

Re-ordered

by

DrT

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Chapter I

Friday, August 11, 1995

Albus Dumbledore was worried as he sat in the courtroom and tried to manipulate Harry's defense. He was worried in part because two dementors had attacked Harry and his cousin in Little Whinging. It should have been impossible for Tom to have sent any forces to that town with the blood protection which Lily had provided Harry, and which he had used to construct the wards -- and that protection would especially include dementors.

If Tom hadn't sent dementors, who had? Dumbledore now had a terrible suspicion which was approaching a certainty.

Dumbledore was also worried about how powerful Fudge's political influence had apparently become since June, although it was more likely attributable to Lucius Malfoy's long and deep purse than to Fudge himself. Had he still been head of this court, Dumbledore would never have allowed any case like this to be brought forward. Had he somehow been out-manoeuvred, he could have insured an easy verdict in Harry's favor. Now, it might come down to the shabbily-dressed Squib he'd had to pull out of bed in a hurry to get Harry off. The only alternative defense would have set Harry outside his control, which would be nearly as bad as Harry being found guilty. Still, that would form the appeal Dumbledore would make, if worse came to worse.

Suddenly, Harry slipped out of the accused chair and landed in a heap on the floor, convulsing as a powerful spell of some sort made his body glow with power.

Now Dumbledore was even more worried.

Harry slowly came back to awareness of his body. He was confused.

Harry slowly came back to his body. He was not so much confused, as he was concerned, as he wasn't certain exactly where his body was. Or when.

The two Harrys confronted each other in their now-common mind.

"Who are you?" 15 year-old Harry demanded.

"You," the other Harry said, "except I'm actually from 2013."

Had younger Harry been awake, he would have blinked and shaken his head at that.

"You won," older Harry said. "You beat Voldemort in 1998, but at a very high cost. Sirius, Dumbledore, Remus, Tonks, Ron, Ginny, Hermione, just to name a few you currently care about, were all dead by then. You survived, and mourned their loss for almost a year. When you came back to the wizarding world from your mourning, they actually tried to arrest you for killing Tom Riddle, since he and Voldemort were proven to be the same person."

"Sounds about right," younger Harry agreed. After all, he was already on trial for non-crimes.

"I was angry and depressed, and a friend helped me escape to North America. I came back to Britain in 2004, when the twins and some other friends of ours started a movement to overthrow the Ministerial oligarchy and replace it with a more representational government. We won, but again the price was high. By then, I had lost everyone I ever care about as more than just a friend, and had lost most of them as well. I spent six years researching this spell, to send my self and magic back to the past."

"Well, it worked," younger Harry said.

"Hopefully, it's May or June, 1995, at least a week before the end of the Triwizard."

Younger Harry sighed. "It's August, 1995."

"Shit! Before or after the trial?"

"During," younger Harry said drily.

"Oh . . . Shit, shite, merde! I was afraid that might happen, because it was about the worst scenario I could come up with."

Younger Harry was now convinced that this was indeed himself. That was his secret 'bad word set,' which he had never uttered aloud, but sometimes thought. "So what happens now?" he asked. "You take me over?"

"No," older Harry replied. "In terms of magic, it's our power merged together. I was slightly stronger than Riddle ever was, and he was slightly stronger than Dumbledore. . . ."

"You're joshing!"

"No," older Harry said. "Your magic overpowered Riddle in the graveyard, because then it wasn't about knowledge, only raw power. Remember, the reason Riddle is so dangerous to you is not your lack of power, but his ruthlessness and your lack of experience. He had nearly forty years of practicing magic on you in June, since he was a spirit for over ten years. Dumbledore is his near-equal in power, and has a hundred years on Tommy-boy."

"And now?"

"Together, we can easily over-power the Dork Lord," older Harry stated firmly. "He still has at least twenty years on the combined us, so we will have to be careful. More importantly, we will know what we need to know to destroy the bastard."

"Really?"

"Really," older Harry assured his younger self. "Moldishorts made himself nearly immortal by splitting his soul into six pieces plus the piece inside of what passes for his body, and each piece can be difficult to destroy by itself, although we took care of one at the end of our Second year."

"That diary?"

"Exactly," older Harry agreed. "One Horcrux down -- that what the six pieces are called -- and five more plus the Dark Lump himself. I know where four of the five other Horcruxes are, although one is down Nagini's gullet."

"Yech."

Older Harry gave the mental equivalent of a shrug. "Same as gutting a flobberworm, only bigger and messier." He seemed to come closer to younger Harry. "So, magically, it's both of us, although mine is a lot more developed than yours. In terms of memories, it will seem more like mine over the short-term, until you get used to them. In terms of personality, it will be more you than me, although you might hear 'me' talking in the back your mind for a while before we're totally joined."

"Do I have a choice?"

Older Harry again gave the mental equivalent of a shrug. "You can probably eject me, or at least most of me. I won't stop you. Or you can let me run things as we integrate. It's up to you."

"What about the trial?"

"We got off last time, but who can tell that Fudge is up to while we're talking to each other? The bastard is in Malfoy's moneybag."

"Should you be in charge when we wake up?" younger Harry asked.

"I can be, but that might be giving me more influence later."

"Do it anyway," younger Harry said. "I think you have a plan."

"I do," older Harry admitted, "but it's pretty radical. It would have been better if I had taken out the Death Nibblers in June. Still, if we do this, we will rock the British magical community and we could set every adult you know, including Dumbledore, against us, along with Ron and Ginny, and maybe even Hermione."

"Does Dumbledore really care as much for me as he seems to at times?" The Headmaster's actions that morning had bothered Harry a great deal.

Older Harry thought about that. "At times," he finally said, "but for some reason he preferred trying to save people like Snape and Malfoy to helping us prepare to fight."

"Then do what you have to do."

"Right."

"Harry! Harry, speak to us!"

"Are you certain you didn't. . . ."

"What do you want, Cornelius? for me to swear an oath?"

Harry opened his eyes and frowned at the arguing members of the Wizengamot. He sat up and glared. "Which one of you did that?" he demanded. When they paid no attention, he wandlessly cast the Sonorus spell. "I SAID, WHICH ONE OF YOU ATTACKED ME!"

The courtroom went dead silent. Harry stood and he allowed a fair share of his magic power his aura, making it visible -- a rare sight that not even Voldemort or Dumbledore could easily pull off. He released the spells. "That wasn't Voldemort . . . oh, grow up! Tom Riddle is a powerful sorcerer, but he's not THAT powerful."

Everyone looked at him stupidly. Harry shook his head. Most of these people were old enough to remember the truth about Tom Riddle. Harry wondered if Riddle hadn't cast a confundus charm on everyone but Dumbledore. Harry sighed and reached over and took Percy's wand, to the sycophant's shock. Harry quickly did the 'TOM MARVOLO RIDDLE = I AM LORD VOLDEMORT' trick. As he did so, no one noticed Harry wandlessly sending off two paper messenger spells. "As I said, you dumb bastards can deny that Riddle -- or Voldemort, or 'Lord Thingy' or 'He-who-must-not-be-named' or 'Moldishorts' or 'the Dick Lord' or whatever you want to call him -- is back if you want to be stupid, or in the Minister's case, if you wish to maintain your pay from Lucius Malfoy. I prefer to look at the truth."

He glared at them, and they all, even Dumbledore, took at least one step back in fear as his magic flared around him. "Under the Founding Ministry Statutes of 1621, which cannot be amended, this session of the Wizengamot constituted as a court is illegal, as I was not given due notification of the time change. Also, since the Underage Magic of Act of 1911 has not been amended, although the amendment has been proposed, there is no crime for this body to judge legally -- not that such constraints have ever stopped the British Ministry from acting illegally, as in sending innocent people to Azkaban without a trial, contrary again to the Founding Ministry Statutes. Therefore, the most that I could be fined is fifty Galleons, since the Underage Magic Office was never properly set up under the Ministry Regulations of 1869." There was a lot of uncomfortable movement. These facts were well-known in certain small circles, and they were usually ignored, as no one wanted to put in the time and effort needed to make things perfectly legal -- plus of course the loopholes could be useful for the right people. "Even that is mostly moot, however, since the only magic I did was in front of my cousin, Dudley Dursley, who is aware of magic."

Harry glared at Delores Umbridge, who quivered. "We all know who the Ministry liaison to the dementors is, but I expect nothing will be done about that. Now, since I know I will not be allowed to confront any of my false accusers, let alone duel with them, I am leaving. As I have reached my fifteenth birthday and I am the sole surviving member and heir of one of the one hundred and twenty-three Founding Families of Magic, who met at Glastonbury on the summer solstice of 924 to form the Original Wizengamot, I declare myself of age -- and remember, that group's laws and customs take precedence over mere Ministerial decrees and even laws. This also again renders these charges moot. I also declare myself to be a warlock. I renounce the Ministry of Magic's claims upon me, and also any protections the Ministry or services the Ministry might provide."

"You can't do this!" Umbridge shouted.

"You'll never get your wand back!" Percy proclaimed.

Harry looked at Percy and snapped his fingers. His own wand appeared in his hand. Harry tossed

Percy's wand back to him, and then, to everyone's shock, Harry snapped his wand in half and tossed it on the floor. "Test it, you'll see it was mine, and as for you, Umbitch, I couldn't care less what you say or proclaim. I hereby give notice that the following people are anathema to me." As an independent warlock, outside of the Ministry protections and most of the laws, Harry could be challenged by anyone who announced their intentions before hand. In the same manner, Harry could announce he would challenge almost anyone he chose. Harry should not chase them down (there was another set of rules for that), but he could attack them on sight under many circumstances. "Tom Riddle, who calls himself Lord Voldemort. Lucius Malfoy, Voldemort's main financial backer and a Marked Death Eater. Cornelius Fudge, who receives most of that financial backing. Delores Umbridge, his toad in every sense and who I charge with setting the dementors on both me and my defenseless Muggle cousin. Anyone bearing the Dark Mark -- especially Peter Pettigrew, who is alive and who was my parents' secret keeper, not Sirius Black, who is innocent of all charges brought against him. And that little ferret, Draco Malfoy, might be underage and so I cannot proclaim him anathema, but if he attacks me or my friends, I will answer him with equal violence."

"Just who do you think you are?" Umbridge shouted at Harry before anyone else could.

"I am your worst nightmare," Harry said. "Someone who doesn't give a rat's arse about any one of you and who has the power, ancestry, and money to back that up. At some point, even Malfoy's money won't be able to cover up that Voldemort is back. At that point, you'll all come to kiss my arse and I'll tell you to go to hell."

At that point, the doors to the courtroom opened, and Lucius Malfoy, looking confused, and another wizard came in.

"Harry, no!" Dumbledore shouted.

"Shut up!" Harry snapped. "You've had almost sixty years to deal with Riddle, and you've stuffed things up at every turn." Harry walked over to the other wizard who had just come in and took the Prophecy. Harry handed it to the very shocked Lucius Malfoy. "He could handle it, because it's his job," Harry said. "You can, because I gave it to you. Now, you tell that half-blood bastard master of yours to listen to that prophecy well. I have the power to kill him. If he seeks immortality, I couldn't care less. If he seeks power legitimately, I couldn't care less. If he goes around killing or torturing innocent people, I'll kill him. Oh, and the next time I see you, I'm killing you. I've declared you anathema."

Malfoy just started his customary sneer when Harry banished him out of the courtroom with a flick of his finger. Without so much as a motion, Harry willed the doors shut as the sound of Malfoy crashing into the wall was heard. "Notice he didn't deny anything. Oh, and Fudge? I just saw he spilled those Galleons he was going to pay you off with. You might want to go scurry along and help him pick them up before he goes crawling back to his master without paying you. As for the rest of you? Fuck off!" And with that, Harry disapparated, which should have been impossible from so deep within the Ministry.

To say that Harry had left chaos behind would be a huge understatement. Only Amelia Bones seemed to have enjoyed the scene.

Harry went first to The Daily Prophet (where Harry bought a full- page ad with his announcements, so that his side would come out as he wanted it) and then, to the younger Harry's surprise, to The Quibbler, where he gave out a fairly full version of what had happened in the courtroom. 'We aren't going to Ollivander's?' young Harry then asked.

'No,' older Harry replied. 'If we're going back to Grimmauld Place, we need to go now, before Dumbledore manages to get there, and then to Gringotts. Or, we can go straight to Gringotts.'

Younger Harry thought about that, knowing that it was up to him. 'Can't we go back late tonight, when everyone's asleep? Just to get Hedwig and leave some notes?' It was clear that older Harry needed to tell him things -- that younger Harry could sense, but couldn't yet get a firm grasp of any details.

'Very well,' older Harry thought as he apparated to the private apparation area of Gringotts. "I need to see Ragnok, Drossfill, and Griphook, Friend Oretoe." The goblin, Oretoe registered surprise, as Harry was both speaking Gobbledegook and knew the goblin's name, although as far as Oretoe knew, the two had never seen each other. "I also need someplace private to wait, where no wizard or witch will see me."

"Very well, Mister Potter," Oretoe replied in English.

It took Harry just forty-five frenzied minutes to set his financial affairs in the order he wanted them. Then he went down to the vaults. He bypassed the vault younger Harry had had access for to get ready cash, made a brief stop at the family vault, and then went down to the First Vaults.

'We're related to Gryffindor'? younger Harry asked, for vaults 2 through 5 were the Founders' Vaults. "We're the Heir?"

"Yes, although there are some more branches off in North America,' older Harry replied. 'Mother came from a branch of the Hufflepuff family, although there were three generations of Squibs before her. Also, Riddle accidentally made us a magical heir to Slytherin. With his new body, he's not a blood heir any longer, so we have equal status with him. Touching the vaults gives us power over artifacts magically protected by those three followers. The only dangerous Horcrux, to us, will be the healing jewel inside of Nagini, which belonged to Ravenclaw. We'll touch her vault and see if anything happens this time. In addition, we can claim a Head of Family ring for the Potter branch of the Gryffindor clan as well as a ring showing us to be the head of the Gryffindor clan -- the vaults will provide them. Riddle turned the Head of Slytherin ring into a Horcrux. We'll claim that as well when we break the Horcrux. We can also claim a membership ring from the Hufflepuff vault and as I said we'll ask the Ravenclaw vault to accept us as a magical heir.'

'Okay. And this first vault?'

'It's called 'Merlin's vault', not that he ever used it. Still, it does have some of his relics. Two of which we are going to claim.'

'We can get in?'

'We're both the first wizard powerful enough to succeed since Gryffindor and Ravenclaw set it up,

and we're not Dark. Therefore, we can get in.' Older Harry smirked. "Dumbledore was powerful enough to talk the vault, but was refused entry. Riddle was knocked on his skinny arse when he asked."

'And we're claiming what, exactly?'

'Merlin's third favorite wand and his second favorite staff. As I said, a basically light wizard of at least my old power can get in. That's why Dumbledore couldn't, although it at least talked with him. It wouldn't speak to Riddle, it just rejected him.'

Ignoring all the other treasures in Merlin's vault, Harry picked up a wand and a staff. 'Each is oak, with a phoenix feather -- Fawkes', as it happens. There is also a griffin feather in both, and one from a fwooper, of all things, in the staff. Therefore, our wand will work against Voldemort's, but his will not work against ours.' Young Harry smiled, and the fact that both had small emeralds on the ends which matched his eyes also amused him.

'Here's the plan,' older Harry said. 'The cottage at Godric's Hollow was never restored. There is an older Potter Manor, late Fifteenth century, looking like a cross between a stone late medieval manor and an early Tudor construction, about a mile further into the woods from the cottage. There should be two house elves there, although both are past merely elderly. We can bring in Dobby and Winky to help. Then, after we put it under the Fidelius, I'm going to set up some monitoring spells on Grimmauld Place. We'll drop by in a few days. In the mean time, we assimilate into one Harry.'

'I like it,' younger Harry said. 'Anything else?'

'We also have to stop and get some extensive potions ingredients, and don't worry. We're a lot better than Snape ever gave us credit for.'

Conversation transcription from one of Harry's spells, from the kitchen of #12 Grimmauld Place.

Snape: not believe that . . . that boy could think of anything like this. He must have been helped and coached!"

Dumbledore "By whom, Severus? I assure you, up until the time that spell hit him, he had no inkling of what was about to happen. What ever group did this. . . ."

Sirius: "Group?"

Arthur Weasley: "Most of the magical monitoring equipment in the Ministry was melted, and the others went off the scale and have had to be recalibrated. That much raw power in one person would be unheard of."

Dumbledore: "Even if three powerful wizards had drained themselves of magic, they could not have caused that sort of reaction."

Molly Weasley: "The poor boy."

Remus: "I'm not so certain about that."

Snape: "Is your mind still addled from last night's change? How could it not be bad?"

Remus: "Bad that Harry declared his independence?"

Dumbledore: "That was not Harry."

Sirius: "We don't know that. For all we know, someone took temporary possession of Harry to give him the options we always wanted him to have."

Snape: "You're as crazed as your animal."

Sirius: "Shut it, Sniv. This is none of your business! And no offense, Molly, but it's not yours, either. I'm Harry's appointed guardian, even if I can't exercise it since I was illegally sent to Azkaban. Ignoring that, Remus is the only person who should legally have ever had ANY say in what happened to Harry. Were you even asked?"

Remus: "I was shipped off to Bulgaria before the funeral! I still haven't been able to get access to the wills!"

Snape: "If it was you two who somehow. . . ."

Sirius and Remus: "Shut it!"

Dumbledore: "We must find Harry and see what can be done to free him from whatever happened to him, if it is still in possession of him. Once that is done, we can see about undoing the damage. . . ."

Sirius: "Wrong. Harry is now legally an adult."

Remus: "And even if Sirius can't come out and fight you in public, I can, and will."

Sirius: "See your selves out. Soon."

Snape: "You ought to do something about those two." Arthur Weasley: "I don't know who's right here, but don't be precipitous, Headmaster. Good night."

Molly: "Good night."

Dumbledore: "Good evening." Pause. "Find Harry, Severus. Quickly."

Snape: "And?"

Dumbledore: "Bring him to me. I hope I need not add I want him as unharmed as possible."

Snape: "Very well."

Chapter II

Monday, August 14, 1995

To any casual outside observer, Harry did very little of real note between Friday afternoon and that next Monday morning after putting the Fidelius on Friday at tea time. What he was mostly doing was assimilating the two personalities he now housed, plus brewing some powerful potions, which he started taking Saturday night. Older Harry had mentally and magically prepared his mind for just this melding, so it did not drive the combined Harry insane, as it could have.

Younger Harry had been very shocked at certain details; the death of Sirius had been especially hard to remember. Snape's murdering Dumbledore, on the other hand, had been easy to believe. Younger Harry also understood why Older Harry had been so harsh on Umbridge.

Harry's future love life had also been surprising. Cho had been a complete disaster. Ginny had used several enticement potions to draw Harry closer than he otherwise would have been from the spring of his Fifth year through most of his Sixth year. Each time he had unknowingly fought one off, Molly Weasley had supplied a stronger one. Harry had been surprised to learn that after Ron's murder near Christmas in 1997, he and Hermione had become each other's first actual lovers -- it had been Hermione's murder by Bellatrix Lestrange which had sent Harry into a killing frenzy which had ended up destroying Voldemort as well as most of his Death Eaters.

Younger Harry had, of course, not even really registered Luna Lovegood. It was she who had nursed Harry mentally back to health in the Yukon and who had had his only child. Their death at the hands of a British Ministry assassination squad had had the opposite effect of what it had been supposed to do -- instead of frightening Harry off of the impending civil war in Britain, Harry had come back to lead it.

Harry spent all day Monday making lists to make certain he did not forget anything important, and also reading over the transcriptions of the conversations which had happened in Grimmauld Place since Friday evening. He was glad the twins had come up with such an amazing bugging charm in 2002.

Neither Snape nor Dumbledore had been back to Grimmauld Place as far as Harry could tell. Mrs. Weasley was fairly strong in her conviction that Harry needed to be 'helped'. Most of the Order members who dropped by, who were not close to Harry (at least not yet), agreed either with her or Dumbledore. The two exceptions were Moody and Tonks, with Mr. Weasley right in the middle between his wife and Remus. Tonks was leaning towards Remus' and Sirius' position, and Moody kept his own counsel.

Harry had hoped that the five teens would be totally on his side. To his surprise, the twins were more in between their father's and Tonks' position, ie willing to believe in Harry, but worried. Harry couldn't really fault them for that. Ginny seemed to be between the twins' and Mr. Weasley, mostly because (as Ginny explained to Mrs. Weasley in private), Ginny was worried that a really independent Harry would not fall for her. Mrs. Weasley had suggested a mild enticement potion, and Ginny had agreed to consider it.

Hermione was a more vocal version of Moody, willing to wait and hear Harry out and demanding that others do the same, but still very concerned for him. In fact, Remus and Hermione seemed the most concerned, even more so than Sirius, who was confident that whatever had happened, Harry would just have to be fine.

Ron was just plain confused.

Now of one unified mind, Harry decided to put off a visit to Grimmauld Place and study the situation a bit more. Instead, he went outside of the Fidelius and managed to summon Dobby to him. The elf was more than happy to come to work for Harry Potter. Dobby brought Winky, who was thrilled to bond with a family again, as opposed to taking Harry's first offer of employment.

Harry took the elves to meet the two elderly Potter elves. He left Winky to get to know the two elves and took Dobby aside. Dobby was eager to go back to Hogwarts to keep an eye on Harry's interests. Harry made certain to tell Dobby what not to do, as he did not want the elf taking any risks at all. Dobby would simply tell Dumbledore that he hoped that Harry would contact him and would ask if he could stay and work without pay until Harry contacted him, or until September 1.

After dinner, Harry collected two Horcruxes, Slytherin's ring and Gryffindor's knife, which had been turned into a Horcrux the night Harry's parents had been murdered. He quickly and safely destroyed the soul fragments inside the Horcruxes, took another set of potions, and then went to sleep early.

At first, Harry was slightly surprised the next morning when Hedwig showed up, despite all the magic hiding him. Still, their bond was strong. A few quick checks showed that all the letters had tracking charms on them, as did Hedwig, and two of the letters held portkeys. Hedwig's magical ability to detect her owner had also been enhanced somehow, magic that Harry didn't know. He therefore transferred the tracking charms to a bone left over from his steak the night before. When Harry told Hedwig why he was doing these things, he saw that Hedwig had an idea what Harry was talking about. She looked very offended that people had tried to use her to betray her owner. She took off, and would deliver the bone to just outside of the Riddle House.

Harry then deactivated the two portkeys and read his letters.

Dumbledore's note, unsurprisingly, was meaningless platitudes, as it had been sent merely to draw Harry to Hogwarts via the portkey spell which had been attached. Harry was surprised that the other portkey was attached to Ginny's note. He decided not to read much into that, as Sirius and Remus would have been leery of letting Dumbledore near their letters. Harry did wonder how Dumbledore had gotten to Hedwig, as none of the transcription spells had noted Dumbledore being in the house. Still, those were far from infallible, as many portions of the house were not covered.

Ginny's actual note was not very informative, basically merely hoping that he was not injured and would come back to Grimmauld Place soon. Harry frowned when he read Mrs. Weasley and Ron's letters, as they expressed the same sentiments, in the same order, as Ginny's, although with (mostly) their own phrasing. Harry wondered if this and the portkey were all Dumbledore's doing, or if Mrs. Weasley had a hand in it. Not to mention wondering about Ron and especially Ginny's motives. At least Ron had expressed some genuine concern about Harry's welfare in his note, as opposed to

mere rhetoric on the subject, like Ginny and Mrs. Weasley.

Hermione's note was the shortest letter, other than Dumbledore's faux message. She merely hoped he was well and healthy, and asked that, if he was, that he contact them all as soon as possible, so they would know what to do next.

And that she missed him very much. Harry smiled as he remembered Hermione's confession to him as they had laid in bed together for the first time, after their first night of lovemaking. She had been attracted to both himself and to Ron, much more to him, until his anger during their Fifth year had sent her to Ron.

Harry cast a spell on Ginny's and Dumbledore's messages to reveal the magical signatures left over from their being made portkeys. He was far from an expert at the reading the results, but he could tell that the portkey spells and the tracers on Dumbledore's letter were all cast by the same person. All the other tracers were cast by a second person, most likely, Harry guessed, Mrs. Weasley. Harry frowned, and wondered why Sirius and Remus would have allowed her access to their letters and Hedwig, but then realized that either they didn't know how compromised Mrs. Weasley was, or perhaps Ginny had helped out.

Sirius' letter congratulated Harry on doing at 15 what he himself had done at 16, ie tossing over the traces and running away. Sirius did admit that Harry might have even better reasons than he had had, and warned Harry to be careful, and to get in contact with Sirius soon. Remus spent more time urging Harry to be careful, and not to trust anyone, including himself, unless Harry was certain of their motives. 'Of course, if you are under any sort of control, the odds are you either will never get this letter or else will have extreme difficulty getting to us,' the letter ended sadly.

Harry made certain he wrote good letters for Remus and Sirius.

Wednesday, August 16, 1995
2:06 am

From what Harry could tell from the transcription spells, Moody was probably not in the house. That left Kreacher and Buckbeak as likely problems, and Remus, Sirius, and Mrs. Weasley as possible ones. Harry placed himself under special silencing, scent removal, and disillusioning spells, and then apparated into the top floor of Grimmauld Place. Harry moved silently down the stairs and picked up the locket Horcrux Regulus Black had stolen. Just as silently Harry went upstairs and slipped into the girls' room. He placed voiceless silencing spells on the room and a sleeping spell on Ginny. A wave lit one candle.

Hermione was instantly awake, and sitting up, wand in hand. "Har. . . ." she managed to stop herself, glancing at Ginny and the door.

"I put up silencing wards, and put Ginny into a deeper sleep," Harry said.

"Why?" Hermione asked simply.

"So we could talk a little," Harry answered.

"Just a little?" Hermione asked with a frown.

"Have you ever heard of Legilimency?"

Hermione's frown deepened. "It's some sort of mind-magic. . . ." After that, she came up blank.

"A novice can break into your mind with the spell," Harry said. "An expert can read your surface thoughts without verbalizing the spell. A master can use that as an entrance to direct your thoughts to some particular set of thoughts. You can fight it, and if they want to remain undetected, you can win easily. If they don't mind being detected, it's harder to fight than the Imperious."

"And?"

"And both Snape and Dumbledore are masters, and constantly practice it. Dumbledore's giveaway is that damn twinkle, Snape's is that little movement he does with his eyebrow."

Hermione face-faulted, and then demanded, "You mean . . . you mean they've been reading our minds?"

"Yes," Harry said. "Snape from that first day in class. So, anything you know, they will know."

"There must be some way to counter it," Hermione protested.

"It's called Occlumency, clouding your mind. I could probably teach you at least the basics in the two weeks we have before class starts," Harry offered. The older Hermione had easily learned the basics, since she had a very organized mind, and Harry was betting this Hermione could as well.

"But not here," Hermione said.

"If you trust me, and prefer to help me, yes," Harry said. "If not, believe me, I'll understand. This must look very odd from your point of view."

"When do we leave?" Hermione asked without hesitation.

"Pack Hermione's things," Harry commanded, and instantly Hermione trunk was perfectly packed. "I wonder how the magic knows what's yours?" He shrugged off the problem. "I'm going to silence your footsteps, disillusion you, and then do the same to myself, plus mask our scent, after you take my hand. Then I'm going to slip some notes under doors, and then we're leaving."

"I wish I knew why I always let you talk me into these things," Hermione said with a sigh. "Let me leave a quick note so they know I wasn't kidnapped. I'll have to owl Mum and Dad later." Hermione frowned. "Harry, you packed all my clothes."

"I didn't pack your slippers, and you'll want to go back to sleep, anyway. I promise, you won't be cold."

"Oh, very well." She paused. "There is one thing you should know."

"Let me guess," Harry said with a small smile. "Dumbledore sent out the prefect badges, and while you of course got one, Ron got the other."

"I'm sorry," Hermione said. "You deserved it, not Ron. He's been quite the prat about that."

"It's alright. I expected both."

Fifteen minutes later, Hermione appeared with Harry in the front entrance hall of Potter Manor. Harry showed her to the bedroom next to the master suite, and she quickly settled into trying to catch some more sleep. As much as she needed to ask many questions, she was just too sleepy.

7:40 am

Albus Dumbledore frowned mightily, although his twinkle was sparkling at full-blast. Hermione Granger had disappeared and Harry had left three notes, to Ron, Sirius, and Remus. All three said basically the same thing -- that Harry was fine, he wasn't under any coercion, that he was asking Hermione to join him until the First of September to help him research some problems, and that he was currently planning on coming back to Hogwarts. Sirius' also mentioned that Harry hoped to stay with him over the holidays if he did return to Hogwarts.

Ron's note also contained an apology for not taking him as well, basically because Harry didn't want to cause a rift between Ron and his mother. Ron didn't like that very much, but he did have to acknowledge, seeing the glower on his mother's face, that Harry was probably right. Harry had added a PS to the twins in Ron's letter, telling them to be prepared for a tough year. Hermione's note -- to be sent on to her parents' -- merely agreed with Harry's main points.

Ginny had not been left a note, and was still asleep from the charm whomever had taken Hermione had placed on her. She would not wake up until after noon.

Dumbledore finally toned down his Legilimency to its normal, fairly passive level. He had a headache. He had traced the tracking spells he and Molly had put on Harry's letters and owl to Little Hangleton, and had been given a hostile reception from the passive wards Voldemort had left in place, only to find that whoever had taken Harry had easily defeated the tracers.

Dumbledore took Remus and Sirius aside, and asked, "Were there no other notes or clues?" he almost begged.

"No," Remus said coldly.

"And you can stop your damn mind-probe," Sirius growled. After 13 years in Azkaban, mere passive Legilimency could not break into his mind. Werewolves, and vampires for that matter, were also immune to Legilimency.

Dumbledore glared at them and stomped away. 'Why can't people just trust me?' he basically asked himself angrily. He knew what struggles he had had with his power; the temptation of power at the level where at most few dozen wizards in the world operated at any given time (including himself and Voldemort, and some day, he believed, Harry) were great. Dumbledore believed they almost always went in one of three directions, and of those most commonly they chose behind the scenes manipulation or the Dark Arts. Harry would never be good at the behind-the-scenes work that Dumbledore practiced. He likely would never willingly be Dark. Dumbledore could not have

known either when he abandoned the child at the Dursleys. That left the third option in Dumbledore's opinion -- Harry's power being used by someone else to advance their agenda, as he had been doing to Harry himself, although he rarely admitted that even to himself. That scenario now seemed to be in play, with someone else influencing Harry.

It wasn't that Dumbledore had wanted Harry abused, it was just that he wanted Harry to grow up without a knowledge of magic. He needed to be the one to control Harry, to guide him to the final confrontation with Voldemort, which would sadly end with the death of both. Dumbledore was not as comfortable with that as he had once been. He had come to care for Harry, although not really love him. In the original time line, that affection had interfered with The Plan, until the entire scheme had unraveled, leaving Harry unprepared to fight Voldemort directly and winning in large part because of the support of his friends and, of course, pure luck and raw power.

Now Dumbledore was in a panic. He had to find Harry and save him from any outside influences, even if it meant his own influence over Harry could end up lessened.

"What do you think, Paddy?" Remus asked once they were alone. He and Sirius had also received slightly more informative notes as well as the ones they had shown Dumbledore.

"I think . . . that I'm confused," Sirius admitted. "I think Harry's right, and we can't fully trust Dumbledore. I just don't know if we can trust he's as safe as he claims."

"I have to agree," Remus said, unhappily.

8:35 am

Hermione woke up in a bright, cheerful room, which confused her for a moment. Then she remembered what had occurred in the wee hours of that morning.

She had run away with Harry. Ron Weasley might have caused a few more naughty thoughts to cross her mind over the previous weeks, but Harry wasn't far behind in that department. Plus, Hermione had known from at least the time she had left Harry to confront Voldemort by himself at the end of their first year that Harry was her leader. She was called to him . . . to advise him and to follow him. She wasn't sure if it could be more than that or not, despite many fantasies, desires, and hopes on the subject.

She had often wondered how closely she might become with Harry. Now, it might just be the two of them for two weeks, and she would find out. Hermione blushed slightly as her body responded to that line of thinking.

She jumped slightly as a light knock came on her door. "Come in!"

Harry came up with a breakfast tray. "Good morning," he said, fully dressed and obviously wide awake. "I thought we could talk about a few things while you eat breakfast, if you don't mind."

"Let me run to the bathroom first," Hermione said.

"There's a private bath in there," Harry said, pointing. He enjoyed watching Hermione's body in nothing but very lightweight summer pajamas, and wondered if she was somehow cold, or just excited.

There was a small breakfast table for two in the large room, so Harry set the tray there and waited. A slightly flushed Hermione came back, hesitated over digging out her dressing gown from her trunk, decided not to, and finally sat, barefoot, at the table. "What should we talk about?" she asked.

"Until you achieve some at least some minor success at Occlumency, I can't tell you how I know things," Harry answered as Hermione poured her tea. "I will when I can, but for a while, you'll have to take things on faith. I can test you after breakfast, if you like."

"Alright," Hermione answered. "Like what?"

"To start off, house elves." Hermione frowned. "First of all, let me say that as strongly as you despise abuse of any kind, I probably feel even more strongly." Hermione nodded, knowing that Harry had endured some sort of abuse over the years at the Dursleys. "And, if any being holds another as a slave, the possibility of abuse is possible, given the dynamics of the situation."

Hermione's eyebrows went up, as this did not sound like her Harry, but she said nothing.

"So, if all house elves in a country are slaves, some are going to be abused, and that is wrong. On the other hand, house elves do have the need to serve. They will never be fully independent creatures. The problem, therefore, is creating a system where they can serve but will not be abused."

Hermione swallowed her bite of egg and toast and agreed that was possible.

"Now elves are actually technically free in North America, Australia, and New Zealand. The governments there keep an eye on all elf 'sponsors' as they're called, to prevent abuse. There is a different system in Central and South America. Greater India and Tibet, and most of Africa, have altogether different systems as well, but the important thing is, any known elf abuse is punished. Elves cannot be really free. Even Dobby needs to serve someone or something."

"Like Hogwarts."

"Exactly. Now Voldemort is a more pressing problem, but the elf problem is one symptom of the bigotry embedded in wizarding culture in Europe. At some point in the future, we will need to help bring about a system where any elf abuse is reported and punished, and where an elf can freely leave any household if they wish. It isn't the sort of freedom you seem to have envisioned, where they're practically unionized. That would be far too impersonal for most of the elves themselves to handle, at least for a few generations."

"You could be right," Hermione said. "Somehow, though, I seem to think you're bringing this up first because you have elves here."

"I do," Harry agreed. "Most elves live until at least their early-sixties. Kreacher, I understand, is in his late sixties. These two are in their late seventies. They don't even really remember their genders, let alone their names. Cleaning this house is all they have left. I certainly couldn't free them, even if I begged them to stay on. It would kill them."

Hermione sighed. "You might be right."

"I also tried to hire Winky to help out. She refused and demanded to be bound. I agreed, but insisted that she take pay for her work anyway, and I told her she could leave whenever she wanted to be with some other family as long as she would still keep my secrets."

"And she agreed?"

Harry winced. "She did, on the condition that she not have to directly serve 'she-who-tries-to-trick-good-house elves-with words'."

Hermione flushed again. "Tell her I promise not to try and trick her."

"I will."

Hermione quickly finished her light breakfast, and then Harry tested her right there for Occlumency.

The key for the first steps in Occlumency were an organized and alert mind. Hermione had both. She was quickly able to recognize when Harry was trying to direct her surface thoughts anywhere she didn't want him to go. It also meant she would likely learn the next steps easily -- recognizing when anyone was touching her mind and diverting her thoughts in any way. The next steps, stopping a determined attack, would likely take months of hard practice. Still, Harry felt this was enough to trust Hermione with his basic story.

The pair moved to the small loveseat in the room and Harry told her a fairly detailed summary of what had happened at the trial and afterwards, and then gave her a slightly briefer synopsis of the alternate time line. By the time Harry was finished, it was nearly 12:45, and to their slight surprise, Hermione's breakfast dishes disappeared and lunch for two appeared on the breakfast table.

They also both only noticed then that they had been holding hands for some time.

"I suppose I should get dressed," Hermione said shyly.

"If you'll be more comfortable," Harry said, his thumb stroking the back of her hand. "I hope you don't mind my saying this, but I think you look adorable like you are."

"You have grown up," Hermione said.

"Thank you, I think," Harry said.

"Still, either you're overdressed, or I'm underdressed . . . eep!"

Chapter III

"I suppose I should get dressed," Hermione said shyly.

"If you'll be more comfortable," Harry said. "I hope you don't mind my saying, I think you look adorable like you are."

"You have grown up," Hermione said.

"Thank you, I think," Harry said.

"Still, either you're overdressed, or I'm underdressed . . . eep!"

Harry had stood up, toed off his trainers and proceeded to strip off his shirt and trousers, leaving him in a plain undervest, boxers, and socks. Then he took off his glasses, and Hermione realized he didn't need them. "You've changed physically," she said, surprised. She had been too tired the night before to notice, and too engrossed in Harry's story that morning.

"A little," Harry admitted. "I brewed a potion from the future which made my eyes normal, plus another set of potions which triggered some of the growth I would have had if I hadn't been left short of food for ten years and then again over the past three summers, combined with some powerful nutritional potions. I've put on a stone of muscle and grown three inches since Sunday night, when I first took them. I should grow another three inches, to about five foot nine or ten, and put on another two stone of muscle by the end of the week."

Hermione's eye flicked over Harry. Except for still being just a bit too thin and his knobby knees, he looked . . . sexy. "I like it," she admitted.

"I'm glad."

"Harry . . . were we dating when I was killed in that other life?"

"We were each other's first actual lovers," Harry said. "That doesn't mean we have to be in this new life."

"There wasn't anyone else?"

"You dated Ron, but never got past medium petting according to you, heavy petting and handjobs according to Ron. You certainly never did any of the Bonding rituals with him, and you wanted to put any of that off between us until the war was over, when we could get married. I later married and Bonded with a girl named Luna Lovegood," Harry explained. "I didn't know her until the next ride to Hogwarts, and she's a year behind us. If we don't date, I'll probably make an effort to get to know her."

"She's very smart, very cute, but also. . . ."

"Odd?"

"Very odd, from what little I know of her," Hermione agreed.

"You check out younger girls?" Harry teased.

Hermione looked at Harry. "You didn't know. . . ."

"That you and Ginny became 'touching friends' as you called it in that tent at the Quidditch World Cup and have been since? Yes, I did. You also carried on a short but torrid affair with Padma Patil in our Seventh year. Ron was being particularly prat-like, and she was tutoring you because we were spending so much time looking for Horcruxes. She was killed just before Ron was."

Hermione's flush was no longer just from shy embarrassment. She had apparently come to trust Harry as she had always hoped to trust a lover. She looked up through her lashes. Harry smiled and nodded as he recognized the body language from the alternate time line. Hermione dropped her hands passively on her lap, leaned back against the armrest of the love seat, and closed her eyes. She was giving Harry permission to do whatever he wanted, and would say nothing unless he did something she didn't like.

Harry reached up and unbuttoned the bottom of the five closed buttons on Hermione's pale green thin cotton pajama top and worked his way up. He had only seen three pairs of breasts in his previous life. Ginny's small A-cups had not been terribly responsive, their large pink nipples barely changing as they had been kissed and petted. Luna's breasts had been just slightly rounder than Ginny's, but while her actual breasts had been no more responsive than Ginny's, her small, translucent nipples were ultra-sensitive. She had often orgasmed while Harry had been suckling on her, and she had had even small orgasms while breast feeding, until their daughter had started teething.

Hermione was currently a large B, pushing towards a C-cup. By the time of her death in June, 1998, she had become a border-line D. Her nipples were only slightly larger than Luna's, but were more a reddish brown. They weren't as sensitive as Luna's, but they were still sensitive, and the skin of the actual breasts were much more responsive than either Luna's or Ginny's.

Having bared Hermione's lovely breasts, Harry decided that the best word for them were perky -- round but firm. Another term would be perfect, except that he knew he would love them ever more as they grew.

Hermione bit her lower lip, not knowing how sexy that made her look, as she heard Harry pull off his t-shirt. She let him pull her gently away from the arm rest, so that he could slip her top all the way off. Considering the hiss of excitement Harry had made when her breasts were first bared, she was content to let Harry take charge.

The first touch on Hermione's bare skin was on her shoulder, as Harry pulled her into a deep lingering French kiss, Hermione's first, as her kisses with Viktor had been chaste, and her few sessions so far with Ginny had been more mutual masturbation than anything else.

Hermione never knew where the next two and a half hours went. She did know that they had soon moved to the bed, as Harry had easily carried her. Her breath, already slightly rapid and shallow, had increased as Harry had slipped off his boxers and then her pajama bottoms. She was really not ready to lose her virginity, but at that moment, she would have willingly agreed to anything Harry

had asked of her.

Harry had asked nothing. They had gone back to deep kissing and roving hands. Then, Harry's lips went roaming. Hermione climaxed from Harry's mouth on her breasts and his hands between her legs. Then she came twice more, as Harry's agile tongue followed his fingers.

It was only as Hermione calmed down in Harry's arms that she came to her senses and realized several things. The most prosaic was how much time had passed. The second was how comfortable she was, basking naked in her sexual afterglow in Harry's arms.

The final thing was the large, hot, hard rod which lay from below her dripping labia to past her naval. She had read all her parents hidden sex manuals; she had watched the sex tapes her father kept stashed under the tellie console in the master bedroom. She knew that Harry's had a porno-worthy sized cock, and she knew what she was supposed to do with it, from the videos, the books, and from observations at Hogwarts.

Hermione thought of all the implications that there would be if she followed through, for in the magical world there were far more of them than in the Muggle. For the first time in her life, she not only knew what she was expected to do in such a situation, but she was more than eager to comply. She was glad she'd fixed her front teeth, or else she might never have been able to fit Harry inside her mouth. As it was, she knew that Ginny could never have easily performed this act on Harry -- her tiny mouth was too small for Harry's size.

She leaned close.

"Are you certain?" Harry asked.

"I am, if you are, my lord," Hermione answered formally. "I am free to Bond with whom I will. I love you, and would have you be part of me."

"I love you, and I will always love you," Harry answered. "I would have you Bond with me, and become part of you."

Hermione grasped Harry's base with both hands and went to work with fingers and lips, and within a minute was rewarded with a warm fountain that Hermione decided was her favorite flavor.

As Hermione and Harry cuddled together, Hermione asked, "Did I love your taste, your cock, so much last time?"

"Actually, yes," Harry said. "You and I did just about everything a man and a woman can do without serious extra equipment. We just avoided doing this very much to avoid all the complications."

"And did any one ever join us? Ginny? Ron? Padma? . . . Luna?"

"Padma and Luna both joined us in some three-way snogging and petting, and once a four-way snogfest," Harry admitted. "Just realize, my heart now belongs to you, my lovely Hermione."

Hermione looked somewhat pleased, but then a thought struck her. "You never had a nickname for me, did you?"

"Like what?" Harry teased. "Hermie? Herms? Mione? Ni?"

"Ni?"

Harry shrugged. "I tended to call you 'sweetheart', and sometime 'sweetie' in private." Harry blushed as thought occurred to him.

"What?"

"My cousin's friends called him 'Big-D'. After you met them, sometimes you just called me, well. . ."

"Big?"

"Exactly."

"Harry, you're longer than my forearm and as thick as my wrist. What else could I call you?"

"Your arms aren't all that long, and your wrist is rather dainty," Harry teased.

"I'm sure I'm fairly average, which you are not," Hermione teased back. She suddenly looked both doubtful and longing, "Harry. . . ."

"My heart belongs to you," Harry repeated. "If you'd like, I'll give you a promise ring."

"Maybe you should wait until my birthday," Hermione suggested as she snuggled closer.

"If you have it before we go back to Hogwarts, you're under my magical protection."

"Just how powerful are you?" Hermione asked.

"Well, there are no exact measurements, but probably until last Friday morning, there were at least fifteen people in the world at least a major step over all other witches and wizards, and maybe others that I didn't know about," Harry said seriously. "Of the fifteen, three were in China, one in the Gobi Desert and two in Tibetan monasteries, all well-hidden from the Communist authorities. Four were in greater India -- one in Nepal, one in Kashmere, and two in India itself, all leading communities hidden away from the Muggle population. One was the oldest living magical person alive, at 198."

Hermione nodded.

"There was one in Japan, who is the head of the magical Shinto community, and the magical advisor to the emperor. There was one in central Africa, who rules the only magical kingdom, the one in the middle of the Sahara."

"The one where they kill anyone not given prior permission to enter their territory, right?"

"Correct. One is the head of what we would call Magical Law Enforcement of the United Hispanic Magical Ministry of the Americas. The other three were in North America, working with the communities of Old Believers there."

Hermione again nodded, knowing that the largest community of magical users were tucked away in the various mountains of North America, including many who were the direct magical descendants of the druids. "That's only twelve," was all she said.

"Plus Voldemort, Dumbledore, and myself -- something of a statistical anomaly, having three of the acknowledged fifteen most powerful magic users in little old magically under-populated Britain," Harry agreed. "What do most of those fifteen have in common?"

"Except for you, Voldemort, the ruler in Africa, and the chief auror in South America, they're either working behind the scenes or working with small communities," Hermione said. "Even the Emir in the Sahara might be considered part of that company."

"Exactly," Harry said. "Most of the people at this level of power either become behind-the-scenes leaders, leaders of religious communities . . . or Dark Lords or puppets of Dark Lords."

Hermione blinked. Then she protested, "You could NEVER turn Dark!"

"Thank you," Harry said. "No, I don't think I could really go Dark, but I could be pretty gray at times."

"Maybe." Hermione looked Harry in the eye. "What exactly happened last Friday?"

"Wait a minute," Harry said. "First, thanks for thinking I won't turn Dark. Look at it from Dumbledore's perspective, though. Why, if I'm the only person who can defeat Voldemort, have I been kept in an abusive home and undertrained?"

"He wouldn't want you to fail," Hermione said thoughtfully. She thought about everything she knew, and plugged this new tidbit of information into the formula. Her eyebrows shot up. "You think he wanted you to take Voldemort out, and die in the battle? And if not from Voldemort's people after you took out Voldemort, then by 'friendly-fire'?"

"I think so," Harry said. "And I think he became more and more doubtful about the whole thing over the next two years, but he died before he could really give me any real help. We won, but at too high a price, and through sheer dumb luck, coupled with my power and your brains."

"Speaking of your power. . . ." Hermione coaxed.

Harry sighed. "As I told you already, I was able to send my memories and most of my magical core back. I was near the top of the pile last time. I think I'm about half again as powerful as I was when I left, and have all my control."

"So, you're really future-Harry in present Harry's-modified body?" Hermione asked. "Not a combination?" That hadn't been totally clear.

"No," Harry said. "Originally, if I had made it back to my original goal, two weeks before the end of the Triwizard, I would have been mostly present-Harry with extra power and future- Harry's

memories. Landing in the middle of the trial meant we had to let future-Harry have more control of things than he wanted. He really wanted current-Harry to have the control. At a guess, my personality is maybe fifty-fifty, or maybe leaning towards the younger Harry."

"So, I'm not dating a guy almost a year younger than me, but one, say, three to five years older?" Hermione teased.

"That's one way of looking at it."

"Harry."

"H'mmm?"

"Would you be offended if I drifted off for a short nap?"

"Not at all. Would you like a small dose of the enhancement and nutrition potions tonight? It will get you into immediate shape, because I'm going to be starting some serious physical training and you're welcome to join me."

Hermione yawned and asked, "Side effects?"

"Over-doses can be nasty, but I'm not coming close to that, and you certainly wouldn't with just one dose. It can only be taken in one series. Once you go without taking it for much more than a full day, it can have very nasty side effects, possibly fatal, if you start again."

"Sounds like a good deal. I wonder why more magical people don't take it?" she pondered sleepily.

"It tastes worse than polyjuice, your muscles and bones ache for at least two hours when you wake up the next morning, you lose the muscle tone quickly if you don't work out, and most magical people are too lazy to work at their conditioning. All auror candidates take it when they start physical training."

"Then I'll take it." With that, Hermione again cuddled closer and fell asleep in Harry's arms.

"Thank you for coming," Dumbledore said to the small group in his office.

"May I know why we aren't meeting at Sirius'?" Tonks asked.

"It was merely more convenient," Dumbledore said off-handedly, thus confirming the suspicion in several minds that Sirius at least, and perhaps Remus, were less than pleased with Dumbledore and were not yet upset at Harry's display of power and independence at the trial -- especially not the independence. "Would you care to start, Nymphadora?"

Tonks glowered, but merely said, "The Grangers have not heard from Hermione, and are incredibly upset with us in general and Molly Weasley in particular."

"Why are they upset at Mum?" Bill asked.

"Because she's the one who not only talked the Grangers into letting Hermione come to Headquarters after spending only two weeks at home, she also convinced Hermione. Hermione would have preferred staying with her parents until Harry arrived. Your mother convinced Mrs. Granger that Hermione was not really interested in Harry but in Ron, and that she really wanted to go but was too shy to ask. Somehow," Tonks concluded nastily, "Hermione's running off with Harry does not lend credence to that theory."

"We don't know for certain that she voluntarily ran off," Bill said weakly.

"Ron and Ginny certainly hope she didn't, but I think Hermione went with her champion," Tonks said. "I'll check back with the Grangers ever day."

"Very good. William?"

"The goblins are usually pretty open about most things, if you know how to ask," Bill said. "The manner in which they are keeping their mouths shut means, I hate to say it, that Harry has not only been there but has made some sort of agreement with them."

"And that's bad why?" Tonks asked.

"We cannot be certain of the motives behind Harry's captors. . . ."

"Why are we spending so much time on Harry, Headmaster?" Tonks demanded, breaking in on him.

"I've often asked that," Snape muttered.

Tonks ignored him. "It can't be because you feel guilty his parents died. It can't be because he's famous and losing him would be a blow to public morale. Most of the magical people in Britain are sheep -- as long as you can convince them there's no wolf, they just want to be left alone. No, Harry's is somehow necessary to defeating You-Know-Who. That's why we're guarding a prophecy about him and You-Know-Who. . . ."

"How did you know that!" Dumbledore demanded.

"I have sources, once I knew we were guarding a Prophecy," she answered. "And all prophecies are registered, you know. Harry must be the one prophesied to defeat You-Know-Who, and before you raise that wand to try and Obliviate that knowledge, I've already told a few key people. And you, Severus Snape, if you send one more Legilimency probe at me, I'll fry your arse!"

"Nymphadora, and Severus! calm yourselves."

"Something happened to Harry in that court room," Tonks went on. "Someone either possessed him, as you think, or somehow fed him information and released his adult power, as Sirius hopes. I've read ALL the reports there are on Harry, even if Fudge tried to suppress them. Harry did something to the dementors the night Sirius escaped from Hogwarts. A hundred and five of the hundred and eight dementors ran back to Azkaban and hid like frightened puppies. I can maybe drive off three. How many can you drive off, Headmaster?"

"What is the point. . . ?"

"Could you drive a hundred and five dementors all the way back to Azkaban?"

"Possibly, but probably not," Dumbledore finally said. Snape looked stunned, never having heard this before. He knew that some dementors had been driven off, but had not realized there had been nearly that many, or that Potter of all people had claimed to have done it. Surely the boy was claiming credit that did not belong to him? Still not knowing about the time turner, Snape couldn't see how that was possible.

"You might be right in believing that whatever hit Harry is still in control of him, but if he has that much power, I'm doubting it. He not only threw off Crouch Junior's Imperius, but You- Know-Who's as well, according to the story you passed on to us about the rebirthing. If Harry has somehow come into his full adult power, we'd better not give him a reason to lump us in the same pile as Fudge, let alone with You-Know-Who."

"Speaking of whom," Dumbledore said, unwilling to debate the points Tonks had raised, "Severus?"

"The Dark Lord is as confused by the series of events as we are," Snape admitted, dismissing Potter's alleged power. "Lucius was taken to task for the court fiasco, and the Dark Lord has listened to the Prophecy, he has not said so. Has there been any political fallout from Potter's tantrum?"

"Actually, there has," Dumbledore admitted. "The dementors confessed that it was indeed Umbridge who set them off towards Harry. Fudge and his supporters on the Wizengamot have tried to sweep it all under the rug, with the effect that I am back on the Wizengamot in my old seat, as I had not yet been replaced, although currently just as a common, if senior, member. Madam Umbridge has accepted the post of Ambassador to Sarawak."

"So, to some degree, they got away with attempted murder," Tonks said. Bill was too shocked to say anything, since it was clear to both him and Tonks that Dumbledore was in on the Umbridge part of the deal.

Dumbledore again ignored them. "Alastor?"

"Nothing to report," Moody said. "I know you want me to spend more time, especially nights, at Headquarters. Well, I will on two conditions."

Dumbledore frowned, but merely inquired, "And they are?"

"Get rid of those Weasleys. They were only there early to keep them from contacting Potter, and they were only allowed to stay as window dressing for Potter." Bill winced. "Molly is going to provoke Black into cursing her soon. Second, we have to do something about that blasted elf and hopefully the painting as well. Stop holding Black back on both counts."

"Very well," Dumbledore said with a sigh. "I shall talk with Molly, and you or Miss Tonks can talk with Sirius."

Chapter IV

Friday, August 18, 1995

"Now, Severus," Dumbledore said, "what effect did the Prophecy have on Voldemort?" Snape was just back from another meeting with his other Master. "He must have listened to it by now."

"He's convinced that this is all a trick on your part," Snape admitted.

"I wish I was that clever, and others might wish I were that powerful for that matter," Dumbledore said.

"Back again, Miss Tonks?"

"Yes, good morning, Mrs. Granger," Tonks said. "I told you I'm going to come back every morning at this time, and I'm going to ask if you've heard from Hermione." Tonks took a deep breath and said, "and even if you have heard from her, I will understand if you say you haven't."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning we don't know what's going on," Tonks admitted. "Professor Dumbledore is certain something is seriously wrong, and many of us just don't know. If you want to clue me in on anything, I would appreciate it. If not, I'll understand."

"I take you haven't heard anything, then," Mr. Granger said, coming forward.

"Not a thing," Tonks agreed. He looked at them and shrugged. "I'll talk with you tomorrow."

"We'll look forward to it," Mr. Granger said drily.

As she shut the door, Emma Granger asked, "I take it you don't have any doubts about not telling them about the letter?"

"None at all," Dan Granger answered. "It doesn't say much, but it does have one of the passwords Hermione set up."

"So she's either doing this of her own free will, or she's really been totally taken over," Emma agreed. "I hope they come visit soon."

"She said they would, so they will," Dan said, with a confidence he didn't feel.

"I should stay here in case Harry sends a message," Molly said determinedly for the fifth time. Dumbledore pinched the bridge of his nose in frustration.

"Fine," Sirius snapped. "Let me put this in terms even you can understand. Get out of my house!"

Molly reared back in raw anger. Sirius cut in on her. "Out! I've had enough of you! I don't wonder that one son ran off to Egypt and now avoids you as much as he can, another ran off to Romania and refuses to come near you, and that a third won't even speak to you. You're an overbearing, suffocating woman, and in your own way as rude as my mother. The wards on your own house have been strengthened, so it should be safe there. Now, get out!" He turned and stalked out of the kitchen.

"I can see how even his minimal influence may have contaminated Harry," Molly said with a hurt sniff. "I will leave, so that my children won't be exposed to him any longer."

Later that morning, Hermione awoke when Harry gave a loud snort. She realized that she was laying nude in the master suite's bed, and Harry was at a small desk in a corner. "What's amusing?" she asked. She winced and added, "And why does my mouth taste like rotten leather and every bit of my body ache?"

"Dumbledore asked Mrs. Weasley to leave Headquarters, and Sirius had to get rude to get her out," Harry said. "I have some powerful spying spells on parts of the house, and get transcriptions of what's said. Your aches, and the bad taste, are because of the potions you took last night. I'm surprised you don't have to. . . ."

"Harry!" Hermione suddenly said. "I need to pee! Badly! And I can't move!"

Harry came to help her. "You can, you're just stiff, but I'll help."

Twenty minutes later, Hermione had urinated and freshened her mouth, and then she and Harry had showered together, the hot water and Harry's gentle hands easing her aches. She was examining her body in the mirror in the dressing room off the main suite. Harry was also examining her.

The night before, Hermione had stood 5 foot 3 and measured 34B- 25-36. She now stood 5 foot 4 and measured 36C-22-35. She was toned and, she thought, attractive.

Harry thought she was drop-dead sexy.

Hermione frowned at Harry. "You took the potions last night, too. Why could you move so easily?"

Harry shrugged. "I'm used to it. And I think I've hit my full growth, from the potions I mean."

Hermione looked at Harry hungrily. He was now 5 foot 10 and was a fairly leanly-muscled 11 stone 1 (155 pounds). "What do you have scheduled for us now?" she asked in a husky whisper.

"How about some time together, then lunch, and then some more Occlumency lessons?" Harry suggested. "Then some shopping for Muggle clothes that actually fit instead of being transfigured. When we come back, some advanced spell work and physical exercise, dinner, and some more snuggle time."

"Snuggle time?" Hermione teased.

"Fine, I would like to make passionate love with you this morning and again tonight," Harry said.

"My tongue aches to taste you, and I love being inside your sexy mouth almost as much as I love kissing it. How's that?"

"Much better," Hermione said. "And tonight, we'll lose our virginity together."

"As you wish," Harry said with a small smile and slight bow.

"You think you're Wesley to my Buttercup?" Hermione asked with a return smile.

"Yes, and I think I'll have to play the Dred Pirate Roberts to everyone but you," Harry answered.

"What are you up to, Mad-eye?" Sirius asked as Remus returned from taking the charred painting of Sirius' mother off to the trash heap. He would have to take care of Kreacher's body as well, as the elf had died of a stroke as he had been restrained from saving the painting from the three wizards attacking it together.

"Dumbledore's treatment of Potter has never really made much sense to me," Moody answered. "It's as if there are two or three conflicting plans running about in his brain, so he winds up doing as little as possible. Now, despite that, I think Potter might be in trouble. No matter if Potter is a free agent or not, I think he's likely to be in contact with the pair of you. If he's not a free agent, he will be in touch if only to give the illusion that he is. I want to make certain I'm around when that contact happens, so we can start to figure things out."

"Whose side are you on, Moody?" Remus asked.

"Do you really expect me to answer that?"

"No, but if you do, I'll know it's honest," Remus retorted.

That actually brought a slight flush to the jaded old auror's face. "Then I'll tell you. I'm on Harry's side. If I can ever get any sort of reasonable answer out of Albus, I'll decide if it's a good idea to follow him as well. In the meantime, if the boy's in trouble, I want to help him."

Remus and Sirius blinked at that. Sirius recovered first. "I know I should be worried, too," Sirius agreed. "I don't know why, and I know I could be wrong, but I just feel Harry's not in trouble."

"I hope he's not, for his sake as well as the lass'."

Just after dusk, sore and aching, but in different and more pleasant ways than she had been when she had awakened that morning, Hermione snuggled around her lover and fell asleep, with her cat laying on the foot of the bed.

Domesticity was not Hermione's goal in life, but she decided it had its place.

Sunday, August 20, 1995

Emma and Dan Granger were startled by the knock on their half- closed bedroom door at 7:05 on the Sunday morning, which then swung fully open. "Hermione!" After their surprise, they both leapt out of bed to hug her.

Hermione hugged her parents back, and after the long hug, the Grangers stepped back and looked at their daughter and her escort. Hermione, they both realized with a shock, was no longer a girl. It wasn't just that she had grown an inch and developed a fantastic body, but that she had lost the bits of baby fat in her face and even carried herself differently. Her slightly rounded shoulders were gone and she looked them right in the eye instead of shyly avoiding just that -- she was a confident woman.

Harry was an even greater surprise. He had been slightly shorter and lighter than Hermione back in June. He was now just over average height for an adult, had the well-muscled body of a swimmer or distance runner, and was not wearing his glasses.

"Mister Granger, Mrs. Granger," Harry said, "I can understand that you're probably upset with Hermione and myself, not to mention that you likely feel concerned and even confused. However, if you would like, I'd like to invite you to my home for the next few days. I understand you are on holiday this week."

The Grangers looked at each other. "Hermione can help you pack, and then magically take you there. I need to visit the Headmaster and talk with him."

"Miss Tonks said she'd be here at Eight-thirty to ask if we've heard from you," Dan said.

"Then we should pack quickly," Hermione said. "Don't worry about the food in the fridge. We can send someone to take care of that later."

The Grangers' eyebrows went up at that statement. This was an aspect of their daughter they had not expected.

"Mister and Mrs. Granger?" Harry broke in. "I hope we'll get to know each other over the next week." Harry popped away.

"I think you have a lot of explaining to do, young lady," Emma said to her daughter.

"I do," Hermione, "but not here. I'm afraid that will have to come at Harry's." She easily withstood her parents' glare.

Harry popped into existence inside the Shrieking Shack, where he was met by Dobby. Dobby had never been in Dumbledore's bedroom, but he was able to confirm its location and that Dumbledore was there via the other elves. Harry made himself a portkey, put on his glasses with the clear glass, messed up his hair a bit more than usual, and then, wand in hand, activated the portkey. He would be able to activate it with a twitch of his left hand if he needed to leave quickly.

Albus Dumbledore was an eccentric old man. He knew it, and he cultivated his eccentricities, in part because it amused him, in part to deflate the awe too many people held him in, but mostly because it made people underestimate him. One of his most famous eccentricities were his oddly colored clothing. His clashing robes were well-known and custom made.

In his nightwear, however, Dumbledore was a good Victorian, wearing a long plain light flannel nightgown as he sat at the little breakfast table, since he was breakfasting alone. For his first meeting, he had planned a dark orange robe with neon green and violent pink polka dots zooming around the hems and collar.

When Harry appeared via the portkey, holding a wand on him, the old Headmaster was caught totally unaware and nearly choked on his hot chocolate. "Who are . . . Harry?" He only recognized Harry because of his resemblance to James and his scar.

"Headmaster," Harry said formally, his voice a major third lower than it had been before.

"What . . . what has happened to you?"

Harry shrugged. "I've grown up."

"No one can grow this much in less than two weeks!"

Harry grinned. "Magic." Dumbledore frowned. "I would imagine you think I was possessed at my illegal trial, which no one bothered telling me ahead of time was illegal."

"Yes, the thought had more than occurred to me," Dumbledore agreed warily.

"Well, you were right," Harry said evilly. "I was possessed."

Dumbledore sat up straight. "You were?" He had not expected Harry to admit it.

"I was," Harry agreed. "Do you know who possessed me?"

"No, who were they?" Dumbledore asked eagerly.

"They?" Harry asked, puzzled. "No, it was just one person."

That surprised Dumbledore. "Then who? Who has that much power?"

"Harry James Potter."

Silence.

Then, a puzzled Dumbledore asked, "What?"

"I possessed myself," Harry said. "Me, from the future, from June 2013 to be slightly more precise. I had defeated Voldemort in June, 1998, but magical Britain fought a civil war and laid in ruins. Too many people died, mostly because of your poor leadership and Fudge's stupidity, followed by

Scrimgeour's rigidity."

"Scrimgeour? Rufus Scrimgeour?"

"The next minister," Harry said. "He took power next July, after Voldemort was exposed next June. Fudge did nothing during this upcoming year, except plant Umbridge here, kicking you out next spring. You did nothing proactive for this upcoming year, although you finally took out one Horcrux between the end of term and early July, although it cursed your hand and nearly killed you. For the year after that, all you did was tell me the history Tom Riddle, which you could have done in one afternoon. Taking me to find the next Horcrux in June of 1997, you were caught and murdered by Draco Malfoy and your pet project, Snape."

Dumbledore was shocked by all this. Still, what got to him was, "Wait! you think Severus would murder me?"

"He did murder you in the other time line. He ended up as Voldemort's planning lieutenant, while Bellatrix Lestrange was the operational chief. I killed them both." Harry pulled out a sheaf of paper. "Here's the time line, not that it really matters now. I am both the Harry of August, 1995, and the Harry of June, 2013, with the magic and control of the latter. If you're worried, my two personalities have fully merged into one. If you're wondering why I'm bothering telling you all this, when I hold you responsible for cocking up Light magic's response to Voldemort for over a fifty year period, well, I figure it would just too difficult to work around you."

As Dumbledore was making no sound, even if his jaw was moving, Harry went on. "The time lines are of course all disrupted now. That doesn't change the fact that Snape is playing you. Admit it and deal with it, or he will remain a knife threatening the Order, as well as yourself and myself personally. And remember, he is Marked, and therefore anathema to me. That's another reason why I've had to tell you, otherwise you'd be thinking up silly schemes, trying to force us to work together."

"As you might have guessed, Hermione and I have formed a relationship. If Snape hurts her, I will also strike. You have until Tuesday at noon to decide what to do. You may also request that Hermione and I attend Beauxbatons, or the Swiss School, the Ecole in the Alps."

That idea jarred the Headmaster even more than the apparent fact that Snape would betray him, and likely already had. He felt the need to at least supervise Harry, if not control him. And, of course, Dumbledore was still trying to come to terms with all that Harry was claiming.

"I also need to tell you that my merge during the trial was a mistake. My future self was aiming for just before the Third Task. I would then have been able to take the Cup before Cedric. The plan was then to let Voldemort reanimate himself."

"Why?" Dumbledore demanded, finally finding his voice.

"Because he couldn't be killed in his previous form, as you know perfectly well," Harry said simply. "I am also a master of wandless magic. The plan was to hit Voldemort when he was just remade and weak, but after he had sent the signal to the Death Eaters. I could have captured them as they arrived separately. The Ministry could never have held Voldemort, of course, but it would have proven to Fudge that he was indeed back, and of course Pettigrew's capture would have freed Sirius."

Dumbledore nodded his understanding.

"Of course, I would still would have had to find and destroy the six Horcruxes," Harry went on. Now Dumbledore's waning hope that Harry had somehow been fooled into believing this story had taken its next major hit. Another was coming.

Harry tossed Gryffindor's knife and Slytherin's locket on Dumbledore's breakfast table. He placed Slytherin's ring on his finger. "So, I've now destroyed four of the six Horcruxes. I don't know where Hufflepuff's Cup is; I suspect Lucius Malfoy has it, but I could be wrong. I found it being guarded by Nagini in a temporary hideout in the previous time line. Nagini was magically enlarged thirty years ago, when Voldemort was investigating a hide-away created by Slytherin in Albania. He then fed Ravenclaw's healing emerald to the snake, which has been mutating it ever since."

Harry pulled out more rings from his pocket. "As you know, but never told me, I am not only the heir to the Potter line of Clan Gryffindor, but head of the Clan as well. Lily Evans was descended from Hufflepuff, although there were some generations of Squibs before her. I have been recognized by the Ravenclaw Founder's Vault as being worthy of being considered a magical heir, and Slytherin's vault has recognized me as being the senior remaining magical heir, since Voldemort is no longer a blood heir."

"Before getting to any questions you might have, have you found a Defense professor? Or will we be stuck with Umbitch?"

"Madam Umbridge has been sent to Sarawak," Dumbledore said, coming out of his daze. "I am still searching for a Defense teacher. If I don't have one by Tuesday, Minister Fudge will again appoint some other follower."

Harry gave Dumbledore an evil smile. "Tell you what. Why don't you go to Horace Slughorn and tell him that 'The-Boy-Who-Lived' made an appeal that you ask him personally to come back. I'll even write you a note to give him, if you'd like. Give Snape the Defense job, on the condition that he and I fight a Class Two duel, under Professor Flitwick's supervision. If he wins, I will swear to be obedient in class. If I win, he swears an Unbreakable Vow to follow all the proper rules and regulations and not to give unwarranted detentions, submit all point decisions to the headmasters' portraits, and to grade all home and class room work fairly. Of course, if he goes over the line during the duel, I will have the right to dispose of him on the spot -- and I will." Harry's expression hardened. "I suggest you talk Moody into either taking the Defense job right from the start, or have him in the wings, because Snape is incapable of fighting me fairly, just as he has always been incapable of treating me fairly."

Dumbledore stayed silent, thinking, for several moments. Before he could say anything, Harry swore an impressive oath that what he had told Dumbledore about his time travel and merger was the truth. It was then that Dumbledore noticed the details of Harry's new wand. "Harry, where did you get that wand?"

"From vault number one," Harry answered, "known as Merlin's vault. I also took one of his staves." Harry put the wand away and held out his right hand. The staff appeared, the emerald glowing.

"Merlin's. . . ." Dumbledore was struck speechless, for he knew what that meant. That Harry was the magical heir of Merlin, and possibly the most powerful magic user alive.

Harry broke the mood. "You may check with the goblins, if you wish."

"You seem to be friendly with them," Dumbledore managed to probe.

"I am," Harry answered. "I believe in a much more democratic wizarding world than you do, and a more cooperative magical one as well." He shrugged. "In any case, you know your options. Oh, and the Grangers are visiting me for the week. Where we're staying is under the Fidelius, so questioning them, even under Legilimency or a truth potion, wouldn't help. Please keep an eye on the dementors; they allowed the Death Eaters in Azkaban to escape in late autumn. Oh, and Hagrid's mission to the giants will fail. A few of the remaining giants showed up next summer. You might want to get the International involved."

"What can we do? Giants are by nature dangerous, perhaps even vicious, and I really do believe there is almost no chance of them surviving much longer as a species. At current count, there are likely less than a hundred, perhaps less than seventy, and nearly all of them are females."

"Grab all the largest, most aggressive males left and set them in a fight to see who gets all the females, let them kill each other, and then kill the winner," Harry said. Dumbledore's eyes went wide. "Only let the few that aren't so aggressive or who are a lot smaller survive. Then split the women up evenly with the few remaining males and set them in separate reserves. See if there are any wizards as crazy as Hagrid's father to mate with a few of the women if any are interested." Harry grinned, "I'd hate the first part as much as you, but it might allow the giants to survive as a species, even if a little selective breeding helped them down-size a little and have a little less aggression. As for the second, I think the wizarding gene pool could use a bit more giant blood in it."

"A practical, if immoral, solution," Dumbledore agreed.

"Is it really more immoral than letting them all die out?" Harry asked. "I know enough to know each is immoral on a different level, but not enough to know which is worse." Harry shrugged. "We, well 'we' meaning the wizarding world, would then have to keep splitting the groups up and culling some of the males, so there is only ever one relatively unaggressive male per female group. New females would have to be sent to the other groups, most new males would have to be killed or castrated young or else they'd just restart the internal cycle of slaughter. It would take an on-going effort, and most would object to helping giants survive in the first place, and the others would have the moral qualms we feel, or more likely have the same objections that would first occur to Hermione."

"True," Dumbledore agreed.

"So, I'm sure the real wizarding response will be to do nothing, except kill any giants deemed to have gone 'rogue', and then congratulate themselves for being tolerant of the dwindling number of survivors," Harry went on. "We're doing similar things, in less violent ways, to the merpeople and centaurs and most other magical creatures and beings, as the Muggles slowly take over their environment." Harry looked downcast. "Even if wizarding world survives, the magical world isn't likely to, except a few small pockets. Right?"

"Very likely," Dumbledore agreed. "Granted, large tracks of North and South America, and Australia for that matter, are magically protected, the rest of the magical world has been very careless, especially in Europe and north Africa." He sighed sadly.

"Good bye, Headmaster." With that, Harry portkeyed out.

Dumbledore looked at his now-cold chocolate with distaste. He knew he had best get moving.

"Exactly how involved are you with this boy?" Emma Granger demanded. She and Dan refused to be impressed by the upper-class elegance of Potter Manor, not that Hermione could even mention the name, since it was under the Fidelius. Now that she had her daughter away from Harry, the gloves came off. "And what about that other boy? Ron?"

"I've always liked both Ron and Harry," Hermione admitted. "But Harry was more interested in another girl until this summer. Ron was interested in another girl until he saw me with another boy, and since then, he wants to possess me. Mrs. Weasley has this vision of One Big Happy Weasley Family, which includes Harry with Ginny and me with Ron. Harry's grown up a lot this summer, and he's taken charge of his life."

"And here you are, without chaperons and without permission," Emma castigated.

"Mum, if Ron or Harry had worked up the nerve to do anything with me or Ginny respectively short of intercourse, Mrs. Weasley would haven't have just turned a blind eye, she would have been giving us pointers. And I can assure you that Harry is the most honorable wizard there is."

"And?" Dan demanded, knowing his daughter was leaving at least something out.

"And he would like to give me a promise ring, and I would like to accept it," Hermione admitted.

"Which means?"

"Which means I will consider no other while I wear it," Hermione said simply. "It's not anything I can't take off if I choose to."

"How about him?" Dan said. "You didn't say the two of you couldn't consider, just that you couldn't consider anyone else."

"With someone of Harry's wealth, status, and power, he could have at least three wives under current law, I believe," Hermione admitted. "Maybe as many as a dozen. I'm not too worried about that." 'Maybe two, but not three,' she thought, remembering Luna.

"We'll talk some more when he comes back," Emma said.

Chapter V

"That boy is even more arrogant, and not to mention stupid, than I had ever thought," Snape stated.

"Severus, perhaps you do not understand the conditions of the duel. . . ."

"Oh, I understand them perfectly," Snape said with real relish. "Anything goes, and it's legal."

"If you should use a Class One spell, or even worse an Unforgivable, first. . . ."

"Then I cannot surrender, I have to go on until I'm dead or unable to respond," Snape said, dismissing the very idea of either possibility. "I can finally teach that arrogant brat a lesson."

"Severus. . . ."

"I shall have to invite the werewolf," Snape mused. "It's a shame that Black cannot attend."

"Severus. . . ."

"I shall have to make certain that McGonagall will be in the front row as well."

"Severus!"

"Oh, what is it?" Snape demanded.

Dumbledore suddenly, for the first time since 1981, had real doubts. Could Harry have been right about Severus? That would mean swallowing Harry's entire story, at least tentatively, something which Dumbledore still did not like all the implications of.

"Well?" Snape demanded.

"Very well, Severus, I have tried to warn you. If I can secure the services of Horace Slughorn, you will be the Defense teacher this upcoming year."

Snape gleefully took his leave from the Headmaster's Office. Dumbledore shook his head. He would talk to Moody about being a security consultant until Harry dealt with Severus, and then Dumbledore would see where things stood. Even if Severus were still as redeemable as Dumbledore hoped, if he could not fight a fair duel with Harry, he could not be fully trusted in the upcoming conflict.

Harry finished showing the Grangers around the Manor. They accepted, reluctantly, why they could not be told its name or location. They were impressed, despite their dislike of the Muggle landed gentry.

"Are you some kind of magical lord?" Emma asked her host at one point.

"Yes and no," Harry said.

"That's helpful," Dan teased.

"I'm not eligible for the House of Lords or anything like that," Harry said. "There's a set of Muggle regulations about that. On the other hand, the concept of lordship goes further back in time than those regulations. Lords were those who controlled certain areas or clans. Some Scots lairds and German titles were similar in more recent periods. In that respect, yes, I am a lord, two or three times over."

"Does that mean anything, in magical society?" Emma asked.

"Not really," Hermione said.

"Actually, yes," Harry corrected. "The Wizengamot, the governing body of the British Ministry, is primarily an oligarchy. There are fifty seats and when a member dies or is kicked out, the new member is selected by the others of the group or subgroup that person represented. Five seats are reserved for the Minister, the Head of Magical Law Enforcement, and three of the Department Heads chosen by the Minister. Since it takes a vote of thirty to dismiss a Minister, that gives any incumbent a fair advantage."

The older Grangers nodded their understanding, while Hermione's eyes were wide, as none of this was openly explained in the books she'd read. Harry went on, "Fifteen seats are reserved for the heads of the so-called Original First Families, the one hundred and twenty-three families which founded the Wizengamot back in 924. Dumbledore and I would be examples. Right now, there are only sixty-three people left eligible, because of intermarriage. I am eligible in at least four different ways, for example."

The three Grangers nodded.

"Some of those family heads will never be really considered for seats, of course," Harry went on. "For example, Mister Weasley's great uncle is head of the Weasley family, and lives in a small cottage and barely interacts with his family, let alone anyone else." Seeing there were no questions, Harry continued, "Other families were added to the Original First Families, or the Most Noble Families as they are also called. Right now, there are ninety-six heads of families, plus the Most Noble Family heads, who are eligible for a further fifteen seats. So, we have fifteen seats drawn from sixty-three people, and a further fifteen drawn from a hundred and fifty-nine. The other fifteen are appointed by the Wizengamot as a whole. Right now, fourteen of the fifteen more-or-less open seats are drawn from the two groups of First Families, either the Heads of the House or other notable members, as are two of the five Ministry members."

"I never realized that it was that restrictive," Hermione said, aghast.

Harry nodded. "And you know a lot of the heirs, because of the attrition of families during Voldemort's rising. Just in our Year at Hogwarts, Susan Bones, Neville, and myself are three heirs of the Original First Families; while Kevin Entwhistle is the younger son of an heir and Millicent Bulstrode would be an heir if the three remaining males in her family die without magical children. Malfoy and Goyle are the eldest sons of Heirs to the other level First Families."

Hermione frowned. "What about Susan's aunt. . . ?"

"The daughter of the last male heir of the Bones line would inherit before the sister," Harry pointed out.

"Oh, of course." Another idea occurred to Hermione. "And what about Sirius?"

"Sirius is head of the Black line, a Noble First Family, but not Original or Most Noble, as they would call it. If he dies without magical children and without restoring Andromeda Tonks, then the eligibility dies out, as Draco is eligible already. The entire group of First Families would then appoint a new family, or more likely an additional branch of a First Family, to the group. It was decided back in 1803 that the Original group would not be allowed to drop below the current numbers.

"So what counts is magic, not legitimacy?" Dan asked, interested despite himself.

"If there are any legitimate, magical heirs, the illegitimate don't count," Harry said with a shrug. "Just like if there are any magical male heirs they can find, women don't count. They do allow for magic skipping one generation, at the discretion of the head of the family, or if it will prevent a line from dying out. In addition, there are two types of marriage, and the children of a magical bonding would come ahead of children from a legal consort."

"So Voldemort could have entered power legitimately? At least of some sort, I mean." Seeing the confused looks on her parents' faces, Hermione explained, "He was descended from Salazar Slytherin, one of the founders of Hogwarts, who must have been from a Founding Family."

"True, but the Gaunts hadn't won a seat in hundreds of years. Riddle was the illegitimate son of the last known heiress, Merope Gaunt, and a Muggle she'd seduced with a love potion. It would have taken Riddle decades of hard work to restore his name to one worth being considered for the Wizengamot, not to mention needing at least some form of fortune."

"Not to be crass, Harry. . . ." Dan started, but didn't know how to finish.

"Money?" Dan nodded. "Well, you know all about magical taxes, right?"

All three Grangers looked confused.

"Really? Well, I'll let Hermione research on how the Ministry was put under the Duchy of Lancaster in 1663, and the deal which allows all magical land to be subject to no governmental taxation. Essentially, we pay very little in taxes. There are no death duties, for example, and we pay a one Knut per Galleon VAT on magical items, and two Knuts per Galleon on non-magical items sold through magical shops."

"That's . . . that's almost nothing!" Emma exclaimed.

Harry nodded. "And, since magical ownership falls under a special trust of the Duchy of Lancaster, we don't pay any Crown taxes on most of it. We do have to pay for any utilities, but even in the cities most magical people don't bother with electricity. We do have to pay for water and the drains, but we mostly use a system that looks like gas lighting and heat, but which is magical, and both cheap to install and free to run. The Americans have a system that imitates panel lighting and which

can run electrical appliances with an adaptor. The Purebloods here are fighting its import."

"That figures," Hermione said.

"In addition, anything like income taxes on Muggle income, Muggle VAT, licenses, et cetera are dealt with on a sliding scale that makes magical accountants swoon. Basically, you pay upfront, and if you fill out the right forms, the Crown or local authority keeps between ten and thirty-three percent depending on which tax we're talking about, the Ministry gets between a fifth and a third, and you get the rest back."

"Really?" Dan said, amazed.

Harry nodded. "Gather up all your tax records, put the house and business in Hermione's name, and I'll give it all to my accountants at Gringotts. They'll get you your money back, less any commission, going back to the date of Hermione's letter."

"We'll be sure to do that," Emma said.

"So, we pay very little in taxation, especially compared to Muggle Britain. For most other types of wealth, we can set up special trusts, so we have to pay almost nothing on certain types of income, including no taxes on most magical income. I couldn't draw on it before this upcoming year, of course, but last year the Potter Trust brought in over twenty-seven million pounds income from the Muggle world, net. It had to pay out under half a million pounds in taxes and accounting fees. The Trust had to pay less than ten thousand Galleons in fees and taxes on the magical income of just over two million Galleons." Harry smiled. "Does that answer your questions?"

"It sure does," Dan had to admit. If Hermione and Harry did stay together, at least Hermione would be taken care of. More importantly, it was clear that Hermione was not going to be overwhelmed by the teen's good looks, fame, money, and social position, nor did Harry seemed spoiled by any of that.

In short, the Grangers still had numerous concerns, considering their daughter's age, but some at least had been answered.

That evening, Severus Snape knelt before his true master. "What is your bidding on this matter, my Master?"

"You wish to cripple, if not kill, the Potter boy, don't you, Severus?"

"Yes, my lord," Snape admitted.

"Even if you were to make it look like an accident, I do not believe the Old Man would allow you to get away with killing his little protege." Snape had to admit to himself that was likely true. "So, you cannot kill Potter, or bring him to me, so long as I find you useful at Hogwarts. The news that you may be moving on to the Defense position pleases me. So, the only question is, do you cripple or at least seriously beat young Potter, or do you allow him to win so that he has an over-inflated opinion of himself. . . ." Snape could not quite suppress a wince at that thought, "or do you merely humiliate the Boy?"

Snape did not dare move, let alone make a suggestion.

Voldemort honored Snape by thinking aloud. "If you humiliate the Boy, you will likely merely drive him to try harder, and Dumbledore may even, finally, find him some adequate tutoring. It would make no difference in the long run, but it would make killing him a bit more troublesome if it takes too long to get to him again."

"An over-confident Potter would be a good thing, but that would undermine your position at Hogwarts and undermine my position with certain elements. I could use that to draw out any waverers, but right now I prefer having numbers and ears everywhere."

Voldemort thought a bit more and came to a decision. "Yes. If you can cripple Potter and make it look like an accident, do so. If you cannot, you do not have to go so far as to let him win, but make him look good. Cripple him, or make him and his friends somewhat over-confident."

"Yes, my lord." Snape did not smile, but knew what he was going to do.

Voldemort had no doubts which Snape would choose either if it were possible.

The next morning after breakfast, Emma cornered her daughter. Hermione gave in to the situation by crossing her arms over her chest and rolling her eyes, proving herself to still being a teen. "I hope you and Harry are at least practicing safe sex," Emma stated.

"I'm very careful when I swallow," Hermione stated, looking her mother in the eye. "Something I remember you confessing you started doing at my age. And don't think that anything you might say to the Hogwarts people will so much as raise an eyebrow. Promised couples, or those in a prearranged marriage, often engage in fellatio fairly openly. Those who aren't in either arrangement have to resort to places like broom closets, the Astronomy Tower, or empty class rooms. For those who are, though, there's an alcove off each of the common rooms, where the witch can strengthen the couple's magical and emotional connections by sucking her promised one and swallowing his essence. The only rules are nothing can really show except the wizard's penis. I've seen perhaps a dozen couples performing the ritual probably close to a hundred times in four years, and if it weren't considered rude to watch any given couple too often, I could have watched at least once a night since there's another room, where couples in different Houses can get together."

Continuing, while her mother's jaw dropped in shock, Hermione said, "It's also common for all of us to engage in exchanging hand-jobs. I probably gave Percy Weasley a dozen hand-jobs my First year, to thank him for helping me along. I offered Harry and Ron handjobs after saving me from the troll, but they were too shy to accept. Harry offered me one for helping him learn spells during the Triwizard. We all decided that we were too close to do that, as it's seen as an impersonal act. I have received dozens of finger jobs for tutoring." Hermione shrugged. "Harry and I are a magical couple, and will act as such."

Dazed, Emma wandered off. Hermione smirked. The custom of officially acknowledged couples sharing fellatio was real, although a bit more private than she had let on. Percy had convinced her to give him some hand-jobs, pedophile that he was. Hermione had soon caught on, and got him to stop by threatening to go to McGonagall. The rest, however, had been a gross invention.

"What's the evil smirk for?" Harry asked, coming up behind her.

"Just blowing my mother's mind," Hermione said. "I told her about the 'sucking corner' and exaggerated the custom somewhat."

Harry was a bit surprised Hermione would use the vulgar expression, instead of the slightly more proper 'couples' corner'. "What exactly did you tell her?"

A bit red-faced, Hermione did so. Harry was not happy about Percy's actions. "Did he do that to other First years?" he asked. "After our First year, I mean."

"Not that I know of, but I suppose he could have," Hermione admitted.

Harry merely nodded, and filed Percy away to be dealt with later, if necessary. "Hand-jobs for favors?" The open-fellatio had both embarrassed and thrilled Harry (boys were not allowed to watch, but he had sometimes heard the sound effects), but he had never heard of the hand-job exchange, and was both glad it wasn't real and aware that Percy was likely not the only person to have used the first to convince young students to do the second.

"She knows she can't withdraw me from the magical world without my permission," Hermione said. "So, I gave her some other things to think about."

Harry shook his head, as if to clear it. Finally he said, "Anyway, your parents never did object to our making a promise."

"That's true," Hermione agreed.

Harry got down on one knee. "We've been best friends, closer than friends in many ways, for nearly four years. We're still too young to be absolutely certain, but I do know I love you. I would be yours for now, and will consider this the start of a formal relationship. Would you be mine?" He held out a small box.

Hermione took the box with shaking hands and opened it. A promise ring should be silver, or at least silvery, and have some sort of knot in the design with no stones. This ring was a shining Celtic knot. "I am yours, Harry Potter," Hermione whispered.

Harry took the ring and slipped it on her ring finger and then kissed her left hand. Harry stood, and the pair kissed deeply. When they broke the kiss, Hermione sniffled from happiness. To cover her emotions a bit, she asked, "Harry is this white gold instead of silver?"

"No," Harry answered, "it's platinum instead of silver. That's how precious you are to me. It's also one of the six promise rings I know are in the Potter vault. It's been used eight times before, and each ended in a happy marriage, at least according to the notes."

"Did you give this to me or Luna last time?" Hermione asked.

"No," Harry answered. "I asked at one point if you wanted a promise ring or an engagement ring. You said you wanted a wedding ring, a week after Voldemort was defeated. Luna didn't want a promise ring, either."

Hermione gave Harry a watery smile. "I love and cherish thee, beloved," she said in the formal phrase of the promised.

"I love and cherish thee, beloved," Harry agreed. They kissed again and then went to their bedroom to kiss in more intimate ways.

Ginny watched Ron tossing gnomes out of the Burrow's garden. After one hit a tree, Ginny asked, "Upset, are we?" Ginny asked.

"Yes," Ron snarled. "Aren't you?"

"Yes," Ginny agreed, "I am. Still, even if Harry and Hermione are together like Dumbledore claims, that hardly matters. How many Fifth years do you know who got married? Not many who weren't in pre-arranged marriages, right? So, I can still end up with Harry."

"Doesn't it bother you that she and Harry might be . . . doing things?" Ron demanded.

"A little," Ginny agreed, "but I'm not all that jealous. I won't like to see them snogging and would loath seeing them in the sucking corner" -- Ron went dark red -- "but if I get all snarky, I'll just ruin my close friendship with Hermione and lessen any chances I might have with Harry in the long run. What is it you want, Ron? Hermione for the long-term, or did you just want to grab her before Harry did? I mean, it was almost a given that she would at least casually date one of you."

"But she should be mine!" Ron whined.

"Why?" Ginny asked. "Because you got all jealous once you saw her at the Yule Ball? You didn't care before that."

"What makes you say that?" Ron demanded.

"You didn't think enough to ask her out first, and the way you finally did ask her, it looked like if Fleur had agreed to date you, you wouldn't have cared if Harry had asked her then."

"But then I would have had Fleur," Ron protested.

Ginny shook her head. "I swear, you make me look mature. If you act like this around Harry and Hermione, you'll lose Harry as a friend and any chance with Hermione."

"And you won't let your temper loose, even worse than I will, if they do go to the sucking corner?" Ron demanded.

"I won't," Ginny said. Of course, she could say that because she knew that even then Harry could likely have at least two consorts. Even if Hermione somehow had staked one claim, Ginny was determined to get the other.

Ron pouted, and went back to tossing gnomes.

Emma tracked down her daughter the night before returning home. "Yes, Mother?" Hermione asked warily.

"You can guess that I disapprove of what you and Harry are doing," Emma said. "I also suppose you could guess what your father would say."

Hermione nodded. "I know. And I think you also know that Harry has the power to override any of that, if I asked him to."

Emma frowned, and decided to go to her main point. "What did you mean when you said swallowing Harry's semen would strengthen your bonds to him."

Hermione shrugged. "Just that. Muggle myths and old theories and 'old wives' tales' often have some magical truth behind them. I am a magical being, as is Harry. Our blood is a magical substance, with special properties. So is Harry's semen, and so will my breast milk. One of many reasons why the magical-born look down on us Muggle-born is because magical mother's milk strengthens the magical core. Not much, but a little."

"We weren't talking about milk," Emma pointed out.

"No, but we're getting there. Willingly ingesting a wizard's semen slowly binds you to him. As in makes you his soulmate."

Emma was aghast. "Why make yourself subservient to anyone? And especially at your age!"

"It's not THAT addicting," Hermione said. "If I stopped, it would wear off over time, and the physical withdrawal symptoms are not as nearly as bad as breaking a combined nicotine/caffeine addiction, although I would cry a lot more."

"How long. . . ."

"After it's taken it's basic effect, which would be drinking from Harry at least three times a week for a month? Maybe a year." Hermione shrugged. "The magical world is different from yours, Mother, at least in all the details. What's supposed to matter in the Muggle world these days is talent and drive, with some luck thrown in. Still, you know as well as I that family connections and money still matter in most jobs. That someone whose family is considered a 'county family', like yours, or who went to, say, Eton and Cambridge like Daddy, will have an advantage over other people in many professions."

Emma could not deny that.

"So, start off realizing my deep feelings for Harry," Hermione said, "and his for me. Without those, I admit what I'm about to say would sound . . . calculating at best. Taking those into consideration, however, I had to think, where do I want us to go? I already knew, from the time I was eleven, that I would be following Harry Potter. Before I left after our First year, I knew that he would be the greatest wizard of my time. I don't know how I knew, but I did."

"I now know that for a fact. Since we're still something of an Eighteenth century culture, let me put

it in those terms. I, a brilliant shop-keeper's daughter, am forming a relationship with the first Duke of Marlborough, the first Lord Rothschild, George Washington, and I suspect Thomas Paine all rolled into one. In terms of raw magic, my skills and talent might be at the top of the normal curve, but still a real, very large step down from Harry's. They also mean little, unless I manage to get a job in one of the few departments in the Ministry where they count more than background, and there aren't many where they do. Also, I know I want children. Having a Muggle-born for a mother is a black mark. It's not as bad as having a Muggle-born for a father, or a Muggle as either parent, but it is."

"Say I were to marry Ron or Neville, one an impoverished Pure- Blood with little political pull and the other a Pure-Blood seen as being far less capable than he really is. My children would be at a huge disadvantage. If I were to marry Dean, a Black Muggle-born, well, our children would face just about every prejudice there is out there."

"And Harry?" Emma asked.

"Harry will defeat Voldemort," Hermione stated. "That, coupled with his family name and fortune, well, he could probably impregnate fifty Blacks, fifty Indians, and fifty Chinese -- all of them Muggles -- on successive days in Diagon Alley and Wizarding Europe would still be kissing their backsides, when they aren't being jealous." Hermione shook her head. "I wouldn't do this if I didn't love Harry anyway. If he were a poor Muggle- born and there were no Dark Lord after him, I would still want to marry him, because he is so fundamentally good. I would just be waiting to be this physical until our Sixth or Seventh year or after."

"Then why do it now?" Emma asked.

"Because Harry was abused by his family," Hermione said. "He needs love and affection to get him through the fight with Voldemort. And I love him."

Unknown to Hermione and Emma, a rather embarrassed (if mostly pleased) Harry slipped away from the entrance to the room they were in.

Chapter VI

Sunday, August 27, 1995

"Good morning, Miss Tonks."

"Good morning," Tonks said. "I take it you two had a good week?"

"We did, all things considered," Emma agreed. "I presume your boss told you where we were?"

"Actually, no," Tonks said, clearly disgruntled that Dumbledore knew and had not told her or Sirius. She would have been angrier if she had known that Dumbledore had told Molly Weasley. "I presumed you were with Hermione and hopefully Harry."

"We were," Emma agreed. "We don't know where we were, other than its being a grand house which somehow belongs to Harry, and that it's under something called a Fidelius."

"How are they?" Tonks asked, eagerly.

"Flourishing," Emma had to admit. "I didn't recognize Harry, he's grown so much, and so has Hermione. I do know that Harry had at least one long conversation with the Headmaster, and that he and Hermione have gone out shopping quite often, in the magical and regular worlds."

"Really?"

Emma nodded. "Of course, they said I could tell you that, as they plan on sticking closer to home until the First of September."

Tonks looked dissatisfied.

"This sounds a bit weird to me," Emma said, "but Hermione said I was to ask you to do the 'pig snout.' Does that make sense to you?"

"It does," Tonks admitted. "I'm what is called a metamorphmagus, meaning I can change my physical appearance." With that, Tonks scrunched up her face, and her cute nose turned into a pig's snout, and then turned back.

"Good enough," Emma said. "Dan!"

Dan came into the kitchen and handed Tonks four letters, addressed to her, Moody, Remus, and Sirius. "Have a pleasant summer, Miss Tonks," Emma said, almost pushing her out the door.

Tonks shook her head as she realized she was standing on the back stoop of the Grangers' house, holding four letters. Then she realized that Emma had slipped her a private note, asking her to visit when Dan was not at home. Tonks considered this, and, deciding to keep it a private matter, disappeared.

"I'm surprised the Ministry can't trace portkeys," Hermione said, looking up from her sweet crêpes and café au lait.

"You do know how new spells of any kind are usually created, right?" Harry asked.

"Of course," Hermione said. "The desired results are translated into an arithmetic formula. Then the magical actions needed are translated into formula as well, and once any bugs are worked out, a designated phrase is added. Then come the two difficult parts. First, combining the formulas into workable magic. A team then conditions the magical flows of the world so that the phrase and intent trigger the desired effect. There usually has to be a specific wand motion as well."

"So, the 'portus' charm usually used has a component built into the original formula which notifies any local magical tracing equipment that the portkey is in use. The same with common apparation. Because both travel along the streams of magic which envelope the world, we couldn't really be traced otherwise. Now, suppose you were powerful enough to coerce magic to do what you wanted to without using pre-existing spells, although it is a bit tiring and you have to be careful not to do accidental magic."

"That's a lot of power," Hermione agreed, "but I know you have it."

"Exactly," Harry said. "So, I can use regular magic, or I can use my own. I portkey and apparate using my own brand of magic, not conditioned magic. Hence, I cannot be traced."

"Why portkey at all?"

"It's easier to get through wards that way than by using apparation," Harry said simply. "The two methods are related, but not identical. Elves travel a third way, and some other magical beings might travel differently as well." Harry smiled. "I haven't gotten the hook on the elf way with another person, but it is easy to do myself."

"So, you could actually go say, to Hogwarts, anytime you wanted?"

"I could, and I could bypass all the wards and alarms."

Hermione looked worried. "Couldn't Voldemort do the same thing?"

Harry smiled more wanly. "No. He could never think or feel like a house elf. It would mean thinking yourself so low that the wards don't notice your magic. I don't really feel that way about myself any more, but I certainly did when I lived with the Dursleys, and can recapture that as needed. Wizards command magic, elves supplicate themselves before it. If Voldemort could do that, he couldn't be a Dark Lord."

"I see." Hermione, seeing Harry was finished, set her cup down. "Well, I'm ready to see magical Paris. How about you?"

Harry switched to French, saying, "I am ready to show off the beautiful city of Paris to the even more beautiful lady."

"That would sound insincere in English, sir," Hermione replied in the same language. "What are

your plans for the week?"

"Magical shopping in Paris this morning, Muggle shopping tomorrow morning. We visit Basle and Florence, and then magical and Muggle Rome on Thursday and on Friday morning. In the afternoons, more Occlumency practice for you, and then some dueling practice. Next Tuesday afternoon, we might have to deal with the Headmaster. One afternoon in between, we can spend on the beach, any beach in the world you wish." Then Harry's smile grew wide. "And, above all, I want all that time to be spent with you."

"Well. . . ." Remus said that afternoon, having now read the letters to Sirius, Tonks, and Moody as well as his own.

"Well," Sirius echoed, "I can see why Harry doesn't trust Dumbledore."

"Aye, I agree," Moody said. "Still, things just don't add up."

"True," Remus said.

"Not to mention there's hardly a word, at least in the letters, about who rescued him from the Ministry, who he's with. . . ."

"Other than Hermione," Tonks threw in.

"Other than Granger," Moody acknowledged.

"Not that it helps now," Remus mused, "but knowing what the Prophecy actually is does explain James and Lily's actions."

"True," Sirius agreed.

"There's something else," Moody said. "Dumbledore asked me not to repeat it, and I would hope you lot wouldn't spread this."

Three sets of eyebrows went up in surprise. Moody rarely shared private information like this.

"Old Horace Slughorn is coming out of retirement. Snape is moving to the Defense job." The other three made a face. "Potter told Dumbledore the only way he and Granger would return to Hogwarts, instead of going to Beauxbatons or the Swiss Ecole was to either fire Snape or allow a Class Two duel between Snape and himself."

"What!" the three exclaimed.

"Harry can't take out a Dark bastard like Snape!" Sirius protested.

"He has the power, but neither the control nor the experience," Remus agreed.

"Dumbledore might be blowing smoke, but I'm to come to Hogwarts for the autumnal term as a security consultant," Moody went on. "Dumbledore said that if Potter beats Snape too badly, or

even kills him, I'll be the new Defense teacher."

The four sat in amazed silence, unable to believe what Moody had said -- not even Moody could believe what Dumbledore had told him. Then Tonks said, "The Grangers both said that Harry and even Hermione had grown so much they were barely recognizable. Could they have spent the last few weeks under some extreme use of a time-turner?"

"Or has someone substituted someone else for the pair?" Moody demanded.

The four sat in silence, because there was nothing further any of them dared say.

Tuesday, August 29, 1995

As Sirius sat in the kitchen, nursing his fourth firewhisky, a voice asked, "Don't you think you've had enough?"

"Bugger off, James," Sirius almost snarled.

"If you don't realize what's wrong with that statement, then you've certainly had too many."

Sirius frowned, and then realized what exactly he had said. He turned around so quickly he fell out of the chair. "Harry!"

"Sirius!" Harry hauled Sirius to his feet and gave the older man a strong hug.

Sirius pulled back and looked at Harry. "Damn, Harry! What the hell happened to you?" He looked again. "You grew what? Five inches?"

"Just over six," Harry said.

"Which isn't possible in less than three weeks," Remus said from the kitchen doorway, his wand out.

"I took a few days worth of special maturing potions and nutrient potions," Harry stated. "Amazing that no one equated the near- starvation I went through at the Dursleys for ten years and then for three and a half more summers with my being shorter than both of my parents. A few legal potions and I've caught up to where I should be."

"James wasn't this tall until sometime during his Sixth year," Remus observed.

"I'm not my father," Harry reminded the two men.

"No, you're not," Remus agreed. "The question is, are you Harry?"

"Am I?" Harry challenged. "Of all the people in the Order, you two should know."

"Why?" Sirius asked. He had had too many, after all.

Harry rolled his eyes.

"Because I'm a werewolf and you're a dog animagus," Remus said. He came over to Harry and sniffed. Sirius changed into Padfoot and did the same thing. After over a full minute of sniffing, Sirius changed back.

"Close?" Remus asked.

"Close, but not quite," Sirius agreed, confused.

"Ah," Harry said, "that would be because I added a new trick. Well, new to me, anyway."

"You also somehow became an animagus over the last three weeks?" Remus asked, doubt in his voice.

Harry changed into a Kodiak bear, and back. He had been very pleased to discover the ability had traveled with his older self.

"That would explain the change," Sirius said, amazed.

"I suppose so, but. . . ."

"But it's still difficult to believe, isn't it?" Harry agreed. "How does this strike you, then. I was possessed in the courtroom by accident."

"Someone possessed you by accident?" Sirius asked.

"No, but the timing was off. I was supposed to be possessed in late May."

"Why did they wait?" Remus asked.

"They didn't," Harry answered. "He travelled back from the year 2013, and miscalculated slightly, although the courtroom was the third most likely possibility."

"Who?" Remus demanded.

"Me," Harry answered. "I won the war in 1998, but nearly everyone I really cared about was dead, including the two of you. The few people I still cared about were killed in the civil war that followed. It started in earnest, at least for me, when the Ministry, fearing the coming uprising to bring about a democratic government, killed my wife and daughter. I helped overthrow the Ministry and set up a more democratic wizarding Government, but decided that there had been too much bloodshed. I came across a ritual, and used it. I was able to send my memories and most of my magic back in time."

The two men gawked at Harry.

"So, I possessed myself and had a good talk with myself. Older!Harry made his little speech and disappeared us. Here." He handed both men slips of paper with his Fidelius secret. "Don't say it, just in case Dumbledore, or worse Snape, have the place bugged."

The two men glowered at that idea.

"I brewed the potions and integrated the two personalities. Now, I don't have huge amounts of time. Questions?"

"Why give up the Prophecy and why challenge Severus?" Remus asked.

"The Order spent this next year trying to guard it," Harry acknowledged. "Mister Weasley almost died one night. He was only saved because of this link I have to Voldemort. Well, I can keep it closed now, because I've mastered Occlumency. Oh, you did know that Dumbledore and Snape both practice nearly-constant passive Legilimency, right?"

"We do," Remus acknowledged.

"We can both block them," Sirius added.

"Good. So, I wouldn't be able to sound the alarm if the same sort of thing happens -- the time line will be different, of course, but it still could have happened if the Order stayed as obsessed with the Prophecy as Voldemort was. I don't think it was worth defending, and by giving it to Voldemort the way I did, it raises suspicions about Malfoy and also makes Voldemort doubt it was the true Prophecy anyway."

"Snape murdered Dumbledore in the other time-line and was one of Voldemort's chief Death Eaters, which tells you all you need to know about him. I need to get him out of Hogwarts, and I will by beating him badly, hopefully making him look bad as well."

"We died in the other time line, you said?" Sirius asked.

Harry nodded. "I didn't see how you died, Remus, but it was in battle. Sirius, next year Voldemort tricked me and five friends into going to get that stupid Prophecy. A bunch of you came to the rescue after you realized that Kreacher had been in on the plot. Oh, and about him. . . ."

"He's already gone, and let's leave it at that," Remus said.

Harry nodded. "Anyway, Voldemort had freed a number of his Death Eaters late this autumn, including the Lestranges. Damn, that bitch was fast! She had beaten a few people, and then you had to go taunt her. She caught you in mid-taunt."

"She killed me? Bella!?"

Harry nodded. "We were deep in the Department of Mysteries. There's this Veil thing. . . ."

Remus nodded. "The Execution Veil," he told Sirius, who then nodded as well.

"She hit you and you fell through it." Harry shrugged. "I knew I would come out sometime between late May, 1995 and late May, 1996. I couldn't save Cedric, but at least I've saved you."

Wednesday, August 30, 1995

"Good morning, Miss Tonks," Emma said. "Coffee?"

"Please." Tonks sat and looked at Emma expectantly.

"As you know, Harry and Hermione are together," Emma said, and Tonks nodded. "Is there such a thing as a 'sucking corner'? and if so, what does that sort of behavior imply?"

"Oh, dear. . . ." Tonks said. "That sounds like something you wouldn't approve of."

"I don't," Emma said. "Now spill."

"I was a Hufflepuff, not a Gryffindor, so we just called it the couples' corner, a private alcove," Tonks said. "In one sense, women in wizarding cultures have until recently been treated better than in Muggle ones because our magic is much nearer equal to wizards than our physical strength is."

"Does that mean wizards are still more powerful?" Emma asked.

"That's been argued for at least hundreds of years," Tonks answered. "On the whole, I'd say no. However, our magic does tend to be different. Notice, I do say 'tend'. Witches are usually more powerful in empathic magics, and most types of nature and blood magics. Wizards, unsurprisingly, tend to be more powerful in combat magics. Still, there is plenty of overlap. Many couples, even after they marry, do not engage in oral sex because of the bondings that result. Many others, however, do, even before marriage for the same reasons."

Tonks frowned in thought. "If Hermione and Harry are doing it, do they know all the implications?"

"Hermione seems to think she does," Emma said.

"Then let me think." After a few minutes, Tonks said, "Harry is many fine things, but from what I gather, he is emotionally fragile. Hermione could be doing it" -- 'and likely more' Tonks added to herself -- "in part because it will shore up the one vulnerable side Harry has. The couple's emotions reenforce each other's, so Harry's stability would be stronger. In addition to the emotional impact that any couple would feel, Harry would actually grow to feel Hermione's affection and support as the bond grows."

"Really?"

Tonks nodded, wishing that Remus would let her at him for just those reasons. "I don't know what Hermione would get from Harry in the exchange, as she will be able to feel Harry's emotions even more strongly, because I don't know them quite well enough."

"She told me there are two sets of reasons. One is that they think they're in love."

Tonks nodded. "If they aren't, they will be. Bonded couples can still separate for many reasons -- it's not a blind, enslaving love -- but they will never separate because they fell out of love."

Emma grimaced, but went on. "The other is that she believes that Harry is the most powerful magic user there is, and that once he defeats Voldemort, they will be able to rise above the prejudices of

the magical world against the Muggle-born, in part because of Harry's raw power and his defeating this Dork Lord, as Harry calls him, and in part because of his family background and wealth."

"The Potters are an old family," Tonks agreed. "I didn't know they were all that wealthy."

"His Trust had an income of over two million Galleons last year," Emma said.

Tonks looked shocked. "Most magical fortunes are invested in the Muggle world," she said. "That would make his the second largest purely magical fortune in Britain, after the Malfoys, and certainly in the top twenty in all of Europe. It might even be larger than the Malfoys!" Lucius, after all, had been spending large sums to curry favor for years.

"His non-magical income was something over twenty-five million pounds," Emma said, gauging Tonks' reaction.

"That would likely be one of the top three in Britain, and the top twenty-five or so in Europe," Tonks admitted. "Together, he might be at the top in Britain. He would at least be second."

"Could he really take two wives?" Emma asked.

Tonks shook her head. "One official wife, whose children would out-rank any others. We do have legal concubinage. In fact, most wizarding marriages are really concubinage, although we prefer the term 'consort' these days."

"How so?"

"Well, first, both parties have to be magical, so any marriage with a Muggle or a Squib wouldn't qualify as a magical marriage, just as concubinage. Second, there are a series of magical oaths they would have to make. Third, Harry would have to pledge half his lands to his children by the marriage. Once sworn, those oaths cannot be broken. The couple may separate, but they are still Bonded legally."

"Oh."

"Concubinage is more like a Muggle marriage these days. Even divorce is legal then. To take a second concubine, or a first one if the wizard is already married, he has to provide a new domicile and either a set allowance or a dowry. Right now, the minimum yearly allowance is set at five thousand Galleons a year, and the dowry is set at a hundred and twenty-five thousand. So, you tell me, how many concubines could Harry take, just using one year's magical income? Even with the property requirement, he could have twenty."

Emma looked ill.

"Don't take things too much to heart," Tonks said. "I doubt if there are more than three hundred wizards with extra concubines in Britain. Certainly less than five hundred."

"There are only a few more than thirty thousand magical people in Britain and Ireland," Emma said drily. "If there are three hundred wizards with extra concubines, that could be what? About two percent of the male population? If there are five hundred, that's more than three percent."

"About that," Tonks agreed.

"And who knows, how many might have them but haven't publicly acknowledged them?" Emma asked.

"Probably a few," Tonks admitted.

Emma was far from reassured.

Neither was Tonks.

Chapter VII

Friday, September 1, 1995

"Stop fidgeting," Ginny hissed.

"I can't help it," Ron whinged.

George took over. "Are you being a prat because you're a prefect when you know Harry should have been, or because Harry is likely with Hermione. . . ."

". . . or just because of Harry in general?" Fred concluded.

"Boys," Mrs. Weasley scolded.

"Yes, Mum?" Fred and George chorused innocently.

"Don't give your brother a hard time," she told them. "It isn't easy being a prefect, especially a Fifth year prefect."

"He'll have four years worth of younger students to keep an eye on," Fred pointed out.

"Assuming he doesn't leave it all to Hermione to do," George said, slipping the knife in. Ron colored as the jibe hit.

"I would hope that does NOT happen," Mrs. Weasley stated firmly. "Remember, you are a Gryffindor prefect. Professor McGonagall expects you to do your job. If you don't, that badge can be taken back." Ron winced. He hated to think what his mother would say if that happened.

"I think we should get on the train," Ginny said. "We can find Harry once we get going. They're probably already here."

"May we sit in here?" Harry asked.

Luna Lovegood looked up from her upside-down Quibbler. "You may."

Harry and Hermione came in, and Harry put their trunks away. "You're Harry Potter, and you're Hermione Granger, correct?" Luna said. "You gave my father a very interesting story this summer."

"You're Mister Lovegood's daughter, I take it," Harry said.

"I am. Luna Lovegood." Harry and Hermione shook her hand and sat across from her.

At that moment, Neville looked in. "Is there room here?"

Harry saw that Luna, as well as Neville, was looking at him. "You were here first," Harry told Luna.

Luna blinked in surprise at being deferred to. Harry had told Hermione how Luna had been treated by many of the Ravenclaws, and for some reason this little gesture of surprise on her part pulled on Hermione's heartstrings. She knew what Harry hoped for, and she found herself agreeing to try, now that she had really met Luna.

"There seems to be plenty of room," Luna said. "Please join us. I'm Luna Lovegood."

"Neville Longbottom," Neville said, tucking Trevor away in his cage and pulling a small object out of his carry-on.

"Just be careful with that *Mimulus mibletonia*," Harry warned. "They spit some sort of stinksap."

Neville blinked at that, and then he frowned. "I knew you had to be the girl's prefect," he said to Hermione, "but. . . ."

"You must have read about what I said to the Wizengamot," Harry said.

"It was in The Quibbler," Luna said helpfully. Neville merely nodded.

"Well, if Dumbledore had any intentions of making me prefect, that pretty much killed it," Harry said. "He might have been planning on making Ron prefect even before that."

"Ron? Really?" Neville said, surprised.

"Sure," Harry said. "I think any of the three of us, maybe the five of us, could have been prefect."

"If you say so," Neville said, doubtful of his own chances, if not Harry's.

The door opened again, and Ginny asked, "Is there room here?"

"Certainly," Luna said. "Good morning, Ginny, Ronald." She looked at Ron a little hopefully. Her slight smile disappeared when Ron looked down at her and wrinkled his nose. Hermione was now firmly on Luna's side, however things played out. She decided that Ron was far too immature to date anyone for a few more years.

"We need to be off to the prefects' meeting," Hermione said, giving Ron a nasty look. "Could you get me some pumpkin pasties, Harry?"

"Of course, sweetheart," Harry said. Hermione kissed Harry tenderly and led the now-scowling Ron off.

"You're dating I take it," Ginny stated tonelessly.

"Yes," Harry simply. "I gave her a promise ring."

"It was very pretty," Luna said. "Did you pick it out, or did you choose it together?"

"She must have picked it out," Ginny said cattily, despite her best intentions.

"No," Luna said, shaking her head. "It was platinum, was it not?"

"It was," Harry said. "I'm surprised you could tell."

"Silver is very reactive, magically speaking," Luna said. "If you're at all sensitive to auras or magical fields" -- Ginny snorted gently -- "it's easy to detect silver. Gold is neutral. Platinum cannot even be shaped magically. I take it that's one reason why you chose platinum? So that it cannot be cursed, I mean." Harry nodded. "It's very distinct under mage sight."

"I just developed some form of that this summer," Harry said. In the original time line, it had grown over the hunt for the Horcruxes. "Have you been able to access yours for long?" To Ginny's disgust, Harry and Luna plunged into a deep discussion, which even Neville was interested in, as Luna claimed mage sight could be used to diagnose illness in plants. Not even Cho's popping her head in for a moment disrupted the conversation.

Hermione and Ron came back to the compartment an hour later. Harry had bought a large assortment of goodies off the trolley. As Ron munched his way through a half dozen chocolate frogs (jealousy was one thing, but food was food) and Hermione through her pumpkin pasties, the other four listened to Ron's mumbled complaints about Draco being a prefect.

"The prefects are nominated by the Heads of House, and then approved or disapproved by the Headmaster," Harry said with a shrug. "In addition, each of the Heads of House nominate the candidates for Head Boy and Girl." He shrugged again. "Who else would Snape nominate? Crabbe or Goyle? Ted Nott's father is a Death Eater, just like theirs' and Malfoy's. Who would that leave? Pretty-boy Zabini?"

"I suppose," Ron said, dissatisfied.

"Speaking of stupid ferrets," Harry said, as the door to the compartment opened. "Hello, ferret. We were just talking about you."

Draco ignored the insult and smirked. "Your days are numbered, Potter."

Harry nodded. "According to some religions, God or fate or whatever has already foreseen or even determined all outcomes, including our allotted span. That's very theological of you, Malfoy. I'm impressed." Luna smiled at that, while Hermione smirked a bit herself. Ron and Ginny looked nearly as confused as Draco. Neville merely kept an eye on Draco's stooges.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Draco demanded, confused.

"Oh, in that case, I suppose you mean that your father's lord and master is still after me." Harry shrugged. "Big deal. I disembodied him at fifteen months and again at the end of our First year. I killed part of him at the end of our Second year, and out-dueled him and over two dozen of his Death Munchers, including your father, last June. Oh, I'm so scared," he concluded with a very bored tone. Everyone, even Hermione and Luna, was shocked at Harry's tone. He knew he was exaggerating, but was doing so deliberately to bait Draco and send a message, both to the children of the Death Eaters (Crabbe, Goyle, and Nott were in the corridor) as well as their parents, Snape, and Voldemort himself if word reached them.

Draco started to sputter.

"Yes, yes," Harry said dismissively. "You want to protest that your father isn't the slave of a mad, Half-blood, barely human bastard who is still throwing his toys out of his cot because he had a childhood nearly as bad as mine. Well, your father is a slave, who would be killed if he ever showed a second thought and who would be sacrificed if the Dork Lord thought it would bring Snake Lips the slightest advantage."

Harry stood, and Ron, Neville, and Ginny, as well as Draco, saw how tall Harry had grown. Harry's bored voice was now gone, and it was cold, and infused with enough magic to send chills down the spine of everyone who heard him. "Now let me tell you something, you whinging, spineless, little piece of excrement. If ancestry matters, then the direct male ancestors of five of the six people in this compartment were elders of the British magical community more than two hundred years before the first magical Malfoy earned the name 'bad-faith' by abandoning William II and allowing him to die in that so-called 'hunting accident', which was just an arrow charm. If brains count, as it should, then Hermione has everyone in the school beat, and Luna isn't far behind. If character counts, then I'd put my five friends here up against you and your little band of arse-suckers any day. If it's money, well, the Dark Loser will have your family fortune drained off in three more years or so. And if it's power, as I said, I whipped his skanky arse at fifteen months, and I'll do it him and all his little branded slaves whenever I see them."

"Now," Harry thundered, "begone!"

Wandlessly, the speechless Draco was flung back into Crabbe, making both of them crash onto the floor. With a flick of Harry's finger, the door shut gently.

"Damn, Harry," Ron said, awe in his voice, "what happened to you since you left?"

"Since I was sent off by Dumbledore and his followers, including your parents, to be illegally tried, you mean?" Harry asked. Ron and Ginny both winced. "I grew up, magically as well as physically."

"Snape is going to hate you like this," Neville pointed out.

"Not for long," Harry rejoined. He sat back down.

"Did you mean what you said?" Luna asked.

"I hope so," Harry said, slightly confused. "Which part?"

Luna hesitated, but went on. "That . . . that you would be willing to consider me your friend?"

"Of course," Harry said with a smile. Hermione bravely matched it.

The six students made their way to the carriages, Ron and Ginny confused by the dynamics they had seen in the train compartment, and by the Harry they had seen. He was so much different than the Harry their father had taken to the Ministry less than a month before.

The changes bothered Neville far less. This Harry was certainly the Triwizard Champion, the Boy-Who-Lived, and, as far as Neville was concerned, although few had used the title yet, the Chosen One. Had Harry asked, Neville would have publicly nailed his colors to Harry's standard right there and followed him into battle as needed. He already had in his own mind.

Luna had been interested in knowing Harry as a person since the start of the Triwizard Tournament. He had really impressed her, and her defense of Harry as champion had made her treatment by some of her fellow Ravenclaws even worse. That interest was heightened when Harry gave an interview to her father which was still shaking magical Britain.

Luna watched as Harry made a short detour to speak with Padma Patil. The way the Indian girl glanced in her direction showed Luna that she was the object of their discussion. "Harry's aura is very different this year," Luna said quietly to Hermione.

"In what way?" Hermione asked, knowing this time around that Luna actually could see auras, a fairly rare gift but well-documented.

"Usually, I can only see them when magic is being actively used, but Harry's was always right there, flickering away, showing that he is a very powerful wizard. Then, though, it was just the way he was. Now it's much brighter, but it's under perfect control, which likely means he's much more powerful."

"And all that led him to the compartment you were sitting in. Harry is in love with me," Hermione said, giving no details of their relationship. "Still, for some reason, he has decided that you are also special to him. He wants to get to know you. If you wish to get to know the real Harry, this term will be your chance."

"You don't mind?" Luna asked, wondering which of the many interpretations Hermione's words might mean.

Hermione smiled slightly. "There are just a few people Harry would admit caring for, as friends, family, or something more. Maybe a dozen, if he still includes Ginny and Mister and Mrs. Weasley. Harry has been starved for affection his entire life, until this summer. I would not deny him anyone's friendship . . . or your affection."

Luna watched as Harry came back, patting a thestral as he passed it. "I would like to get to know you, too."

"From what Harry says, we look at things in very different ways," Hermione warned.

"You have the reputation of being overly-organized and logical, as well as very intelligent," Luna said. "In some ways, that is a huge advantage in the magical world, for we are neither organized nor logical, although many think we are and most try to act as if we were. Neither am I either well-organized or often logical. I find it easier to understand the underlying magic of the world almost as music, flowing in complex harmonies and counterpoint, with our active magic as inserted melodies."

"Perhaps that's why Harry might need both of us," Hermione mused. "He is active magic, while we understand the patterns and can help him find explanations, especially because we approach magic totally differently." Harry and the two teens climbed into the carriage where Neville was already

waiting. Hermione continued, "Which extra classes do you take?"

Still struggling to take in all of Hermione's implications, Luna replied, "Muggle Studies, Runes, and Divination. And you three?"

"Neville and I take Care of Magical Creatures and Divination," Harry said, while Neville nodded.

"I take Runes, Arithmancy, and Care," Hermione said. "What do you think of Professor Trelawney?"

"She has a touch of the True Gift," Luna said, and added frankly, "but she so wishes for a greater gift that she often buries her talents under meaningless showmanship. In fact, I suspect she has a powerful gift, but for some reason, she has never been able to release it. She actually does know the theory quite well, but I can't help but wish she would help us more and show off less."

Luna looked at Hermione a bit wistfully. "I also wish I had dared take Arithmancy."

"Why dared?" Hermione asked.

"My mother developed spells for the Department of Mysteries. She was testing an Arithmancy block at home and something went wrong, and she was killed by the wild magic. I would have liked to have taken the course, but I was leery of it. She was much more disciplined than I, and yet the subject in a sense killed her."

"I understand that can happen with new combinations, no matter how solid the theory is," Hermione admitted. Professor Vector had been very stern in admonishing them not to play around with such blocks of embodied raw magic from day one. "Runes can be dangerous, too, once we learn how to use them to enchant objects in Sixth year."

Luna and Hermione chatted happily away about Rune sets as they made their way to the castle.

Harry was a bit embarrassed by the Sorting Hat's song, as it mentioned a 'new heir of the Founders, coming in righteousness' as well as pleading for cooperation between the Houses. Fortunately, besides Harry only Hermione and the Headmaster knew for certain that it was talking about Harry, although Luna and Neville were not the only other people in the hall who suspected it.

"Welcome, to another year at Hogwarts," Dumbledore said as the Feast wound down. "Tonight, for the first time in many a year, we have no new professors. Professor Grubbly-Plank will, however, be substituting in Care of Magical Creatures until further notice. In addition, Professor Snape will be assuming the position of Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher for at least this year, and I am certain that we all hope he will be in that position for longer than that." The Slytherin table applauded loudly.

"Returning from his retirement to again teach Potions is Professor Horace Slughorn, one of the premier potion brewers in the world." The potions affectionadoes applauded this loudly. "In addition, Alastor Moody will remain on staff this year as a security consultant." The Gryffindors, encouraged by Harry, gave the retired auror a decent ovation.

"Tomorrow being Saturday, I ask all the Fifth year prefects to take their First years around the castle in the morning." Then Dumbledore's light tone turned serious. "In the afternoon, we are going to witness a serious duel. Professor Severus Snape and Mister Harry Potter will fight a Class Two duel in the Quidditch stadium, beginning at One-thirty." Before the noise from the students (and most of the staff) could grow too loud, Dumbledore went on, "The Forbidden Forest is still just that, forbidden. Mister Filch has posted all banned items outside of his office, and reminds you all that magic is not allowed in the corridors."

"Bloody hell, Harry," Ron said half an hour later in their room, "why didn't you say something?"

"In a minute," Harry said. He turned to Seamus. "Am I wrong, or do you have something to say to me?"

Seamus winced. "Me Mam, well, for all of July, she was going on and on about, well. . . ."

"She believed what The Daily Prophet was saying about me and Dumbledore," Harry said calmly.

"Well, yes," Seamus said.

"And what did you think?" Harry asked.

"I know you, Harry," Seamus said, "but some of what it was saying, well . . . it seemed to make sense. But then those revelations after your trial, the fact that you were even put on trial for something that was so obviously the right thing to do. . . ." Seamus shrugged. "Then your declaring yourself a warlock." He frowned. "Is that part of this duel?"

"In a moment," Harry said. "Go on."

"Well, no offense, she can't believe that You-Know-Who is really back, but The Prophet has backed down, Fudge looks like an idiot, and she doesn't know what to believe, especially since Sirius Black was pardoned yesterday" -- Harry's eyebrows went up and he glared at Ron, for he hadn't read or heard anything about that -- "but . . . well. . . ."

"Go on," Harry said.

"She did say I wasn't to be too close to you this year," Seamus said, red in the face. Harry preferred that to the pale fury of their confrontation in the original time line. "And she has ways of worming things out of me."

Ron, who like the other three had been listening, snorted. Harry merely looked at him. "Well," Ron said, ears reddening, "Mothers are like that."

"That's why I don't tell my parents anything about the magical world," Dean stated.

"My Gran always believed The Prophet was a government propaganda sheet, and she said this summer proved it when it changed its editorial mind about Harry," Neville put in. "But enough about this. Tell us about Snape."

"And anything else you can tell us about this summer," Ron demanded.

Harry sighed and sat on the edge of his bed. "In the war back in the 1970s, Snape became a Death Eater almost from the day he left Hogwarts in 1978. He was Voldemort's . . . how, come off it!" Harry told Ron, Neville, and Seamus. He redid the 'tom marvolo riddle=i am lord voldemort' trick again. "It's not a magical incantation. He won't appear if you say it." Harry paused. "I guess I can see why some people wouldn't want to say it in public, where it would automatically mark you as an open enemy of the Dick Lord, but don't be afraid of the phony title itself."

"Fine," Dean said, "Snape was really a Death Eater?"

Harry nodded. "Well documented. That's one reason why he became so good at making potions; he was Moldishorts' potion brewer, and the Dump Lump needed all sorts of nasty and difficult potions made. Now, in the spring of 1981, he did one of two things. Either he decided that Moldivort was too violent or couldn't win or whatever and came to Dumbledore and became Dumbledore's spy; or Voodlemort sent him to Dumbledore and Snape pretended to be Dumbledore's spy while actually being Voldemort's. In any case, after Moldie-Voldie was disembodied in 1981, Snape was tried for being a Death Eater but Dumbledore got him off."

"But which was he?" Seamus demanded.

"Dumbledore thought until this summer he was a genuine traitor to Voldemort," Harry said. "I've had my doubts since I found out. Yes, he saved my life once back in First year, but I think that was him covering his arse, since he didn't realize that Voldafart had possessed Quirrell. If anything made Dumbledore wonder before this summer, it was how Snape treated me at times."

"How about the rest of us?" Neville asked.

"Supposedly camouflage," Harry said dismissively. "He was supposed to be using that as a cover to lure his Slytherins, especially from Death Muncher families, towards the Light."

"He's been doing a piss-poor job of it, if that were the case," Dean stated. No one disagreed.

"I can't say how I got the Headmaster suspicious," Harry said, "but once I did, he checked the disciplinary records more carefully. He knew Snape had skewed things, but it was much worse than he had realized. The way Snape jumped at the duel has made him even more suspicious." Harry shrugged. "If Snape fights like I think he will, then we'll know for certain."

"Err, aren't you worried about fighting Snape?" Seamus asked.

"No," Harry said simply.

Chapter VIII

Saturday, September 2, 1995

Severus Snape looked at the Boy with his usual sneer of contempt. "I always knew you were like your father," he nearly spat. "Arrogant, spoiled, and worthless."

"And I always knew that you are a snivelling, bigoted, incompetent, Death Eater," Harry retorted. "Just like I know your Master is a cowardly, sadistic bastard, and I mean that literally."

"Just because you managed to get away through some trick. . . ."

"Is that what your Master told you?" Harry demanded. "Then you should have known it was a lie, since he's even more incapable of telling the truth than you are. What are you going to do when I whip your arse, Snivellus?" Snape flinched at the hated name. His eyes flicked up towards the area of the stands where Sirius and Remus were sitting.

"No, they never told me your o-so-appropriate nickname," Harry said, knowing who Snape was looking for, although he did not know that they were actually there. "I read it in your mind." Snape's glare went back to Harry, who had decided to hit Snape where it might hurt, even if it wasn't true. "Dumbledore never really tried to read you. Your Occlumency shields are shit. You're an under-powered bully. You teach here in part because your master commanded you to and in part because you enjoy abusing children. If you acted like this in public, then almost every witch and wizard and some of the Squibs would whip your arse. How many times have you EVER faced a wizard one-on-one in a fight, other than Lockhart? And he couldn't use magic other than memory charms worth a damn."

"Keep telling your self that, Potter," Snape snarled as he turned red.

"I can't lose," Harry said simply. "Almost everyone expects you to win, so even if you do win, you win nothing. How can you teach students again?"

"By making the golden boy look so bad they will know not to cross me," Snape retorted.

"Give it your best shot, Snape," Harry answered in turn.

With that, the pair took their preliminary places for instruction. Professor Flitwick looked at his colleague with disapproval. Finally, he said, "When my wand shoots sparks, you may begin. Jump the signal, and I will invoke the full sanctions allowed. Use any curse or hex above a Second Level spell, meaning a First Level, unapproved, or Unforgivable, or an inaudible or silent one, and the same will happen. Do you both understand?"

Harry and Snape agreed that they did. "Think you can avoid cheating from the start?" Harry asked his opponent.

"Don't you wish you knew?" Snape retorted.

"Enough," Flitwick commanded. "Go to your supporters. I call you to the field of honor in five

minutes."

Snape stalked off towards his Second (Lucius Malfoy) and his two allowed supporters (Macnair and Draco). Harry walked over to his Second, Hermione, more calmly. Neville was his first supporter, and to everyone's surprise (and Ron's disappointment and Ginny's dismay) a rather confused (but pleased) Luna was the other.

Ron understood (with a little prompting from Ginny) that he needed to show Harry that he was willing to support the relationship between Harry and Hermione before Harry could fully rely on Ron. Since Ron wasn't sure if he could, he had said nothing that morning except to wish Harry luck.

After all, no matter how disappointed and envious Ron was, there seemed to be a slim chance for Snape to be humiliated.

"Beat him quickly and decisively," Hermione told Harry. "The more quickly you beat him, the sooner I can have you seated in the Couple's Corner, or perhaps the Couple's Room, since it should be more public for our first time."

"Beat him badly enough, and maybe I'll take you there, too," Neville joked.

Harry grinned. "I might be interested in a second consort, but I just don't think we're compatible, Neville," he teased back.

"Oh, I'm crushed," Neville deadpanned. "Seriously, good luck and be careful." He shook Harry's hand.

"Show the Malfoys how dangerous you really are," Hermione almost commanded. She kissed Harry deeply.

"Life will certainly be more interesting, now that our lives have touched," Luna said. "I look forward into learning how interesting." She hesitated a moment, and then kissed Harry's cheek. To her surprise and pleasure, Harry returned the gesture, managing to kiss the side of her lips as well as her cheek. Then he strode out to the center of the pitch.

Luna leaned into Hermione as Hermione wrapped her arm around the slightly taller girl. "Don't worry, Luna," she said. "Harry knows what he's doing." She kissed the other side of Luna's lips and held her tight. Luna put her arm around Hermione's shoulders, and hung on nervously.

When it was time, Flitwick said, "You both know what few rules there are. One long blast on my referee's whistle means that Mister Potter has forfeited mercy. Two short blasts means Professor Snape has instead." He looked at Snape. "That does include starting any movement before I send off the opening sparks. Now, go to your marks."

Less than thirty seconds later, the duel started.

Snape instantly sent off one of the strongest curses allowed under the rules, a bludgeoning hex which would break bones at the least. All offensive spells had to be vocalized, so that they could be checked for correct use under the rules. Unvoiced spells were penalized. Defensive work could be silent.

Harry flicked the curse to one side with a slight movement of his wand, a move only possible for those with excellent reflexes and superior power to the caster.

Snape paid that no mind but sent off a curse chain -- spells sent one after another with no breaks, designed to break through any defenses: a minor pain curse; cutting hex; burning curse; a second bludgeoning hex; a blinding hex; and finally 'Expelliarmus'.

To Snape's shock, Harry flicked four of the spells away, ducked the blinding hex, and deflected the 'Expelliarmus'. "Is that all you've got, Snivellus?" Harry taunted.

Snape sent off a second chain and, when that proved equally ineffective, a third which tried to change the environment around Harry. That one Harry had to deal with by more actively blocking the spells. Still, nothing had affected him.

Snape sent off three more chains, all easily dealt with by Harry. He needed something which either Harry would not know how to counter or could not counter. Spells which fitted into the first criteria, however, were either so minor as to be almost useless in a duel, or were not permitted. There were no truly unblockable spells, although there were some, especially the three Unforgivables, which came close.

Under the rules of the duel, an Unforgivable was no more wrong than any other unpermitted curse. Snape could not be punished after the duel for using one, either. Therefore, his next choice was "Crucio!"

Harry had to dive out of the way to avoid the Unforgivable, and the crowd roared, mostly with anger towards Snape, for the dueling wards magnified their voices for the crowd. Harry meanwhile had cast his first curse, a modified stone cutting spell, even as Flitwick blew the signal that Snape had gone beyond the rules.

Normally, the stone cutting spell sent a cutting beam about a quarter of an inch across, and which was effective (normally) up to twenty feet at the most before it quickly died off. Harry's modified spell compressed his full power into a beam about a hair's breadth in diameter, increasing its penetration punch. It poked through Snape's hastily-erected shield like a cutting laser through sheet of plastic wrap, through Snape's chest, through the wards erected over the floor and sides of the pitch, through two of the magically reenforced supports of the stands (fortunately, the beam was so thin it did no structural damage to the supports) and then into about six feet of the hillside behind.

Snape staggered, as the beam had nicked his heart. Blood started clotting and Snape's heart started beating irregularly.

"Accio Snape's right eye," Harry called out. Normally, this was a very easy charm to block, but Snape was in no shape to stop it. He screamed as his right eye was ripped from his skull. Since Snape had forfeited mercy, Harry then simply walked up to the screaming form, now writhing on the ground, and cast the regular stone cutting spell right into Snape's left ear, ending his career as a spy and as an abuser of students.

The crowd, which had been cheering, went silent. After a moment, the Gryffindors managed a light round of applause, supported by over half the Hufflepuffs and over a third of the Ravensclaws. Harry bent over and pulled up Snape's left sleeve. He forced the Dark Mark to appear.

Harry did not have to amplify his voice, as the wards which did that were still active. "And so dies a Death Eater, loyal to his Master to the end!" He glared at Macnair and the Malfoys. "And so will die every Death Eater!"

Now the applause was far louder, and to Draco's discomfort, he realized that some of it was even coming from the Slytherin section. Harry halved the distance between himself and Snape's three supporters. "Two of you are Marked Death Eaters. Go now. I will not hesitate next time."

Macnair broke first and ran. Lucius hesitated, but followed. Draco ran after his father.

Harry ignored the stunned and silent Ministry people and most of the reporters (who started shouting at him as he passed them) as the crowd exited from the pitch and instead Harry went up to Lionel Lovegood. Harry's three supporters followed. "Good afternoon, Mister Lovegood."

Lionel's eyes flipped between Harry and Luna and the approaching crowd. A casual circle made with Harry's forefinger established a ward around the group, and the reporters and others outside of that ward could not approach, and their shouts were muted.

"I didn't know you knew my daughter," he said.

"She's a very wonderful and interesting girl," Harry said simply.

Seeing nothing to build on there, Lionel asked instead, "I suppose you've heard that Sirius Black has been pardoned?"

"Pardoned, not exonerated?"

"Peter Pettigrew has been acknowledged as the one who betrayed your parents, and as still being alive," Lionel said. "Even if he might have sent the curse into the gas line that killed the Muggles, which is still under dispute, Black did choose to confront Pettigrew in a crowded Muggle environment."

Harry could hardly deny that.

"Still, I take it you stick by the backing of Black you gave last month?"

"Certainly," Harry said firmly. "As for the duel, Snape was a Death Eater. Professor Dumbledore hoped he was a reformed, former Death Eater, who might resume his role as a double agent, making everyone wonder whose side he was on. This was a test. If he could have stayed in the rules, he would have been given the chance to prove himself. He chose not to."

"And how did a fifteen year old student defeat a powerful Dark wizard like Severus Snape?" Lionel asked.

"Dark, certainly," Harry agreed. "And very knowledgeable of the Dark Arts. Powerful?" He shrugged his shoulders. "Voldemort is certainly very powerful. Probably only the Headmaster and I could face him and beat him. As for the other Death Eaters, they are cowardly, weak-minded, spoiled bullies, and most of them are stupid and magically below average as well." Harry gave another little shrug and looked somewhat contrite. "It's a shame that it had to come to this, but it did."

"Is there anything you'd like to add?" Lionel asked, stunned at the simple statements.

Harry shook his head, and with that, led Hermione and Luna off the pitch (Luna waving goodbye to her father, adding a happy "Bye, Daddy!"), with Neville guarding their backs. Harry stopped in the Quidditch changing rooms for a quick shower and to get back into his school robes and casual clothes, and then the quartet made their way back to the castle. A number of students came close to the group, but then backed off, wanting to say something to Harry, but afraid to come too close.

Once in the castle, Neville peeled away. As more of the students realized where Harry was heading (or more accurately, where Hermione was leading Harry), the boys also started moving off, except for a few persistent ones, like Colin. Many of the girls, sighing with disappointment, did the same.

Harry was heading for the Couple's Room, at Hermione's urging.

The rules were simple. Only those interested in having a committed relationship could use the room. Only one wizard was allowed in at a time, and he had to be accompanied by his beloved. At least one other female had to be present, to make certain that things stayed within the boundaries. Other girls were allowed to watch (although not too closely, and only if they remained silent), both to learn and to see that this was indeed an active relationship -- and to get used to the act being performed in public, should they choose to follow the same route. Those too shy to perform in front of others were asked to rethink their commitments.

"Are you asking me to be the chaperon?" Luna asked, surprised.

"Yes, if you wouldn't mind," Hermione said.

"We just met yesterday," Luna pointed out. She frowned, as she realized that she was in the unaccustomed position of being the conventional one in a conversation for once.

Harry stopped and looked Luna in the eye. "I feel there are only two women I can fully trust with my heart. Hermione has earned my trust and my love, and I hope I have earned hers. She has honored me by taking my promise. I feel you could be the other, but I cannot say if that means being close friends, or even acting like siblings, or perhaps as something more . . . intimate. Hermione is willing to help us discover that."

"Please?" Hermione asked. Her growing bond to Harry encouraged her to want to please him in this.

"I will witness," Luna said. "I will stand with you both, although I'm not certain how."

They went on to the couple's room.

Over a dozen girls followed them. Angelina, Alicia, and Katie; Cho and Padma; Parvati, Lavender, and Ginny; Daphne and Tracey; Susan and Hannah; and three Seventh years, who always liked to watch. With that, the 'gallery' was full, although perhaps another two dozen girls milled quietly outside the door.

Harry stood next to one of the large, soft, armless chairs, his back to the gallery but facing Hermione and Luna. Hermione started to kneel, but Luna forestalled her, determined to undertake

the full ceremonial role. Luna undid Harry's trousers and pulled them and his boxers down, and then closed his robe. She helped Harry sit without tripping, and then helped Hermione kneel on the pad provided. Luna then went and fetched a small towel and a glass of water, laying the towel near Harry's lap and the glass on the stand near the chair. Luna then sat on one of the straight chairs provided.

"You may begin," Luna said soberly.

Hermione opened Harry's robe and pulled out his half-hard penis. There was a sharp intake of breath from all the other girls as six light strokes of her right hand got Harry fully hard, and his full length was revealed. The licking of lips was almost audible.

Luna moved over and added more padding on the floor, so Hermione would have enough elevation to get a good angle.

Hermione used both hands to cover most of the shaft and then popped the head into her mouth. Harry leaned back and enjoyed. He enjoyed the sensations; he enjoyed the look of lust on all the girls' faces, especially Luna's, although he felt more than a bit embarrassed and exposed. He did not, however, like the jealous look on Ginny.

Harry realized that he was in danger of going soft, despite Hermione lovely ministrations. He blocked out all the other girls and concentrated on Hermione's bobbing head and stroking hands. He was long enough to get a fairly good view of Hermione's stretched lips. From his adjusted position, the only thing his peripheral vision picked up was a flushed Luna licking her lips hungrily.

Hermione licked the shaft, getting it slick again, and went back to using both hands and her mouth. In less than three more minutes, Harry shot off. Hermione swallowed most of it, but made certain to show some on the tip of her tongue and some on Harry's crown to Luna, verifying that she had indeed swallowed Harry's essence. Hermione then cleaned off the rest with her tongue and then the towel, and then covered Harry up.

As custom dictated, the gallery left.

Hermione stood and took the sitting Luna's robe in her hands and bent close. She opened her mouth, and Luna could see exactly what Hermione was offering. Luna could smell Harry on Hermione's face, on her mouth, as well as see the foam inside. She could feel their desire for her. She leaned forward without hesitation and french kissed for the first time, tasting Hermione's lips and Harry's semen.

When Hermione finally broke the kiss, Luna said, "I believe there are some things you need to explain to me."

Harry nodded. He stood and pulled up this clothes. "It's time to introduce the two of you to the Room of Requirement."

An hour later, Luna sat on a comfortable chair, pensive and trying to absorb everything Harry had told her. "That is quite the story," Luna finally said. After a moment more, she said, "It is such an amazing story, I wonder you believed it so easily, Hermione."

"Looking back, I can see why you say that," Hermione agreed. "However, I had no doubts this was Harry. We've had a sort of magical connection for years, months before I ever even thought of kissing him at the end of our First year. I knew it was him, and that he was telling me the truth. I also somehow always knew he would be the greatest wizard of our generation, perhaps in many generations. I could never see how, before now, but I knew he would be, and that I would be helping him." She smiled demurely. "I like how things have turned out so far."

"I can understand that," Luna agreed. She looked at Harry. "You mentioned Legilimency and Occlumency. I am something of an empath. I can always tell when someone is telling me the truth or is lying. Therefore, I also knew you've told me the truth. Now tell me this, why do you desire me, when you obviously desire Hermione? Just because we loved and married in the other time stream? Because you pity me?"

"I don't think I pity you at all," Harry answered. "I knew I would be trying to get to know you better, but things have gone a bit further and a lot faster than I had thought they might." He smiled. "And I'm very happy with that."

"I like and admire you, Harry," Luna said. "I did even before the train ride, and I must admit, I am more attracted to you than ever." She turned to Hermione. "I also find you attractive. I also understand why, should we follow the path you have been nudging me along, you would be the first and I the second, no matter what our official status. The politics of the situation, if nothing else, would demand that. However," she concluded, "I am not ready for a sexual relationship of any kind, with either of you, at least not today. I need to think about my feelings more. So, nothing further than what we've done today." She smiled shyly, "Well, perhaps a bit more kissing with both of you."

Harry stood and bent over Luna, and kissed her deeply. Hermione followed suit.

An hour later, Harry and Hermione had walked Luna back to the Ravenclaw common room and had just been walking around the castle, hand-in-hand. The gossip mill had already spread the tale of their status as a bonding couple, and they were reenforcing it.

Thanks to Harry's potions and their weeks of working out, both were trim and very attractive. After Harry's demonstration of power that afternoon, however, none of the students were going to approach the couple.

Remus, however, was another matter. "There you are! Where the devil have you to been?" he demanded when he finally found them.

"Establishing ourselves as a formal couple, in the open couple's room," Hermione managed to state without blushing.

Remus was not so fortunate. He knew all about the practice, of course, but had never had the chance to participate. The whole world of sexuality had in many ways simply passed him by because of his condition. Remus, therefore, blushed. He did manage to say, however, "In case you didn't know, Sirius has been pardoned."

"I did, but I didn't know you and he were here."

Remus managed to look offended. "As if we would miss it!" Then the full impact struck him. "Any regrets?"

"No," Harry answered frankly. "I killed him once before, and I knew I won't be lucky enough just having to kill Voldemort this time around." He shrugged. "I was partially responsible for killing Quirrell. I've already killed over half of Voldemort. I can't be squeamish." He gave Hermione a wan smile. "Don't worry about me just killing people at random. Hermione and some others will keep me on the straight and narrow."

"I know you wouldn't," Remus assured Harry. "Just remember, others won't be so sure of you."

"I know," Harry said soberly. "Believe me, I know how fickle public opinion is. It's worse in magical Britain than just about anywhere else I've ever seen."

Hermione took Harry by the arm. "We'll stand together."

Chapter IX

Although she was neither a prefect nor a Seventh year, there was little doubt who the top bitch was in the Ravenclaw food chain. It was therefore a surprised top bitch Cho Chang and her friends who were dragged into a meeting by Padma Patil and her friends right after the gallery had broken up.

"What do you want, Patil?" Cho demanded.

"Do you fully realize what happened today?" Padma asked.

"Yes," Cho hissed, "somehow Granger got her claws into Harry."

Padma nodded. "That was one of the three things. Now think, why did Cedric like Harry so much?"

When Cho didn't answer, one of her friends muttered, "Cedric said Harry should have been Sorted into Hufflepuff, because of his sense of fair play."

"Exactly," Padma agreed. "It was pretty obvious that this wasn't the first time Hermione had Harry in her mouth. She's wearing a promise ring. They are an established couple, and Harry won't cheat on her."

"So?" Cho demanded, trying to pretend she didn't care.

"The Potters are an old and at least fairly rich family. Harry has declared himself a warlock, and proved today that he has the power and the determination to back that up. We all saw Harry kill Professor Snape. Think about that. A Fifth year out-fought a skilled adult wizard and then killed him. If Harry wants something, only his sense of decency might stop him."

"So?"

"So, in case you didn't notice, the struggle for the position of Second Wife has already started."

"Second Wife?" Cho asked. "You mean they have that in European culture, too?" In both Imperial and magical China, wealthy men and high officials often had multiple wives.

"In magical culture, yes, but not Muggle," Padma said.

"To be accurate," Lisa Turpin said, "there can be only one fully bonded, legal, magical wife. The rest are consorts."

"Yes, but that only really matters for entailed property. To take a second wife, or consort if you prefer, one must have the wealth. Before this summer, the only boys in school other than any new First years that I don't know about who had the potential wealth to take a Second any time soon were Malfoy, Harry, Longbottom, Zabini, Finch-Fletchley, two Seventh years, and a Third year Slytherin. The only one with both the wealth and position before this year was Longbottom. As far as I know, only Harry and Malfoy have the wealth to take more than four, and Draco only after he inherits. Now Harry has everything, including his First Wife lined up. And the race to claim Second

has already started. Ginny Weasley wants it badly, but Harry and maybe Hermione have already chosen their Second."

Cho and the others frowned, but then Marietta exclaimed, "Loony?"

Padma nodded. "Harry told me last night that Luna was under his protection and that he knew how you lot treated her, although she had not complained herself. I wondered then what was up, since I saw Hermione's promise ring. Well, Luna acted as a Supporter this afternoon and then as Chaperon." Padma sighed. "I was the last one out. I saw Hermione kissing Luna, and it looked like there was still semen in her mouth." That would start Luna's bonding on a small scale if repeated often enough.

Cho glowered.

"Just think," Padma warned, "bother Luna and she won't hit back, or at least she never has yet, but Hermione might and Harry will. If Harry is 'the Chosen One', he has the power to fight You-Know-Who. He was somehow involved in the death of Professor Quirrell, he somehow ended the threat of the Heir of Slytherin, he co-won the Triwizard Tournament, and he just killed a somewhat Dark and powerful professor. Do you want to mess with him? Like it or not, Hermione is one of the smartest students around and perhaps the best researcher here. I know her well enough to know she has a vindictive streak. Harry will defend Luna, Hermione could attack for her."

"Do you think I would want to be his Third at best, after Loony?" Cho demanded with a proud sniff.

"That is up to you," Padma answered. "Ginny Weasley, I think, would say 'yes'. Lavender Brown, Parvati, and I say 'maybe'. Susan Bones looked like she was ready to cry because someone had claimed Harry before her. Who knows what she might do now? From the calculating looks on Davis' and Greengrass' faces, they are also thinking about it, as are Harry's Quidditch teammates and one of the younger Gryffindors who was drooling just outside the door. There could be others as well."

"From what you said about the size of his thing, I probably couldn't take him more than once or twice a week after we're bonded anyway," Lisa Turpin said with a smirk. "It might be easy to share."

"He does sound . . . delicious," a Seventh year added.

"In any event," Padma said, "don't bother Luna this year. No teasing, no stealing her things, no eating her sweets. She's under Harry's protection, and she's under mine as well."

"And mine," Lisa added.

Several other students added their protection as well. Cho knew she had to back down. She either had to give up her summer fantasy of Harry taking Cedric's place or work around the new realities.

Margot Smythe, Luna's enemy in her own year and Cho's devoted follower, looked to her leader. Cho shrugged, as if to say, 'It's up to you, just don't do it for me.' Margot decided she would have think about this as well. She disliked everything there was about Loony Lovegood. She did not like Harry Potter much, either.

Seeing Potter kill Professor Snape after beating him so easily, however, was frightening.

'Yes,' Margot thought, 'I do need to think about this.'

"But why were you pardoned?" Harry demanded.

"If you mean pardoned instead of exonerated, then blame Fudge protecting his cowardly arse," Sirius growled. "The rest is a combination of you, Dumbledore, and the fact that old Barty Crouch was killed."

"How's that?" Harry asked. He was sitting with Hermione, Sirius, Remus, and the Headmaster in the Headmaster's office.

"Since you chose to reveal the Prophecy to Lord Voldemort, I did not feel there was any reason to keep it secret from the Minister," Dumbledore replied. "If Voldemort does truly believe that you sent him a faux prophecy, the fact that we told the Minister the same one should not change his mind."

"And that meant Fudge realized that you indeed are his only hope of containing Voldemort," Remus said simply.

"But what else made him realize Voldemort was back?" Hermione asked.

"The panic Lucius Malfoy and the others showed after Harry's trial," Dumbledore admitted. "It was hardly proof, but it was enough for Cornelius, and more importantly for the people around the Minister to push the Minister more than a bit. And Lucius was attending Voldemort, not soothing Cornelius, nor was Madam Umbridge in any position to whisper poison in his ear. Together, this meant the other advisors prevailed for once."

"And it was made clear to Fudge that if he wants to suck up to you, Sirius needed a pardon," Remus said simply.

"I really hate the Ministry," Harry said.

"Do you really, Harry?" Dumbledore asked.

"I do," Harry answered. "I know we can't have pure democracy. Merlin couldn't predict what kind of mob rule the Government would descend in to. It took a bloody civil war and the intervention of the royal family to get a fair, constitutional government in the other time line."

"The Royals got involved?" Hermione asked. "They know about us? And wouldn't that really be against constitutional practice to intervene if they do know about us?"

"It might be unconstitutional when dealing with the Muggle government, but not the magical," Harry said. "Most of the Anglo- Saxon, Scots, Danish, and Norman kings had wizards as advisors, the most infamous being the founder of the Malfoys, who betrayed William II. Elizabeth Woodville and Anne Boleyn each attended Hogwarts for five years and four years respectively -- Slytherins, unsurprisingly. With a witch for a mother and another for a paternal great-grandmother, it's hardly

surprising that Elizabeth I had magical powers, although considering the times, she had to keep them hidden." Harry smiled. "Nicholas Flamel told me he trained her in Legilimency himself."

"But. . . ." Hermione protested, "but isn't he dead?"

Harry shook his head. "He did destroy the Stone, but he and his wife are living out normal wizarding lifetimes, up in the Yukon. Anyway, Mary Queen of Scots attended Beauxbatons for three years, and her great-grandson, Charles II, had magical powers, although he was trained by tutors, mostly during his exile. His intrigues with the magical world helped with his Restoration in 1660. The Minister of Magic is appointed by the Wizengamot, but he reports to both the Wizengamot and to the Crown, and he can really be dismissed by either -- technically the Minister of Magic is the Royal Wizard, or Witch as the case may be, just as the Prime Minister is First Lord of the Treasury. I can assure you, Her Majesty knows a lot more about the wizarding world than the Prime Minister does. A fair number of the Royals have had magical powers, although no monarch since Charles II."

Harry turned to Dumbledore. "And yes, I also know that you acted as a summer tutor to that son of Queen Victoria who was about your age and who they pretended died of hemophilia so that he could move into the magical world. He actually died leading the final raid against Grindelwald, and only then did you take over and defeat your Dark Wizard."*

"Very good research," Dumbledore agreed.

Harry shrugged, not about to reveal his knowledge was more first hand than that, having tutored a few Royals himself. He knew more about the magic-Royal connection than anyone in the Ministry or the Wizengamot. "Not much we can do about things now, though. We still have to get rid of Voldemort, then we can worry about the inequities of the wizarding world, helping house elves, ending discrimination against werewolves, and all the other things we want to try and do."

"So, you two are official in the eyes of the girls' network?" Sirius teased, changing the subject.

"We are," Harry said firmly.

"You do realize you might both be teased a fair amount," Sirius said, a bit more sincerely.

"I might be," Hermione admitted, "but after that duel, I doubt many will be bothering Harry for a bit."

"Good point," Remus agreed.

"Did you really have to kill Severus?" Dumbledore asked, having wanted to ask that since the duel.

"Yes," Harry answered. "Death Eaters are bound to their Master. They cannot defect; it would be nearly as bad as breaking an Unbreakable Vow, no matter what you hoped for. Those who have not taken the Mark might be forgiven, but the others cannot be until Voldemort himself is dead, because they will simply go back to his side as soon as they can, even if they hate it. Until then, they have to be killed, because they will remain a threat."

"Are you really so certain?" Dumbledore demanded.

"Yes," Harry retorted. "The most Snape could have done is prevaricate at times. In the end, he had

to side with Voldemort."

Harry turned to Sirius. "Now that it's legal to be seen again, you need to clean up your act. Get back in shape, physically as well as magically."

"Yes, mother," Sirius retorted.

Harry ignored that. "Remus, in the other time line, Greyback was backing Voldemort. I need you to tell the other werewolves that I'm on their side to some extent. I would especially want the Wolfsbane Potion made freely available and most of the restrictions lifted on them."

"To some extent"? "Most"?" Remus asked mildly.

"No offense, but I do think the registration of werewolves and vampires are necessary, along with reasonable rules of conduct."

"Reasonable to whom?" Remus asked.

"Everyone who is reasonable," Harry retorted.

"Perhaps some of the werewolves themselves should make a set of proposals," Hermione suggested, "just as the vampires did sixty years ago." Remus obviously liked that idea to some degree.

"How many werewolves and vampires are there in Britain and Ireland, anyway?" Harry asked.

"There are about thirty of us registered," Remus said, "and perhaps a half dozen who aren't. There are six magical vampires who live here full time, and twenty-seven non-magical. There are some vampires who visit periodically."

The group went on to talk about possible tactics.

Luna stared at the small combination vanity/desk provided for her in her dorm. She noticed that the small items already taken by her Housemates had been returned in a pile.

"So, Loony," came the scornful voice of Margot Smythe, "I suppose you think everyone is going to kiss your arse now that you're friendly with Potter."

Luna turned to confront her main tormentor. "Some will. Others will remain as petty and spiteful as always, or act even worse out of jealousy."

Margot's expression darkened but then the Ravenclaw in her paused for a moment and realized that since she did actively despise this odd witch, she could be said to be spiteful at least. "I don't like you," Margot almost snarled.

"I have noticed," Luna agreed.

Margot almost seethed. "You do know that's why so many people attack you, don't you?"

Luna was now bewildered. "Sorry?"

"You won't bloody react! You're so bloody weird people react, and so damn passive about it they then need to get a reaction from you!"

Luna cocked her head to one side thoughtfully. "Really? I had always thought that if I reacted, people would merely increase the abuse." Margot twitched slightly at the term. "So, you mean if I simply wish to be left alone to be myself, I should throw a tantrum when childishly attacked?" A new pair of related thoughts hit her. "Or should I start hexing people, now that I know how, unlike in my First year? Or should I have Harry Challenge them for me?"

"I don't see what he sees in you," Margot said with contempt.

"That is because you do not know Harry," Luna said. "I know you and many others think me odd, because I see the world so much differently than you do. That does allow me to See things which you miss. Until this summer, Harry thought he wanted normalcy. He didn't want to stand out. He hates being 'the-Boy-Who-Lived'. Even though I did not know him at all, I could see how much he loathed being in the Tournament last year, right from the moment his name came out of the Cup."

"And what does he want now?" Cho asked, coming into the room, followed by three of her followers, plus Padma and Morag, and three of Luna's other roommates.

"First, he wants domesticity. He wants affection and lots of children. He still loathes being famous, but now seems determined to use that fame instead of fighting it. He wants a fairer wizarding Britain, one where innocent people won't be sent to Azkaban without a trial, where a teen cannot be put on trial at the whim of the Minister, and not a place where prejudice and bigotry are rewarded."

"Do you think being the consort of Harry will mean a life of ease and glamour?" Luna asked rhetorically. "No, it will likely mean living in some fairly modest, remote place, with maybe at most a free elf or two helping out. It will mean raising children, lots of children, while pursuing your own interests. It will not be a life of privilege, glamour, dinner parties, and servants."

"Harry was raised Muggle," Cho said. "Yet he seems interested in having at least two consorts, and may end up with more. You don't think that he would consider that 'normal' do you?"

"He is coming to realize that it can be in our culture," Luna replied. "Let me tell you something important about Harry Potter. Above all things, he appreciates honesty. If he had come back this year not as the tall, handsome warlock he has recently become, but was still the undersized-but-cute boy he was last June, one whom the main-stream press had been abusing all summer, how many of you would have gone up to him and said, 'I wish a relationship?'" She looked at Cho unblinkingly. "Not trying to replace Cedric, but for Harry's own uniqueness? Hermione could. I could. Would any one you really have done that, without his being the handsome, rich, warlock, but still being the essential Harry?"

"Weasley probably could," Padma said. "As for me?" She shrugged. "I don't know. What I do know is that Harry IS who he is now. And that is someone I wish to know."

Cho had thought about Harry over the summer, although not exclusively. Did she really want to get into this competition, even if she was fairly certain she might win in the end. "You're welcome to him," she finally said. "You'd have to share him with Granger, and maybe Lovegood here." She

shrugged. "I'm off to dinner."

Cho left, and her followers of course followed, including Margot. Margot was wondering, however, how she might aid Ginny in replacing Luna in Harry's affections. It might still be spiteful, but it would hardly be considered petty.

Hermione walked into the great hall early for dinner, holding Harry's arm. The voices dropped from the usual roar of feeding students to something more like murmurs. Harry and Hermione both singled out Luna to say hello to, but did not ignore the others who spoke to them. They finally sat down between Dean and Neville, and across from Ron and Parvati, with Ginny sitting closely by.

"Hungry already?" Parvati asked Hermione, her voice somewhere between a tease and a sneer.

"Yes," Hermione answered, "although I may not need much protein tonight."

"I still don't understand the custom," Dean admitted. "Or what the girl gets out of it."

"We get affection, a stable relationship -- for even if the wizard takes another consort it's almost as difficult for him to break things off as it would be for the witch. . . ." Hermione started.

"The witch also gets a massive orgasm each time," Parvati teased. Hermione flushed at that.

"I didn't understand before this summer, either," Harry said, moving back to Dean's point. "I don't know what it would be like between two Muggles -- well, I suppose the immediate physical pleasures would be the same -- but for a short while afterwards, I can feel Hermione's emotions."

"And I Harry's," Hermione agreed.

"How long?" Dean asked.

"Over an hour," Harry said.

"About nine hours for me," Hermione added.

"That's . . . a strong bond," Parvati admitted. "If they do it three times a week for a year, Hermione should have Harry's feelings all the time, and it would take years to wear off. Or, at the rate they're going, it could take far less time than that."

Dean looked puzzled.

"The guy doesn't usually get that far," Ginny put in, "since it's the woman who's, well, ingesting the potion, shall we say. What the wizard feels is, in a way, feedback from the bond the witch has with him."

"Ah."

"Part of it is the actual feelings the two have for each other," Parvati said. "It also acts as an enticement potion."

"Not quite," Hermione said defensively. "It does reenforce the attachment. . . ."

"And lower any feelings of jealousy or competitiveness," Parvati concluded. "By this time next year, Harry could add any number of other lovers he wanted, and you would hardly object."

"I think I might, at least as to the individuals," Hermione said pointedly.

Parvati sighed. "You're likely right. Still, that's why there are only what? Fifteen couples openly engaging at Hogwarts right now? And five of those are pure Hufflepuffs, and six of the others prearranged marriages, either Slytherin or mixed Slytherin/Ravenclaw. Since Paul and Fran left last year, you two are the only pure Gryffindor couple engaging."

"At the moment," Harry put in. "There seem to be a fair number of people getting interested in each other these days."

"Or maybe they're just interested in you," Parvati suggested.

"I would hope not," Harry said. "Voldemort is still after me, you know. I am the one Chosen by Prophecy to face him. That doesn't mean I'll win."

"You'll win," Ron said with certainty, for the first time in weeks sure of himself.

"I hope you're right," Harry said.

"Then what?" Dean asked.

"I've wondered that," Harry agreed. "Since Binns never talks about it, did you know that the European Ministries were set up in the late 1600s?"

"So?"

"So, even though the countries of Muggle Europe have changed in many ways, and their borders as well, the European Ministries are mostly the same, at least in theory. Portugal, Spain, France, Britain, the Netherlands -- although Belgium and Luxembourg have been attached -- the old Holy Roman Empire minus some places, Switzerland, an Italian Federation, the Turks, Austria, Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark."

"So that's why Ireland is still part of the Ministry," Dean said.

"Exactly," Seamus put in.

"They do recognize Muggle nationalist borders for Quidditch," Harry agreed. "And the old Ottoman Ministry is mostly honored in the breach. The Greeks, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Albanians, and Serbs pretty much rule themselves. Some of places under Communist control really suffered a lot, Russia and the Soviet successor states, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, parts of Germany, and especially Albania." The magically raised looked confused. "But the British and Spanish Ministries are still ruled by the same families that ruled in the 1600s, and the same is true to a lesser degree in Portugal, Italy, Austria, France, Sweden, and even Denmark and Switzerland."

"May I point out that the Potters are one of those families?" George pointed out from further up the table.

"Just because I benefit doesn't make it right," Harry reminded him. "I wish I could do something to make things like positions at the Ministry at least a bit more based on things like merit, with fairer laws, and less institutionalized bigotry."

"Like?" Seamus asked, leaning over.

"Like against werewolves," Harry retorted. Even Seamus had to admit that one, being as much a fan of Remus Lupin as most of the non-Slytherin students.

"Well, if you fight that kind of fight," Ron teased, "don't let Hermione name the group SPEW or anything like it."

"I'm sure she's only interested in another type of spewing," Fred called out, which seemed to bother Ron and Ginny even more than it did Harry and Hermione.

Chapter X

Sunday, September 3, 1995

Early in the morning, as Lucius Malfoy lay shivering on the floor, Walden Macnair collapsed next to him.

While the Dark Lord had been as angry about Snape's death as they had feared (and he had been even more surprised than angry, which had not been good), they had not been tortured as such. What the Dark Lord had done was tear into their minds, so that he could witness the duel himself, which had been more than painful enough.

As Malfoy and Macnair tried to recover, Voldemort strode up and down the hide-away, thinking furiously. Finally, he brandished his wand. Both of his Death Eaters shivered, but the wand was not directed against them. Instead, two figures appeared. It was soon apparent that they were both Harry Potter -- the Harry Potter of the Triwizard Tournament and their master's rebirth, and the one from the duel the day before.

It was clear that Harry had grown over six inches, perhaps even seven, in just three months, and had gone from scrawny to athletically lean. "It should not be possible," Voldemort declared. "Yet this is still Potter." He frowned. "I cannot believe the Old Man did this, yet who else would have the power and the access?"

He turned to Malfoy. "Your son had better produce detailed reports of everything that happens at Hogwarts this term. I want any other reports possible as well."

"Yes, my lord," Lucius managed to say.

"I need a plan, or else my plans for Azkaban may be in danger. You still know the situation at Hogwarts better than any, Lucius. Find something we can use against him! I don't care who gets him for me, but I want Potter here so I can kill him!"

"Weasley! Hey! Weasley! Stop!"

Ginny stopped her trudge through the quiet halls, not yet ready to face breakfast and so faced the person shouting for her attention. "What do you want, Smythe?"

Margot approached Ginny and asked, "I was just curious if you were content to lose out to Loony Lovegood as well as to Granger."

Ginny's face hardened. "What do you mean?"

"Come off it, Weasley," Margot scoffed. "The only time you weren't mooning over Potter the last four years was right after his name came out of the Goblet last November, and even then you had come back around before most people. You want him, or you did."

"And what do you suggest I do about it?" Ginny nearly spat.

"Well, there are always enticement potions, since I suppose a love potion would be too obvious, considering what he and Granger are up to," Margot pointed out.

"Are you crazy?" Ginny demanded.

"Oh, like I didn't see you with that book with the enticement potions in it last spring," Margot said contemptuously. "Since the worst punishment using most love potions gets you is a month's detention, isn't it worth the risk?"

"For a Ravenclaw, you do sloppy research," Ginny snapped. "First of all, yes, that's the penalty for using most love potions on an unattached Sixth or Seventh year if you are underage yourself. The penalty for using one on a Fourth or Fifth year is suspension for the rest of a year, and then having to take the end of year exams and passing ALL of them before being allowed to come back. Second, Harry and Hermione are Bonding. Just using an enticement potion is seen as interfering with that, and is punished by expulsion from Hogwarts, having your wand snapped, and being forbidden a wand for ten years for those underage. If you're over seventeen, you also get a year in Azkaban on top of that." Ginny sneered. "Since you suggested it, if I were to go ahead and got caught, you'd get about the same. Now, keep your nose out of my business. I would suggest you keep it far from Harry's as well." Ginny stormed off.

Margot stamped off, frustrated.

"Don't you want me to do it again?" Hermione pouted.

"I do. Absolutely. Often," Harry agreed eagerly, "I just don't care about it being in public." He loved Hermione's cute pout.

"We have to, three times a week," Hermione pointed out. "That shows we are Bonding, and in a stable Bond at that. Since we're both Gryffindors, we really should use the Gryffindor Corner twice a week. Since we want to involve Luna, we can use the Room once a week."

"If we have to do it in public, how about twice with Luna?" Harry offered.

"Alright, twice," Hermione said, having already arranged that. She knew that had she started off with the idea, Harry would have fought it. "Now, as to our Gryffindor Chaperon. . . ."

"Anyone but Ginny," Harry said firmly. Seeing Hermione's disappointed look, Harry asked, "What's wrong?" He eyed Hermione. "Are you trying to get me another consort or something?"

"As a possible option only," Hermione said. Ginny had, after all, been her first lover in some ways. "You want lots of children, and while both Luna and I would like to have children as well, I know Ginny dreams of having at least as many as her mother. The Weasleys would have had ten or twelve children if they could have afforded it."

"Really?"

Hermione nodded and explained, "They held off for several years at the beginning, and again until they could build on to the Burrow -- that's why there's a gap between Charlie and Percy -- and they stopped after Ginny because of the costs of sending their children to Hogwarts." Hermione looked at Harry. "Did you know there's at least the same number of children our age who are taught by at best an informal network, simply because they can't afford to come here?"

"No, I didn't," Harry admitted.

"Well, even though our class is small because of the war, even before then most classes have been under sixty for most of this last century. That's when a fund set up by the Founders partially 'went bust' because of embezzlement. That paid the fees for many of the magically poor, and the last money from the fund ran out in the late 1940s. If they have any land and don't mind living a pre-industrial rural lifestyle, wizards really don't need much actual money -- unless they want new things, or want to come to Hogwarts."

"I'll set some money aside to seed a new fund," Harry said. "We'll need to come up with some way making sure the most deserving get it, as there won't be anywhere near enough for fifty or sixty children a year, every year. But we've gone off topic, my love."

"So we have," Hermione agreed. Harry sighed. "What rules are there for choosing Chaperons?" He knew Hermione would know.

"Pretty simply ones," Hermione said. "They have to be at least fourteen or be in an active prearrangement if younger, and they have to have witnessed the ritual at least three times."

From the way Hermione's voice inflected, Harry knew there was more. "Yes?"

"While I would like you to consider Ginny for next Sunday, unless you have any strong objections, Angelina should do it today."

"Why?" Harry asked.

"Because she's the Head Girl," Hermione answered. "She's already coaching the First year girls on proper behavior." Seeing Harry's reaction, Hermione huffed, "Oh, Harry! They have to learn and it's part of the job for the Seventh year girl's prefect, or Head Girl in this case. We aren't taught all that much about wizarding customs, but we are taught this. The senior prefect always instructs the First years. You and I are the only purely Gryffindor couple at the moment doing the ritual. It's our duty to demonstrate for them."

Harry sighed again and rolled his eyes, giving in.

"That's wasn't so bad, was it?" Hermione asked forty minutes later.

"You were magnificent, and I love you," Harry answered wisely.

"But?"

"But it's still odd doing it in front of people, especially four giggling eleven year olds, and the

Second years weren't much better. That was even worse than having to see Parvati, Lavender, and that Third year drool."

"Third year? Oh, right, Romilda Vane." Hermione wrinkled her nose.

"At least Ginny wasn't there, making faces again," Harry went on.

"If I know her, and believe I do, she'll be coming to talk to you soon," Hermione said.

"About?"

"About her and you, of course," Hermione stated. "I don't know for certain what she's decided, but treat her nicely."

"What do you think she's choosing between?"

"She might still wish to be your consort," Hermione pointed out. "If so, she'll likely wish to know if we've settled on Luna as one or not. If that is what she's after, don't tell her Luna has any doubts. She could cause Luna lots of problems, accidentally or on purpose. And remind her that secondary relationships may not become publicly active ones until the primary couple have been Bonding for at least six months. And since Ginny is a Pure- blood, a secondary consort must be at least fifteen, unless she has her father's permission. Since Luna is considered a Full- blood, she has to be fourteen, which she is, of course. Even a Muggle-born like myself has to be at least thirteen to start without permission."

Harry frowned. "Are you sure?"

Hermione nodded. "You're supposed to ask the families of anyone not Muggle-born, of course, in order to make certain there are no pre-contracts. And if you want to have a real alliance, you can negotiate with them. Still, those aren't absolute."

"So Ginny couldn't start anything until next August without asking her father, and Luna couldn't do anything publicly until mid-February. Oh, you do know when her birthday is, don't you?" Harry asked.

"The First of November, as you already knew," Hermione answered. "I asked. And I got an amazing amount of detail," she added shaking her head.

"Such as?"

"Her mother's labor started an hour before midnight that Halloween, and she started crowning, meaning the head started to appear, at exactly midnight. Luna was technically born at three minutes past midnight." Hermione looked at Harry. "What?"

"I knew she was born on the First, of course, but I hadn't realized it was so close to Halloween. Her birth started exactly one year before Voldemort attacked Godric's Hallow, and her birth was a year before Hagrid flew me off."

"Really?"

"Sirius told me that he arrived about ten minutes before midnight, Hagrid told me he left just after midnight." Harry shrugged. "It probably doesn't mean much of anything."

"Probably not, but who can tell with magic? Connections are connections."

"Harry?"

Harry looked up from where he was standing in front of the Fat Lady, about the given the password. Harry was just coming back from the library. "Yes, Ginny?"

"Could . . . could I have a word in private?"

"Sure," Harry answered, unsurprised that Hermione had been correct. He led Ginny down the corridor, towards an alcove that was the off the usual path of the students. He perched on a window ledge. "What's up?"

Ginny stood there shyly, her large brown eyes looking up though the wisps of hair. her face was framed by a few more strands which had escaped from her casual ponytail, the toe of her left shoe rubbing against her lower right calf, her hands clasped behind her back (which thrust what little bosom she had outwards). She looked adorable, innocent, and very sexy. Harry looked on, bemused, recognizing one of Ginny's favorite teasing poses. "Harry, I was wondering. . . ."

Harry cut right to the chase. "If I might be interested in having three consorts?"

Ginny frowned, and her pose went from shy, innocent school girl to aggressively defensive almost instantly. "Three?" she demanded.

"Three," Harry said firmly. "Hermione is suggesting it, knowing how much I'd like a large family. I do know I wouldn't be interested in seriously thinking about it before next August in any case."

"Next August?" Ginny asked, dismayed.

"Next August, which would be the soonest you could think of openly becoming a consort anyway."

"It is? Oh . . . she said, remembering all the rules, "right." She smiled slyly. "Unless Daddy gives me permission before then."

"I would want that anyway," Harry told her, "and I'm not promising anything. I haven't seriously thought about going past two." He sighed. "If I had to, today, I suppose I would consider you. I like you, and you're cute and smart, but I tend to think of you almost like a sister, even though I know perfectly well you're not anything of the sort."

Ginny now seemed torn between anger and tears, but said, "Could I please act as Chaperon? At least for now?"

Harry scowled. "Why torture yourself?" he asked.

"What do you mean?"

"It won't bother you, watching Hermione do what you wish you were doing?" Harry asked.

"I do want to be the one doing it," Ginny admitted. "I've wanted to ever since the day I met you, no matter that I was just ten, didn't really know much about what 'it' was, and knew I couldn't for at least three years, more likely four or five." Ginny gave Harry her most determined look, which was a very determined one indeed. "Can you really swear I won't ever become one of your consorts, Harry?"

"No," Harry said with a sigh. Hermione seemed to be pushing the idea to some degree, and since Harry could hardly honestly say he was strongly against the idea of having sexual contact with another desirable teen, even one who had manipulated him in another time line, he couldn't say a flat-out 'no'.

"Then leave me some hope," she asked.

"Alright," Harry said, "you may Chaperon. Still, I was wondering if you would consider doing something for me?"

"Probably," Ginny had to say. "What?"

"Could you get to know Neville better?"

Ginny looked puzzled. "Why?"

"Because Neville has a lot of potential," Harry said. "I truly believe that he could be the second most powerful wizard in my year, after myself. He might be the third most powerful person, certainly the fourth. So, while I'm not saying a flat 'no' to you, I'm asking that you get to know Neville. If you decide that he might be better for you, fine. If not, just don't break his heart. If you do find him nice and desirable, you might help him find that confidence he needs."

Harry looked at Ginny and went on. "Ignoring, if you can, the whole 'Boy-Who-Lived' and 'Chosen One' stuff. . . ."

"Not easy to do, but I can try," Ginny said.

"Objectively, Neville is well-off, and will grow into a position of political influence. I know you can't direct your heart any more than I can, Ginny, and I'm not asking you to. I am asking you to consider if being Neville's likely only consort, more likely his true bondmate, might not be a better position for someone, not necessarily you, than my third or fourth consort."

Ginny frowned in thought, and then said, "So, you're asking me to get close to Neville, in part hoping we fall for each other, and if we don't, so that I can find someone else nice for him?"

"Basically, yes," Harry agreed. "Is that too much to ask?"

"No, no I suppose not," Ginny said.

Harry and Hermione were snuggled together on a small sofa later that evening, and Harry had been

explaining what had happened.

"I told you," Hermione said, continuing their conversation in a whisper.

"I didn't doubt you," Harry answered. "Why are you pushing her?"

"She's had this crush for five years," Hermione pointed out. "She's hardly fickle."

"True," Harry had to agree. "Plus the two of you are intimate friends."

"We were," Hermione agreed. "That seems ended, at least for the moment."

"Any other reason?"

"Well, there were those last ten days before we came back to Hogwarts. How many times were we doing it every day?" Harry blushed slightly. "I don't know if it's because you're fifteen, because of your magic, because of those potions, or whatever, but we were doing it at least four times every day, and that one day we managed ten. Tell me, you're wanking at least every morning, aren't you?"

Harry nodded. His libido was in overdrive, so he was also doing it most nights.

"I know women generally have more sexual endurance than men, but I think you're an exception. You can probably handle three to six women, especially once we start having children in three or four years."

"Do you really think I could love six women?"

"Love isn't a finite thing, or the same in everyone," Hermione said. "You may just love Luna and myself. You might find it in yourself to love four others, and all our children, with ease."

"Are you interested in Padma?" Harry asked.

"She's nice and very sexy, but not as such," Hermione said. "Whatever drew me to her in the other time-line isn't active right now." She shrugged. "That might change, it might not. To be honest, I admit I likely would desire her if I got close to her. Right now, though, I'm more interested in getting to know Luna."

Harry nodded.

Just before 11:00, Harry caught Fred and George and led them to an alcove. "How go the Whizzes?"

"Pretty well," Fred said. "We have a good set of products, although we will need to be testing them soon."

"And we think we'll have just enough resources to open a small store next summer," George added.

"Why a small store?" Harry asked.

"Well, we don't have the money for a bigger place. . . ."

"And we won't have the cash to hire help, assuming we could find anyone we could trust."

"Ah, as for help you could trust, I know one of you took Katie to the Ball, but aren't the two of you more interested in Alicia and Angelina?"

"True." Not that the twins were solidly sure of which of the two girls each liked best, and neither had they written off Katie. Nor had any of the three girls written them off.

"However, to be sordid, most girls, especially the smart ones -- and all of them are smart -- would want a bit of financial security to go along with the emotional security, before committing to anything before leaving school, especially to what you and Hermione are doing."

"True," Harry agreed in turn. "Now, the seed money I gave you was, remember, a gift. I am considering an actual investment, if you'd accept one."

"Amount and terms?" George asked.

"I want ten percent of the net, starting in the year 2000," Harry said. "The first payment will be on the first quarter day in 2001 and based on the first quarter of the previous year, the rest on the second."

"And the amount you're interested in putting in?" Fred asked anxiously.

"How does twenty thousand sound?" Harry asked.

"

It sounds like if Hermione ever has a sore throat, George and I will go down on you," Fred admitted.

"I can give you a draft for a thousand now. On the second Hogsmeade weekend, we can sign the partnership agreement." Seeing the twins frown, Harry added, "You will need to see a solicitor on the first weekend to set that up, right?" The twins nodded their understanding.

Harry went on, "The rest of the money will be available after the New Year on the terms I mentioned." The twins again nodded. "Now, no matter if the girls get formally involved with the two of you or not, here are the rules for testing your products at Hogwarts. No extemporaneous testing. No unpaid or surprise testing. Testing only on Friday evenings and Saturdays, so that anything that goes wrong can be fixed. And I want Angelina and Alicia, or some one designated by Hermione, to be at any testing to help out if anything goes wrong."

"Ah."

"Now the light breaks."

"For your Beloved's peace of mind, we agree." Fred and George bowed to Harry.

"Not to mention that it gives the two of you good reasons to get close to the girls, and for them to know your prospects," Harry pointed out. The twins grinned and went on to their dorm.

"Quite the little matchmaker, aren't you, Harry?"

Chapter XI

"Quite the little matchmaker, aren't you, Harry?" Lavender asked, coming out from the shadows.

"What do you mean?" Harry asked.

"You're setting the twin terrors up with the two who have been chasing them since Bell got angry at the pair of them for double-teaming her at the Ball, and I overheard Ginny and Hermione talking a few minutes ago. You want her to go after Neville Longbottom instead of you." Lavender almost leered. "What plans do you have to make Ron Weasley more attractive?"

Harry almost shuddered at the prospect of 'Won-Won' and 'Lav' a year early. Still, this had some potential. "Why? Are you interested?"

"Maybe," Lavender admitted. "No offense, but on looks, I'd take Ron over anyone else in our year and most of the Sixth years, although you and Seamus are both attractive. And I like him, but he treated Padma badly at the Ball, he was obviously crushing on Hermione after that until you whisked her away, and half the time he still acts more like a Second year than a Fifth. He's nowhere nearly mature enough to enter the Bonding, and with you and Hermione doing it, and possibly his older brothers, too -- well, that's what he'll want."

Harry projected a slight compulsion spell onto Lavender, while projecting the feelings of 'helpfulness', 'trust', and 'interest' through his aura. This was a trick he had been shocked to have learned that Dumbledore often used it. These were easy to resist if you were really so inclined, but Lavender wasn't.

"If I was attracted to Neville at all, I'd make a run at him, but I'm not. I am attracted to Ron. I just don't know how to approach him, especially since I don't know if I'm ready to Bond at the moment, and I know he isn't. And if we go ahead anyway, then I'm mostly stuck, Harry. I don't think most boys appreciate that." She looked at, confused and worried and hopeful all at the same time. Unlike Ginny's faux coyness earlier, Harry could tell Lavender's feelings were genuine.

"Ron is directionless," Harry said. "And he needs direction. The temptations will be either to boss him, like Hermione would have, or smother him with affection." 'Which is what you did in our original Sixth year,' Harry thought. "If you really want Ron to succeed, you need moderate amount of both as you test the waters. Don't nag him about homework, just set aside times to do it together. You're in all the same classes, and except for Divination, you two have much the same attitudes towards each class." Lavender had to agree with that.

"Start there, and encourage him at the Quidditch tryouts. I'll offer to toss Quaffles at him, and you can either do that, too, or if you don't think you can, you can help in some other way, even if you just show up and cheer. Keep any snogging very very light for a while. When Ron suggests more, tell him you hope to make it the type of full relationship Hermione and I have, but you don't want to get to that point until after the Easter break or even next year at the earliest -- you can always move it up. Right now, you want to get to know him, and for him to know you, because once you start, you'll likely be together for the rest of your lives. But as you sort of pointed out, you will have to control the relationship, not Ron."

"That makes sense," Lavender admitted.

"If you and Ron do get together, don't worry," Harry said. "We'll get him on a decent career path somehow. Actually, if he has confidence, I think he could actually play Quidditch for a few years and then move into coaching."

Lavender cocked her head to one side. "Wouldn't he have needed to be team captain for that? Here if not professionally?"

"Not necessarily here," Harry said. "If he makes the team this year, he or I could be captain for at least one year. If it's me, Ron would be the play designer, and I'd be sure to give him credit."

"Thank you, Harry," Lavender said. It was at least a start.

For Harry, the next few weeks were some of the most enjoyable he had ever spent at Hogwarts. Classes were a breeze. Moody was not quite as entertaining as his imitator had been, but he was a far better teacher, giving the students a solid theoretical background to go with the strong grounding he gave them in practice.

Harry, Ginny, Fred, and George had spent several hours the first week of class throwing Quaffles at Ron, while Hermione and (to everyone's but Harry's surprise) Lavender helped by retrieving any stray Quaffles and putting them back in play. Ron was surprised by Hermione's competence on her broom (and that she even owned one, a Cleansweep model noted for its stability), not knowing that Harry had coaxed her into flying again in August and had coached her.

The final surprise (to all but Harry and Hermione) had been the quality of Ginny's flying. The twins and Harry easily convinced Angelina to give her a tryout, and so Ginny was listed as Reserve Chaser and Reserve Seeker.

Harry's romance plans for his friends were also working out. Officially, Fred and Alicia, George and Angelina were couples starting their own Bonding by the end of September, with Katie acting as Chaperon. In reality, the two couples were switching off. And, after each time, Angelina or Alicia would then share the semen with Katie, just as Hermione was sharing with Luna, and then Angelina and Alicia would share the remaining taste with each other. It turned out that the three best friends were at least as interested in finding a way to stay together as they were in the twins.

Ron went through the roof with joy when he learned that Lavender was interested in him. A real, serious relationship frightened him nearly as much as the idea pulled on him, however, so Lavender's cautious approach actually relieved him. Her hugs and light kisses, which started after he made the Quidditch team, were more than enough to keep him going.

Neville had no idea what to make of Ginny at first. Then he realized that she was seeking a substitute for Harry, which both thrilled and bothered him. In truth, Neville was by nature the boy with the most natural ability to woo a girl in his year, and one of the best in the school. What he lacked was any confidence. After a pep talk from Harry, however, Neville began to put his hidden, natural charm to work.

Harry rather hoped that this would take care of both Neville and Ginny.

Luna was spending more time with Harry and Hermione each day in the library and even some private time in the Room of Requirement, as the trio got to know each other as close friends. She reported that things were still often tense for her in Ravenclaw, but the open problems were at least totally gone for the moment.

"You have returned of your own will, Lucius," Voldemort drawled. "You have news, or a plan?"

"The news, which I am sure you already have my lord, is that Potter is Bonding with that know-it-all Mudblood in his year, Granger," Malfoy replied.

Voldemort nodded. "Macnair is already trying to track down her parents' location. Proceed."

"Potter knows that I, Crabbe, Goyle, and I believe Nott are your followers, my lord. However, I am certain that the name of one follower who has a child at Hogwarts was skipped over in June."

Voldemort thought back, and his eidetic memory quickly remembered, "Smythe."

"Yes, my lord. Even better, Smythe's daughter is in Ravenclaw, not Slytherin, and is separated from her and her mother, which is even better cover. Also, Draco believes that Potter is already considering taking a second consort, a Fourth year Ravenclaw named Lovegood."

"Lovegood? An old name in modern form," Voldemort mused. "Coincidence? A Half-blood?"

"A Full-blood, actually, as she does have a great-grandfather who was Muggle-born on her mother's side," Lucius said. "The girl's father runs a ridiculous scandal-sheet called The Quibbler."

"So, we can either send Smythe in for a suicide assassination, or perhaps he can convince his daughter to help us abduct the Lovegood girl, if not Potter or even Granger," Voldemort thought aloud.

"A portkey could spare Smythe the need of it being suicidal, my lord," Malfoy suggested. "He would need to stay underground, and could claim someone impersonated him with polyjuice. That way, he would still have access to his fortune for us and his family."

"I shall consider the two options," Voldemort said. "See Smythe, and hear his opinions of his daughter's worth."

"Yes, my lord."

Saturday, September 30, 1995

Luna looked up from her tome on ancient Mitanni charms and looked at Harry and Hermione. The three of them were in the Room of Requirement. The room itself was a pleasant one, a cross

between a sitting room, a study, and a reference library. She was curled on an amazingly comfortable (and huge) leather chair while Hermione worked on new study schedules for the First year Gryffindors at a library table. Harry was in a corner, dressed in a gi and practicing wand movements with such quick and fluid motion that it looked like a cross between a dance and a Muggle martial arts demonstration. (Harry, it turned out, had learned several martial arts, although not at the very top levels.)

Between Hermione and Luna, on a low table, was a large pot of peppermint tea. Nearby was a pitcher of pink lemonade for Harry. There was a platter of cheeses, sliced cold meats, and breads, which they periodically munched on.

It was warm in every sense, domestic even.

It was the closest Luna had felt to being at home, in her heart, since her mother had died.

Luna, when she realized that, thought about those feelings very carefully. She decided that she not only approved, but wanted those feelings to last.

Luna slipped off her shoes and quietly undid her robe and then her dress. When she stood to take them off, it caught Hermione's peripheral vision, and she looked up to see Luna placing them on the chair, followed by her bra, then her socks and panties.

Luna smiled at Hermione, dressed only in her necklace of butterbeer caps and mismatched earrings -- a small silver Celtic cross and a hard green plastic spider.

Harry caught that sight as he made a spinning turn in his workout. Harry fell out of his spin and onto his arse, stunned.

"Wow," he said.

"You are beautiful," Hermione agreed.

"I am not," Luna said simply. "I have no boobs, no butt, I am too skinny, my eyes pop out, I have scrawny legs, my hair is. . . ."

"If you were a Muggle, you would be hired as a high fashion model in a minute," Hermione avowed. Luna was a bit too short for that, at least currently, but Hermione was fairly accurate in her assessment. It was not a popular look in the wizarding world, however.

"Easily," Harry agreed.

"I shall take your word for it," Luna said. "Harry, Hermione, I know I must wait until February to officially join my life to yours, but I thought I should give you notice of my desire."

"We would have to wait until February to make it official," Hermione said, her voice husky from desire. "We can do anything you want now."

Harry merely nodded and secured the entrance with a wave of his wand.

Hermione set down her quill and moved to her knees in front of Luna. "Please, may I kiss you . . .

everywhere?"

Luna took the two steps necessary to bring her to nearly touching Hermione. She bent and kissed Hermione deeply. "Only if I can return the favor," she replied after breaking the kiss.

Harry approached and touched their shoulders, and concentrated for a moment. The Room wavered and reformed around them.

Luna's chair and possessions remained, as did Hermione's library table and work. Even though it was mid-afternoon in mid-autumn in the real world, a large window had formed on one wall, showing an evening scene, looking out on snowy woods. The ambient temperature dropped a few degrees, then went back as a fireplace, merrily burning fragrant apple wood, appeared opposite the window. An immense canopied bed was against the room opposite the trio. Harry gestured to behind Luna, where a door had appeared. "There should be a bath nearly equal to the Prefect's Bath in there, along with some water-proof cushions. Any preference?"

Luna looked at Hermione, who replied, "This is your day."

"You and I should go to the cushions with Harry, and perhaps, if we are still able, then Harry, you, and I on the bed." She looked at Harry. "If you wish to last, you might want to stay out here."

"I don't care if I pop in a second," Harry said, "if neither of you would mind."

"I don't mind a bit," Luna answered, her voice now heavy with lust.

"I want you to watch us love each other," Hermione added.

"Then you are overdressed at the moment," Harry said, for he had slipped out of his workout gi and was standing only in the jock strap.

Looking down, Hermione said, "Maybe Luna and I should relieve your pressure, then make love. You might be inspired afterwards to take me to bed, with some help from Luna . . . or even the other way around."

Harry adored Hermione's blowjobs, but had not been inside her since the morning of September 1. His hard cock pulsed at the idea.

"I think he is in favor," Luna said with a smile.

"I think so, too," Hermione agreed. "Still, before we go any further. . . ." She took her wand and held the tip just above Luna's clit and said a contraception spell.

"I not certain if I'm ready for that," Luna said.

"True, but it's best to be safe," Hermione pointed out. "Shall we?" The other two nodded. Hermione went through the door first. Harry and Luna watched her arse gently sway away from them.

"So perfect it would make an artist cry out of envy, isn't it, Harry?" Luna stated.

"Exactly." Harry smiled at Luna. "So, partners as well as lovers?"

"Partners and lovers," Luna agreed. They shook hands and then kissed.

Hermione looked back at them. She hoped she was doing the right thing. Harry swept Luna up in his arms and threw her over his shoulder, which made her shriek and giggle, and followed Hermione.

"Where do you want this lovely wench, my love?"

Hermione glanced around, and saw a large sunken bath, with mats, on one side of the room, but her attention was drawn to the other side. "Set her on that futon over there, then lie down on your back, with your feet on the floor. You might need the leverage. Maybe we'll play in the water later."

Harry set Luna down and then did as Hermione directed. Hermione got on the futon, on Harry's right side. Luna slithered over him and knelt on his left.

Hermione took a deep breath, and then started licking up and down Harry's erection. Luna's head came close, staring in lust and interest. Soon Hermione was licking and sucking up the right side while Luna was doing the same on the left. They went slow, and often kissed at the top. Luna had never done this, but all First year girls were given instructions, and all had witnessed this done.

After a few minutes of this, Hermione readjusted her position, and slowly sucked Harry into her mouth, and after a moment of hesitation, down into her throat, something which was impossible to do in the formal Bonding setting.

"Oh my!" Luna exclaimed in an awed whisper. She had never thought 'deep throat' was anything more than an expression. She saw now it was real, and from the small sounds Harry was making, he loved it. From the yummy sounds Hermione was making, she loved doing it.

Hermione expelled and sucked down the entire length of Harry three more times. Luna watched in awe as she saw Hermione's throat bulge with each swallow. Then with a final lick around the head, Hermione sat up and swung her left leg over Harry, so that her arse was facing Harry. She held onto his cock, while trying to position herself -- he was so long it wasn't easy to aim from this height.

Seeing this, Luna touched Harry with her hands for the first time. She watched as Hermione slowly eased herself onto the wet pole. Hermione's inner labia formed something of an 'innie' -- very little of them were visible.

Harry was holding still, letting Hermione massage his cock in and out of her, with it going in a little deeper every third or fourth mini-thrust. After a few moments of this, Hermione seemed to have hit bottom. Less than a third of the cock was still outside Hermione.

Hermione sighed with satisfaction. She spoke to Luna in a dreamy voice than Luna had never heard before. "This is great, but it can hurt both of us a little if I bounce him off my cervix very much. So. . . ."

With that, Hermione gave a little grunt, and the remaining two inches slowly sank into Hermione. "That feels. . .so weird," she said, with obvious satisfaction.

"It's rather on the snug side," Harry said, and Luna realized Harry was inside Hermione's womb.

Hermione eased Harry out slightly more than half-way, and began flexing her vaginal muscles a little. "Make me cum, Luna," Hermione begged.

Luna sat up and looked at her friend and lover. Hermione was red in the face, neck, and even a little around her breasts from her sexual flush, her reddish-brown nipples hard and vulva dripping, and she was breathing hard. Harry was supporting her back with both arms. Hermione was leaning back, totally relaxed except for those muscles gripping Harry's cock, her arms relaxed -- she was waiting to hold Luna's head, Luna realized.

Luna leaned forward, and licked around Hermione's right nipple, drawing a low moan from Hermione throat and Hermione's arms went around Luna's shoulders. Luna's tongue worked over to the left nipple, and then down Hermione's sensitive tummy.

Hermione's pussy was slowly leaking a mixture of her own juices and Harry's pre-ejaculation lubrication. Hermione moved off Harry slightly, and Luna licked the lowest quarter of his cock clean, before moving directly to the source, and then to Hermione now-exposed clit. It only took about a half minute of flicking before Hermione orgasmed, and lost control of her body as she nearly passed out. If Luna had been thinking clearly, she would have marveled at the power of Hermione's passions.

She wasn't thinking clearly, however. Luna eased Harry out of Hermione. Her own lust had been building, and she licked and sucked him clean. Harry reached down and pulled Luna to him, and they kissed hard and deeply.

Luna felt the glans rubbing against her vulva. "Harry?"

"Yes?"

"I was wrong about not being ready. Would you claim my virginity? Would you claim me as your second consort?"

"No," Harry answered, "but I will take your virginity as a gift, and I would be honored to have you as my first consort, if we ever bother with ranking ourselves." Hermione, she realized, would be his full bondmate if any would. "I love you."

"And I love you, Harry." She sat back slowly, savoring the fullness as Harry sank in some seven inches -- this felt like heaven was slowly splitting her apart, only slightly burning as he ripped her maidenhead and opened her for the first time. She didn't care. The pleasure was far more overwhelming than the pain. "Oh, goddess, yes! Split me! Spit me! Send that in all the way!" Luna screamed a little as Harry did just that -- in a smooth thrust that barely hesitated at her cervix, Harry was all the way inside her.

"It's a good thing I cast that spell. I hope I did it right! Cause if it didn't work, he's about to impregnate you," Hermione, recovering, murmured.

"I'm sure you did," Luna managed to moan, "but I wouldn't care if I get preggers! Fuck me! Fuck me hard, master!"

As Harry did just that, Hermione sat back in surprise. Luna had never shown any submissive

tendencies that she had ever heard of, not that she knew Luna all that well. On the other hand, they were both being showered with testosterone.

Hermione came close to Luna's ear as she could without getting slammed in the jaw by Luna's shoulder. "Did you mean that, Luna? Are you our slave in bed? What shall we do with our slave?" Hermione whispered, although it was loud enough for Harry to hear.

"Yes," Luna moaned, "I'm yours. Hermione, my love, my mistress, my beloved darling, have him fuck me! Spank me, rip me, do anything, but don't let him stop pounding me!"

Hermione's hand slapped the side of Luna's arse, hard.

"Yes!" Luna called out. "Love me!"

Hermione spanked as Harry fucked her. In less than two minutes, Luna was having as great an orgasm as Hermione had. Luna fell on Harry's chest. Hermione rolled her off and hugged her.

Luna and Hermione were embracing, kissing deeply, when they became aware of a long rod near their lips.

"Poor baby," Hermione cooed, shocking Luna again. "And you were so good at holding back for us."

"What shall we do?" Luna asked.

"Get astride him, and start sucking," Hermione commanded. Luna hustled to obey. A small voice in the back of her mind wondered why she was acting so submissively, but she smothered it and concentrated on sucking Harry's glans. Hermione had no compunction in stationing Luna at the tip and concentrated on jacking Harry off into her mouth.

Harry had nearly cum three times in the past forty minutes, restraining himself only with increasing difficulty. Now he just laid back and slowly relaxed. In far less than two minutes, he was ejaculating into Luna's mouth.

Luna pulled back after three jolts of cum filled her mouth, trying to swallow it all. Hermione was there in an instant, swallowing the rest, jacking Harry dry.

Only when Hermione was sure the last drop was out, and Harry had mostly softened, did she sit up and kiss Luna on the lips. They nestled down on either side of Harry, clasping hands. Harry's arms held them close. They each sighed, and fell into a short nap.

Margot stared at the letter from her father. It was discreet, almost to the point of being obscure.

Almost.

Margot had long wondered why her mother had left her father when she was just an infant. That wonder had grown in her First year, as she had learned about the Bonding, and learned that her mother had been Bonded to her father. What, she had wondered, had been so bad that her mother

had broken that Bonding in November, 1981? Her mother, after all, was a vague, weak woman as far as Margot was concerned.

Then she had realized what the cause had likely been. One of her parents must have supported You-Know-Who. As much as Margot wished that it had been her mother, she knew that it would have had to have been her handsome, nearly-perfect in her eyes, father. As the tensions over the Chamber of Secrets rose during that late spring, numerous accusations had flown around the Ravenclaw Common Room. It was only then that she had learned that her father had spent a year in Azkaban, and had only partially gotten off by pleading he had been under the Imperius.

It had been Lovegood who had actually told her what the other students had been saying, but Margot had placed most of the blame on the messenger.

Margot had firmly believed in her father's basic innocence ever since. However, this letter destroyed that belief. Her father was either a Death Eater, or had been close to being one. Stated plainly, what he had taken six paragraphs to ask was if she would either be ready to help him kidnap Luna Lovegood, or invent an excuse for him to come to Hogwarts to either kidnap or kill Harry Potter.

Kidnapping Lovegood by portkey should not be difficult. All Margot would have to do would be to say a password and drop the portkey onto Lovegood's sleeping form or into her bookbag, and at the prearranged time, it would whisk the annoying girl away.

'Why not?' Margot thought. 'What could go wrong?'

That thought made Margot stop and wonder what in deed could go wrong? Therefore, when she wrote her reply, she asked some very thoughtful questions, ones which Smythe did not feel qualified to answer.

Chapter XII

Luna awoke with Harry's left arm still surrounding her. She then realized that while Harry was still napping, Hermione was stroking her nipple.

A slight moan escaped Luna's lips. She opened her eyes, and Hermione was staring at her intensely. Hermione's hand moved off Luna's left nipple, and stroked down her breast and then her flank. On the up-stroke, she pulled Luna a little towards her, and they gently kissed.

"Here, you two! At it again?" Harry muttered.

"Humm-hmm," Hermione agreed through the kiss. Hermione broke the kiss and sat up. "Had enough Luna, or do you want more?"

"I don't know if I could take more, or if Harry could give more."

"He can," Hermione assured her, "although if we get him going to another climax now, there'll be no more until tomorrow morning or maybe afternoon, but that's alright. We have to do the ritual in Gryffindor tomorrow. But we three can still play around now."

"H'mmm, like doing what?" Luna teased.

"What would you like?" Harry asked.

"Actually," Luna answered, "before we play some more, I did have a serious question."

"And what's that?" Hermione asked.

"Harry, in the previous time stream, did you Bond with us?"

"I did with you," Harry answered. "I was in a deep depression after the Final Battle and Hermione's death, and the Ministry's actions, coming in and trying to totally reinstitute the entire old order of things, really almost enacting most of the Pure-Blood agenda, made things worse. You took me to the Yukon, and stabilized me mentally and emotionally by creating the Bond."

"And me?" Hermione asked for Luna's benefit, since she already knew.

Harry shook his head. "You wanted to wait until after the war, and after your N.E.W.T.s, so while we had shared oral a few times, it was pretty irregular, not enough to really Bond." He looked back at Luna. "You asked because you felt it, didn't you?"

"I did," Luna agreed. She looked at Hermione. "Having oral sex once does not really start the Bond at any noticeable level, as you know. I believe Harry's relationship with the other me jump-started the Bond."

"It's nearly as strong as ours," Harry told Hermione.

"Good," Hermione answered decisively. She turned to Luna. "Since we have that settled, tell me, when did you become a bottom?"

"A bottom?"

Hermione slapped Luna's butt lightly. "A submissive," she clarified.

"It happened just this afternoon. I don't know where that came from," she admitted, "but I liked it. I know I can trust you not to abuse me or demean me, or to play when I do not wish to."

"True," Hermione agreed. She looked at Harry. "Did you know she was submissive?"

"Of course I knew she enjoyed playing the submissive at times," Harry answered. "Not very often -- maybe seven or eight times a year -- but I wanted her to discover that aspect of herself, and then decide if she wanted to pursue it again."

"I do, my lord, master and spouse," Luna answered.

"Did you have a safe word?" Hermione asked.

"Safe word?" Luna asked.

"A word or short phrase which serves to give notice that you feel things are getting out of hand, and you want to at least pause," Hermione answered.

"Of course we did," Harry answered.

"Let me guess," Hermione grinned. "'Snorkack'?"

"No, that was yours," Harry replied. "Luna's was 'Draco'."

"I had a safe word?" Hermione asked.

"'Draco'?" Luna asked.

"You picked Draco because you couldn't imagine ever saying it otherwise, and knew that your saying it would certain get my attention." Harry said to Luna before turning to Hermione as he continued answering, "You liked bondage and tickling at times as well as spanking and such, while that Hermione liked a lighter version of bondage and tickling, but rarely wanted to be spanked."

The two teens considered all of that.

"So, shall we tie you up and tickle and lick you?" Harry offered. "Like I said, you liked that in the other time line."

Luna wriggled from both embarrassment and excitement. "That . . . might be fun."

Harry wrestled with Luna for a few moments, and soon had her legs locked under his and her wrists firmly in his hands. "Care to see how ticklish she is, my love?"

"I don't know, let's see!"

It turned out Luna was very ticklish, and Hermione spent nearly five minutes tickling her, while Harry licked her neck and ears, which also made her giggle.

After that five minutes, Hermione moved from tickling Luna's sides and thighs to licking Luna's nipples. She soon worked her way down to Luna's pussy, while Harry held Luna's wrists with his right hand and stroked her breasts with his left. Within two minutes, Luna had a small orgasm.

Harry flipped Luna around, and soon had her pinned with her arse in the air. Hermione ran into the first room, while Harry and Luna kissed deeply.

WHAP! Hermione suddenly slapped Luna's arse with a ruler the room had conjured. "Ow! Wow!" Luna exclaimed.

For the next three minutes, Hermione slapped Luna's reddening arse cheeks; some times with her hand, some times with the ruler. Luna was breathing hard, when she felt Hermione's fingers stroking her labia and, after applying a little lube, her rectum.

Hermione played Luna like a musical instrument -- her right hand fingers playing with Luna's labia and clit, and sometimes stroking in for her g-spot, her left probing inside Luna's arse and delivering an occasional slap.

When Luna finally orgasmed again, Hermione kissed her friend's bright red arse cheeks, and then went to wash her hands.

"How do you feel now?" Hermione asked when she came back.

"I feel . . . cleansed, somehow. Like I've been baptized in love and sex." She thought a moment. "I wouldn't wish to do this too often, though."

"I didn't hurt you, did I Luna?" Hermione sounded concerned. She'd never even considered playing out such a scene, and was worried about testing Luna's limits too soon.

Luna smiled and rubbed her raw arse. "You hurt me just right. No damage, I'm sure. I was more surprised when you stuck your finger up my arse."

"Sorry."

"No, I liked it in the heat of the moment."

"How about you, Hermione?" Harry asked.

"What?"

"Do you want any similar moments?"

"No, not really, at least not to that extent." She then smiled. "I guess my tastes haven't changed from the last time."

"Making love to me like that didn't turn you on again?" Luna asked, curiously.

Hermione blushed. "I came, rubbing myself against Harry's knee."

"How about you?" Luna asked Harry. He was about half erect.

"I had better save it for tomorrow. It would look bad if I didn't shoot a lot." He smiled. "I think we should first massage our wonderful inspiration here instead."

"That sounds reasonable."

"Then we can find out if she's ticklish."

"Hey!"

"Is that a no, my love?" Harry asked.

Hermione fought with herself for a few moments but then gave in to her desires. "Hold me tight, tickle me, and then lick me to orgasm if you want to, but remember, no spanking."

Luna and Harry looked at each other and then gave Hermione evil grins. "Great," they both said.

The next morning, Margot read her father's reply and the detailed instructions which came with that reply. She decided to comply, which meant she had to make no reply. Her reply would be her actions.

That afternoon right before dinner, Ginny confronted Hermione in the Fifth year girls' dorm. "What?" Hermione asked.

"Tell me, why did it take you a bit longer than usual to get Harry off this afternoon?" Ginny asked, curious. "Were the two of you, or perhaps three of you, busy yesterday afternoon, when no one could find you?"

"Perhaps," Hermione answered.

Ginny sighed sadly. "I may never have a magical connection with you, but I know your body language better than Ron or even Harry ever will. I have to face the fact that not only won't I ever have Harry to myself, I'd have to share him with more than the one girl I can even imagine I could be intimate with."

"Are you certain?" Hermione asked.

"No," Ginny answered, tears now running down her cheeks. "I'm not really certain of much right now." Before Ginny lost what little composure she had, she asked, "Could you have someone bring me something to eat later?"

"I will," Hermione answered.

"Thank you," Ginny managed to choke out as she fled the room.

Hermione was not surprised that Ginny begged off being Chaperon from then on.

Tuesday, October 10, 1995

Hermione blinked. When Luna had asked to meet Hermione privately, she had not expected Luna to bring a guest. "What. . . ?"

"Some girls might desire Harry," Luna said. "Perhaps many, but none have actually approached us. She has actually, what was the phrase?"

The teen knelt respectfully in front of Hermione. "As is proper, I have asked the First Consort for her opinion. She expressed interest, and has given me permission to approach you. If you give me permission, my lady, I shall approach my perspective lord."

"You're about the only one he might even consider, at least at this point," Hermione said, making the teen's heart beat a touch faster. "Have you approached your family?"

"No, not yet," the teen admitted.

"Unless it goes against your family's traditions, I suggest you do this. Write to your father and explain your interest and your reasoning. If he gives you permission to approach Harry, then we will give ours as well. It might be more common for your father to propose an alliance. . . ." The teen nodded, "but assure him that if he genuinely wishes to ally himself with the Chosen One, this is the best way."

"That might be my father's reason if he agrees, but it is not one of my reasons," the teen stated, flushing. "I desire Harry . . . and I desire you. Both of you, but especially you. I would not have the courage to ask for Harry, if you were not in the relationship."

Hermione leaned over and kissed the teen lightly on the lips. "We know. That's one reason why Harry might say yes."

As the teen almost skipped away with happiness, Luna asked, "Harry never had these insights before, did he?"

"No," Hermione agreed. "Almost annoying, isn't it?"

"Almost."

When told, Harry merely smiled.

Saturday, October 14, 1995

Margot sat playing with her food at dinner, wondering where Loony was. Rumor had it that she spent the previous Saturday afternoon at least with Potter and Granger. Loony had been acting more annoyingly serene for the last two weeks, and therefore less eccentric in other ways.

That hardly mattered, except that she had to be carrying her bookbag in the next five minutes. Ravenclaws were rarely separated from their bookbags, but it did happen.

'There she is,' Margot said to herself, spying Granger, Potter, and the despised Lovegood walk in. 'They do look in love. If they keep standing there, they'll get a good look at her leaving. Oh good, here come Patil, Li, Goldstein, and some of the 'Puffs. This will be good.'

Whatever was going on, Padma was obviously the leader. Margot winced as Padma placed a hand on Luna's shoulder to make a point, right on the strap of the bookbag, for at that moment, the portkey kicked in.

Sound died in the hall, and then Parvati and Hannah Abbot both screamed.

"Silence!" Harry commanded before any at the staff table could, his voice somewhat amplified. He thought a few moments, and then told the silent hall, his voice cold but his eyes twinkling, "Someone planted a portkey on Luna. It took her and Padma to Voldemort." A gasp sounded through the hall. "I am going to retrieve what is mine, and then return. Whoever did this has until I return to confess if they expect any mercy." His Legilimency let him hone in easily on Margot Smythe, who was broadcasting her feelings. "And I mean that." Margot shivered guiltily, not that anyone but Harry noticed.

Then Harry, who had looked very impressive and dangerous, seemed to wilt, to become totally passive. And then he snapped his fingers and disappeared.

Hermione realized that he was using his ability to imitate the magic of a house elf to trace his second lover. Dumbledore finally made himself move, heading towards the crowd at the entrance to the hall.

Moody went to make a firecall.

"Well, well, well, it looks like we caught two flies in our trap," Voldemort gloated. "You must be the Lovegood girl. Who are you, nigger?"

Padma of course realized who this was instantly. His first words showed that whatever plans Voldemort had, they were for Luna only. She was likely as irrelevant as Cedric had been, for Harry had allowed Hermione and Luna to spread a general story of what had happened at the graveyard.

Begging or pleading, she quickly understood, would do her no good. Therefore, she stood tall -- the Sorting Hat had considered putting her in Gryffindor, but she had begged for Ravenclaw, the other possibility, knowing that Parvati had little chance of being placed there. "I am Padma Patil. I can trace my paternal ancestors back to Brahman magicians from more than three thousand years ago and maternally all the way back to a Sumarian witch more than five thousand years ago." She glanced over two men she did not know (Macnair and Smythe) and her eyes landed on Lucius Malfoy. "For however much magical blood matters, what is your nine hundred years of paternal magic compared to that?" Her eyes managed to meet Voldemort's. "Let alone your less than seventy?"

Before Voldemort could recover from the insult, Luna was standing in front of Padma. "Do you think you will save her from her audacity, girl?" Voldemort hissed.

"For the moment, yes," Luna stated.

Voldemort strode forward and moved to strike Luna. She grabbed his wrist before he had barely started the back swing, and Voldemort screamed in agony. "You removed all positive feelings from yourself," Luna stated as Voldemort pulled away, his wrist nearly charred. The three Death Eaters were stunned by their Lord's reaction. "You could not bear Harry's physical touch until you stole his blood, and you can not stand the touch of his deepest emotions. I am filled by my love for Harry Potter and his love for me. You are just a shell of evil, powered by your magic. Those are the only two things you have left, your evil and your magic, and Harry will take both from you."

"We are protected by the Fidelius," Malfoy sneered. "Even if Potter mattered, he could not find us here."

"Harry could not find you here," Luna acknowledged. "Harry can find me here."

"True," Padma agreed.

"Why do you think that, girl?" Voldemort demanded, partially recovering.

"Because he's standing behind Mister Malfoy," Luna answered.

Involuntarily, all four turned. In each case, they mentally berated themselves for falling for such an old trick. To their surprise, however, Harry actually was standing behind them, his wand already in motion. Harry's wand slash arced, and his rock cutting hex sliced through Smythe at nose level, the taller Macnair through his shoulders and chest, and ended in a slight change in motion that sent the cutting beam right through Lucius Malfoy's neck.

"AVADA KA. . . ."

Voldemort had started the Killing Curse even before Macnair had been sliced and cauterized into two very unequal pieces. Luna and Padma completed their Stunners before he could finish it, however. They didn't actually Stun the Dark Lord, but they did nearly knock him over. He Disapparated before he hit the ground.

The three students stood silently for a moment, and then both Luna and Padma bent over, heaving from the fear, the stress, and the three dead bodies and the smells associated with death and burnt flesh. They would be glad, when they stopped a few minutes later, that they had not yet eaten.

Harry conjured up glasses of water for the two, so they could at least rinse their mouths out. "We'll get going soon, but I need to do a quick search," Harry said as he vanished the mess. "If you could, stand in that corner, wands out, just in case anyone shows up."

"Right," Padma said.

"Of course, Harry," Luna agreed.

Harry started to turn, but looked back when Padma said, "Harry? Thank you for saving me."

"I suppose I did," Harry said. "I'm glad I could." Seeing Padma's puzzled look, Harry explained. "I technically rescued both you and Luna. However, I was only able to do that because I have such a strong magical connection with Luna. I would have wanted to rescue you, if you had been the only one kidnapped, but I wouldn't have been able to."

Padma thought about that, and then said, "I understand. I know it doesn't seem like any of my business, but does Hermione know how powerful that connection is?"

"She does, and shares in it," Harry said. "I would ask that you keep that to yourself."

"I will," Padma said. She looked a bit unsure of herself all of a sudden, but still went on, "My father wrote back today. That was one of the things I was going to tell you after telling you that Susan and I have organized more support for you in general in our Houses. May I discuss that with you, Hermione, and Luna at some point? Soon?"

"That the reason that you wish to Bond with me is that you are primarily but not exclusively drawn to women, and have had a crush on Hermione for years?" Harry asked. "That you agreed to go to the Yule Ball with Ron in the hopes of being able to be socially close to Hermione?"

Padma looked stunned.

Harry smiled. "The answer is 'yes', as in we can meet, and discuss how to bring you into our group, if your father sent his permission."

"He did, Harry."

"Good. I have no idea where things might go, but I am interested in talking with you. Now, excuse me." Harry put the wand away and held out his left hand. A long staff appeared, the emerald on the top end glowing with power. Harry strode out of the room.

Padma turned to Luna. She tried to say something, but nothing came out.

"Sometimes it is better to pretend that the carnivores have infected you, rendering you unable to speak," Luna said gently.

Padma merely shook her head at that, but said nothing.

Fifty minutes had passed since Luna and Padma had been abducted, and the great hall was still in something of an uproar. The known pro-Voldemort faction within Slytherin had all loudly protested their innocence, at least in this case.

Remus, Sirius, and Tonks had arrived some ten minutes into the crises, summonsed by Moody. They were surprised at how calm Hermione was (all she had said was, 'Harry will take care of everything. Find out who did this before Harry does'). Tonks and Moody had conducted the investigation starting with the Slytherins, and had just started in questioning the Ravenclaws when the sound of rushing wind announced an incoming portkey. Harry, Luna, and Padma were standing in front of the staff dais holding onto a long piece of rope, which was also looped under what looked like three bodies covered in dirty sheets. Each body's left arm was uncovered, and those close enough could see the Dark Mark on each.

"Quiet!" Dumbledore ordered, and he got it. "Well?" he asked Harry.

"I went after one who is privately pledged to me, and one who soon is likely to be," Harry answered. "They were being held by three Death Eaters and Voldemort. I killed the three Death Eaters, as I swore I would do when I see any, while Luna and Padma drove Voldemort away like the coward he is. I can't take anyone back to the hideaway, because it was under the Fidelius. I could search out the person, not the place." Dumbledore nodded both his understanding and that Harry should go on.

"I did search the place, and the three of us left some interesting traps, which will at least annoy the Dark Wanker if he ever has the guts to go back."

Harry looked at Tonks and Moody. "Did anyone confess yet?"

"No," Tonks answered.

"Let me show you who was involved. Maybe that will give everyone a hint." Without Harry's moving, the shroud covering Macnair was swept off, and then Malfoy's.

Everyone glared at Draco, who had turned almost chalk-white at the sight of his decapitated father. "No," Harry said, drawing most people's eyes back to him. "No, I don't think Draco was involved." The third shroud swept off. It was difficult to see who this had been, until a twitch of Harry's finger set the two halves of the face back together.

"Daddy!" Margot shrieked.

Chapter XIII

The sobbing Margot quickly confessed her complicity, and cleared anyone else at Hogwarts of being involved, at least so far as she knew. Tonks took her away, while Moody removed the bodies.

"Quiet!" Harry called, and the anxious population of Hogwarts complied. "It's time the truth be told."

"Harry!" Dumbledore protested.

Harry ignored him. "Hermione, Luna, Padma? Would the three of you take down notes. We'll combine them for a press release later."

"Harry!" Dumbledore again pleaded.

Harry again ignored him. Instead, he stood on a bench and told the students the full story of the life of Tom Marvolo Riddle. There was a shriek when Harry got to the murder of Myrtle -- she had been lurking invisible in the hall, Sir Nicholas explained. In fact, all the ghosts and spirits (except Peeves) were now present, he told Harry, although few could be seen. Myrtle was crying in a corner.

Harry went on. Dumbledore went white when Harry explained about the Horcruxes, although he felt just a bit better when Harry described how dehumanizing the use of even one of them was and how immortality (as opposed to merely extending the lifespan) on Earth was a pipe dream. Harry then explained what five of the six Horcruxes were, and how he had already destroyed four of them.

"Luna?" he then requested.

Luna stopped scribbling and handed Harry her bookbag. "Here is the fifth Horcrux," he proclaimed. "Hufflepuff's Cup! Now, everyone stand back!"

And with that, Harry broke the magic on the Cup. For a brief instant, most of the students saw a glimpse of a ghostly, ghastly image, until that version of Voldemort faded.

Harry continued the story, telling them the full story of Quirrell, the Chamber of Secrets (leaving Ginny's name out of it), Sirius' escape and then Pettigrew's discovery and escape, and the Triwizard

Tournament, ending with Voldemort's rebirth in June. "What do you say now?" Harry directly asked a very shaken Draco.

"What?" Draco demanded. "Even if everything you say were true, which I'm not saying it was, do you expect me to acknowledge the wizard who just murdered my father as my lord?"

"No," Harry answered. "I thought you were a real Slytherin, though."

"And what do you mean by that?" Draco demanded.

"I didn't murder your father, I killed him because he was following Voldemort and holding my two future consorts. To avenge your father means furthering Voldemort's power. Is that what you really want? Haven't you figured out that he only uses the Pure-Blood agenda to further his personal power? That what I'm asking you is will you be at least be neutral towards me, the wizard who just made YOU the Head of the Noble House of Malfoy?"

Draco blinked at that. That aspect of things had not occurred to him. "Neutrality? You're not asked me to acknowledge you as my lord instead of the Dark Lord?"

"I am asking for you to stand up as a man, your own man," Harry answered scornfully. "I am no one's lord."

"You are the Head of the Most Noble House of Potter," Hermione stated. "I am your bondmate-to-be and we are fully bonding. You are my lord."

"You said I would be acknowledged as your First Consort-to-be in February," Luna added. "You are my lord."

"And I hope I shall be able to call you the same," Padma added.

"But. . . ." Harry protested, at a loss for words.

Neville stepped forward. "There are no noble titles, like baron or duke, in our world any more," he said. "There are lords. You are a lord, as you head one of the families now called the Original Families. You may also be called a lord outside of exercising those duties if acknowledged as such by at least twelve people eligible to swear their fealty to you. Those people have to be adult wizards or witches, who have no personal or familial ties of fealty to any other. If they are underage, they may offer you conditional fealty until they are seventeen, assuming that they are the Head of a Noble Family over the age of fourteen or if not, if they are over the age of fifteen. And again, they can have no personal or familial pledges which would interfere."

With that, Neville dropped to his knees. "I, Neville Longbottom, acting head of the Ancient and Most Noble Family of Longbottom, do pledge my conditional fealty to Harry Potter as my lord, until my seventeenth birthday."

Harry was shocked. He knew he should not reject Neville's offer for many reasons, and that despite his personal reluctance, he really could not. He drew his wand and tapped Neville on each shoulder. "I accept your pledge. Rise, housecarl of the House of Potter." A flash showed that the oath between them was now in force, unless they both agreed to break it before Neville's seventeenth birthday, when it would lapse, or if Harry did not renew it on his seventeenth birthday. As was his right as the heir of an old Anglo-Saxon family, Harry used the older Saxon term rather than the Norman terms 'knight' or 'vassal'.

Neville had barely stood, let alone moved to kneel behind Harry, when Ron had taken his place. "I, Ronald Weasley, do pledge my conditional fealty to Harry Potter as my lord, until my seventeenth birthday."

Slightly stunned, Harry repeated his acceptance.

Fred and George instantly took his place. "I, George Weasley. . . .

"I, Frederick Weasley. . . ."

". . . do pledge our unconditional fealty to Harry Potter as our lord."

After Harry accepted them, a group of Gryffindors: Angelina, Alicia, Katie, Dean, Lavender, and some others, collided as they tried to follow. "Wait!" Harry begged, overwhelmed. "Please, think! Do all of you really want to do this?"

"Yes," Angelina answered.

"I certainly do," Dean said.

"It's not just Gryffindors, either," Anthony called from the Ravenclaws.

"The Magical World has been looking for leadership, real leadership, against Darkness and bigotry a long time," Ernie declaimed, giving Dumbledore a dirty look in passing. "You're it, my lord. And

we're in it with you, if you will have us!"

"And us," Sirius stated. Harry's eyes went wide.

"Unless this is a youth crusade," Remus agreed. "And even then, I think we're young enough at heart to join."

Over the next hour, in addition to Sirius and Remus, every eligible Gryffindor pledged themselves to Harry (even Seamus, which had made Ginny irate, since she was too young to pledge herself to Harry), and so had more than half of the eligible Hufflepuffs. As for the Ravenclaws, the Fifth years other than Cornfoot, Corner, Li, and Edgecombe had done so. So had, to many people's shock, Daphne Greengrass and Tracey Davis from Slytherin. Harry's accepting them had then brought in four Sixth year Slytherins as well.

Harry then called out the students with known ties to Death Eaters, no matter what their year, and had then stand to one side, making Dumbledore look nearly as worried as the students. Harry then called out a smaller of group of fifteen students, Fourth through Seventh years, all but Zack Smith a Ravenclaw or Slytherin. Some, like Cornfoot and Zabini, were dedicated Pure Bloods while disliking Voldemort. Bulstrode and Parkinson were both pro-Pure-Blood, and supporters of Draco at least. Others, like Smith, were dedicated troublemakers. Finally, he called out Cho and the nine girls remaining in her Clique.

"I hadn't asked anyone, well, I suppose other than Hermione and Luna and now Padma, to join their fates to mine." He looked directly at the eighteen students from Death Eater families (ie a parent, grandparent, uncle, or great uncle as a Death Eater; thirteen were in Slytherin, five in Ravenclaw). "You lot probably couldn't, even if you wanted to. I am asking two things from you, however. First, I want you to think very carefully about if you really want to tie your lives to Voldemort. I am going to destroy him. He will lose."

He looked to take in the second group as well. "Secondly, I'm not in favor of 'Mugglizing' magical Britain. I do believe that merit should mean more than blood in Ministry hiring and promotion. I do believe that justice should be based on truth, not influence. I believe we should be more open to Muggle ideas, but not to Muggle society. You can accept those terms and we'll get along, or you can reject them, and we'll see who wins."

Harry now stood again on the bench (he had gotten off to accept Neville's pledge). He held his wand aloft. "I am the Heir of Godric Gryffindor. I am descended from Helga Hufflepuff. I am now the primary magical heir of Salazar Slytherin and one of Rowena Ravenclaw as well." Everyone gasped as the ceiling of the great hall suddenly stopped reflecting the night sky, and reflected the banners of the Four Houses -- surrounding the arms of the House of Potter. "Many of you have wondered at this unusual wand. It was made by Merlin, and only one acknowledged as his magical heir can safely wield it." A gasp escaped from nearly everyone in the hall. Harry glared at the Death Eaters and pro-Pure Bloods. "I suggest you all take that into consideration."

Harry stepped down and faced Cho, and the night sky faded back into view on the ceiling. "We've always treated each other with respect, and even a little affection." Cho nodded, a bit frightened. "You have not treated the woman who will become my First Consort with either. May I please ask you and your friends to at least treat her respectfully, if not kindly?"

Cho bowed deeply. "That is a reasonable request, Lord Potter," she answered. "I shall do so, and ask my friends to do the same. And I deeply regret that one of our group tried to injure her and our friend Padma. I swear, I didn't know about her father."

"I believe you. Thank you, Miss Chang." Harry respectfully bowed to her and then turned to face the majority of the students. "Now, one final thing."

The great hall tensed.

"It's after Seven-thirty, in fact, it's almost Eight! No one has eaten anything, not even Ron! Let's eat!"

An hour later, Dumbledore was meeting with Harry, Hermione, Luna, Padma, Sirius, Remus, Moody, Tonks, McGonagall, and Flitwick. "Why?" Dumbledore asked Harry.

"Why anything in particular?" Harry asked. "Or some big why? Like 'why are we here'?"

"Why tell everyone what you told them?" Dumbledore demanded.

"Why not?" Harry asked. "Before I left the hideout, I had Winky home in on me, and bring the broken Horcrux shells. He now knows I've destroyed five of the six, but not that I know what the sixth is. I also know that if he tries to divide himself one more time, it won't work. It would leave his consciousness unable to work the body, but his followers might find a way around that, given enough time. Now that he knows for certain that he has created a sixth Horcrux, he should know that, too. He needs to really protect that last Horcrux, which is inside his snake. He can't afford to guard it himself, so that probably leaves. . . ?"

"Wormtail," Sirius growled.

"Find me Pettigrew, Sirius," Harry said. He looked at Remus. "Any luck with the werewolves?"

"As best I can tell, there are just the thirty-six of us I told you about in the British Isles," Remus said. "Thirty of us are registered, six not. The six unregistered are following Voldemort, as least as of today, or rather five of them are following Greyback, who is following Voldemort. The other twenty-nine are willing to be neutral, in exchange for free Wolfsbane Potion, provided they get it by the December full moon."

"I've already made the arrangements with Professor Slughorn," Harry said. "He's not making it himself, but he referred me to two of his former students he says can do it, and who need the work."

"You're paying for it? Harry. . . ."

Harry shrugged. "For all thirty of you? Twelve hundred Galleons a month or so. It's worth it and I can afford it."

"We'll try and find alternate funding later," Hermione stated firmly.

"Can you help Sirius look for Pettigrew and keep dealing with the other werewolves?" Harry asked Remus.

"Yes," Remus said firmly.

"Good. Oh, and you're on salary. Five Galleons a day. Everyone else who swore allegiance to me today gets five a month."

"I don't need it," Sirius said.

"Keep that in mind when making out any expense reports," Harry retorted. "You lot made me a lord and patron. I can treat you primarily like vassals, or I can treat you more like a Roman patron would treat his clients. I can live with myself more easily with the latter." He turned to Dumbledore. "Next Sunday morning, I will start training those students who swore allegiance. We'll call them the 'Defense Association'. After I run them into the floor, I'll offer to absolve any of them from their oath, and will do so after each training session for the next few weeks, and I'll be training them hard every Sunday. If Voldemort is dumb enough to attack the castle, we'll be able to defend it. After Voldemort is defeated, I'll try again to get them to agree to absolve the oaths."

"That is good to know," Dumbledore said, relieved.

"Professor Flitwick, Professor Moody, would you care to join us and share some of your

knowledge?" Harry asked.

"I would be delighted, dear boy," Flitwick answered.

"Wouldn't miss it, lad," Moody agreed.

"I'm hoping you and the other teachers might come and give pointers some weeks," Harry told McGonagall.

"Why . . . why thank you, Mister Potter," a somewhat flustered McGonagall answered. "Or should I say Lord Potter or Lord Harry?"

"I'll answer to any of those, but of course in a classroom setting, just 'Mister Potter' is fine," Harry answered. "Now, it is getting late, and I and my friends here need to get some work done and we also need to settle some personal matters. We might not be available until class Monday morning. We will not make a habit of this." Harry stood, and Hermione, Luna, and Padma rose with him. "Headmaster, I wouldn't be surprised if Voldemort still had plans for Azkaban and the dementors. I hope you and your contacts in the Ministry are still looking into that. Goodnight, all." The three women nodded at the assembled adults and followed Harry from the Headmaster's office.

"What just happened?" McGonagall demanded.

"We have a Light Lord, or perhaps a Gray Lord, to oppose the Dark Lord," Sirius answered.

"He is the Heir of Merlin," Remus pointed out. "The magical world, or at least magical Britain, will never be as it was."

"Thank Merlin," Sirius stated, and then he smirked. "Or should I say, 'thank Harry'?"

"I wouldn't in his hearing," Moody growled.

Harry took Hermione, Luna, and Padma to the Room of Requirement, which at first was a comfortable study. Harry first told Hermione in detail what had happened in Voldemort's lair. She and Padma both flushed when Harry got to Padma's confession.

"Shall I tell her my secret?" Harry asked Hermione.

"Yes, I think you should," Hermione said.

"Padma would be joining us more for you than for me," Harry reminded her.

"I was unsure of how I felt about being intimate with a woman, despite fooling around with someone for the last year," Hermione said thoughtfully.

"Ginny Weasley, you mean?" Padma asked. Seeing Hermione's look, she added, "It was obvious to me at least. I doubt if many others noticed."

"Yes, well, Luna and I have also been intimate, with Harry. That, and something Harry told me, made me think about you," Hermione said. "I found I was interested in the idea but I've been more interested in getting to know Luna."

"And what did you tell her?" Padma asked.

Harry told her the story of how he had returned from the future, as well as information about that time line. "I have to admit," Padma said, "I didn't even suspect that." She smiled shyly at Harry. "I do expect to fulfill ALL my duties as consort to you, and I am looking forward to them. I would not be here, despite my strong feelings for Hermione and my attraction to Luna, if I did not desire you as well . . . my lord."

Hermione looked at Padma, who answered, "I wouldn't want to get between you, Harry, and Luna, especially when Harry has to perform in public."

"Harry can shoot twice a day easily," Hermione answered. "We'll do the Sunday ceremony well before lunch, and the two of us can teach you to please Harry after dinner."

"As you will, my lady," Padma replied, her genuine smile revealing her interest.

Luna shrugged. "Hermione likes making these plans for lovemaking, but we always just get carried away and have a fab time."

Hermione gave Luna a look of mock hurt, so Harry jumped in. "Tomorrow morning, after we work out, we also have to finish off the piece for The Prophet and The Quibbler," Harry said. "As for now. . . ." The room of requirement shimmered into a room with a large canopy bed with gold and blue curtains, a roaring fireplace, and one door. "Shall we shower and snuggle?"

That sounded good to the three young women. Harry called for Dobby, who agreed to get them all clean clothes for the morning, and to bring refreshments.

While Harry was enjoying himself, the pro-Voldemort Slytherins were having a meeting of their own. "You've been leading us since Flint left," Bulstrode said, opening the meeting, "and if anything you've led us against Potter, and Granger for that matter, from the beginning. Now, you tell me, do you believe that Potter can win?"

"Does that matter?" Pansy demanded scornfully. "Granger is still a Mudblood and Potter little better."

"Both matter, but only to a degree" Nott said. "I couldn't follow Potter right now even if I wanted to, and he knows enough not to ask. If he does win, however, opposing him now means we lose any political influence for decades. Our fathers have already lost our families that influence for now, unless the Dark Lord wins."

"So, we can't support Potter, but do we work against him?" Bulstrode asked. "Despite my family's ancestry, I'm not a Pure-Blood, not even a Full-Blood, although any children I have will be. I have the least to lose of any of us. Draco, you have the most. You always claimed the leadership. So, now lead us."

It was at that moment that Draco came to the realization that many young and spoiled people never realized until it was too late -- that being young and rich and spoiled did not protect you from the real world. He had not fully realized this in the original time line until that night Dumbledore had been murdered, and then it was too late to change his course. Now, however, he was head of the Noble House of Malfoy and he was the head of this group. His decision would actually affect his life and the lives of his friends. If he chose wrong, they would all suffer for it, and his wealth would likely not protect him, let alone them.

Finally, Draco answered, "The Dark Lord might be in contact with some of us, but until then, I say we stay neutral. If Potter does win, Granger will push for radical reforms which will sooner or later go against them. I mean, just think of that SPEW nonsense last year. Then we shall be able to show that the Old Ways are the best. So until then, we stay as neutral as possible, even if we're forced to pass on information."

With that, all agreed, some with more enthusiasm than others.

Chapter XIV

Sunday, October 1, 1995

Normally, Padma was an early riser, and that was true this Sunday as well. Still, as she stretched, reveling in the memories of the kissing and snuggling of the night before and especially in the promises for this day, she realized that she was alone in the wide bed.

Peeking out of the curtains, she saw that a nude Harry was doing Tai Chi, but no one else was in the room. Padma made her way quietly to the toilet and then returned to join Harry in his exercise.

"I didn't know anyone else at Hogwarts did this," Harry said as Padma matched his movements.

"Su Li does this every morning, and she taught me," Padma replied. "Parvati and I were trained in classical Indian dance and singing, of course, although we've fallen behind here at Hogwarts."

Although Harry's body and limbs kept up the perfect pace, his eyes glanced at the nude body beside him. "You are incredibly beautiful."

"Thank you, my lord," Padma replied. "May I say you are wonderfully put together yourself?"

"Thank you. Do you intend to stay the course with me? You may, if you and Hermione wish, form a couple outside a formal relationship with me."

Padma responded without breaking the motion. "Even though multiple wives are no longer considered proper in formal upper caste Hindu society, they are still very common in magical India. My father, who is nearly eighty, has three -- a bondmate and two consorts. His bondmate is from a long line of Indian wizards, nearly as old as the Patils, and we are a very old family. They had five children, all of them magical. The first consort is from a Muggle Brahman family, and they had six children, all magical. The second consort, my mother, is from an incredibly old magical family, but she was born a Squib, something which few people know. Parvati and I are her only two magical children. All of our magical half siblings were sent back to India to receive their magical education, and our seven Squib siblings had the choice. All but our full sister, two years older than us, went back to India, or in the case of our younger two brothers, will go back when they are fifteen. We were sent here, so that, if we could, we could find magical husbands." Harry merely nodded.

"If we are not in a formal relationship by the start of our Seventh year, Father will find us husbands from India, and we will have to marry them, for we are true children of our culture. Yes, I am in love with Hermione, but I am very attracted to you, Harry. If I were not, and if I did not believe you to be a man of great honor, I would not have pursued this, despite all the other reasons I might have to join my life with yours. Your wealth and fame and power are not incentives for me to marry you, but they do provide assurance that I am doing the right thing in these troubled times. Father hardly complained about my being the Second Consort to you and he agreed I could approach you. He will object even less to any arrangements once he learns you are the very wealthy magical heir of Merlin, whose name is honored even in Hindu magical circles. I will be consort to one of the few males I find physically attractive, one of the few people I find attractive for his moral character alone, and one whose personality and smile I think are very cute. In addition, I will be with the

woman I love, and with a woman I have always found nearly as fascinating and whom I am learning to appreciate physically. From my view point, why would I want anything but what you have offered?"

"Put that way, I understand," Harry answered. He stopped his movements, and turned to smile at Padma.

Padma returned the gesture. "By the way, where are the lights of our lives?"

"I'm not sure," Harry admitted. "Hermione said they had an errand to run together about twenty-five minutes ago, and they said they would be back by now."

Fortunately, Hermione and Luna did return within a few more moments, and saw that Harry and Padma had resumed their Tai Chi.

"Lovely forms," Luna stated, the lust obvious.

"Thank you," Padma answered.

"What have you two been up to?" Harry inquired. "Or is it a secret?"

"No," Hermione answered. "I've been altering documents."

Harry frowned and stopped, and so did Padma. "Which documents?"

"The logs of the couple's room and the corner in Gryffindor," Hermione stated, "claiming we've already done the ceremony. I need to have your seed in my mouth soon, or I shall be foresworn. We just thought it would be nice to share with Padma."

"If you wish to start," Luna added to Padma.

"We do this every morning," Hermione said.

"Harry sleeps very little, and was wasting his precious potion every morning in the drain pipe," Luna continued. "Now we share him, and invite you."

"Wow," Padma said. "How connected are you two?"

"I was sucking Harry off at least twice a day for most of August," Hermione answered bluntly. "Between that, this, and Harry's power, I think I'm connecting about twenty hours a day." Since it wore off in her sleep, she wasn't certain.

"And my magic is particularly powerful in empathic magics," Luna said, "making me more susceptible than most, plus our Bond was somewhat jump-started by the Bond Harry had with me in his other lifetime. I am already up to nearly eighteen hours a day, which is why Harry could trace me so easily. As for Hermione and myself," Luna said, taking Hermione's hand, "when we take Harry together, we become connected for about two hours."

"We invite you to join with us," Hermione said.

"Then I am honored to be asked," Padma answered formally. "Have you decided upon the wedding date for you and our lord, my lady? And what would be the best dates for the consorts to sign the agreements?"

"Of course I have," Hermione replied.

"Whoa, wait just a minute," Harry broke in. Seeing the stunned and hurt looks, he added quickly, "Yes, I want to make this all official, but don't your parents have any say in this?"

"Legally," Hermione said distastefully at having to actually say it, "since my parents are Muggles, no, they have no say. We can work to change that later."

"As I told you, my father gave his permission," Padma said. "I merely need to write back, stating that we have agreed to a settlement."

"Whoops," Luna said, flushing slightly. "Daddy wrote me a note, saying that you were an honorable and powerful wizard, and that he would approve any arrangement I make with you, but that I should actually make them before I go as far as I've gone."

"I own a number of Muggle blocks of flats," Harry said promptly. "That would settle both the property requirements and the income requirements, unless they have to be magical."

"Just for me?" Luna asked.

"No," Harry answered, not being slow on the up-take. "That would be a settlement for each of you, and a dowry for Hermione."

"Is there enough for two more?" Hermione asked.

"Two more!"

"If it meets with your approval, Harry, Padma," Hermione carried on, "we were thinking of having the Muggle wedding the afternoon of Harry's eighteenth birthday."

"That's a Friday," Luna said helpfully.

"After a short reception, we four and any other consorts go to the Ministry and sign the magical contracts -- after all, we'll all be Bonded by then anyway -- and we're off on the honeymoon."

"Sounds good," Padma stated.

Harry was looking dumbfounded, but finally found his voice. "Leaving aside any other consorts for a few more seconds, Luna, would you really give up your last year of school?"

"Yes," she simply. Seeing the look on Harry's face, she went on, "Had we not come together, I would likely have wished to take the maximum number of N.E.W.T. classes allowed, which is seven, most likely Charms, Divination, Herbology, Muggle Studies, Potions, Runes, and Transfiguration. I will learn more about Muggles from you and Hermione than I ever would in class, so I will take six. I would not learn the advanced symbol sets I wish to learn even in the Seventh year, so I will arrange to learn those as part of an independent study. Do not fret about my

education, Harry. I will have learned what I need to know. My greatest desire is to be with you, and with Hermione, Padma, and our children."

"Magical education is primarily vocational, I mean practical but general education," Hermione admitted. "All advanced training comes from apprenticeships for the most part."

"People won't think we're all too young?" Harry asked.

"Yes," Luna stated, "they will. And if we wait, they will criticize us for waiting. People will disapprove of just about anything."

"True," Harry had to agree. "Now, what's this about two more consorts?"

"I believe she said at least two more," Padma pointed out.

"Perhaps it would be good for you to have a Hufflepuff and a Slytherin. . . ."

"No," Harry stated flatly. "I will NOT be that calculating."

"But. . . ?" Hermione tried.

"No," Harry said firmly. "I won't."

"But. . . ?" Padma suggested.

"No," Harry said gently.

There was silence for a moment, and then the three looked at Luna.

"But," Luna said with a sigh.

"First of all, I don't know any of the Slytherins except those in our year, and Parkinson and Bulstrode are right out. What's their names, Rivers and Stinks?"

"Spinks," Padma supplied.

"Right. They are non-entities, like fillers an author makes up to hold places."

"I have to admit, they've never really said much in any class I've had with them," Padma agreed.

"Not even Potions," Hermione admitted. "Still, that leaves Greengrass and Davis."

"Based on looks alone, Greengrass is drop-dead sexy," Harry admitted. "She's also a tremendous snob who also has always struck me as terribly boring. I haven't heard her say much outside of class, but it's always been about fashion and society gossip."

"That pretty much sums Daphne up, so far as I know," Padma had to agree. "I think that's how she's managed to stay friends with Parvati and Lavender during vacations. However, her maternal great-uncle is on the Wizengamot and her family is at the top of European magical society." Harry wrinkled his nose and shrugged that off.

"What about Tracey Davis?" Hermione asked.

"Maybe I'm being unfair, or at least wrong, but while we've always joked about Bulstrode being the most macho person in Slytherin, and our entire year for that matter, I have seen Tracey looking at girls the same way Seamus does."

"Like a starving child outside a chocolate shop?" Padma suggested, to which Harry nodded. "That is true, but Harry darling, on the lesbian meter, Hermione's at least a third of the way over, Luna a bit more than half, and I'm between two-thirds and three-quarters. I really don't think Tracey is any more gay than I am."

Harry shrugged. "She just never caught my eye, except when she was giving girls the eye. I never saw her looking at any boy like that, certainly not me." He smiled. "She especially likes looking at you, Hermione, in Potions and History. She's the only Slytherin whose evil intentions toward you looked like they might at least be fun for both of you."

"Very amusing, Harry," Hermione retorted. Both she and Padma knew there had been at least two boys Tracey actually had eyed hungrily: Cedric and Harry.

"So, since there really are no Slytherins I would want to get involved with, I shouldn't get involved with any Hufflepuffs, as that would highlight my non-involvement with the Slytherins," Harry concluded.

"There must be something I, or we, can do about that, but I'll let it slide for now," Hermione said. Luna elbowed Hermione gently. "Oh, right," Hermione added. "We saw that Draco and Pansy had signed up for the couple's room today."

"I guess he couldn't stand the idea of my being the only Fifth year male in such a relationship," Harry mused.

"Or that he is quickly taking advantage of being the Head of his Family," Luna pointed out.

"Never mind Draco and Pansy," Padma said. "What about the four of us?"

"I have to do the public ritual every Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday," Hermione answered. "Even though you can't officially participate, you two are now publically interested and accepted, so we'll do them all in the room instead of in Gryffindor. Luna. . . ."

"I shall set up the times for the two of you," Luna replied, still extremely pleased over her acceptance.

"Unless Harry objects, we can share him between the three of us Saturday mornings, and have him privately two other days before breakfast. I'll take Wednesdays, and either Monday or Friday, whichever is left."

"I'll take Mondays and Thursdays, leaving Padma with Sundays and Tuesdays," Luna said, claiming her proper place.

"Agreed. So, I get him this morning? Please?" Padma almost begged.

"Harry generally ejaculates at least five spurts, and then some dribble," Luna told her.

"I am right here," Harry muttered, embarrassed.

"So you are, my love," Luna agreed, and turned back to Padma and Hermione. "Perhaps we should allow Padma to get Harry off and swallow the first spurt, then jack most of the rest off on him for you and me, and take him inside of us, if he still can? And if he can't, we still have tonight."

"Very well, if bluntly, said," Hermione said drily. Luna beamed happily at what she took as a compliment. "Is that acceptable to you?"

"Of course . . . my lady," Padma replied, bowing respectfully.

"Harry, are these arrangements acceptable for now?"

"Yes, my love," Harry replied, although his bow seemed a bit more ironic than Padma's.

"Then why don't the two of you go ahead and lie on the bed and enjoy yourselves," Hermione said. "I'll take you in hand at the end."

Harry led the suddenly-shy Padma over to the bed. "I think she might even be more beautiful than Parvati," Hermione murmured. At just over five foot six, Padma was taller than Hermione or even Luna. She had the toned body of a dancer or tennis player, and actually she and Parvati played competitive badminton during the summer. Her frame was 36C-22-35, and her legs were proportionally long, helping her to be light on her slim feet. Her hair was nearly as long as Luna's, but even thicker than Hermione's, although Padma's was just slightly wavy and of course jet black.

Hermione put her arm around Luna's waist as they watched Harry and Padma kissing on the bed. "I can't wait to see you and Padma making love," Hermione stopped nuzzling Luna's neck and whispered in her ear. "You, all creams and yellows; Padma such a light café-au-lait and with that jet black hair, all intertwined. Look at how aroused she's getting. You can see the sexual flush, rosy under the dark skin. I can't wait to see her flushed, next to you in the same condition."

"I'll probably look like a boiled lobster," Luna murmured, aroused by the pair in front of her and by Hermione's touch and the sexy breath in her ear.

"You will look beautiful, as always," Hermione said, starting to stroke Luna from the top of her outer thigh up to the lower curve of her breast and back. "Thank you for sharing your love with me. Harry needs both of us, and I need the both of you." She pulled Luna into a deep kiss.

Padma was now on her back, whimpering in pleasure and anticipation, as Harry kissed around her breasts and stroked her lower belly and her hips, in both cases avoiding the areas she most wanted Harry to lick and stroke. She moaned as Harry finally took a meaty hard nipple into his mouth, and her moans grew louder and she arched her back as Harry finally stroked her outer labia.

Hermione and Luna stopped their own foreplay nearly two minutes later, when Harry's tongue began its languid path down Padma's stomach to her navel, drawn to Padma's growing moans. As Harry's tongue went further south, Hermione and Luna climbed on either side of the bed, kissed Padma gently, and then moved to take a nipple each into their mouths. The timing was coincidental

but perfect, as the two witches started suckling at the same instant that Harry's tongue gave a quick flick to Padma's largish clit, now mostly poking out from under its hood, before moving down to lick her inner labia.

Padma writhed in the first orgasm she had ever had, other than from her own or Parvati's experimenting fingers. Less than two minutes later, Padma cried out her need, "My lord!"

Hermione moved and gently gave Harry a shove, which he followed, rolling from kneeling over Padma's right side onto his back. As Hermione took him in hand, Luna guided Padma until Padma, still partially unseeing from her passions, felt and smelled Harry's cock against her face. "Master," she said in satisfaction, ovaling her full lips and drawing Harry into her mouth with a sigh of fulfilled satisfaction.

Padma sucked the entire large head easily into her mouth and her tongue moved hungrily against the sensitive underside, while Hermione pumped her fingers at the base of the stalk and Luna's fingers sought out Padma's clit. Harry very much wanted to shoot, but also knew that Luna and Hermione, as much as they loved drinking him, preferred to wait for the ejaculation, loving to suck him and driving him wild. He therefore grabbed Luna, who squeaked as Harry lifted her hips and started licking and sucking on her exposed clit.

Despite Harry's best intentions, he came just before Luna. While Padma was dealing with the first large mouthful, the second one flooded her mouth. Hermione therefore had no trouble getting Padma off the end of Harry's cock, so she could claim some for herself. She did so, and was prepared to jerk the rest onto Harry's stomach for Luna to lick up later.

There was no need, as Luna blindly homed in on the subsistence she desired. Despite the two switch-offs, not one drop of Harry's 'precious potion' was lost, and Luna orgasmed with Harry's cock in her mouth -- her second favorite way so far.

The four adjusted themselves, and despite the early hour, drowsed for some time.

The quartet spent a little time on their homework (retrieved by Dobby), but more on the press releases, which Dobby took to The Prophet and The Quibbler mid-afternoon. Harry also started training Padma in Occlumency. Like Hermione, Padma's mind was very organized, and so soon recognized any attempts to direct her mind. Like Hermione, it would take more time to learn how to divert more direct attacks, but already practicing yoga meditation gave Padma an edge.

Luna, of course, needed no such training, as she would quickly give a splitting headache to anyone who tried to read her mind.

Harry also outlined how he planned to train those sworn to him. He would call it the DA, although of course only his three lovers knew the backstory of the Defense Association. It would meet for two hours every Sunday morning. They would practice shields and defensive magic for the rest of the autumn term, and move on to offensive magics in the spring.

That evening, the group went to dinner, planning on coming back for an evening of passionate fun.

Walking into the strangely silent great hall, the quartet saw that a grim-faced Cornelius Fudge was

waiting for them, and he had brought ten aurors with him.

Chapter XV

"No need to have the aurors with you, Fudge," Harry said loudly. "I know I am not allowed to kill you while you are still in office." He strode forward. "What do you want?"

"You killed three men, one of them on the Wizengamot, and you ask what I want?" Fudge demanded. "Even if they were Death Eaters, you still have to answer some questions, Potter."

"I might," Harry agreed, "but why to you in person? Was this DeVere's idea? He is the one other member of the Wizengamot I know for certain is a Marked Death Eater."

That was exactly whose idea it had been, and that accusation made Fudge stop and blink. Harry stalked closer. "Did he also suggest which aurors to take? I wonder, are any of you Marked Death Eaters, too? Let's see. . . ." Harry's wand flashed, and three of the ten screamed, and grasped their left forearms in agony. "Well?" Harry demanded. "Are you going to arrest them, or do I execute them, too?"

The other seven aurors sprang into action, and soon three more Death Eaters had been exposed and arrested. "I see Voldemort went recruiting this summer," Harry said, his voice deadly cold. "None of you three were at the ceremony last June. In fact, I doubt any of you were even old enough to join last time." None said anything, although two did manage a credible sneer.

Harry turned to Fudge. "If you continue to keep the company of Death Eaters, Minister, you will understand why some will start to wonder about your own loyalties."

"I can see why you would say that, boy, but I still resent it," Fudge tried to growl. He blinked as a growling murmur went through the hall. "What?" he demanded of the students.

Neville stood. "We said, 'that's Lord Potter' to you!" Neville gestured, and at least a fifth of the students stood, certainly a majority of the older students. "We are the sworn followers of Lord Harry Potter, heir of Merlin and the Four Founders of Hogwarts, Triwizard co-champion, and the Chosen One."

Fudge's jaw hung open, and so, when the challenge came, it was not from Fudge. "Is he really all those things?"

En masse, everyone not tied up looked to the entrance way, where a group of sixty figures in rich blue hooded robes stood. They started to come in. "Who are you?" Dumbledore demanded.

The Grey Lady, Ravenclaw's ghost, glided forward, and for the first time in living memory spoke. "Mistress Ravenclaw decreed that each year at least one First year Ravenclaw girl would be chosen to join the Select, now commonly called the Ravenclaw Coven. Behold the ten current members at Hogwarts and the leaders of the coven outside of the school." She bowed, and then led the figures until they made a chanting circle around Harry and his three women.

After nearly five minutes, they stopped circling, but kept chanting. A break opened in the circle. "Stand just outside the circle," Harry said to his lovers. "And don't worry, I'm perfectly safe." The three teens unhappily did as Harry had instructed them, and the circle now broke into two circles,

moving in opposite directions.

The ceiling again faded out, replaced by the four house symbols, and then the Potter coat of arms appeared in the center. Then, next to it, appeared the red dragon.

"He is what he says," the spokes witch said. She dropped her robe, showing that she was nude except for her sandals. All the others did as well, showing that the current Ravenclaws were Cho and her 'Clique'.

The inhalation of (mostly male) breath was clearly audible, as all of the Ravenclaw witches had clearly kept their figures, no matter what their age, and they were aged from 12 to 150. The Coven dropped to their knees atop their robes. "We swear our fealty to the Heir of Merlin," the woman intoned, and the entire Coven repeated the oath. In a more normal voice, the witch then added, "While we are sorry you did not choose one of our sisters as a consort, we are proud that you have chosen two Ravenclaws, and one whose mind could have easily placed her in our House. Su!"

"My Lady?" Su Li, one of the two Fifth year members (the other being Marietta Edgecombe), replied.

"You are the liaison between Lord Potter and our Coven. Lord Potter, our apologies that one of our number dared strike out against you and yours." The woman, who looked rather like Marilyn Monroe toward the end of her life, stood, and the others followed. She waved her wand, although not even Harry had seen it before it appeared and chanted something, then adding, "None shall remember our names or faces, save Lord Potter and his consorts." The group then moved out of the hall, hungry eyes following many of them, for if their faces and identities would be forgotten, their bodies would not be.

Padma moved to Harry's side. "Two of those witches are general members of the Wizengamot," she hissed, "and at least seven are consorts to wizards who are on it."

Harry nodded. He turned back to Fudge. "I think you should take your Death Eating body guards and leave. You may send auror Shacklebolt or Tonks with any questions you still need answered." The dumbfounded Fudge merely nodded. Harry turned to Dumbledore. "If you'll also excuse us, I think we've lost our appetite for company."

"Of course," Dumbledore managed to say.

Hermione sat in a soft arm chair and pouted.

"What?" Harry asked.

"I never heard of the Ravenclaw Coven," Hermione said angrily. "I've never seen so much as a hint of their existence."

"If it makes you feel any better, I never heard of them either," Padma said. "I mean, we obviously knew the Clique existed, but not that the Coven was this powerful."

"I had, but I didn't believe they actually existed," Luna put in.

"Did you recognize their speaker?" Harry asked. The three witches shook their heads. "She's the number two person in the Magical Exchequer." This oversaw the collecting of magical taxes, such as they were. "Hermione, draft a letter to her, the Wizengamot members, and the spouses of Wizengamot members. Outline our desires for civil rights, especially for elves, werewolves, and the Muggle-born."

"Not a problem," Hermione answered.

"Padma, talk with Li and see what protocol we should follow in getting the letters out. Luna, ask the Grey Lady why they showed up and what they might want."

The two nodded.

"And what else should I do?" Hermione asked.

"I think you should take off all your clothes, so the three of us can make passionate love to you," Harry said in such a straight tone that it made all three teens blink. Then they saw that Harry had already had the Room of Requirement change the study into a bedroom, and they all took the hint.

Saturday, October 21, 1995

While the letters to the Coven had been dispatched, there had yet been no replied. Su Li had assured them that the letters had been appreciated, and had asked if Harry had any further plans for the wizarding world when he defeated the Dark Lord.

It turned out that Harry and Hermione indeed had plans, and the quartet had spent a week refining them and improving them. Their breadth had swept Padma's breath away when she had first heard them. She had known Hermione was something of a radical, but it turned out that Harry was an egalitarian revolutionary as well. The civil rights for werewolves and the freeing of house elves from formal slavery had been expected, although the many practical suggestions would make both pills far less bitter to all but the most entrenched hard-liners. The proposals for restoring the education fund, which would have the effect of allowing dozens of impoverished Pure-bloods to attend Hogwarts would help those pills go down as well. The proposal to increase the Wizengamot by ten seats, selected by popular vote, was even more radical than the various sentient's rights proposals -- as was the idea that they have five year terms rather than life-time appointments (with two elected every year and, even more radically, that no one could be elected to consecutive terms). The other proposals were less radical, but together, they covered a wide swath.

Harry made certain to tell the Coven that he did not expect their oath to him to carry over to politics, other than hoping that they would take his proposals seriously. Hermione and Luna had spent the last week taking soundings on some of the proposals in their respective common rooms, while Hermione and Padma had sounded out some friends in Hufflepuff. There were lots of discussions on these ideas all around Hogwarts.

On this late Saturday morning, however, Harry was seeking out his loves, having spent the last two hours at Quidditch practice. Who he found, however, was Millicent Bulstrode. "Potter," she said

with a nod as she blocked his way.

"Can I help you?"

"Yes," she said, "although you won't think so, and if all the rumors I've heard this week are true, I'm not really so sure we should be looking to you for help."

"Afraid you don't have the talent for a level playing field, Bulstrode?" Harry taunted.

"Is that what you're really aiming for, Potter?" she demanded.

"Actually, yes," Harry answered. "I know, better than you, that we wouldn't survive being exposed to the greater Muggle world. And I really don't want to 'Mugglize' us. Believing we should be is as stupid as Voldemort's Pure-blood agenda."

"We'll see," Millicent retorted. "Now, do you want to see what we've arranged?"

"Not really," Harry retorted.

"Pull that wand and follow me," Millicent growled. "I'm taking you to meet three Death Eaters who want to speak with you."

That made Harry blink, and he certainly pulled his wand.

"Much better," Millicent stated with a sneer. "Come along, then." Her lip curled. "Unless you want three Death Eaters walking about Hogwarts." She turned and left. Harry sighed and followed.

Millicent led Harry to a room not too far from the ground floor stairs which led down to the dungeon entrance of the Slytherin common room. Harry was not terribly surprised to see three sets of fathers and sons -- Crabbe, Goyle, and Nott. Millicent went over to the right wall, and Crabbe, Nott, and Goyle Junior reluctantly went over to join her.

"Who's going to explain this," Harry asked forcefully.

"Crabbe and me," Goyle Senior started off, "we been friends all our lives, and our fathers and grandfathers trained us to follow Lucius Malfoy. We made two mistakes. Training our boys to do the same. . . ."

"And letting Lucius Malfoy talk us into taking the Mark," Crabbe added. He winced in pain, as the slight verbal betrayal caused the Mark to react against that thought.

"I can only blame myself," Nott grumbled. "Now Draco is trying to get our sons to swear allegiance to him. He thinks he can build up a Pure-Blood faction which will either rival our Lord's and replace it if you fail, or which will take you out, should you somehow succeed."

"Either way, our boys end up dead," Crabbe said. "Draco isn't a patch on his father, and Lucius could never have stood up to the Master. Draco certainly couldn't."

"But they can't swear allegiance to Malfoy, since you are sworn to another," Harry said.

"There you are wrong," Goyle said.

"Draco hasn't come right out and said that he will oppose the Master," Nott said.

"But he will if he thinks he can get away with it, and when he learns he can't, either he and his sworn followers will die, or he'll sacrifice them to save himself," Goyle said.

"So, we'll fight you for our sons, Potter," Crabbe stated.

"If we win, we take you to our Master to dispose of, and our sons enter his service," Nott went on. "If you win, they swear allegiance to you."

Harry blinked at that.

"If you lose to our Lord, they die," Goyle acknowledged. "If they go with Draco, they die."

Harry understood, somewhat. This was the only way to get their sons on what the three men realized would be the winning side, even if Harry didn't really want them. "What do you three say about that?" Harry asked.

"We don't have any options we really like, Potter," Ted Nott answered, his voice tight from emotion. "We certainly don't want to watch you try and do to our fathers what you did to Smythe, Macnair, and Malfoy. Still, this seems like the least worst option." Young Crabbe and Goyle nodded.

"Fine," Harry answered. "If any of the four of you make a move towards your wands, I'll kill you, too." From the tone of his voice, no one in the room doubted him.

The 'fight' was over quickly. Nott pulled his wand first, but Harry was able to conjure a shield wandlessly with his left hand while shooting cutting hexes from his wand. These blasted through their shields, especially as none of the three men were really trying to attack or defend. They had come to die, to free themselves of Voldemort's service, and to get their sons on the winning side.

They laid dead on the floor in less than one minute of the 'fight' starting.

Harry looked at the three grieving teens. "I didn't like having to do that," he said.

"We know," Millicent said.

"Their service to their lord gave them no other option, under the circumstances, once Draco pushed the issue," Nott said, tears running down his face.

"We do blame you, Potter," Crabbe said.

"But we blame Draco and the Dark Lord more," Goyle concluded.

Harry walked over to them. "Do you still want to do it?" Harry demanded.

"Do we have any choice?" Nott asked.

"Of course you do," Harry retorted. "Whose side do you want to be on? Voldemort's, mine, or Draco's? Somehow, I don't think you have the option of being neutral."

"You're right about that," Nott agreed, wiping his face with a handkerchief. "I wish you weren't."

"You're going to do things we don't like," Bulstrode said. "Take positions we don't agree with."

"Almost certainly," Harry agreed. "With any luck, however, this will all be over by the time you turn seventeen."

"No," Nott said thoughtfully, "you wouldn't want us sworn to you then if we really opposed you."

The four Slytherins looked at each other and seemed to come to a decision. Nott slid to his knees. Then Bulstrode, Goyle, and finally Crabbe followed. Harry accepted all four into his service.

"My lord," Nott then said, "a warning. If Draco comes to you, I don't recommend you accept his vow."

"Malfoys seem to have ways around oaths and vows," Millicent stated.

"I can believe that," Harry said. "Millicent, please work with Padma and Tracey, and go see Professor Slughorn."

"Doing what?" she asked, confused.

"Three of my liegemen have lost their fathers. Even if those three men followed my sworn enemy, I owe them proper wizarding funerals."

"As you command, my lord," Millicent said, impressed.

"Do you three prefer Theodore, Vincent, and Gregory, or Ted, Vin, and Greg?"

"Ted, or Theo," Nott said.

"Actually, I like Vincent," Crabbe admitted.

"Greg," Goyle said.

"Then come with me to see the Headmaster. Millicent, guard the outside of the room. I'll send someone along to relieve you, and then you can start work on the funerals."

"Lord Potter?" Harry swung around, and saw he was being addressed by the Bloody Baron. With him were the Fat Friar and Sir Nicholas. "With your permission, my colleague and I can guard the door, allowing none to enter."

"While I shall say the Office for the Dead, and keep watch in here," the Friar added.

"Thank you, my lord," Harry said with a bow. "Thank you, Sir Nicholas. Thank you, Brother."

And with that, the five living persons left the room.

After speaking with the Headmaster, Harry gathered his 'associates' as he had come to call them, for a working lunch: Tracey and Daphne from Slytherin; Ron and Neville from Gryffindor; Su and Tony from Ravenclaw; and Ernie and Hannah from Hufflepuff -- all Fifth years sworn to him, other than Su, who was his link to the Coven. And, of course, Hermione, Luna, and Padma were there as well.

Harry explained what had happened, and saw that their looks were more of surprise at the actions of the Death Eaters and their sons than revulsion of what he had done to them.

Finally, Ron spoke. "It's too bad you took them in, Harry . . . I mean, Lord Potter." The group tried to be formal in this setting. "Still, I really don't think you had much choice, unless you think they would foreswear your service."

"Actually, I don't," Harry answered. "I don't think they'll ever like it, although I suppose I could get lucky and they might accept our agenda. Still, I really don't think any of them would easily try foreswear that kind of oath."

"And taking them in does take them away from Draco," Ernie pointed out, which made Ron and Neville grin.

"What do you two think?" Harry asked Tracey and Daphne. Tracey and Padma, of course, had already spoken with Millicent and knew what had happened.

"I agree that they would be no more likely to foreswear the oath than anyone else who has taken it," Tracey said. "Crabbe and Goyle have been trained to serve, and they will serve you. Greg Goyle is the only person I know of who finds Millie at all attractive. She's the brains and balls of the four, although Ted isn't stupid by any means. Still, she'll stick with Greg and measure her chances. If she can live with the changes you've proposed, they will likely stick with you after all this is over."

"I agree," Daphne said. The group had been surprised to learn that her interests did indeed extend to more than gossip and fashion. She was interested in being a force behind the scenes in politics, and perhaps being married to a future Minister of Magic. She had therefore dismissed Harry from her calculations and had been eyeing Neville in a way which was making Neville very nervous and Ginny (to her surprise) slightly jealous. "Equally interesting is what this says about Draco. Since he can't get the two boys who have been his bookends to swear allegiance to him, he should have little chance of convincing many others, although Pansy might. The oath has to be freely given and freely accepted to be binding. I predict Ted was right . . . the Ferret will be approaching you to suck up after he gets over whatever tantrum he has when he learns what happened, unless he's stupid enough to confront you about it directly."

"Warn everyone to be careful around him," Harry said.

"And around Pansy," Daphne added. "She's bound her fate to Draco's, and she might not be quite as smart as he is, but she does have more guts and gall."

Chapter XVI

It was just over a week after Harry had killed the three Death Eaters, and he had been trying to get to a meeting with Su Li. Harry hoped that she had an answer to his letter, outlining his proposals for reforming magical Britain after Voldemort was destroyed. She had finally agreed to meet with him that afternoon.

What was standing in his way at the moment was Draco Malfoy, with Pansy on one side of him and Montague on the other, all three with their wands drawn.

"What do you want, Malfoy?" Harry asked, annoyed.

"You just have to be greedy, don't you, Potter?" Draco spat. "You can't leave any gravy for the rest of us, can you?"

"You're training your own army here, Potter," Pansy nearly snarled. Harry thought she looked rather like Aunt Marge's bulldog. Still, he did see why the DA could look like a small army in training.

"You want to take over the magical world once you defeat the Dark Lord," Draco accused.

"Draco, you're an idiot," Harry said contemptuously. "First of all, nothing I want or am doing has anything to do with things outside of magical Britain and Ireland. That's hardly the magical world. In fact, it's less than one percent of the magical world. None of my ideas are going to be easily accepted, even when I kill Tommy-boy. Once Tommy is gone and I turn seventeen, I'm releasing everyone from their sworn oaths, just like I'm not holding anyone to reswearing once they turn seventeen if they're underage now. As for the Defense Association, what's the matter, you don't like people knowing how to stand up for themselves? Are you three upset because there are less people you can bully?"

Harry glared at them, and each of the three started to sweat. "Now, put your wands away and bugger off, or I'll take them away and shove them so far up your arses that sparks will come out your gobs each time you smile."

Pansy's nerve actually broke first, to Harry's surprise. Montague left next. Draco continued to glare.

"Well?" Harry asked, "are you going to do something, or are you going to be smart for once in your life and bide your time? Now is not the time to be loudly defending the old Pure-blood agenda, Malfoy. Wait a few years, and when people forget how bad things were, how asinine the positions are, you'll be able to drum up support again."

"I will be back, Potter," Draco swore, and he marched off. Harry rolled his eyes.

"Oh, dear," Su Li said with a small smile on her tiny lips (for she was a very petite, small-boned young woman), "you don't seem to be in a good mood." Harry had come into the small seminar room with an angry look.

"Sorry." Harry shook himself out of his remaining irritation. "I ran into Malfoy, Parkinson, and Montague, and at first they thought they wanted to fight."

"Well, I am glad you decided to frighten them off instead of killing them," a woman said, revealing herself.

Harry bowed, "Madam Ramsey," he said.

"You know me? Or did one of your brilliant consorts identify me?"

"I knew of you," Harry answered. She had been an ally inside the Ministry during the civil war, but had not revealed the Ravenclaw Coven to him that time. "I'm happy to see you."

"It is a trick I may use at Hogwarts, as a representative of Mistress Ravenclaw."

"Ahh," Harry said with a smile. He disappeared, and reappeared several steps away. "I suppose it's good to know that I would be undetectable as well."

"Unless Hogwarts herself were to reveal one of us," Ramsey agreed. She gestured and sat at the table. Harry sat, but at first Su stood behind Madam Ramsey, until she gestured to Su to sit as well.

"We have studied your proposals, Lord Potter," Ramsey said. "They are radical in intent, but they would not really have as radical of an effect as most people would think at first."

"I want to liberalize our society, and provide more protections for magical sentients," Harry agreed. "That would mean that the core of conservative Pure-bloods who run things would lose some power, and their reactionary supporters, who sit back and pull strings in the Ministry and who support people like Grindelwald and Voldemort, would hopefully lose even more."

"In the short term," Ramsey agreed, "assuming they do not rebel."

"They'll be discredited once Voldemort is gone, which I would hope would take care of the short term, and the type of people they partially control are already in charge," Harry said. "In the sort term, they can hardly rebel against themselves, and the most extreme ones are Death Eaters, and they are going to be dead or discredited. In the long term, those families are fast dying off."

"Not fast enough, and we are a long-lived people, Lord Potter," Ramsey said. "May we suggest several things, in addition to your proposals?"

"Of course," Harry said. Madam Ramsey first handed him some parchments, which Harry glanced through. He looked up. "As you know, we've already talked about restarting the Education Fund. I like this scheme, and would happily donate fifty thousand Galleons when I reach seventeen."

"That would be most gratifying, but we were going to ask for at least sixty thousand and hoped for ninety," Ramsey retorted with a smile.

"I'll donate forty thousand up-front, and then another thousand for each ten thousand raised after that from private sources, up to an additional thirty-five thousand," Harry offered. "Say a ten year time limit?"

"That is a good idea," Ramsey agreed.

"Assuming that you have all this in place before I'm seventeen," Harry added, waving one sheet of parchment, which summarize Harry's positions as well as the education scheme.

"Of course," she said.

"As for the required teaching of a two year course on Magical Culture to us Muggle-raised, and mandatory Introductory Muggle Studies for the Magically-raised. . . ."

"Yes?"

"Since you have a high position in the Ministry, I presume you are at least a Full-Blood?"

"I am."

"And your Coven?"

"We have no Muggle-born members, but there are some who have been raised in a mixed environment. Why?"

"Muggle Studies is as poorly taught here as History. Both need better teachers. This course needs to be taught by someone who was Muggle-raised, but who has a background which will command the students' respect. It will also have to emphasize how dependent we are on Muggle food and basic supplies, as well as on how to pass through the Muggle world without being noticed."

Ramsey nodded. "Excellent points. Anything else?"

"No, I like all these proposals."

"Now," Madam Ramsey asked, "What other intentions do you have?"

"Very few," Harry answered. "I know as well as you that the magically-raised 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, explains most Pure-Blood attitudes."

"And what do you think of that fear?" Ramsey asked.

"I hate to say it, but it's probably very well-founded for lots of reasons," Harry had to admit.

"Such as?"

"If Muggles knew that most magical beasts were real, how many would want to go hunting for dragons, griffins, or even unicorns?" Harry asked, which made both Madam Ramsey and Su shudder with horror. "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? That's assuming that their secret services can't do that already." Madam Ramsey looked horrified, but had to admit that was possible. "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, even if I loathe the bigotry that goes along with the fear. 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?" Su asked.

"Our chances for what? Improving the magical world? I do think we can do that. Our, and your, proposals are good first steps. For ever integrating the magical and Muggle worlds? Even in my grandchildren's lifetimes? No, not unless we gain more significantly 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. There are just too many Muggles and too few of us."

"I meant our chances of staying hidden," Su retorted.

"I understand there are plenty of magic users hiding in plain sight all across Asia, Africa, Australia, and the Americas," Harry answered. "Do you know why magical Europe are the most paranoid in the world, besides all the Pure-Blood bigotry?"

"Why?" Ramsey asked sardonically.

"Two reasons," Harry answered, "one good and one bad. The good reason is because how 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. That tells us right there that the Muggle world can't just be trusted." Harry's expression darkened. "It's almost amazing that it's almost never mentioned here, even by the Pure-Bloods, isn't it?"

"Why isn't it?" Su Li asked.

When Ramsey didn't answer, Harry said, "Because it rather undercuts the Pure-blood claims of magical superiority in some ways, doesn't it? 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."

"How?" Su asked.

"Almost every Seventh year here 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 two minutes, and that is easily accomplished by Muggle weapons. 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 than those." Harry shrugged. "Like I said, if we could control the Muggles, we already would have, back in the days when they just had swords, spears, and arrows."

"And the bad reason?" Su asked. Ramsey grimaced, correctly suspecting the answer.

"All of magical Europe is woefully under-taxed," Harry said. "To do the job right, the Ministry would have to be both more efficient and hire on more people. But if they hired on more people, they couldn't all be the 'right' kind of people, meaning people from the 'right' families. The only reason why the aurors are even semi-efficient, given that they are only at about half the strength they should be, is that for the most part the 'right people' are too lazy to meet the requirements, despite Snape's efforts to misteach Potions to everyone except for Slytherins these past dozen years

or so."

Su looked at Ramsey, who merely nodded.

"Well, Professor Snape is hardly a problem now, is he?" Ramsey asked.

"No, ma'am," Harry agreed. "Now, what is it you wanted to really ask me?"

"You might have the brains for Ravenclaw and the guile for Slytherin, but you are too direct for any House but Gryffindor," Ramsey said with a smile.

"Let me test your theory about my brains," Harry said. "I am the Heir of Gryffindor, and an heir of Hufflepuff. There are no known blood heirs left of Ravenclaw or Slytherin."

Ramsey frowned, "I thought You-Know-Who was the last blood Heir of Slytherin."

"Tom Riddle was, but he's dead," Harry answered. "Voldemort has returned, and he is a magical heir of Slytherin. He doesn't have a drop of a genetic relationship to Slytherin, since he was made up of unicorn blood and venom, the bone of his Muggle father, the hand of his slave Peter Pettigrew, and a bit of my blood. That makes him a very distant relation by blood, and I've already filed all the papers and said the spells which disinherit him. I have already been recognized as a magical heir, and since he was just reborn to his body a few months ago, I am the senior magical heir. I've disinherited him as an heir to Slytherin as well." The Slytherin vault had considered that, and on a flying visit to the vaults a few weekends earlier, had finally confirmed that it also considered Voldemort disinherited.

"So," Harry went on, "unless Voldemort somehow has children. . . ." Harry shuddered at the thought. "I get to restart the lines to both Ravenclaw and Slytherin, plus continue the line of Gryffindor." He smiled. "I am sure you're more concerned with Ravenclaw."

"We are, but have spared a thought for Slytherin as well," Ramsey agreed.

"I will not take a Slytherin consort, at least not to provide Slytherin with a new heir," Harry said. "Trust me, I think I'll have enough children to be Sorted all around. I once heard a prediction I'd have twelve, and I trust the Sorting Hat to choose at least one for Slytherin, and that will be the start of a new Slytherin line, and to do the same for Ravenclaw."

"You wouldn't object?"

Harry shrugged, "Not if Slytherin once again becomes a House of honest ambition, and not greedy, greasy, gits." Harry smiled and added, "And yes, I know your family is split between Ravenclaw and Slytherin."

"I have to admit," Ramsey said, "you are a lot different than I had been led to believe."

"I had a very hard childhood," Harry said with steel in his voice, "and learned to hide whatever talents and abilities I have. I had to let that side out last year, and I didn't like it so I tried to put it away. I had to use it this summer, and learned that I have to show that side to the world now. What I was before last year now only belongs to Hermione. The whole gestalt that is Harry Potter belongs to Luna and Padma." His hard voice grew incredibly cold and terrifying. "If anyone hurts one of

them, they will wish for what I did to Snape."

"I understand," Madam Ramsey said. She was not about to cross the-Boy-Who-Lived, even if she might sometimes have to oppose him.

"So we have a deal?" Harry asked.

"We have a deal," Madam Ramsey said. "We will start feeding our combined ideas through the Wizengamot over the next year, starting at the next meeting in December. I hope you will endorse the ideas, through The Quibbler if not The Prophet."

"I think that can be arranged," Harry said. He stood and bowed to Madam Ramsey and to Su Li, and then took his leave.

"I knew he had changed," Su mused, "but I hadn't seen how much until today."

"So you believe Chang's descriptions of his character were accurate, at least for last year?" Ramsey asked.

Su thought about that. "Probably, but if he was interested in Granger last year, he was putting it aside because of his interest in Cho." She shook her head. "I can't imagine what he went through in the Third Task. It obviously changed him more than any of us guessed."

Ramsey thought about that. She also wondered what exactly had happened at Harry's farce of a trial. The Heir of Merlin was not a person to press for too many answers at one time.

"Harry?"

"Yes?" Harry looked at Padma. "What is it?"

"Next weekend is the first Hogsmeade weekend."

"True," Harry agreed.

"My parents would like to meet you."

Harry merely nodded and looked at Luna. "Should I be meeting your father then, too?"

"That would be nice," Luna answered. "I always like seeing Daddy."

"Professor Slughorn wants us to attend one of his little get-togethers that night as well," Hermione said.

"You and me, or the four of us?"

"Oh, the four of us," Hermione assured him.

"Then tell the Professor that, if I survive meeting the Patils and Mister Lovegood, we'll be there."

Padma clasped her hands together and made a slight bow to her father. "Father, Harry Potter. Harry, my father, Chandragupta Patil." Padma looked around. "Mother is not here?"

"Your mother is with Mister Lovegood," her father answered. "Mister Potter and I have things to discuss." Padma repeated her gesture, and led Luna and a scowling Hermione away. "Mister Potter," he said, gesturing to a private parlor.

Harry nodded and went in and sat.

"I did not invite you to sit," Mister Patil snapped.

"True," Harry answered. "Sit."

"What did you say to me?" Mister Patil thundered.

"I said **SIT!**" Harry ordered.

Patil sat, much to his own surprise. "Now," Harry continued, "we can be reasonable men, or we can posture. You have seventy years on me, and I have more wealth, a lot more power, and in this part of the world, the more important ancestry. Which do you prefer?"

"I was hoping to posture a bit more, but it seems rather futile," Patil admitted, irritated.

"Sir," Harry teased, "I've faced down Voldemort, Dumbledore, a troll, a dragon, Hermione's parents, and Molly Weasley, and killed a number of men, one of them in a very public way."

"True," Patil agreed ruefully. "I hope you'll honor me by putting me somewhere on the list."

"Above the troll, the dragon, and Dumbledore; below the Grangers and Voldemort, and certainly below Molly Weasley."

"I have met her," Mister Patil agreed.

"Is there a problem, or was this display required for some Indian custom I'm not aware of?" Harry asked.

"I was wondering if there was some reason that you only gave my daughter the minimum amount required for her status," Patil stated.

Harry blinked. "Is that because you're worried that Hermione's status will be that of full bondmate instead of consort? That in the eyes of the Muggle world, she'll be my wife, and the others at best my mistresses?"

"Yes," Patil said. "I understand that, along with your personal preferences, you are making a political statement by bonding with a Muggleborn and taking two Pure-bloods as consorts."

"I don't mean any offense, but is Padma considered a Pure-blood? I understood that her mother,

while from very old magical bloodlines is, well. . . ."

"A Squib? Well, yes," Patil admitted. "However, few people know that, as she was an only child. People in Britain assume she was educated in India, people in India presume she was educated here or in America, as her mother was. She is also a very knowledgeable potions brewer. As an American friend of mine would say, 'she can talk the talk'."

"So everyone just assumes she a witch, because they have no reason not to," Harry said, amused. "To give you the explanation you want, yes, all of the Potter magical property is entailed, so it will go to the oldest son I have with Hermione. If we don't have a son, it will go to the first son born to Luna or Padma. None of the Muggle property is entailed, and I will be dividing most of that up between any other children I have, with life-interests for their mothers, if I live so long to officially get married and have children. Beyond that, I really shouldn't say."

"Possibly not," Patil agreed.

There was a knock on the door, which turned out to be Mister Lovegood. "Hey, Sandy! I heard you were trying to intimidate our future son-in-law. Need some help?"

Chandragupta Patil winced. "Lionel, how many times have I asked you not to call me that?"

"I haven't kept a tally," Lionel admitted. "But who wants to keep saying 'Chandragupta'?"

"As we are to be indirectly related, you may call me Chandra," Patil said. "In fact, please call me Chandra."

"Be sure to tell all my future children to call him 'Grandfather Sandy', though," Harry said gravely.

"Nonsense," Lionel said. "He'll be 'Pappy Sandy' and I can be 'Pappy Lion'."

"I knew this incarnation was going too well," Patil said wearily.

Chapter XVII

Saturday, November 18, 1995

Harry sat in the bed, arms folded over his chest, scowling.

"It's no use making that face at me, Harry Potter," Madam Pomfrey scolded. "You're the one who plowed into the ground."

"At least you made Malfoy crash three times before you crashed, and you did catch the Snitch," Ron pointed out.

"I suppose," Harry allowed.

"Mister Weasley and you other Quidditch rats? Out! You three ladies may remain for a short time if you behave and don't say a word."

The Quidditch team left, Madam Pomfrey pulled the privacy curtain, and Hermione, Luna, and Padma were totally silent.

"I have mended your broken leg, your broken ankles, your broken knee, both your broken and your sprained wrist, and your cracked collar bone," she stated. "With all that, you need a bone strengthening potion. Take this."

She handed Harry a double shot of a dark violet potion. Harry sighed and tossed it back. "H'mm," he said.

"What?" Hermione asked. Luna and Padma had never visited Harry in the Infirmary before, and weren't quite certain how to act.

"It actually tastes rather fruity," Harry said. "Most potions taste awful."

"It actually tastes so awful that no one can stomach it," Madam Pomfrey admitted. "They had to come up with a favored version. Now, I know what you and Miss Granger are up to, and I wouldn't be surprised if you two were as well. I know you'll hate to hear this, but no touching for thirty-six hours. Certainly no fellatio."

"Aaaawww," all three witches said, which made them giggle and Harry blush.

"I mean it," Madam Pomfrey said. "That potion can not be taken by fertile women. It would immediately upset your hormones, and you'd have about a two week period." At that, the three teens shivered. "Also, it would make any magical anti-pregnancy potion inactive for about three months, and the same with the so-called Muggle 'pill'. To be on the safe side, nothing until Wednesday morning. Don't even get any skin contact before that. No, not even a kiss."

She turned to Harry. "As for you, I suggest you 'clean out your pipes' Wednesday night and start with a fresh batch." Harry turned scarlet. "To be totally safe, I recommend you all wait until next Saturday for that. As for tonight, remember, don't even touch him for thirty-six hours. Now, say goodnight, ladies."

Dejected, the three witches left. Madam Pomfrey left Harry alone, muttering, "I have to say the damndest things to that boy. . . ."

For Harry, the only good thing that happened over the next week was the return of Hagrid. Since Hermione was keeping some distance between them, Harry visited Hagrid by himself.

Harry got the tale of Hagrid's journey to the giants while he was casting healing charms on his friend. Hagrid was only slightly surprised that the charms actually worked on him, as few had the power to affect him. Still, Hagrid thought Harry could walk on water if he wanted to.

Harry also wormed the story of Grawp out of Hagrid.

Saturday, November 25, 1995

"Has anyone seen Miss Granger?" McGonagall asked at lunch.

"I don't think you'll be seeing much of her, Mister Potter, Miss Lovegood, or Miss Patil this weekend," Pomfrey admitted.

"Why is that?"

"Well, the potion I had to give Potter last week would have some nasty side-effects on the young women if they came into contact with him while it was still in his system. Today was the first day I told them it would be, well, totally smooth sailing," Pomfrey said.

"Ah," McGonagall said. "I believe I shall wait until Monday to discuss some ideas she had on alternate transfiguration theory."

Three satiated witches managed to rouse themselves by late afternoon. Their (literally) drained lover lay snoring peacefully in the huge bed the Room of Requirement had provided, so they stealthily moved into the bathroom, where they lay in a magical hot tub.

"This is nice," Luna told Hermione. "Lots of swirling bubbles." Luna slid down so the surface swept past her nipples. "I can't decide which position I like best," Luna admitted, with a slight shudder.

"Stop that," Hermione scolded. "We have to decide something important."

"I doubt it," Luna said.

"Why?" Hermione demanded.

"We have entered into an old, very traditional relationship with our lord," Luna pointed out.

"True. And the point is?"

"The point is, he is not just Harry, our friend and now lover and future husband. He is our lord. We are not his slaves, but neither are we his equals. We are his advisors, but in private. All three of need to get used to addressing Harry properly, although Padma already is doing a much better job than we are." Padma smiled.

Hermione frowned.

"Luna and I are more secure than you seem to feel," Padma said. "Harry must be the center of this relationship if it is to work. I feel secure, because I know the bonds will bring us together, and because Harry is too honorable, too noble, and just plain too nice to ever do anything so horrendous that he would drive me from his side. Yet while I am the least relevant member of our group, I also feel the most at home in this relationship, for I am the product of exactly this type of relationship. Each of you has to give up something for the relationship to work. If neither of you is willing to face that now, you had best decide that now, because it's almost too late."

"What are you giving up?" Hermione asked Luna.

Luna said simply, "I am giving up my final year at Hogwarts, remember. I was not as attached to that as you, but it would have been nice to finish. This relationship is more important."

"And Harry?"

"Harry has given up his dream of ever being 'just Harry'," Padma said. "He would have been quite happy if he had by some miracle destroyed He-Who -- I mean Voldemort -- that night of the Third Task without anyone but Dumbledore knowing and if Cedric had not died. In fact, he would have been ecstatic. Had he been told then that you and he would get married, have three children, and live a mixed magical-and-Muggle lifestyle, with him as the house-husband and you as the famous spell-weaver, he would have been happy and happy for you."

"Of course, he would have been happy to just have known that such a life was possible," Luna mused. "He does know that it no longer is."

"And you have to give up the air of superiority coupled with the need to show that you are superior to everyone else," Padma said.

Hermione crossed her arms over her chest. "I thought I had."

"You're getting better," Padma agreed. "No one can do everything," she went on. "Which fights are the most important to you? Sentients' rights? Bringing a bit of fairness to the Ministry and Wizengamot? Those are the fights Harry has been committed to, in part because of you. However, we can't have Harry as the leader of the movement and you being the leader's boss."

"You tried to overrule Harry several times in the DA and in our discussions with Su," Luna said. "We're not saying not to argue your point."

"We certainly will keep arguing ours," Padma agreed. "However, there cannot be true collective leadership. In the end, one person has to make the decisions, and that is Harry."

"No one is your sworn follower," Luna pointed out.

Hermione merely scowled.

Padma started to say something, but stopped herself.

"What?" Hermione demanded.

"There's a betting pool going," Padma said apologetically.

"And?"

"The betting is that since they believe that you are, well. . . ."

"A know-it-all?" Hermione suggested.

"An insufferable stuck-up prig of a know-it-all' is the exact phrasing I believe," Luna supplied. Padma and Hermione both gave her dirty looks.

"Any way, the pool is for when Harry dumps you," Padma concluded.

"He won't, of course, because Harry loves you," Luna said. "Other than defeating Voldemort so that he can then get on with his life, nothing means more to Harry than you."

"But you need to tone down your opinions a bit when people other than the four of us are together," Padma said.

"I'll try," Hermione said with a pout.

"That's our adorable know-it-all," Luna said, leaning over and kissing Hermione's cheek.

As Luna leaned back, Luna and Hermione suddenly smiled contentedly. "You two look happy," Padma said.

"Our love is dreaming, and it seems to be a pleasant dream," Luna said.

"You know," Hermione said, "my link seems to be nearly as strong as it was last week. Maybe even as strong."

"So does mine," Luna agreed.

"I thought, since we shared him all three times today, it would take a while to really reestablish itself," Hermione said thoughtfully.

"Well, Harry always cums a lot, and that was with ejaculating at least twice a day," Luna pointed out. "We got that gusher this morning because he had held back since Thursday night."

"True," Hermione agreed. "If we can get back to the schedule of at least twice a day for him and if our links are as strong as they were, I was thinking. . . ."

"Yes?" Luna and Padma asked.

"I was thinking you and I should only do him three times a week," Hermione told Luna. "All three of us would still do him Saturday mornings." She turned to Padma. "Then you could swallow his potion six or seven times a week between now and the start of the holidays. That way, you can really strengthen your bonds."

"You would . . . for me?" Padma tried to ask, tears of happiness in her eyes.

"Yes," Hermione said, kissing away a tear.

"Yes," Luna agreed, kissing another.

Padma made a little sound which the other two recognized as signaling she was getting aroused.

"Before we start something fun," Hermione said, "there's something important we have to discuss."

"The Yule holidays?" Luna guessed. Hermione nodded.

"Yes, we don't want Harry to be alone, and we of course want to be with him and our families," Padma said thoughtfully.

"Harry always stayed here, of course," Hermione reminded them. "His relatives are perfectly horrid people. Harry has already made the Headmaster agree that he need never go back to stay. He, or someone, does need to go back once over the holidays to warn them that since we won't be back, their protection will ebb away by the end of next summer. They will likely want to move, unless they're too stubborn and stupid to leave."

"From what he's said, they aren't terribly bright, and very stubborn," Luna pointed out.

"Would Harry be very hurt if . . . Voldemort hurt them?" Padma asked.

"Not terribly, but likely more than he suspects," Luna said.

"If you're still having trouble calling him 'Voldemort', call him 'Riddle' or one of the silly names Harry calls him," Hermione suggested.

"You can be blase, because you have not seen him," Luna told Hermione darkly. "I thought nothing of saying 'Voldemort' until I saw him. Now, it is only my love for Harry that allows me to say it without external hesitation."

"You're both right," Padma told them.

"Ignoring his possible-if-unlikely day-trip to his relatives, Harry will spend most of his time with Sirius, and after the full moon, Remus. The Headmaster has agreed that the two of you may know the location of Headquarters, if you intend to spend time with Harry. So, the question is, what do we do over the holidays?"

"Saturday, December Twenty-third through Wednesday, January Third," Luna reminded them.

"I would like to spend a day or two with my parents," Padma said simply. "It doesn't have to be any particular day, as we are not Christian. The solstice means more, and that's the day before we leave anyway."

Hermione and Luna looked at each other, thinking hard. Finally, Luna gestured for Hermione to speak first.

"Why don't we suggest this to Harry," Hermione said. "We all leave on the Saturday and visit our parents. Harry spends the time with Sirius and Professor Lupin, and then Harry collects us Christmas Day."

"May I ask that he collect me Christmas Eve?" Padma asked. "He should have one of us to unwrap Christmas morning."

"We should put it to him so that he has a real choice," Luna said. "I suspect Harry is going to be lavish in his presents, and might want us to show off to our families a bit."

"Again, we don't exchange many presents, so I could unwrap mine Christmas Eve," Padma said hesitantly.

"Then we'll tell Harry that," Hermione said.

"Someone just woke Harry up," Luna said sharply. She was always much better at interpreting what Harry was feeling than either Hermione or Padma.

Luna stood. "We need to get dressed. Now." She stepped out of the hot tub.

"I don't feel anything in particular," Hermione protested, but standing up anyway.

"Harry is suppressing his feelings," Luna told them. "Something bad must be happening."

The three witches dried themselves magically and wore their towels back into the main room, just in case it wasn't Dobby who had brought the message and was still there.

Harry was alone, and was getting dressed.

"What's happened?" Hermione asked.

"I tried to warn them," Harry said. "Voldemort has broken his followers from Azkaban. The dementors may have left as well, which I didn't expect to happen for a while, if at all."

The four dressed. Just before they went off to find the Headmaster, Harry held up a small leather sack, saying, "If you ever see me without this, other than in bed or in the shower, remind me." The three teens merely nodded.

As they hurried through the corridors, Hermione said, "Is this why you've had everyone start trying to do the Patronus Charm?"

"Exactly, along with some of the other spells."

"It's bad, but it could have been far worse," Dumbledore said.

"How?" Harry asked.

"When the Minister didn't take my warnings to heart, I went to Madam Bones," Dumbledore said. "She couldn't do much, as Azkaban is directly under the Minister's authority, but she was able to station more guards and even an auror at the landing where you have to leave to get to Azkaban. Not even Voldemort can apparate or portkey directly onto the island. She also made certain that all the people stationed there could cast the Patronus." He looked at the quartet.

"And she and the aurors know that the dementors are sensitive to ultraviolet light," Harry said. "You can't imagine how angry I was when I learned that had been kept a secret."

"It was part of the treaty with the dementors. . . ."

"In the old time line, the dementors left at the end of spring, and no one, not you, not anyone in the Ministry who knew, ever made the information known," Harry snapped.

"Yes, well, when the dementors massed at the landing, the guards withdrew to a defensive position. When the Death Eaters appeared, the aurors and a third of the guards attacked, while the other two-thirds hit the dementors with ultraviolet lights, which drove many of them back."

"A strong enough burst will destroy them," Harry pointed out.

"We don't have any devices strong enough to do that," Dumbledore retorted.

"The Muggles do," Harry said severely. "So, how many prisoners escaped?"

"Just four, although I grant you, they are the four we would least like to see free," Dumbledore admitted.

"The three Lestranges and Dolohov?"

"Exactly."

"Has Fudge taken his head out of his arse and decided to destroy the dementors?"

"Did he last time?" Dumbledore retorted.

"No, but then he was still under the influence of Malfoy, so I ask you again, what is Fudge going to do?"

"He claims that it was a rogue faction of the dementors who did it, and that the majority of the

dementors now have them under control," Dumbledore said.

"And do you believe that?" Harry asked.

"No," Dumbledore said.

"Neither do I," Harry answered. "So, Fudge has got to go."

"How do we do it?" Dumbledore asked. "Remember, I am now simply a common member of the Wizengamot."

"We probably can't get the Wizengamot to sack Fudge," Harry agreed. "Still, you four should work out a letter to the Head of the Ravenclaw Coven. They will likely be happy to sack Fudge, and that will give us some more pressure, plus some influence on who to replace him with. My first instinct is Madam Bones."

"I would concur that she is a possible choice," Dumbledore said.

"Remember, neither the Coven nor I would really like an Order member there," Harry said. "If you want to control the Ministry, take the job yourself."

"Very well, we will suggest Madam Bones," Dumbledore said after making a face. "And what are you going to do while we write the letter?"

"I have not been passively training, Headmaster," Harry said. "I have been in contact with a few people I met during the aftermath of Voldemort's second rise, and during the civil war."

"And?"

"And they form part of the magical court of Her Majesty," Harry answered. "She was not happy that the Ministry largely kept her in the dark back in the Seventies. She is not happy that Fudge is doing it again. I believe she might be inclined to take action. If not, she will at least know what questions she should be asking."

"You. . . ." Dumbledore was inarticulate.

"Me," Harry said. And with that, he shrank back into his chair, and then disappeared with a slight 'pop'.

Dumbledore turned to the three witches. "Don't look at us," Hermione said. "The difference between Harry's action and yours are he just doesn't mention things, while you actively hide the information."

"I did wonder why he said we might have tea at Windsor Castle some day, though," Luna said thoughtfully.

Few people knew of Her Majesty's Magical Advisors besides the Queen, other than HRH the Prince of Wales, the Minister of Magic, and the Supreme Mugwump. They never told anyone, because it

was embarrassing to admit that the Muggle Queen had a great deal of potential power over Magical Britain, and because she appointed her own magical advisors. Unlike most of the regular court, neither the Prime Minister (had he known) nor the Minister of Magic could influence her choices.

Charles II, the last magical monarch in Britain, had decreed that there would be eight such advisors, plus the Minister of Magic. He had further written, in a testament magically passed on to each new monarch, that the more embedded a wizard or witch was in magical culture, the less trustworthy they were to give good advice. Three of the current eight came from Muggle Noble families (although one had faked his death back in 1918 and currently lived mostly in the magical world). Three came from the gentry, and all three of them, plus the oldest of the nobles, had been serving as royal advisors since before 1940.

These advisors (five wizards and a witch) were always on the look-out for future replacements. He wouldn't know it, of course, but Justin Finch-Fletchley was already marked down for possible future consideration.

The other two were the descendants of that magical son of Queen Victoria. Victoria Drake was thirty, had attended Hogwarts (Ravenclaw), and had married a Half-Blood Hufflepuff who inherited his father's chain of forty Muggle pawn shops, and who now operated one in Diagon Alley and one in Hogsmeade as well. Her husband still did not know exactly what his wife's ancestry was. As they had three magical children and a fourth on the way, she planned on telling him as soon as Voldemort was defeated.

HRH Victoria Alice of Saxe-Gotha-Coburg (she had only used Windsor back in the days when she enjoyed motoring about Britain, a habit she had discontinued during Voldemort's first rise in the 1970s and never resumed) was 102, and looked like a well-preserved 50. She had married a cousin (a magical grandson of an illegitimate son of William IV, making them fourth cousins). She had lost her husband to the fight against Grindelwald in 1916, her son to the same fight in 1941, and her father in the final assault against Grindelwald in 1945. Her younger daughter and her entire family was wiped out by Voldemort in 1980, and that had finally allowed the royal advisors to realize that the Magical government had been lying to them about the fight against the would-be Dark Lord all along.

Now all she had was her duty to her royal cousin, her older daughter's only granddaughter (Victoria Drake) and her family, and the only living descendent of her younger sister, whom she had never met. She rather suspected she would meet Luna some day soon, however.

It was Princess Victoria Alice whom Harry had contacted in September. He had known her very well in the other time line, and had known her secret relationship to Luna. He had told her nearly everything, and the royal witch had more than enough of the Sight to See that as strange as his story was, Harry was telling the truth.

She had asked Harry to tell his story to her great granddaughter and two of the other advisors, and they had started collecting information for the Queen. Her Majesty had to move cautiously, as the last Minister of Magic to be removed by Royal fiat had been removed back in 1820.

As Harry Potter kissed the old witch's hand in greeting, she knew from his demeanor that the time had come for the Queen to act.

Chapter XVIII

Thursday, November 30, 1995

Cornelius Fudge stomped into the Wizengamot meeting chamber and shouted at Dumbledore, "What is the meaning of this! You do not have the right to call an emergency meeting! You didn't have the right to call a meeting even when you were the head of Wizengamot!"

"I do have the authority, Mister Fudge," Dumbledore said.

"What did you call me?"

"I called you Mister Fudge, for you are no longer the Minister of Magic and Royal Wizard," Dumbledore said.

"I most certainly was NOT voted out of office!" Fudge shouted.

"True," Dumbledore agreed. "However, you must hold both positions. Her Majesty has dismissed you from the position of Royal Wizard, and refuses to accept you as Minister." By now, all talk in the chamber had died down.

At that moment, a man in ermine robes stepped into sight. Fudge's heart sank, for this was the head of the Queen's Magical Advisors. "Cornelius Fudge, you longer enjoy the confidence of Her Royal Britannic Majesty, Elizabeth the Second." He turned to the Wizengamot. "I have here the notice of discharge, and also a pardon for Sirius Orion Black, head of the Ancient and Noble Family of Black, who was illegally imprisoned by an executive order which was approved by this body."

Sirius stepped out of the shadows as well.

"New members may only be elected on the summer solstice," the man went on. "Until then, Her Majesty exercises her rights and calls to the Wizengamot Sirius Orion Black."*

All this finally set off an uproar from the stunned group. When it finally died down, the man went on, "Since you all seem to have either not taken the N.E.W.T. in History or slept through the relevant sections of the Seventh year, all this is well within the rights of the Monarch. In addition, since you did not select a Chief Warlock on the Autumnal Equinox, Her Majesty has reappointed Albus Dumbledore to serve until the next regular meeting, which will be the winter's solstice." Dumbledore smiled smugly. "Now, unless you wish for Her Majesty to appoint the next Minister as well, you have one hour to elect one."

The uproar that greeted this was even louder.

With all the noise around them, no one else heard Lord Severn when he leaned over to Dumbledore and said, "With luck, they'll yell for the next fifty-nine minutes."

Dumbledore smirked and created a sand-glass, which showed the time running out. Several fistfights broke out (fighting with magic was forbidden), as the factions started 'discussing' their options.

Friday, December 1, 1995

"Congratulations, Susan," Harry said, coming over to her as the slightly bewildered Hufflepuff came into the great hall. She had been called away from the Hufflepuff common room the night before, and had attended the rituals which installed her aunt as Minister of Magic and Royal Witch, and was just returning.

"How did . . . you're behind this?" Susan asked.

"In part," Harry said, not knowing that Hermione, Padma, and Luna were rolling their eyes at Harry's modesty, and signaling that he had a great deal to do with the fact that Madam Bones had been elected on the only ballot. (The Queen's Advisor had told the Wizengamot that Madam Bones was the Queen's choice with less than ten minutes to go on the imposed time limit. The vote had been 27-22, Sirius Black's vote being considered the deciding one, as custom had demanded that Madam Bones abstain. While 30 votes were needed to oust a Minister, it only took 27 votes to elect one.)

At that moment, the owls started arriving with mail, including The Prophet. "Good luck handling all the well-wishers," Harry said sincerely, extending his hand. While Susan had not given Harry her Oath (she had been worried that it might compromise her aunt's position), she had been very vocal in defending those who had, and Harry had always thought well of her.

Susan looked up into Harry's eyes as she took his hand with both of hers and said, "Help me . . . please?"

"Of course. May I tell our mutual friends your good news?" Susan nodded. "Ernie, Hannah?"

"So, now we'll find out where you've been since Professor Sprout called you away last night?" Hannah asked her best friend as the pair came over.

Susan nodded and looked at Harry.

"Fudge was sacked yesterday," Harry told them. "The Wizengamot wouldn't do it, so the Queen did, the first time that's happened since about 1820, when George IV was finally able to take over as king instead of regent. Her Majesty also exercised her Royal Prerogatives and reappointed Dumbledore to head the Wizengamot until their next regular meeting, and appointed my godfather, Sirius Black, until regular new members can be selected next summer. Susan's aunt was nominated by Her Majesty, and the Wizengamot approved, Twenty-seven to Twenty-two."

The Hufflepuffs were stunned. Susan started trembling, as she realized just how controversial her aunt's appointment was going to be.

Hermione stepped around and put one arm around Susan, while Harry the same from the other side, as he was concerned for his friend. "Obviously, some elements are not going to take this well. I know you're Susan's friends and would stand up for her anyway, but remind my supporters that this has my full support."

The two nodded, unsure what these new developments might mean but glad that Susan would have their lord's support. Luna placed a hand on Harry's shoulder, knowing that despite the appearance

he was giving of confidence, inside he was trembling. This had been his idea, and therefore it was partially his responsibility if things did not work out.

"My lord?" Tracey Davis asked.

The tableaux of support broke apart. "Yes, Tracey?"

Tracey held out a copy of the newspaper. "May I ask your lordship's opinion of this morning's news?"

"It has my unconditional support," Harry said.

"I shall spread the word to your sworn Slytherins," Tracey said, bowing. Tracey then lost her formal manner and turned to Susan. "Congratulations on your aunt's appointment." The two hugged, and then Tracey went back to spread the word while Luna, Padma, and Hermione did the same at their tables (not that it was really needed, since everyone had seen what had just happened).

Harry walked up to the Headmaster, who was pouring himself hot chocolate. "Yes, Harry?"

"I understand things went as well as they did yesterday because of you," Harry said. "Thank you."

"And what do you think happens now?" Dumbledore asked.

"I hope the Ministry can organize a better response, including destroying any rogue dementors, if not all of them," Harry said.

"I meant within the Wizengamot itself, Harry."

"I'd look into purging some of the Darker members, but I don't know if that is really feasible," Harry retorted. "I also imagine you're deciding if you want to try and keep your old job."

"And if I do?"

"I only have influence with a few of the Wizengamot members, not a majority," Harry said. "As for the reforms I'm in favor of, about the only one that I know Sirius will be pushing are the werewolf law reforms. Anything else will likely have to wait until after Voldemort's gone."

"I am pleased that you are aware of that," Dumbledore said, dismissing Harry.

Harry smiled and left, already deciding to take the Coven's recommendation on supporting Charles Trowbridge, one of the Ancient and Most Noble members, to take Dumbledore's place. A long-retired auror, he was well-known for having both a disdain for the Muggle world but being against discrimination against the Muggle-born.

What few people knew was that Trowbridge's favorite great-nephew had been bitten by a werewolf back in the 1960s. The young man had been driven to suicide by the condition. (Those who knew included Trowbridge's niece, the boy's mother, who was a member of the Coven.) Trowbridge wanted to engage Voldemort nearly as much as Madam Bones, and was sympathetic to Sirius.

Sirius' membership could not be challenged until the next June, when the Wizengamot would vote

to ratify his membership. Any opposition would need to draw the full thirty votes against him for him to be expelled.

Saturday, December 9, 1995

"Where are Hermione and Padma?" Harry asked. "I thought they were coming with me to see Hagrid after this?"

"They agreed to let me try something new, master," Luna said.

Harry blinked, and then he realized that Luna was asking to indulge her submissive side privately. She had had a few light spankings, but that had been as far as things had gone. "Like what?"

"Well, you know how I've been trying to deep throat you, master?" Luna pointed out.

"Of course," Harry agreed.

"I thought maybe you could just fuck my mouth and throat. . . ." Luna's face dropped as she saw Harry shake his head.

"I don't want to choke you, my love," Harry said gently.

"You're too gentle, my lord and master," Luna softly chided. "I am not that fragile and you are not that out of control."

"But you must remember that I have the alternative future to draw on," Harry reminded her. "You don't want me to fuck your mouth, you want me in your throat, blocking your air, with no possible safe word or action available. You want me to grip the back of your head, push into your throat, and block your air until you black out, just like you did after your mother died, and you experimented with hanging yourself."

Luna went very pale. "You know me too well, my lord."

"I know that the spell block that backfired and killed your mother made her choke to death," Harry said gently. "I know that it's one of your secret obsessions. So, if you really want to suck me hard and gag yourself on me again and again, I won't stop you. I won't help, because then we might go over the line. If you do it yourself, you can't."

Luna knelt before Harry and leaned against him. "I love you, Harry."

"And I love you."

"Harry. . . ."

"Yes, Hagrid?"

"Ya said I could talk with ya?"

Harry had met up with Hagrid at lunch as they had agreed, and they were walking towards his hut. "What's on your mind?"

"Harry, ya've been goin' into the forest, haven't ya?"

"Why would you say that?"

"Don' fool, Harry," Hagrid warned. "Grawp's tol' me tha' a little wizard with black hair came an' talked with 'im." Hagrid stopped and looked squarely at Harry. "You told 'im tha' yer a Jack, didn' ya?"

"I did," Harry said, "and I showed him that I have the power to destroy a giant. I never want to, Hagrid. I swear I don't."

"He wouldn' tell me wha' ya did, but ya scared him."

"I scared the shit out of him," Harry said, "and I mean that literally." Harry shivered with disgust. "It was nasty."

"Well, I mus' say, he's better behaved," Hagrid allowed. "Ya did somthin' to Aragog and Bane, too, didn' ya?"

"I had a talk with them," Harry answered. "They should be avoiding Grawp. The centaurs are going to be retreating even deeper into the forest."

Hagrid nodded, understanding.

Saturday, December 23, 1995

A very angry Dumbledore was glaring at Harry as they ate their breakfasts.

"What's his problem?" Neville asked.

"He basically told me that politics was not any of my business, so when some people asked if I could support another candidate for chief warlock, I decided I could," Harry said.

"What? You mean Dumbledore was voted out yesterday?" Ron asked, surprised.

"Well, he only had a temporary appointment," Harry said. "By voting in someone else, they could unleash some of the frustrations the Queen caused by pointing out their proper job to them."

"What was the vote?" Neville asked, since the mail had not arrived yet.

"Charles Trowbridge got thirty-one; the Dark/Purist alternative, Percival Throckmorton, got eighteen; and Dumbledore got one, his own."

While they all rather liked and certainly admired Dumbledore, there's little a teenager likes more than to see an authority figure embarrassed. There was therefore a great deal of snickering that morning in the great hall.

Harry kissed two of his three lovers 'goodbye' at the station. He had discovered tracers had been put on their luggage, and after removing them and warning Mr. Lovegood and the Patils, he traveled with the Grangers just to make certain they weren't followed in some other way. Then Harry popped over to Grimmauld Place.

Christmas Eve

"What's wrong, Father?" Padma asked after tea. She would be leaving that evening at 9:00 via portkey to join Harry. Chandragupta beckoned his daughter into his study and shut the door. Padma sat on the small chair reserved for the use of the children of the house when called there and folded her hands on her lap.

"It is not that I disapprove of Lord Potter in any way," Chandragupta said after a few moments of silence. "And I did send you to Hogwarts. Still, I find my self . . . disconcerted."

"In what way, my father?" Padma asked in Sanskrit.

Chandragupta nodded. "Exactly," he answered in the same language. "I find I do not wish my grandchildren to be raised as foreigners to our customs."

"Then they shall not be, my father, providing my lord agrees," Padma answered. "Knowing him as I do, he will have no objections."

"Still, the pull of caste and traditions are stronger within me than I had thought, my daughter."

"We are Brahmin, but while Harry is an outsider, he is both Kshatriya and Brahmin in spirit, and in reality, the magical crossed caste boundaries more often than is now admitted," Padma stated.

"The warrior I can easily see," Chandragupta agreed, "the sage, the philosopher, the religious leader, I cannot."

"Harry honors life and wisdom and compassion more than anyone I have ever met," Padma said. "He does not believe in non-violence, as so many of the sages, both within Hinduism and those who broke away from it have believed, but he does honor life as they do. Harry will never be a philosopher." Padma smiled. "No, you are likely right and Harry does not fit into our tradition. He would more perfectly fit into an older tradition, that of the priestly-warrior king. To Hermione, Harry is the Duke of Marlborough, Thomas Paine, and the younger George Washington, all rolled into one and without their glaring flaws. To me, he is Cyrus the Great, Ashoka, and a Greek hero, perhaps Theseus or even Odysseus."

"Should I ask what your friend Luna would think?" Chandragupta said, reverting to English.

"I would not dare answer for her," Padma replied.

"The lad does seem to try and do the right thing," Chandragupta went on, "although I do wish you were not the last consort."

"We may yet succeed in persuading Harry to take at least two more consorts," Padma said. "Would third of five or six be better?"

Mr. Patil sat there stunned for a moment. "I don't want to know," he finally said. "To get to the point, Lord Potter either did a little research himself, or one of the others suggested it to him. In either case, he sent over sixty ounces of raw gold along with some jewels, and asked that it be made into, or exchanged for, the right type of body jewelry. Granted, that is not something women of your high position bother with, but it does show a willingness to learn. My Second Wife chose the designs, claiming they will please both you and your lord, even if they displease me greatly. " He handed Padma the heavy box. "You may wish to try it on before you dress to go."

"Thank you, father!" Padma kissed her father and ran squealing from the room.

Chandragupta Patil shook his head. "I hope she's wrong," he muttered, for he remembered Cyrus and Ashoka not from their later periods of wise rule, but from their earlier periods of bloody conquest.

"Pumpkin, may I have a word with you?"

"Sure, Daddy," Luna said happily.

"Have a seat, my love."

Luna eyed her father warily. There was something about his tone that was setting off her alarms. She perched on a sofa and looked at him. She wondered, not for the first time, why her father was the only person she could never read.

"It's past time that I told you some things," Lionel said. "Things which I thought you understood, at least at some level."

"Oh, Daddy," Luna said, "I assure you what little I hadn't picked up one way or another I've learned now. Madam Pomfrey gave me a good lecture on the medical implications back when I had my first period, and Hermione has this lovely little book she calls 'the manual'. . . ."

"Luna. . . ."

"The four of us have had such fun."

"Luna. . . ."

"I mean, who would have thought spankings were so enjoyable?"

"Luna. . . ."

"Or that Harry is so gentle, despite his nearly ten inches, we all hope that he will take us anal. . . ."

"LUNA! STOP!" Lionel protested. "Not those kind of facts, and believe me, no father wants to know what his daughter knows about those. No, let's start this way. What did your mother and I do before you were born?"

"You both worked for the Department of Mysteries. Mummy was a Spell-Tester in the Experimental Charms Unit, and after I was born she continued the work part-time. You never said what you did. . . . You were an Unspeakable, weren't you?"

Lionel nodded. "And I still can't tell you what I did. I should tell you that your Gift was inherited largely from my side of the family. I can't read you, and you can't read me. I think that's why I've made such a terrible mistake with you."

"What terrible mistake?"

"In a moment, my darling. First, I am sorry if this hurts you. To get back to the story, I left the Ministry in 1984 because I hated to see where our Ministry was drifting and, to be honest, because I inherited quite a pile from your great-great-great-uncle Albertine."

"The recluse."

"Exactly. The family hadn't heard from him since 1921, and who knew he had settled in northern Canada and accidentally laid claim to what later became a uranium mine? Anyway, your mother and I talked before I left, and we decided to contact some other friends of ours around Europe, and out of that came The Quibbler."

"Go on," Luna said.

"Well, you know not everything in the paper is true, don't you?"

Luna looked really worried. "Well, I know some of the letters from the readers . . . contradict each other," Luna said cautiously.

"There is no real opposition allowed in the 'quality' press in Europe," Lionel said. "We're dismissed as mostly cranky letters and odd sightings. If we criticize, though, they dismiss it. About a third of the letters and articles are actually in code, from people all across Europe, sharing information. Many readers are in a position to influence policy, and their knowing the truths people in other Ministries aren't allowed to share openly helps guide them."

"But . . . but what you write. . . ."

"Is often based on some of their reports," Lionel said. "So for example, Cornelius Fudge did not literally make goblin pies, but his policies were eating away at goblin confidence in the British Ministry."

"But what about nargles, and humdingers, and . . . and snorkacks?" Luna pleaded.

"Nargles are a magical mite which infect fairies and some of the plants associated with them," Lionel said. "Humdingers . . . well, that's a code I can't tell you about. Snorkacks were real, but likely hunted to extinction centuries ago in part by dragons but more likely by wyverns, which

might be one reason they went extinct as well."

Her lower lip quivering and tears gathering, Luna said, "Good night, Daddy. I'm going to go to bed early, before you tell me there's no Father Christmas, either."

"That's right," Lionel muttered, "and I'll pretend you're still my innocent little daughter."

After greeting Sirius, Remus, and Tonks, Padma wasted no time but dragged Harry up to bed. After kissing him thoroughly, she built up the fire in their fireplace, stripped Harry nude and left him sitting in a chair in a heavy dressing gown and slippers. She extinguished the other lights as she slipped out to change.

Padma came in wearing a floor-length dressing gown. As soon as she shut the door, the dressing gown slipped off and Harry's heart-rate went up.

Padma was wearing nothing but the gold jewelry, which shone in the firelight and against her dusky skin. She stood there, striking a pose, her dark thick nipples hard from the chill and from her excitement. Padma had long gold earrings set with small emeralds, and a net of gold wire threading through her long, thick, wavy black hair. She wore three gold necklaces of heavy links, and on her right hand were three rings (thumb, middle finger, pinkie) linked to a bracelet, all of the same sort of links as her smallest necklace. On her left hand was a single gold band, set with a larger emerald. On both feet were anklets of the same links, chained to toe rings on the second and fourth toes of her slim elegant feet. Two small emeralds dangled as charms from each ankle bracelet. Padma wore more than half the gold around her waist in heavy links, although a fine mesh was also attached -- had she worn it centered, it might have just covered her pubic area, but she wore it slightly off to the side, showing off her totally hairless mound.

"It's not quite traditional jewelry, but how do you like it?" Padma asked.

"It's not?" Harry asked. "It looks like some of the carvings I've seen in photos of temples."

"Oh, the concepts are close, but the execution is very modern. So you like it?"

"I like the jewelry, but not as much as the setting," Harry said. "I think we'll have more fun without it."

Padma walked over to Harry, and the firelight glinted off the gold. "What is your desire, my maharajah? How may I please you?"

Harry stood and dropped the dressing gown back on the chair. A flick of his hand created a wandless silencing ward. The pair embraced and kissed deeply. As they broke the kiss, Padma said softly as she nibbled Harry's neck and ear, "I don't care if it bends the gold." Harry moaned as Padma took his cock in her left hand and started stroking him hard. "I want you to take me in front of the fire. I want you deep inside me, and I want you to love me and fuck me until you can't take me any more."

Harry closed his eyes and his hand moved again. Padma turned and was surprised to see a huge bearskin rug covered with silk and satin cushions in front of the fire, and assorted silk pillows strewn around it. Harry lifted her in his arms and set her down on the bearskin and the two quickly

moved into the missionary position as they kissed.

Padma moaned aloud as Harry penetrated her. She moved her knees up under Harry's arms and crossed her ankles behind his back. She would keep the position until she had had three orgasms and Harry two. Harry only stopped because she had passed out during her third.

Christmas

Padma woke up to the sounds of soft movement. She wasn't surprised to see Harry doing his Tai Chi.

She moved, and wasn't terribly surprised to find her self with a bit of a stiff back and a very tender pussy. She noted as she made her way to the private toilet that Harry removed all her jewelry except for the rings. When she came out, she took off the bracelet/rings combination as well as the anklets/rings. As she matched Harry's movements, she asked, "Do you think it would bother the other two if I wear the ring?"

"I don't think it would at all."

"Luna? Luna? would you like some breakfast?" Hearing no answer, Lionel shrugged and fried some eggs.

Chapter XIX

The Grangers followed their usual Christmas routine. They arose fairly early and had a light breakfast, and then drove off to a large church in the fens, Fenchurch St. Paul's, where they could enjoy the end of the Christmas peel on one of the finest rings of bells in England. A patron had left a legacy, and every Christmas, New Year's, and Easter there was bell ringing from midnight until 10:00 am.

Hermione did cast a longing look at her presents, especially a set of small boxes from Harry, but went along. She did love the bells.

"That was a wonderful breakfast, Dobby," Remus said.

"Perfection," Harry agreed.

"Can we open presents now?" Sirius whined.

"What?" Harry asked. "We're not going to wait for Hermione and Luna to come around after noon?"

Sirius growled.

"Luna? Luna!" Lionel frowned, and wondered why his daughter was being so quiet. He shrugged and decided to look over some copy which had come in for the next edition of the paper.

"If I had known Christmas meant so much to you, I'd have gotten you more presents," Harry said.

"No, no," Sirius protested. "These are enough, trust me."

"Didn't Harry get you anything?" Remus teased Padma.

"Some lovely gold jewelry, but considering that the jewelry is all I should be wearing to show off the full effect, you'll please excuse me from showing it."

"Maybe you can get some for Tonky," Sirius teased. Remus rolled his eyes.

Lionel went up the stairs to the small loft where Luna's room was. He knocked on the door. "Luna! Aren't you going to eat before. . . ." His voice went quiet as the door swung open and he saw that Luna was gone.

Hermione was just unwrapping her first present when the flames in the fireplace went green, and Lionel's face appeared. "Hermione Granger!"

"I'm here, Mister Lovegood," Hermione answered.

That allowed him to actually see into the room. "Is Luna there?"

"I haven't seen her, why?" Hermione asked, worried.

"She's already gone and she didn't say goodbye," he said. "That's very unlike her. I don't have Harry's floo address and calling his name didn't work. Could you check with him?"

"Alright," Hermione said. "Expect us in a few minutes."

"I'll clear the wards," he agreed.

Hermione stepped through to Grimmauld Place and rushed up to find Harry.

"What's wrong?" Harry asked as she burst into the room.

"Luna's father flooed us and told me that she's missing," Hermione said, panting. "Is she here?"

"I'll locate her in a second. How did he floo you, and how did you get here for that matter?" Harry had been planning on going to get her.

"Oh, the Ministry came by and hooked up the fireplace the other day," Hermione said.

Harry and Remus exchanged a look.

"What?" Hermione asked.

"Hermione, they don't just hook people up, at least not for more than a day or two," Remus explained. "An adult witch or wizard has to authorize a permanent connection."

"Then how. . . ?" Hermione went pale.

"Sirius, could you please let the aurors know? Remus, you tell Dumbledore. Padma, you have your wand?"

Padma nodded and pulled her wand out.

"Since there wasn't an attack last night, it will likely be tonight," Harry said. "Come on. I want you two to come with me to Hermione's. Get your parents ready to move back here for the night. I'll go on to the Lovegoods'."

"But where is Luna?" Hermione asked, knowing Harry's link would find her unless she was under heavy wards.

"She seems to be upstairs. She must have come through during the night. I'll go find out why she would do that without telling her father, then come back to your parents' place and we'll bring them back. Take some floo powder."

"We have some. . . ."

"There are floo powders which, when used repeatedly, can leave a trail," Remus said. "Take ours."

"Right," Padma said. "Come on, Hermione. There may be no time to lose."

That shook Hermione, and the two teens left. Sirius was already coming down the stairs, dressed to go to the Ministry.

"Dobby! Winky!" Harry called.

"Mister Harry!" they chorused.

"Winky, defend Luna until we return. Dobby, pop over to the Grangers' five minutes after Hermione arrives. Defend."

"Yes, Mister Harry!" the elves proclaimed.

"Let's go!"

"Oh, there you are, Harry. Any idea where Luna is . . . urk!" Harry had lifted the larger man off the floor and pinned him to the wall.

"Luna is asleep in a spare bedroom, and she placed 'notice-me-not' and silencing wards around it so we wouldn't know she was there. What did you do to her?"

"I realized something last night," the now-terrified Lionel managed to say. "I never realized how seriously Luna takes The Quibbler."

"She doesn't take the paper seriously so much as she takes YOU seriously," Harry snapped at him. "I can imagine how you felt when your wife died, but Luna saw it happen. You mostly withdrew in your grief, and from then until she went to Hogwarts, all she had was your partial attention and her imagination, and her imagination played on the pages of The Quibbler. Anything that took her wonderful, beloved father's attention away from her must be important and therefore true. When the students at school made fun of The Quibbler, she had to defend it, because that was defending you, and you were all she had left."

Harry dropped Lionel. "If you said moon calves shat snorkacks, then that must be true. And then last night, you calmly tell her that the whole thing is a joke, and you wonder why she's upset?"

"That's not what I told her, and it's not a joke," Lionel said. "I can't tell you the details, but it's a way

for people to exchange confidential information across Europe, information that their Ministries don't want out. About half our stories are like that."

"So that article saying Stubby Boardman was Sirius. . . ."

"Really meant that Black was innocent, in hiding, hadn't been seen in months, and known to be associated with the Order of Phoenix."

"Well, that might earn you a bit of a reprieve after she calms down," Harry said. "Now, it looks like there might be an attack on the Grangers. Be careful."

"The wards here are good," Lionel said.

"They might be attacking through the floo," Harry warned.

"If anyone but Luna or I come through, they'll be in for a surprise." Lionel frowned. "How did you get here? I was just going to suspend the wards."

"It's a secret," Harry said. "Just be careful. I'll warn the Patils, and move back to the Grangers."

"Remind Luna that I do love her," Lionel said. "You might also want to take her presents." Lionel pointed to a small pile near the fireplace

"I shall do both." With that, Harry took them and disappeared without a sound.

Ten minutes later, Harry appeared in the Grangers' parlor. Kingsley Shacklebolt was there with three other people Harry didn't know.

"The Grangers already leave?" Harry asked, taking the auror aside for some privacy.

"They have," Kingsley said. "Their floo powder was contaminated. I sent Tonks and two others to the open station in Diagon Alley. That should erase any traces of Miss Granger's trip to Black's place. The description of the floo worker who visited matches Pettigrew."

"I didn't know they had to send a worker," Harry said.

"They don't, if it's actually done from inside the Ministry, as it's supposed to be done. When you're hooking up an illegal fireplace, though, then you usually do."

"Right," Harry said. "Remember, if Voldemort himself shows up, there's still one more Horcrux to go before he's mortal."

The large auror nodded. "Any leads?"

Harry shook his head, "Only that if anyone knows where it is other than Snake-lips, it's likely Pettigrew."

"In that case, we'll try harder to catch him alive," Shacklebolt declared. "And I wouldn't be

surprised if they were just trying to track you down."

"And just leave a pair of Muggles alive who produced one of the smartest and most talented witches this century?"

"Good point," the auror had to agree.

"Sorry to ruin your Christmas," Harry called over to the group of aurors who had been giving them some privacy.

"Mrs. Granger said we could eat their Christmas dinner if we finish it and clean up," one of the others said.

"Joyce and Kevin are working on it," another added.

Harry again thanked the group, and went back to Grimmauld Place.

The two younger aurors shook their heads. "I never would have believed I'd be reporting to a Fifth year," one said. "And less that I didn't mind doing it."

Harry popped back to Grimmauld Place, to see that the Grangers still had a small pile of presents to open, which they had brought with them. Harry took Padma and Hermione aside to explain to them what had happened.

Harry looked at Hermione, who dropped her eyes in shame.

"I know," she said. "I wouldn't make fun of her, honestly, Harry."

"But you do feel a little smug?" Padma asked gently.

"I do," Hermione agreed. "Still, she's proven herself right more often than not. And she's seemed a bit more focused, less . . . dreamy."

"Her worldview expanded to things beyond her school work and the paper," Harry said. "She stepped outside her imagination. Still, that world, which had a lot more truth in it than we suspected, but less than she believed, has turned to ashes for her. She feels betrayed by her father. It's up to us to provide support."

"And we will," Hermione affirmed.

"Go to her," Padma said. "And get her to move into your suite of rooms."

"Suite?" Hermione asked. "You're not staying in the same room?"

"No, I took over the suite Mister and Mrs. Weasley had," Harry said. "Bedroom, bath, and a dressing room. Dobby redid the furniture in the dressing room, and enlarged the bed."

"How large?" Hermione asked.

"Large enough for four," Padma assured her. She turned to Harry. "Perhaps you should fetch the missing one, my lord."

"Perhaps I should," Harry agreed.

Harry and Luna hadn't been intimate since the previous Friday. Therefore, while he had been able to find her, he could not read her emotions. When Harry dispelled the wards, however, he could hear that Luna was crying. He knocked.

"Harry?"

Harry eased the door open. "Hi," he said softly, closing the door and walking towards her.

Luna was laying cross-ways on the bed on her back. The covers were wet from her tears and there was a pile of dirty handkerchiefs on the bed as well. Harry finished coming over and sat on the bed. "Rough night, I take it," he said.

"I just can't stop crying," Luna sobbed. "I've cried so much, I'm surprised there's enough moisture left in me to cry some more." This was said haltingly, and the tears still ran down her face.

Harry took Luna's hand and then projected a thought. Winky popped in with a tray, three bottles, and a glass. She also took away the sodden pile of linen. Harry lifted Luna to him and hugged her tightly. "I can't imagine how you feel," Harry told her as she sobbed on his shoulder. "Don't think I love you one bit less, that I respect you one bit less, that I need you one bit less."

"Really?" Luna asked in a lost little voice.

"Really," Harry answered. "Hermione and Padma feel the same way."

"Hermione doesn't feel, well. . . ."

"A little," Harry agreed. "But only a little. She's more ashamed of feeling that way, because she loves you dearly. Now, may I hit you with a cheering charm?"

Luna nodded her head like a little girl, and Harry hit her with the charm. As he did so, Luna's handkerchiefs reappeared, clean and folded. Luna had to immediately use one to clean up and blow her nose.

"Here," Harry said, filling and handing her the glass. "You need to drink this, and then at least the bottle of water."

Luna took a sip and smiled a little. "Pomegranate/kiwi. How did you. . . . Oh, of course."

"You drank it while you were nursing, because you said it soothed your nerves," Harry said. "Now, close your eyes."

Luna did so, and Harry placed his thumbs just underneath them. When he removed them a few

moments later, most of the puffiness and redness were gone.

"Thank you," Luna said.

"I love you," Harry said. "I didn't know about your father's coded messages. I never knew."

"I'm glad," she said. She took the bottle of spring water and drank it done in less than two minutes.

"Everyone else is down stairs?"

"Including the Grangers. Pettigrew hooked up a floo connection to their house. They might have planned an attack, or they might be trying trace a link to me by using doctored floo powder. Most likely both. I warned your father and the Patils."

Luna merely nodded.

"Here, I gave something similar to Padma."

Luna opened the box and saw a red gold ring set with a large star sapphire. Luna slipped it on. "And Hermione?"

"I have a diamond ring for her," Harry answered.

"Then hit me with another cheering charm, and then let me pee. Then we'll go entertain the Grangers."

The girls enjoyed showing off their rings to each other, and everyone seemed to enjoy their presents. Still, the event of the morning of course cast something of a pall over the proceedings. However, the dinner was proclaimed a great success.

That evening, Sirius tried to get the Grangers to try fire whisky (stopped by Remus and Hermione, who pointed out the dangers of the fire part of the component on the Muggle system). Sirius therefore dug out an old bottle of Warre's port, dating from before World War I. Dobby opened and decanted it perfectly, to the applause of Dan Granger, who knew how difficult it would have been to have done it so well without magic. Even the teens were allowed quarter glasses of the nectar.

To their collective surprise, Tonks arrived around 9:45 to announce that the Death Eaters had attacked a little before 9:00. The Lestrage brothers had led in five recruits, two of them Seventh year Slytherins, one a Seventh year Ravenclaw. The other two were recent Slytherins. All of them were captured.

"What are they going to be charged with?" Harry asked.

Tonks frowned. "Why entering into a Muggle house with intent to do grievous harm."

Harry turned to the Grangers and said, "Remember, you put the house into Hermione's name, and all that is on file now."

Tonks and Sirius grinned.

"I don't get it," Hermione said.

"It wasn't a Muggle house, it was a magical house," Harry said. "The penalties are much harsher." He turned to Tonks. "You will also find that the goblins did this and charged my estate, because Hermione is my promised Bondmate."

Tonks smiled even more before she said, "And you are the Heir of an Ancient and Most Noble Family."

"Actually, my father was the Heir of four Noble or Most Noble families. I can prove I am more than that." Tonks had to transform her face a bit just so she could grin more. "Plus, being the magical heirs of Merlin and Slytherin count, too."

"Harry, if you didn't have three women, I might consider moving from Wolfie here to you."

"Harry!" Hermione begged, needing to know what was going on.

"You are under the protection of seven recognized Magical Houses," Sirius said. "That means they are facing seven counts of breaking into one of Harry's properties by proxy."

"If they don't cooperate, they face the Kiss," Tonks agreed.

"You think you can trust the dementors?" Harry demanded.

"To do this? Yes," Tonks answered.

"And if we were just random Muggles?" Dan demanded.

"If they had killed you, the same," Tonks said. "Since they were caught as they were, three months."

"You were right in your assessment of the wizarding world," Emma said to Harry.

"I'm surprised they don't claim Imperius," Padma said.

"If they do, I can raise their Marks," Harry said. "Taking the Mark has to be voluntary, and they also have to commit a murder to get it. Maybe I should do it anyway."

"Maybe you should," Tonks agreed. "I'll tell Kingsley to expect you tomorrow morning."

"You mean something happens fast in the magical world?" Dan asked sarcastically.

"What passes for justice does," Sirius said bitterly. "They'll be tried within a few days. If they're sentenced to the Kiss, they'll be soulless within a week."

Tonks turned to the Grangers. "You do realize that it will be unsafe to go back there."

"We had guessed that," Dan agreed.

"Make sure all that, including that they'll be moving, is in The Prophet," Harry said. "Did you check

out their practice?"

"Not a trace of magic," Tonks said.

"Tell the press that we're considering moving to Australia or Canada," Emma said.

"You are?" Hermione asked.

"Considering, yes; actually moving, no," her mother answered.

"Good idea," Tonks said. "Good night all."

To the mocking whistles of Sirius, Remus escorted Tonks back to the floo. Tonks gave her cousin a two-finger salute.

The Grangers were not overly pleased that the four teens went off to bed together, but they had to acknowledge there was little they could do about it.

Harry, Hermione, and Padma quickly stripped and then stripped Luna. Harry made slow love to her aided by Padma and Hermione, and afterwards Hermione and Luna 69ed, in part so that Hermione to show her love for Luna and in part because Hermione craved the taste of the semen what was inside her. Harry then made love to Luna a second time, but this time held off his ejaculation when she had her orgasm and instead came on Luna's eager lips, so that she and the other two girls could kiss away the results before they went back to making love.

When they finally fell asleep, that was how they slept: Harry and Luna intertwined, as well as Padma and Hermione.

Two mornings later, a worried Hermione found Harry doing his Tai Chi. "Harry, did you and Luna make love again last night?"

"Yes, why?"

"Did you spank her?"

Harry frowned and stopped. "You know she likes being spanked. I was on my back, and she was facing away so I could spank her while we made love. Why?"

"Because Luna had me paddle her yesterday morning for nearly twenty minutes, and she had Padma cane her yesterday afternoon," Hermione said. "I only thought to ask Padma and now you because I saw that the essence of murtlap is almost gone now."

"Luna must be using pain to deal with her father," Harry said, to which Hermione nodded. "If she asks for pain again before we return to Hogwarts, we'll need to have a talk with her."

Hermione agreed, and they were glad that Luna did not ask any of them to be spanked for a few

weeks, when she fell back into her old routines.

Still, Harry was resolved to keep an eye on her.

Chapter XX

Much of the rest of the holiday was spent in moving the Grangers. This was made easy in part by Harry, who merely bought the Grangers a nice house, allowing them to sell theirs at leisure and pay him back the sale price (Harry did come out slightly behind, much to the Grangers' chagrin). Then Harry (directed by Hermione) would shrink parts of the Grangers' possessions and Dobby would send them to Winky at the new house. Mrs. Granger would tell Winky where to place the items, and either Sirius or Remus would restore them. Mr. Granger was covering their practice alone, guarded by Luna and Padma, and either Sirius or Remus, whomever was not with Mrs. Granger.

The Grangers were still unhappy about the unorthodox arrangement their daughter was in. It was bad enough that their sixteen year old daughter was in a sexual relationship (not that they hadn't been at her age), one which at least seemed set for the long-term due to the Bonding. Adding in two more teenage girls, not just as Harry's lovers but Hermione's (and each other) made them wince every time they thought about it.

Granted, now that they had met Padma and Luna, they could see the attractions. Padma was conventionally pretty and sexy, and when she tried, down-right sultry. Luna reminded them of some of the free spirits they had known in University in the early 1970s. All that helped the Grangers a bit, but just a bit.

The one unexpected visitor who turned up was Arthur Weasley, who showed up on the afternoon of New Year's Day, asking to speak to Harry and Hermione.

"Is Ron alright?" Hermione asked.

"Ron?" Arthur asked, confused. "Of course, why wouldn't he be?"

"Sorry," Hermione said. "I thought something had happened to him."

"No, no," Arthur said. "This is about Ginny." He turned to Harry. "I understand you suggested that she consider seeing Neville Longbottom?"

"Yes, sir," Harry answered, now a bit worried.

"Well, we had Augusta Longbottom around yesterday, on her grandson's behalf, asking for a marriage to be arranged and for the Bonding to start." They knew that Ginny needed permission, still being fourteen.

"And how does Ginny feel about that?" Hermione asked.

"She's agreed, or else I wouldn't be here," Arthur replied. "You both know young Longbottom. In fact, I understand he was your first sworn supporter."

Harry looked at Arthur and asked, "Sir, why are you nervous about talking with me." He gestured for Arthur to sit.

Arthur sat down, heavily. "We always knew you were special," Arthur told Harry. "We worked very

hard at giving you a taste of normalcy whenever you visited us, to treat you as a person. Well, now . . . now. . . ."

"Now he's the Heir of Merlin, the Chosen One, and the sworn lord of three of your sons," Hermione concluded.

"And a declared warlock who has truly claimed his heritage as both a lord and the leader of one of the most ancient warrior families, and a raising power in the Ministry," Arthur agreed.

"Sir, to you I'm still just Harry," Harry told him.

Arthur smiled. "You have never just been 'just Harry,' and if we ever thought you were, you stopped being that to us when you saved Ginny. Now, Neville is your liegeman and you suggested the arrangement. Do you still think he's right for Ginny?"

"I do," Harry said. "Neville still lacks confidence at times, but really nothing else. Ginny will supply that. Ginny is a bit, well, flighty, and not just because by age she's closer to being a Third year in age than really a Fourth. Neville will help ground her, in the good sense of the term."

"I agree," Hermione said.

"There only one thing," Harry said.

"And what's that?" Arthur asked.

"What about Ron?"

"Ron?" Arthur frowned. "How does he figure into this?"

"His two brothers who are still at school are Bonding. His two best friends are Bonding. Now his sister, seventeen months younger, is Bonding," Harry pointed out.

"He's dating Lavender Brown, and she really does like him," Hermione told Arthur. "Still, I don't know if Ron is really responsible enough to offer her Bonding."

"Not to mention that he doesn't know what to do with his life," Arthur agreed. "If Neville had no certain prospects, I certainly would not be considering this. I will have to have a talk with Ron about responsibilities, even though I know how he'll react."

Harry and Hermione could imagine.

Arthur turned to Harry. "There is just one thing from our point of view, then."

"Yes, sir?"

"Would you allow Ginny to pledge her service to you?"

"Hey?"

"Ginny cannot pledge her service to you until she is fifteen without my permission," Arthur

reminded Harry. "Her three brothers have sworn themselves to you. She would as well. Her mother objects, of course, but I do not, and it is my decision to make. So, I am asking you if you would please accept her service."

"I will," Harry said.

The captured Death Eaters were not encouraging. While they had all been British, it was clear from the younger four that Voldemort was tapping into small pro-Grindelwald groups which had had no internal cooperation and which had been squabbling between themselves back in the 1960s and 1970s.

Harry was not totally surprised. One member of such a group had been involved in the attack on Hogwarts in the other time line when Dumbledore had been murdered. However, in that time stream, Voldemort had had them mostly on a recruiting drive in parts of Europe, only drawing on their numbers for some specific attacks.

Obviously, this time around could be different.

Harry, Hermione, Luna, and Padma therefore met with the Headmaster, Remus, and Sirius.

After a general discussion, Remus asked, "Harry, do you think Wormtail is still guarding Nagini?"

Harry thought a moment, and answered, "I think so. She might be in partial hibernation for the winter. That would free up some of his time."

"But that's just a guess?" Remus asked.

"Just a guess," Harry agreed. "I don't dare open up the channel between us. Even if I drive him out when I want to separate us, there's no way to be certain what he might pick up." He turned to Dumbledore. "When was the last time anyone checked Little Hangleton?"

"I checked it Boxing Day," Sirius said.

Dumbledore nodded. "I have it checked every seven-to-ten days. There's some evidence that several people have crossed the property, but nothing more than that."

"Any activity near the graveyard?" Harry asked.

"Of course," Dumbledore said. "That's where all the activity is, why?"

"I have to admit, I didn't have much time to take a survey, but it seemed to be a private cemetery, not the one for the town," Harry said. "Even if some of the Riddle servants are buried there instead of near the church or chapel, the last would probably have been buried there more than fifty years ago. How many visitors would they have?"

"Maybe more than you might think, or maybe there's a lair of some kind there," Luna said thoughtfully.

After a moment's silence, Harry just looked at Dumbledore, who shrugged, leaving the decision to Harry for the moment. "Remus?" Harry said. "The full moon is in two nights. If you're up to it, why don't you and Sirius visit the cemetery and villages Sunday afternoon. Do we need to make any suggestions?"

A tired Remus shook his head. Sirius, however, said, "We take stock of the tombstones, especially to see the more recent ones. Look for tracks. And set up passive survey wards to see what times people are coming through." The others nodded.

Ginny approached Hermione the next day.

"You want me to what?" Hermione said, when Ginny had finished.

"I need you to coach me through performing fellatio on Neville," Ginny repeated. "I've seen it done, of course, but I want to do it right, and I need to do it right the first time I do it in the couple's corner. Please, my lady?"

Hermione blinked.

"Harry accepted my service this morning," Ginny reminded her. "You are sworn to be his bondmate. You, therefore, are my lady. And we were close, even if we've drifted apart a bit this year."

Put in those terms, Hermione of course was glad to agree.

All three people were nervous -- Ginny, Hermione, and especially Neville.

"I wish this didn't have to be so public," Neville whimpered.

"Harry said pretty much the same thing," Hermione told him. "You aren't ashamed, are you?"

"Of course not," Neville stated. "I would happily scream it from the turrets, if that was the requirement. It's just that this is so. . . ."

"Personal?"

"Exactly," Neville agreed, "and embarrassing." He looked at the nearly as nervous Ginny, and he smiled. "But no, it's not in any way shameful."

Ginny smiled back.

"Okay, back against this chair," Hermione said. "Shut your eyes, and keep them shut. Harry says it's easier that way. Just concentrate on what Ginny is going." Hermione reached under Neville's robes and loosened and dropped his trousers and then his drawers. She helped Neville sit back.

Hermione placed the pads and helped Ginny to kneel, and laid the towel on Neville's leg. She pulled on Neville's right knee while Ginny pushed a little on his left.

Ginny had tied her hair back, and Hermione leaned close in case she needed directions. Ginny reached and touched Neville's flaccid penis. Hermione whispered, and Ginny took Neville in hand and raised his totally flaccid penis.

Hermione was glad that Harry had reminded her that this might happen, and that she had warned Ginny. Because of his nerves, there wasn't much of Neville visible beyond his foreskin.

Ginny leaned forward and licked around Neville's foreskin, while she lightly held the base between her right thumb and forefinger. She started pumping and continued licking, her small pink tongue darting about, swiping.

It took almost a minute for Neville to reach his full erection, just over five inches, although thick for its length, nearly as thick as Harry in fact. His crown slowly pushed its way out of the foreskin.

Hermione was glad that Harry was circumcised, and that he had (although very embarrassed) reminded Neville to fully clean there.

Once Neville was fully exposed, Ginny just managed to fit the glans into her tiny mouth and began licking and bobbing, and now was stroking with her thumb and two fingers. From that point, Neville groaned and shot off in less than thirty seconds.

Hermione helped them clean up, and then left the stunned and dazed lovers to adjust to their new feelings.

Sunday, January 21, 1996

The group met nearly three weeks after their first meeting. Remus, at least, looked much better.

"I set up the wards a week ago last Thursday," Remus said. "I didn't check on them until this morning. I didn't want anyone thinking we were paying too much attention." Everyone nodded. "I checked out the cemetery itself two weeks ago, and also went through and checked out the village both times. There is a larger cemetery there."

Remus looked at Harry. "You were right. I also checked out the history of the Riddle property." He smiled. "I'd like to give you the full account."

"Oh, Merlin," Sirius muttered. "Ow!" Sirius looked at Hermione, shocked, for she had kicked him.

Hermione smiled sweetly, while Harry, Padma, and Remus chuckled. "Go ahead," she told Remus. "I, at least, would like to hear it all."

"The whole area belonged to Slytherin a thousand years ago," Remus said. "Slytherin may or may not have married, but he did have children by three witches. The children of the first witch fully backed Slytherin against the other Founders. The children of the second, two witches, separated from him after he broke with the other Founders, in large part because they were married to the younger sons of Gryffindor and Ravenclaw. They were disinherited by Slytherin, and yes, the

younger witch and that son of Gryffindor are the founders of the respective line you're descended from, while Lily was descended by that youngest son of Ravenclaw and the older daughter of Slytherin's second consort."

"So I have a blood relation to Slytherin, but it doesn't count because the witches were disinherited?" Harry asked.

"No, it makes you an heir of Slytherin, just as you're an heir of Hufflepuff," Remus responded. "You are not the Heir, because there must still be a blood heir senior to you, one which neither the Gaunts nor Voldemort knew about. However, because whoever the senior blood heir is is very distant from a direct descent of male blood, you were recognized at the Magical Heir, because of both your connection to Voldemort and your double blood connection."

"My head hurts," Harry said. "And who knows how many blood heirs there might be, lost out there."

"Well," Hermione mused, "it has been a thousand years. . . ."

"Exactly," Remus agreed. "Two of the three sons of the first witch followed Slytherin out of the country, and died, so far as we know, childless. So did the two sons of Slytherin by the third witch. The third son of the first witch went back to the area which today is around the villages of Little and Great Hangleton. In addition to the son from the first witch, the only daughter of the third witch also settled in the area. Each claimed the whole territory, as the daughter claimed her parents were bonded, giving her a superior claim. The son claimed that his parents were bonded and the daughter's mother was a consort. The two had a great fight. The son won, and to punish his half-sister, he raped her and drove her out."

"She fled to Ghent in Flanders, where she had the child. She married a wizard who was a merchant there. The son came back and killed his both father/uncle and his family some forty years later, except for the youngest daughter -- after defeating them, he strangled them all and left their bodies hanging between the areas of the villages. He made the girl his mistress. He sold off the land which is now the village and area around Great Hangleton. Great Hangleton therefore made it into the Domesday Book while Little Hangleton, like nearly all magical property held at the time, is not."

"Ghent, of course, was known as Gaunt in England throughout the medieval period. The family maintained ties with their Flemish cousins for the next four-hundred and fifty years and later adopted the surname of Gaunt. Neither seems to have had many branches, and the English branch seems to have married their first and second cousins almost exclusively." Everyone wrinkled their noses at the idea.

Remus turned to Sirius. "You told me to spare no expenses. I have three friends of mine researching some ideas."

Sirius broke in before Harry could offer. "That's fine. Go on."

"Fortunately, even if the Flemish branch rarely had many children, and many of them joined the celibate communities which flourished until the late 1500s, they also kept bringing in outside blood. The Flemish branch died out during the early 1500s and as best anyone can tell left no relations outside of the Gaunts. The Gaunts spent the next four hundred years selling off stray acres of their patrimony and intermarrying with a small group of equally Pure-blooded and inter-bred families.

There were five other families, and after 1600, they only intermarried with each other. One family died out in the early 1800s. The others died violent deaths in the 1960s through the late 1970s and seem to be gone now."

"Voldemort getting rid of potential claimants?" Padma asked, before anyone else could.

"Exactly," Remus agreed. "There is no evidence so far that Riddle Senior ever married Merope Gaunt, and in fact Riddle laid a claim for all their property a few days after he left Hogwarts. He was granted the land on the basis of his birth certificate, and the fact that there was no one in the Riddle family left to contest the will. The land itself had been entailed. Voldemort's grandfather had a will, and his son had an incomplete will, dealing with the money but not the land, since he still expected to marry and have legitimate children -- Voldemort was disinherited from the money, along with any other illegitimate children Tom Senior might have had. If there were any others, none came forward. The family money was dispersed according to the two wills, so Voldemort got the land but nothing else. It was transferred to wizarding property, so there is little money needed for taxes and the like. Voldemort also owns the dozen acres left of the Gaunt patrimony. The two families shared joint control over six acres."

"The cemetery," Harry said.

"Exactly. A monastery some twelve miles away bought the land around the Riddle House and most of Little Hangleton over the course of the 13 and 1400s. They used the land as forest, taking wood and game out, and fattening herds of pigs in it. When the monastery fell to Henry VIII's Commissions in 1536, a wealthy London merchant named Riddle bought the land. He and the Gaunt of the period argued about the exact boundary. The Gaunts had been using part of the land as a cemetery since the beginning. They agreed to share. Only Riddles and Gaunts are buried there."

"Meanwhile, Riddle's son built a small lodge on the hill, and also built the village which became Little Hangleton. He needed them on the other side of the valley from the Gaunt land, since he opened a clay dig down near the stream and a small slate quarry a bit further away. The clay dig ended in the early 1800s, and the quarry closed in the 1890s. The Riddles were living off their investments when Voldemort murdered them, and the villagers these days either work in Greater Hangleton and beyond or are pensioners. The village has a pub, and that's the only business. The church was built in the 1560s, and hasn't had an incumbent since the 1950s. The Great Hangleton vicar comes over every first and third Saturday evenings and conducts the burials."

"And all this is relevant because?" Sirius asked.

"Well, it means that there's no one who has the right to be going to the cemeteries," Hermione pointed out. "Of course, there could be people having . . . well, no, not in the winter."

"And they aren't crossing the cemetery to and from anything in the surrounding woods, licit or illicit," Remus said. "According to the tracking wards, they are going to and from a fair-sized mausoleum, built by the Riddles in the early 1600s."

"According to the tracking wards?" Luna asked.

Remus nodded. "There are no tracks in the remaining bits of snow, or in the places where it's muddy instead of grassy."

"Where are they coming from?" Harry asked.

"From the direction of the village," Remus admitted, "not the woods."

"So, something is up there," Dumbledore mused. "And it is possible it is something to do with Voldemort."

"What else could it be?" Padma asked.

"Muggles can be pretty sneaky," Hermione said. "I would imagine at least a few of the villagers are poachers, and could cross through the cemetery without leaving much evidence. They could also making illegal drugs there for all we know."

"Possible, I suppose," Dumbledore agreed.

"The village itself is a dead end," Remus said. "There's no way for a stranger to walk around and ask questions. I spent two nights there, disillusioned. All I can say is, it seems like a boring place. I saw no evidence that anyone was be-spelled in any way. I didn't want to watch the road or increase the number of tracking charms, as that might become noticeable."

"Anything else?" Dumbledore asked.

"Yes," Harry said. "You're hoping to dig up another Heir of Slytherin, aren't you?"

Remus nodded. "That's why I'm researching those marriages before the early 1600s. The later ones all seem accounted for." He turned to Sirius.

"While Remus was skulking around Little Hangleton, I drank a lot of beer in Great Hangleton," Sirius said. "I was under a number of charms to make me both inconspicuous and which inspired people to talk around me." He shrugged. "They really haven't seen anything unusual, but they do tend to think that their neighbors in Little Hangleton are an odd, in-bred group."

"So, one of us needs to go back and set more wards, closer to the village, or you need to send someone to spy," Remus told Dumbledore.

"I will set some subtle wards myself," Dumbledore said, glancing at Harry. Harry merely nodded.

Chapter XXI

To everyone's disappointment, the Headmaster's surveillance wards did not show any sign of Voldemort, Pettigrew in or out of his animagus form, or Nagini (not that the last was likely, given the weather). He had also detected many subtle anti-apparation and anti-portkey wards, cast inside the mausoleum (such wards were more commonly cast on the outside of buildings, but those are also easier to detect).

It was Dumbledore who, invisible, set up small-scale and disguised Muggle surveillance equipment, hoping to identify who exactly was using the mausoleum.

The New Year therefore started off quietly, both in and out of Hogwarts. Draco Malfoy was keeping his head down, at least for the moment. Harry's followers in his Defense Association were making good progress, and Harry had allowed a few other Fifth through Seventh years in so that they could get more hands-on experience, including Susan Bones.

To Harry and Hermione's surprise, Ron took the announcement of Ginny and Neville's ritual Bonding slightly better, and with less jealousy, than they had anticipated. True, Ron tended to growl at Neville for all of January, February, and most of March, but that was the worst of his behavior.

Nor did he try and pressure Lavender into starting the same. To Hermione's surprise, Ron started taking his school work seriously for the first time (even Divination). He was also one of the harder workers in the DA, and the one working most on his conditioning. It was clear that he was working so hard in part to prepare for whatever came Harry's way, and in part so that he could support a family.

Ron and Lavender also became the most openly-affectionate couple at Hogwarts, even more so than any of the Bonding couples. And, to Ron's delight, over the Easter break Lavender would take him in hand for the first time. Her gentle stroking, her soft thumb rubbing over the head of his cock, was an entirely different experience from his own rough jacking-off.

He had already started getting it through his head that there was a difference between sex and making love, and an even larger one between dating and Bonding. Harry and Hermione had given him a Muggle sex manual for his sixteenth birthday in March, one which was geared to getting the male to slow things down and to concentrate on pleasuring his partner.

Ron, who had only been thinking in terms of his own future orgasms, had become fascinated by the concept. He approached the subject like studying chess, which while a bit clinical was superior to what his approach would otherwise have been.

Of course, Ron still wanted to play with the pieces.

While all that was playing out, Harry, Luna, and Padma had their own ritual to perform. Harry and Hermione had started Bonding in late August. Therefore, his relationships with Luna and Padma

could be formally announced in February.

They had the option of a ceremony for each of the two, or one for both. Harry was not really surprised that they chose to do just one for the both of them.

Wednesday, February 14, 1996

It was a little after 4:00 when Harry, Hermione, Luna, and Padma entered the Couple's Room. For this ceremony, the girls could invite the 14 students who would act as observers. They had discussed it, and had invited Parvati, Lavender, Ginny, Katie, Alicia, and Angelina from Gryffindor; Cho, Su, Mandy Brocklehurst, and Lisa Turpin from Ravenclaw; Tracey and Daphne from Slytherin; and Susan and Hannah from Hufflepuff.

Hermione turned to the group, who quickly quieted. "I, Hermione Jane Granger, am the acknowledged future sworn bondmate of Harry James Potter. I have been so since last August, some six months ago. I acknowledge and welcome Luna Lauren Lovegood and Padma Patil as my bondmate's future consorts. I welcome them into our family, and fully accept them as mates and partners." That caused a little stir, as it meant that Luna and Padma would be acknowledged as her consorts in the future as well as Harry's.

Hermione turned around, opened Harry's robes (this time, he was only wearing his robes and sandals, so there were some soft moans from the assembled teens), and sat him down. Luna and Padma adjusted the knee padding, and Hermione knelt down and quickly got Harry fully hard with her mouth. She then moved out of the way, and Luna sucked on Harry for about half a minute, and then she exchanged places with Padma, who did the same.

When Padma stood, Harry closed his eyes and stood as well. Luna and Padma removed his robe, and a little gasp went through the assembled teens. Hermione again knelt, but this time was holding two small crystal glasses. Luna and Padma wrapped their fingers around Harry, and began to gently jerk him off. Hermione leaned forward and licked the top of his crown.

Padma went up on her toes and started whispering into Harry's ear. The three all knew how much Harry looked forward to starting their family, and any talk of them being pregnant made his shoot off more quickly -- therefore they rarely did it. Now, though, her whisperings had Harry shooting in less than two minutes.

Hermione caught most of the semen in one of the glasses, letting it spurt and then milking him. When it was reduced to a slight ooze, Hermione picked the other glass off of the floor and divided the semen into two equal portions. Luna and Padma each took one and drank the contents while Hermione cleaned the end of Harry's cock with her tongue. Luna and Padma then kissed each other deeply, and then bent over and did the same with Hermione. Hermione then leaned forward to clean Harry with her tongue. Luna took the two glasses and licked them clean as well.

When the three were alone, Alicia said to her two female lovers, "That looked like more fun than I had thought it would be."

"We need to talk to Granger," Katie said, "and see if we can do the ceremony so that we're all

legally bonding with both the twins."

Alicia and Angelina agreed.

Hannah, Cho, and Daphne lead the stunned Susan, Su, and Tracey from the room.

Meanwhile, Hermione booked the room for six days a week: two each for herself and the other two. The seventh day, she would be fellating Harry in the Gryffindor corner, with Ginny once again as chaperon, right before Ginny did Neville.

Friday, February 23, 1996

Harry stared at the others in the Headmaster's office, having dropped what to them was a bombshell, although to him it had been obvious. Dumbledore, Sirius, Remus, Moody, Hermione, and Padma stared back, stunned and unable to say anything for a moment. Luna merely asked, "Could you explain why?"

"I would think it was obvious," Harry answered.

"Humor me, my lord," Luna answered.

Harry sighed. "We need to know what is going on inside the Riddle mausoleum. After all the surveillance, all we know is several people no one local seems to know are going in and out, usually once every other day or so -- but it never appears to be the same person coming out as who just went in. If someone goes in on any given day, they usually don't come out until four days later. Sometimes, however, they seem to stay. So, there must be a group inside. At least what? Six?"

"At least," Moody agreed, "unless there's Polyjuice involved, and that doesn't seem likely."

"They aren't Muggles from the village, so it's unlikely to be some Muggle thing, like smuggling or drugs. However, they are carrying things in. My guess is food. If it's not shrunk, then I don't see how it could feed six people. So it's either shrunk or they started off with a good supply. Still, we need to know."

"But why you?" Sirius demanded.

"Because I am the only one who wouldn't need a portkey or to apparate to escape," Harry said. Harry seemed to shrink back, and his body language changed. His eyes dropped to the floor. He then disappeared with a 'pop'.

"Are you sure, Harry?" Luna asked.

"What do you mean?" Hermione asked in turn. "We knew he could pop."

Luna didn't blink. "Aren't you going to answer her?"

Dumbledore asked, "He is still here?"

"Of course he is."

"He is?" Moody demanded, his eye spinning.

"None of you can see him?" Luna asked, confused. They all agreed they couldn't. "And none of you saw the house elf who was in here dusting when we came in, then? She left just before Remus arrived." Remus had been late by some fifteen minutes. He was staying in the castle part-time as a 'security consultant,' and had rescued some students trapped by Peeves in a closet.

That stopped everyone cold, for they hadn't detected the elf.

Luna shook her head. "No wonder my house mates thought I was loony from the first night, talking to the air, not knowing I was talking with the elves."

No noise announced Harry's return. "They do adore you, though," he told Luna. Harry looked up. "Does this establish how I can get in, spy, and get out?"

They all agreed that it did.

"Still, I couldn't detect you because your scent was still in the air," Remus said. "Sirius?"

"Right." Sirius turned into Padfoot.

"Do that again," Remus said.

Harry concentrated for a moment, and then faded away. "He cast something on himself this time," Dumbledore told the group.

"Two things, I believe," Luna said.

"Probably to mask his scent and to make him even more silent," Hermione said. "He did that to us when he came for me last August."

Padfoot howled in shock as something grabbed his tail. He switched back to himself and grabbed his butt. "Dammit Harry! That bloody well hurt!"

Harry faded back into place, still apparently sitting on the chair. "So, any questions?"

"When do you go?" Remus asked.

"They seem to arrive at between Nine and Eleven, on those nights when anyone does show up," Harry said. "I should go now. I'll pop to the cemetery and make my way in from there."

"Dress warm, my lovely lord," Luna said, and before anyone could say anything, Harry was gone with another 'pop'.

"Is he gone this time?" Padma asked. Luna nodded. Moody was incapable of speech,

"What did he do to my tail?" Sirius demanded.

"He used a little wandless magic," Luna said. "He was sitting there the entire time."

Hermione shook her head. "You should be very glad Harry is fighting a war," she told Dumbledore.

"Why?" he asked.

"Could you imagine how much mischief he could cause if he had been dedicated to causing trouble?" she asked. "He would make the Marauders, the Weasley twins, and Peeves combined look like amateurs."

"Possibly true," Dumbledore agreed. "Now, Harry left before some of you could take a good look at the photos we got. Do any of you know them? Or have you at least seen any of them? None attended Hogwarts."

"This one looks a bit like the Knight's Bus conductor," Luna said a few moments later. "It isn't, of course, but he does look like a sibling."

"The Prangs and the Shunpikes are old but impoverished Pure-blood families," Dumbledore mused. "Ernie left his enclave back in the early 1920s and worked in Muggle Birmingham. He became the second driver for the Knight's Bus company during the war. There were so many planes flying about it was no longer safe to ride broomsticks in many areas and so the Knight's Bus was developed. Stan is his nephew, and the first Shunpike to attend Hogwarts since the mid-1600s, although he left after his Fifth year. There should be other Shunpikes of his generation."

"Headmaster," Remus said nervously.

"Yes?"

"I know these three," he said. "All three are werewolves, one English, one Irish, and one from Poland. And I had heard that Fenrir had a Shunpike as a lieutenant." He stood and started pacing. "What we have here, it seems, is Grayback's pack."

Harry appeared (although invisible) about twenty yards from the Riddle mausoleum. He approached it cautiously, and stood off to one side, waiting to see if anyone would show up.

In less than fifteen minutes, someone did. And this someone was carrying a bundle which could only be a child. Harry slipped in with the poorly dressed man.

There were several tombs in the mausoleum. One had never been finished, and it disguised an entrance to a tunnel. Harry followed the man down, and into a large chamber, some thirty feet across although varying between 8 and 11 feet in height.

The man laid the bundle roughly down next to a naked, terrified boy of about 10. The man's flipping the bundle open revealed the child to be a naked girl, just a bit smaller and younger than the boy. The man pulled a very old, beat-up wand and woke the child up.

There were eleven men surrounding the naked children, and Harry knew this could not end well,

although he was determined that it would end well for the children. At that moment, two more men came in. One was carrying a larger bundle, and Harry was not really shocked to see that the other man was Fenrir Grayback.

The other man flipped the filthy blanket on the ground, and a naked teenaged girl, maybe 14 at most, rolled onto the ground. The first man woke her up. The three terrified sacrifices were soon huddled together.

"Well," Grayback said, "tonight is the night. Tonight, you taste human flesh for the first time in this form." He turned on the oldest of the others. "Or do you still have doubts, Umbridge?" That name made Harry blink, as this must be a sibling or cousin to the Ministry official.

"I have no problems killing and eating a Muggle," the man retorted. "My only doubt is being able to digest it properly in this form when it is uncooked."

"Well, there is that," Grayback conceded. "Still, you must taste the raw flesh. We'll take the young boy and rip his legs off and use them. We'll cook the rest of him later, along with the little girl's liver and kidneys. I want to experiment with the older girl."

"How's that?"

"Let's see how that titty flesh tastes when seared still attached." As Grayback conjured a cooking grill, half his followers laughed at his ideas, while the others marveled at his ingenuity. Harry felt like throwing up, while the three Muggles were nearly hyperventilating from their fear.

Harry silently put them to sleep.

"Aw, they passed out," one of the werewolves pointed out, disappointed.

"All at once?" Grayback demanded.

And then, all hell broke loose.

"Lupin won't be back tonight, I take it?" Moody asked.

"No," Sirius said. "My bet is, he'll be attacking that cache of fire whiskey we left during the autumn of our last year and could never get back to. We recovered it this morning."

"It must be difficult, hating something that's part of you, something which everyone else judges you by," Luna said.

"There are some right decent people out there who are werewolves," Moody said. "It's not just Lupin. Still, the Curse breaks most of the decent ones, sooner or later. Lupin's the only decent one I know who's managed to live with it for more than ten or twelve years, without it driving him mad, killing him, or driving him to kill himself. No, most of the others, the ones that live with it, embrace it, and turn into worse monsters in their human form than in their transformed state."

"Show yourselves!" Grayback screamed in fury. In less than two minutes, his followers had been destroyed, and his victims for the revel were asleep, protected from his attacks. "Where are. . . ." Grayback froze as a hex hit him. He was shocked that a simple bodybind could hold him.

He had been bitten weeks before the start of his Seventh year, and the Board of Governors had immediately voted to expel him. No one had spoken for him, for the Heads of House had been threatening to expel him if he had continued his bullying ways even before then. His Head of House, Flitwick, was even leading the attempt. He had been an excellent student, however, and had continued his magical training on his own. He had quickly come to dominate the werewolves of Britain and Ireland, a true alpha animal -- strong, intelligent, and utterly ruthless.

How could he be held by a First year hex?

A form faded into view in front of him. It was a young man, looking sixteen or so. Perhaps over average height for his age, and a bit more muscular, although not with the bulging powerful form like himself.

And intense green eyes and a lightening scar.

Potter.

Potter disarmed Grayback quickly, removing three wands, six knives, and a pair of 'brass knuckles' (although these were nickel-plated). The Boy tried all the wands in the room, finally placing one in his left sock and tying the others together before putting them in a jacket pocket.

Then the Boy simply studied Grayback. Despite the hex, the alpha werewolf started to sweat. "Interesting," Potter finally said. "So, fifteen more werewolves, but these were your pick. About half the others go along because they're afraid of you and because the bloody Ministry was forcing them to starve. I'll send Remus to them, but may have to kill the others."

Grayback was shocked.

"Yes, I know, werewolves and vampires are supposed to be immune to Legilimency," Harry said. "But you took the Dank Wanker's Mark, so just as he can see inside your little brain to a degree, so can I. And I have decided what to do with you." Harry grimaced and said, "You need to die hunted, and torn apart."

Grayback gave a mental snort at this little wimp thinking he could do that to him.

Harry Summoned all the weapons and melted them into a metal mess, which made Grayback even more glad that this would be a physical contest and not a magical one. Then he was floated to the back of the chamber.

Grayback grinned as he felt the hex melt off him. He stood, six foot six, and incredibly muscular and fit.

And in front of him, he saw a Kodiak bear, head nearly brushing the ten foot top of the chamber

where it was standing. It dropped all fours and roared, and then one massive forepaw flicked out and crushed the skull of one of the dead werewolves.

Grayback's eyes went wide with the first true panic and terror he had felt since he had been bitten.

He backed against the wall, and begged for mercy.

Chapter XXII

"It was Greyback's werewolves," Harry said.

The group in Dumbledore's office jumped to their feet, for they had not heard anything before Harry's spoke. They were shocked to see Harry carrying two unconscious nude children and levitating an equally nude teen girl. "Greyback and his pack were going to cannibalize them tonight," Harry said. "They seem to be Muggles." He laid them on the rug in front of the fireplace. "Perhaps Madam Pomfrey should see them before you return them to their families, if they let any of their families survive."

"Of course, my boy," was all Dumbledore could say.

"I had to kill them," Harry said, tonelessly. Luna stopped Hermione and Padma from rushing him, knowing that Harry had to talk this out before he could accept any comfort. "I did search the mausoleum after I, well, after, but except for some food and the bones of their previous victims, I didn't find anything worthwhile." He turned and handed Moody a small sack. "I shrank what's left of the victims' bones. There wasn't much, because these were killed and eaten by them in werewolf form. Still, if you turn them over to the Muggles, they can probably discover who they were. It might at least give their families some closure."

Moody nodded.

Harry next turned to Sirius. "Where's Remus?"

"In his room. I expect he's on his third bottle of firewhiskey by now." Harry looked puzzled. "Werewolves apparently don't get drunk easily."

Harry nodded and turned to his mates. "Unless the Headmaster prevents it, could you please go to the Room of Requirement and wait for me? I suspect I won't be very good company, but I could really use yours."

"Of course," Luna said, walking over and kissing the now statue-like Harry on the cheek. "I will prepare your bath, my consort."

Padma kissed his other cheek. "And I shall be in your bath to wash you, my lord."

"And I shall be waiting to hold you after your bath, my husband-to-be," Hermione agreed. She cupped his cheek, and the three witches left.

"Harry. . . ." Sirius started, but Harry shook his head.

"I need to talk with him. There are fifteen more werewolves, and it looks like five or six might still be savable. You might want to join us in half an hour or so." Harry nodded at Moody and Dumbledore and left.

"I'll go get Shacklebolt and a few others I can trust," Moody said. "We'll clean up the mausoleum and check it out as well."

"Be careful," Dumbledore warned. He frowned. "In fact, since Harry might have left it booby-trapped, I had best go along as well."

Harry opened the door to Remus's chambers, and sure enough, Remus was on the sofa, with two empty firewhiskey bottles in front of him and a third nearly half gone.

Remus looked at Harry as he shut the door. "Are they dead?" he asked.

"The thirteen who were there," Harry agreed.

Remus sucked down the rest of the bottle and cracked open a fourth as he burped smoke.

"They had taken three kids, well, two little kids and a girl who might have been fourteen," Harry said. "They were going to eat the little boy's legs raw and grill the girl alive."

Remus sucked down nearly a fifth of the bottle with one swig. He burped more smoke and even a little flame

"I'm sorry that I had to do it, Remus."

Remus merely nodded, took a small sip, and declaimed:

"I saw the werewolves of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, dragging themselves through Knockturn Alley at dawn looking for a wolfbane fix. . . ."

Remus took another deep swig.

"who poverty and tatters and hollowed-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities. . . ."

Another swig.

"who cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear, burning their money in wastebaskets and listening to the Terror through the walls. . . ."

yacketayakking screaming vomiting whispering facts and memories and anecdotes and eyeball kicks and shocks of hospitals and jails and wars. . . ."

Another deep swig.

"who wandered around and around at midnight in the railroad yard wondering where to go, and went, leaving no broken hearts. . . ."

who howled on their knees in the subway and were dragged off the roof waving genitals and manuscripts. . . ."

Remus drank down a quarter of the bottle. His speech was just starting to slur, but his eyelids were drooping.

"who walked all night with their shoes full of blood on the snowbank docks. . . ."

Another quarter.

"who fell on knees in hopeless cathedrals praying for each other's salvation and light. . . ."

Remus finished off the bottle, and it slipped from his hand to the floor.

Harry approached the werewolf, and partially laid him out on the sofa, although Remus was still sitting up, taking off the older man's shoes. "I am sorry I had to do that, Remus," Harry said again.

"I know, cub," Remus muttered. "Did you at least get Greyback along with the others?"

"I did," Harry said. "He'll never harm another child again." Harry summoned a nearby tray, and made Remus drink a large glass of water. Harry set the glass down and helped Remus lie down.

"Thank you, Harry," Remus said. "I'm sorry you had to do that, too."

"I know, Moony," Harry said, his hand on Remus' shoulder. "There are fifteen more. We might be able to save a few of them."

"A few?"

"I'm hoping at least six," Harry said. "Six of the others were rejected by Greyback because they weren't loyal enough, but they were glad to kill. The other three, I don't know."

"When?"

"In the morning, Moony," Harry said. "Get some rest."

"I'm sorry I couldn't keep you," Remus mumbled. "I really wanted to, but. . . ."

"I know," Harry said. "I'm sorry, too. I would have loved to have been raised by you."

Remus smiled slightly, and then either fell asleep or finally passed out. Harry wasn't sure which.

"Remus."

"Remus."

Remus opened his bloodshot eyes and managed to mumble, "Blerg. . . ."

"Drink this," Harry said, holding out a hot mug of something.

Remus managed to sit up, and he drank the steaming potion down. "Not bad," he mumbled.

"Now get to the toilet," Harry said. "You're going to piss at least a quart in about three minutes, which will finish cleaning out your system, and you won't be able to hold back."

Remus moved a lot faster than he wanted to. Harry told his retreating friend, "I'll have fluid replacements here waiting."

Five minutes later, Remus returned. "That was the least worst hangover cure I've ever had, and probably the most effective," he said.

"That's what you get with Hermione and two cute Ravenclaws," Harry said. "They even modified it to work more effectively for werewolves."

Remus frowned and looked at the clock on the mantle. It was 6.42. "What did they do, stay up all night?"

"Actually, yes," Harry said. "They rather like you, you know." He held out another mug. "I know you prefer tea, but I think you need coffee."

Remus nodded, added three cubes of sugar and then some cream, and then sat down. "If I remember right, you fought and killed Greyback and twelve of his followers last night, and we're seeing to fifteen more today?"

"Not exactly," Harry said. "You were almost right about the numbers, by the way. Most of the werewolves were foreigners. None of the registered British werewolves you knew about were involved." Remus' shoulders dropped a bit in relief. "I captured the fifteen around Three this morning. I turned the six vicious ones over to the Ministry for questioning." Remus winced. He knew they would all be dead soon. "The three questionable ones I turned over to Dumbledore and Moody for questioning. They'll either turn them over to the Ministry afterwards or drop them back in their home countries."

"And the other six?"

"Five are foreigners: a German, a Finn, a Hungarian, a Pole, and an Estonian. The sixth is an Englishman who was bitten in early December. They had just forced him into the group a week ago, so he was registered but wasn't on the list you gave me, of course."

"And what do we do with them?" Remus asked.

"Do you know the little Vale the Potters own in Wales?"

"Your father mentioned it to me once or twice in passing, something about he needed me to check it out?"

Harry nodded. "It turns out I had a great great-uncle who was a werewolf. The family warded the valley for him to stay in. There are strong rune-wards involved here. It's a good thing you didn't go in unprepared, because a werewolf can't get out in his human form any more than the actual transformed werewolf could."

"And you're going to imprison them there?"

"I'm going to offer them sanctuary there," Harry corrected. "There's a lodge with nine small bedrooms and I can arrange food and some house elves to help them out. There's also an outbuilding where they can transform, so they can have shelter or run the woods."

"And what would they do?"

"Between them, they are fluent in eighteen different languages," Harry said. "They could be watching the Muggle and magical press at the very least. Since five of them speak German, and German is the most common language of the magical media in central and most of eastern Europe, there's quite a lot to get through. Five of them have at least a Fifth year magical education, while the German is a Squib who was bitten while in medical school. The Headmaster said he might have some intelligence sifting for them to do as well. We can also arrange small salaries, so they can post orders through their contact, or save it up."

"We? Me?" Remus asked.

"If you want," Harry answered. "Wouldn't they be more likely to trust a fellow werewolf? Or would it be a complication?"

Remus thought about that, and finally said, "It would probably be best if I talked to them first, but I likely would be the better contact."

"I hauled them in, so I should be with you, plus I can answer any questions they might have," Harry said. "Shall we go?"

"Where?"

"Oh, to the Room of Requirement."

Remus gave Harry a small twisted smile. "That figures. Oh, how will I get in and out of the Vale?"

"I can make you a portkey. Since I'll make it, it will by-pass the wards." Harry waved his hand and Remus' wrinkled robes were cleaned. "Shall we?"

"I believe we shall."

All six werewolves were happy to be free of Greyback, and willing to work together in any way to repay Harry. Harry's promise of Wolfbane Potion was also welcome.

None of the captured werewolves knew anything about Voldemort's location and little of his plans. He had been planning on using the werewolves in an attack on Hogwarts, but none of them knew if they would have been the primary assault force, or part of a much larger attack.

Harry therefore spent much of his free time with his DA. Should there be a direct attack on the school, or even on the Hogwarts Express, they would be ready.

Most of their work in the autumn had been on conditioning and purely defensive magic, as Harry taught them several different types of shields, including some very powerful ones which took more than a single person to cast. And, even though the dementors seemed to be neutral still, Harry showed them how to cast a Patronus, even though none had fully achieved one through mid-April.

In the spring, their work progressed to offensive spells, and how to fight as a group. Harry knew that, at least before, the Death Eaters had never fought in a really organized way. The few pitched magical battles they had engaged in were more like a medieval tournament melee -- disorganized

fighting after the first engagement, other than each side knowing who was on which side.

Harry wanted his liegemen capable of following a clear chain of command, instead of just awaiting his orders. By early March, that chain had been worked out, and mock skirmishing had been added to the practices.

Other than his involvement with his consorts and the DA, early March also brought a return to Quidditch practice. Whatever had been the root causes of Ron's lack of confidence in the original time line were obviously overcome in this one. He had performed fairly well in the game against Slytherin in November, and he was even more able in practices.

Harry nudged Ron into making small suggested variations in plays to Angelina. Most of them seemed to work pretty well, and after their game in early April, Angelina went to McGonagall to suggest that Ron might make a good captain the next year, as Katie would be a prefect or Head Girl, taking her N.E.W.T.s, and dealing with having her four lovers at a distance, including the two males she was Bonding to.

Gryffindor beat Hufflepuff with great elan, while Ravenclaw narrowly beat Slytherin.

Hermione, Padma, and Luna, had done their research, and actually found a way to form the group bonds that would allow a woman Bond with two males. It was an ancient Sumarian variation, and would only work if the two males were close relatives (brothers or paternal half-brothers, father/son, paternal uncle/nephew, paternal grandfather/grandson).

Most of the research had been done by Padma, as it took help from her extended family back in India, who still preserved some of the knowledge of the very ancient Middle East and India. Luna found the loophole in British magical law which allowed the ceremony to be legally recognized.

Harry wasn't certain who was the most grateful: Fred, George, Alicia, Angelina, or Katie. Harry rather suspected that it would be difficult to talk any of them out of reswearing their fealty to them once he turned 17. All concerned knew, however, that they had to keep things quiet until after Katie left Hogwarts in just over a year.

With all that had been going on, Hermione had almost forgotten that this was her and Padma's O.W.L. year (she was not terribly concerned about Harry this time around, of course). As March turned into April, however, she would have panicked had not Harry and Padma prevented it. Harry started giving the pair test questions to practice on for all their common courses, and between Padma and herself, the pair had no difficulty coming up with the answers.

It would only be after the O.W.L.s were over that Hermione would realize that Harry had covered every single question on the Astronomy, Care, Charms, Defense, Herbology, Potions, and Transfiguration exams, and Harry confessed he had used a Penseive to go back and look at his memories of the exams.

Harry hadn't totally cheated (after all, there was a test bank of questions that the O.W.L.s would cover). Therefore he had included material other than what was on the exams he had taken. He had drawn material from the various conversations he had overheard about the O.W.L.s to figure out all the other questions as well.

Most of the other Fifth years had turned down the offer to study with Harry, Hermione, and Padma, as it was sometimes too intense even for most Ravenclaws. Lavender and Parvati were happy to study away from Hermione and Padma, and Ron and Dean wanted to study with Lavender and Parvati. Seamus often tagged along.

Neville, however, studied with the trio as much as he felt comfortable with. Susan and Hannah from Hufflepuff; Anthony, Su, Lisa, and Morag from Ravenclaw; and Tracey and Daphne from Slytherin also studied with them as much as possible. Of the nine, Neville probably studied with the trio the least, as it sometimes made Ginny jealous. Su, Tracey, Daphne, and Susan were with them nearly every time.

The others had calculated that this study group actually gave them the best shot at being prepared for the O.W.L.s. These decisions would have a fair impact on the O.W.L. results when they came out.

Of course, there were some bumps along the way to the O.W.L.s.

Saturday, April 27, 1996

This Hogsmeade Saturday occurred in the midst of the pre-O.W.L. frenzy. By promising a 'private session' with his three lovers early in the morning, and a study session that night after dinner, Harry persuaded Hermione and Padma to take a break. Once in the village, Harry refused to let either of them near the bookstore.

It was a chilly, overcast morning, so they went first to Honeydukes, before it grew too crowded, and then made a stop at the stationary shop, for more parchment and inks. Harry, Padma, and Hermione were curious when Luna picked up a special order.

They knew that Luna loved odd-colored ink -- one of her favorite small Christmas presents had been a set of Muggle fluorescent acrylic inks from Hermione. Her most common ink was a magical combination of hot pink and electric blue, that intertwined the colors as she wrote.

"What colors is this one?" Harry asked, amused.

Luna flushed slightly but demonstrated. This ink combined two shades of brown and a vibrant green. "That's rather sedate for you, isn't it?" Hermione commented.

"No, it's perfect," Padma said. "It's the colors of our eyes."

Hermione nodded and went to order some ink in Padma brown, Harry green, and Luna grey.

The quartet got to the Three Broomsticks around 11:15. Madam Rosmerta intercepted them and whispered, "VIP, room Sixteen -- Madam Bones."

Harry nodded, and they wound their way through the main room, greeting the other students. It took a bit of doing, but they finally made their way up to the part of the building where the guest rooms were.

There were two aurors guarding one end of the corridor, and Dawlish nodded them in. "Ah, Lord Potter. Ladies. I thought we might have a chat."

Remus' quotations are of course from the poem 'Howl' by Allen Ginsberg. Except for the first two lines, the others are correct quotations.

Chapter XXIII

The quartet got to the Three Broomsticks around 11:15. Madam Rosmerta intercepted them and whispered, "VIP, room Sixteen -- Madam Bones."

Harry nodded, and they wound their way through the main room, greeting the other students. It took a bit of doing, but they finally made their way up to the part of the building where the guest rooms were.

There were two aurors guarding one end of the corridor, and one of them, Dawlish, nodded them in and shut the door. "Ah, Lord Potter. Ladies," the Minister said, nodding. "I thought we might have a chat."

Suddenly, there was a loud crash and the shout of curses from the corridor. As Madam Bones stood, Harry snapped, "Flank! Padma, window!"

Padma moved cautiously to the window, Hermione and Luna stood on their guard between the Minister and Harry, and those two stood at the alert, their wands out.

The door crashed in, but even before the door fully opened, Harry had sent two unvoiced stunners down out the door. Dawlish laid on the floor, next to a masked Death Eater, the end of the Dark Mark peeking out from under the auror's sleeve. The other auror was dead.

"Stay here until I send up some people," Harry ordered. The Minister frowned, but quickly realized from what she had heard from Susan and others that Harry probably had more resources on hand than she would for some time.

Harry thundered down the stairs and into the actual pub. "DA! ATTENTION!" Twenty-three people stood up. The seven Coven members Third year and higher were standing at the doorway. "There's been an attack on the Minister!" Harry scanned the crowd. "Millicent! In a moment, take Ted, Vincent, and Greg upstairs and guard the Minister. Ernie, Justin, you two take the top of the stairs. Neville, Ginny, take the bottom. Go!"

"Cho! Take your group to the edge of the village near Hogwarts and warn everyone to be watchful. Angelina, Alicia, Katie, go to the opposite end. Fred, George, go to the station and back to the Shrieking Shack. Once you all get to the far end of your routes, hurry back. Go!"

Padma, Luna, and Hermione hurried in. "The Minister said Susan and Hannah should be in Gladrags."

"Let's go fetch them," Harry said. "Ron, Lavender, Parvati, guard the back. Everyone else, keep an eye on who comes in. Tony, take charge of the main room."

"Yes, my lord."

"Madam Rosmerta? Could you notify the aurors and the Headmaster that there's been an attack on the Minister?" She merely nodded, stunned.

The four hurried out, down the short distance to Gladrags. They were nearly there when they heard the muffled screams. Harry scowled. "Wait thirty seconds and then blast the door."

"Right," Hermione said.

Harry disappeared silently.

Harry had a feeling, and he was sick to see that it had been correct -- Bellatrix was just releasing Hannah Abbott from the Cruciatus. There were two other Death Eaters, both masked, near the door. The five attendants were on the floor, either dead or unconscious, Harry was unsure which.

"You're a dead woman, bitch," Susan growled.

"Oh, and do you want a taste of this, little girl?"

"Would it make any difference if I said no?" Susan asked. Harry could see she was trembling, but there was no questioning her bravery.

"Not really," Bellatrix said, an evil grin on her face. "Still, on the off-chance your dear auntie survives the attack, we may need you alive. That doesn't necessarily mean 'alive and we. . . ." At that moment, the front door blew in.

Bellatrix screeched, as Harry severed her wand arm mid-way between her shoulder and elbow. One of the Death Eaters from the doorway turned. His mask had fallen off, and Harry saw it was Dolohov. The other Death Eater was screaming on the floor, bleeding from his eyes, where glass shards had penetrated.

Harry snarled and sent the same cutting curse that Dolohov had fired at Hermione in the other time stream. Harry's sliced into the Death Eater, disemboweling him. Harry stepped over and stunned Lestrage and the blinded Death Eater as his three lovers charged in.

"Luna, Susan, look after Hannah," Harry commanded. "Padma, guard the door. Hermione, check those shop assistants over there." Harry went and put an end to what was left of Dolohov, who was feebly trying to figure out how to replace the coils of intestine inside himself.

The shop assistants were dead. Harry magically bound Bellatrix and the blinded Death Eater together, back to back. "Susan, levitate Hannah. Padma, you take the two Death Eaters. Luna, Hermione, watch our backs."

The group moved back out into the streets, which were nearly deserted except for a few students crowding into the Three Broomsticks. Fred and George hurried over.

"Harry! Dementors!" Fred panted.

"How many?" Harry demanded.

"Hundreds," George said.

At that moment, Tracey and Daphne hurried up. "You've heard?" Tracey asked.

"The dementors?" Harry asked.

"They massed near the Hog's Head, but a violet glow is keeping them out. It looked like they were drifting this way before they got distracted," Tracey said.

Harry saw that Daphne was pale and sweaty, obviously terrified. "Fred, carry Hannah to the Three Broomsticks. George, take these two Death Eaters. Daphne, go with them to get the door. If no one has flooded the Ministry and Hogwarts about the dementors, get on it!"

"Right!" the twins chorused, taking over Hannah and the injured Death Eaters and shepherding Daphne ahead of them.

"Tracey!"

"My lord?"

"Take charge of Susan, because the dementors are coming here." The group saw that indeed, the dementors were coming directly towards them.

"Harry. . . ." Hermione started.

"You three stand behind me," Harry commanded, watching the mass of black shrouds coming closer. "Close your eyes and think of how you feel for us, left hand on your neighbor's back, the last one touching me. Tracey, Susan, are you still here?"

"Yes," they both answered.

"Look behind us, and make certain nothing attacks us from behind." Harry took out the pouch he had been carrying since the day after the Azkaban escape. "Any good thoughts you might have would be welcome." He poured out a palm-full of tiny amethyst crystals and then used his wand to scatter them about twenty yards ahead of him.

Then he put Merlin's wand away. Merlin's staff appeared in his right hand. As the 500+ dementors slowly came closer, Harry could feel the immense pressure of them trying to affect his mind.

"Ladies," Harry said firmly. "I love you with all my heart."

"I love all three of you with all my soul," Luna stated.

"I love you," Hermione managed to say.

"I love you all," Padma managed to whisper.

Tracey took Susan's hand as they both tried to think the best thoughts they could. "We're with, you, my lord," Tracey said.

"With all of you," Susan managed to say.

"Make certain your eyes are closed for the next few seconds," Harry ordered. With a wave of his staff, the amethyst dissolved into a stupendously bright surge of violet light, destroying over 200 of the dementors and at least injuring all of the others.

The destroyed and injured dementors sent up a wail of agony, especially those which had captured souls, as those souls escaped to the 'next great adventure'. Harry swept the staff in the air twice, sending off the same cutting curse he had used on Dolohov. The purple-colored curse cut through first twenty and then thirty-two more dementors.

The dementors started to flee.

"**SEIVEELTH!**" Harry commanded in the Old Language of the Great Circles, some of which he had learned from the information in Merlin's vault. "**KEINNOOLTH!**" The dementors halted at the first command and then were gathered together. "You are not creatures, you are demons, embodied by ancient dark lords as servants and terrorists. I, the Heir of Merlin, the Chosen One, command you! Give up the souls you have imprisoned, give up your forms, and return to the tortured portions of the afterlife, where you belong! **EEMADAYL EEREIAN!**"

The dementors, screeching, melted away.

The staff disappeared, and Harry fell to his knees, exhausted. Four of the five young women moved towards him. "Stop!" Hermione commanded. "Tracey, Padma, keep an eye out for enemies. There might be other Death Eaters. Susan, could you help Luna and myself move Harry?"

And with that, the five moved the now unconscious Harry into the Three Broomsticks, two of them keeping their wands drawn and their eyes peeled.

Harry woke up slowly, feeling warm and cuddled. His face was burrowed between a large set of breasts, and he could feel hard warm nipples on his back as another woman hugged him close.

Then Harry frowned. Hermione and Padma were generous C-cups, but the ones he was resting between were larger, if equally firm. "I think he's waking up," the breasts' owner commented.

Harry pushed back and looked at the speaker. "Susan?" he mumbled, his lips filled with her flesh.

"Hi, Harry," Susan said.

"Your pledged are keeping the slaving hordes of reporters and officials at bay," Tracey said from behind him, her right hand inching over his hip, while her left arm, and Susan's right, were under Harry's pillow.

"They said you needed affection and support," Susan said. "We were happy to give it."

"They're plotting something," Harry growled.

"They've been plotting on how to get you into bed with the two of us," Tracey said. "Nice of Riddle to give us an excuse."

"They seem to think I need a mate from both Slytherin and Hufflepuff," Harry said.

"Really?" Susan asked. "As far as I know, Tracey and I were the only two who seriously asked since you rescued Luna and Padma."

"Seriously asked?" Harry demanded.

"My lord," Tracey said, "I assure you, some thirty witches, Third to Seventh year, made at least general inquiries. Most decided that, since you have three betrothed already, they would not fit in. Those who merely hoped to take advantage of that fact -- having your protection and your children, with little responsibility -- were quickly discouraged as well."

"I was too shy to ask last autumn," Susan stated. "I had planned to ask you out September First, but you were already with Hermione. I talked things over with Auntie over the Christmas break, and she encouraged me to talk with Padma."

"I was really very impressed with how you handled yourself last year," Tracey told Harry. "I know I've apologized before, but both Daph and I are sorry about those buttons. By the end of the Second Task, we knew that all the things that Malfoy and Snape and the other rumor-mongers had ever said about you were wrong." She flushed slightly. "I've never met anyone like you, my lord. That night you rescued Padma Patil . . . I just dragged Daph over. There was no way I was going to let what might have been my only decent chance to do something really right in my life go by. I had to pledge my self to you."

Tracey moved back and rolled Harry on to his back. "And you looked me in the eye, and you accepted me, my lord. You accepted someone who, at first glance, had never given you any reason to trust her. You accepted me, not to further your power, because it was clear how uncomfortable you were with the whole deal."

Tracey quirked a smile. "After all these years in Potions and Divination with you, I know you're not a very good actor. I knelt before you, and literally put my life in your hands, and I could see that it scared you. That it probably scared you more than you had been when you fought Voldemort and three Death Eaters less than two hours before. And that it scared you because you knew that I was taking a bigger risk than the others had, because I would be the first Slytherin follower."

Harry merely nodded.

"I was told you think I'm a dyke," Tracey said. Harry winced and Susan giggled. "Well, I like the looks of a well-made woman, that's true." She leaned over Harry, pressing a breast against his lips, and kissed Susan. "I'm very attracted to women. But I've only had crushes on two people, and I don't think you'd mind being compared to Cedric."

"Not at all," Harry said.

"I admired you both so much last year," Tracey said. "I can offer you many things, Harry. I am a Pure-Blood, just as Susan is. Susan and Luna know the Pure-Blood English traditions very well. I know the Welsh ones. The Potters are a Marcher family, feet on both sides of the Dike. I can offer you that, and more acceptance in Slytherin. Most of all, I can offer you my love, my affection, and my body, since you already have accepted my loyalty. If you can't say yes now, please don't say no without knowing me better."

"Alright, I won't say no," Harry said.

Tracey smiled, leaned down, and kissed Harry's cheek.

"Instead," Harry said, "let's talk about some other things. First, what do your parents say?"

"Auntie gave me permission to fully Bond with you last summer," Susan answered. "I was so disappointed when I saw Hermione had gotten in ahead of me." Harry's passive Legilimency was operating full-force, although the girls' misinterpreted the twinkle in his eyes. He could tell she had indeed been disappointed, not jealous.

"I wrote to Auntie Em, but then it was clear you were adding Luna as your second, and then of course you also added Padma. Well, Auntie refused to allow me to approach you, even though I'd begged her several times since then, although she didn't give me a final no, either. Well, in that time, you helped make her Minister, and you never asked anything from her except to do a good, honest, and fair job. Today, you saved her life, as well as mine and Hannah's. You somehow destroyed all the dementors. You proved exactly what it means to be the Heir of Merlin."

"What's she's trying to delicately say, my lord, is that every unbonded female who was in Hogsmeade today, at the very least, would be willing to at least entertain the idea of becoming your consort if you asked," Tracey put in. "Hell, a lot of them would be willing to bond their life-forces to you and become your willing slaves and I bet every one of them, and some of the boys, would be happy to get naked with you and at least stroke you off."

Harry shuddered at the idea.

"So in any event, Auntie gave me permission to do what I feel is right," Susan went on. "Luna whispered something to Hermione and Padma, and they sent us to cuddle with you, so that you would recover faster. . . ."

"From the size of the tent in the sheet, I think he's recovered," Tracey commented.

". . . and so we three could talk."

"And after we talk. . . ."

"The Bones are an old family, and I am the last heir to the Most Noble family name. We are a senior line of Hufflepuffs as well. An alliance with the Minister's family won't hurt you, and it won't hurt Auntie, either, but that doesn't mean either of you has to follow the other's lead." Susan looked at Harry with utter devotion. "Mostly, I offer you my love and my self, and I offer my affection to your other consorts and your bond mate."

Tracey went on, "As for me, my family is an old Most Noble one. We trace our lineage to the days of Merlin. My paternal family has possessed the Vale since the mid-500s. However, my grandfather was a younger son who married a Half-blood, joining their butterbeer business. I am considered a Full-blood, not that it matters to you. I am the youngest of five, a son and four daughters. My family was thrilled when I mentioned I might try and become your consort."

"I don't think I could do it fifteen times a week," Harry pointed out.

"Hermione and Luna are fully-bonded to you, my lord," Tracey said. "I understand you're doing it with the three of them thirteen times a week as it is. So, three times each with Padma, Susan, and myself, twice each with Hermione and Luna."

Harry thought. He thought very hard.

Finally, he said, "I would like the two of you to scoot out of bed and stand over by the door."

Confused, but willing to follow orders, the two did so. Harry looked at them. Susan stood five foot five, and was a firmly-packed 37EE-27-36. Her hair was strawberry blonde, and her eyes were the most perfect shade of blue Harry had ever seen. Her nipples were medium-sized, brown with a tinge of red, and under Harry's gaze they were getting very hard. From the previous time stream, he knew she was above average in intelligence and even more above average in magical power, and in many ways the ultimate Hufflepuff, as she had died defending a Muggle playground. Harry decided that if he was going to go through the bonding with her, she would need the conditioning potion.

Tracey stood an inch taller, and was 35B-23-35. She had the stockiest body-type of the five women, and was easily the most muscular. She had shortish black hair, blue eyes a shade darker than Susan's, and the palest skin of any girl he knew of, other than Ginny. Her hardening nipples looked thick and tasty, like Padma's.

"Would you be willing to allow me to put secrecy oaths on you?" Harry asked. "Or do you know Occlumency?"

"I know a bit of the basics," Susan said. "Auntie thought I should practice. If I'm not good enough, do what you need to do to protect us."

"Same here," Tracey said. "My father said I would need to know how to protect my self in Slytherin, so I was coached that first Christmas."

"Susan, I'll need you to get in better condition by the end of July," Harry said.

"I will be," Susan promised.

"Tracey, would you be willing to grow your hair at least as long as Susan's?" Susan's was just past her neck.

"If it will please you, I'll let it grow as long as Luna's or Padma's," Tracey answered, starting to breath fast.

"Then come to bed," Harry said. "We can start your bondings now. Together."

The two teens practically leapt back into bed, ripping the sheet off of Harry. "Merlin," Tracey moaned, "it looks even more delicious up close."

Susan dipped her head and engulfed Harry between the softest lips he had ever encountered, making him moan in pleasure. She dipped down and then slowly eased off. "He's also even more delicious than I thought."

Tracey went down from the other side. Her lips were not as soft, but she managed to take almost an inch more into her mouth before she backed off. "You're right," she told Susan.

"We need to get off the bed if this is going to work," Harry said. The two teens looked at each other and realized that Harry was the experienced one here. They rolled off the bed and were soon kneeling next to each other.

Harry tossed them pillows, to pad the floor. Then he stood between them and they took turns taking him into their mouths. After a few minutes of this, however, Harry then kneel closely together, their cheeks and chins touching. Then he took himself in hand.

The two sets of deep blue eyes looked up at him, and two mouths were opened wide. Harry managed to grunt, "Tongues." Two tongues immediately came out, rubbing against each other. Harry gave it up, and shot over their tongues, lips, and a little on their cheeks.

They performed the public ceremony, with Hermione, Luna, and Padma's help, the next day.

'Offa's Dike' was built by an Anglo-Saxon king to divide England from Wales. The 'Welsh Marches' were the border regions where Norman knights and lords used lands on the English side to extend power into Wales between the reigns of William I and Edward I.

Chapter XXIV

Harry refused to explain to anyone other than his betrothed what he had done to the dementors. Since Madam Bones did not press for an explanation, no one, not even Dumbledore, could do more. Bellatrix Lestrange, Dawlish, and the other captured Death Eaters were questioned (none knew Voldemort's location, and none had a good idea of his plans), tried, and then, since the dementors were gone, magically beheaded.

Harry and his five women threw themselves into their mutual relationship and into study. Dumbledore did summon Harry to his office the Sunday before the O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s began, however. He needed to tell Harry that the International and Russian Ministry had agreed with Harry's suggestion about the remaining giants.

As best as anyone could determine, there were just 47 giants still alive. Two males had sided with Voldemort, and were in an undisclosed location. There were just three other males. Unsurprisingly, Dumbledore had known about Grawp. He was now back in central Asia, with 14 female giants of various ages. There was another 'small' male giant (some 17 feet) with a second group and a young adolescent male with a third.

Normally, male giants were between 20 and 25 feet tall, while the females were between 16 and 19 feet. The largest females had also died in the fighting over the previous year. There was some hope that, if the giants managed to survive, the next generation would at least be a bit smaller, and hopefully a bit less aggressive as well.

As best anyone could tell, Voldemort only controlled at most a force of maybe 20 Death Eaters and the two giants. It was also suspected that the various old pro-Grindelwald and other Dark alliances hidden throughout Europe could provide him with some trained trolls and even some volunteers. He had no known werewolves or other known forces, such as vampires, banshees, or similar sentients. All of the dementors of Azkaban had been accounted for (although destroyed, their robes had been left behind).

To Harry, that suggested an attack on a single rural target, such as Hogwarts or Hogsmeade in Britain, or one of the other schools, like Beauxbatons or even Durmstrang. Dumbledore agreed, and would pass on the information.

The final exams and the last Quidditch games came and went (Gryffindor winning the Quidditch Cup), as did the other exams and finally the Feast. (As they had stopped their internal bickering, Ravenclaw had actually beaten Gryffindor for the House Cup by seven points, with Hufflepuff a very respectable third and Slytherin a close fourth.)

Harry had had a long discussion with Dumbledore and Madam Bones in early May, and they had agreed to provide all students with a single use portkey to a safe place in the Ministry. The room was well-warded in other ways -- no one could apparate out, for example -- and so stealing a portkey would be useless for the Death Eaters. Underage students who had scored at least an A O.W.L. in Defense would be allowed to practice magic, under the same restrictions as adults, although they would still be monitored. Any student who had taken the O.W.L.s, but who hadn't scored an A, but had scored A's in both Charms and Transfiguration would also be allowed to practice. For the students a year younger, they needed to have scored at least a 90 in Defense for the

year, and 85s or higher in both Charms and Transfiguration. Harry also arranged to meet with his retainers in several different locations throughout the summer.

Harry's defeat of the dementors had seen his popularity soar. When the summer solstice came around just before the end of term, not one member of the Wizengamot dared to vote against Sirius' membership at the quarterly regular meeting. Only a handful voted against the repeal of most of the anti-werewolf laws and the replacement werewolf legislation.

There was a great deal of grumbling about the rest of Madam Bones' legislation -- as part of the omnibus bill made most wizarding taxes progressive taxes for the first time in wizarding Britain, as an income tax replaced hidden VAT. Even so, the highest income tax was only 2%. The recreation of an education fund (partially set-up by funds donated by Harry and a few other private contributors) for poor magical families barely sugar-coated the new set-up, despite the fact that 99% of the families to be helped were 'Pure-bloods', showing that what many of the members really cared about were only wealthy Pure-blooded families.

Just after the O.W.L.s, Dumbledore had actually had the nerve to suggest that Harry return to Privet Drive for at least two weeks. Harry had laughed, and reminded Dumbledore that the Headmaster had no authority over him outside of school. He informed the Headmaster that he had warned Petunia that he would not be returning the previous October, so they could have the chance to move before the wards failed if they wished.

When Dumbledore had asked if the Dursleys had actually moved, Harry had merely shrugged, unconcerned.

No, Padma, Susan, and Tracey would be accompanying Harry directly back to Potter Manor. Madam Bones had given Harry a Portkey License (he did have to pay a tariff on each use) and they would be going directly to Harry's home from the Platform. Hermione would be portkeying directly to her parents for five days. Luna, who was still upset with her father, would be going with Hermione.

In the days between the end of the O.W.L.s and the feast, Harry had sought out Draco. Since the destruction of the dementors, Draco and his little band of unsworn followers (seven in Slytherin, three in Ravenclaw, one in Hufflepuff) had kept a very low profile.

"What do you want, Potter?" the sullen Draco had demanded.

"Even though you probably already know this, I thought I should warn you," Harry answered. "You know Voldemort could go after you and your group this summer."

Draco's shoulders dropped in defeat. "I know."

"What's your plan?"

"If you must know, Mother and I are going to be traveling, and no, I won't tell you where," Draco retorted.

Harry blinked. "That's it? Malfoy, you're the leader of a little group of ten students, plus Pansy

Parkinson. Don't you feel any responsibility to them?"

Draco frowned. "Why should I? They follow orders."

Harry shook his head in disbelief. "Why. . . ? Never mind, Malfoy. Just never mind." He left a confused and bemused Draco Malfoy.

The train ride was quiet. Harry saw Hermione and Luna off, and stayed behind to make certain that all the students were picked up. Then Harry took his other three consorts to Potter Manor.

All of them had at least met Dobby, but he now introduced them to Winky (the two elderly house elves had died over the winter, happy that a Potter had returned home).

Harry would occupy the master suite -- a bedroom, three smaller rooms, and a bath. Hermione and Luna were assigned two nearby bedrooms, while the other three picked out their own rooms. There were still nine bedrooms available for any guests.

After dinner, Harry was surprised that the three women knelt beside his chair. "What?" he asked.

"My lord," Padma said, "in the five days we have before our lady and the first consort return to you and to us, your two newest consorts have a request to make."

"And what's that?"

"They wish to be taken, my lord, in addition to bonding with you orally."

"Ah. . . ." Harry said. "I see."

"After all, our lady, the first consort, and I have all enjoyed having you inside us. We all also hope that some day we might be able to taken by you anally as well."

"Are you sure about that?" he asked the trio.

"We'd at least like to try," Tracey answered. A blushing Susan merely nodded.

"Who should go tonight?" Harry asked.

Susan and Tracey looked at each other. Susan extended her right hand in a fist. Tracey nodded and did the same.

One. Two. Three. Susan shot paper, Tracey scissors. "Scissors cut paper," Susan admitted. She looked at Harry. "Tomorrow night, my lord?"

Harry nodded. "Do either you want to assist Tracey? Assuming you want any, Trace."

Tracey smiled at the first use of a nickname by her lord. "I welcome my fellow consorts."

"I shall help," Padma said.

"So will I," Susan said.

"In that case, I have some things to do," Harry said. He glanced at a clock. "It's not quite Eight. Take her to the master suite. Bath her, and I want her in my bed by Nine. I'll be there by quarter after. I would hope you've each helped her to at least one orgasm by then."

The two nodded and dragged the suddenly-shy Tracey off.

Harry worked on some paperwork for the Potter estate for about fifty minutes, and then took himself off to one of the other bath rooms for a quick shower. He got to his bed room right on time.

He was not surprised to see that Padma was between Tracey's thighs and was having almost as much fun eating Tracey out as Tracey was being eaten. Padma really was the most enthusiastic of his lovers when it came to going down on the women, even more than Harry.

Susan saw him first, unsurprisingly. She removed her right nipple from Tracey's mouth and eased off the bed. She approached Harry and knelt before him. Despite the spanking games Luna liked to play once a month or so, it was Susan who was the most naturally submissive of his lovers as a rule. "My lord, your consort is nearly prepared."

"Really?" Harry asked.

Susan nodded. "I brought her off once, and I think this will be the sixth for Padma."

"Then I better make my appearance, or she may get too jaded," Harry said.

Susan shook her head. "Neither Tracey nor Padma could be that easily worn out, my lord." She looked worried. "I could, though."

"I'll keep that in mind for tomorrow night," Harry responded.

"Thank you, my lord. May I?" She gestured to Harry's semi-erect cock.

"Yes."

Susan smiled with satisfaction as she leaned forward and quickly fluffed Harry erect. She didn't try to get him too excited, but she managed to keep him erect and in her mouth until they heard Tracey's moan in her orgasm.

Susan instantly released Harry's member, and he moved quickly to the bed. Padma, who had crawled up to hug Tracey, showed that she knew that Harry was there by rolling off Tracey with perfect timing for Harry to take her place.

Tracey's body molded itself around Harry by perfect instinct, and Harry's cock inserted itself into her with the movement.

Tracey screamed in surprise and pain, and Harry stopped in shock. "Keep moving," Padma told him and Harry did. Padma reached over and pinched Tracey's right nipple, hard. That distracted her for a moment, and when her attention went back to her burning pussy, the sharp pain had receded and the

remaining pain had a growing element of pleasure in it.

The whole thing had thrown Harry off, and he ejaculated into the sobbing teen in less than a minute. He then held her, as Tracey whimpered apologies.

Harry kissed away her tears and apologized in turn. As he grew partially soft, Padma eased them apart. She instantly dove down into Tracey's bloody pussy and licked the blood and juices. Susan showed up a few seconds later with a warm cloth to clean up Harry, Padma's face, and Tracey.

Harry lifted the started Tracey from the bed so that Padma and Susan could clean it (no underage magic could be detected at Potter Manor -- their O.W.L. scores had not yet arrived, of course). Tracey clung to Harry, so he climbed back into bed with her, followed by Padma and Susan. As the four cuddled, Harry again apologized.

"I knew it could hurt," Tracey admitted, "but that took me by surprise. I'm hardly a pain wimp."

"I guess I was just lucky the other three times," Harry said.

"Mine burned a bit a first, but somehow it was a pleasurable burn," Padma agreed, "and the pleasure only grew."

"I asked Hermione and Luna about it," Susan said. "Luna said pretty much the same thing, and Hermione said that it hardly stung at all."

"Just my luck," Tracey pouted. "And stop worrying about it, my lord." She kissed Harry's cheek.

"I'll make it up to you," Harry said.

"Tomorrow night you do Susan, and then Padma should have her turn. In three nights, I'll be healed, that nasty little bit of membrane is gone, and I want my lord deep inside me."

"Then you shall have him," Harry said.

"When Hermione and Luna get back, things will likely go back to all oral," Padma reminded them. "Did you fully relieve yourself, my lord?"

"Not entirely," Harry admitted. "But that will just mean more in the morning."

"Very well," Padma answered. She looked at the other two women. "If I might claim our lord's seed from inside you, I will give up my turn in two nights. That way both of you can enjoy him inside you properly."

The two were more than willing.

That night, the three teens took Harry's auror conditioning potion. It really made only slight changes to Padma and Tracey. They both grew about half an inch, their firm breasts became even firmer and their taut butts tighter, and their musculature became fully defined. Susan also grew half an inch. Her previously slightly padded 37EE-27-36 body went to 36DD-23-34. Once the trio had gotten

cleaned up that next morning, they and Harry spent two hours exploring the newly-conditioned bodies.

While that part of the morning was enjoyable for the three teens, the rest of the morning was not. Harry put them through just over two hours of hard exercises. It would have been a bit longer, but Harry and Hermione would need to help Susan find the right combination of magic which would give her tremendous bosom the support it needed for a strenuous workout. They wouldn't hit on the best combination for some time.

After a light lunch, Harry pushed his three lovers for three more hours of hard exercise. The women were very happy to know that this amount of exercise would not recur. Instead, there would be ninety minutes of spell work in the mornings and an hard hour of exercise (alternating strength and endurance training) on any days they weren't busy elsewhere.

After a quick cool group shower and a light tea, Harry conducted his three consorts to a room redone by Winky and Dobby over the previous few months. It was a back room in the attics, about twenty by twenty. It was lined with California redwood. Although they would not be using it during the summer, it had an adjoining sauna as well as an attached lavatory.

The outside wall was half greenhouse glass. The room itself had a 12x12 platform on the outside wall, and a seven foot wide hot tub. There was a water-proof mat and water-proof pads available as well. Harry eased them into the tub, with the water jets running at full.

Harry massaged each of their calves and feet, starting with Padma and then Tracey. Padma and Tracey also massaged Susan's sore back. From there, the two eased their hands moved to Susan's shoulders and then on to her upper breasts with one hand and down to her now taut tummy with their other. Harry had finished Susan's feet and calves, and moved on to the upperside of her thighs.

Susan shuddered in her first orgasm and groped forward. Harry gathered her into a hug as the orgasm shivered through her. As she came down, Susan simply slid forward and began sliding Harry's cock up-and-down her labia.

Harry carefully stood and climbed out of the water, Tracey helping to keep Susan steady. "How. . . ?" Harry started.

Susan shifted her weight as she kissed Harry deeply, making Harry sit down on to the top of the tub. As Susan again adjusted her weight, her large tits pushed their mouths apart, but the new angle allowed her to slide Harry's cock directly into her.

Tracey and Padma moved the grinding couple slightly, so that Harry's legs were out of the water. 'Lucky wench,' Tracey thought, seeing Susan fully impaled without discomfort and only a hint of blood as she nearly jumped up-and-down on Harry. Harry responded in kind, and Susan became yelling and screaming from joy and pleasure.

Susan's hands clasped her tits -- she was bouncing too much for anyone else to. She kneaded them, always rubbing the nipples between two fingers as she did so. She managed two more orgasms before she collapsed from fatigue and the soreness of her ripped hymen catching up to her. Padma and Tracey eased her back to the edge of the mat.

"May I try, my lord?" Tracey asked, posing over his cock.

"If you're slow and very gentle," Harry answered. Meanwhile, Padma was between Susan's legs, with one of her hands on her own clit.

Tracey gingerly lowered herself. She bit her lower lip in pleasure and moaned. "My lord, that is sooooo good." Once she was filled, she smiled at Harry and leaned over to kiss him deeply.

When she broke the kiss, Harry asked, "Can you reach one of those smaller pads?"

"Sure."

"Place one under my head and shoulders and another just under my head."

Tracey did so.

"Now, let me hug you." With the new angle Harry slowly moved in-and-out. Tracey's knees were spread wide on either side of Harry's hips and she was in Harry's embrace, her own arms around his shoulders. Each pistoning movement made her nipples rub against Harry's lower chest, and there was enough of Harry's cock outside her to stimulate her clit as well.

Padma, having brought herself and Susan to climaxes, merely rolled over to watch. Susan, half asleep, merely listened to their passion with a small smile.

It was gentle, slow, and Harry started whispering endearments, each one of which made Tracey clench her vaginal muscles. After almost four minutes, Tracey orgasmed, and her spasms set off Harry's as well.

The pair merely relaxed, Tracey adjusting herself so she could stretch her legs while still staying with Harry inside her.

After nearly fifteen relaxed minutes, Tracey rolled off Harry and then kissed him. "I love you, Harry," she said.

"And I love you," he replied.

The trio was nearly as glad to have Hermione and Luna back with them as the pair was. They all felt complete. All they had to do now was to love and to train until news came about Voldemort, assuming any came before the start of school in September.

The only bump in their routine in July was the arrival of their O.W.L.s:

Harry Potter:
Astronomy - E
Care - O
Charms - O
Defense - O+
Divination - A
Herbology - E

History - E
Potions - O
Transfiguration - O

Hermione Granger:
Arithmancy - O
Astronomy - O
Care - O
Charms - O
Defense - O
Herbology - O
History - O
Muggle Studies - O
Potions - O
Runes - O
Transfiguration - O

Padma Patil:
Arithmancy - O
Astronomy - O
Charms - O
Defense - O
Herbology - E
History - O
Muggle Studies - E
Potions - O
Runes - O
Transfiguration - O

Tracey Davis:
Astronomy - E
Care - O
Charms - O
Defense - O
Divination - O
Herbology - E
History - E
Potions - O
Runes - O
Transfiguration - E

Susan Bones:
Astronomy - E
Charms - O
Defense - O
Herbology - E
History - E
Muggle Studies - O
Potions - E
Runes - E

"Shouldn't you have gotten all O's?" Hermione scolded Harry.

"Hermione, I hardly studied most of the theory in the alternate future," Harry retorted. "I certainly never touched Astronomy, History, or Divination after my first O.W.L.s. Just be glad I did better than the first time around." Grinned. "In fact, we all did."

Hermione gave a snort of disgust.

"I'll be taking just five subjects," Harry went on. "Care, Charms, Defense, Potions, and Transfiguration. How about the rest of you?"

"Why Care?" Hermione asked.

"Because Hagrid was so disappointed last time," Harry answered, "and because I have to take five."

Hermione rolled her eyes, but said, "Arithmancy, Charms, Defense, Herbology, Potions, Runes, and Transfiguration."

"With your permission, my lord," Padma said, "I should like Arithmancy, Charms, Defense, Herbology, Potions, Runes, Transfiguration."

"Why would you put it that way?" Harry asked.

"In case you need us more knowledgeable in some other area," Padma answered.

"I really think you should all take Defense," Harry answered. "Beyond that, it's up to you."

Susan spoke up next, saying, "Then I should like to take Charms, Defense, History, Transfiguration, and either Herbology or Muggle Studies, since so many of you are interested in Runes. Do you two think the Muggle Studies is worth the time?"

"I've looked over all the Muggle Studies material through the Seventh year," Hermione answered. "I promise, you'll learn more from us."

"Then I'll do Herbology," Susan answered.

"Astronomy, Charms, Defense, Divination, Potions, Runes, and Transfiguration for me then," Tracey said. "I was going to drop Defense, but you're right, I shouldn't."

Chapter XXV

The group had a great deal to plan for. There was Harry's birthday at the end of the month, and the girls wanted to hold the ceremony acknowledging the status of Susan and Tracey as soon as reasonably possible. For that, they would need fourteen female witnesses.

In early July, Padma's bonding to Harry became complete -- she was now aware of his basic emotional state at all times, just as Hermione and Luna were. Susan and Tracey were already up to about six hours awareness after fellatio. They were therefore still performing it on alternate mornings, Sunday through Friday. Harry made love to one of the teens each weekday evening. Saturday was more of a free-form orgy. Sunday evenings, Harry rested, while the girls entertained themselves.

In mid-July, however, Luna showed up for her turn with Padma and Tracey. "What's up?" Harry asked.

"My fellows have agreed to help me fulfill a fantasy, if you will allow it, master," Luna said.

Harry was wary. "Which one?"

Luna merely bowed and then knelt before Harry submissively.

"We are prepared for several," Tracey answered. "One, to hold her head while you are pistoning her throat until she passes out. Two, to partially hang her while you take her, vaginally or anally, perhaps with one of us adding oral stimulation. Three, to gently garrote her instead of hanging her."

"Have you been experimenting?" Harry asked.

Tracey and Padma both nodded. "Tracey has hanged Luna twice while I licked her to orgasm," Padma said. "I have gently garroted her three times, while Tracey licked her. We've been very careful not to cause any damage."

"May I suggest a safer alternative?" Harry asked, having worried this might come up again.

The three looked at him.

"Gillyweed in the hot tub," Harry answered. "I can fully fuck your throat, but you can't pass out. Or is the passing out the part you like?"

"It would be worth trying," Luna said eagerly.

The four were soon nude in the hot tub. Harry had the jets on high, to make certain there was plenty of oxygen in the water. Luna eagerly swallowed the gillyweed and then Harry's cock. As the gill slits formed, Harry sat back while Padma and Tracey adjusted Luna's body.

Soon Harry was fully down Luna's throat. Luna's agile tongue was swishing on the underside of Harry's cock and the back of her throat was wriggling nicely on the upper third. The crown was

fully down Luna's throat, and she was swallowing happily, squeezing the bulb most pleasantly.

Harry then began moving back and forth. Not much, maybe half an inch of movement. Had Luna not been modified by the gillyweed, she would have been at best semi-conscious from a lack of oxygen. She decided that this was a wonderful sensation, almost better than the fantasies and realities which had centered around asphyxiation for so long.

Luna was thrilled by the way Harry's member filled her mouth and throat, glorying in each throb and thankful she was fully aware of its swellings, instead losing her consciousness. When she felt Harry's seed running down her esophagus, she pulled back so that she could taste her love's essence. She let it fully fill her mouth, knowing that she could not choke or cough.

When Harry was fully soft, Luna shifted around, and licked her two other lovers to orgasm, to thank them for their help, and for their previous aid in pandering to her kinks. She knew that she had their love and acceptance.

Her three lovers, in turn, touched and teased and massaged Luna to three orgasms of her own, before the gillyweed's affect ran out.

The four would agree that it was a successful experiment, and all five of the young women would use gillyweed to fully please Harry while he was down their throats over the summer. It would always be a favorite of Luna's, and she hoped she would never again feel the need for direct asphyxiation again, although she knew she wouldn't cease her quest to beat her gag reflex. Hermione, the only one easily able to deep-throat Harry at will, still found it a fun variation.

The following weekend, after the Saturday morning orgy, Harry and Tracey visited her family. Not her immediate family in their home outside of Cardiff, but the family Vale, a remote valley in deepest Wales.

Harry looked around at the apparation point, which was at the mouth of the valley. Harry looked around again, in amazement. Behind them, about sixty meters away, was a paved road, but it didn't look like it got much Muggle vehicle traffic. Not too far in the distance in every direction were high mountains, and if Snowdon was not quite visible, Harry knew it would be from the peak of the tallest mountain. Between them and the mountains were forests which reminded Harry of the forests around Hogwarts. Only the wheel ruts showed the path from the Muggle road into the narrow valley to their north.

"It's about a mile and a half walk," Tracey said. "At least there's where the llu . . . I mean the lodge is."

"Lodge?"

Tracey shrugged. "Lodge, manor, villa, chateau, chalet, dacha. Whatever you want to call it. A few of the foundations and sub-basements may predate the Romans, although the earliest actual structure of the actual building is early eleventh century. A large part of one of the barns dates back to the mid-eighth century though. Come on, as long as we are pledged and holding hands, you may cross the wards."

"Exactly how large is this place, and how many people will be there?" Harry asked.

"Remember, we're not just a family, we're a llwyth, a tribe or clan," Tracey said. "One of the fifteen surviving magical tribes in Wales."

"Plus the two surviving ones in Cornwall and the sixteen in Brittany," Harry said. Harry knew that nine of the seventeen Welsh and Cornish families also were Most Noble Families, according to the British Wizengamot.

"Exactly."

"So most of your llwyth go to the Ysgol?" That was the Welsh school of magic, where all the instruction was in Welsh. It was about half the size of Hogwarts.

"About three-quarters," Tracey acknowledged. "The rest are about evenly split between Hogwarts and the school over in Brittany. Father went to Hogwarts, however, and so did mother."

"Which llwyth is it?" Harry asked. "I'm embarrassed not to have asked. . . . Wait, let me guess. The gwiber or blaidd families?" Viper or wolf.

"Gwiber," Tracey acknowledged. Viper. A Most Noble family, and the Head of the Family was on the Wizengamot.

Harry nodded. "So, any interesting 'critters' around, as Hagrid would say?" He noticed they had just passed through the wards.

"Lots of magical animals. We're at one edge of a Welsh Green preserve, not that the feeding grounds are that close," Tracey said. "Between here and the Ysgol? There're two herds of Aethonans and three of unicorns. There are also Snidgets, Jarveys, Knarls, Imps, Doxies, Gnomes, Fairies, Jabberknolls, Nogtails, Nifflers, Augureys, Mokes, Puffskeins, and Bowtruckles. There are a few forest trolls and Graphorns, too. We also raise Crups." A few could now be heard, barking.

"With all that, I'm not surprised you did so well in Care. Why didn't you continue?"

Tracey shrugged. "I know he's your friend, but Hagrid really hasn't taught us much about taking care of the Creatures we're likely to need to actually take care of," she answered.

At that point, a large pack of dogs, most of them Crups, bounded down the path. There were also a few beagles, a dachshund, three spaniels, six Welsh Terriers, and a huge Irish wolfhound.

The pack circled them, barking, happily for the most part. Tracey bent and extended her fist, and one of the Crups came over and gave it a sniff. It regarded her, and then turned its head to look at Harry.

Harry bent over and extended his hand as Tracey had. The lead Crup gave a high-pitched series of barks and bounded away, and the entire pack, save the wolfhound, followed.

The wolfhound sat and regarded the pair.

"We need to head directly to the lodge," Tracey said.

Harry merely nodded, and the pair moved a bit faster.

The 'lodge' was unlike anything Harry had ever seen before. The front of the building was some sixty yards long, varied between two and four stories, and had at least four conflicting styles (none Muggle, although there were hints of Tudor in the plaster-work interspersed amongst the various woodwork) and was built over five different styles of stone foundations. At the far left was a six storey stone tower. Harry later learned that there were three more extensions in the back -- one wooden residential area, a huge stone kitchen, and the final extension led towards the barns and stables.

About sixty people and a family of elves lived at the lodge at all times, but there were another ninety or so who, like Tracey, were at least frequent visitors.

Tracey's face registered surprise when she saw five people coming out the huge front door to greet them. When they approached, Tracey bowed and said, first in Welsh and then in English, "My affianced, this is my esteemed great-great-grandfather, Adda ap Mercher ap Huw ab Owain ap Tudur ap Caradog, leader of the Gwiber. Father of my clan, my lord Harry Potter, the Heir of Merlin."

The two men bowed to each other. Adda looked at Harry, and said, "According to our family's traditions, in about the year 498, as we now figure the time, Merlin visited this site and gave us his blessing. If you are indeed the true Heir of Merlin, can you do the same?"

"I would be willing to display Merlin's Mark," Harry answered. "I doubt if any other blessing, especially in words, would be worth any more than the sentiment of any wizard who was aligning himself with a family, a llwyth, as distinguished as yours."

Adda turned to Tracey. "You spoke the truth. He is a Parselmouth."

"I was speaking Parseltongue?" Harry asked.

Adda looked at Harry. "You did not know that?"

Harry shook his head. "I can never tell."

The old man, just a few decades younger than Dumbledore, pondered that. "I may be able to show you how to control the gift. But first, if you would?"

Harry nodded and took a few steps back. He held out his right hand, and Merlin's staff appeared in it. The emerald glowed for a moment, and then a stream of red flew into the sky, where it formed the Red Dragon, symbol first of Merlin, and then of Wales itself. It writhed in the sky, and all who saw it, as it floated there for the next two days, would feel as if they had been hit with a mild cheering charm.

Adda bowed deeply. "Lord Potter, welcome to our lands. You and yours may always find a home with us. Tonight, you and I shall talk with the other llwyth heads, including those from Brittany. We shall see where we can make common cause with you, besides destroying the Dark one."

"I am honored," Harry said.

It turned out to be an even bigger deal than Harry had guessed. The heads of all thirty-three British Celtic clans were there. In addition, the heads from three of the nine magical Scots Gaelic clans were there, and there were representatives from the other six. The heads of six of the eighteen Irish clans were there, and nine others had sent representatives. The head of the Manx clan was there. Harry had not even known that eight Gaulish clans still existed, five tucked away in the Alps, two in the Pyrenees, and one in the high hills of central France. They had each sent a representative.

All these clans had extensions in North America, and some even had sub-clans living in Australia and New Zealand. Some of those areas had also sent representatives. All together, there were two hundred or so people crowded together in the great hall of the lodge.

"There has not been a meeting like this one since the time of Merlin himself," Adda said at the start of the feast. "We face many challenges. The Darkness of Voldemort." Harry was glad to see that less than half the crowd winced at the sound of the name. "The spread of Muggle technology and their sheer numbers. The poisoning of the world by that same Muggle technology. The arrogance of British Ministry, and to a lesser extent that of a few others as well. The ever-shrinking wilderness, where magical creatures and some very marvelously mundane ones can roam free. Together, we are the heirs of a great magical tradition. The traditions that built the great circles, and then domesticated our Celtic ancestors as they entered the lands that today form western Germany, Switzerland, France, northern Spain, Belgium, Britain, Ireland, and the other Isles."

He looked around. "Together, if we can indeed work together, we can influence the International, and the British, French, Swiss, Spanish, Benelux, North American, Australian, and New Zealand governments, magical and perhaps even Muggle. Over the next day and half, let us seek out our common ground."

He hoisted a glass of mead. "Praise to Merlin!"

"Merlin be praised!" came the refrain in eight different languages and several dialects.

As Harry and Tracey snuggled down in their large bed, if in a small bedroom, she said, "I honestly didn't know this was planned, my lord."

"I understand," Harry told her. "Do you think there's any real chance of them deciding anything of importance?"

"These Celtic families are pretty conservative," Tracey pointed out. "They've maintained their languages and many of the customs for over a thousand years, close to two thousand for some of them, with magical and Muggle pressures on them. They aren't ever going to be 'progressive' or 'liberal'. Still, they might take an interest, and be willing to work for everyone's betterment, so they can survive."

Harry shrugged. "Let's wait and see."

The group did come to a quick agreement to pressure their respective Ministries to take an even

more pro-active stance against Voldemort. They also condemned blood-purity. While each member was a strong defender of their minority cultures and what was left of the related Muggle cultures as well, they truly didn't care if a magic user was the first member of their family to practice it or a scion of one of the ancient families. It was the culture that mattered.

Beyond that, they really couldn't come to any agreements in such a short time, but all agreed that it had been a worthwhile meeting.

The pair would leave on the Monday morning after breakfast. Most of the representatives had left after the banquet the night before. Just before breakfast, Tracey was joyfully swallowing Harry's semen. As she cuddled close to Harry afterwards, Tracey let out a sign of contentment and smiled.

"Does that mean you're really happy?" Harry asked.

"You can't feel that I am?" Tracey asked.

"I can feel that you're happy now," Harry answered. "I don't know if that means you're really happy with your life."

"Ah," Tracey said thoughtfully. After a moment, she said. "I knew I would feel great affection for you, Harry. However, I truly do love you. Maybe part of that is the bonding we've done. I don't know, and I don't care. By nature, I'm a rather solitary person. Daphne and I became close friends more for mutual protection than from anything else. I had crushes on various people, mostly girls, but you and your other partners have treated me as an equal, and with more love and affection than I ever imagined possible."

"You didn't get along with your family?"

"As people I had to associate with because we are a family, yes," Tracey answered. "There were times when I thought I might just come here to the vale and live happily in the woods, playing with experimental potions and charms."

"May I ask you a personal question?"

Tracey snorted. "If you can't, my lord and love, who can?"

"Do I really satisfy you, emotionally as well as sexually?"

Tracey looked at Harry and realized that he had his own insecurities. The Chosen One did not. The Heir of Merlin did not. Harry, abused as a boy, did.

"Emotionally, yes, in that I am very happy with the group, and you are the key member, both for me and every other girl, even Padma. Sexually, to tell the truth, I will be happy when I am fully bonded to you. Then I will be down to one or two one-on-one sessions with you a week, and that, combined with the Sapphic sex and the weekly orgy, will be right for me most of the time."

Tracey bent over and kissed the glans of Harry's cock. "I love your taste, but I love this pushing inside me even more. I also think I am the least sexual of us. Don't get me wrong, I do love having sex, but I don't seem to crave it as much as the others."

"Really?"

"Really," Tracey answered. "Under slightly different circumstances, Luna could easily turn into a masochistic sex addict. I think she was bullied by the Coven so long that she actually came to think she deserved the abuse."

Tracey looked ashamed. "Padma and I talked last week, and we were very wrong to pander to Luna's asphyxiation and spanking fetishes."

"You've both spanked Luna recently?"

"We didn't know it, but we both paddled her arse raw, because she was asking for more and we both got carried away," Tracey admitted. "Fortunately, Luna had a bottle. . . ."

"Of essence of murtlap," Harry finished. "Luna did the same thing last New Year's. Sometimes, she does seem to crave the pain. We'll have to tell Hermione, and she and I will have to talk with Luna about how to keep those desires safe."

Tracey nodded. "I think Luna also really wants you to sodomize her."

"I'm surprised that none of you have asked," Harry admitted. "Or is that just a male fantasy?"

"Not entirely," Tracey answered. "You like it, don't you?"

"As an occasional variation, yes," Harry admitted.

"Any of us will try anything, Harry," Tracey pointed out.

"I know, that's the problem," Harry answered. Tracey looked puzzled, so he explained, "I only have limited time with each of you. We should be doing things that please you."

"I swear, you're nearly as bad as Luna," Tracey said. "And of course, we generally don't want to ask you for anything, because you have to satisfy five of us. Well, fuck that. All of us deserve what we want. She bent over, and despite having a very tired jaw, went to work on Harry's cock."

Harry was puzzled, but more than willing to go along. When he was fully hard, Tracey climbed on to him. She bit her lip in pleasure as he bottomed out inside her. Unlike Hermione and at times Luna, the others could not easily take Harry past their cervix.

Tracey leaned forward, and began using her vaginal muscles to pulse on Harry. Hermione had found a Muggle book of exercises which helped all of them. She and Padma were especially good at them, although Luna and Tracey were not far behind.

"Padma is the most content of us," Tracey said, in part to distract herself and Harry from the pleasure they were feeling. "She truly desired this type of arrangement, which none of the rest of us really foresaw in our futures. I probably come next."

Harry gave her a little teasing trust, which made Tracey smile.

"Susan would be the most happy with you alone, as she is the least Sapphically-inclined. Still, she also enjoys of camaraderie of our little harem the most, as she is the one who is the most out-going and friendly. She would suffer in a little cabin in the woods. She needs people around her."

"Hermione loves being in command, and if she can't command you, she can organize us. She adores making out the love-making sched. . . ." Tracey couldn't help herself, but shuddered in orgasm.

When she calmed down, Tracey started that internal pulse again. "I do worry about Luna a bit, but we can all talk these things out. But now. . . ."

Tracey climbed off of Harry and settled on her elbows and knees. Harry moved behind her. As he started to enter her, Tracey said, "Not there, my lord. Please, fuck my arse."

Harry hesitated.

"I have had you in my mouth and cunny," Tracey said. "Now take my arse."

"Okay, let me do this my way," Harry said, easing back into Tracey's vagina.

"Harry, I came twice which sucking your cock and then a third time just now," Tracey retorted as best she could. "Please, just take your pleasure. I love you, and I WANT to serve you."

Harry said nothing, but wandlessly cast a lubrication spell, and then followed it up with a finger up Tracey's arse. She moaned in pleasure.

Harry said, "Relax your sphincter as much as you can."

Tracey tried to comply, but she orgasmed first.

As she came down from that high, she also finally relaxed. Harry pulled out of one orifice and gently pushed into the other. Once he was about half in, he adjusted his position to that he had a clear shot into Tracey's bowels, and then fucked her as Tracey had never known Harry to fuck before.

It was a slowly relentless pistoning, as Harry withdrew nearly out of Tracey only to plunge fully into her. Tracey later realized that Harry's length precluded such movement in any of the vaginas -- it would bruise their cervixes, and Harry's cock. When he was inside Hermione or Luna's womb, that then precluded such long strokes.

When Harry came, it was with a louder grunt of pleasure than usual, and Harry's final thrusts actually pushed Tracey fully into the mattress. Having so recently swallowed his essence, the connection between them also released an orgasm in Tracey.

Tracey recovered first, and crawled out from under Harry. She cleaned herself up, and then Harry.

"Thank you," she said.

"Why?"

"For letting me see a little of the real Harry," Tracey answered. "All five of us love you, Harry. You

don't have to be the selfless hero in the bedroom, at least not all the time. She kissed Harry deeply, and then cuddled in his strong arms. "I do love you with all my heart, Harry, even if I also love the others."

"And I love all of you," Harry had to say.

"I know," Tracey answered. "And I'm glad you can love us all."

Chapter XXVI

Harry's consorts, friends, and the Coven were all surprised to learn about what had happened in the Welsh valley. After the impromptu meeting and dinner, Harry took Hermione and Susan to his bedroom.

"Anything I should know about?" he asked.

"Actually, yes," Hermione answered, blushing slightly. "One of Padma's half-sisters sent some magical dildos. They magically attach themselves over another woman's clitoris and labia. I doubt if they feel like the real thing, but they are supposed to transmit some pleasure."

"You haven't tried them yet?" Harry asked, surprised.

"Not without your approval," Hermione replied, not quite convinced herself. Still, the other three teens had been certain they should wait.

"Not a problem," Harry said. "Have fun. What about Luna?"

"What about her?" Hermione asked.

"I'm still a bit worried about her," Harry answered. "Learning she had Tracey and Padma strangle her in various ways scared me, and she's been more interested in spanking than usual."

"Well, I did spank her once while you were gone. . . ." Hermione admitted.

"So did I," Susan agreed, to Hermione's surprise.

"I bet Padma did as well," Harry nearly growled. He scowled. "One of us needs to talk with her."

"Padma might be best," Hermione suggested.

"Alright," Harry said. He looked at Susan. "We've fallen a bit behind on the ritual. Would you care to stay tonight?"

Susan looked at Hermione hopefully.

Hermione smiled. "I'll rearrange the schedules, if that's acceptable, my lord."

Harry nodded, and leaned forward to kiss her gently. Hermione caressed his cheek, kissed Susan on the cheek, and left the pair together.

"I need a shower," Harry said. "Care to join me?"

"Very much so!"

The pair walked into the bathroom hand-in-hand. "Have you been keep up with your workouts?" Harry inquired.

"Padma has been teaching me Tai Chi," Susan answered. "And the water down in the pond is warm enough that I can swim there, even if it's a bit dirty. The mill stream is still a bit too cold."

Harry looked a tad puzzled, so Susan explained. "It's these, remember? Susan said, hefting her huge jugs. "We're trying to find a stabilization charm that works so I can run, but we haven't found the right one yet. The ones we've tried work well-enough for me to use most of the exercise equipment, but not running or aerobics. The best alternative is the backstroke."

"That makes sense," Harry agreed. He stopped and had Susan stand still and then started stripping off his clothes.

Susan went on. "I have to say, between that potion and the weight training, not to mention a potion Hermione found, my back feels better than it has since I turned thirteen and these started growing too big."

"What potion is that?" Harry asked, pausing taking off his last sock.

"One first designed for vain mothers, after they've stopped nursing," Susan admitted. "It tightens the boobs up, so-to-speak. No droop, in other words."

"You know, there is a Muggle operation to reduce breast size," Harry told her. "If they bother you that much, we can have it done over the next Yule break."

"You don't like them?" Susan asked, tears coming to her eyes.

"I love you," Harry answered, hugging her and kissing the tears away. "All five of you are beautiful, especially on the inside. Don't think you're my consort just because you have breasts that are both pretty and large."

"Huge," Susan corrected.

"Huge," Harry agreed. "Besides, we can always take them down just one size. I want you comfortable."

Susan pondered that, and said, "I don't think so, unless they grow a lot bigger than they were before I took the tone-up potion. I will keep it in mind, though. Now, unless you have something else planned, may I fulfill a fantasy of yours you didn't know you have?"

"That sounds intriguing," Harry answered.

"Now that you're finished taking off your clothes, lay face up on that mat."

"I wondered why that was here," Harry commented.

Susan stripped and then took her wand and touched her breasts, muttering a spell. Over the next minute, they swelled past their old size.

"I don't understand," Harry confessed.

"It's an emergency lactation spell," Susan answered. "It only fills the titties once, and can't be repeated for a few days. It was developed for, well, emergencies."

"You mean. . . ."

"I have drunk from you, my lord." Susan hefted her right teat. "Please, drink from me as we couple."

Harry smiled and laid back. Susan gently lowered herself on her Harry, and then bent forward, the milk beading on her nipples. She pinched her left nipple, and squirted milk onto Harry's face.

They laughed, and happily made love, and then finally took a shower together.

All of Harry's sworn followers of course wanted to celebrate their lord's birthday. Dumbledore therefore had granted them permission to use the Hogwarts grounds and great hall. Harry made a moderate donation to the school's general fund for the use, plus the use of the house elves. He also paid for the food, pumpkin juice, and butterbeer. The one strict rule imposed had been 'no presents'.

All of the sworn had shown up, of course, as had the current members of the Coven at Hogwarts. At Ginny's suggestion, they had also hired Colin to come and take photographs.

Harry should have suspected what would happen. Colin had been unable to swear himself to Harry's service, as he was too young. He had turned 15 on July 1, and the first thing he did was beg Harry to 'swear me in, please'.

Considering that Harry had turned no one down yet, he knew he couldn't turn Colin down. Colin was still an annoying fan-boy. He was not terribly good in Defense. What he was was enthusiastic and loyal.

Before the party started, Harry gathered his forces together. He now had exactly ninety sworn followers, if he included his consorts. Harry thanks them for their support, repeated that he expected this to break apart after Voldemort's defeat, and then had Hermione and Padma distribute envelopes all around.

"Remember," Harry told them, "Voldemort's people almost certainly know who each of you are. I am surprised that there have been no attacks on any of you. In addition to the escape portkeys you already have, your envelopes have instructions on adding wards to your homes, in case your family doesn't already have them. For those of you underage, contact Remus and Sirius, and they will arrange to put them up."

"Now that we've had a month off, we need to get back to work. Several locations and numerous times are noted. I expect everyone to show up for 'shield and stun' drills at least three times in August. For those of you who have left Hogwarts, there's a set of assignments. You are our eyes and ears in the community. You will be reporting to our intelligence officer, Tracey."

"Any questions?"

There were none.

"Then let's party!"

The group enjoyed the party, to say the least. Outside there was a picnic and dancing. In the great hall, with some help from Sirius, Hermione had set up a video projector. She screened some Muggle classics, which fascinated the magicals who had never seen 'Dracula', 'Frankenstein' and 'Bride of Frankenstein' (followed of course by 'Young Frankenstein'), 'The Mummy', and 'The Wolf Man'. Sirius had especially found the last hilarious.

It was a few evenings later when Padma had her turn sleeping with Harry. Padma, Hermione, and Luna usually spent their evenings with Harry engaging in long, slow bouts of vaginal sex. Harry would 'warm them up' with his tongue, and they would finish him off with their mouths. The exception since Harry's return from Wales had been the one night Luna had requested to be sodomized.

This night had run true to form. Afterwards, Harry laid back, physically and emotionally content. Padma still lay curled up next to Harry's legs, one arm under the small of Harry's back, her other hand still cupping his balls, her head on Harry's abdomen.

Padma didn't know why she loved watching Harry's huge cock shrink down after sex, but she found it enjoyable to know that she could help cause such extreme physiological changes, and rather humorous as well.

When Harry's cock had shrunk to an inch (plus the crown), Padma said, "My lord, may we speak seriously, or are you too tired?"

The title and tone told Harry that this was indeed something serious. "What's wrong?"

"Hermione and I have been researching what Luna's problem may be. Hermione was researching what we might call the Muggle aspects -- psychological that is. I've been looking to see if there might be any magical explanations."

"And there is one?"

"Very possibly," Padma answered. "Luna of course has very strong empathic magic. It's possible that she is also a Seer of some sort, and is fighting the deeper Gift."

"And that might relate to her bouts of masochism how?"

"We think she saw a vision of her mother dying, but didn't recognize it as such. Instead, she thought she wished her mother died in exactly the way she foresaw, and internalized it as having wished her mother dead, maybe even killing her magically. Not only could that guilt produce some of the masochism, but it would also explain her fighting the Gift. Her manner, especially before she became involved with you, was developed so that she could separate herself from the everyday

world, including the Gift. Now that she's involved with us, she can't do that. The pain drives the Gift away when it's too strong."

"And the solution, if any?"

"We're looking into it," Padma answered.

"Does she fully know she has the Gift?"

"We think so, but she's frightened of it," Padma pointed out. "She may never have fully admitted it to herself."

"A Prophecy may be iron-clad, but it usually just means the most likely outcome," Harry reminded her. He had spent some time studying the idea of prophecy. "A vision is even more just the most likely outcome at that moment, unless it's far-sight."

"Far-sight? Seeing something that's actually happening?" Padma asked.

"Exactly. And I understand having the full Sight, even if there's no Propheying, is disturbing."

"What are you saying?" Padma asked.

"If Luna's masochism doesn't become too common or too deep, and if we can always heal her, which would be worse for her? She seems to have lost interest in asphyxiating herself, at least for the moment."

"True," Padma agreed. "Still, you convince Hermione that knowing what a problem is, and maybe learning how to fix it, does not mean we should fix it."

Harry made a face and a sound of complaint. That changed as Padma leaned down and again took her lover into her mouth. She loved having Harry there nearly as much as Hermione, and didn't really care if it was hard or soft.

The next afternoon, Harry and his women had a meeting on another unpleasant topic. This one was at Hogwarts with the Headmaster, Moody, Sirius, Tonks, and Remus.

"I just don't understand it," Harry growled when the 'adults' were finished. "How can any git as fundamentally egotistical as Voldemort stay hidden?"

"Didn't he during your original Fifth year?" Remus asked.

"I suppose so," Harry admitted. "Still, he was trying to get at the Prophecy."

"So perhaps Severus had his uses?" Dumbledore asked archly.

"Perhaps," Harry acknowledged. "That was about the only thing he ever did that I heard of that might have useful to our side without being mostly useful for him or cutting both ways."

"Is there any indirect evidence of what he's been up to?" Hermione asked.

"A little," Moody allowed. "The German and central European Ministries keep a better eye on the old pro-Grindelwald families than we did. There have been a few small transfers of funds, but no more than a few thousand Galleons in total."

"One of the nastier Polish werewolf packs was contacted by Pettigrew at the last new moon," Remus said. "They threatened to keep him around for a game of 'Animagus keep-away' at the next full moon if he came back."

"A Romanian vampire coven reported finding a huge snake skin shed in one of their caves, and many of the bats gone, presumably eaten," Moody went on. "These reports suggest Voldemort is moving into the Urals or central Asia."

"I have alerted the guards at the giants' preserves," Dumbledore said before Harry could ask.

"What else could be there for him?" Harry asked.

"There are a fair number of old, secret communities tucked away in the Caucasus Mountains, in the Urals, in the Himalayas, in the Hindu-Kush, in the deserts of central and northern Asia," Dumbledore mused.

"Is there anyone I should be talking to?" Harry asked, out of his depth.

"There are no real magical authorities in these places, other than the local ones," Dumbledore answered. "All should be well-able to protect themselves, and I doubt if any would long give Voldemort shelter, if any would give him aid at all. More likely, he knows of some abandoned site where he can take refuge."

"I've never been to central Asia. . . ."

"No!" nearly everyone chorused.

"We need to end this soon," Harry retorted. "Is it possible to rejoin a soul fragment from a Horcrux back to the soul, and then split it again?"

"Of course," Dumbledore answered. "Is that what you think Voldemort will do?"

"He must at least suspect we might know what the final Horcrux is," Harry answered. "We couldn't find the damn thing when we knew what it was, and were fairly certain it was in Britain or at least not too much further away. If it can be anything, anywhere on Earth. . . ."

Dumbledore nodded. "I shall. . . ."

At that moment, Harry screamed and clutched his scar.

It had only been Voldemort, along with Wormtail and two other servants to care for Nagini, who had made the trek to a deserted area of Kazakstan. From 3165 years before until 1290 years before,

a small branch of the Silk Road had run within a few dozen miles of this small valley, where, during that period and a few decades beyond, a small magical community had flourished.

Abandoned, the buildings had collapsed more than a thousand years ago. The old trail had partially grown over, and had otherwise been destroyed by blowing winds. The land was now nearly desert.

Deep in the caves, however, Salazar Slytherin had found refuge in his exile, as well as water and some old knowledge. Slytherin had returned to Europe to die, and left the location for any future heir who might reclaim his knowledge.

It had taken Voldemort three days to set up the ceremony, as he had made discoveries at the site that Slytherin had not. Then he triggered its start by murdering the two servants. To complete the ceremony, he killed Wormtail and Nagini, and broke the Horcrux.

It had been at that point that Harry had screamed.

Harry woke up the next day. All five of those pledged to him were nearby, but only Hermione was actually sleeping with him in the Hogwarts Infirmary. She stirred and hugged Harry. Harry hugged her back quickly, then slipped out to use the toilet.

"I see you think you're fit, Mister Potter," Madam Pomfrey said archly when he came out.

"Fit enough for that," Harry retorted.

"Sit down and let me examine you," she commanded.

"Alright," Harry agreed. "Padma, Luna, get the Headmaster here. Tell him I need to see him, Moody, Remus, and if he's available, Sirius, as soon as Madam Pomfrey allows."

"A wise caveat, Mister Potter," Madam Pomfrey observed.

"Hermione, take Tracey and Susan with you to Gringotts. The Goblins know you are authorized to speak for me. Tell them I would be honored to meet with any senior goblin as soon as possible, if they would like to win a treasure equal to a pharaoh's tomb. Make sure you emphasize 'as soon as possible'."

"That should fetch them," Hermione agreed. In less than three minutes, the girls were gone.

"Now may I examine you?" Madam Pomfrey snapped.

"I figured you'd want to do it without an audience," Harry teased.

"Jackanapes," the healer grumbled, good-naturedly.

Harry was not surprised that Hermione was back with three senior goblins before Dumbledore could get Moody, Remus, and Sirius together. Dumbledore was not happy with the arrangement, but

didn't argue.

"Some quick background," Harry said. "Voldemort was down to one Horcrux. An emerald used by Rowena Ravenclaw."

The three goblins nodded, unsurprised Harry had known what the last Horcrux was.

"He had the emerald stuffed down a viper, which had been mutating because of this for over twenty years. Yesterday afternoon, our time, Voldemort killed two people I didn't know, Peter Pettigrew, and the snake." He pointed at his scar. "This links me to Voldemort. We've both tried to keep the link closed, but he lost it during the ceremony, and the feedback got to me."

"Now, the ceremony Voldemort performed did far more than kill three people and the snake. First, it broke the Horcrux and rejoined the soul fragment to Voldemort."

Everyone winced.

"Second, you have to remember that Voldemort's body was made up of several different things, magically combined. The pseudo-body he was in before his current one was made had been largely made with the snake's venom. The actual body was made from that pseudo-body, a bone from his father, a bit of my blood, and Pettigrew's hand. I don't think he captured any of Pettigrew's soul, but the ceremony did capture some of the life-force from both Pettigrew and the snake. He then re-split his soul into three parts. Most in his body, and then two weaker Horcruxes. I'd say each held roughly half the amount of his soul as the emerald Horcrux. It shouldn't have worked, but he somehow made it work, using the life-force from Pettigrew and the snake, since they had so much in common with his body."

"As interesting as this is, Lord Potter," Ringchain, one of the goblins, spoke up, "what has it have to do with us?"

Chapter XXVII

"Voldemort did capture some of the life-force from both Pettigrew and the snake. He then re-split his soul into three parts. Most in his body, and then two weaker Horcruxes. I'd say each held roughly half the amount of his soul as the emerald Horcrux. It shouldn't have worked, but he somehow made it work, using the life-force from Pettigrew and the snake, since they had so much in common with his body."

"As interesting as this is, Lord Potter," Ringchain, one of the goblins, spoke up, "what has it have to do with us?" Harry knew he was second in command at the London Gringotts. He didn't know the other two goblins.

Harry nodded. "First, why do I need you? Voldemort plans on staying there for a week or so, to rest and to gather up as much treasure as he can. I doubt if we could organize a wizarding strike in central Asia in that amount of time. On top of that, I'm sure it couldn't be done without causing lots of problems afterwards. As you are probably even more aware than I am, there is a whole tangle of disputed national authorities there these days, and a web of local ones. The goblins are international. If you accept my proposal, we can move on time. I would say in less than three days, if possible."

"As to why should you be interested in helping us," Harry went on, "in addition to the fact that Voldemort threatens all of us? I saw in his mind rooms full of old-fashioned polished gems. He believes there is more than enough to fuel his plans for several thousand years."

That got the goblins' full attention, although they tried to pretend otherwise.

"So," Harry continued, "here's the deal. Voldemort is alone but extremely dangerous. We invade the site together. It's your job to locate him, then it's my job to capture him or to destroy his current body, or at least drive him off, hopefully without his new Horcruxes. Here are their descriptions." Harry held up a sheet of parchment where he had sketched two objects. "Briefly, one is an uncut diamond a bit larger than the size of my fist. It wasn't the largest one --" now the goblins dropped their pose of semi-interest -- "but it had the most perfect structure. The other is a large silver bell inscribed with symbols." The goblins nodded.

"Obviously, we get anything associated with Voldemort. I get five percent of the jewels by weight and five percent of any other disposable treasure. You get the rest. Any artifacts and knowledge are your possessions, but you will allow magical scholars access to them after ten years, except for myself, Remus Lupin, Hermione Granger-Potter, Padma Patil-Potter, Luna Lovegood-Potter, and one person designated by the Headmaster. We may have full access at any time."

"Also, this discovery may lead you to other sites. The same terms apply, except I get one percent of the treasures." Harry smiled. "And yes, I trust you to be fair in the selections. As for the jewels, keep in mind I will have them cut to adorn my beautiful spouses."

"Give us a moment to confer," Ringchain said, and the three goblins went into a huddle.

"Are we to accompany you, my lord?" Hermione asked through gritted teeth. She knew she had to play her part with outsiders present, but did not like it one bit.

"Yes and no," Harry answered. "You won't be in on the assault. It would be distracting while I am dealing with Riddle. You should be there for the rest of it, during and especially after." Harry turned to Dumbledore. "You can arrange for some members of the Order to come with us, I hope?"

Dumbledore nodded, while Remus growled, "You can't keep us away."

The full moon wasn't until the Twenty-eighth, so Harry merely nodded.

The goblins stopped talking, and Ringchain approached. "We have the authority to make the deal. We have one alteration."

"And that is?" Harry asked.

"That you agree to take the standard finder's fee of ten percent of the jewels by weight from the site, not five."

Everyone seemed surprised at that except for Harry and Luna, the goblins noted. Harry looked as if the goblins were acting as he had hoped. Harry bowed and said in heavily-accented gobbledegook, "It is an honor to deal with the People. I accept your condition."

The three goblins bowed in return. One of the other goblins spoke up. "I am known to you by my office. I am Goldchain, secretary of the High Council of the Clans." Dumbledore looked surprised, for the secretary was actually the number three official in goblin society. The goblin bowed. "It is an honor to deal with a wizard as wise, as powerful, and as unbiased as you."

Harry bowed again, as the three goblins bowed as well.

The deal was struck.

After the goblins left, before anyone could ask anything else, Sirius asked, "Why did the goblins ask that you take more than you asked for?"

"I asked for less than their standard fee to outsiders, to show that I looked upon them as friends," Harry said. "On a deal like this, a goblin would expect five percent, although first pick of the jewels. I asked for five percent and the Horcruxes. They asked that I take ten percent of jewels as a gesture that they understood my offer. That I get five percent of any other treasures is a sign that they accept me as an ally. The one percent for related sites is also the standard goblin reward. For outsiders, it's three."

"We'd best move quickly to get organized," Dumbledore said.

"Wish I could come," Moody grumbled.

"You are, if you want to," Harry said. "I need you."

Moody grimaced. "Not much good for combat any more, Potter."

Harry gestured with his hand. "How about as my watch guard, protecting the five most beautiful

women alive?"

Moody drew himself to attention. "I would be honored, Lord Potter."

The next morning, a different goblin showed up to brief Harry and Dumbledore. He did not introduce himself. "We have scouted the area, and will be moving in tomorrow morning at Four of your clock. That will be late morning there, and Voldemort is not a creature of the daylight."

Harry and Dumbledore nodded.

"We shall, of course, put up anti-apparation wards."

"What about anti-portkey wards?" Harry asked. He raised his hand to forestall objections. "Yes, I know those have to be established with runes carved and placed on the spot. However, it will likely take several days if not weeks to clean the place out. With anti-portkey wards added, it should prevent many counter-measures."

The goblin thought about that, and bowed. "You are correct, Lord Potter. I shall pass on your recommendation. In any event, Voldemort has not established such wards, although there are proximity wards in the area of the site he is working on. We do have tracers set up, in case he makes any moves outside that area."

"What's the basic plan?" Harry asked.

"Basic?" Dumbledore asked.

"Plans rarely last long in actual battle," the goblin reminded Dumbledore, with an approving look directed at Harry. "We shall have three hundred goblins ready to attack, along with two dozen human guards. You two and your forces will be directed to Voldemort, while a fifth of our forces back you up. The others will be securing the rest of the site and blocking any physical escape routes. The second wave will bring in a team of goblin and human curse breakers and a few goblin scholars, once we have a secure perimeter. Your consorts will be there as well."

"Sounds like a sound enough plan," Harry said.

The goblin shrugged. "We shall see."

The goblins and others 'achieved site penetration', as one of the more pompous wizards had put it, apparently without setting off any alarms. That lasted for about twenty seconds, which was actually time enough to get under some cover.

When nothing happened for more thirty seconds, a newly-recruited member of the Order made the error of sticking his head up to look around. Harry wasn't certain what the silent hex was that hit the tyro, but it moved faster than the eye and roasted the man's head in under two seconds.

That also allowed everyone else to aim where the hex had come from, the cave entrance already

pinpointed as Voldemort's main area of interest. Obviously, he had not yet gone to sleep, was up early, or else the alarms were silent and keyed to Voldemort himself.

With the cover fire provided, plus some powerful shields put up by Harry and Dumbledore, the assault group of goblins and wizards cautiously made their way to the cave. They would later be told that Voldemort made three attempts to apparate out. Finally, less than five minutes after the alarm had been tripped, the word came that a portkey had been used.

Despite that, no one broke ranks. When the cave mouth was secured, a group of guards and curse breakers were left to slowly make their way in. The group divided into five other groups, and the second wave portkeyed into provide support.

Harry made his way over to the support crew, as Moody and his five betrothed would be there. He took the chance to look around a bit. They were at the north end of a desolate valley, which he knew from the intelligence reports was six miles long and two across at the widest point. Here, it was less than a third that distance, and the mountains were at least three to four times higher above the valley floor than the mountains around Hogwarts were (he knew they were at a much higher elevation to begin with as well).

The ancient inhabitants had burrowed into the mountains, but had also built numerous small stone houses and buildings over the area within two miles of the northern mountain. All these buildings were now roofless, and most walls had at least partially collapsed.

Each of the caves had also had a stone entryway built in front of it, supported by rows of plain columns but beginning with a tall statue in front of each row. Most were males, but not all, and all were nudes. Many of the pillars and statues had collapsed as well.

That had been true of the cave Voldemort had been interested in. The broken columns and the remains of the stone slabs which had formed the roof had been moved off to the side.

In less than an hour, one large house had been checked and proclaimed 'clean' of any magic. Magical tents were set up inside to provide shelter and a headquarters. (They were set up inside the walls, as the walls gave some added protection against both wind and attack.)

The team which had been exploring Voldemort's cave reported in the next morning. This had been the cave system where jewels had been stored, and where the ceremony had been held.

It appeared at first as if Voldemort had gotten away with about 10% of the precious jewels, amounting to about a third of the rubies which seemed to have been there. Voldemort also cleared about a quarter of the clear quartz which had been stored together. In fact, it looked as if there was a good chance that instead of taking a large diamond as he had thought, Voldemort had seized a large rock crystal.

There were diamonds -- thousands of them -- but the dust in their storage areas were untouched. Instead, Voldemort had taken about a thousand pounds of polished quartz and about a twentieth of that amount in rubies. The diamonds and remaining rubies would give everyone who was getting a share (like Harry) a considerable fortune. On the down side, there was no immediate sign of either of the Horcruxes, but there were at least three other areas which needed to be searched.

Harry had apologized to the goblins for not recognizing that most of what he had been seeing had

been quartz.

"That many diamonds would have depressed the price in any event," had been the answer. "Plus we love decorating with rock crystal."

"Are there any magical uses for quartz?" Harry asked Dumbledore when these facts had been verified.

"There are, in many rituals," Dumbledore replied. "However, I know of none where it is not better to have other types of crystal, especially diamonds, than plain clear rock crystal."

"The diamonds and rubies aren't cut, just polished," Padma mused. "Lots of the quartz has a more obvious resemblance to a roughly cut gemstone. Voldemort might have simply made a mistake."

"Possible, perhaps even likely, but we can't count on that," Dumbledore reminded her.

"Clear quartz does transfer electricity very well," Hermione pointed out. "Could it transmit magic?"

"That's right, natural crystals were used to both send and receive radio signals," Harry said, remembering a long-distant science class, where there had been a guest demonstrator. "It also conducts light better than glass."

"Either Voldemort made an error and took the wrong stones, or else he took them for some purpose we can't guess at," Dumbledore said finally. "We will have to investigate the latter premise when we return to Hogwarts."

Harry and his betrothed had their own suite in one of the tents. They stayed until the late afternoon of August 28. Everyone was pleased when the ancient bell Voldemort had used for a Horcrux was found. Harry managed to break the Horcrux without doing more than minor damage to it.

Beyond that, Harry, was rather bored. All the others knew Runes and Symbols (Susan decided to drop Herbology for Runes, just because this site was so fascinating). He rather wished that he had had some sort of counseling, from McGonagall or some staff member (other than Snape or Lockhart of course -- he could imagine what their advice would have been) at the end of his Second year. He would have been much better off with Runes as well.

He had picked up Gobbledegook over the years of the previous time stream, and therefore spent a fair amount of his free time with any off-duty goblins. Harry appreciated their straight-forward approach to most situations. Few of the goblins had had much contact with a wizard, and found that in Harry, at least, they had a wizard totally unlike their prejudices would have predicted.

Of course, the goblins did learn not to play poker with a wizard who knew Occlumency, as he did not have any 'tells' or 'give-aways'. It was during one of the earliest poker parties that one of the youngest goblins on the trip asked Harry the question most of the goblins had wanted to.

"Why do you seem to trust us, Lord Harry?" While Harry's proper title was 'Lord Potter', he had

asked everyone to call him Harry. The goblins had compromised by calling him 'Lord Harry'.

"I don't know why I didn't have any sort of reaction against you at first," Harry answered. "I had certainly never seen anyone like a goblin before, and the lobby of Gringotts is pretty impressive." They all smiled, lips tight, which meant they were amused.

Harry returned the smile. "Maybe it was in part, in the beginning, because the cart ride was so much fun."

The goblins chortled, and one said, "There are few humans who would agree with that."

"True, but there are some of us," Harry retorted. "Then, over the next four years, I learned what passes for history at Hogwarts. Half of what old Binns teaches is goblin rebellions. But I noticed that while he, and the texts, kept on trying to put all the blame on the goblins, never once did I see you as being totally in the wrong."

"Totally?"

Harry nodded. "Sometimes, it seemed like you over-reacted, or were being purposefully obstructive, but then I wondered, since they were trying to put all the blame on you, if some of that might not be exaggerated as well."

"Some?"

Harry looked the questioning goblin straight in the eye. "Don't you think your sources might have their biases as well?"

The goblin squirmed. "Maybe."

Harry nodded. "So I knew that these rebellions were not only not all your fault, but probably not even mostly your fault. And that the mistrust humans have for you might be misplaced as well." He looked at them all in turn. "I decided to think for my self. I decided to trust you with more than just my money. So far, it seems to be working."

"That's because you win more often than you lose," a goblin complained, throwing in his hand.

"Well, I wouldn't keep playing just to get to know you better," Harry retorted. "Shall we keep playing?"

In the end, Harry learned that he could, in general, trust the goblins. The goblins learned that there was at least one human who might be worthy of some real trust as well.

Of Harry's women, Luna and Hermione spent the most time with the goblins. Hermione spent the time because she wanted to learn more about them. The goblins, finally tiring of her polite questioning, started teasing her that she would be starting the next rebellion on her own.

Luna spent most of her free time with a goblin seer. The elderly female goblin tried to coax Luna into her full Gift, but failed. This led to several conversations with Harry.

When the group returned to Britain, they made a quick tour through Diagon Alley and then Muggle London for supplies. Luna was a bit worried, as her lovers seemed to have something planned, but would not let her in on the secret.

Chapter XXVIII

Luna shuddered a bit as she entered one of the cellar rooms of Potter Manor. It was not chilly, but it was dark, with only a few candles burning. There were objects under old sheets, and her lovers had been acting very strangely.

At a nod from Hermione, Susan and Tracey stripped Luna. She shivered again and knelt before Harry. "My lord?" she asked.

"Did you know that you have the full Gift, far beyond mere empathic magic?"

Tears formed in Luna's eyes. "I have always feared so, my lord."

"You fought the Gift off in the previous lifetime. You are fighting it off even harder this time. To fight it off, you make us hurt you. We love you, Luna. Anything more than a light spanking, mild bondage, hurts us to inflict on you."

Luna lowered her eyes. "You are right, my lord. I apologize to all of you."

Harry went down on one knee before her. "Luna. I love you. We all love you. You have to make the choice. We cannot make it for you. All we can do is love and support you."

"Yes, my lord," Luna whispered.

"As we see it, after much research from Hermione and especially Padma, you have the following choices. One, you can ingest a set of hallucinogenic potions. Those will make your Gift kick in." He looked over at Hermione.

"You will have visions, many of them horrible," she said. "You will see many possible paths, most of them with bad outcomes to say the least."

"Second, since pain drives the Gift away, we have to distract you with pleasure." He looked at Padma.

"Again, we would have to give you some potions, to lower your threshold of pleasure, so that we can drive you to orgasm after orgasm. A lot more pleasurable than the first -- for a while. Yet again, you are likely to have horrible visions of what will happen to us, should the Gift fully infuse you. Some might turn out to be true, but most won't."

"Third," Harry said, "we can help you fight the Gift. We will spank and whip and cut and even half-strangle you if we have to in order keep that Gift away."

"Those with the Gift lead troubled lives," Susan said.

"You would feel a burden to us, as the Gift would partially control you," Padma agreed.

"But you help me bear my burden," Harry told her. "I will happily help you bear or fight yours."

"Speaking of bearing, it would be difficult for me to bear children," Luna reminded Harry. "I would feel their thoughts before they can truly think. I will get lost in their minds, and may never find my way out."

"We will always find you," Harry told her. "We will never let you go."

"We love you," Tracey reminded her.

"You are one of us, and we need you almost as much as we love and adore you," Hermione pointed out.

Luna thought a long moment, and asked, "If we do the second, and it works, may we still use gillyweed, my lord?"

"Of course," Harry answered.

"Then I choose the second," Luna decided. "If it does not work, then I shall take the other potions. If I resist, pour them down my throat. I've fought this for too long. It's time to conquer my fears." She knew, in her heart, that if she had faced these fears at 11, she could have been Sorted into Gryffindor. How different things might have been, had she been there to help Ginny with the diary, and had really known Harry from the beginning, for she had no doubts that the Gift would have brought her to them. It was time to conquer the shame that her fear had caused, as well as the fear itself.

While Padma and Hermione brought out several potions, Harry vanished most of what was under the coverings. "What were those?" Luna asked.

"Torture devices," Harry answered. "Stocks and whips and branding irons, and even a rack."

"I may still like bondage," Luna pointed out. "You might want some of it back."

"Drink this one first," Hermione broke in. "It will keep your natural lubrication going longer."

"It was all nasty things the Potter family has confiscated over the centuries," Harry answered as Luna drank the potion. "I merely returned it all."

"We can start in about half an hour," Padma said, as Harry brought in cushions and mattresses.

Far off in a deserted, forgotten little valley in the Carpathians, Voldemort gleefully continued to set out the best crystals into position, and crushed quartz into powder to connect the crystals. At the center would be what he thought was the diamond Horcrux. If his calculations were correct (and he had made them and triple-checked them, he had no doubts that they were), then he would be able to amplify some of his powers. Diamonds, tremendously hard and made from carbon, a building block of life, could channel and hold tremendous amounts of power.

With this new set up, there was an 85% chance that he could dominate the world by himself, without relying on the weak followers who he totally blamed for all past failures. Granted, there was that 15% chance of various disasters. That had been enough to prevent him from trying this course before.

Now, however, he felt he had little alternative.

He easily crushed the crystals, as always impressed with his own power as that he smashed what he thought it were diamonds.

As Luna came out of the haze the potions had induced in her, she blinked several times, which was unusual for her.

"Why are there five Harrys?" she asked, confused.

"One Harry, four consorts polyjuiced into Harry," a Harry answered.

"One for you to impale yourself on, one for your pretty arse, and one for your prettier mouth," another answered. "The other two will help keep things steady, and when one Harry finishes, another will take his place and take an aphrodisiac potion and some fluids." Luna was pretty certain that was Hermione.

"Only Harry and Tracey should sodomize me at first," Luna said. "At least until I get loose back there."

The Harrys nodded.

Luna looked at one. "Hermione, let me get you hard, and then I can climb aboard."

"Well-spotted," that Harry replied. "Oh, my!" she said as Luna took her cock into her mouth, "I can see why Harry likes this so much!"

"This looks so weird," the real Harry said, as Susan!Harry stood next to him and Tracey!Harry and Padma!Harry knelt before them to fluff their cocks hard.

"It feels good, though," Susan replied. "Would it be too weird to kiss me like this?"

"A little, but since I know it's not me. . . ."

Luna soon had Hermione!Harry down on her back, and slowly impaled herself. Then she leaned forward to take Susan!Harry into her mouth. Harry put on a condom to keep things from getting too messy (none of the girls cared much for rimming, let alone ATM action).

Over the next fifty minutes, each version of Harry took Luna twice, each time in a different orifice. Still, with the aphrodisiac potion, they would each be able to have six or seven orgasms.

It was as they were finishing the second round that Tracey and Hermione set up a low body swing, needed because Luna's arms were getting a bit tired. Using their wands, they had Luna in the swing just a short way off the ground before she completely came down from her last set of orgasms.

Luna found herself face down in the swing, legs spread and bent, putting her feet up in the air. A cock slipping into her well-lubricated tunnel and then one tongue started in on her clit while two

others started in on her nipples. Orgasm after orgasm ripped through her and they started taking turns inside her in this position.

Slowly, Luna lost awareness of everything except the pleasure surging through her. As her lovers started the third pass through the group in this position, Luna lost full awareness even of that.

Suddenly, Luna felt as if part of her was hurling down a dark, wet tunnel, out of control, as pleasure still tugged at her. She tried to stop herself, but she no longer could. Only that slight thrill of pleasure kept her from cringing and screaming as all the insults of her five years at Hogwarts were again thrown at her, screamed at her. Visions of her mother, dead on the floor, flickered in Luna's peripheral vision. Other visions, of Voldemort threatening her and Padma, and then of his rising from the cauldron and then killing Harry's mother, replaced them.

Then came the visions she would forever wish she could forget -- visions of her lovers being tortured, raped, disemboweled, and worse. She saw Draco Malfoy plunging himself into the mouth of Hermione's detached head as he madly laughed; a werewolf stripping the breasts off of Ginny; the Patil twins being vaginally impaled until the metal rods jutted from their mouths. Every person she cared for, or whom one of her lovers cared for, were tortured beyond the realm of nightmare.

Luna screamed as a pain as harsh as the Cruciatus ripped through her soul -- the full Gift she had resisted for so long had exploded inside her.

And then all was dark. She felt nothing except extreme cold. She was a prisoner of the Gift, and part of her wanted to be rid of it, even if the only way to be rid of it now was through death.

Suddenly, Luna felt a hint of warmth, and then saw a faint light. The light grew slightly, and Luna knew there were four smaller lights orbiting around the greater one.

She now knew what that light was. "Harry!" she called, pleading.

Instantly, the light came towards her, enveloped her, warmed her. "My beloved?" Luna murmured. "You did come for me."

"Always," Harry said, and Luna realized that she was back in her body. Harry was seated on the floor, holding her in his arms. The other four women were around them, hugging them.

Luna felt lips kiss her shoulder, and knew it was Hermione. "We love you," Hermione whispered. "I love you."

"We all love you," Susan said, kissing Luna's forehead. Padma managed to kiss the back of Luna's right hand, while Tracey kissed her hip.

"I think we need to put you to bed," Harry said.

"Don't let me be alone, until I wake up tomorrow morning," Luna begged.

"We won't," Harry said. "You helped me through my nightmares in the last life time. We'll all help you this time around." With a little help, he got to his feet with Luna still in his arms. He carried her through the halls to their bedroom, with the magically-widened bed for six.

"I think we can all use a nap," Susan stated, and so they all crawled under the sheet, and were soon asleep.

Sunday, September 1, 1996

It was a very satisfied group which made their way to the train that Sunday, and in Harry's case, a very tired patriarch. He had spent most of the previous day satisfying Luna in the morning, Padma in the afternoon, and Hermione that night. Luna had swallowed him in the hot tub, and both Padma and Hermione had lost their anal cherries. Both of them had been nervous before the event, and very satisfied afterwards.

Tracey and Susan had brought Harry off orally twice that morning. He was almost glad that he would not be on 'potion detail' until the next morning, and would soon be going to just twice a day love making. The magical dildoes his consorts were using on each other had made his life a little easier.

Padma and Hermione kissed their lovers goodbye for as long as the prefects' meeting might last. As the train started, Susan said, "I was thinking. . . ."

That got her lovers' attention.

"If I'm not pregnant when we leave Hogwarts, I would like to take a fertility potion and get preggies on the train ride," she said with a smile.

"Well, we have some twenty-one months to decide," Harry said. Seeing Susan's look of disappointment, he added, "I don't have any objections."

"That has to be decided by both our lord and lady," Tracey reminded her. "Besides, some of us might be pregnant by then."

Harry shook his head. Tracey frowned, and then nodded. "That's right, at least four of us are taking N.E.W.T. Transfiguration, and of the four of us, you're the only one not taking N.E.W.T. Potions."

"And since Seventh year is advanced human transfiguration, that would be as bad for the baby as some of fumes and ingredients of Seventh year Potions," Luna agreed.

The girls chattered about the upcoming year, and oddly (as far as Harry was concerned) possible names for their children. A number of people came by to say hello, especially those sworn to Harry who were not also prefects.

Finally, Hermione and Padma returned, and the prefects sworn to Harry also made their greetings. The last to do so, however, were Draco and Pansy, although Pansy stayed just outside the compartment.

"Potter."

"Malfoy."

"I did as you suggested, but I thought you should know that none of my supporters were so much as approached by the Dark Lord or any of his people."

"That's good to hear," Harry said. "We ran into him, but he got away again."

"I say, Pansy," Luna broke in, "is that a new ring?"

Pansy scowled, but nodded.

"It's a promise ring," Draco told them.

"May I see it?" Luna asked.

Pansy made another face, but stepped into the compartment. As soon as she did so, Luna stunned her.

Draco yelped and demanded, "What the hell. . . !"

"Pansy bears the Dark Mark," Luna said. Draco started to shake his head, but Luna broke in, "It is on her inner left thigh."

"Every one, quiet!" Harry ordered. He lifted Pansy onto the seats, which Tracey, Susan, and Luna moved from. "Malfoy, come here. Tracey, lift her skirt. Susan, steady her right leg." Harry held his palm over Pansy's upper inner left thigh.

The Dark Mark appeared.

"That bitch!" Malfoy shouted.

"Damn," Harry said.

"What's the matter?" Draco demanded. "Don't you have the balls to carry through with what you said you would do to any Death Eater? It didn't stop you before."

"She's underage," Harry retorted. "Even though the Ministry put a bounty on any Death Eater, dead or alive, for me to legally execute her, I need either her father's or your permission, since you are the Head of an Ancient and Noble family, and her promised lord."

"She betrayed me," Draco stated. "Kill her," Draco dared, not believing Harry could do so.

Harry nodded. "Alright. In a few minutes. Susan, Hermione, Padma, clear the carriage of everyone not pledged to me. Fill it up with those who are. Luna, take Ron and Neville and two others and walk through the train. Bring back anyone else with a Dark Mark. Also, send Cho and Su here. We need at least two impartial witnesses."

"She may not technically be impartial, but Margot Smythe has been allowed to return, although she has to be tested to see if it's as a Fourth or Fifth year," Luna said.

"Fine, bring her, too, if Cho and Su agree. Tracey, wait here with us. Go!" They went.

Harry shut the door and then tinted the windows into the corridor. "Tracey, strip her, then bind her hands and wrists under her back, then bind her knees and ankles, and finally immobilize her while leaving her Mark exposed."

"Yes, my lord."

Harry turned to Draco. "While all this is being organized, let me tell you what the Dork Lord was up to this summer."

In less than twenty minutes, everything was organized, as Luna had detected no other Marked students. Cho, Su, and a very terrified Margot were seated on the back seats. Tracey was seated on the outside seat of the compartment, with a firm grip on Pansy's legs. Pansy's head was in Luna's lap, while Draco stood next to her. Harry stood near Tracey.

There were silencing and privacy wards up. They were isolated.

Harry woke Pansy up.

"Look me in the eye, Parkinson," Harry commanded.

She tried to spit at Harry, but Luna closed her jaw before she could.

That was enough for Harry to invade her mind. He was not terribly skilled, but he was very powerful and Pansy had no mind shields.

"She was just to spy, but was to ask to go through the formal pre-bonding with you on her birthday," Harry told Draco. "That would make her an heir to the Malfoy fortune. Then she was to take you to her real master."

Draco, very pale, merely nodded.

"That seems to be all she knows," Harry said. "I'll give the names of the Death Eaters who recruited her through her mother to the Ministry, but I think they're all already dead. Now, according to the old customs, since she was bonding to you, you have as much right to execute her as I do. You also have the right to have her raped as punishment of betraying your bond. I'm sure your friends Crabbe and Goyle would oblige."

"No," Draco managed. "She likes it rough. Why give her something she might actually like?"

"Afraid your three inch needle-dick won't match up?" Pansy managed to say before Luna silenced her again.

"Tracey," Harry ordered, "wrap that towel around her bottom, so she won't make a mess, then sit on her lower legs."

"Yes, my lord." Tracey quickly made a rough diaper around Pansy and then sat.

"Ow! Watch it, you fat cow!" Pansy snapped.

"Don't worry," Harry said, "you won't mind much longer." He knelt and placed his hands under Pansy's jaw and over her mouth so that she couldn't breathe through her mouth, or move her head.

"Luna," Harry ordered, "pinch her nose shut."

Luna blinked in surprise. She then realized why Harry was making her do this. She had made asphyxiation into a game, which could have backfired.

Pansy's eyes had gone wide as she realized what was happening. However, she didn't really believe it, even as Luna's arm slowly entered her field of vision, and the two long fingers of her small hand pinched Pansy's nostrils shut.

Pansy's body struggled for nearly two minutes. Since Harry had also blocked the carotid artery before he had spoken to Luna, and had also stunned her again, Pansy was unconscious long before her body gave up the struggle.

Unmoved, Cho stood up and opened the window to let the stink out. Two waves of her wand disposed of the diaper and cleaned the corpse of urine and feces.

Margot pushed Cho out of the way to vomit out the window.

Su cast a diagnostic spell, waited fifteen seconds and cast it again. "She's dead, Harry."

Harry relaxed and gathered Luna into his arms, where she burst into tears.

Chapter XXIX

Harry summoned Dobby and sent him to the castle and then to the Ministry with notes of explanation (one to the Headmaster, one to the aurors, and one to the Coven), co-signed by Draco and Cho.

Pansy's body was left alone in the compartment. Draco and Margot went out of the carriage, pushed by Cho and Su respectively. They dumped the pair in the first empty compartment, two carriages down.

"I can't believe Scarhead had the balls to execute someone like that," Draco managed to say after a few minutes.

"Potter? He killed Professor Snape, and I gather whoever was the Defense teacher your First year. He executed our fathers, not to mention those others." Margot shook her head. "No, I'm not surprised he could execute someone. I'm surprised that Loony could."

"You may be right," Draco admitted.

"You do know that it could be us next?" Margot said.

"What!" that thought had never crossed Draco's mind.

"If Potter decided that we were still enemies, I mean. Marked or not."

Draco swallowed nervously at that idea.

"I shouldn't have come back," Margot almost sobbed. "I should have transferred to Beauxbatons, or just done the O.W.L.s by private tutor." She looked at Draco. "We're going to have to be very cautious the next two years."

The idea was foreign to Draco Malfoy. However, the vision of his being sliced in two by Potter, or having Granger cut off his air supply, like Lovegood had just done to Pansy. . . . Draco shuddered.

'Maybe she's right', Draco thought.

While there was of course an inquiry, and the Parkinsons made what threats they could, what Harry and Draco had done was legal. As the Death Eaters who had recruited Pansy had been killed by Voldemort and there were no surviving witnesses to Pansy's recruitment, nothing further was done to the Parkinsons directly, although there was an investigation into their finances. Madam Bones would eventually issue Harry an official reprimand for executing Pansy aboard the train with young students near by when she was not a present danger, and fined him one Galleon and a Sickle.

The Parkinsons were fined ten times the amount they had supplied Voldemort (a total of 102,000 Galleons) and five times the amount they had contributed to help Lucius Malfoy bribe Ministry officials (81,000 Galleons), which took out all the family's liquid assets and half of their investments, although it did leave them their family estate.

Between Pansy's execution and Tracey and Daphne's tight hold on the reins, the neutral Slytherins decided during the welcome feast that they were keeping their heads down this year. Those few students in all the Houses -- like Draco and Margot -- who had not really renounced the Pure-blood agenda or violence -- knew they not only had to keep their heads down but their mouths shut very tight.

The students pledged to Harry accepted Pansy's execution -- she had taken the Dark Mark. Most of the neutral older students accepted this as well. The younger students were split between those who accepted Pansy's execution and those who were frightened by her death so close to them on the train.

Dumbledore was even more aghast than the students or the Ministry officials. Of course, he could not deny that Harry had given plenty of warning about his intentions.

After the welcoming feast was over, Dumbledore sat at his desk, face in his hands. He was alone with the portraits and the Sorting Hat, for Fawkes was no where to be seen.

Finally, the painting of Phineas Nigellus said, "We all tried to warn you. We all disagreed with your course of action these last sixteen years or so. I grant you, we often disagreed among ourselves why you were wrong and on what course you might better take, but we all agreed you were wrong in your treatment of the Potters, and young Harry. And I told you that as flawed as Sirius is, he would never betray James Potter, that Pettigrew was much more likely to have done so."

An eighteenth century headmistress chimed in, "We warned you and your predecessor that Tom Riddle was a flawed and evil little boy. That no good had ever come out of the Gaunt family. . . ."

"You cannot condemn a boy for his ancestry," Dumbledore mumbled. He looked up. "Yes, we could have rejected Riddle. Just think what trouble he might have caused had he remained untrained, with his magic surging wildly. I could have been harsher with the radical Pure-bloods, and forced them out of Hogwarts. Imagine Lucius Malfoy, Bellatrix Black, and their ilk trained at Durmstrang. I am very conscious of my many errors of judgement. Nearly as many have suffered because of those judgements as have been helped, and perhaps few have been injured as severely as Harry. Still, to kill, to execute, a student on the Hogwarts Express when she was not directly threatening anyone. . . ."

"So, he should have waited and executed her when?" a thirteenth century headmaster demanded. "As a treat at the feast, as we would have? After she had passed on some information? When she had murdered a student? She had taken the Mark, which means she must have murdered, for that is part of the ritual."

"I sometimes think you are as much a Purest in your way as Lucius Malfoy was," Nigellus sneered. "Why else protect these little Purists? One would think you were a Slytherin instead of a Gryffindor."

"There is much wrong with our society, as there is in every society," Dumbledore retorted stiffly. "I have obviously been in error, and some of my judgements have been proven mistaken, at least as they were applied."

"You think so, eh?" the Hat asked snidely.

"What does that mean?"

"It means that you still have not admitted to yourself exactly how mistaken you have been," the Hat retorted. "In this century, I have seen the attitudes of the Muggle-born and raised become more independent, and the would-be Purists go from defending their traditions to becoming thugs. I have been forced to concentrate them more and more into Slytherin, because they are not raised to be independent-minded or thoughtful or loyal to anything but their thuggery."

"And what has that to do with me?" Dumbledore demanded. "I am not so powerful as to cure society!"

"Almost a fifth of the magical children in Britain and Ireland come through Hogwarts," the Hat stated. "Hogwarts helps to mold them. And who did you put in charge of Slytherin for some fifteen years?"

"Severus. . . ."

"Even if Severus Snape had been as loyal to you as you believed, which he was not, he still spent his time reenforcing the negative prejudices of his House," the Hat stated firmly. "Every student he has favored either took the Mark or would have eagerly have followed Tom Riddle if given the chance before last September. He dismissed Greengrass, Davis, and Zabini, the trio who now control the House for young Potter, as lightweights and not worth his time."

Dumbledore said nothing.

"You suspected Tom Riddle in the death of young Myrtle," the Hat persisted. "You dismissed those ideas, concentrating on Grindelwald while a greater evil was born before your very eyes. You console your self with the thought that you helped Hagrid find a position, when if you had acted correctly, he never would have been convicted in the first place."

Dumbledore started to speak, but the Hat cut him off. "Your ego has been the size of Tom Riddle's since you became second-in-command of the forces fighting Grindelwald."

"There was no prophecy that said you had to deal with Grindelwald," the Elizabethan headmistress broke in. "You were part of a large, international team effort. If you had not cast the spell that sent Grindelwald into the void, there were others who could have, who would have, either alone or as part of the team."

"But they hadn't," Dumbledore retorted.

"They hadn't," Headmaster Dippet agreed. "Your leader and his strike team had failed, but destroyed most of the protections around that madman. You came in and finished the job. How many other teams were ready to strike? Sixteen?"

Dumbledore had no answer to that.

"You gave Tom Riddle no guidance, and he turned into the greatest monster magical Britain has ever produced," Nigellus concluded. "You gave Potter no more, although you did try and

manipulate him into being your attack dog. And now he is so powerful none may predict what his impact will have."

Dippet looked scornfully at Dumbledore. "What have you wrought, Albus?"

Dumbledore decided to go to bed, even if sleep was unlikely.

Sunday, September 8, 1996

"Good morning," Harry stated.

"Good morning," the DA responded. The group consisted of Harry's sworn Fifth through Seventh year sworn supporters and a few others. Those who had left the year before would attend periodically, but today they were all present, as were Sirius and Remus.

To the disappointment of many, Harry had refused to allow any more students to swear allegiance to him over the summer after Colin, and had again refused over the previous week. He had agreed to allow some of the Fourth years to join the DA, but not to swear, the next year, to help them prepare for their O.W.L.s.

At that point, Hermione stepped forward and told the group all that she could about what Voldemort had done that summer, and then outlined the plan for training that term. Then Harry took control back.

"As you heard, we think Voldie might be down to just himself. Even if we were right about that in August, remember, he does seem to have the knack of charming people into following him, and a tendency to force people to as well," Harry warned. "Should he gain some followers, he might attack Hogwarts. That's what we are training you still here to do -- to defend Hogwarts and the younger students. Now, Tracey, Susan, and Padma are passing out lists. For those of you still here, you will see you are assigned to three different training groups. Hermione has devised three different response scenarios you will be trained for -- a different group taking the lead -- right down to where you are to respond to. Two for Hogwarts, offensive and defensive, and one for Hogsmeade, should we be attacked there. We'll practice in our offensive groups for an hour, and then have lunch. After lunch, the offensive flying squad will meet at the Quidditch pitch."

Harry looked around. "Any problems or questions? No? Then let's see how your Patronus charms are doing. Let's see if you picked up any really good memories this summer." That got some mild laughter. "Break into your groups, and then form a line facing that wall."

As the people were milling about, Luna came over to Harry, holding her stomach. "I feel . . . sick." Seeing the mixed feelings on Harry's face, she said, "Harry, I'm ill, not pregnant."

"Right." Harry called Cho over, and sent the pair to the Infirmary, since Cho already could do the Patronus.

Cho rolled her eyes and led Luna out. She was about to make a smart remark when she saw that Luna was starting to sweat heavily, and she realized that something could really be wrong.

They were less than a third of the way to the Infirmary when they ran into Professor Trelawney, who was leading a reluctant Headmaster by the arm. At that moment, Luna fell to her knees and her eyes rolled back.

"The end is coming soon," Luna chanted.
"The Dark One has made an error;
But if the Marked One does not employ his Powers,
The Dark One will sleep for a thousand years.
When he awakes, Darkness shall descend upon the Earth.
The end is coming soon." And with that, Luna passed out.

"I said that?" Luna asked during lunch. She was sitting up in bed in the Infirmary. Her lovers, Cho, Su, Dumbledore, Sirius, and Remus were there as well.

"You did," Dumbledore confirmed. "As is required, I have made a copy of it and will send it on to the Hall of Prophecy." He held up the globe. Harry saw it read:

L.L.P. to C.C.
Harry Potter?

"A little more disingenuous this time," Harry commented.

Dumbledore nodded. "I do not believe you mind being referred to by your status as consort," he said to Luna, who shook her head. "And as Tom's course seems predetermined, there is no reason to give him the idea of invading the Department yet again." He shrugged. "As to what it means. . . ."

"It means that Voldemort has likely mistaken quartz for diamonds," Hermione said. "He's going to perform some Dark ceremony, and it will backfire, placing him in a thousand year magical coma. . . ."

"I won't kiss THAT Sleeping Beauty," Harry grumbled, but was well-ignored.

"Harry must locate him, or at least narrow down the location, through the link, just as he did this summer. Then he must destroy Voldemort. If he doesn't, we'll likely spend the rest of our lives looking for him and failing. And failure will mean he's likely to win when he comes to."

"It would be better if Harry could use his power to find Voldemort through the link even before then," Remus pointed out.

"Maybe. If not, perhaps you could put your memory of anything that happens in a Penseive, and relive it, narrowing down the search," Su suggested. She blushed as the others liked that idea.

"That's possible?" Harry asked.

"It is not possible with someone else's memories," Dumbledore said. "It is with your own."

"I wonder how much time we have," Sirius mused.

"That depends on the type of ceremony," Luna answered. "For some, the moment of the equinox

would be best. For others, just after complete darkness falls locally on Halloween, which marks the start of the Season of Darkness and the first of seven nights when the veil between the world and the next life is weakest. Finally, just before local dawn the day of the winter solstice, when Darkness is at its height."

"It might depend on the ceremony," Harry mused, "but all other things being equal, I'd guess Halloween."

"We should be prepared for anything, including the equinox on the Twenty-second," Dumbledore stated.

"So," Harry asked when he, Sirius, and Remus met with Dumbledore that afternoon, "what's the plan?"

"I know of no one in Europe who can teach you how to trace the link in any active way," Dumbledore admitted. "It is not part of modern European magic."

"Whose magic is it part of?" Sirius demanded.

"Primarily Buddhist and native Australian, and Hindu to a slightly lesser degree," Dumbledore said.

"Chang and Li," Remus said, "not to mention the Patils."

"In that case, I'm sure all three are already writing," Harry said. "We'll just have to see who gets a usable response first."

The answer arrived the next Saturday morning. The contacts of all three families had actually recommended the same person, as time for lessons could be short.

To describe Leo Korsakov as 'mixed' would be a huge understatement. Five of his sixteen great-great grandparents had been magical, eight had been Squibs, and three had been Muggles. Each had been from a different ethnic group, and fifteen had all shown up in Hawai'i between the 1870s and the 1900s to join the sixteenth -- the sixteen were Russian, Irish, Scots, Native Hawaiian, English, Welsh, Spanish, Portugese, French, Tahitian, Italian, Filipino, Chinese, Indian (Bengali), Japanese, Korean.

He had studied magic in California, and both magic and Buddhism as well as martial arts in Japan and Korea. Of average height and a lean build, he moved lithely and totally silently. He spent four hours evaluating Harry in private, and then an hour dueling him. In the end, he merely said, "We can work together."

With that, Harry got permission to drop Care. Hagrid was disappointed, but understood why Harry had to drop one class. Korsakov would work with Harry on his astral projection and other related mental arts as well as his martial arts. He also agreed to tutor those members of the DA who were interested.

Harry also tried to quit Quidditch. Upon learning how much flying meant to Harry, however,

Korsakov merely had him cut back on his participation in practices. Since Ron had been named Captain (Katie wanted to concentrate on her N.E.W.T.s and Harry knew he would not have the time), Harry could spare the time.

Harry's consorts had picked up basic Tai Chi from Harry and Padma. Su had started tutoring them before breakfast, and already had fifteen other girls working out with them as well. Korsakov would build on that with Harry's consorts and a few others for a more active response.

Before the equinox arrived, and despite the added training, Harry and his consorts gathered together after dinner on the nineteenth to celebrate Hermione's seventeenth birthday.

Hermione had been allowed to pick the scenario, and all had eagerly agreed to it. After Hermione had been carefully bathed, she merely spread her legs and bent over, taking Harry in her mouth. Luna was underneath her, licking away at her clit, while Padma and Susan suckled and stimulated her breasts. Tracey, meanwhile, had one and then two fingers up Hermione's bum, and she managed to get a few licks in on Hermione's labia and at the sensitive skin between her labia and anus.

It was not a terribly comfortable experience, but it was very pleasurable for Hermione (and Harry).

The day of the equinox passed by without so much as a twitch of Harry's scar. However, Voldemort was actually very busy. The ritual chamber was now filled with patterns and incantations chalked and painted (and sometimes painted in blood). The key points had been reenforced by the quartz dust.

For six hours on either side of the actual solstice, Voldemort was adding patterns and formula to the ceiling of the chamber. Setting up this ritual was stretching his knowledge of magic and power, and it would be, in fact, the most complicated ritual performed by and for just an individual in centuries.

As each step was completed, on time and with nearly inhuman precision, Voldemort's staggering confidence went up yet another notch. Already confident that he could do anything, and that he would succeed, he was starting to believe himself invincible.

He was also becoming to believe that when the ritual was over, he would no longer be the greatest sorcerer of all time.

Voldemort would be a god.

Chapter XXX

Thursday, October 31, 1996

The DA was ready. The Order was ready. Selected aurors were ready. Harry and his consorts were ready.

And nothing happened.

Whatever Voldemort was going to do wasn't going to come off at Halloween.

The tension around Hogwarts collapsed, and it would take a few weeks for everyone's full attention to come back.

The following Monday morning, a little after 2:40 am, a hidden door opened in the Chamber of Secrets. Voldemort spent the next two and a half hours spreading crushed quartz in ritual patterns.

He was gone by 5:00 am.

They would likewise miss two return trips in mid-November. The Order, and Harry, were lucky that Voldemort had been forced to decide that clearing the blockage caused by the cave-in, which had grown larger, would likely alert the wards he felt (incorrectly) the Headmaster would have had to erect on the other side,

In the original time line, Voldemort had made the same discovery, although earlier, but with the same results. That had been why he had given Draco the task of creating the alternative route into the castle. Had he known that there was no ward, the invasion of Hogwarts would have happened during the Sorting at the start of Harry's Sixth year in the original time line, not at the end of the school year.

For Dumbledore and Remus, however, the exciting news for the month was the discovery of a family descended from the Slytherin progeny which had lived in Ghent. A daughter of the family had married out in the mid-1400s, into a family of magical merchants which had lived (and still did) southeast of Dijon.

This had made no sense to Harry, even when Remus and Hermione tried to explain the concept of medieval Burgundy and Flanders to him. More importantly, with Harry's help, they managed to discover three current members of the extended family of four different branches and nearly fifty members who possessed the gift of Parseltongue -- two adults and a child.

The two adults were introduced to the Slytherin vault in Gringotts the first weekend of December. While they felt honored to be able to extend their ancestry, both were slightly disappointed to learn that whatever treasures had been in the vault had long ago been cleaned out. Instead, they purposed to go through the papers, in the hopes of publishing some of them and making a bit of money that way.

The point, of course, was that having more acknowledged heirs, especially blood heirs, to Slytherin

meant that there were a few less rituals available for Voldemort to invoke. And, since he wouldn't know of these heirs for a while, if ever (the heirs agreed to keep their heritage a secret until given the okay, or for five years), there was a chance Voldemort might try to invoke his connection to Slytherin in a ritual and it would backfire.

Another positive aspect of the later enactment of Voldemort's mysterious ritual was that it allowed the Celtic clans time to organize. They had, for the most part, spent the previous few hundred years in a complex game of both intermarriage and one-upmanship.

Harry had magically learned modern Welsh, Old Irish, Old Welsh, and two Gallic languages (one Belgic and one Gaulish) in early October. This had given him a severe headache for three days and took him two weeks to fully integrate. It also made him fully acceptable to the Celtic clans as a potential war leader, if needed as such.

That meant that by mid-December, the ritual specialists of the clans had visited Hogwarts and both strengthened and tightened the wards. Their antiquarians found ancient spells which would both help Harry in his astral projection and even allowed him to have some combat capabilities on that plane and in any dreamscape Voldemort might lure him into.

In late November, Harry learned Sanskrit the same way (to Chandragupta Patil's satisfaction). Leo Korsakov was then able to take Harry deeper into the art of meditation, and finally true astral projection.

To Korsakov's slight surprise, Harry's Bondings and experiences with his scar connection actually help him learn astral projection quickly. He had been afraid that Harry's prior experiences (all negative in some way) would have created a natural reluctance to repeat the experience, even under Harry's control. He also had thought that the Bondings would tend to anchor Harry too much, as that had been a common belief for millennia.

Instead, it was the anchors of the Bondings which gave Harry the confidence to totally let go his physical connections -- he knew his Bondmates would be able to call him back to his body, that he could never 'get lost'. Having sent his soul and magic back in time (something Korsakov did not know about), Harry was also somewhat predisposed in his current body to the art.

By early December, Harry's spirit was wandering around the castle for an hour or so every night, which had scared Peeves the first time the poltergeist had encountered Harry. Peeves had never run into a spirit who could fully use his magic, and did not want to ever again.

Harry had examined most of the castle, although after accidentally running across Su Li twice in the Prefect's bath, he stayed away from there, even at 5:00 am.

Meanwhile, Hogwarts prepared for a normal autumn of Quidditch and Hogsmeade weekends. When Ron, as the Quidditch captain, led Gryffindor to a crushing victory over Slytherin, Lavender decided that she could take the chance on his at least having a Quidditch career, and so led him to the Couple's Corner eight days later.

Harry's example had, in fact, led to an upswing of such Bondings. By the start of the Christmas break, there would be a higher percentage of Bonding couples than at any point since the mid-

1870s. When asked about his opinion of that, Harry merely shrugged and said, "Just because I'm against most of the Pure-blood agenda doesn't mean I'm against most wizarding traditions."

Harry did not know what to make out of the fact that one of the newly Bonding couples was Draco and Margot. As a couple, they were behaving and keeping their heads down. Blaise reported the same from Slytherin. Margot was keeping to herself in Ravenclaw, and the only disturbances she made were a few loud nightmares, where she had thought she was being smothered.

As there was still the good chance that Voldemort might attempt his ceremony on the winter solstice, nearly every non-DA student would be leaving for the winter break that year, which started early (on Saturday, December 21). Padma and Susan had, in early November, suggested a winter dance for the night of the 20th. This helped distract the vast majority of students.

Meanwhile, Harry was working hard on his astral projection. By mid-December, he was trying hard to track Voldemort down. He could detect the magical connection between them with ease. However, Harry had kept that conduit tightly closed since his return to the past. Nor had Voldemort tried to open it. While the connection therefore had a great deal of potential power, it had little actual strength.

In short, Harry could easily follow the connection, but only very slowly.

Even following it for up to twelve hours at a time only put Harry across the Channel into northern France. Harry kept at it, however, as that would enable him to trace the link more quickly, should Voldemort do anything which accidentally pushed it open.

The whole exercise greatly strengthened the bonds between Harry and his lovers. Tracey and Susan were fully Bonded with Harry by early December, less than seven months after they had started on the process.

Harry was actually rather glad of this. Sex three times a day, alternating with five beautiful women, was great, but also very tiring. If he hadn't been in perfect shape (and in a teen-age body), he never could have coped. They all now preferred straight sex to fellatio, reserving that for foreplay or sometimes as an alternate during their periods when they didn't feel like anal.

It was the weekend before the dance (and the solstice) that Harry made a discovery which he would ruefully admit he should have made long before. He had by then searched every inch of the castle, wondering, as he did do, why he kept on running into Su, who was usually nude or close to it.

Those were the two reasons why he had finally returned to the Chamber of Secrets.

He had been shocked.

The basilisk's body was gone, and he knew that it should have been mummified. The explanation was there, on the floor of the Chamber -- a complex web of runes and ritual markings, done in chalk, paint, blood, and rock crystal.

There was obviously another way in, one that Harry had not known about. Ignoring that, Harry

surveyed the entire Chamber carefully, so that he could show the set-up via a memory.

Harry would lead Dumbledore, his consorts, Remus, and Korsakov into the memory the next morning. None of them, not even Dumbledore, could figure the entire configuration out, at least not by themselves. Voldemort had created his configuration from runes and theories from at least seven different cultures.

After over six hours of study, the group wearily ate a late lunch. "So," Harry asked, "where are we?"

"Confused?" Tracey asked.

"We need more information," Dumbledore stated. "I suggest I contact Bill Weasley. Harry, perhaps you should contact your friends at Gringotts."

"Ron mentioned that Bill has been working Sundays, so that he can be with Fleur in France on Fridays and Saturdays," Hermione offered.

"Then I'll take the memory to Gringotts and leave it to them," Harry said. "Maybe you could all write down what you found out, and what your best guesses are. That might help them as well."

The group agreed, and got to work as they finished lunch.

A very tired Bill showed up with the analysis Tuesday evening.

"There's bad news and good news," Bill told them, plopping down in a chair. "The biggest bit of bad news is that we don't see how to interfere with the ceremony going off. The set-up looks, at least for now, like it any interference would cause a magical inversion."

Everyone gasped but Harry. "Meaning?" he asked.

"Meaning at the least, the magic of whoever was present at that time would lose their magic, and there is a good chance it would drain all the magic in the area. . . ."

"Hogwarts?"

Bill nodded and said, "Possibly. Considering the amount of ambient magic in and around Hogwarts, the result would be a huge explosion."

"And what else is bad?"

"If this works, a fair amount of the ambient magic would be drained off and channeled into the receptacle, which look like it should be Voldemort himself."

"And the good news?" Korsakov asked.

"It won't work," Bill answered. "Voldemort needed to use diamond dust, not quartz. Thanks to Luna's prophecy, we know what the result will be -- that still holds good as far as we can tell. It's possible that the ritual will wreck the Chamber. I suggest we have a small goblin crew reenforce the

tunnel area leading to the Chamber. That should prevent the castle foundations being damaged."

"We should also warn the merpeople to stay away from that part of the lake," Hermione suggested. Dumbledore wrote himself a reminder to do so.

"The other good news is that the timing of the ritual was built into the designs," Bill said. "It should be about three hours before sunrise, on the Twenty-second."

"Bill, please make your plans with Gringotts," Dumbledore ordered. "We must act with alacrity."

"Do we know enough to evacuate everyone the morning after the dance?" Hermione asked.

"That would tip our hand," Harry pointed out. "If they do all leave, we should do it quietly, after most of the students leave." Hermione nodded her understanding.

"Remus, you meet with Minerva and Filius and start making plans. Once you have a rough idea, bring in Pomona and Poppy. We'll bring in Horace and the other staff once we know for certain we have to leave, assuming that we do indeed have to evacuate," Dumbledore ordered.

The group agreed. "You look almost happy," Tracey said to Harry.

"I am," Harry answered. "I've lived with this confrontation coming over my shoulder for too long." He raised his hand to stave off any comments. "I know. Riddle is still very powerful. Despite the prophecy, I may still have to fight him. I could lose. But I lose a lot just by having this continue." Everyone nodded. Those in on all of Harry's secrets all thought that the stress was starting to make Harry's face match his magical age. "And, when this is over, I can be happy with all that was accomplished, besides the defeat of one madman."

"Remind us, my lord," Susan said with a smile.

Harry returned it. "We changed the government from one that was corrupt and incompetent into one that is more honest and fair."

"And weren't most of the supporters of Fudge honked off when it turned out that one of their biggest fears -- higher taxes -- wouldn't occur because without all the internal graft, there's been just enough money to pay for the improvements?" Padma said with a giggle.

"And the fairness extends to all magical people, not just Pure-bloods, and is starting to include other sentients as well," Hermione pointed out.

"House rivalries are fast breaking down," Susan said. "We're becoming a school that competes in four groups, instead of four factions trapped in one school."

"The Celtic clans are becoming more active," Tracey said with some satisfaction, "and they're interested in working with the Government instead of just insisting on their own rights."

"And you've made five witches very very happy," Luna pointed out.

"And content," Susan added.

"And on that note, we're taking Harry to bed," Hermione stated firmly. "Ladies?" Hermione asked standing. The other four stood as well. "My lord?"

Harry stood and bowed. "My lady." He bowed to the others. "My ladies." The group left.

It was not easy to keep pretending as if they knew nothing about what might be happening on the upcoming solstice, but the sextet managed to do so. The excitement over the winter dance helped distract many of the people around them, plus the two earlier alerts helped lull some of the DA into believing that the solstice would just be another drill.

Therefore, the Ball was a great success. With all the pressures on Harry, he and his consorts were hardly very active dancers. To the aggravation of Ron and a number of others, the star couple of the dance actually turned out to be Draco and Margot.

When Draco had spun his partner past Harry's table for the fifth time, Margot swishing her hips as they did so, Hermione and Luna caught a movement from Harry's hand.

"What did you do?" Hermione hissed.

"Me?" Harry asked, looking innocent.

"I wouldn't believe you were innocent if you had a nimbus," Hermione stated.

Harry smiled even more sweetly, and a halo appeared around his head. Hermione sniffed, and allowed Padma to come and take her for a spin around the dance floor.

"Whatever you did must have been naughty, since you won't own up to Hermione," Luna commented.

"It was," Harry admitted.

"Draco or Margot?"

"Margot," Harry said. "She's the one who hurt you, not Draco."

"Draco didn't hurt Hermione?"

"He did, but her slapping the smirk of his face sort of evens them up," Harry said.

"What did you do?"

"Every time she opens a Christmas Cracker, she'll get the same prize," Harry said.

"What will she get?"

"A set of Muggle nose plugs," Harry admitted.

"What are those?" Luna asked.

"A little Muggle device that pinches your nose shut, so water doesn't get up it underwater," Harry answered.

It took Luna a second to figure out the connections, and then she paled. "That was naughty indeed. Father Christmas will not be happy."

"Father Christmas ignored me for nine years at the Dursleys," Harry almost growled.

"Whatever it is you two are talking about, you're entirely too serious," Susan said, as she and Tracey made their way around the table.

"Quite right," Luna agreed. She stood, and Tracey led her out onto the dance floor. Harry did the same with Susan.

The next morning, the students were roused early. Most of them were heading home for the holidays right after breakfast. The large number who were in the DA were remaining, however.

Harry addressed them after lunch, and then Remus and Hermione explained exactly where things stood. Then Harry spoke to them again.

"First of all, let me say that there is a lockdown in effect," he told them. "Owls cannot get in or out, and no one can fire-call or enter or leave the castle until after noon tomorrow. With luck, everything will be over by then. However, it is possible that Voldemort has forces we are unaware of. If so, had this ritual not been discovered, the wards here would have been very damaged, and we would be open to assault. We have taken care of that part of the problem, at least. If Hogwarts is attacked tomorrow, the attackers will find the wards intact, and a large group of very capable defenders!"

The students cheered. While they did so, Harry's consorts were passing out medallions. These were up-graded versions of the fake Galleons Hermione had made for the DA in the first time stream.

"Get anything you need to get out of your system, well, out of your system before dinner tonight," Harry went on after explaining how to use the medallions. "You will be patrolling the corridors from after dinner tonight through noon tomorrow. If something is going to happen, it will happen in that time-frame. Ron and Millicent will be passing out the patrol schedules in a moment. The first patrols start tonight at Six. From Six until Midnight, Ron and Neville will be out on random patrol and Professor Flitwick will be here in the great hall with Cho. Report any problems to whomever is closer. From midnight until Six in the morning, it will be Millicent and Blaise on patrol, Professor Sinistra and Su here. From Six until Noon, it will be Ernie and Justin on patrol, and Professor McGonagall and Morag here. You will be actively patrolling for two hours, and be on alert for four. For those of you on the night shift, Madam Pomfrey has a very mild sleeping draft. It will help you nap for a few hours between dinner and midnight." He smiled. "So, are you ready?"

They cheered again.

The night was quiet, for which all were thankful. Dawn comes late at Hogwarts on the shortest day of the year -- it would be nearly 8:00. That meant the Voldemort's ceremony was likely to go off

between 4:00 and 5:30. Harry and his consorts all took the napping potion, and were wide awake by 2:00.

Harry ate a light but high energy breakfast, and was in his astral form down and down in the Chamber at 3:55. His body waited in the Room of Requirement, along side his consorts.

And then, everyone just waited.

To the east, Voldemort started the ritual at 4:42, Hogwarts' time, by slashing the throat of a Muggle boy he had kidnaped.

At Hogwarts, Luna said softly, "It has started," and then fainted.

Chapter XXXI

"Luna?" Hermione asked, "are you alright?"

"No, not really," Luna replied, not opening her eyes. "Have I been gone long?"

"It's just been a few seconds," Hermione answered. "Did you faint, or have a vision?"

Luna considered, and answered, "I had a vision, and then fainted." She paused, and then said, "I both saw and felt the runes and patterns being activated in the Chamber, and then Harry being taken away. Then I fainted."

"Was Harry out of control?" Padma asked.

Luna reviewed what she had experienced and frowned. "I think he was being taken along the path of power, rather than following it, but I don't think he was out of control."

Suddenly, the castle shook slightly. "The quartz must have shorted out," Hermione said.

"Shorted?" Padma asked.

"Muggle term," Hermione answered. "The power over-loaded the quartz or some other element." She flashed a quick bluebell flame and extinguished it. "No problems with my personal magic."

Padma checked on Harry's body. "No change in his pulse or breathing."

"Where's Tracey?" Luna asked.

"She and Susan went to notify the Headmaster," Padma answered.

"And here we are, with nothing to do but wait and see if Harry succeeds," Hermione complained.

"That is not quite true," Dumbledore said from the doorway. "Remember, the goblins cleared the cave-in. Harry should have left the entrances to the Chamber open. If so, we can start to evaluate the ceremony, and any damage to the tunnels or foundations. Remus and Sirius are investigating the dungeons, while the others are investigating the towers. They should meet somewhere in the middle this evening. If you could join Mister Korsakov in Myrtle's toilets, I shall inquire of the merpeople about the status of the lake bottom."

"Well," Hermione commented, "that should at least keep us busy."

"And it is all necessary," Dumbledore reminded. "Welcome to the world of adult responsibilities." He laughed when Susan and Padma stuck their tongues out at him.

"We shall endeavor to act as mature as you, Headmaster," Luna told him, recovering.

"Ah, you must be over a hundred to get away with acting as natural as I," Dumbledore told them. "Now, let us make a start."

"One of us needs to stay by Harry," Hermione insisted. "Luna?"

Luna thought but shook her head. "You four are all connected to Harry's emotions well enough that if he is in trouble you will know it, especially this close to his body. Lady, you should stay with our Lord. I will know if the rest of us need come."

"And if you need anything else, call us on your medallion," Tracey suggested.

Two soft pops announced the arrival of Dobby and Winky. "Dobby and Winky will wait with Mrs. Hermione," Dobby said. Hermione smiled at the title. The others left, and she waited and drank some tea which Winky had procured for her from the kitchens.

Some forty minutes after the castle had shaken, Hermione's attention was drawn back to Harry, laying on a small bed. She saw the slight changes in his respiration. His spirit was making its way back.

Hermione crossed over and laid on the bed next to her best friend. She hesitated, but then scooted down and flipped open his school robe and unbuttoned his trousers. She heard Dobby and Winky pop away as she fished into his underwear and pulled him out.

Harry was totally flaccid. It always amazed Hermione that his member, some nine inches long when fully erect and very excited, could shrink down to two inches. She sucked the soft flesh into her mouth and swished her tongue. As Harry had to travel some distance, a little encouragement might be welcome.

Hermione sucked for over three minutes, and Harry had grown at most a third erect. Suddenly Hermione shuddered, and she knew it was backwash from Harry rejoining his body. She kept sucking, and in less than ten seconds, Harry was fully erect and fully down her throat.

Hermione held the position as long as she could, and then backed off, stroking Harry as she did so. "Are you alright my love?" Hermione asked.

"Yes," Harry said in a tired voice. "It's over."

"Good." Hermione engulfed Harry's cock again, sucking hard, stroking fast, and tickling the bit of skin between Harry's testicles and anus. Harry, used to getting off at least twice a day for over year, had been too busy the evening before. He quickly shot off, and Hermione greedily swallowed, happy not to share for once.

Hermione kept Harry in her mouth until he was completely dry and clean. Only then did she let him get dressed. Luna had prevented anyone was entering the Room of Requirement until her lord and lady were ready.

In addition to the four consorts, there were Remus and Sirius, Dumbledore, Minister Bones along with Kingsley Shacklebolt and Tonks, Su Li, the Princess Victoria Alice, two representatives of Gringotts, and of course Harry's 'coach', Korsakov.

The quartet of consorts stood behind Harry and Hermione, while the others sat in chairs provided by the Room. When everyone was seated, Harry tossed Shacklebolt what looked like a compass.

"What's this?" he asked.

"A Voldemort finder," Harry answered. "I'm not totally sure where I was. My guess is Hungary. You'll need a team of curse-breakers."

"Let's start at the beginning, shall we?" Dumbledore suggested.

"Quiet," Victoria Alice commanded. "Let him tell it as he sees fit." Dumbledore scowled, but said nothing.

"Has everyone been briefed on what I was planning on doing?" Everyone nodded.

"Once Voldemort started the ceremony, I was pulled along with the magic he was trying to pull away from Hogwarts. In a sense, I was swimming with the current. I think doing so made the whole thing over-load even more quickly than it would have anyway. In any case, the whole thing blew at Voldemort's end when I arrived."

"As most of you know, even in my astral form, I retained some use of magic. Not a lot, but a little. It was enough to levitate a large rock, about twice the size of a head, and drop it on Voldemort's head three times." Several people wrinkled their noses. "I saw his rather surprised spirit rise from the body, much like a ghost. Then it was, well, I guess 'bathed' is the only term I can think of. It was bathed in a golden light. Voldemort looked shocked, and then his whole demeanor became peaceful, and then almost regretful. Then the light turned dark red, and he started screaming. The light also seemed to change direction. At first, it seemed to be coming from above. The red light was from below. He's gone from this world."

Harry shrugged. "I created a beacon for that device to home in on, and then made my way back here. So, there was nothing glorious about it. No great final battle. No grand declarations or declamations. No exchange of ritual abuse. I just bashed in the head of a very dangerous dark criminal lunatic." His shoulders slumped.

"I know it gives you little comfort, but it had to be done," Dumbledore said.

"True," Harry retorted. "Minister? Could you try and placate whatever Ministry I offended by executing a criminal without notifying them?"

"I will," she assured him. "Dumbledore and I will talk to the International as well. As ineffective as they usually are, they still need to be notified. We'll make the formal announcement this evening at the Wizengamot."

"Harry. . . ." Remus started.

Harry merely nodded. "The werewolves in my valley are certainly free to leave after the next full moon. If they want to return for future full moons, so they can run without taking the Potion, that's fine with me." The next full moon was early Christmas morning.

Princess Victoria Alice cleared her throat and said, "Lord Potter?"

"Yes, Ma'am?" Harry answered.

"This lot will get around to mentioning the Order of Merlin at some point. I talked this over with Her Royal Highness, and we wondered if you would accept a Muggle award as well."

Hermione put her hand over Harry's mouth before he could refuse and looked at the other consorts, who all nodded. "He will," she said.

"Good. Wise man, Potter, listen to the gels. Now, I wanted a barony for you, but the Muggles have fouled the nobility up. Can't create real lords any more, and even the life peerages are too scrutinized. They don't seem to create baronets any more either." She sniffed. "So, in the Muggle world, you will have to be satisfied with being a plain old knight bachelor, Sir Harry."

"Thank Her Majesty, and thank you," Harry answered. She nodded.

"I think we should all go make all the reports we need to make, and preparations for some big parties," Sirius said.

"Good idea," Remus agreed. The group started to break up.

Korsakov went over to Harry and merely said, "Talk with me tomorrow. We will work to put your soul back into balance."

Harry stood and bowed in thanks. His teacher bowed in return.

In less than five minutes, everyone was gone, except Harry, Hermione, the consorts, and Su.

"You might have noticed Su around the castle these last few weeks," Hermione said. Su knelt before Harry.

"I did," Harry admitted.

"Would you consider adding one more?" Hermione asked.

"We promise, no more," Luna added.

"We do like her very much," Susan pointed out.

"We work really well together," Tracey said, "and, to be political, it would be a good mood."

"And she's very very cute and adorable," Padma purred.

"We are not buying a puppy," Harry said, pretending to be irritable. "We're talking about our friend."

"True," Hermione agreed.

"No more, right?" All of the women nodded their heads. "You all swear?" They all agreed to swear.

"Then we should all rest until the party." The Room of Requirement changed into a very nice bedroom, with a very very huge bed.

"Well," Hermione said, "we should all at least lie down."

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To the surprise of many, Harry tried stay out of politics, but this was only successful for a few years. His last year and a half at Hogwarts were calm, as few could get at the hero of the magical world while he was there. Even though more than three quarters of the those students sworn to Harry let their formal oaths drop, none were anything but loyal to Harry as a person. They guarded his privacy as much as they looked out for him and his.

Over the decades, some would work against a few of the proposals from Harry's inner circle, but none who had once sworn to follow him ever really did so on any matter of real importance to Harry, and they all stayed, at the least, friendly.

Harry never became Minister of Magic, but with his help, Daphne Greengrass did, and then she went on to hold the post for nearly ninety years. Harry was named to the Wizangamot at the age of twenty-four, when the first seat came open after he left Hogwarts.

While Harry tried to play house-husband as often as possible, it was Susan and Tracey who spent their time looking after the children and playing the roles of 'house-witch' -- overseeing both the magical and mundane aspects that the house elves didn't take care of. Luna worked part-time in the Department of Mysteries, and to Hermione's dismay, would not reveal what she did there.

Hermione, Padma, and Su took on the traditions of magical education. Potions was the only field with a well-organized and fairly open apprenticeship program. Astronomy really relied on Muggle advances. Runes, Arithmancy, and Transfiguration had very informal apprenticeships. Other fields of study were even less organized, or were only formally studied by various government agencies under various Ministries.

Over a twenty-five year period, the trio created a system where experts contributed criteria and provided testing. This was seen as a way to make the traditionally informal apprenticeship programs more professional. With Harry's reputation (and connections and money), they were able to extend the idea outside of Britain, and that made it large enough of a program to succeed.

Unsurprisingly, considering his six mates, Harry had far more than the dozen children Trelawney had predicted. He and Hermione had four, Luna had one, Padma had five (including two sets of twins), Susan six, Tracey three, and Su two.

The children (nine boys, twelve girls) were Sorted into all four Houses. Tracey's son was Sorted into Slytherin, and a son and a daughter from Susan were Sorted into Hufflepuff. Harry and Hermione's son was Sorted into Gryffindor, as was one of Tracey's daughters and one of Padma's. The others were all Sorted into Ravenclaw. Harry loved all his children, of course, and was proud of them. He was a bit disappointed that only six played Quidditch, and of them only Su's daughter played Seeker.

Harry put together a consortium and, after Ron ended his two year career as Keeper for Appleby,

Harry bought the Cannons. Ron was made the coach, and while they only won three Championships over the ninety years Ron coached them, they were a much more winning team than they had been over the previous ninety years.

After the wizarding world had suffered decades of unrest because of Grindelwald, and western Europe had endured Voldemort, it settled down to a degree over Harry's lifetime. There were no real Dark Lords who attempted to rise. There were five major attempts to start Dark movements -- one in eastern Europe; one that formed in western Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean; two that rose and fell in succession in parts of central Asia, and one which nearly formed in east Africa and India -- but in the end, all were crushed with minimal violence. Harry helped out to some degree in all five cases, but was not called upon to take the lead in any of them.

The saddest part of Harry's life was that his tremendous power gave him an extended life, out-living all his consorts and only dying at the age of 231. Still, overall, Harry thought he had managed, with their help, to leave the world a bit better off.