

The Mathias Prophecy Book I

By

Esined

Table of Contents

The Mathias Prophecy Book I.....	1
PART 1 - HARRY	3
PART 2 - REVELATION	26
PART 3 - A LITTLE TEST	38
PART 4 - LONDON ADVENTURE	46
PART 5 - THE PROPHECY.....	55
PART 6 - THE UNSEEN WATCHER.....	72
PART 7 - HALLOWEEN	84
PART 8 - YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW	95
PART 9 – HARRY REMEMBERS.....	110
PART 10 - A RAT IN A TRAP	121

PART 1 - HARRY

Harry was in transfiguration class when Professor Dumbledore's summons came. Professor McGonagall had informed the headmaster earlier in the day that Harry had wanted to speak with him but had refused to tell her why. She had tried to question Harry for some time regarding why but was unable to get a straight answer. She finally determined that it was something of a personal and private nature which had been troubling Harry for some time. It was then that she decided to notify Dumbledore.

As Harry headed through the corridor to the headmaster's office he kept thinking about what to say and how to approach the subject. Harry was sure that Dumbledore knew all about it and had helped James and Lily Potter to plan it. The only problem was they had been killed and Harry was left to live with the Dursleys. They, of course, had threatened life in an orphanage if Harry ever told anyone about his parents' death; it had been made perfectly clear that they had wanted this from the time Harry was a baby. Then there was Sirius Black, Harry's Godfather. Harry was almost certain that he was aware of the situation.

Reaching the gargoyle which concealed the entrance to the headmaster's office Harry's heart began to pound with anxiety. Professor McGonagall had given Harry the new password and in a last minute moment of panic Harry considered turning around, but decided that it would be foolish, having come so far.

"Butternut toffee," Harry stated to the statue. The hidden door then swung open revealing the curving stairs up to the headmaster's inner sanctum. Harry climbed on and was immediately sent up. There was no answer when Harry knocked, so, opening the door, Harry went on in, noting immediately that Dumbledore was not present in the room. However Fawkes, the headmaster's pet phoenix, greeted Harry happily with an odd trilling sound fluffing out his feathers. Harry responded by pulling a cracker out of his robe, and gave it to the bird.

"Hello Fawkes," Harry smiled as the phoenix lifted up his head to be scratched. "Professor Dumbledore is expecting me, but he doesn't seem to be here," Harry told the bird not expecting an answer. Just then Fawkes let out a sound somewhere between a screech and a caw as he looked past Harry towards the fireplace.

"Good afternoon Harry," Dumbledore's quiet voice stated from inside the fireplace startling Harry.

Dumbledore's head and shoulders were floating in the fire. Harry knew that this was a convenient and swift way that wizards could communicate with each other but still couldn't get used to it.

"I'm afraid I have been called to the other side of the building on a minor emergency. It seems Peeves has been up to his mischief again in the kitchens."

"I can come back later," Harry replied.

"That will not be necessary. Have a seat by the fire and I'll have the house elves send up a snack while you wait," Dumbledore said smiling kindly. "I will be along in a few minutes. You just make yourself at home and keep Fawkes company."

Dumbledore's image then vanished and a moment later a tall glass of pumpkin juice and a plate of chocolate cookies appeared on the table over by the fireplace. Harry sat down to wait in an overstuffed Queen Ann chair while munching on the cookies.

Harry kept trying to plan what to say to Dumbledore while watching the flames swirl around in the fire. A myriad of ideas danced in Harry's head about how to approach the subject with the headmaster. 'What possible reason was there for Harry's family to have allowed it to be done? Surely Lily Potter would have angrily objected if not outright refused. Was this James Potter's idea? If so why? Could it have had something to do with Voldemort? What dark reason could they have had?' Harry was so confused by the whole situation and just wanted it to end. Harry was sure Dumbledore knew the answers and suspected that Sirius did too, if he were around, but he was still in hiding, a wanted felon for a crime he did not commit.

"Harry, you've been staring into those flames for the past thirty minutes."

Harry jumped as the sound of Professor Dumbledore's quiet voice interrupted his reverie.

"What could be so important that you were distracted enough not even to notice I had returned to my office?" Dumbledore asked gently, his blue eyes serious. "Your scar hasn't been hurting again, has it?" he questioned, indicating the scar etched into Harry's forehead.

"Uhm....no sir," Harry stammered uncomfortably. "I uh...wanted to talk to you about, well.....um.....the lie I'm being forced to live," Harry blurted out, cheeks burning. "I can't stand the secrecy any longer."

"I see..." Dumbledore replied slowly, his blue eyes staring into Harry's green ones in contemplation.

"My friends.....well....they're starting to get suspicious and ask questions."

"What kind of questions?"

"They want to know why I was given a room of my own, away from the dorm."

"What did you tell them?" Dumbledore asked, watching Harry intently.

"Just what you told me too. That it was because my nightmares kept waking them up," Harry stated, referring to the recurring nightmare about James and Lily's death, "but they don't believe that, not entirely anyway."

"Has anyone else said anything to you?" Dumbledore prodded.

"Draco Malfoy. He keeps making remarks because I'm not tall and my voice hasn't deepened like some of the others. He keeps saying that the famous Harry Potter is going to stay a Gryffindor lion cub forever," Harry said referring to the Slytherin student and arch rival. "It's not fair professor; I'm sixteen. I want and need to know why this is happening to me!" Harry said angrily.

Dumbledore merely sat patiently watching Harry and allowed the anger and frustration to come out. It was true that Harry's problem needed to come out into the open, and soon, but he

needed to make the child understand that it had to be done carefully. So he just sat there until Harry's green eyes met his blue ones before speaking.

"You're right Harry. We've waited as long as possible. I know you have questions but I want you to wait until I can send for Sirius. He should be here too and yes to your next question," Dumbledore smiled in amusement, "he does know. He is your godfather after all. I will dispatch an owl to him today."

Harry's face broke into a broad grin. Sirius was coming! True, he was still a wanted criminal having escaped from Azkaban Prison three years ago, but more and more wizards had been reporting that Peter Pettigrew was actually alive while spying on Voldemort for the order. It was just a matter of time until the Aurors caught up to the filthy bastard who had betrayed the Potters resulting in their death, causing Sirius to be wrongfully accused.

"In the meantime, Harry, I expect you to return to class and say nothing to no one about this, and I do mean no one," Dumbledore told him sternly, but his blue eyes were twinkling.

Harry understood that he was referring to Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, Harry's two best friends. They had all met five years ago when they first started at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, becoming fast friends. All three been placed into Gryffindor house for their school dormitory, although Harry had narrowly missed being placed into the Gryffindor rival house of Slytherin.

"I won't say a word, sir," Harry promised as a sharp rap sounded on Dumbledore's office door. A tall man entered. He had a pale face and straight black shoulder length hair that was rather greasy looking. His height was accentuated by the fact that he was entirely dressed in black robes. It was the potions master and head of Slytherin House, Professor Severus Snape.

"I beg your pardon Headmaster," Snape said glancing at Harry. "I was unaware you were still with Mr. Potter."

"That's all right, Severus, Harry was just getting ready to leave," Dumbledore informed him.

"Yes, Professor," Harry said looking over towards Professor Snape. "I have to be getting over to the greenhouse for Herbology." Harry smiled over at Dumbledore before opening the door and the headmaster winked back conspiratorially before Harry descended.

Dumbledore waited until Harry was gone and then turned his attention to the potions master. He loved the former Death Eater turned spy like a son, and despite Severus' sometimes dour attitude he was his best friend. Severus watched intently as Dumbledore penned a brief letter without speaking. He knew his mentor would let him know what was going on in due time. He sat perfectly still waiting. Dumbledore marveled at this and took his time. He found it amazing how someone could not even twitch a muscle while sitting perfectly straight. Not only that, but Severus could walk through the entire castle without so much as making a sound. He truly had the stealth of the Slytherin snake. Dumbledore completed writing his letter and looked up.

"Severus, something has come up and I'm sending for Sirius Black," the headmaster said calmly watching for his friend's reaction.

Severus and Black did not get along ever since their days as students at Hogwarts. Black had played a practical joke, which almost resulted in Severus' death at the hands of another student, who was now a teacher at Hogwarts. Remus Lupin, the Defense Against the Dark Arts professor, was a werewolf and had been in wolf form when Severus was tricked by Black into going into Lupin's safe retreat. It had been Harry's father, James, who had gotten Severus out of the way before the werewolf had attacked him. Severus and Sirius had come to a somewhat shaky truce in an effort to defeat Voldemort and protect Harry but they still did not fully trust one another.

"Has something happened to Mr. Potter? He did not seem ill," Severus said, arching his left eye brow speculatively.

"No, Harry isn't ill, but we do have a major situation developing. Suffice it to say that the entire school will be in an uproar within the next few days," Dumbledore replied carefully.

"May I inquire as to the nature of the problem? I'm sure you didn't send for me just to tell me Black is coming," Severus sneered in his usual manner.

"I can't tell you just yet," Dumbledore said mischievously, "but I do need you to prepare yourself in the event Voldemort becomes more active and makes another attempt to harm Harry....." Dumbledore concluded knowing that they may be in for a rough school year in many ways.

"Headmaster, you know I have always been ready when you called," Severus answered evenly. "What could possibly cause the Dark Lord to step up his campaign?"

"As I stated before, I am not yet at liberty to divulge that information."

"I understand Headmaster, but if the Dark Lord is up to something perhaps I could...." Severus began, clearly disgruntled, before Dumbledore cut him off.

"No, Severus, not yet."

"Will there be anything else?" The Potions Master asked.

"Yes. See that this letter gets to the owlery and posted at once. I don't want to give it to the house elves due to its sensitive nature," Dumbledore instructed as he handed Severus a letter with Sirius' name on the front. "Then have Professor Lupin report to me. We need to plan how to best protect Sirius. I think it might be a good idea to keep him in the Shrieking Shack in Hogsmead. That way he'll have access to the castle and can keep an eye out for any sign of trouble in town," Dumbledore said wryly. "No one will pay much attention to a stray dog," he mused, indicating Sirius' animagus form of a large black dog.

Sirius Black, Peter Pettigrew, and Harry's father James became animagus wizards in their fifth year at Hogwarts. They had decided to do so in their second year to protect their friend Remus Lupin when they learned he was a werewolf. It had taken them three years to perfect the skill in secret, James becoming a Stag, Sirius a black dog, also known a Grimm, which wizards considered a harbinger of death, and Peter became a rat. The Shrieking Shack had been built to conceal Remus from the full moon when the madness was upon him and the local people

believed it to be haunted. This was attributed to the awful howls and screams which came from it when Remus was present in his wolf form and it had been quite effective. It was connected to the Hogwarts grounds via a secret tunnel beneath the Whomping Willow.

"I will see to your letter immediately, Headmaster," Severus said with distaste as he glanced down at Black's name and rose to go. "Then I will go and inform Professor Lupin you wish to speak to him," he said, referring to the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, who had returned to Hogwarts after having resigned the position two years ago.

"Thank you, Severus. I knew I could count on your support," Dumbledore said dismissing him.

Thirty minutes later Remus Lupin and Professor Dumbledore concluded their business. Sirius would indeed stay in the Shrieking Shack. Dobby the house elf would see to his personal needs and make sure food was sent to him daily via the secret tunnel connecting the two buildings. He then returned to his class wondering what was going on.

The owl found Sirius Black two days later hiding in a small cave outside to Remus Lupin's home town. At first he thought it was a letter from Harry but as soon as he saw his name on the envelope, he recognized Dumbledore's hand writing, becoming alarmed that something had happened to Harry. He tore open the envelope and read the missive inside:

SIRIUS

HOPE THIS FINDS YOU WELL. HARRY IS ASKING QUESTIONS AND IT'S TIME TO GIVE THE ANSWERS. WE BOTH KNEW THIS DAY WOULD COME. I'D ALSO LIKE REMUS AND SEVERUS TO BE ON HAND AS I'M WORRIED THAT THIS MIGHT STIR VOLDEMORT INTO ACTION. COME AT ONCE. ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR YOUR SAFETY

ALBUS

Sirius scanned the letter a second time just to make sure he didn't miss anything. His anxiety level was high and he had hoped Harry would be patient a little longer. He looked outside preparing to leave the cave. The sun was just setting and long shadows were hiding the mouth of the cave. Once he was certain no one was about he transformed and set out at a swift trot heading north towards the school. He worried that Harry would not wait and tell his friends. He knew this was hard on Harry and wondered if Dumbledore had not made a mistake by continuing to have Harry keep quiet after entering Hogwarts. The whole thing had been Dumbledore's idea, but then, they had all agreed to it for Harry's sake. Would Voldemort have been more aggressive if he had found out? So far Harry had been lucky. The predictions in the Prophecy had been coming to pass. Sirius hoped that things would work out satisfactorily and that Harry wouldn't be too angry with them all for turning everything totally upside down. 'Please Merlin; don't let Harry be too angry with me. I wouldn't be able to bear it if I lost the only family I have left because we did something so stupid just to protect the child,' Sirius thought to himself as he made his way across the country.

He had traveled through the night and completed more than half the journey when he realized he needed to stop and rest. His paws hurt and his stomach was making loud gurgling sounds. Still, he continued on for another hour before spotting an isolated farm house in the distance. Hunger overtaking him, he decided to take a chance and beg some scraps. He studied the yard

cautiously for other dogs guarding the premises, then picking up his left paw so that he would appear injured, limped into the yard with a whine. He could smell sausages cooking and knew there would be fresh eggs also, having startled some chickens moving about the yard when he entered.

"Woof!" He barked in an effort to get some attention, sitting down licking his paw and drooling with hunger, as he waited for a response.

A small blond haired boy of about six opened the door. "Mama! Mama! It's a Grim! It's here to get me!" the startled child cried panic stricken, believing the black dog to be a portent of death.

Sirius felt bad that he had frightened the child, and remembered the first time Harry had seen him, when he had tried to run away from the Dursleys. Hoping the boy's mother would feed him when he saw her appear in the door, Sirius took his cue from her presence, and lowering his head in a submissive manner whined again.

"That is not a Grim, Toby, his mother explained. "It's just a stray dog."

"No, it's a Grim Mama. It's going to get me just like in the stories," the boy sobbed, hiding his face in her apron as she looked on helplessly.

"What is going on out there?" a man's voice called from the kitchen. "I want my breakfast!"

"It's just a stray dog that's wandered into the yard Ethan," the woman called in to her husband. "I'll get rid of him."

"If you don't, I will!" he responded in an angry voice, "and shut that brat up!" he added in response to the child's continued crying.

"Shoo! Go home. Please doggy go home if you know what's good for you," she said looking with sympathy at Sirius.

Sirius had gotten the distinct impression that this was not a happy family and was beginning to regret coming into the yard when he heard a chair scraping on the kitchen floor.

"Papa the Grim won't go!" the boy said continuing to sob. "It's going to take me!"

"Shut up you stupid brat," the child's father said as he came onto the porch and shoved his wife aside. Sirius noted that she winced in pain when he touched her. "I'll get you! You filthy mutt," he yelled at Sirius. Grabbing a large broom from the porch, he pointed the handle towards him and began to advance threateningly.

Sirius was angry now and crouching low, let out a low growl. He felt sorry for the woman and son and instinctively knew this man was abusing them. He decided to teach him a lesson and get some food at the same time.

Tensing, he sprang up quickly, knocking the man off balance. Circling him carefully he rounded with a snarl, biting his ankle before running up the stairs and into the house. Racing over to where the breakfast sausages were cooling on a plate by the stove, he scooped them up, and then dashed back outside, sausage links dangling from either side of his mouth. The

angry man was howling in pain and attempting to stand as Sirius came onto the porch. Taking another leap he landed squarely on the man's chest knocking the wind out of him. Using the time to his advantage he stepped aside, never having lost a single sausage, lifted his leg, and urinated in the man's face. He then ran off down the drive. Hiding under some nearby brush about a half mile further, he stopped and devoured the food. If anyone had seen him they would have sworn the large black dog was smiling, and they would have been right. Having satisfied his stomach Sirius decided it wouldn't be prudent to stay long in this locality, as the man would surely report a vicious dog to the authorities, so he decided to continue his journey until he was sure no one was pursuing him. He traveled on for over an hour keeping off main roads and using whatever underbrush he was near for added cover. Finally, fatigue overcame him. Finding a group of yew trees he curled up into a ball with his tail over his nose and went to sleep.

The dream began happily. He was standing in the hospital with James, who was telling him about the baby. Sirius was all excited and thrilled to be the child's Godfather, but something wasn't right. The dream started to get dark and then Albus appeared shaking his head and holding up his hand. He was holding some kind of paper and motioning them to hurry when a dark shadow moved passed them. It was icy cold with red eyes and moved with a slithering motion, like a snake. Voldemort! The baby was crying.....Sirius woke with a jolt, panting with anxiety. The late September sun was at an angle in the sky and Sirius knew it must be past noon. He had to make haste if he were to reach Hogwarts by tonight. Harry needed him. No matter what the outcome, he would be there to see it through.

Sirius skirted around the town of Hogsmeade just after sunset of the second day. He then ran the rest of the way towards Hogwarts, and only slowed down as he neared the Forbidden Forest. Using the trees as a cover he transformed back into his human form and staying to the shadows headed towards Hagrid's cottage. Hagrid was outside gathering fire wood when he was alerted to Sirius' presence when his boar hound, Fang, began to bark, and picking up a familiar scent, ran out to greet him.

Looking up from his work, Hagrid smiled. 'Whatever is goin' on Sirius 'as arrived an' Dumbledore'll know what to do,' he thought to himself. "Come on Fang," Hagrid said leading the way to the door, "Let's get 'im into the house so we can greet 'im proper like."

"Good to see you again Hagrid," Sirius greeted him warmly as soon as the door was closed behind them

"Ye be a sight for sore eyes," Hagrid replied. "Professor Dumbledore said ta keep an eye out fer ya. Said he wasn't sure when ye'd get here so I been waitin' patiently with Fang here," he grinned pointing a thumb over his shoulder to where the dog lay by the hearth.

"I came as soon as I received Dumbledore's message. I need to talk with him immediately."

"He'd be down ta the Great Hall right now, it bein' dinner time. I'm sure the watcher elves let 'im know yer here," Hagrid informed him. "Why don't ya join me in a bite ta eat an' we can do some catchin' up till he sends fer ya?"

"Now that you mention it I am starved," Sirius grinned. 'Sometimes being the stray dog does have its drawbacks,' he thought to himself. "What's on the menu? Something smells awfully good," Sirius asked sniffing the air.

"Lamb stew," Hagrid told him as he set out two bowls. He then scooped out a generous portion with the large ladle by the cooking pot before cutting a large slab of bread. Placing them both in front of his dinner guest, he smiled broadly, as Sirius attacked the meal. Sirius had been so worried about the situation with Harry he hadn't realized how hungry he was.

The two men chatted amiably for the better part of an hour while they ate. Sirius, of course, listened with interest to every new item that Hagrid told him, especially when it concerned Harry. Finally a house elf appeared and told them that Sirius was wanted up at the castle. Dumbledore would see him in his office. Sirius was to come up to the castle where Professor Lupin would meet him and escort him upstairs. As he entered the castle, Sirius transformed back into his animagus form, as Remus soft voice called out.

"Hello Snuffles. It's good to see you again." Snuffles happily licked his friend's hands in hello. "Let's get you up to the headmaster's office. Dumbledore doesn't want Harry to know you're here yet. He wants to speak with you alone first and then bring in Snape and myself."

At the sound of the Potion Master's name Sirius looked up emitting a low growl. He still didn't like Snape even though they had agreed to that truce to protect Harry against Voldemort.

"Now Snuffles behave," Remus grinned as they passed a small group of students. "I don't care for Severus that much either but he has been civil since I've been back. Besides, he makes my potion each month without complaining," he sighed, referring to the Wolfbane Potion he needed to control the madness brought on by his werewolf transformation during the full moon. As they came to a stop in front of the gargoyle guarding the entrance to Dumbledore's office Remus uttered the new password, "Banana Cream Pie," and the door swung open. "This is as far as I go for now Padfoot," Remus told him using the nickname Sirius had chosen for himself when he had learned to transform rather than the more commonly used Snuffles. "I'm most anxious to find out what is going on so don't keep me in the dark for too long," he told his friend with a wink goodbye.

Sirius barked once to tell him he understood and then trotted off up the stairs. Once inside the office he looked about and seeing Dumbledore at his desk he transformed back into his human form.

"Ah Sirius, welcome back," Dumbledore said rising to greet him. "I was worried my owl might not find you as quickly as it did."

"I came as soon as I got your message. Were you waiting long?" Sirius queried.

"Four days."

"How about Harry, has there been any change?" Sirius inquired referring to Harry's desire to get everything over and out into the open.

"No. Harry has been waiting for you. I'm just concerned about how the faculty and students will respond," Dumbledore informed him with a slight smile playing about his lips. "Sirius we need to handle this as delicately as possible. Harry's whole life is about to change."

"I agree. If James and Lily hadn't been killed Harry would have been told a long time ago," Sirius said shaking his head, "but I ended up in prison, and you had to deal with the situation the best way you could, to keep Harry safe. What about Voldemort? Will he see the parallels with the prophecy and increase his attempt to get to Harry?" he finished worriedly.

"It's very possible. That's why Harry must be told everything very carefully."

"So where do we begin?" Sirius questioned the older wizard.

"Does anyone else to your knowledge know?" Dumbledore asked him quietly.

"Not unless you told them. I promised James and Lily never to say a word and I'm glad to say that I didn't fail them there. I never even told Remus after breaking out of Azkaban, and Peter never knew, thank Merlin," Sirius informed him.

"Good. I've told no one either."

"Not even Snape?" Sirius scowled.

"No. Not even Severus," Dumbledore corrected him gently. "You really need to try and get along, especially now that Harry will need your extra protection," he scolded.

"Well then, should we start with just Remus and Snape or Harry?"

"Why not bring them all in together?" Dumbledore said his eyes twinkling. "I will send word around for them to come up. It's only eight o'clock so Harry should still be up. I'll have Professor McGonagall get Harry for us. Would you like to include her and Hagrid tonight too?"

"Not yet," Sirius replied. "Let's start with Remus and Sna...er Severus," he corrected at Dumbledore's sharp look, "and see what happens."

"Very well," Dumbledore nodded ringing for the house elves. Dobby appeared promptly. "Dobby I want you to ask Professors Snape and Lupin to come to my office immediately. Then have Professor McGonagall send Harry Potter to me. Tell her it's very important that Harry be dispatched at once. I will also want some refreshments sent up from the kitchen."

"Dobby will do so," he said jumping up and down. "Dobby will send Professors Snape and Lupin and have Professor McGonagall send Harry Potter. Dobby will send up some food too!" he repeated, before disappearing with a loud pop. A pot of tea and a pitcher of juice appeared along with a tray of cake and cookies almost as soon as the elf had vanished.

"Sirius I apologize for not offering you some refreshments sooner."

"That's o.k. Albus; I was still full from dinner. Hagrid fed me well," Sirius said with a grin, as he patted his stomach, before helping himself to a cup of tea and a piece of cake, as he continued their conversation. "Do you think Harry will have any problems with the other students when they find out?"

"Possibly, but children adapt quickly. In a month, they will have found the entire situation amusing and continue going about their usual routines, until a new topic for discussion comes up."

"What about Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley?"

"Harry's their best friend. They'll adapt quickly once they get over the shock of Harry not telling them," Dumbledore stated firmly as the other two professors entered the office.

"Remus, Severus, come and join us by the fire and have some tea and cakes while we wait for Harry to arrive," he indicated two chairs and the tea table full of pastries.

"Headmaster, Black," Professor Snape said his dark eyes glaring at Sirius.

"So Sirius, Professor," Remus said cheerfully, trying to dissolve a serious situation before it could happen, "I guess we're finally going to get to find out what's going on?" he asked as he accepted some cake and a glass of juice. "What has Harry got to do with this?"

"Yes..." Snape said slowly staring at Black while he waved away an offer of refreshments. "Just what does Mr. Potter have to do with what ever is going on? The Dark Lord has made no attempts to summon me back into his service to try and get to Harry," he finished, indicating where his left sleeve covered the skull and snake tattoo known as the Dark Mark. This would burn painfully when Voldemort sent his summons to call his followers to him.

"Let's hope it stays that way." Sirius replied tersely.

"I agree," Dumbledore added, "but here comes Harry now. Both yours and Harry's questions will be answered shortly," the headmaster explained, as the door opened and Harry entered nervously. "It's all right Child, there's someone here to see you," Dumbledore reassured Harry, looking over to where Sirius was just getting up with a smile, holding his arms out.

"Sirius!" Harry exclaimed as they greeted each other with a hug.

"Let me have a look at you," Sirius said taking a step back and nodding to himself. "I hear you're looking for some answers to some very important questions," he said, his eyes laughing, as he looked over towards Dumbledore and continued, "you're right Albus. It's time everyone is told, but before we go on I just want to ask Harry if anyone here at Hogwarts knows?" Sirius questioned.

"If you mean Ron or Hermione no," Harry stated firmly looking him in the eye, "but there is one other person I had to tell," Harry explained looking over towards the headmaster. "I'm sorry Professor but I had to tell Nurse Pomfrey. I told her to speak to you and not to say anything to anybody else."

"I see....." Dumbledore said shrewdly, "and when was this?"

"About an hour ago," Harry said nervously. "I was having some stomach cramps and needed to see her right away. Then she got called over to the Ravenclaw common room on an emergency."

"Yes, one of the first years had an asthma attack. I believe she and the doctor are still busy with the boy. "

"It's not too severe is it?" Professor Lupin inquired solicitously.

"No, they've got him stabilized now, but we're getting away from the reason I have called you all here. Don't worry, Harry, Poppy won't say or do anything until she speaks to me," Dumbledore said, amused by Harry's obvious discomfort over having to speak with the nurse, as he motioned for Harry to sit beside Sirius on the couch.

"Potter are you ill?" Professor Snape inquired.

"Yes Harry, did you eat something at dinner that disagreed with you and had to go to the nurse?" Remus Lupin asked with concern.

"You didn't tell them?" Harry asked looking from Sirius to Dumbledore and back again.

"No," Sirius said grinning wickedly, keeping his face hidden from the two professors, indicating his knowledge of Harry's condition that had caused a visit to the school nurse in such a hurry.

"Harry, why don't you go into the other room for a minute? You'll find some new robes there for you, my present," Dumbledore said with a smile. "You might like to try them on to see how they fit."

"O.K.," Harry agreed picking up on the headmaster's meaning and going into the adjoining bedroom.

"Sirius if something's wrong with Harry I'll be of any help you need," Remus told him anxiously.

"As will I," Professor Snape agreed cryptically. "Despite my feelings towards his late father I hold no animosity towards the boy."

Harry listened to this exchange from the other room while changing into the new clothes that were laid out neatly on the bed. Then, taking a final look in the mirror turned back to wait inside the door way of the office.

"Actually Harry is going to be fine now," Dumbledore told them smiling as he directed their attention to where Harry was waiting in the doorway.

Harry would forever remember what happened next. Sirius, who had been party to the whole thing since its inception, was laughing so hard with delight he fell off the couch. Remus Lupin was in shock and just kept opening and closing his mouth like a fish out of water, unable to find the right words to express himself. But it was Professor Snape's reaction which was the best. He just stood up slowly, and bringing himself up to his full height, arched one eyebrow, and with a shake of his head looked over at Harry. Then, with the most sardonic tone he could muster, spoke in his eloquent voice.

"Miss Potter this is truly an unexpected surprise. Welcome to Hogwarts," then, turning towards Dumbledore he continued slowly, "Headmaster.....I can only assume that Harry's true gender has been kept concealed since she was an infant for a specific purpose?"

"All of your questions will be answered Severus," but first we have to answer Harry's," he finished, motioning Harry to return to the place where she had been sitting beside Sirius as Snape resumed his seat.

"Professor," Remus Lupin said, finally finding his voice, which sounded strangely hollow in his ears, "does this have anything to do with the Prophecy of Mathias?"

As he asked this question Professor Dumbledore saw Severus appear to flinch which meant he knew how this could affect not only Harry, but all of them and the school.

"What is the Prophecy of Mathias?" Harry asked, "and why have I had to pretend to be a boy ever since I can remember? For that matter is my name really even Harry?" she asked in confusion, looking from Sirius to Dumbledore.

"Calm down Harry," Sirius said gently as he put his arm around her protectively.

"Child all your questions will be answered, as will those of Remus and Severus," Dumbledore soothed her with an air of authority. "Sirius do you want to start or should I?"

"I think it would be best if you do Albus," Sirius conceded. "I'll just sit with Harry till you're finished."

"Very well, first of all let me begin with Harry's questions," Dumbledore said looking at his two professors. "Then we can plan how to proceed. Harry it's vital that you understand why your parents needed to conceal the fact that you were a girl," the headmaster said as he reached over to take Harry's hand. "It all goes back to the Prophecy of Mathias."

"Who was Mathias? And what has he to do with me?" Harry asked her confusion mounting.

"Hush Harry," Sirius chided, "go on Albus."

"Chandra Mathias was a Muggle woman who married a wizard by the name of Aremis Mathias. She lived in the village where I grew up. As I said, she was a Muggle, but as sometimes happens, she was a gifted seer."

"Oh great, that's all I need, another Madam Trelawney," Harry mumbled under her breath rolling her eyes, but noting the dark look from Professor Snape refrained from further comment as Dumbledore continued, ignoring the remark.

"She was never wrong and both Wizards and Muggles often sought her out for a reading."

"What happened to her?" Professor Lupin queried. "I'd heard that she died in an accident."

"She was murdered by Grindelwald," Dumbledore stated flatly. "He was furious that she had made all those accurate predictions about him."

"She predicted things about the evil wizard you defeated?" Harry asked her curiosity piqued, looking at Dumbledore with interest.

"Yes Harry, but that doesn't matter right now," Dumbledore stated dismissing any questions she might ask. "What does matter is what she predicted about Voldemort."

"Voldemort!" Harry exclaimed looking at the men seated around her.

"Yes Harry," Sirius replied his voice husky with emotion. "She predicted his rise to power, his first defeat and his resurrection."

"O.K. so she knew...."

"Wait Harry, let us finish," Dumbledore stated firmly, noting that Harry was becoming agitated. "She also predicted his ultimate defeat. She said his major nemesis would be a female child born under the sign of the lion with green eyes. She would have a wizard father whose wife would be a green eyed Muggle born witch. After his first defeat the child would carry the brand he bestowed on her for the rest of her life."

"And you all believe that I'm this child?" Harry asked slowly. It was more of a statement than a question since she already knew the answer.

"The facts can't be denied. You're obviously female, your eyes are green, your mother was muggle born, and the scar on your forehead wasn't put there in an accident," Professor Lupin said using his teaching voice in an effort to keep her attention.

"All right, let's assume you're all right. How would anybody know when I was born that I was destined to be this witch?" Harry challenged. "For that matter who even knew I would be a girl?"

"No one did. As far as your being a girl, James and Lily were surprised. There hadn't been a witch born into the Potter family for generations. We all thought you were going to be a boy!" Sirius said smiling at her. "Albus and I were both there the night you were born. Lily and James were so happy and Albus was beside himself with delight."

"He gets that way with babies," Snape sneered. "You would think they were all his."

"Now Severus, behave. You know that I'm always happy when the people I care about have children. I think of all of you as family," Dumbledore admonished placing a hand on his head before turning his attention back to Harry. "When your mother put you into my arms I was thrilled," Dumbledore said, his blue eyes misting over with the memory. "You were all wrapped up in a pink blanket and sound asleep. Then James decided that Sirius should get to know his goddaughter so I handed you over to him," Dumbledore told them laughing at the memory. "He had no idea what to do. Here, the former heart throb of Hogwarts was terrified of a tiny seven and a half pound baby girl. He held you like you were a piece of glass and would break at any moment."

"It wasn't funny Albus!" Sirius said his face red with embarrassment. "There's no reason to laugh," he finished glaring at the grins on both Snape and Lupin.

"So, when you sensed his discomfort and started to cry, I relieved him of his burden, much to Sirius relief," Dumbledore related with a hint of mischief. "It was then that I was shocked back into reality. You calmed down quickly and opened your eyes to look at me with a small smile as you started to suck on a tiny fist. You had green eyes."

"Lots of people have green eyes professor," Harry said trying to humor the old man.

"Lots of people don't have a wizard father with a muggle born wife with green eyes, as Professor Lupin has so aptly pointed out," Professor Snape interjected wryly, his dark eyes glittering with a strange light, "plus your birth sign is Leo for the Lion is it not?"

"You know darn well it is," Harry snapped at him abruptly.

"Easy Harry, I know this is difficult if not darn right confusing for you," Sirius soothed putting his arm around her shoulders protectively. "Go on, Albus, finish the story."

"I knew about the Mathias prophecy of course, but hadn't given it much thought in years."

"Even with Voldemort wreaking havoc over half the countryside? Lupin asked with amazement.

"Yes. I'm sorry to say it was an oversight on my part. Then Harry was born and it all came back to me. I needed to speak with James and Sirius right away so under the pretext of your needing to nurse and Lily needing her rest I got them out of the room."

"Why not tell my mother too?"

"I didn't want her to worry needlessly. I wasn't positive of my recollections of what Chandra had actually said and needed time to look it up," Dumbledore said matter of factly. "So, when I got James and Sirius outside, I told them of my suspicions."

"Did they believe you?" Harry asked, intrigued by the story about her birth.

"We didn't know what to think," Sirius replied, "but we'd always trusted Albus and were willing to listen."

"I sent them both here to Hogwarts. A copy of the Mathias Prophecies is kept in the restricted section of the school library."

"James and I brought it back to his house and the three of us reviewed it all night. We were scared and elated at the same time. James wanted to protect you from Voldemort as long as possible. He realized what a powerful witch you were going to become. We all knew that if Voldemort found out he would try and kill you."

"So Voldemort knew about the prophecy?"

"Yes Harry, he knew. I believe he studied it in some detail when he was a student here," Dumbledore answered. "I wasn't headmaster then so I'm not sure if he associated it with himself at that time or not. In any event we couldn't take the chance."

"That's when we came up with the idea to let everyone think you were a boy. After all, everybody had been expecting you to be one," Sirius said trying hard not to smile. "Albus was able to get your birth records sealed through a friend in the ministry. The next step was to convince Lily."

"I can only assume she was in agreement?" Remus asked.

"No Remus," Sirius grinned, "she was furious! You remember her temper don't you?"

"I most certainly do. She didn't get mad often but when she did it was like being hit with a bucket of ice water," Remus laughed.

"Ahem..." Dumbledore cleared his throat as a signal for them to continue.

"Sorry, Albus," Sirius said nodding, "any way, we all told your mother in the morning. She knew something was up because we hadn't slept and weren't hung over from celebrating," Sirius explained blushing, "besides, we all showed up with flowers and teddy bears."

"What did she say?" Harry asked in amusement, thinking of the three of them trying to act nonchalant while standing there with their arms full.

"At first she thought we were playing a joke on her. Then she got angry and frightened."

"She actually called me a crazy old lunatic and wanted to know why I would do something so mean as to suggest Voldemort would kill you," Dumbledore said unable to disguise the tears in his eyes. "It took your father over an hour to calm her down. She just kept cradling you protectively and crying. We all felt terrible about doing this to her so soon after giving birth, but we felt you were at risk and she would never forgive us if something happened to you. When she finally calmed down and began to relax she had me tell her everything all over again since James was so sure of it all. After I had finished she just looked at me for a minute and then handed you over to your father and hugged me while she apologized. I can still hear her voice asking me to forgive her and to please keep you safe and protected as long as possible. So, for all intents and purposes, you became a boy to everyone except the four of us. Your aunt and uncle were only told after your parents death and Remus and Severus knew nothing until tonight," Dumbledore concluded sadly.

"So who named me Harry?"

"Well....," Sirius said slowly, "your mother and I did. James didn't want you to be a junior, especially since there was a definite possibility that you might one day want to change your name, so he asked that his name be used as your middle name. He then asked us to give you a first name. I told them you reminded me of the old wizard who ran the coffee shop down stairs from the flat where I was living at the time. Lily wanted to know his name and I told her I wasn't sure, but every body always called him Harry. She just laughed and placed you up on her knees in bed and said, 'Hello Harry James Potter. You don't know it yet but you're going to have a very unique and charmed life'," Sirius concluded with a catch in his voice as he remembered his former friends while looking at Harry fondly.

"You named me after some old wizard in a coffee shop?!" Harry accused trying hard to sound angry without success. "You know of course that you will owe me for the rest of your life."

"But it's not my fault that you were red faced with a ring of dark brown fuzz on your head," Sirius groaned feigning misery as they all laughed. Even Professor Snape managed a crooked smile.

"Is there anything else you wish to know child?" Dumbledore asked secretly dreading the question he knew that would come next.

Harry considered carefully before asking the question which was on her mind. She knew in her heart that Dumbledore knew the answer but did she really want to know? Finally she nodded and asked the question she knew he would dread.

"My parents' death," she began slowly, "was that part of this prophecy too?"

The room was silent as Harry waited for Dumbledore's reply. His blue eyes seemed to bore into her while he tried to decide exactly what to say to her. Could she handle the truth? Was she ready to hear the answer which had haunted him for the past sixteen years?

"The prophecy is very vague in parts and not easily understood," he said quietly forming his thoughts. "However, looking back over all that happened, I would say yes. Hindsight can be a terrible thing," Dumbledore finished, unable to hide the guilt in his voice.

Harry didn't answer but studied the headmaster's face as she rose slowly off the couch. For the first time since she had met him Dumbledore appeared old and tired. Moving over to where he sat, she gently placed her arms around him in a gentle hug and whispered in his ear so that no one else could hear. "Thank you for being honest with me. I don't think I could have stood for it if you had lied, even to protect me."

As the old wizard returned her hug he could sense that she could feel his deep emotions. Harry herself was aware that she could do this but had taught herself to tune out other people's feelings and pain. She had come to convince herself that it was an invasion of others privacy. Only with Dumbledore this was more difficult. She thought it must have something to do with his age and power. She was visibly shaken as she resumed her seat beside Sirius.

"Harry, how long have you been able to do that?" Dumbledore quizzed her thoughtfully.

"Ever since I can remember, but I can usually control myself and tune it out," she replied lowering her head feeling ashamed.

"Harry what is it? What's wrong?" Sirius asked growing concerned by what was obviously something troubling Harry. He could sense that the older wizard had discovered something that Harry hadn't wanted known.

"Nothing," she responded refusing to look up.

"Harry," Dumbledore said gently, "there's nothing to be upset about. You possess a wonderful and rare gift."

"My aunt Petunia and uncle Vernon don't think so. They always made me keep quiet about it. They said people would think I was crazy or some kind of freak. So I taught myself to block out what I felt."

"Albus, what's going on?" Remus Lupin asked, as Sirius tried to pull a resisting Harry into his arms.

"Headmaster, to what gift are you referring?" Professor Snape asked, scrutinizing Harry with his usual intensity. "Is Harry some sort of seer?"

"Not exactly," Dumbledore replied, "Harry, why don't you show them?"

"But...." Harry began to object as Dumbledore cut her off.

"You're not a freak Harry. Your aunt and uncle are afraid of what they can't understand," he explained patiently. "Start with Sirius and work your way around the room back to me. Don't any of you speak until she is finished," he instructed the other men in the room.

Harry swallowed hard as she allowed Sirius to put his arms around her.

"It works better when there is physical contact," she said looking up at him. A series of expressions passed over her face as she began to speak. "You're worried. Mostly about me but also about being captured and sent back to prison. You're also afraid of failure. You feel that you failed my parents. You're afraid you'll fail me," she said continuing to concentrate. "You also are feeling some distrust. It seems to be directed towards Professor Snape," Harry concluded, noting that the potions master stiffened at the mention of his name

She then moved over to Professor Lupin and picked up his hand. "Interesting," she said after a few minutes. "Is that what it feels like?"

"What is it Harry?" Dumbledore prompted. "What does what feel like?"

"Remus is feeling the anticipation of the full moon in two days. There is much anxiety over his transformation. There's something else though.....the wolf....I can feel it within him. Wild.....Angry.....I don't know.....hunger maybe?" she finished. Releasing him, he watched her with an odd expression in his hazel eyes before he spoke.

"She's right Albus," he said dumbfounded. She had been able to feel his other self waiting to emerge. His heart was pounding so hard he could hear the blood rushing in his ears.

Harry then turned her attention to the potions master who was sitting as rigid as a statue.

"Professor Snape?" she questioned holding out her hand for him. He moved slowly to extend his right hand but was stopped by the sound of the headmaster's voice.

"No Severus," Dumbledore corrected, "give her your left arm, and if you'll pull up your sleeve please."

"But headmaster....." Severus began to object before his friend and mentor cut him off.

"Do as I ask Severus. Harry won't be harmed. You can pull back if it becomes too intense for her."

"What's the matter Professor, are you scared?" Harry challenged, knowing it would irritate him.

"No," Snape sneered back at her as he pulled back his left sleeve to reveal the snake and skull tattooed on his forearm known as the Dark Mark.

Everyone was watching intently as Harry placed her hand over his tattoo and closed her eyes. The room was silent except for the ticking of the clock in the corner. Harry moaned softly, and Snape started to pull his arm back as Sirius tried to rise from his seat, but they were both stopped by a warning look from Professor Dumbledore.

"Guilt.....Anger.....Loss.....Strong desires.....You wanted the power. The cost was too high.....Hatred....Physical pain....*Cruciatus* curse....so many times....Loved them so much.....he murdered them to punish you.....your wife....the baby.....Fear.....Fear for me.....NO!" Harry suddenly yelled pulling away from Professor Snape as if she were on fire and nearly falling over backwards. "Voldemort, he went to summon the Professor!" she told them, her voice shaking, as she found herself secured back in Sirius embrace as he steered her back to the couch.

"Headmaster she is correct," he said showing them the tattoo which had turned almost black.

"I thought you didn't go to him any longer?" Sirius challenged him with anger and distrust.

"I don't Black!" Snape growled back at him, "but that doesn't keep him from trying."

"Enough!" Dumbledore admonished sternly. "Severus let me relieve your discomfort," he told his friend as he applied his wand to the tattoo to relieve the burning pain caused by the summons, as he continued speaking; "as you have probably already guessed our Harry is an empath. She can sense and feel other people's pain and emotions. It is among the rarest abilities of the wizarding world. I also suspect she may also be a natural healer. Our local healer will be able to tell us later," he told them referring to the wizard physician who lived in Hogsmeade, and attended to the staff and students of Hogwarts whenever necessary. "Now Harry," he went on, "you knew he was summoning Severus. I assume you felt the mark begin to burn?" Dumbledore questioned gently.

"Yes, but that's not what stopped me."

"What happened then? Why did you stop?"

"I could feel him. Voldemort.....it was like something fetid and rotten. The darkness and power were intense. I've never felt such coldness before. It was the opposite of what I feel when I'm near you," she said giving the old wizard a wan smile. "What really threw me though is that he knew I was there. He could feel me in contact with Professor Snape," Harry shuddered, absently rubbing the scar on her forehead. It had begun to hurt as soon as she had become aware of Voldemort's presence.

"He's getting stronger headmaster," Professor Snape said frowning. "He hasn't tried to call me for some time. Perhaps I should answer his summons?"

"NO!" Harry shouted before Dumbledore could reply. "He's angry.....and....and...I don't know how to describe what I felt when I was in contact with him. I think he means to harm you," she warned looking at Snape in confusion.

"He probably does," Snape told her without so much as flinching. "What you felt," he continued dryly, was his power to hold and control his followers. His anger stems from the fact that I have been refusing to answer his summons for some time now, and he considers me a traitor. What I find most interesting though is that he was aware of your presence," he finished thoughtfully.

"I think we need to discuss this further but not now," Dumbledore said looking at the other wizards with meaning. "It is already passed ten and Harry should get to bed, but not in her

room. She might be seen and we don't want that to happen just yet," he said with a twinkle in his eye.

"Just where should Miss Potter go?" Professor Snape asked.

"I think she's just come down with a mysterious illness; something with a rash," Dumbledore chuckled waving his wand. Harry tried in vain to dive beneath the couch as the group of wizards looked on in amusement. "Poppy will just have to put her in isolation for the next twenty four hours until we're sure she isn't contagious. That should give us enough time to inform the staff about Harry's true gender and plan how to let the student body know," the headmaster continued, formulating a plan in his mind. "I'll call an emergency staff meeting for tomorrow morning, say about ten o'clock?" he finished, not expecting any answer.

"How come I don't get any say in this and get stuck in the infirmary?" Harry complained from where she still lay on the floor half under the couch.

"Because child," Dumbledore replied patiently, "we need time to plan how to protect you now. It won't take long for this to get back to Voldemort, not to mention the turmoil this will cause within the school itself."

"Look on the bright side, Harry; you'll finally get some new clothes. I've never met a female yet who couldn't resist going shopping," Sirius teased. "Does it itch much?" he asked examining the rash as she got up off the floor.

"No. It's just a heat rash, and it's not funny!" she said sourly, noting the broad grin on his face. "It's not fair that I have to spend Saturday in the infirmary with a heat rash which isn't even real, instead of going into Hogsmeade."

"I could arrange for you to have the chicken pox instead," Professor Snape said with a nasty smile as the other men snickered in amusement.

Harry just sat up straighter and folded her arms across her chest with a glare in an imitation of Professor Snape refusing to allow him to bait her.

"Careful Severus," Professor Lupin said smiling, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, especially one who can't go into Hogsmeade tomorrow."

"Remus is right Snape. I wouldn't mess around with this little witch. She may just give you a case of the chicken pox!" Sirius said, continuing to laugh.

Harry didn't say a word but just sat staring at Professor Snape with a crooked sneer in a continued imitation, her green eyes locked with his dark ones.

"If I were you," Dumbledore added, "I'd make peace with the lady."

"I wasn't the one who gave her the body rash," Snape replied as he continued to maintain eye contact with Harry. It was a battle of wills they had played since Harry's first day at Hogwarts. Snape always won but Harry continued to get better and more determined which was exactly what the professor wanted. Harry would need to use all her will power in the fight against Voldemort.

"But you did threaten her with the chicken pox," Dumbledore reminded him watching their exchange with interest. He knew Severus was testing Harry as did the other two wizards. He also had a strong suspicion that Harry might know it too.

"In that case Miss Potter," Snape said with a flourish without breaking his eye contact, "I will personally take you up to London next weekend and buy you some decent clothes. Those things you wear now were pathetic when I believed you to be a boy. Now they're down right disgusting," he said referring to her hand me down oversized clothes from her cousin Dudley.

Harry blinked and broke her eye contact with Professor Snape and her mouth dropped open. She just sat gaping at him for a few seconds before finding her voice. "Did I just hear Professor Snape correctly? He did say he would take me shopping for new clothes next weekend in London?"

"I did," Snape responded without moving.

"I intend to hold you to that Severus," Dumbledore laughed. "That is provided Sirius has no objections to her going with you?" he asked hoping Severus rival would accept this olive branch of sorts.

"None, I'm sure Professor Snape will conduct himself with the utmost decorum," Sirius replied with a slight warning edge to his voice.

"Excuse me professor," Harry said looking at Dumbledore over her glasses, "I think that maybe Professor Snape has been inhaling too many fumes from all those potions we've been mixing in the dungeon." She was still astounded that Snape was actually going to take her to London shopping.

"Don't look a gift horse in the mouth Harry," Dumbledore told her with genuine affection.

Professor Snape didn't say anything further. He just continued to sit by the fireplace with his back perfectly straight, a sardonic expression on his face, as his left eyebrow rose in amusement. He was totally enjoying Harry's discomfiture with his proposal to take her shopping and Harry knew it.

"Well, since we're all in agreement about next weekend I'll just send for Poppy and we can get busy working on our plans for this weekend," Dumbledore said happily, as he rang for the house elves, and Beryl appeared. "Beryl, please have Madam Pomfrey report to my office immediately."

"Yes, Madam Pomfrey," the elf repeated and then disappeared with a pop.

No one said much while they waited for the nurse to come to the headmaster's office. They just sat and relaxed sipping tea and watching the flames in the fireplace. Harry was starting to feel sleepy and snuggling back into the soft cushions on the couch, rested her head on Sirius shoulder. He stroked her soft hair absently thinking how pretty she was becoming as she dozed comfortably. She still looked like James of course, but her features were softer. Her dark hair now framed her face and she had begun to let it grow. Her bangs continued to cover her forehead so that her scar remained hidden. It had been tied back earlier in the evening when she had come into the headmaster's office but she'd loosened it when she had changed clothes so that it now lay almost to her shoulders. The rich dark brown also accentuated her

green eyes and the effect was astonishing. Sirius made up his mind then and there to keep a close watch on his young goddaughter. Once everyone knew Harry was a girl the boys would all be coming around and if they were anything like he was.....well.....they would have one hell of a job getting past him. He groaned softly and thought that he was more nervous now than when he'd had to hold that little infant sixteen years ago. Harry opened her eyes and looked up at him for a moment before speaking.

"Are you o.k.?"

"My foot fell asleep," he told her quietly.

"You're lying," Harry said with an impish little smile. "It's not easy to hide your feelings when I can feel them too."

"Then tell me what I'm feeling."

"You're still worried," she said matter of factly.

"Oh? What do you think is worrying me?"

Harry kept her head on his shoulder and just smiled coyly up at him her cheeks burning before answering, "You just worry about protecting me from Voldemort. I'll worry about protecting my virtue."

Sirius just squeezed her tightly and whispered in her ear, "How about I worry about both. Right now I'm not quite sure which is the bigger threat, Voldemort or some eager adolescent boy."

Harry just shook her head and rolled her eyes as a knock sounded on the door and Madam Pomfrey appeared in the doorway.

"Headmaster, I was planning on coming to see you in the morning. There is a matter of the utmost importance I need to speak with you about concerning Harry Potter," she said as she walked into the room, stopping dead in her tracks when she saw them all sitting there.

"Poppy I'm fully aware of what you were going to tell me."

"But Albus, how could this happen? Is Harry really a girl or is this some kind of dark magic?" she demanded worriedly.

"No Poppy, there is no dark magic at work here. Harry is a legitimate member of the fair sex," Dumbledore reassured the nurse. "I was one of the few people who actually knew of her true gender. We had to keep it hidden since she was an infant in order to protect her from Voldemort. As you can see this is no longer possible," he said with a smile and a wink at Harry.

"Albus, as the school nurse I should have been told. What if she had been seriously injured? Heaven knows she's spent enough time in my infirmary. What was so important that this poor child had to pretend to be a boy for all this time? Voldemort was defeated when she was just a baby."

"Are you familiar with the Prophecy of Mathias?" Dumbledore asked gently, trying to soothe Madam Pomfrey's ruffled feelings.

"Of course, she predicted all that stuff about Lord Voldemort..." she said, her voice trailing off as she stared at Harry. "Headmaster?" Poppy questioned shaking her head, her eyes wide with wonder.

"Yes Poppy, we believe so," Dumbledore said giving her time to fully digest the situation. "Now we need your help."

"Of course Albus, I'll do anything you ask."

"I knew I could count on you Poppy," he said with a nod. "Now, I've had to place Harry under a temporary spell to make her appear ill," he explained to the nurse indicating the rash. "What I need is for you to keep her in isolation for the next twenty four hours. She is not to see or speak with anyone outside of this room. That especially goes for Miss Granger and Mr. Weasley," Dumbledore instructed, stressing the names of Harry's friends.

"I understand headmaster. Will there be anything else?"

"Yes, I will be holding an emergency staff meeting tomorrow morning at ten o'clock. We will all meet in the infirmary so that Harry will be present as well as Sirius Black. In the mean time you are to tell no one about Harry. Is that understood?"

"Yes. I'll see that Harry is safely tucked away," she said with a nod as she turned to Harry, "come along Harry. It's off to bed with you and I don't want any argument."

Harry rose and started to follow her out of the room when Dumbledore stopped her.

"By the way Harry, where is your invisibility cloak?"

"It's in the trunk in my room, why?"

"We don't need Ron and Hermione using it to sneak up to see you now, do we?" he asked looking at her over his glasses, his blue eyes laughing in anticipation of her friends actions. "Severus will you retrieve the cloak from Harry's room and bring it here when we've finished?"

"Of course headmaster, I'll see that you get it immediately," Professor Snape replied gloating.

"I promise to return the cloak to you after the weekend Harry," the headmaster informed her. He then turned his attention to the others. "Sirius I know we had planned on your staying in Hogsmeade at the shrieking shack but it may be best if you stayed here tonight. I'm sure you and Remus would enjoy each others company and this way we can gather early to plan how to proceed," the headmaster said rising, indicating his dismissal.

Sirius and Remus were pleased to have some time to talk alone. Sirius knew his friend was eager to ask him some more details about Harry and he would be only too glad to tell him. He was also anxious to ask Remus how Harry was getting on in school and about her latest quidditch match. He was also hoping to spend some quality time with her and was glad to be able to be so near, even if most of it would be in his animagus form. As they prepared to exit

the office he transformed back into Snuffles and gave Harry a "kiss" goodnight. Wagging his tail he followed Remus to his rooms as Harry obediently went to the isolation ward with Madam Pomfrey. No one saw them as they passed along the halls as the other students were already asleep or relaxing in their common rooms as it was well past curfew.

As Harry lay in bed a million thoughts passed through her head. She knew she needed to get a look at the copy of the Mathias Prophecy that Dumbledore had said was in the school library and resolved to do so as soon as she got her cloak back. She didn't think she would be allowed to view the document otherwise. She also wondered how Ron and Hermione would react to the news that she was really a girl, as well as her other friends. She almost laughed out loud when she pictured the look on Draco Malfoy's face, and then shuddered when she realized his father was one of the Dark Lord's Death Eaters. She had been tossing and turning for over an hour when she heard a soft clicking sound coming towards her. Sitting up in bed she saw a dark black shape moving through the darkness.

"Snuffles," she whispered hugging him, "what are you doing here?" A moment later Sirius was standing by her bedside.

"Why, I'm checking up on you," he whispered, grinning down at her, feigning innocence. "Now go to sleep. It's late and you are in for a very interesting day tomorrow." He then transformed back into Snuffles and lay down next to the bed. Harry knew he was on guard duty but she didn't care. She lay back down, and reaching her arm over the side of the bed, scratched his ears affectionately until she finally drifted off to sleep.

PART 2 - REVELATION

As Harry woke, she stretched lazily, before realizing that she was not in her own bed. Opening her eyes in confusion, she looked around and remembered that she was in the infirmary. The events of the previous evening came rushing back, and looking around, she realized that "Snuffles" had gone. She was wondering what time it was when Nurse Pomfrey appeared in the door to the isolation room.

"Good morning, Harry. I trust you slept well?" She did not wait for a reply and just kept on chattering in a pleasant voice. "Professor Dumbledore was up here at the crack of dawn asking after you. I told him you were sleeping and not to wake you so he let you sleep," she said as a breakfast tray appeared on the overbed table. "Your two friends also tried to sneak in during the night, but Snuffles stopped them cold," she laughed, "but I will tell you that they were genuinely concerned."

"When were they here?" Harry asked as she examined the tray of scrambled eggs, bacon, a steaming bowl of oatmeal, and a glass of milk.

"About two o'clock this morning. Snuffles headed them off in the ward as they tried to sneak into your cubicle. Scared them silly; he just stood there with his head lowered, baring his fangs and growling. Young Mr. Weasley tried to reason with him but he snapped at him until the Granger girl got between them. She looked at him and said, 'All right Snuffles, we're just worried about Harry. What ever is wrong we'll come back tomorrow.' Then he sat down and waited while she dragged Mr. Weasley out of the room, muttering something about a cloak. If I didn't know better I'd swear Snuffles was grinning, especially when he heard Mr. Filch yelling after them in the hallway."

"Oh no," Harry groaned. "Filch caught them?"

"My yes, he took them directly down to Professor Snape who was on Hall Duty last night."

"Professor Snape was on Hall Duty!" Harry repeated, shaking her head worriedly as she picked at her food. "They'll get major detention for sure," she thought to herself, "and it's entirely my fault." Her worry over her friends getting into trouble because of their concern for her was distressing. Not only that, but Sirius had snapped at Ron! He could have just transformed and told them he didn't want her to be disturbed. After all, they did know he was "Snuffles." She started getting annoyed at Sirius for treating them that way. As she sat picking at her breakfast Nurse Pomfrey left to attend to her usual routine. A few minutes later the door opened again and Professors Dumbledore, Lupin and Snape entered along with Sirius.

"Good morning child," Dumbledore greeted her, putting one hand on her head affectionately.

"You're upset, what ever is wrong?"

"What's wrong? I woke up to find out my Godfather almost bit my best friends, and when they tried to leave Filch came along and brought them to him!" Harry said pointing angrily at Professor Snape.

"She has Lily's temper," Professor Lupin said with a laugh, as he looked over at Sirius.

"Obviously," Snape agreed as Sirius just looked at them and rolled his eyes.

"Calm down Harry," Dumbledore responded patiently, "Sirius would never have bitten Ron or Hermione. Besides, Professor Snape gave them a rather interesting detention."

"They shouldn't have gotten any detention," Harry protested still upset.

"Miss Potter," Professor Snape said sternly, "they were out of bed after curfew."

"But they..."

"The detention I gave them," Snape interrupted in an oily tone, "is to spend the afternoon keeping you company in the isolation room of the infirmary. If you would prefer I could change it to something less agreeable. Maybe gutting some iguanas for the anti aging potion next week," he finished with a wicked half smile.

Harry just sat there dumbfounded. Snape was getting soft; either that or he was up to something. "Professor Snape," she said slowly finding her voice, "I have exactly seventeen

months of school left here not counting summers off, during which time I may yet figure you out. You are an enigma of a human being."

"Why do you say that?" he questioned, his black eyes glittering strangely.

"I have never met anyone else who could be so nasty and nice at the same time. You really seem to enjoy keeping everyone of us off balance. I don't know why, but you can rest assured that I will find out," she told him with a flourish. Sirius and Remus snickered and Snape continued to smile evilly. "And as for you," Harry said directing her attention to Sirius, "you're still not off the hook."

"Harry, I just made sure they knew I wasn't fooling around. In fact, I've already spoken to them both in Dumbledore's office this morning and apologized. Forgive me?" he asked with a pout as he transformed into "Snuffles" and sat up begging, crying like a puppy.

"Well, since you put it that way," Harry said unable to contain her laughter, "I guess I have no choice. He barked twice and wagged his tail before changing back. Harry made up her mind then and there that she wanted to try and become an animagus, but would do so in secret.

"Now that we've settled that problem we need to get down to the business at hand,"

Dumbledore told them happily. "As you know Harry, the staff meeting will take place at ten o'clock. It will be held in the infirmary proper. You are to stay here until I send for you," he instructed with a mischievous smile. "Professor Lupin and Sirius will stay with you."

"I get the feeling you don't trust me Professor," Harry replied feigning hurt.

"Let's just say we don't want you coming out of the closet too soon," Dumbledore said looking over his half moon glasses at her, blue eyes twinkling.

"So I get to make another grand entrance?" she asked brightly.

"As a matter of fact yes," Professor Snape replied in his usual sardonic voice. "Nurse Pomfrey, will you please come in here, and bring Miss Potter the new outfit we all bought her for this wonderful occasion?" he called from the door. Harry got the distinct impression that he was enjoying putting one over on the rest of the staff. A moment later the nurse appeared carrying several packages wrapped in brown paper.

Uh.....I can't accept these," she said examining the new clothes they contained. There was a long black knit skirt with a green satin blouse to accentuate her eyes. New undergarments and stockings, which caused her to blush as she wondered how they knew what size to buy, and a pair of low heeled black suede shoes.

"Of course you can, Harry," Nurse Pomfrey beamed. "Professor Dumbledore sent me into Hogsmeade early this morning while he stayed in the infirmary while you slept. I had to wake up half the village. They're a present from all of us. The gentlemen bought you the clothes and shoes while I had the foresight to add the undergarments. Really, the nerve of your family for making you wear boys' underwear all this time! It's disgraceful!" she said indignantly.

"Now Poppy, I don't believe we should be discussing Harry's underwear," Dumbledore admonished the nurse as Harry blushed in embarrassment.

"I totally agree," Sirius chimed in as he sat down next to Harry. "As her Godfather I feel this line of conversation is totally inappropriate," he told them trying to look stern and failing miserably. He was finding Harry's new found femininity both amusing and uncomfortable. He knew that while she was pleased to get everything out into the open she would have some problems getting used to it. 'Women could be catty and cruel to each other,' he thought to himself, 'and Harry isn't used to that. Then there were the boys...up to now she had been one of them, but how would she react when they started to exclude her from their conversations?' He wasn't ready to think about her dating...

Professor Lupin had been studying both of them intently and could sense their confusion and anxiety. He was glad he could be there for both of them if they needed it. He shouldn't have much of a problem talking with Sirius, but he wasn't sure if Harry would confide in him. He made a mental note to give her a little extra tutoring in an effort to get her to express her

feelings when he finally spoke, "Harry, please accept our gifts. We just thought you would want to look nice. You probably don't realize it but you're very pretty."

"Thank you, Professor," Harry smiled shyly, "but I'm really just plain old Harry."

"Do accept the gift, Miss Potter," Professor Snape added smirking, "I think the green blouse will look lovely on you."

"Could that be because it just happens to be one of the Slytherin House colors?" she said smirking back at him.

"Now, Harry," Dumbledore said firmly, "as I recall the dress robes you wore to the New Year's Ball were green also."

"Yes, they were, but if you also recall I had to take a girl to that same ball," Harry responded defiantly, mortified at the memory. "What will people think?"

"They'll say you carried off a master charade for the good of the school in the fight against Voldemort," Dumbledore replied in a voice that brooked no argument. He had clearly anticipated this question. "Now it would make an old man very happy to see you the way nature meant for you to be seen. We kept you hidden for far too long."

"In that case, flattery will get you everywhere, Professor," she smiled up at him. "Why don't you all leave so I can finish my breakfast and get dressed?"

"We'll be back in an hour," Dumbledore said as he checked his watch, "it will be nine thirty then. Oh, and Harry, Mr. Weasley and Miss Granger will be attending the meeting too," he finished, watching her shrewdly.

Harry just smiled back at him nervously and nodded as they all left except Sirius. Her heart had begun to race and she was suddenly afraid. Sirius sensed her discomfort, causing him to hang back.

"Don't worry, Harry, true friends won't desert you," he told her calmly, thinking of Remus.

"I know," she answered staring into his soft brown eyes. "I'll see you in a little while."

Sirius winked at her in reply and left the room trailing behind the others, transforming into "Snuffles" before entering the hallway. Harry was too nervous to finish eating and headed to the shower. Relaxing under the stream of hot water she instinctively knew Sirius was right. Remus had been there for him and believed his story about Peter Pettigrew after he'd escaped from Azkaban. They had both been there to keep Peter, disguised as Ron's pet rat, "Scabbers," from harming Harry. If Ron and Hermione were true friends, they would stand by her. She completed her shower, and drying off quickly began to dress. It was then that she found out being a girl was not that easy. Nurse Pomfrey was keeping a motherly eye on her from the other room, but didn't interfere with her attempts to get her clothes on properly. Her panties felt tight and uncomfortable to her after wearing boys' underwear for all those years, and trying to adjust her feminine napkin was more than an annoyance. Of course, it was rather funny when she told them about coming to the infirmary last night. Sirius had actually blushed when he realized why she had stomach cramps, she thought with a smile. It had been the first time she had been caught off guard, and she promised herself it wouldn't happen again. Putting on her bra proved to be a worse chore than the panties. Fortunately, Nurse Pomfrey had gauged the size well, and Harry believed that her age and experience as a nurse had something to do with it. However getting it hooked was another matter. She finally figured out that if you turned it around and hooked it in the front, then twisted it back around and slipped your arms through the straps you could secure it properly. Harry knew this wasn't the proper way to do it, having seen Aunt Petunia hook hers, but she didn't have the time to practice. She decided to ask Hermione about it as soon as possible.

Next came the panty hose. It took a few tries but she finally figured out that if you gathered them up like a pair of socks, doing one leg at a time, they would go on easier. The skirt and blouse fit perfectly, as did the shoes. It took her a few minutes to get used to wearing a heeled shoe, albeit a low one, but she was able to manage. Surveying herself in the mirror, she wondered what she would look like with make up. She'd seen Hermione put it on a few times,

and was secretly a little jealous. The charade, although necessary in Dumbledore's eyes, had been a painful one at times. Nurse Pomfrey must have known what she was thinking and appeared with a small bag.

"I bought these for you too dear," she smiled as Harry opened the bag. "I didn't want to say anything in front of your Godfather. Men can be funny about when their little girls start to wear make up. They're afraid of them growing up," she explained as she opened a vial of mascara and a tube of lipstick. "I'll help you put them on if you'd like?"

"Thank you," Harry smiled as the nurse showed her how to apply the cosmetics. She then helped Harry to style her hair into a feminine style. Harry then went over to wait by the window. It was clear and windy outside, the clouds racing across the sky. She could see some of the other students heading towards the road to Hogsmeade, but was too high up to determine who any of them were. She wondered idly if Ron and Hermione were very disappointed at having to stay behind for detention, and determined to try and make it up to them. She was still staring out of the window when Sirius and Remus returned.

"Harry?" Sirius questioned from the doorway.

"Hmmm..." she said turning from the window to face them.

The two men just stood there gaping. Even though Sirius had known and enjoyed the other's reactions of the previous evening, he was stopped cold. 'How could anybody have ever believed her to have been a boy all this time,' he thought to himself amid mixed feelings which both excited and worried him.

Remus recovered first and letting out a low whistle looked at his friend and said teasingly, "Remember all those fathers you used to worry about? Well, I guess the shoe's on the other foot now. Payback is a bitch."

"She's never getting out of her room without a chaperone," Sirius responded, recovering himself.

"What, no convent?" she teased him playfully.

"Now that you mention it, that might not be such a bad idea," he answered grinning.

"I don't know Sirius," Remus laughed going along with the joke, "do they let witches into the nunnery?"

"Very funny," Harry said looking at them both affectionately. "It seems I have one overprotective Godfather whose best friend is a 'wolf in sheep's clothing'."

Remus laughed out loud at her remark knowing it was both an indirect comment about his whistle and his being a werewolf. Sirius just scowled and let out a low growl.

"Now be a couple of good canines and sit down and behave or I'll just have to put the two of you on a leash!" she teased them. Taking out her wand, she pretended to threaten them as they sat down to wait.

Sirius stretched himself comfortably on the bed while Remus took a chair by the door. Harry was too nervous to sit. She could hear the other professors beginning to gather for the meeting and the sound of Dumbledore's voice directing Ron and Hermione to join the group. She couldn't see any of them, but was sure they were wondering why the two students were invited to attend, as well as why they were meeting in the infirmary instead of the staff room.

"Good morning everyone," Dumbledore addressed the group with an air of authority. "I have invited you all up here on a matter of the utmost importance. Are there any among you that have not heard of the Prophecy of Mathias, either in whole or part?" he asked, looking around the group who shifted nervously in their seats.

"The what?" Ron spoke up without thinking, realizing that Dumbledore was directing his question to the staff.

"Sh...", Hermione whispered with a frown, "it's some kind of prophecy. I'll bet it's got something to do with Harry."

"My apologies, Mr. Weasley, Miss Granger," Dumbledore addressed them formally, "The Prophecy of Mathias is a series of divinations done before you were born. The part that

concerns us today has to do with Voldemort," Dumbledore continued watching the group intently.

Hermione looked on with interest, and leaning over whispered quietly to Ron, "See...I told you. If it deals with Voldemort it has something to do with Harry."

"But Albus," Professor McGonagall interrupted with a look of consternation on her face, "the part of the prophecy about Voldemort deals with a witch who is supposed to defeat him. No such person has ever been found."

"Perhaps, Minerva," Madam Trelawney said with interest, "but I have been casting my stones and they say that there will be much trouble ahead for a young woman who is close to Hogwarts."

"Are you suggesting that it will be one of our students?" Professor Sprout asked.

"Silence, ladies," Dumbledore instructed. "I have asked Professor Snape to explain the Prophecy to you in more detail. He has been reviewing it for most of the night. Severus, if you would?" Dumbledore said turning towards the Potions Master and indicating that he should come to the front of the room while the staff muttered amongst themselves.

Professor Snape stood quietly, looking down his long nose as if he were surveying a group of first year students, until his colleagues came to attention.

"I'll bet Snape knows more about what's going on than they do," Ron whispered to Hermione.

"He seemed really weird last night when Filch brought us down to him, almost nice."

"Keep quiet," Hermione hissed, "I want to hear this. Something really weird is going on, and where's Harry? I thought he was in here last night when "Snuffles" cornered us and made us leave. I hope he's o.k.," she finished looking around worriedly.

"Come to think of it, where is Professor Lupin? I thought all the staff was supposed to be here, and the moon won't be full till tomorrow night," Ron said looking around as Professor Snape began.

"Professor McGonagall is correct," Snape informed the staff, "the prophecy does deal with a young woman. She will be a very powerful witch with many talents, some of which are exceedingly rare. This witch has already fulfilled a portion of the prophecy, but she will need to be protected in order to fulfill her destiny."

"Severus, are you telling us that this witch actually exists?" Professor Flitwick asked him with an air of disbelief. "If so, where is she and how did she get to Hogwarts?"

"I shall address that shortly," he replied icily, unable to hide his annoyance at the interruption.

"What we need to do is be prepared to defend the school against Voldemort and the Death Eaters should they decide to try and come after her, and I can assure you they will" he finished menacingly.

"Why?" Professor Sinestra asked from the back of the room. "If the prophecy is true the girl will defeat The Dark Lord. It seems to me he would be afraid of her."

"Voldemort fears no one!" Snape said standing with his arms folded and dark eyes glowing like coals. "If anything he will want to take on the girl to prove his superiority. In fact, he has several times already."

"Uh oh," Ron whispered, "here it comes. Snape is really mad and he's acting like Voldemort will just walk in here. Doesn't he know that Voldemort isn't stupid enough to face Professor Dumbledore?" Ron asked Hermione smugly, but she just shook her head shrugging her shoulders.

"Really Severus, you're acting as if you actually know this girl," McGonagall said haughtily. "I do Minerva, and so do you," Snape replied as the professors in the room all started talking at once. "She has been a student here for the past six years. Professor Dumbledore has helped to keep her securely hidden from Voldemort for the past sixteen years, during which time she still had various altercations with him," he told them, looking at the expressions of disbelief on their faces.

"It's you!" Ron yelled at Hermione as he jumped to his feet upsetting his chair.

"Of course it's not!" she said taken aback by his outburst. "I've never even seen Voldemort!" she retorted.

"It is not Miss Granger, although she and Mr. Weasley are here for a reason," Professor Snape sneered, "they will be doing detention shortly."

"Excuse me, Professor Snape," Hermione said from where she sat, "but what does our detention have to do with this Prophecy of Mathias?" Her heart beating furiously as she dared not believe what she was thinking. Ron merely sat next to her looking confused.

"I'm so glad you asked, Miss Granger," Snape said in an oily voice as he studied her with interest. He could see her mind working, but she didn't want to believe it. "I will show you," he told her walking over to the back of the room and disappearing into the isolation area.

"Miss Potter," he said calmly once inside, "you're wanted in the next room."

Harry who had been listening with Sirius and Remus looked up at Professor Snape as she prepared to leave, "Hermione has figured it out, hasn't she?" she asked quietly.

"I believe so," he replied arching his left brow in amusement, "she just doesn't want to believe it. Professor Lupin, Black," he turned his attention to the two men, "we should enter first. The staff was told that you would be arriving late, before Miss Granger and Mr. Weasley arrived. The Headmaster told them you were both on business for the Order," he informed them as they entered the outer chamber. The staff was also aware of Sirius wrongful imprisonment, and would help to conceal him while he was there. To fail to do so would be an affront to Dumbledore. "My dear colleagues," Snape said as they all entered the room, clearly enjoying the theatrics, "I would like to reintroduce you to one of our students."

Harry had hung back as the men entered the outer room and waited for Snape's signal. Taking a deep breath she came out from behind them and walked into her future. At first there was total silence as everyone looked at her. Then, realization dawned on them, and everyone began talking at once, everyone except Ron and Hermione. They just stared at Harry as she stood waiting for their reaction with trepidation. Hermione was the first one to break the silence.

"You see, Ron," she said slowly, "I told you that if it had to do with Voldemort our Harry was involved."

"Harry? It can't be you. I mean, we roomed together for five years. We spent summers together. You just can't be a girl. This must be some kind of joke you and Hermione cooked up and somehow got the staff to participate," Ron said his voice shaking with anger and disbelief that his best buddy was a girl.

"Ron, stop it!" Hermione exclaimed. "Can't you see how hard this is for Harry?"

"Hard for Harry," he parroted her. "Harry is my best friend! My whole family loves him, ah, her...and Ginny....My God, what will she say?" he cried in exasperation, referring to the crush his younger sister had harbored for Harry. Harry had rescued her four years ago from the basilisk, after Voldemort had kidnapped her to try and regain his body, in the Chamber of Secrets hidden beneath the school.

The staff had calmed down and was now watching the exchange between the three friends with interest; all but Sirius who was becoming upset with Ron. He wanted to go over to Harry but Dumbledore restrained him with a hand on his shoulder.

"She has to be able to deal with this," he whispered to the younger man, "her character will be tested over the next few weeks."

"Ginny will be thrilled. I have never given her or any other girl reason to think that I was interested in them," Harry replied staring at Ron in dismay. She kept her voice steady but inside she wanted to cry. 'Ron will never forgive me,' she thought.

"What about Cho or Parvati?" Ron asked her, red faced. "How will they feel?"

"They'll say that I did a good job of carrying out the charade to protect the school and everyone from Voldemort." Harry said, holding her head high, repeating Dumbledore's words

as she looked at him over her glasses. "They'll be right too, Ron Weasley. I certainly fooled everyone."

"Harry, Ron, please...You're creating a scene in front of all the professors," Hermione soothed in an effort to calm them down, looking over to where they sat in an effort to get them to intercede.

"Piss off, Hermione," Ron yelled angrily, "you're glad Harry is really Harriet."

It was the worst thing Ron could have said. Harry's anger and frustration with his attitude had been growing and now the dam was about to burst.

"Don't you dare ever call me Harriet, Ronald Weasley," she said turning on him menacingly, yelling as she pulled out her wand, "Wingardium Leviosa!" Ron had been unprepared for this as she levitated him up towards the ceiling. Attempting to grab his wand, it fell from his robes, hitting the floor with a shower of white sparks. "My name is Harry. It has always been Harry, and will always be Harry! Sirius and my mother gave it to me the night my parents and Dumbledore decided to pass me off as a boy. So don't you ever forget it! Harry....Harry James Potter," she finished. Gritting her teeth, she lowered him gently to the floor, picked up his wand, and handed it back to him.

No one moved while Ron extended his hand to retrieve his wand from her. All of the Professors had heard what the Headmaster had said to Sirius, and understood the expression on his face meant that they should not interfere. Each had watched with bated breath while the scenario had played out before them, amazed that Harry had the ability to levitate a person, a skill that should not yet be apparent in a young witch. Hermione just kept looking with dismay from her friends to her teachers, clearly dismayed that no one would do anything, as they all stood and waited. Then, very slowly, Ron's lips twitched and he smiled.

"Damn you Harry! How the bloody hell did you think I'd feel? Why didn't you tell us?" he laughed looking over towards Hermione.

"Mr. Weasley," Professor Snape said coldly, as the staff relaxed, "I believe you owe both of the young ladies an apology for your language and reprehensible behavior."

"Shut up Snape!" Harry and Ron yelled simultaneously without thinking, as Hermione rolled her eyes, and they started to laugh.

"Fifty points from Gryffindor," Snape sneered in response.

Harry just looked over at him and crossing her arms in front of herself, she imitated his pose and said, "Thank you, Professor. It's good to know things are starting to return to normal around here."

The whole room burst into laughter except, of course, Snape, who met her gaze with his own, black eyes glittering wickedly. The three friends then hugged and Sirius breathed a sigh of relief as he heard Harry say, "I'm going to tell you one heck of a story. I don't even know how much to believe myself," she said as they turned back to go into the isolation room together. The staff meeting concluded an hour later after all the professors decided that Dumbledore should make a formal announcement at dinner regarding the Prophecy and Harry. They then discussed the events that had already taken place from the prophecy; and all were amazed to discover how much had actually happened. Additional charms would be placed on the school in an effort to protect both Harry and the rest of the students. Dumbledore had already dispatched an owl that morning to the rest of the Order. He knew the ministry would have to be told too, as the students would tell their families, and it would get back to them anyway. He wasn't happy with that, since several Death Eaters held prominent positions, including Lucius Malfoy. He also didn't want to alert them to Sirius presence here. Dumbledore knew he would need to use old magic to help protect them all and keep Harry safe.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione spent the rest of the day together in the infirmary. Ron was gradually getting used to the idea that Harry was actually a witch, and not a wizard, as they had previously believed. Hermione, on the other hand was delighted, and completely intrigued with the story. They spent the better part of the afternoon discussing why Harry's parents,

Professor Dumbledore, and Sirius felt that it was important enough to disguise Harry as a boy until she was old enough to understand what they all believed to be her destiny.

"So," Hermione said thoughtfully "they really believe you're the witch in this prophecy?"

"Yeah, I think they're all nuts myself, but you must admit that Voldemort and I do have some history."

"Some history," Ron grunted, "more like a conflict for almost every year in Hogwarts."

"I can't help it if the lunatic is a glutton for punishment," Harry grinned.

"Really you two, get serious, we need to get a look at this Prophecy of Mathias," Hermione admonished. "We need to compare it to some of the things that have happened to Harry already, and then we can decide if the thing is for real," she finished with a hint of skepticism.

"My thoughts exactly," Harry agreed, "but it won't be easy. You know, of course, that we'll have to get it out of the Restricted Section of the library."

"Do you think Professor Dumbledore will give us a note?" Hermione asked hopefully.

"Come on, Hermione, you know that they aren't going to let Harry see it. What if it says bad things?" Ron asked pointedly.

"Ron, don't be silly. The prophecy said the witch would defeat Voldemort," Hermione said shaking her head, hair flying in all directions.

"Yeah, but what happens to the witch? I mean, she might get killed too!" he finished worriedly.

"Gee thanks," Harry said sarcastically, although the thought had also occurred to her, "but in case you haven't noticed, so far I haven't been that easy to kill."

"Harry, I'm serious. Voldemort really wants you dead. If he thought you were a threat before, what will he think once he hears about this?" Ron told her growing more agitated at the thought of her dying.

"All the more reason to get our hands on the copy in the library, and I have an idea how we can get it."

"Why do I think we're going night traveling with your cloak again," Hermione said disapprovingly.

"All right, I'd love to put one over on Filch!" Ron said smugly. "You should've seen the look on his face last night when he caught us in the hallway. You would've thought he was an Auror zeroing in on a group of Death Eaters."

"Ron's right, Harry, and we also have to watch out for Professor Snape," Hermione agreed.

"Well, if you'll give me a minute I think I can fully eliminate at least one of our problems," Harry replied with a hint of mystery.

"Oh, I just know we'll get expelled this time," Hermione scowled back at her friends, "but let's hear you plan."

"Yeah, I could use a little adventure!" Ron said with excitement.

"O.K., first I won't be going to the library with the two of you," Harry told them looking towards Hermione.

"What, just Ron and me? Where will you be Harry?"

"I'll be with Professor Snape on a shopping spree in London," she answered mischievously.

"Shopping.....with Snape?" Ron choked. "Harry, you're daft."

"Nope, he invited me last night. Seems he feels I need new clothes. In fact, he chipped in on this outfit," she said, enjoying the discomfiture on both their faces.

"I don't believe it! Snape bought you those clothes?" Hermione asked incredulous.

"I said he chipped in, although he particularly liked this green blouse," Harry explained indicating the top she was wearing.

"I wonder why?" Ron snorted in exaggeration, "green is the Slytherin House color you know."

"So, he's taking you to London?" Hermione asked pointedly ignoring Ron. "Does Sirius know about this?"

"Of course, he agreed to it. I think he feels bad about me having to pretend to be a boy all this time. Besides, he can't take me himself, and Snape can afford it. I hear he comes from a wealthy family."

"Sure does," Ron told her shaking his head in affirmation, "it's one of those old wealthy pure blood families like the Malfoys."

"No Ron, Snape isn't like the Malfoys," Harry corrected him, "he's not prejudiced against Muggles and mixed bloods, and he has a conscience."

"Harry, the man is a mean slimy sneak," he protested testily, "how can you say he has a conscience? He was a Death Eater!"

"I can say it because Dumbledore believes in him, and I'm an empath."

"You're a what?" Ron asked bewildered. "I thought you were a witch."

"Ron, you dolt, of course Harry's a witch! What she's trying to tell you is that she's also an empath," Hermione told him in annoyance.

"What is an empath?" Ron said looking at them both with curiosity.

"An empath is a person who can feel another person's pain and or emotions," Hermione told him knowingly. "I've read about them in Rare Magical Traits and Abilities."

"That figures, you read everything," he growled back at her.

"Hermione is right," Harry interjected before trouble could start, "although I usually am able to tune them out most of the time."

"How do you do that?" Ron asked growing interested in his friends otherwise unknown ability. "What am I feeling right now?"

"Well, I tune them out by setting up a mental block, this way I'm not overwhelmed with what others are feeling around me," Harry explained matter of factly. "Now, give me your hand and I'll tell you what you're feeling." Ron reluctantly placed his hand into Harry's while he waited with baited breath for her to speak. "You're happy that I'm not really sick, but you're still a little mad at me for not telling you I was a girl. You're having some mixed feelings about me and our friendship, and wondering if maybe it could develop into something more," she finished blushing.

"Could it?" he asked, trying not to sound too hopeful.

"Ron," she said slowly, "you're my best friend. I'd like to keep it that way, but if you're ever stuck for a quick date I'd be happy to help you out."

"Fair enough," Ron grinned at her. "You make Trelawney look even sillier with all her crystal balls and tea leaves."

"She's not trying to look silly; it's just her methods. Besides, she's a seer not an empath. I feel what you feel and simply put it into words; she claims to actually see the future, although I have my doubts. I also think Snape may have some sort of telepathic ability, but I can't be sure."

"You mean he can read our minds?" Ron asked her incredulous.

"I don't think he's that skilled, but he does have a fairly good idea of what we're thinking a little too often," Harry answered thoughtfully.

"Now I know we're all doomed," Ron moaned.

"Oh, Ron, knock it off. We need to finish listening to Harry's plan on how to get the prophecy," Hermione said looking at him and rolling her eyes impatiently.

"All right," he agreed, "so how do we get the prophecy, and when?"

"Well, I'm supposed to go up to London with him next weekend. So while I'm gone you and Hermione will take my cloak and start searching the library for it."

"Do you have any idea where it might be in the Restricted Section?" Hermione asked hopefully.

"Unfortunately no, but Madam Pince may have it listed in her card catalogue," she replied referring to the librarian. "See if you can get it open, but don't get caught if she has it locked with some charm or other. Just do the best you can."

"If we find it, what then, should we just take it and go?" Ron asked nervously.

"Hermione can do a spell on it to make a copy, if it's not too long. Or there may be more than one. Dumbledore told me she did a number of them. If that's the case then try and find only the one dealing with Voldemort and the witch. We don't care about the other stuff, not right now anyway," Harry explained considering all the possibilities.

"What if we can't find it?" Hermione asked her friend wondering what to do next.

"Then we'll keep trying. We can all ask a few discreet questions here and there too, especially the two of you. You can tell Sirius and Professor Lupin that you're concerned for my safety."

"Do you think they'll really answer our questions?" Hermione asked skeptically.

"I don't know but it's worth a try."

"Speaking of Sirius, how long is he staying?" Ron asked.

"I'm not sure. I know he'll try and stay as long as possible. He's enjoying watching me adjust and they all want to protect both me and the school, but it's not safe for him to stay in one place for too long."

"Well, maybe we'll get lucky and Voldemort will send Pettigrew to spy on you as Scabbers, the rat, and we can catch him," Ron told her referring to the animagus form Peter Pettigrew used.

"That would be nice, but I'm not counting on it," Harry responded somewhat downcast.

"Harry, please don't feel so bad. I'm sure Peter will be caught soon and Sirius will be cleared by the Ministry," Hermione comforted her friend.

"Of course they'll catch him, and then we can all have a big celebration!" Ron chimed, trying to sound happy in an effort to alleviate Harry's somber mood.

"Thanks guys," Harry said hugging them as a knock sounded on the door and Hagrid entered.

"Harry, "he said shaking his head in disbelief, "I wasn't at the meetin' this mornin' cause one of my critters was ailin'. Dumbledore, he just come and told me 'bout yer bein' a witch. At first I thought 'e was kidding, but then 'e told me 'bout the prophecy. I remembered when Tom and me was students 'ere and 'e were a studying it," Hagrid finished stopping in front of Harry's chair.

Harry knew Hagrid had been at Hogwarts with Tom Malvolo Riddle, the actual name of Lord Voldemort. It was Riddle who had framed Hagrid by telling the then Headmaster Tippet Hagrid had opened the Chamber of Secrets, and released the monster, which had resulted in the death of another student. This had caused Hagrid to be expelled, but Dumbledore had spoken up for him, and he was allowed to stay on as gamekeeper. Now, of course, he taught the "Care of Magical Creatures" course at Hogwarts. No one knew or understood any animal, magic or otherwise, better than Hagrid.

"So what do you think of our Harry's new image?" Hermione asked with a smile.

"I think she'll be a witch ta be reckoned with," he said grinning down at Harry, "an' a real pretty one at that!"

"Thank you Hagrid," Harry replied climbing up on her chair and giving him an affectionate peck on the cheek before sitting back down.

"An' I think Ron'll be the envy of every boy 'ere in Hogwarts. What, with you on one arm, and our Hermione on the other, well, 'ell be the talk of the school," Hagrid said winking at Ron.

"I never thought of that!" Ron answered proudly, puffing up his chest.

"Oh great, now he'll be acting like the Don Juan of Hogwarts!" Hermione scoffed.

"Who?" Ron asked, puzzled.

"Never mind, Ron," Harry laughed, "didn't I tell you everything would work out o.k.?"

"Well, I fer one am glad ta see yer all getting' along. Dumbledore said there was quite a tiff up 'ere earlier," Hagrid said looking at them all warily.

"Ron, do you have any idea what Hagrid's talking about?" Harry asked nonchalantly, trying without success to keep her face straight.

"Got me," Ron replied shaking his head negatively and grinning like a Cheshire cat.

"Really you two, you'd think things like this happened around here all the time!" Hermione reprimanded them with a stamp of her foot, smiling and shaking her head.

"They do, Hermione, this is Hogwarts after all," Harry said happily hugging her two friends and Hagrid looked on nodding his approval.

"Dumbledore'll be glad ya all made up nice like. He's big on 'happy endin's ya know," Hagrid told them with a catch in his voice. "Anyhow," he said recovering himself, 'e sent me ta fetch the three o' ya down ta the Great Hall fer dinner."

"But Harry can't just walk in there, nobody else knows!" Ron protested with concern.

"No. It would cause an awful commotion." Hermione agreed.

"You an' Ron are ta go in first an' take yer seats, an' I'll walk in with Harry as soon as Dumbledore makes 'is little speech 'bout our Harry," Hagrid explained.

"Well here we go again," Harry shrugged nervously.

"This should be real interesting," Ron chuckled, "can't you just see the look on Malfoy's face?"

"Yeah, and the owl he'll send out to dear old dad," Harry muttered absently as they left the room. She knew in her heart that Voldemort would know her secret within the next twenty four hours. If Draco didn't warn him then he'd hear it through the Ministry. Harry knew Lucius Malfoy held a high position protecting him from being thought of as one of Voldemort's Death Eaters. Unfortunately, when Harry had tried to tell them, only Dumbledore and a few others had believed her despite the fact that he had been a previous follower of the Dark Lord.

Ron and Hermione entered the Great Hall together, and as soon as they had taken their seats at the Gryffindor table, Dumbledore tapped his goblet with his fork for attention.

"Good evening students," he addressed them formally as a group, "I have a very important announcement to make regarding one of your classmates."

There immediately followed a ripple of conversation through out the Great Hall as Ron and Hermione found themselves glancing at each other knowingly. Harry had been listening from the hallway and Hagrid cracked open the door so they could both watch what was happening. Dumbledore waited patiently until the students quieted down before he continued, "Many years ago a seer by the name of Chandra Mathias made a series of prophesies. Several of these are believed to have been about Lord Voldemort," he stated calmly as a low ripple of conversation erupted around him and the students looked on in apprehension. "They tell about a young witch who will be his major adversary and ultimately defeat him," Dumbledore continued as the students sat listening attentively, hanging on his every word. "That witch has been here at Hogwarts for the past six years; and for her protection she has been disguised as a boy since birth. It is now time for her to come forward and be recognized," he said, standing, and with all eyes upon him, raised his goblet in salute. "I'd like you all to meet Harry Potter, in her true form," Dumbledore finished with a smile as Harry and Hagrid entered the Great Hall together.

The room immediately erupted into a series of cheers, hoots, hollers, and cries of shock as Harry took her seat at the Gryffindor table beside her friends. The first thing Harry saw was Ginny Weasley, shaking her head and laughing. Parvati looked stunned, and Cho was cheering, but Draco Malfoy was sitting stock still. His eyes were boring into her and his face was livid with rage. She could feel the anger emanating from him across the room, but strangely enough there was no hatred. This puzzled her, but due to the massive out pouring of emotions going on around her, she let her mental blocks fall into place, as the din was far too much for her to cope with.

Looking over towards the staff table, she noted that Dumbledore was beaming, while Snape was watching her astutely, eyes glittering, with a slight twitch to his lips. Professor Lupin was clearly pleased and winked at her. The others were talking calmly amongst themselves, while Professor McGonagall looked over and nodded in approval. She had hoped Sirius would be

there as "Snuffles," but he was absent, and Harry knew he must have gone to the Shrieking Shack. Even though she was disappointed, she knew it was for his safety and that Remus would tell him every detail later on.

As the students settled down, Harry was pelted with questions from all the Gryffindors, and students from the other houses stopped at her seat to talk to her. Most of them seemed happy and amazed, and some had even heard of the prophecy. Only Malfoy and his friends stayed away. Harry felt it had something to do with all the Professors being present since the group of Slytherin students wasn't foolish enough to try or say anything in front of them, especially Dumbledore.

Afterwards, she spent the better part of the evening in the Gryffindor common room, relaxing with Ron and Hermione over a game of Wizards Chess. Ron, of course, won two out of three games. Finally, tired and happy, she retired to her own room which Dumbledore had decreed she keep. This was both for her protection, and the fact that the Gryffindor girls' dorm was full. He had put a charm on her door and she was to change the password every week until instructed otherwise.

As she lay in bed, she wished "Snuffles" would come, but he did not appear. Drifting off to sleep she hoped he was safe and comfortable. Harry knew she could never forgive herself if something happened to him.

The dream started slowly. She could see the dark figure of a man in the hall and then the flash light from his wand. Her mother was carrying her, sobbing, "Not my Harry," as she attempted to get out through the kitchen door. Then, two wands flashed, and her mother fell to the floor, as Harry sat crying beside her lifeless body. She could see the red eyes peering at her from the darkness, and then she felt a searing white-hot pain in her head.

She awoke with a sharp jolt in a cold sweat, the fear making her heart feel like a hammer beating the inside of her chest. Her scar was burning, and she instinctively reached up to rub her forehead. Gradually, she became aware that she was not alone in the room. There was a figure sitting in the chair over by the fireplace, his features hidden by the darkness. Panic stricken, she grabbed for her wand on the bedside table when a familiar voice spoke from out of the darkness.

"That won't be necessary. You're safe and in no danger from me. In any event, if I had wanted to harm you I could have done so long before this. Your timing is impeccably slow."

"Snape, is that you? What are you doing in my room?" Harry asked peering into the darkness.

"If Dumbledore or Sirius knew..."

"They are the ones who sent me," he interrupted her without as much as moving a muscle.

"We thought you should be watched for any signs the Dark Lord may try something."

"He knows," Harry told him flatly. "I had the nightmare about my parents' death, and my scar is hurting."

"I know. He tried to summon me earlier this evening."

"How much danger am I in?"

"While you're here in the castle and on the grounds you're protected as much as is both magically and humanly possible. Once you leave though you can't be alone. The Headmaster and Black are worried about our trip to London," he told her gravely.

"I refuse to live like a hermit Professor, just because some sociopath wizard is trying to kill me. I've had to deal with him for most of my life in one way or another. Of course, if you would prefer not to go I would understand," she told him trying not to sound disappointed, and realized she had actually been looking forward to their trip together.

"I have no intentions of backing down. I merely wanted to make sure you understood it might be dangerous," he said, and she saw him incline his head within the shadows of darkness.

"In that case, I can't think of anyone who would know what to do in an emergency situation better than you, except for Dumbledore. It seems to me that traveling with a former Death

Eater would warn them we weren't to be tangled with," she said with animation, wishing she could see the expression on his face.

"You're either very brave or very foolish."

"Don't forget stubborn," Harry said contritely.

"That too," he agreed and she could hear the amusement in his voice. "Now go back to sleep. I'll be here for some time yet."

"All right, just be careful when you leave. We don't need anyone thinking you were here for other reasons," she said sardonically, knowing he would understand her meaning.

"No one will see me leave. I can assure you of that. Your reputation won't be sullied by me," he replied quietly, but somehow she knew he had one brow raised, since his presence could cause more gossip than Voldemort.

"Good night, Professor Snape," Harry yawned, turning back over on her side.

"Good night, Miss Potter."

"Call me Harry when we're not in class, everyone else does," she said yawning again as she curled up with her pillow.

"Very well. Sleep well, Harry," he replied with finality, indicating their conversation was at an end.

She didn't see it when his wand moved deftly in her direction, as he quietly muttered a sleeping charm, to prevent any further nightmares. He knew trouble was coming, and he would be prepared for it. What he wasn't prepared for were the feelings of protection he was having for Miss Potter. He didn't like emotional attachments and tried to avoid them whenever possible. He quietly mulled this dilemma over in his mind as Harry fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

PART 3 - A LITTLE TEST

Harry rose earlier than usual on Saturday, excited about her trip to London and the possibility that Ron and Hermione might find the copy of the Prophecy that was in the school library. Taking her invisibility cloak from inside of her trunk, she folded it neatly on the bed. She had made arrangements with Ron to give it to him before they went down to breakfast. Following a fast shower, she dressed quickly and reviewed the events of the previous week in her mind. There had been a whirlwind of questions and answers from her classmates, most of whom were absolutely astounded that Harry was indeed a witch and not a wizard as they had all been led to believe. The majority of the reactions were positive however, and her friends had started to regard her in a new light. She had overheard bits and pieces of their conversations, when they didn't realize she was nearby, and had found them a bit disconcerting. Parvoti, still had a crush on the "boy" Harry, and it had taken her several days to recover from the shock. When she finally did, she had come up to Harry and hugged her, saying that she was sorry for avoiding her all week. Cho just laughed and enjoyed the whole thing as an elaborate joke, while Ginny Weasley, who had considered Harry unattainable, now looked at her as a sisterly comrade. The Quidditch Team just joked and said that now they not only had the best Seeker, they also had the prettiest.

The only real problem was Draco Malfoy. Not that he'd said anything; on the contrary, he had just kept staring at her when ever they were in class or dining in the Great Hall. Finally, during Double Potions on Friday, he had taken the seat directly behind her. The intensity of the anger emanating from him had distracted her to the degree that she finally had to say something. Spinning around in her seat, she had caught him off guard, and furiously yelled, "What the heck is wrong with you?" louder than she had intended. This had caused him to drop the lizard tongues he had been preparing to chop into his cauldron prematurely. The resultant chemical reaction was a fiasco, with the cauldron spewing out oily red slime the consistency of molasses all over the room. Snape, of course, had been furious, and she had thought for a

minute that he would cancel their shopping trip; instead she had spent Friday evening scrubbing the entire dungeon by hand. It had also cost Gryffindor fifty points, but they all agreed it was worth it, seeing as how Malfoy's hair had turned pink when a large bubble of goo had burst all over him.

After she had completed her detention of cleaning up the dungeon, she decided to go in and try to talk with Snape about what had happened. She was more than a little confused about Malfoy's anger and refusal to speak with her, and didn't feel comfortable talking with Sirius or Remus about it. Snape, however, knew the Malfoys, and she thought that perhaps he could offer some insight into Draco's anger, but she wasn't expecting any miracles either.

"Excuse me Professor," Harry said knocking on the open door to his office, "the dungeon's finished."

"Very well Potter, let me just check it before you leave," he told her rising from his desk, where he had been grading the test papers of his First Year students. She could tell by the scowl on his face that he was not happy with the answers. As he moved about the room running his hands over the equipment, and checking for any debris she may have missed on the floor, his scowl deepened. When he could not find anything, Harry suspected he had been hoping to keep her longer. "I see no problems here Potter, you may go," he said turning back towards his office. When she did not move, he stopped and looked at her quizzically, "Is there a problem, Potter? I said you could go."

"Um...Ah....No Sir," she had stammered, having second thoughts about talking to him, having sensed his bad mood.

"Then I suggest you get upstairs to bed. I want to get an early start tomorrow."

"Yes Sir," she had replied turning to leave, but halfway to the door had changed her mind. Turning back, she found that Snape had been watching her. "Professor Snape...", she began, but again felt uncertain whether to proceed.

"This must be a first Potter, you seem to be at a loss for words," he remarked icily, staring down his nose.

'What's the matter with me?' she had thought to herself. 'I've never been afraid to say anything to Snape before.' Shrugging, she decided not to say anything, and heading for the door, was stopped by his hand on her shoulder, before she could reach for the knob.

"Miss Potter you obviously have something you want to say to me," he said as she turned back to face him, "so why don't you just tell me and get it over with?"

She had studied him intently, and she knew that he was somehow aware that she was scanning his emotions, before replying, "You're not in the best of moods tonight Professor. It can wait."

"My office, NOW," he told her growing more annoyed, steering her in the opposite direction and into his office. "NOW SIT," he said, placing her into one of the chairs by his fireplace, rather than by his desk, and took the seat opposite her. "Now what is on your mind? Have you been dreaming again?"

"What? No, nothing to do with Voldemort," she answered and he visibly relaxed. "It's well.....about today."

"What about today?" he asked stiffly. "You caused Mr. Malfoy to make a serious error and you have been reprimanded for it."

"It's why it happened. I....I'm not sure how to explain it."

"Explanations are unnecessary, Miss Potter, and irrelevant."

"No Professor; you're misunderstanding me. I'm not trying to argue or make excuses about why it occurred," Harry told him becoming flustered, "it's what caused it to happen. I...." she broke off in confusion.

"Harry," Professor Snape said using her given name in an attempt to calm her and find the underlying cause of what ever she was trying to tell him, "just tell me what it is that is troubling you about Mr. Malfoy."

"Anger," she blurted out in a rush.

"Anger, what ever do you mean?"

Draco and I have never gotten along. We're like oil and water, even worse than you and Sirius," she told him as he arched his left brow, but did not interrupt, "any way, you know all week I've been getting different reactions from different people about my really being a girl..."

"And Draco is angry," he finished the sentence for her.

"Look Professor, it's not funny. You would expect him to say something, anything, but he just keeps staring at me. If I let my guard down and scan his emotions all I get are these waves and waves of intense anger."

"Is that what happened during today's class?"

"Yes, I'm not looking to make an excuse. I just don't understand his intense anger. I have trouble blocking emotions when they're that intense, and when I turned to confront him, well.....you saw what happened."

"I see...," he said leaning back and arching his fingers. "He hasn't said anything to you the entire week?"

No, just all this anger," she answered lamely.

"Have you felt any other emotions emanating from him?"

"Mostly just anger, but I think he may also be confused about something."

"Nothing else?"

"No. I would expect him to hate me, but I get no sense of it at all," she replied in explanation. He just studied her for a moment with just the trace of a smile on the corners of his mouth.

"What's so funny?"

"Alright Harry, you may not like this, but I suspect that Draco is angry because you're a witch."

"Why, what has that got to do with anything?"

"Up to now, you and he have been rivals; always in competition one way or another, always trying to best each other. Now he finds out that not only are you his biggest competitor, you're also a witch, and a very pretty one at that," Snape told her smiling sarcastically.

"Are you saying that he's mad at me for not only being better than he is, but because I'm also a girl?"

"Yes, and his confusion stems from the fact that he is suddenly attracted to you. He'd rather be mad than admit to himself that he likes what he sees; a witch who is not only powerful, but pretty," he explained, his dark eyes glittering with unspoken laughter.

"Yech.....I hope he stays mad," Harry said curling her lip in distaste and causing him to suddenly laugh out loud. "You need to laugh more often Professor, it makes you light up," she observed as she scanned him.

"Good night, Miss Potter," he replied, taking her by the hands and helping her to stand, before steering her back towards the door

"Good night, Professor Snape," she replied with a grin, only to find his face back to its usual mask.

"We'll leave right after breakfast tomorrow, so be ready," he said as he walked back towards his desk.

"Oh, don't worry, I will be," she called over her shoulder as she left the dungeon.

Her reverie was interrupted by a soft scratching sound at her door. Opening it to see what it was, she found "Snuffles," sitting there wagging his tail.

"Hello Snuffles," she said petting his head as he entered, his tail continuing to wag, "I've missed you." Sirius had not spoken to her all week and she had been worried about him.

"Where have you been?"

"I've been around," Sirius answered giving her a hug after he transformed.

"I hope you've been a good dog," she teased, "and didn't go digging up anybody's gardens. I'd hate to have to put you on a leash and collar."

"Well, let's see...I dug up Madam Pomfrey's cabbages, peed on Hagrid's fence, and chased Mrs. Norris up a tree. Does that all count?" he laughed.

"Hmmm...Well I hope you're not serious about Hagrid or Madam Pomfrey," Harry told him, laughing so hard there were tears in her eyes, "but you can go after Mrs. Norris anytime," she finished, referring to Filches' pet cat.

"O.K., I'll remember that," Sirius replied smiling, "and I've missed you all week too."

"Seriously, where have you been? I was beginning to worry that you had left without saying good-bye."

"I wouldn't leave without letting you know, so don't worry. I've been in my hiding place and "Snuffles," has been out patrolling at night. In fact the past three nights a certain wolf has been keeping me company."

"Remus," she told him knowingly, "the moon's been full so the two of you have been out cavorting together."

"Guilty as charged," he replied happily as he cupped her chin to look him in the eyes. Her green eyes were sparkling and he could see that she was happy. He hoped that it was because he was there more than the fact that she was going into London with Snape.

Harry scanned him as she met his soft brown eyes, and sensing his feelings she smiled shyly as she told him, "I'm always happy when I'm with you."

"I worry about you when I'm not here," Sirius informed her fondly.

"Me too, I have nightmares sometimes that they're dragging you back to Azkaban," Harry admitted with a shudder, as he held her close to comfort her, and stroked her back.

"Shh..., that's not going to happen. Too many people know Peter's alive. Once he's caught I'll be cleared," he told her softly. "Mad Eye Moody is a member of The Order and he's doing everything he can to find Peter," he explained, referring to the former Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher and Auror. "In the meantime I want you to be very careful, especially now."

"I will," she replied with a frown, "so long as you are too."

"Promise," he grinned with a wink. "Now how about some breakfast together?"

"But Sirius, we can't! I mean, you can't go to the Great Hall without Remus. Everybody thinks you're his pet dog."

"Who said anything about the Great Hall? We're invited to dine with the Headmaster in his sitting room this morning."

"Professor Dumbledore's sitting room, why? What's going on?"

"Nothing, he just thought the five of us should spend some time together," he answered mysteriously.

"Who are the five of us? Right now I only see two."

"You, me, Remus, Snape, and Dumbledore, that's what five."

"But I promised Ron and Hermione I'd have breakfast with them. I'm supposed to pick them up and we were going to go down to the Great Hall together," Harry told him biting her lip in consternation.

"So we'll just stop by the Gryffindor Common Room and you can tell them you've changed your plans. I think they'll understand."

"All right, but I hope Hermione isn't too disappointed. She can't believe I'm spending the weekend in London with Snape."

"What did Ron say?" Sirius asked curiously, pursing his lips in amusement.

"He thinks I'm daft," she said, grabbing the cloak off the bed and a backpack full of books, as she followed him towards the door.

"Harry, why are you taking your invisibility cloak? I don't think you'll need it in London."

"No silly, I'm lending it to Ron over the weekend," she said thinking fast. "He's got a hot date, but don't you dare tell anyone," she smiled mischievously. Harry didn't like lying, especially to Sirius, but she just couldn't let him know about her plan. She was glad he wouldn't be able to question Ron, since he had to go around the school as "Snuffles."

"I promise I won't say a word to him," he said before transforming back into his animagus form.

Ten minutes later found the cloak safely in Ron's hands and Harry sitting down to breakfast in Dumbledore's sitting room. The others had already arrived and the table was set with a sumptuous breakfast of bacon, eggs, toast, hot cereal, muffins, and waffles, along with fresh fruit, tea, coffee, and juice. Snape surveyed her critically as she entered and seemed genuinely surprised.

Harry knew what he was thinking and said, "I borrowed the outfit from some friends. The jeans belong to Hermione, the blouse is Ginny's and the shoes were a gift from some friends," she indicated the shoes they had bought for her.

"You look lovely my dear," Dumbledore greeted her warmly as he pulled out her chair.

"Thank you Professor," she beamed back at him.

"Did you sleep well, no nightmares?" he inquired as she helped herself to a muffin and some juice.

"Professor, not even Voldemort could have gotten into my head last night. I was so tired from cleaning a certain Potion Master's dungeon, that I just fell into bed, and didn't know a thing until I woke up this morning," Harry told him looking over her glasses at Professor Snape. He merely raised his eyebrows without commenting so she continued, "Of course every bone in my body aches. The only person who may feel stiffer than me this morning is Professor Lupin," she said, flashing him a smile as they all laughed except Snape. He just eyed her shrewdly with his usual sardonic expression.

"I'm glad to see you're in such good spirits child, that you can joke about your detention," Dumbledore remarked as he passed her a plate of eggs.

"Who's joking? Don't you know that he always gives someone Friday night detention so he doesn't have to clean up the dungeon himself?" Harry said wickedly, as she looked across the table to where Professor Snape was sitting. Remus upset his teacup and Sirius nearly choked on his eggs, amused by her audacity.

"The dungeon always needs a thorough cleaning by Friday and I can always count on at least one student to misbehave, so why not?" Snape countered evenly, his dark eyes glittering.

"What did you do to bring Severus down on you, Harry?" Professor Lupin asked curiously.

"Oh, I just caused Malfoy to create a mess," she replied casually.

"Wait a minute," Sirius interjected, "Malfoy made a mess so you got the detention?" he asked, looking darkly at Snape.

Harry knew this could lead to trouble so she quickly looked at him and told a half-truth,

"Sirius, I shoved Malfoy, causing him to drop some ingredients into his cauldron prematurely, which caused a chain reaction. Red goo went bubbling out all over the place."

"Well, I can't fault you for not liking Malfoy," he said relaxing again, "but try and keep your battles on the Quidditch Field."

Snape had been watching her and was surprised that she had exaggerated what had happened to Sirius. He made it a point to ask her about it, although he admitted to himself it would not have been a good idea to get into an argument with Black.

"Why are you bringing all those books, Harry?" Remus asked, indicating her backpack full of books in an effort to steer the conversation in a different direction.

"Homework," she groaned.

"All that," he questioned. "Was everyone in a bad mood yesterday?"

"No, just the usual with O.W.L.'s coming up again soon," she said, referring to the exams for Ordinary Wizarding Levels that were given to students after completing their fifth year.

"What do you have?" Dumbledore asked mildly.

"Well let's see....I have Defense Against the Dark Arts, seems Madam Hooch was covering for a certain ill professor," she said looking pertly at Remus, "and she's fascinated by zombies. So I have to write a report on how to identify and destroy them."

"Interesting creatures, zombies," he chuckled, "I met one once."

"Zombies don't move me at all," she replied shaking her head. "Vampires, now they're interesting, and werewolves they're o.k. too, nice and fluffy," she teased with a grin, and he grinned back letting her know he was not offended at all, "but zombies, no, they're just too dead for my taste."

"What else do you have?" Sirius asked, thinking how much he liked her sense of humor.

"Potions," Harry answered with a smirk, "I have to write a discourse on the various truth potions and which I feel is most effective and why."

"Well that sounds easy enough," Dumbledore smiled.

"No, you see our Potions Master is not that kind, Veritaserum is excluded. Of course at the moment I'm one up on everyone else, since I'm spending the weekend with him. If I have a problem I'm sure he'd love to go into it with me."

"I'll be happy to review it with you over lunch," Snape replied casually, but he was secretly enjoying her sarcasm.

"And finally," she said ignoring him, "I have our Headmaster's favorite subject, Charms, and a certain dog's specialty, Transfiguration."

"What do you have to do for charms?" Dumbledore queried with more than casual interest.

"I have to create an illusion so that you think something is in the room when it really isn't," Harry told him pleased by his interest.

"You mean like this?" Dumbledore asked with a wave of his wand, conjuring up a full grown Unicorn and her foal.

"Show off!" she pouted as he patted her hand.

"What would you do?" Sirius asked curiously.

"Yes child, what do you have in mind?" Dumbledore wanted to know, pretending to act casual, and pouring a cup of tea.

Harry had the distinct impression they were testing her, and couldn't resist rising to the challenge. She enjoyed doing charms and liked Professor Flitwick.

"I thought maybe something like this," she said as she waved her wand and a small flower garden appeared with a group of butterflies.

"Absolutely beautiful!" Dumbledore exclaimed with pleasure, thinking that her ability was more advanced than she realized. Then, waving their wands at the same time, the illusions disappeared simultaneously. "What do you have for transfiguration?"

"Oh, nothing much, I just have to turn my Godfather into a dog," Harry bantered calmly.

"Oh really," Sirius replied, going along with her teasing, "do you think you can do it?"

"Of course, I do it all the time. He just drops in every now and then, and for some reason I get this crazy desire to pet a dog and whoosh..." Harry said with a wave of her hand, "he's a dog," she teased, trying to keep a straight face and failing miserably.

"What do you really have to do?" Remus laughed.

"I have to turn an inanimate animal into a live animal."

"Can you do it?" Professor Snape inquired, studying her closely.

"I haven't tried yet," she confessed.

"Then why don't you?" Sirius encouraged her.

"Yes Harry, give it a shot," Remus prodded.

"Go ahead Child," Dumbledore nodded with encouragement, "no one will criticize you," he said as he looked at the others in the room with meaning. Getting up from his chair he took a bronze lion off one of his shelves and placed it on the floor.

"O.K.," she replied doubtfully. Tapping the lion three times uttered, "*linus existum animus.*"

The lion sprang to life, growing to full size in a matter of seconds, and snarling in anger.

Harry was completely taken aback, but didn't panic, as the men all scrambled to their feet to help her. Redirecting her wand at the lion, she yelled, "*stupefy,*" to control the beast while Dumbledore reversed her spell. "Next time Professor, please choose something a little less

aggressive, like that frog," Harry said pointing to a glass frog he used as a bookend, her voice shaking.

"It's all right, Harry," Sirius soothed her while Remus poured her a cup of tea.

"Harry," Dumbledore said taking her hands in his, "you're going to be very powerful, and mishaps like this are going to happen. I'm very proud of you for not panicking when the lion grew to full size."

"What did I do wrong?"

"Nothing," Snape said with admiration, "just watch your wording. The lion was full size because you brought it into existence. Try adding, "*minutum*," next time so it doesn't grow," he instructed her as if she were in class.

Harry merely nodded and drank her tea quietly while the men chatted about classes and Quidditch. They were all looking forward to next weekend when Gryffindor and Slytherin would play their first game. Harry barely listened and sat lost in thought. She knew that she should not have been able to do the two skills she had demonstrated, the garden scene and the lion being advanced magic which only came with much practice. Yet she had done them with little effort. She was suddenly beginning to feel afraid, yet she was elated at the same time.

"Miss Potter," Snape's voice interrupted her reverie, "we need to be going."

"All right," she agreed glad of the distraction.

"Enjoy yourself, Child," Dumbledore said his blue eyes shining, "you deserve it."

"Try not to give Severus a hard time," Remus told her cheerfully, "or you may end up his permanent Dungeon Keeper."

"God Forbid!" Harry smiled rolling her eyes.

"Harry," Sirius said quietly as he helped her on with her cloak, "be careful."

"I will," she answered as he gave her a quick kiss good-bye on the cheek and she picked up her backpack.

"We'll go to the Leaky Cauldron, first, and get settled," Snape informed her as he poured some Floo Powder into her hand. "I'll go first at all times, unless I tell you otherwise," he instructed stepping into the hearth. Seeing her nod in affirmation, he articulated, "The Leaky Cauldron," and vanished.

Harry then did the same and immediately was being pulled along the Floo system in a dizzying rush. She emerged a short time later at the inn, to find Professor Snape waiting anxiously, along with the innkeeper, Tom.

"Hello Harry, it's good to see you again," Tom greeted her cordially. "I see you've changed a bit though, much prettier."

"Ha, ha, ha, Tom, very funny," she replied looking at him askance.

"Ya don't seem surprised I knew you were a witch," Tom said disappointed.

"Tom, over the past six years I have come to learn that news travels just as fast in the wizard world as it does in the Muggle world," she said matter of factly. "I wouldn't be surprised if the whole of Great Britain and half of Western Europe knew by now. They've also probably stopped referring to me as the boy who lived and are now saying that I'm the girl in the prophecy."

Tom threw back his head and laughed, as he addressed Professor Snape, "She's not only pretty, Severus, she's smart too."

Professor Snape just grunted and propelled Harry towards the stairs. "We're in rooms one and two, opposite each other," he said opening her door and checking out the room before crossing the hall and going into his own. Harry knew he was making sure it was safe and didn't complain. He returned within a few minutes and addressed her stoically, "We'll shop in Diagon Alley first and after lunch we can go out into Muggle London. That is if you're not too stiff from cleaning the dungeon?" he added lightly.

"A little exercise will be just what I need to work out the kinks," she countered. "It's nice to see you actually have a sense of humor Professor."

"Since we're not at Hogwarts, you may call me Severus, and why would you ever think I had no sense of humor?"

"All right, Severus," she said testing his name on her tongue, "do you want a list of reasons?" she continued mockingly.

"Do you have one?"

"I'll write one and turn it in with my homework," Harry teased as he arched his brow giving her a thin smile.

"I'll be looking forward to reading it. Are you ready to go?"

"When ever you are."

"I know you have your wand with you," he told her seriously, "I want you to bring it along."

"Professor, you know I'm not allowed to do magic outside of Hogwarts. Dumbledore knows I only have it to do my homework."

"Just the same I want you to have it with you at all times," he instructed her gravely.

"Do you think there will be trouble from Voldemort's people?"

"It's always best to be prepared," he told her in an attempt to avoid giving her a direct answer.

"Severus, don't patronize me," Harry said, shaking her head indignantly.

"Very well, yes, I think it is entirely possible," he stated, admiring her candor.

"In that case, let's go. I could use a little adventure," she said as she forced a grin, unable to hide the worried look in her eyes. The last thing she wanted was to encounter any of the Death Eaters, or even Voldemort himself.

"Just stay close and do as I say," he instructed, laying a hand on her shoulder to show he understood. He then sealed both rooms with a charm and they went downstairs and out through the hidden entrance to Diagon Alley.

PART 4 - LONDON ADVENTURE

"I need to go to Gringotts," Harry informed Professor Snape, referring to the wizards' bank, as they stepped out into Diagon Alley.

"You don't need to spend your money, Harry; I told you this was my treat."

"No, you don't understand, since I'm here I thought I'd just pick up a few small gifts for some friends."

Snape nodded his understanding and they continued up the street until they reached Gringotts, the bank where all wizards kept their money. Harry withdrew a moderate sum and they continued up the block.

Their first stop was a small dress shop run by a plump little witch with mousy brown hair, a round face, and a small upturned nose, but the astounding thing about her was her blue eyes. They were the brightest blue Harry had ever seen, even brighter than Dumbledore's. She apparently knew Professor Snape, and looking up as they entered, called him by name, in an accent Harry couldn't place.

"Why... Severus Snape," she cooed, "it's so good to see you...and with a young lady," she said brushing past Harry and batting her eyes at Snape. "It has been too long since you've been here, and I have missed you. I said to my sister, just the other day, Tabitha..."

"Rowena," Snape interrupted her looking decidedly uncomfortable, while Harry tried unsuccessfully to suppress a snicker, "the young lady needs to purchase some new clothes."

"But of course. She is your niece perhaps, since I know you have not married?" she asked quizzically.

Harry had the distinct impression that "Rowena," had set her cap for Professor Snape, and clearly considered her a rival for his affections.

"Rowena, Miss Potter is one of my students!" he told her sharply. "I have brought her to you, as you have some of the most stylish clothes for young ladies in your shop, and your reputation is flawless."

"Thank you, Severus, you are so kind," she purred softly, turning to look at Harry. "Miss Potter...?!", she said her blue eyes growing wide in wonder, with a questioning expression on her round face, as she saw the scar on Harry's forehead. "Not, THE HARRY POTTER, the girl in the Prophecy, Lily's daughter?" she asked, thunderstruck. "Yes, you have her wonderful green eyes. She was so beautiful, with her green eyes and red hair, and she was always laughing too. Kind and gracious, she was," Rowena stated sadly, shaking her head. Harry was becoming dismayed, and realized this woman had known her mother, but was too flustered to ask any questions. Professor Snape noted the expression on Harry's face and came to her rescue, with his usual aplomb.

"Rowena, Miss Potter is here to shop. She doesn't need you reminding her of her late mother," he said to the shopkeeper as Harry shot him a grateful look.

"But of course, Severus, my apologies dear," she said surveying Harry's clothes and shaking her head with a frown. "You young women today, Muggle clothes...and not even nice ones," she snorted. "Come along with me Child, I'll have you looking so beautiful all the young wizards will be begging at your feet for attention, just like your mother..." she said her voice trailing off as she steered Harry into a dressing room before she could object. Once inside, Rowena waved her wand and Harry was standing partially unclothed, with nothing on except her bra and panties, her clothes hanging neatly on a hook by the door. She was more than a little embarrassed, but Rowena just continued on, "There now, let me see..." she muttered thoughtfully, deftly conjuring up a Royal blue knit dress, with a square neck, and three quarter sleeves. It fit her perfectly, accentuating her curves in all the right places, and Harry couldn't suppress her smile. "Miss Harry, you look lovely," Rowena said surveying her handy work. "Come and we shall get Severus' opinion," she nodded leading her back into the other room, where they found Professor Snape looking out the shop window, watching the people on the

street. "Severus, look at how she'll bloom with the right clothes," Rowena said optimistically as he turned to face them.

"Very nice, Rowena, I knew you could work wonders with her," he complimented the witch as he surveyed Harry's appearance approvingly.

"Thank you, Sevie dear," Rowena replied, sauntering up to him with a playful smile. "Give me a few more minutes and she'll be the Belle of Hogwarts" she winked, as Snape blanched. Six dresses, two skirts, and four blouses later, Harry was done and Snape couldn't wait to escape from the store and Rowena's clutches.

"You've outdone yourself, Rowena," he said paying her, "her aunt and uncle will be pleased," Snape explained icily as she leered back at him.

"Come back soon, and maybe we could share a cup of tea together," she purred as they exited the shop.

Snape didn't answer, but just stared straight ahead, gritting his teeth, as he slammed the door behind them. Harry burst out laughing unable to control herself at the notion of Snape sitting down to tea with Rowena. She suspected that, given the chance, the little witch would be all over him.

"Harry, it would be wise if you stopped laughing right now," Snape threatened his voice like steel.

"I'm sorry Professor," she choked, "but I can't help it. If you could have seen the look on your face each time she called you Sevie..., Oh God..., " she cried unable to control her laughing fit.

"It was darker than when Neville Longbottom melted down two cauldrons in the same day!" Professor Snape refrained from comment, his mouth clenched tight and his face unreadable. Slowing his pace slightly, he looked at his watch, and stopped abruptly in front of "Arabella's Fine Lingerie." "IN NOW! I'll wait here. I don't think you want me around while you purchase new undergarments," he said, his eyes glittering darkly, as he handed her three gold Galleons.

"Not really, Sevie," she said slyly, her cheeks burning, and ducked into the store before he could utter a sound. She emerged fifteen minutes later to find him looking up the street intently. "Is everything o.k.?" she asked as he whirled around, reaching for his wand, startled.

"Harry, don't ever come up behind me like that," he intoned sharply, frowning down at her, and noting the worried expression on her face, he softened his voice slightly. "I might have hurt you by accident, and yes, everything's fine for the moment. What would you like to get next?" he asked trying to alleviate her worry as she handed him his change.

"I could use a new cloak," she told him thoughtfully.

"What no shoes to go with all those new dresses?" he asked with his familiar sardonic smile.

"Them too, but I like Muggle shoes better, they're more comfortable," she said by way of explanation, noting Snape's arched brow.

"That's because you don't know where to shop," he replied leading her across the street. "You can get sneakers in Muggle London, but Coffee's makes the best shoes and boots to be had," Snape informed her as they went into a modest shop, with a sign in the shape of a shoe, which read, "Jonathan Coffee Custom Shoes and Boots."

"Mornin', Professor Snape, what can I do for you?" A thin man with a balding head, and a jovial smile greeted him, and Harry wondered if Snape knew all the shops and proprietors on Diagon Alley.

"Good morning, Jonathan," Snape said exchanging the greeting. "I was just telling Miss Potter that you have the best shoes and boots in London," he leered, making sure to accentuate Harry's name, as he whispered in her ear, "that's for the "Sevie," then redirected his attention to the proprietor, "I'm sure she would like to try some on."

"You're, HARRY POTTER? Samuel," he called into the back room behind the counter, "we have Harry Potter in our store!" A young boy emerged and Harry supposed it was his son,

judging by the family resemblance. "Miss Potter, this is such an honor," Jonathan exclaimed shaking her hand.

"Mr. Coffee, there's no reason to make a fuss," Harry said embarrassed by all the attention, glad there were no other patrons in the store. Glaring over at Snape, she mouthed, "I'll get you for this, Sevie," but his face remained impassive.

"Hello, Miss Potter, I'm Samuel," the child introduced himself, and Harry guessed him to be about ten. "How come you have a boy's name?" he asked curiously.

"Well Samuel," Harry grinned, "my family gave it to me for protection from the Dark Lord," she explained, refraining from using Voldemort, so that she wouldn't frighten him. "It means powerful leader." She noted the surprise in Snape's eyes that she would know such a thing.

"Daddy says you're going to stop He Who Must Not Be Named so you have to be a powerful leader. I like it, even if you are a girl."

"Thank you, Samuel, I like it too," she said, amused at his honesty.

"Daddy says you go to Hogwarts," he said looking over at the shopkeeper, "I'm hoping to get my letter next year."

"You'll like Hogwarts, it can be a lot of fun, and you'll make lots of new friends and learn how to do all kinds of magic."

"I hope so, but I heard from my friend Charles that his brother told him Professor Snape is mean," Samuel told her, looking warily over at Snape.

"Who is your friend's brother?" Snape questioned soberly, looking down at Samuel.

"Geoffrey MacDougal, sir, he's a second year in Hufflepuff," the boy replied, looking frightened.

"Ah...yes...MacDougal," Snape said thoughtfully, and Harry could tell he was considering the aforementioned student's performance in class.

"Miss Potter, he's not going to get into any trouble is he?" Samuel questioned worriedly.

"No", she reassured him, "you can tell your friend Charles that Harry Potter said Professor Snape is not mean, just very strict."

"Are you sure? Charles says he yells a lot."

"He's here shopping with me, isn't he, and you don't hear him yelling do you?"

"No, but you're not in class right now," he told her, thinking about it. "Why is he so strict, he only makes potions?"

"Samuel, that's rude!" The shopkeeper reprimanded his son, "You apologize right now to Professor Snape."

"I'm sorry, Professor," he said lowering his head. He knew that the Professor was one of his father's best customers, and if he got mad he might not come back.

"Apology accepted, Master Coffee," Snape replied, as if he were talking to one of his students.

"Samuel," Harry smiled, "Professor Snape is a Master Potions Maker. He's strict with his students because most potions are not easy to make. Often the ingredients can be harmful if they aren't mixed properly, plus the equipment can be dangerous if you don't use it properly."

"Really... I thought making potions was like mixing stuff up, like when mama bakes a cake. I didn't know it could be dangerous," Samuel said, his eyes opening wide and looking at Professor Snape with admiration. "Did he ever yell at you?"

"Uh huh, but when he yells it's only because someone made a serious mistake and he doesn't want anyone to get hurt," she explained carefully, realizing it was the truth. Snape looked on with approval.

"I'm going over to see Charles right now and tell him," he said shaking his head angrily. "I can, can't I, Father?" he added as an afterthought.

"Very well, but come right back," he directed his son, "I need you to help in the storage area today," he called after him as he raced out the door. "Miss Potter, thank you for being so kind to Samuel."

"No problem, he's a cute little boy," she grinned.

"Now come and let me fit you for some new shoes, no charge," he said pleasantly. "It's not often we have such a prestigious and pretty visitor to our shop."

"I'm sorry; Mr. Coffee, but I can't accept your offer," she told him politely while looking over to Professor Snape for help.

"Jonathan, Miss Potter doesn't like to be given special attention. I have the money for her shoes," he told the shopkeeper, neglecting to inform him that he was actually purchasing them.

"Are you certain, Miss Potter?" he asked kindly.

"Please, I'd be much relieved," Harry said, steadfastly.

"Very well," he answered shaking his head. He'd never known anyone who would turn down an offer of something for free.

Harry purchased two pairs of shoes for school and a pair of dress shoes. Professor Snape had also insisted that she get herself a pair of suede dragon's hide boots, which came up to her knees. She had to admit they were warm, comfortable, and stylish.

Next they went into "Camilla's Cloaks" where she was again greeted with what she had come to call, "The Harry Potter Shock Syndrome." Professor Snape found this amusing, and just shook his head, wondering how Harry could keep from screaming. He realized that she really didn't like being referred to as famous, and he remembered her first year when he had come down on her for being a celebrity. All the years he had taught her, he'd never really gotten to know her. He had just thought of her as James Potter's son, and that he was repaying his debt for James having saved his life. Now Lily Potter's daughter was another matter altogether. He remembered Lily fondly. She had always been kind to him... 'Push that thought out of your head right now, Severus,' he told himself as they walked back to the Leaky Cauldron for lunch. 'She's too young for you, just wait until she's older, and try to keep Voldemort from killing her. Damn that Prophecy!' he thought angrily, for allowing himself to become emotionally involved, even if it was one sided.

As they sat eating a lunch of chicken salad sandwiches and apple cider, he studied her features as if he had never looked at her before. She had James' thick unruly hair and his coloring, but her cheekbones were a bit higher and more pronounced. Her small nose was perfectly straight, and like her father she had a thin upper lip, while her lower one was more pronounced. She also wore the same type of wire framed glasses. But that's where the similarity ended. Her green eyes were Lily's, but somehow different. It was as if she could see into your soul. She also had her mother's laugh, and kind hearted nature, as well as her quick temper.

"Earth to Professor Snape," she called softly, interrupting his reverie, "you're a million miles away."

"Sorry," he replied blinking, and sat up straighter, as if that were possible. "I didn't wish to be rude."

"No offense taken, but you had a weird expression on your face."

"Weird, Harry, in what way," Snape asked curiously.

"Like you were lost somewhere, and didn't know how to find your way back," she responded thoughtfully.

"So where do you think I was?" he inquired, frowning at her intuition.

"Back in time; people look at me like that all the time," she told him uncomfortably.

"Was I really looking at you like that?"

"Uh huh, you were looking at James and Lily Potter, not Harry," she told him, unable to meet his gaze; "you were seeing them. Sometimes I wonder if anybody ever sees just plain old Harry," Harry explained wistfully.

"You aren't plain and you're certainly not old," he retorted sardonically.

"You know what I meant," she told him, gazing out across the room at the other diners, but not really paying attention to what was going on around her.

"Harry," Professor Snape told her firmly, "it's normal for people to look at you and see your parents. You are their natural offspring, so they'll automatically note the resemblance. You are just more aware of this because of the circumstances surrounding their death; and you're right, I was thinking about them."

"Can I ask about what?" she questioned him curiously. Harry was well aware that Snape and her father had been rivals, and that the Professor owed him a debt for saving his life once during the full moon, when Remus Lupin, nearly attacked him in werewolf form. This was why he kept an eye on Harry. He couldn't repay her father, so now he had to repay her. Snape sensed her thoughts, for he studied her carefully for a moment before responding, "I was thinking that you have your mother's eyes, but they're just a little bit different. The green is softer, like fine jade, hers were more of an emerald, and yours give one the distinct impression that you could see into one's soul," he explained evenly; thinking to himself, 'Severus, you idiot, stop acting like a love sick school boy.' He continued aloud, "And your father's features are not as sharp as his were, your cheekbones are also somewhat higher." Harry did not respond to this immediately, but sat looking at him before she finally spoke, "Why?"

"Why what," he asked impatiently.

"Why are you looking at me like you've never seen me before? I've been in your class since I was eleven."

"I might ask the same question of you," he replied sarcastically. "What's that children's expression, I'll tell you if you tell me?"

"Fair enough," she countered, "but you start first."

"I get the feeling you don't trust me," he said, pursing his lips.

"I don't."

"Very well," he said, arching his brow in amusement. "I've been looking at you differently because you are a different person," he told her, holding up his hand to stop her from interrupting. "The person in my class for the past six years was known to me as a boy, and was treated as such, until I had a rude awakening this past week."

"Ah...you're feeling guilty. It was easy to be hard on James Potter's son because of your old animosity towards each other, but Lily Potter's daughter has caught the infamous Severus Snape, off guard," Harry gloated, as he looked on, his dark eyes boring into her, his expression unreadable. "Don't feel too upset though, I think you've finally made it back into the Human Race, Severus," she said with satisfaction, taking his hand into hers. "I'm glad too, because I believe there's a very nice man inside of you that has been trying to get out."

"What makes you say that?" he asked, sitting perfectly straight, a slight twitch to his upper lip, his voice dangerously soft.

"I've scanned your emotions, remember. You have a lot of guilt about your past. Why can't you forgive yourself, everyone else has."

"No, not everyone," he replied harshly.

"Professor, there will always be comments and whispers," she said slowly, "and the people making them are just hypocrites. They pretend to know what they would have done under the same circumstances, but they don't, not really. They're just trying to salve their own conscience."

"You have no idea of some of the things I've done," Snape told her icily. Her uncanny intuition was making him uncomfortable.

"You're wrong, I do know," she replied, staring directly into his black eyes, "torture, kidnapping, murder, and probably a whole list of other things from spying to seduction; but your worst crimes were against yourself. You failed to prevent some of these atrocities when you could have done so. That's what you find so unforgivable. It's time to let go, Professor, I've forgiven you, so why can't you forgive yourself?"

"You've forgiven me," he said askance.

"Yes me. I know you could have done more to try and prevent my parents death, but your old rivalry with my father stopped you. I also know you feel responsible for the torture and subsequent insanity which resulted in Neville Longbottoms' parents being sent to a mental institution, probably for the rest of their lives," Harry told him heatedly. "Let it go, Severus, stop worrying about what you didn't do and think about what you can do! You need to do it for yourself, and I need you to do it for me. If you really believe in that Prophecy then I need you to be there for me. I may not know what's in it yet, but I have a feeling it can't be all good by the way all the teachers are acting, and believe me, I don't want to die."

Professor Snape stared at her for what seemed an eternity, before he nodded and spoke, "I'll take that under advisement, Miss Potter. Now let's get going, it's past two o'clock and I too brought along some homework to do this evening. The third years had a test yesterday, and I need to grade them." He then paid the bill and Harry followed him out the door to Muggle London, confused and feeling that she had overstepped her bounds.

Snape was angry, but not at Harry. He had allowed himself to become vulnerable, and he didn't like that. She had a fantastic perception, and had read him like a book. 'Damn it,' he thought, 'why can't you just do what she asks? She came right out and said that she needed your help to stand up to Voldemort. Hell, she's afraid, and worried about what's in that prophecy. She's afraid it says she's going to die too, and the awful thing is that it doesn't come right out and say if she does or not,' he berated himself as he moved through the crowded streets. 'Why does she have to be so fucking nice to me about my failing to prevent her parents from being killed? And how the hell does she know about the Longbottoms? Even Neville doesn't know about my role in their torture.'

He was mulling this over when he realized she was no longer walking with him. Scanning the crowded London sidewalk, he saw no sign of her. Worriedly he began walking back in the direction they had come. 'Shit, Black will kill me if something happens to her and Dumbledore...' He couldn't even finish the thought. He had promised them both he would keep her safe and now he'd gone and lost her, and in a city she was unfamiliar with. He was growing more concerned by the minute when he spotted her standing in front of a small toy store, looking around nervously. Spotting him coming in her direction she started towards him and they met half way up the block. He wasn't sure if he should be angry or give her a hug, he was so relieved she was safe.

"Professor, you were moving so fast I was having trouble keeping up, then someone bumped into me and I lost you in the crowd," she explained, breathlessly, "so I decided to just stand and wait," she finished lamely, her voice unsteady.

"You did the right thing, Harry, but why didn't you just ask me to slow down?" Snape asked, relieved she was unharmed.

"I did, you didn't hear me," Harry told him warily. She was unnerved and didn't know her way around the city, and had worried he would be angry, especially after their conversation during lunch.

Snape nodded in acquiescence, giving her a brief smile to reassure her that he wasn't angry, and took her gently by the arm to prevent any further mishaps. "Now where would you like to go?"

"If you don't mind, I'd like to go back to that toy store. I spotted something I'd like to buy in the window for some friends."

"Of course," he replied steering her back in the direction they had originally come from. He was amused when she purchased a rather large stuffed black dog and a wolf with some kind of ecology information that promised a donation to endangered wildlife with each purchase. She then bought a mechanical rat that ran in circles when it was wound up. 'Presents for Black and Lupin,' he thought, finding himself feeling a little disappointed. 'Stop it, you fool, of course she's going to buy them something, she cares about them, and Black is her Godfather. Up to now you've been nothing but mean and arrogant with her.'

Next, they went across the street to a place called, The Sneaker Emporium, where he purchased her the new sneakers he had promised. He noticed she was more relaxed in the Muggle World, and suspected it was due to the fact that people didn't know who she was. Here, she was just an ordinary teenaged girl, with a scar on her forehead. Dumbledore had been right to let her aunt and uncle have her, even though they weren't the kindest of Muggles. She was able to grow up without fan fare until she had come to Hogwarts. This, he realized had kept her from becoming vain and conceited, and had given her the ability to think for herself, without the use of magic. He knew she was going to need all experiences from both worlds to defeat Voldemort. 'And I'll be sure to be there to help you, when the time comes. It's time to pay the debt I owe to James Potter for saving my life,' he told himself as the spectre of her father flashed through his mind.

"Let's go in here," Harry said interrupting his thoughts, and pulling him towards a candy store with the ludicrous name of "Dentist's Delights."

"Albus would absolutely love this place," he said, looking around as they entered. They had multiple kinds of chocolates in every variety and shape imaginable, mints, caramels, licorice, and hard candies that would delight any sweet tooth.

"What do you think he'd like?" Harry asked, her eyes gleaming in anticipation of Dumbledore's reaction to the sweets.

"Toffee," Snape replied knowingly, "then maybe some kind of hard candy."

"Toffee it is," she agreed happily, "I know he also likes lemon drops, but let's see how he'll do with wild cherry and watermelon drops instead. I think I'll buy some chocolates for Ron too," she told him selecting some chocolate turtles, "he'll never figure out why they don't move," Harry said wickedly, as Snape looked down at her shaking his head in amusement. They both knew how Ron loved trying to catch the chocolate frogs that wizard children were used to. She then paid for the candy and they left the store both in a more relaxed mood than when they had entered.

"Is there anywhere else you wish to go?" he asked casually as they started walking up the street.

"I need a book store," Harry informed him.

"I'm glad to see you're trying to further your knowledge," he stated, pleased that she was looking for something to read, and interested in what kind of topic she would prefer.

"Sorry, Professor," she said peering over her glasses, "the book is for Hermione. Don't tell anybody but she's hooked on Regency Romances," Harry winked at him conspiratorially.

"Miss Granger reads cheap romance novels?" Snape asked unable to hide his smile as he led her to a book store he knew was on the next block

"Yup, she absolutely loves this one author and has been dying to get her latest book," she said looking over the signs directing shoppers to the appropriate sections. Finding the one she wanted she made her way through the aisle to the area marked ROMANCE, and scanned the titles. "Here it is," she said holding it up for him to see, "The Reluctant Countess," Harry quoted the title. "You look absolutely scandalized, Professor Snape. I can't imagine why," she laughed mischievously.

"I just can't imagine a studious and level headed person, such as Miss Granger, reading such trash," he answered disdainfully.

"Professor, we're talking about someone who had a crush on Gilderoy Lockhart," she said referring to the former Defense Against the Dark Arts Teacher from her second year.

"She had a crush on that fool?" he asked with derision.

"Her and half the female population of Hogwarts, remember?" Harry reminded him with disgust. "I on the other hand, thought he was a real jerk! It's a pity you didn't do a little more damage to him during the dueling club," she said rolling her eyes in disappointment.

"If I had, half the female population of Hogwarts would have been heartbroken," he informed her surreptitiously, his left brow raised, and a slight smile on the corners of his mouth.

"Yes, but the other half, and the entire male population would have been eternally grateful."

"I'll keep that in mind in case he ever gets his memory back," Snape replied as they both laughed aloud. "Are you finished in here?" he asked when they had calmed down.

"Do you mind if I browse for a few minutes?"

"Not too long, it's getting late and I'd rather not be out after dark," he said seriously, and she understood his meaning.

"All right, I'll just be a few more minutes," she agreed as he moved over near the door and began watching the pedestrians for any sign of trouble.

She then deftly edged herself over to the section on WITCHCRAFT hoping to find a book that would amuse him. Looking over the titles she found a book titled, "Potions and their Many Uses" by someone using the pseudonym, A. Warlock. Flipping through the pages she laughed out loud, and quickly placed the book under her arm. She knew Snape would be scandalized and could almost hear him muttering about the ignorance of Muggles. She then paid for the books and went over to join Snape at the door.

It was close to sunset and she knew he wanted to have her back at The Leaky Cauldron before dark. He stopped short as they stepped outside, and grabbing her around the waist, pulled her around the corner into the alley. She opened her mouth to ask what was wrong, but he signaled her to keep quiet, and not say anything. She could hear voices approaching from where they had just come from.

"McNair, I thought you said Snape and Potter went into that bookstore?"

A chill went through Harry's spine as she recognized the man's voice. It was Lucius Malfoy. She also knew about McNair's penchant for torturing his victims. The two Death Eaters had tracked them down.

"Harry," Snape hissed in her ear, "Listen to me very closely. I want you to hang onto me as tight as you can. I'm going to Apparate us back to The Leaky Cauldron, do you understand?" Harry didn't answer him, but did as she was told, and wrapping her arms around his waist as tightly as she could, prayed that they wouldn't be found before Snape could get them out of there. She knew this would not be a good time for a confrontation, and had no idea if they were the only two of Voldemort's men in the vicinity.

"Ready?" he asked, and seeing her nod, raised his arm high into the air with his wand and with a bright flash of light they disappeared just as Malfoy rounded the corner. They reappeared just outside of The Leaky Cauldron and, stepping through the door, found Remus Lupin getting ready to come and find them.

"Dumbledore sent me to find you," he told them both as they took a table in the back of the room.

"What's wrong? Has something happened to Snuffles?" Harry asked alarmed, but was careful not to use Sirius' name in a public place.

"He's fine, Harry, but he had to leave unexpectedly. The ministry wanted to put Dementors around the school again for your protection, but Dumbledore refused. He told them that many of the Dementors used to be Voldemort's allies, and that the ones who could be trusted would still have a detrimental effect on you. He reminded Minister Fudge that you are particularly vulnerable to them," Remus told her gently, trying not to sound too patronizing.

"I guess this is because of that stupid Prophecy?"

"I'm afraid so, Harry," he said, shaking his head. "Snuffles asked me to give you this note before he left, but don't open it here. Wait until you're in a safe place to read it." Lupin withdrew a parchment envelope from his robes. Her name was on it, written in Sirius familiar script. He then turned to address Professor Snape, "Severus, Albus feels you should both return to Hogwarts tonight. The Order got word that Voldemort may try and make an attempt to get to Harry."

"They already did," Harry said flatly, as Snape nodded.

"I had to Apparate us both back here. Malfoy and McNair spotted us a few blocks from here. I'll have Tom send our things. The sooner we get Harry back to Hogwarts the better," Snape replied with finality.

"I agree, Severus," Professor Lupin answered. "Don't feel too bad, Harry, Dumbledore has a surprise for you when you get back," he tried to ease her disappointment over Sirius having to leave and canceling the rest of her special weekend. "Your safety has to come first; you can understand that, can't you?"

"I know," she nodded, "I guess it's time to go back to practicing my Patronus spell, I've been getting a bit rusty. Somehow I don't believe the Dementors won't be showing on Hogwart's doorstep," she looked from one man to the other with a forced smile.

"That might not be such a bad idea," Snape agreed, giving her a brief smile of encouragement.

"I'll go and settle up with Tom, and we'll head back immediately."

Professor Snape paid their bill and gave Tom some brief instructions. He then met Harry and Lupin by the fireplace and they returned to Hogwarts via the Floo System, since Harry was not allowed to Apparate, and in any case did not yet know how. Snape made it a point to ask Dumbledore for permission to teach her in order to help insure her safety. What he didn't know was that Remus Lupin had been thinking the exact same thing.

PART 5 - THE PROPHECY

"Welcome home child," Dumbledore said from behind his desk, as Harry stepped from the hearth in his sitting room. "I'm sorry to have spoiled your trip, but I am greatly concerned for your safety."

"I understand," Harry answered looking around.

Professor Snape who had returned first was standing by Dumbledore's desk. As Harry moved further into the room, Professor Lupin arrived and exited the hearth.

"We were lucky, Albus," Lupin said as he came forward, "they just got back as I was getting ready to leave The Leaky Cauldron to find them."

"There was no trouble then?" Dumbledore queried uneasily.

The three exchanged glances, before Professor Snape answered, "We barely averted a confrontation, Headmaster. Lucius Malfoy and MacNair almost cornered myself and Miss Potter in an alley. I had to apparate us back to The Leaky Cauldron from the city."

"Were there any Muggles nearby?" Dumbledore asked with concern. "Did anyone see you?"

"No, Headmaster, no Muggles were nearby, and we were gone before Lucius could find us. I gave Tom instructions to send our belongings and say we had left over an hour ago, should anyone come in asking about us."

"Good, Severus, now why don't the three of you go down to the Great Hall for dinner? I'll join you there shortly," he instructed, rising, "oh, and Harry, come back up here for dessert after you've eaten and refreshed yourself. I want to speak with you," Dumbledore told her as she turned to leave. "Do you know the password?"

"Yes Sir, Plum Pudding," Harry replied.

"All right, I'll see you about seven o'clock then," Dumbledore said, studying her over his half moon spectacles. "Sirius also asked me to tell you Ron had cancelled, and to return this to you when you got back," he said handing Harry her invisibility cloak.

Harry's face turned beet red, and she felt as if her stomach had dropped down to her feet.

Sirius either knew or suspected Ron wasn't going out on a date, and how much did Professor Dumbledore know? She didn't say anything, merely took the cloak with a nod and mounted the moving stairs. Her heart was pounding in her chest, and upon entering the hallway, she practically ran to her room. Removing her traveling cloak, Sirius letter fell to the floor. In her haste to leave the Headmaster's Office Harry had forgotten about it. Tearing it open she read his brief note.

HARRY,

SORRY I HAVE TO LEAVE WHILE YOU'RE AWAY. I WOULD RATHER SAY GOOD-BY IN PERSON BUT TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE. I FIGURED OUT THE REAL REASON RON HAD YOUR CLOAK, AND AM LEAVING IT WITH DUMBLEDORE. I DIDN'T TELL HIM WHAT YOU THREE WERE UP TO, BUT I THINK YOU SHOULD. I AM ALSO DISAPPOINTED THAT YOU FELT YOU COULDN'T COME TO ME ABOUT THE PROPHECY, AND HAD TO LIE. YOU SHOULDN'T BE AFRAID TO TALK TO ME. I CARE FOR YOU MORE THAN YOU KNOW. PROFESSOR DUMBLEDORE WILL KNOW HOW TO CONTACT ME. DON'T SEND AN OWL, IT'S TOO DANGEROUS. I'LL BE IN TOUCH AS SOON AS I CAN.

LOVE,

SIRIUS

P.S. YOU CAN TALK TO REMUS WHEN I'M NOT THERE. HE'LL HELP YOU AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. HE'S A GOOD AND LOYAL FRIEND.

Harry re-read the note three times before she realized she was crying. Sirius was not only gone, but had left feeling disappointed in her. She couldn't even send him a letter by owl to apologize. Lying down on her bed, she buried her face in her pillow, and cried herself to sleep, Sirius letter in her hand. She had long since lost her appetite. She was awakened two

hours later by a gentle nudge on her shoulder. She opened her eyes to see Professor Dumbledore standing over her; with Ron and Hermione waiting anxiously just inside the door.

"Professor...is anything wrong? What's going on?" she asked in confusion.

"I'm sorry child; I didn't mean to frighten you. We were concerned when you didn't come down for dinner," Dumbledore said calmly, brushing his hand over her forehead. "Do you feel all right? You have no fever."

"I'm o.k., I guess I was just tired from being out all day."

"We were worried, Harry. When we saw Professor Snape in the Great Hall, we figured you came back early," Ron explained. "You never came down for dinner so we went up to the teacher's table and asked where you were. That's when Professor Dumbledore said he'd come up and check on you."

"Harry," Hermione said coming into the room and looking closely at her friend, "you've been crying. Your eyes are red and swollen, what's wrong?"

"It's nothing, Hermione. I'll be o.k."

"Humph, I'll bet Professor Snape was in one of his bad moods and that's why you're so upset!" Ron exclaimed.

"No, you two, it's just a personal matter, and Professor Snape was actually quite courteous," Harry informed them with a faint smile.

"Snuffles is gone again isn't he?" Hermione asked intuitively, careful not to use Sirius name.

"That's why you were crying, isn't it?"

"Partly, but I'd rather not go into it now."

"Harry, you've had a rough week, come up to my office and we'll talk. I'll have some dinner sent up for you. Ron and Hermione can come up too and have some dessert."

"Professor, would it be all right if I talked with you privately before Ron and Hermione come up?"

"Certainly child, you can eat while we talk," Dumbledore smiled, but his eyes were serious. 'He knows,' Harry thought, 'he's just giving me the opportunity to tell him.' Out loud she said, "Just give me a minute to wash my face Professor, and I'll be right up."

"Ron, Hermione, why don't the two of you come up in an hour. Harry should be finished eating by then," Dumbledore said looking at his watch.

"Yes, Sir," they said in unison, and headed off towards the Gryffindor common room as the Headmaster went towards his office.

Harry hurriedly washed her face, and looking in the mirror, ruefully surveyed her reflection. Hermione had been right. Her eyes were red and swollen and her unruly dark hair was disheveled more than usual. Grabbing a vial of saline eye drops she had purchased over the summer in a Muggle pharmacy, she put two drops in each eye as directed. They soothed her eyes and they didn't appear as red. She then brushed her hair, making sure her scar remained covered. Finally, she picked up the package containing the candy for Ron and Dumbledore, along with Hermione's book and headed upstairs to the Headmaster's office. She was determined to do the right thing. Taking a deep breath, she uttered the password to the Gargoyle guarding the entrance to the Headmaster's Office. The door swung silently open, and mounting the stairs, she felt like she was going to her doom.

"Come on in Harry," Dumbledore's melodic voice called as she knocked, "take one of the chairs by the fire, and I'll take the other."

"Yes, Sir," Harry replied, but before taking the seat he had indicated, she turned her attention to Fawkes, in an effort to summon her courage. "Hey pretty bird," she smiled stroking his comb gently, as the Phoenix trilled contentedly, "I'm sorry I forgot to bring you a cracker."

"So that's why he's getting fat," Dumbledore said lightly, "you're spoiling him, Harry," the Headmaster smiled, as she took the seat opposite him.

"He's my second favorite bird," she whispered pretending the Phoenix couldn't hear her.

"Second?" Dumbledore questioned eyes alight with laughter.

"Yes. I have to give Hedwig priority or her feelings will be hurt," Harry grinned.

"I understand completely," he winked. "Now why don't you have something to eat? Dobby sent up many of your favorite dishes," he told her waving his hand towards the table laden with food. There were fried chicken breasts, mashed potatoes, carrots, fresh salad, and a carafe full of apple cider.

"My God Professor, does he really believe I can eat all this? It's enough for four people."

"Just eat what you can," Dumbledore laughed. "You know Dobby; he always goes overboard trying to please you."

"I know," she replied, taking a piece of chicken, some carrots, and a small bowl of salad.

Professor Dumbledore poured her a tall glass of the cider as Fawkes flew off his perch, and alighted on his shoulder.

"He's looking for a treat," Dumbledore informed her warmly. Taking a few carrots, he placed them onto a saucer, and began feeding Fawkes one at a time.

"HA! I'm not the only one who spoils him," Harry teased studying the bird. "Professor, if I ask you a question about Fawkes, will you promise not to laugh, or think it's stupid?"

"Harry, there's no such thing as a stupid question," he said looking at her curiously, "what do you want to know about him?"

"Well..." she said collecting her thoughts, "I know Fawkes is a Phoenix, and every so often he goes up in a poof of smoke, to be reborn from his ashes."

"That's correct," Dumbledore affirmed trying to keep a straight face. He suspected where Harry was going with this line of conversation, but didn't want to hurt her feelings.

"Um...aren't there any female birds...?" She stammered, not entirely sure how to approach the subject. "I mean...don't they lay eggs or something too?"

"Of course," Dumbledore replied, now openly smiling, his blue eyes sparkling with mirth. "I don't believe that was a stupid question at all. These birds live a long time, but they do mate once every ten years. The female will lay one egg, and both parents will care for the hatchling until it can leave the nest. That's one reason they're so rare."

"I told you that you would think it was funny," she pouted.

"I'm sorry, Harry, I can't help but smile. You're one of the few persons who have ever had the good sense to ask me that question."

"Really?" she asked in amazement.

"Yes, most people just assume they just beep being reborn from their ashes, but they do have a genuine life cycle; albeit a long one," he explained patiently as Fawkes dozed on his shoulder.

Harry nodded her understanding and stared off into the fire for several minutes before speaking. "Professor..."

"Hmm...?" he responded, knowing she was finally comfortable enough to talk about what had been troubling her.

"I've done a bad thing."

"Child, what could you have done that has you so upset you cried yourself to sleep this evening?" he asked soberly.

"Sirius is upset with me," she replied sadly.

"I sensed that before he left, but he wouldn't say why."

"He wants me to tell you, but if I do I might get other people in trouble too."

"Did you do something you shouldn't have?"

"Not exactly," Harry answered taking a sip of cider, and studying the amber liquid in her glass, averted her eyes, unable to look at the Headmaster.

"It wouldn't have something to do with your cloak, would it?" he prodded.

"Yes."

"Harry," Dumbledore said gently tilting her chin up to look at him, "you'll feel better if you tell me. I promise no one will get into any trouble if they're innocent."

"I gave Ron and Hermione the cloak. They were going to try and find the copy of the Prophecy you told me was in the Restricted Section of the library," she said in a rush.

"Sirius knew this?"

"He figured it out. He was with me when I brought Ron the cloak this morning before breakfast. I told him Ron had a hot date."

"I see..." Dumbledore said mulling over the information.

"Now he's angry at me."

"For lying to him," Dumbledore stated sternly.

"Partly, and also for not trusting him enough to just ask him about it," Harry replied, her voice unsteady, as she fought back more tears.

"I believe he must be disappointed in you."

"Yes, he told me so in his letter," she whispered.

"As am I," Dumbledore agreed bluntly.

"I...", she began, but was unable to complete the sentence as her voice broke and she started sobbing uncontrollably, unable to look Dumbledore in the face.

He allowed her to cry for a few minutes before he got up and put his arms around her.

Allowing her to feel his comforting warmth with her empathic sense, he spoke soothingly,

"Hush now Child. You did the right thing. Some lessons are better learned the hard way."

Harry just clung to him, allowing him to comfort her, all her inner senses alert to his incredible power. She stayed that way without moving for approximately fifteen minutes, until her tears were finally spent. Finally, releasing her grip, she wiped her eyes on the sleeve of her robe, and looked up at him. "How much trouble am I in Professor?" she asked shakily.

"Go into the bathroom and wash your face, and then we'll talk," he replied keeping his voice stern, but his blue eyes were bright and warm.

Harry nodded and went into his bathroom. Having washed and dried her face for the second time that evening, she returned to her chair, ready for the chastising that she thought was at hand.

"Fawkes seems a bit distressed, Harry," Dumbledore said allowing the bird to perch on the arm of her chair, as she resumed her seat. His feathers were all fluffed out and he was making an odd noise in his throat, resembling the high pitched bleat of a lamb.

"I'm sorry pretty bird," she crooned, rubbing his head with her finger, as she looked at him with wonder, "I didn't mean to upset you."

Fawkes was staring at her, his head cocked, dark eyes unblinking. Harry had the odd sensation that he could understand what she was saying, but shrugged it off, thinking that it was totally absurd. Suddenly, he began to bob his head, and letting out an odd shrilling sound, opened his magnificent wings, and flew over to the package Harry had brought upstairs with her. Grasping it in his talons, he dropped it in Dumbledore's lap, perched on his shoulder, and started trilling happily.

"Now Fawkes, you mustn't go taking things that don't belong to you. This is Harry's. She had it in her hand when she came in," he admonished the Phoenix, laughing as the bird looked at him opening and closing one eye. "I'm sorry, Harry. Fawkes is just being curious."

"Is he Professor? Or does he know that I brought you back a present from London?" Harry asked, eyeing the bird suspiciously, as Professor Dumbledore returned the package to her. She had the distinct impression that the bird had deliberately winked at Dumbledore, but had no way to prove it.

"Fawkes is a very perceptive bird, Harry," Dumbledore remarked his eyes bright, as he eyed the package in her lap.

"Then maybe he thinks we'll both feel better if I give you these," she said reaching into the package. Bringing out the three smaller packages, she smiled as he took them, and proceeded to open each one individually.

"Toffee," he smiled with delight as he put one into his mouth and closed his eyes, savoring the taste, "and what are these...? Ah...cherry drops...and watermelon drops too!" He beamed like a small child. "You know, Harry, you certainly understand how to make an old man happy."

"Professor Snape helped to pick out the toffee," she told him candidly, "I chose the hard candies, and just in case nobody's told you lately, you're only as old as you feel."

"How old does that make me?" he inquired, sampling a watermelon drop, his smile broadening.

"Oh...I'd say one hundred and fifty going on ten," Harry said brazenly, giving his long white beard a gentle tweak, as he raised his eyebrows in amusement. "Seriously though, how much trouble am I in Professor, and what about Ron and Hermione?"

"Hmmm..., well it seems to me that no harm has been done," he remarked thoughtfully, "and you've learned a valuable lesson about trust. Therefore I'd say none," he informed her calmly, looking at her over his glasses.

"What about Ron and Hermione?" she asked anxiously.

"They've done nothing but borrow your cloak, which I believe you gave them, and subsequently it has been returned unused," Dumbledore told her knowledgeably. "So, since I'm sure this won't happen again, let's just keep this our little secret, shall we?"

"Yes Professor," she said with relief, but didn't miss the warning in his voice.

"Good, now that we've settled that little matter, Ron and Hermione should be arriving any minute. We need to get these dinner dishes cleared away." He rang for the house elves, and Dobby appeared almost instantly.

"Harry Potter, how lovely you are," he said jumping from side to side. "Dobby heard how Harry was really the girl from the Prophecy, and Dobby thinks it's wonderful. He Who Must Not Be Named, will finally be defeated once and for all, and we will be free to live without fear!" he said giving her a slight bow of respect. "But Harry Potter's eyes are all red. You've been crying!" Dobby exclaimed flattening his ears in distress. "Has someone hurt Harry Potter? If so..."

"Dobby, I'm fine, really," Harry interrupted him, wondering if he ever stood still. "Professor Dumbledore just helped me to solve a personal problem, that's all," she told him firmly, to get him to calm down.

"Headmaster, is this true? Harry Potter is o.k.?"

"Yes Dobby, Harry is fine," he informed the house elf. "Now if you will have these dinner dishes cleared away and send up some desserts for Harry and her friends, I would appreciate it."

"Right away, Headmaster," he said snapping his fingers twice. The dirty dishes vanished and almost immediately a table full of sumptuous desserts appeared in their place. There were lemon tortes, chocolate brownies, assorted cookies, and three kinds of puddings. "Would Harry Potter like anything else? If so just tell Dobby and he'll get it for her," he looked at Harry hopefully as he jumped up and down.

"That's fine Dobby," Harry responded putting her hands on his tiny shoulders to stop his constant motion, "thank you."

"Dobby is glad Harry Potter is happy," he smiled, his round saucer like eyes shining as he turned his attention back to Dumbledore. "Does the Headmaster require anything else?"

"Have you notified the watcher elves to remain on alert?"

"Yes Headmaster. I spoke with Thera and Hermes myself. They said they would notify the others immediately."

"Very well, Dobby, you can go now. I'll ring when we're finished."

"Farewell Harry Potter, good night Headmaster," Dobby said disappearing with a pop, mischievously leaving a large bubble in the air, which floated up to the ceiling before it dissipated.

"He's adorable, but I wish he would stand still once in a while," Harry told Professor Dumbledore, shaking her head, "he makes me dizzy."

"I know the feeling," Dumbledore responded rolling his eyes.

"Professor, what is a Watcher Elf?"

"They're another kind of elf. They keep an eye on the grounds around the school."

"How come I've never seen them, and I've been here at Hogwarts for six years."

"You don't see them because they can become almost translucent and blend in with the scenery around them," Dumbledore explained.

"Do they look like Dobby?"

"No, they're quite pretty actually. They look like young children, short and slender, with pointed ears, and pastel colored hair with eyes to match."

"Could I see one sometime?" she asked with fascination.

"They're very shy, but I'll ask Thera and Hermes. They're the leaders of the colony here at Hogwarts."

"There's a whole colony? Don't tell Hermione! She'll start a free the Watcher Elves movement next," Harry groaned, remembering what Hermione had put them all through after deciding the house elves were little more than slaves.

"I'll take it under consideration," Dumbledore replied as there was a knock on his door.

"Come in children," he called, and Ron and Hermione entered.

"Good evening, Headmaster," Hermione said formally.

"Hi Harry! Nice table Professor!" Ron added gaily, taking a seat on the couch and reaching for a tart.

"Ron, where are your manners?" Hermione admonished. "We haven't been asked to sit down yet!"

"That's all right, Hermione," Dumbledore laughed jovially. "Please feel free to help yourselves."

"Thank you for inviting us Professor," Hermione said looking at Ron in disapproval.

"Um...", Ron moaned happily, "I think I've died and gone to Heaven."

"Well if you'll come back down for awhile I have something for you," Harry grinned as she reached into her package of treats and handed him the box of chocolates.

"Chocolate Turtles," he read out loud opening the box. Taking two out, he set them on the table side by side, and gave them each a poke. "Hey, Harry, something's wrong. They won't even go back into their shells, let alone walk."

Harry, Hermione, and Professor Dumbledore all laughed, as Ron's face turned as red as his hair.

"Ron, you ninny," Hermione said shaking her head, "Harry's playing a joke on you. They're Muggle chocolates. You just eat them."

"Muggle chocolates...They don't do anything?"

"Actually, Ron, they do one thing...", Harry said taking one and popping it into her mouth, "they taste good!"

They all laughed again, including Ron, who grinned sheepishly as he offered the others a piece of the chocolates.

"I have something for you too, Hermione," Harry said pulling out the book and handing it to her.

"Oh, Harry!" Hermione squealed in delight as she scanned the title, "I can't wait to read it!" she said, slipping it into her robes before Ron or Dumbledore could see what it was. "Thank you."

"No problem," Harry said looking at her fondly, as they started to attack the table of goodies Dobby had laid out for them.

"Now Harry," Professor Dumbledore said soberly as he leaned back in his chair, "I know Professor Lupin told you I have a surprise for you. Sirius, Remus, Severus, and I discussed this last night in depth before I decided whether to give it to you. In light of our earlier discussion, I feel that it is the right choice, and is now doubly important. I asked Ron and Hermione to be here too as I believe it also pertains to them.

"What is it Professor?" Harry asked frowning.

"We all agreed you should be allowed to read this. It will be kept in my office for the time being, should you wish to study it further," he said handing her a large parchment scroll, neatly tied with a fine red ribbon.

Harry's heart was beating so fast she thought it would burst as she untied the ribbon. She was afraid to say what she already knew, and felt more ashamed of her earlier actions than she had before. Slowly she unrolled the scroll until she could see the top line, and read it to herself, 'THE PROHECEY OF MATHIAS.'

"Professor, are you sure about this?" she asked, swallowing hard, her eyes wide with wonder.

"I thought this was what you wanted?" he asked, his blue eyes meeting her green ones with understanding.

"Harry what is it?" Ron questioned with concern. "you've turned as pale as Professor Snape."

"Ron...", Hermione said shrewdly, "I think Professor Dumbledore just gave Harry the Prophecy to read."

"What! Harry, is it the Prophecy, like Hermione says?"

"Yes..." She answered in a whisper, thinking that wanting and having really were two different things. Did she really want to know what was in this parchment? She felt suddenly afraid, even though she had firmly believed that the future was what people made it. Nothing was set in stone. She didn't move or say anything for what felt like an eternity, the room so quiet you could hear a pin drop, her eyes locked with Dumbledore's as she fought an inner battle with herself. Finally, she made the decision they were all waiting to hear. "Ron, make some room on the table. This parchment seems quite long."

Ron and Hermione both scrambled to clear away the dessert plates so Harry could unroll the parchment scroll in front of her, while Dumbledore sat looking on without comment.

Glancing around the room Harry had the distinct impression someone else was watching, but the only persons there were the four of them. Deciding she was just feeling nervous, and that it must be Fawkes, she unrolled the scroll, as Ron let out a low whistle.

"It's all written by hand," he said, looking down at the small neat calligraphy. "Can you read it Harry, it seems awfully faded in spots."

"I think so," she replied studying the words. "How about if I read it out loud, and then we can decide if what's in it is actually true, like so many people believe it is?"

"Should I take notes?" Hermione offered eagerly.

"I don't think that will be necessary Child," Dumbledore said candidly as Ron and Hermione moved closer to Harry so they could see the parchment better.

"All right then, here goes," Harry nodded as she began to read in a slow clear voice.

THE PROPHECY OF MATHIAS

AS TOLD BY CHANDRA MATHIAS AND WRITTEN BY HER HUSBAND ARTEMIS

31 OCTOBER 1921

A HALF BLOOD ANGRY BOY HE'LL BE

TO BECOME THE ANGRY WIZARD WE'LL SEE

WITH SKULLS AND SERPANTS HE WILL RISE

WITH EATERS OF DEATH TO BE DESPISED

CAUSING PAIN AND DESTRUCTION THROUGH OUT THE LAND

SO THAT THE GOOD KIND DUMBLEDORE MAY

HOLD THE DARK LORD'S POWER AT BAY
HE BRINGS TOGETHER A VALIENT BAND
LED BY THE PHOENIX TO STAY HIS HAND
BUT STOP HIM HE CANNOT DO
EVEN WITH PURE EYES OF BLUE
TO THAT TASK THERE SHALL FALL
A YOUNG WITCH WHO WILL ANSWER HIS CALL
NOT YET BORN AND YET TO BE SEEN
HER FATHER A PURE BLOOD WIZARD IS HE
MOTHER'S A MUD BLOOD WITH EYES EMERALD GREEN
HER HEART IS AS GOOD AS ANY I'VE SEEN
THE CHILD IS HALF BLOOD WITH THE LIONS PURE HEART
BORN IN THAT SIGN
SHE'S THE LAST OF HIS LINE
FOR SOON THE SERPANTS TONGUE SHE WILL GAIN
THROUGH PARENTS LOVE GIVEN UP IN PAIN
AND THE DARK LORDS MARK ON HER HEAD THERE WILL BE
LEFT THERE FOR THE WORLD TO SEE
BETRAYED BY A SECRET KEPT IN VAIN
FOR THE DARK LORD HAS VANISHED
ALONG WITH THE RAT
DISAPPEARED IN THE NIGHT
BOTH OF THEM BANISHED
THOUGH NO ONE KNOWS HOW
THE WITCH SHE SURVIVES
ALL ALONE NOW
FROM THE RAT'S FALSE DEATH
COMES IMPRISONMENT AND LOSS
SHE FACES A FUTURE OF PAIN AND DESPAIR
IN THE HOME OF THE MUGGLES
FOR HER FATHER'S NOT THERE
BUT THE EVIL LORD IS NOT YET DEAD
MERELY BIDDING HIS TIME TO RECLAIM HIS STEAD
WHEN SUCH TIME AS DUMBLEDORE'S CALL
COMES ONLY ONE DECADE
FROM THE EVIL ONE'S FALL
HE'LL BRING THE WITCH HOME TO HOGWARTS YOU SEE
THOUGH HIDDEN FROM ALL THE WORLD SHE'LL BE
TO TRAIN HER IN HER WITCHING SKILL
AND WATCH HER SMILE WITH EACH NEW THRILL
BUT THE EVIL LORD IS LURKING NEAR
TO TRY AND STEAL THE STONE SO DEAR
FOR HIDDEN ON A HEAD HE'LL BE
WHERE NONE WILL EVER THINK TO SEE
BUT THE POTION MASTER HE IS CUNNING
AND SUSPECTS TO WHOM THE DARK LORD'S RUNNING
SO DUMBLEDORE HE WILL MAKE
THE TEACHERS DO CHARMS
THAT EVIL CAN'T BREAK
BUT THE DARK LORD IS SMART
HE CHOSE HIS HOST WISELY

AND MANAGED TO GET THROUGH THE CHARMS
TO HIS PRIZE
BUT WILL FIND HIS WAY BLOCKED FROM WHAT HE REQUIRES BY THE
MIRROR WHO KNOWS WHAT HE DESIRES
THE WITCH WITH TWO FRIENDS
WHO TRUE TO HER BE
WILL FOLLOW HIM THERE
BUT NOT FOR ALL THREE
THE FIRST WILL SACRIFICE HIMSELF
PLAYING A GAME OF WIZARDS CHESS
THE NEXT WILL GO AFTER
SOLVING THE PUZZLE
TO HELP THE FIRST FRIEND
IN HIS TIME OF TROUBLE
AND FINALLY THE WITCH
STILL HIDDEN SHE IS
WILL FACE HER FIRST TRIAL
WITH EVIL SO VILE
AND TRIUMPH SHE WILL
WITH THE STONE IN HER POCKET
FOR THE DARK LORD CAN'T SWAY HER
PURE HER HEART STAYS
AS MOTHER'S LOVE BURNS
TO DRIVE HIM AWAY
THE NEXT TRIAL WILL COME
ANOTHER YEAR LATER
AS THE DARK LORD HE WAITS
IN THE CHAMBER STILL HIDDEN
TO DRIVE OUT THE MUD BLOODS
AND MUGGLES ALIKE
FOR TO DESTROY HIS MUGGLE FATHER
HIS SOUL WAS SO BIDDEN
TO RULE WITH FULL POWER
AND RETURN TO NEW LIFE
A YOUNG GIRL HE'LL KIDNAP
BUT TO HIS DISMAY
A PURE BLOOD SHE'LL BE
AND HIS PLAN GOES AWRY
FOR A HOUSE ELF WILL HELP
THE WITCH WHO IS HIDDEN
AND SLOW THE DARK SERVANT
WITH HIS MASTER SO WICKED
WHO PLANNED THE WHOLE PLOT
WITH THE DARK LORD'S REQUEST
TO SLAY HER THE NEXT TIME
THE TWO CHANCE TO MEET
IN THE CHAMBER SO DEEP
BELOW HER TWO FEET
THE BASILISK SHE MUST FACE
AND HER HEART IT STAYS TRUE
FOR LOYAL TO DUMBLEDORE

SHE WILL REMAIN
FOR THE PHOENIX AND SWORD
WILL COME AT HER CALL
TO THE DARK LORD'S DISDAIN
TO HELP HER RECOVER
FROM THE POISONOUS WOUNDS
THOSE FANGS DID DELIVER
AND WILL SAVE HER FRIEND'S SISTER
WITH POISON FANG TO THE HEART
TO THE DIARY OF THE DARK LORD
WHICH HE DID START
WHILE A STUDENT AT HOGWARTS
ALONE IN THE DARK

THE THIRD YEAR THE DARK LORD WILL REMAIN AWAY TILL THE RAT HE
RETURNS HIS MASTER'S PET STILL
AND WATCH THE WITCH
TILL HE MAY COME
AND CAUSE HER POWER
TO BE UNDONE
AN ANIMAGUS THIS ONE IS
THE ONE THEY THOUGHT TO HAVE DIED
BY ALL EXCEPT HIS FORMER FRIEND
WHO KNEW THE SECRET KEEPER LIED
HE BETRAYED THEM ALL IN ONE WEAK MOMENT
CAUSING THE DOG TO LIVE A LIFE
AMONG THE DEMENTORS
WHO CAUSE SUCH STRIFE
BUT ESCAPE FROM HIS PRISON CELL HE WILL
TO GUARD THE WITCH
HIS DAUGHTER STILL
WITH THE HELP OF THE WOLF
WHO TEACHES HER WELL
THE LESSON OF THE PROTONUS SPELL
TO KEEP HER SOUL FROM LIVING IN HELL
TOGETHER THEY WILL CATCH THE RAT
WHO CHANGED ALL THEIR LIVES
IN THE DROP OF A HAT
BUT THE POTIONS MASTER
HE WILL COME
AND FAILS TO BELIEVE THEM EVERYONE
BUT OUR WITCH SHE WILL SAVE THE DAY
AND TURN BACK THE TIME AWAY
TO SPARE HER FATHER AND A STRANGE BEAST
AND SEND THEM SAFELY ON THEIR WAY
BUT THE RAT GETS AWAY FREE AND CLEAR
SO THE NEXT TRIAL WILL COME
IN THE WITCHES FOURTH YEAR
WHEN HOGWARTS WILL HOLD
THE TOURNAMENT OF CHALLENGE
THE WITCH STILL HIDDEN SHE WILL BE

A CHAMPION CHOSEN BY MAGICAL MEANS
FOR EVIL IT TRACKS HER STILL
HIDDEN IN HOGWARTS WAITING TO KILL
FOR POLYJUICE KEEPS ONE ALIKE
A FRIEND AND TEACHER WHO CAN STRIKE
HE'S HIDDEN WITHIN HOGWARTS WALLS
TO COME WHEN EVER THE DARK LORD CALLS
FOR THE PORTKEY
DOES THE DARK LORD HAVE
TO BRING HIM HER BLOOD
TO MAKE A POTION
AND RESTORE HIM TO LIFE
GIVING DEAD LIMBS NEW MOTION
AFTERWARDS A DUEL THERE WILL BE
BUT OUR LITTLE WITCH YOU WILL SEE
STAYS PURE AND TRUE AS WAND STREAMS ARC
FREEING THE SPIRITS OF THOSE IN THE DARK
AMONG THEM TWO PERSONS
WHO HOLD HER SO DEAR
THEY FIGHT FOR HER LIFE
AND HELP HER ESCAPE EVIL'S CLUTCHES SO NEAR
BUT THE DARK LORD HE LIVES
AND IS MORTAL AGAIN
WHILE THE WITCH BLAMES HERSELF
FOR HIS EVIL RETURN
BUT DUMBLEDORE'S COUNCIL
HELPS EASE HER PAIN
IN THE FIFTH YEAR SHE STAYS HIDDEN ONCE MORE
WITH THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX GUARDING HER DOOR
TO GUIDE AND PROTECT HER THROUGH EACH NEW STRIFE
AS DUMBLEDORE WATCHES HER SOUL SPRING TO LIFE
FOR IT IS THEY WHO WILL GUIDE HER WAY
TOWARDS DESTINY'S CALLING
AND LIFE'S NEW BEGINNING
BUT NOT FOR A WHILE YET
AS EVIL HOLDS SWAY
IN THE SIXTH YEAR SHE IS HIDDEN NO MORE
TO BE SEEN BY THE WORLD AS NEVER BEFORE
FOR ANOTHER TASK AWAITS AT HER DOOR
AND THE DARK LORD IS WAITING
TO EVEN THE SCORE
AND ON ALL HALLOWS EVE
SOON SHE WILL SEE
THAT WHICH IS LOST
AND BROUGHT BACK TO THEE
A DECISION SHE WILL HAVE TO MAKE
BUT HER HEART IT IS TRUE
MAKE NO MISTAKE
AND PAINFUL THOUGH IT WILL BE
HER FATHER'S PRIDE SHE WILL SEE
THE DARK LORD IS ANGRY

AND BY THE MOONS COOL WHITE RAY
HE TRIES TO KEEP THE WOLF AT BAY
WITH DEADLY POISON HE STRIKES TO KILL
BUT SHE WILL FIND HER HIDDEN SKILL
AS AN OLD CHARM SHE BRINGS TO MIND
TO SAVE HER FRIEND
AND ALLY IN KIND
THE POTION MASTER WILL BRING THE PLANT
AS SHE RECITES AN ANCIENT CHANT
THEN TO DUMBLEDORE SHE WILL SAY
I KNOW YOU KNEW ABOUT THIS DAY
WHEN TIME TURNED BACK
AND WENT AWRY
A LETTER HE WILL GIVE HER THEN
WRITTEN BY A LONG STILLED PEN
FOR HER FATHER HAD THOUGHT IT THROUGH
AND KNEW HIS CHILD'S HEART WAS TRUE
THROUGH PAIN AND GRIEF
SHE WILL SHOW
THE DARK LORD COURAGE
BEYOND HIS BELIEF
BETRAYAL AGAIN BY SOMEONE CLOSE
WHO FALLS PREY TO THE DARK ONE
TO CALL ONCE AGAIN
THOUGH NOT JUST YET
WILL THIS HEARTBREAK OCCUR
IT WILL COME IN THE SPRING
WHEN THE ROBIN DOES SING
AND FLOWERS ARE BLOOMING
WITH SCENTS OH SO SWEET
IN THE WARMTH OF THE SUN
THEIR PATHS AGAIN MEET
FOR JEALOUSY RAISES
THE CALL THEY ALL DREAD
TO LATE SHE WILL REALIZE
THE WITCH OH SO TRUE
WOULD HAVE GIVEN HER LIFE
FOR A FRIEND LIKE YOU
FOR NOW SHE IS ANGRY
SO DARK LORD BEWARE
FOR YOUR DOOM SHE PREDICTS
WITH DEVIL MAY CARE
WHEN OUT FROM THE SHADOWS
ANOTHER WILL COME
AN ENEMY THAT HATED AND SCOFFED HER BEFORE
WILL AN ALLY BECOME AND REMAIN UNKNOWN
TO ALL BUT THE WITCH NOW ALMOST GROWN
AND AS EVIL GROWS STRONGER
AND DARKER BY DAY
HE KEEPS THE DARK LORD'S
DEATH EATERS AWAY

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE REARED HER
AND SHUNNED HER AWAY
SHOULD NEVER HAVE PLAYED
WITH OLD MAGIC THAT DAY
FOR ENCHANTMENTS WILL FAIL
AND HELP YET TO BE SEEN
AS THE DARK LORD'S FOLLOWERS
RETURN TO THE SCENE
HE WILL HOLD THEM HOSTAGE
TILL THE DARK LORD MAY COME
BUT THE YOUNG WITCH
WILL PREVAIL TO SEE HIM UNDONE
THEN THERE WILL COME
A PROUD GROUP OF THREE
AND PROTECTED BY ANCIENT
MAGIC SHE'LL BE
BY THEIR LOVE AND GUIDANCE
THEY SHALL BE KNOWN
AS THE PROTECTORS SHE CHOSE
AND WILL BE NO LONGER ALONE
THE FIRST IS HER STRENGTH TO DO NO WRONG
THE SECOND HER COURAGE TRIED AND TRUE
THE THIRD HER ENDURANCE
TO GUIDE HER ALONG
THROUGH TROUBLED SLEEP
AND NIGHTS OH SO LONG
FINALLY WISE DUMBLEDORE
HE WILL BECOME
KEEPER OF THE TRUST
PROTECTOR OF EACH ONE
NOW THE SEVENTH YEAR HAS BEGUN
WHEN THE FINAL CONFLICT
YET TO COME
WILL BRING OUR WITCH TO DESTINY'S DOOR
AGAINST THE DARK LORD SO SURE
SHE'LL BRAVELY STAND
TILL NEAR THE END
WHEN ALL SEEMS LOST
AND SHE'S IN GREAT PAIN
HER MOTHER'S LOVE WILL RISE AGAIN
AT HER DAUGHTER'S BEHEST
AS THE DARK LORD WILL FALL
MARKING AN END TO THE QUEST
AND SPARING THEM ALL
FOR NOW SHE MAY REST
THE DEED IT IS DONE
FOR HER HEART IS WAS PURE
AND HER GOODNESS HAD WON

Harry just sat, staring at the parchment, not knowing what to say, as Ron shifted nervously in his chair. Dumbledore sat watching them, his face impassive, while Hermione was lost in thought. It was Ron who finally broke the silence.

"Whew, Harry...we're all in there. You, me, Hermione, Dumbledore..."

"Shut up Ron.," Hermione stated sharply, "can't you see she knows that?"

"But Hermione, it's down right spooky," he protested shrilly, as his voice cracked, "everything's there...right from Harry's first year, but what I don't get is that it said she was hidden."

"I was a boy...everyone thought so....my father...he understood and hid me...the disguise...it fooled everyone...until I got too old. He couldn't stop my adolescence...the normal physical changes," Harry whispered to them, her green eyes far away. 'Sirius, where are you? I need you now more than ever,' she thought to herself. 'Did you know you were the dog in the prophecy, or didn't you realize it until it was too late?' Out loud she spoke to her friends, "Well, now we know what it says. A Poet Laureate Chandra Mathias was not," she said pretending to shake off her dark mood.

"Harry, aren't you the least bit concerned? What about the stuff in there that hasn't happened yet?" Ron demanded worriedly.

"Ron's right, Harry," Hermione agreed, "What are we going to do about it?"

"Nothing," she replied.

"What, nothing?" Ron gasped.

"Harry, you can't be serious?" Hermione questioned bewildered by her friend's attitude.

"Look you two, I appreciate your concern. I really do, but the future isn't set in stone. Hagrid always says not to worry about something that hasn't happened yet. That's exactly what we're going to do; Que sera, sera, and all that stuff."

"Bravo, Harry," Dumbledore approved with a little clap of his hands, "well spoken, well spoken indeed."

"Thank you, Professor," she smiled. Redirecting her attention back to her friends, she spoke candidly, "I know you two well enough to know you're both worried about that final confrontation."

"But Harry," Ron protested, "that prophecy says you're going down in pain."

"It also says Voldemort is going to die, but it doesn't say if I do too. The future is what we make it Ron. Maybe Chandra Mathias really saw this stuff, or maybe not. I can't hide my head in a hole and just wait for it to happen. I fully intend to go on about my life as usual and I want you two to do the same."

"Harry's right Ron," Hermione agreed with admiration.

"Besides, if I go out, at least I'm taking Voldemort down with me," Harry said holding her head up with pride.

"Then I'm going to be there with you every step of the way, just like I've been so far," Ron replied fiercely, "and so will Hermione," he added seeing her nod in agreement.

"Thanks guys, I knew I could count on you," Harry answered giving them both a hug.

"Now, I believe it's past your curfew," Dumbledore smiled. "Ron, Hermione, I'll give you both a hall pass should you run into Mr. Filch or Professor Lupin on hall duty tonight," he told them taking out a parchment, and penned the required statement of permission for being out of their common room so late. "Now off to Gryffindor Tower, both of you," he directed them.

"Harry I'd like a word with you before you go," Dumbledore said handing her a similar note.

"Good night Ron, Hermione, I'll see you both at breakfast," Harry told them as they rose to leave.

"Good night, Harry," they replied in unison as descending the moving staircase.

"Very convincing performance, Harry," Dumbledore said holding out his arms to her once Ron and Hermione were gone.

"You can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool Dumbledore," Harry said deliberately misquoting the Muggle proverb, as she allowed him to comfort her for the second time that evening. "I'm frightened," she told him honestly, green eyes wide with wonder and concern. "I wish Sirius was here."

"I know child, but he'll be very proud of you, for all that's happened tonight. Now go on and get to bed. You're tired and so am I," he told her, brushing the hair from the scar on her forehead, before releasing her.

"Good night Professor, sleep well," she said studying his face. He was tired, and tonight his features reflected the worried look in his blue eyes.

"Good night, Harry, and thank you for the candy," he winked as she disappeared from view down the stairs.

Reaching her room, Harry knew that even though she was physically tired, her mind was too alert to permit her to sleep. Deciding to deliver the rest of her little presents, she pulled out her invisibility cloak, and headed back out the door. Deciding to go to the dungeon first, to bring Professor Snape the book she had bought him, she crept quietly down the stairs. The hallways were dark at this hour, and the wall sconces cast eerie shadows on the walls. When she arrived at the Potion Master's door, she knocked twice and waited. She knew he wouldn't be pleased that she was abroad at this hour, and decided to leave the book where he would find it and go. She had written him a little note on the fly leaf, so she knew he would know she had been there. She was about to put the book down and leave, when he opened the door.

Looking around, he grumbled in annoyance at not seeing anyone there. As he turned to go back into his room, Harry's sense of mischief took over, and she tapped him on the back. He spun back around angrily, and looked up and down the passage, before speaking in an icy tone.

"Peeves, I warn you," believing it was the poltergeist, "I'll have the Bloody Baron after you." He waited a moment for a response, but of course none came, and he turned back into his room.

Harry was enjoying her little game, and attempted to follow him, but as she did so, she accidentally brushed up against him. For a moment she thought he would realize she was the one playing games with him, but he didn't seem to notice. So she moved over to his desk, as he moved over towards his sofa, where a book lay open on the table. Apparently she had interrupted his reading. Slipping the book out from beneath her cloak, she turned away from the desk, to find him standing behind her. 'Now what am I going to do?' she asked herself, when he suddenly spoke up, staring at where she stood beneath her cloak, shocking her so badly she jumped and almost fell over onto him.

"Miss Potter, hasn't anyone ever mentioned that a lady doesn't visit a man in his room at night?" he asked, continuing to stare where she remained hidden beneath her cloak, arms folded over his chest.

Harry was too stunned yet to say anything, and had the distinct impression that he could almost see her. She shifted uneasily, unsure of what to do.

"Miss Potter, I'm waiting for your answer. I know you're here, I can sense your presence, and I also watched you place that book on my desk. You had to remove your hand from beneath the cloak to do so."

"I meant no harm, Professor," Harry said, nervously pulling the cloak from her head, giving the impression that it was floating in mid air.

"You're not only out past curfew; you deliberately have been playing a practical joke on me, allowing me to believe Peeves was up to his usual tricks."

"I was with Professor Dumbledore until about fifteen minutes ago. When I got back to my room I knew I couldn't get to sleep so I decided to bring you this book I bought for you while we were in London. I was going to leave it by your door, but then you came out, and I guess I kind of got carried away," Harry told him in a rush, hoping he would not be too angry, and believe the truth.

"What were you doing with the Headmaster?" he asked ignoring the book she had brought, but was secretly pleased that she had thought enough of their trip, and him, to buy it.

"He let me read the Prophecy tonight," she said knowing that he was aware Dumbledore was going to allow her to see it.

"Do you believe what it says?" he asked studying her intently.

"Yes," she replied, unable to meet his intense stare.

"Then go up to bed, before I bring you back to the Headmaster for this bit of mischief," he told her with his usual sardonic smile, dark eyes glittering wickedly.

"Yes, Professor," she answered unable to believe her ears. 'Professor Snape is actually not going to give me detention.' She thought in amazement, before telling him out loud, "Enjoy the book." Then, pulling her cloak back over her head, fled from his rooms; thinking that she had made a new friend, albeit a moody one, as the sound of his low laughter followed her.

However Harry did not go to bed, as she still wanted to give Remus his present. Taking the stuffed wolf from her room, she headed down the stairs to the main hall, where a small desk sat during the night. It was here, that the professors would spend the evenings during their hall duty, in between nightly rounds. Approaching quietly, she noted that Remus was sitting reading by the light of a single torch.

"Professor Lupin," Harry said cautiously so as not to startle him.

"You can take off your cloak Harry. You should know better than to be downwind from a werewolf. I caught your scent as soon as you came down the stairs," he told her turning around to face her.

"You can do that when you aren't in wolf form?" Harry asked removing her cloak, trying to remember if he'd taught them that in class.

"So can Sirius. We both retain the ability, although mine is stronger," he said studying her with interest. "Now, why are you out of bed at this hour? It's well past curfew."

"I bought you something while I was in London with Professor Snape. I couldn't sleep so I decided to give it to you tonight."

"I suspected you might be out and about tonight. Professor Dumbledore told me he was going to show you the Prophecy tonight before I left for the Leaky Cauldron this afternoon. Do you want to talk about it?" he inquired with concern.

"No, not tonight; I need some time to think. I just came to give you this," she explained removing the wolf from inside her robes. "I hope you like him. He looked lonely on the shelf in the store. I thought he could use a friend," Harry remarked coyly, hoping he wouldn't find the wolf offensive.

"Harry," Professor Lupin responded with a huge grin, "you're the only person I know who would give a werewolf a stuffed wolf. I promise to take good care of him. He's an endangered species you know."

"I know," she laughed, pleased that he liked the toy.

"My malady doesn't bother you at all, does it?" he asked, referring to his lycanthrope.

"No, actually I think it makes you kind of special."

"Special, how?" he asked curiously.

"Some people think you're a monster, but you're not. You see people for what they are and are aware of how inhuman the human race can actually be," Harry explained seriously. "I think it's cool that you're a werewolf. I'm only sorry that it's so physically painful for you. If I could at least change that for you I would."

"You're a very special person yourself, Harry," he responded touching her cheek gently before turning his attention back to the stuffed wolf on the desk, "Does he have a name?"

"He didn't come with one."

"In that case, I'm open to suggestions."

"Then let's call him Captain."

"Captain?" Remus questioned.

"Yes. I'm reminded of an old Muggle movie about a princess. She was in love with the Captain of the Guard, I can't remember his name, but an evil wizard wanted her too."

"What happened to them?"

"The wizard cast a spell on them when she wouldn't marry him," Harry said shaking her head sadly, "she was a hawk by day, and the captain was a wolf by night. The only time they could be together as humans were those few seconds when time shifted between sunrise and sunset."

"How sad. Did the movie have a happy ending?"

"Of course," she smiled, "it had something to do with an eclipse; the spell was broken, and the Captain destroyed the evil wizard."

"Well then, Captain it is," he said absently stroking the wolf, "and now you had better get yourself off to bed before I have to give you detention. I am on guard duty you know," he grinned.

"Yes Sir, Captain," she teased giving him a mock salute before pulling on her invisibility cloak and disappearing. She had the feeling he was scenting her as she turned in the opposite direction, making certain she was going upstairs. 'Well Remus,' she reflected thinking about how hard his lycanthrope must be for him, 'since I want to try transforming, maybe I'll do something for you and try for a hawk, besides I love to fly.' She grinned at the thought of the look on both Remus and Sirius faces if she surprised them some moonlit night by showing up as a hawk while they were out together.

Reaching the second floor, Harry still had one more stop to make. Bypassing her room, she headed up to the third floor and opened the door to the tower which led to the roof. The stairs were dark, as there were no torches lit here, and she didn't have her wand with her to do the *illuminous* spell. Mounting the stairs, she had the same uncanny feeling that she had felt in Professor Dumbledore's office that she was being watched, and kept stopping to listen, only to be met with silence.

Reaching the tower she opened the door to the turret and edged out onto the roof. It was cold, and she was sorry she didn't have on her winter cloak. Pulling her invisibility cloak around her tighter, with her head exposed, she had an ethereal appearance. If anyone had seen her they would have believed her to be a ghost.

The crescent moon cast a fine shadow, and the sky was filled with stars. Off in the distance, she heard an owl, and she could see a single light on in Hagrid's cottage. The wind ruffled her thick dark hair as she sat down on the cold roof and looked up into the sky. Locating the constellation of Orion, she followed it over to Canis Major, the Dog Star; the one Sirius was named for. Staring up at it, she spoke out loud.

"Good night Sirius. Please be careful and stay safe, where ever you are. I'm sorry and I miss you. Please don't take any unnecessary chances, and come back soon. I need you here and I'm afraid. I feel so alone and lost," she sobbed, her voice lost on the wind.

She stayed that way lost in thought for another few minutes, before the cold finally stirred her. Standing up slowly, she let out a long sigh, and disappeared quietly back down the stairs towards her room, and a warm bed. She never saw the dark shape that stood in silence watching her.

PART 6 - THE UNSEEN WATCHER

The next few weeks saw a flurry of activity. The Great Hall was being decorated for the Halloween feast, which was to be a costume affair, and the Quidditch matches were underway. Harry's team had won all of their games, and Malfoy had started speaking to her again, after being knocked off his broom during a particularly violent game. This had made him angrier than ever, but at least now he was being vocal about it.

In fact, Harry's only problem seemed to be a lack of sleep. She would fall asleep quickly enough, but then the nightmares would start. She didn't say anything to Dumbledore, or anyone else for that matter, since they really weren't specific. They always seemed to be about her parents and Voldemort, but that's all she could remember before waking up with a cold sweat. Unable to go back to sleep, she would prowl the castle at night, in her invisibility cloak, only to become more unnerved by what she came to call The Unseen Watcher. Ever since the night in Dumbledore's office when she had felt someone was watching her, but no one else had been in the room, the feeling had persisted. It had grown worse with time, and she was becoming jumpy. The interesting thing about it was, that she felt no sense of danger, only this unseen presence, yet no one was ever there; not even Mrs. Norris.

Harry just took it in stride, shrugging it off to a peculiarity native to Hogwarts and her lack of sleep. She had been hiding the dark circles under her eyes with make up and went about her daily routine as usual, until one day after Transfiguration class. Malfoy was in a bad mood, having gotten on Professor McGonagall's bad side, and was loudly complaining after class. Harry liked the stern old witch, and as head of Gryffindor House, she owed the Professor her loyalty.

"That stupid bitch McGonagall made a fool out of me in class today," Draco complained to his friends, Crabbe and Goyle, as they walked towards the dungeon stairs for Potions class. "She took my broom and turned it into a jackass, but she didn't do that to Potter's," he said vehemently. "She turned Potter's into a sleek white stallion. You know what she can do with that broom don't you? For that matter so can Potter, no wonder she rides it so well," he laughed harshly, pleased with the implication.

"That's rich, Draco," Crabbe agreed maliciously, "they can 'Ride the Pony' any time they want to."

"Why bother with transformation," Goyle grinned, "when all they need to use are their broom handles."

They found the whole idea deliciously funny and kept it up knowing Harry and Ron were following them. They had overheard the entire conversation and didn't miss the sexual innuendo, causing them both to become angry, but it was Ron who acted first, feeling it was his duty as a gentleman.

"Knock it off Malfoy," he yelled, deliberately bumping into him, causing Draco to drop his books.

"Ron, don't..." Harry called too late, as Malfoy pulled out his wand, directing it towards Ron. "*Boils Epidermis Eruptus*," Malfoy recited, as Ron ducked, and a stream of blue light hit Crabbe. Almost immediately huge red sores started erupting out of his skin, oozing foul smelling pus.

Malfoy then dove towards Harry, who deftly avoided him by dodging to the right, and catching his leg with her foot, caused him to fall onto his face. By this time they were surrounded by a large group of students from both houses, who were egging them all on, as Goyle grabbed Ron and put him into a head lock. None of them saw either Professor Snape or McGonagall coming towards them at a run.

"Potter and Malfoy!" Snape exclaimed angrily.

"Stop this fighting immediately," Professor McGonagall yelled sharply.

"*Petrificus Totalus!*" Snape directed his wand towards the fighting students and they all froze in place.

"That will be quite enough!" Professor McGonagall informed the group, her brogue thick with anger. "All of you get onto class immediately," she waved her arms at the crowd of students who had been watching the foray. They moved away rapidly, not wanting to incur any more of her anger.

"What is the meaning of this?" Snape asked icily, his eyes glittering dangerously.

"I'm going to release you and then Professor McGonagall will escort you all to the Headmaster's Office. Mr. Crabbe she will drop you off at the Infirmary on the way so Madame Pomfrey can see to your skin," Snape informed them coldly, waving his wand

"Malfoy started it!" Ron blurted out before Malfoy could say anything.

"Harry! Ron!" Hermione panted running up the hall. She had missed the altercation in the hallway, having stopped to see Professor Flitwick, following Transfiguration. "What ever is going on?"

"Miss Granger, I suggest you get down to the dungeon since you are already late for class, and mind your own business," Snape threatened looking down his nose at her.

"Hermione, do as Professor Snape says, this is no concern of yours," Professor McGonagall added.

"Yes, Ma'am," Hermione reluctantly agreed heading in the direction of the dungeon.

"Minerva, will you tell the Headmaster I will be right up?" Snape addressed the Deputy Head Mistress. "I want to get the students started organizing the necessary ingredients for their potions.

"Of course, Severus...as head of Slytherin House you should be present... since Slytherin students are involved," she replied haughtily looking at him shrewdly.

Professor Snape merely nodded, gliding swiftly down the corridor without a sound, as Professor McGonagall directed the disobedient group upstairs, leaving Mr. Crabbe off in the infirmary before going to Dumbledore's office.

Professor Snape rejoined the group by the time they had reached the Headmaster's Office. Harry knew he was furious and he glared at both Draco and Harry as they were ushered in to see Professor Dumbledore.

"Headmaster, these students were observed fighting in the hallway," Professor McGonagall explained to the Headmaster. "Mr. Crabbe was also involved and is now being treated in the infirmary for a case of boils. He was hit with a misdirected curse from Mr. Malfoy."

"Thank you for bringing them to my office, Minerva. Do you know what started the altercation?"

"No, we haven't yet had a chance to question them," she said, indicating Professor Snape.

"Very well, Minerva. If you would be so kind as to take Mister Malfoy and Mister Goyle into the other room and get their version of the story, Severus and I will talk with Mr. Weasley and Miss Potter. Let's see what they have to say to the Head of their rival houses," Dumbledore directed shrewdly, as the students exchanged glances among one another.

Professor McGonagall nodded her understanding, herding the two Slytherin students into the other room, closing the door behind her. Dumbledore merely sat behind his desk, hands arched beneath his chin as he rested his elbows on the desk, and nodded to Professor Snape to begin questioning Harry and Ron.

"Tell me, Miss Potter, who began the incident?" he asked coldly. Harry didn't answer, but looked over at Ron, who was shifting uncomfortably, and trying to avoid looking over at Snape. "It seems you've lost your voice, perhaps you've contracted a case of laryngitis? Or maybe you've just forgotten how the incident started? If I give you some Veritaserum it will jog your memory," Snape interrogated her as he watched Dumbledore to make sure he was not overstepping his authority.

"Be my guest, but you won't like the answers," Harry told him defiantly. She knew Dumbledore wouldn't allow it and had let Snape have his say to gauge their reactions, but she didn't like to be threatened.

"That little bit of cheek will cost Gryffindor fifty points, Miss Potter," Snape rasped, his voice dripping acid.

"Why not just ask Professor Dumbledore to have all our points voided since you think I'm the one who started the whole thing," Harry said, her voice rising angrily as she took a step towards him without thinking.

"Take care, Miss Potter, you're treading on dangerous ground," he said looking down at her, his face impassive, but his dark eyes were burning like hot coals.

"For someone who professes to want to protect me so much, you're awfully quick to threaten me," Harry responded shaking with anger. "Potter and Malfoy were fighting in the hall so it's automatically Potter's fault. Wake up Snape...The Junior Death Eater is just like daddy. He'll go out of his way to get me into trouble and you just keep letting him get away with it!" Harry screamed slapping Professor Snape in the face as six years of frustration erupted like a flood. Snape didn't move a muscle, merely looked at Harry in astonishment. Professor Dumbledore rose from behind his desk as Ron looked on in shock.

"Severus, are you all right?" Dumbledore inquired. He knew the slap hadn't injured him, but wanted to be sure Snape had his anger under control.

"I'm fine, Headmaster," Snape said placing his hands behind his back.

"Professor...I...," Harry began unable to find words to explain her behavior. She was numb inside. She looked to Professor Dumbledore for support, but none was forthcoming. She could feel his anger; his usually warm blue eyes had gone cold. Harry knew she had overstepped her bounds. She felt alone and confused, and sank down onto the floor. Placing her arms around her knees she began to tremble violently, when Ron spoke up out of concern for his friend.

"Professor Snape, Headmaster, Harry is innocent of all wrong doing. She tried to stop me. I started the whole thing."

"You Mr. Weasley?" Snape questioned sarcastically.

"Yes," Ron answered with more confidence than he felt, "I knocked the books out of Draco's arms."

"Ron, was this done deliberately?" Dumbledore asked patiently, all the while observing Harry's unusual behavior.

"Ron, don't..." Harry sobbed faintly, still sitting on the floor.

"Harry, Draco deserved it. I know you'd rather not say anything, but I don't want to see you punished for something you were trying to stop."

"Ron...I hit Professor Snape...I"

"Hell Harry," Ron interrupted before she could say anything else, "we've all wanted to give him a good kick in the ass at one time or another. You just did it, and if it hadn't been you it would have been someone else whose buttons he likes to push, like Neville. You always say he does it just to get us to think, so maybe if he knew why you lost control he would understand." Ron knelt down beside her on the floor, looking up at the Potions Master as he continued, "I know you're upset and embarrassed, but there will always be guys who say stuff like that. You were in the boys dorm long enough to know that," he said in an effort to elicit a smile, but failed. "Malfoy, and his friends are crude jerks, and you know damn well that he's not going to tell McGonagall what he said about the two of you."

"Ron...please don't...it's not fair. You'll end up in trouble and somehow Malfoy and his crew will get off again."

"Not this time, Harry. Even Professor Snape won't sit still for Malfoy's remarks. For all his bad tempers I've never known him not to behave like a gentleman. Rude and arrogant at times, but he would never say what they did, especially in a public place," Ron asserted nodding as he stood back up to face him.

"Ron, suppose you tell us exactly what did happen," Dumbledore remarked from behind his desk as he studied the boy with admiration. Ron was a good and loyal friend to Harry, and a true Gryffindor.

"Yes Sir," he replied as Harry put her face back down mortified.

Ron calmly recited the entire incident for the Headmaster and Professor Snape. He knew he was in trouble, but his mother's wrath would be worse than anything they might give him for punishment. After Ron had concluded his story, Dumbledore looked over at his Potions Master.

"Severus will you have Minerva bring Malfoy and Goyle back in here please."

"Right away, Headmaster," Snape replied looking at him with understanding, knocking on the door to the other room. "Minerva," he said when she responded, "The Headmaster requests that you come back in now."

"Did these two say anything to you, Professor McGonagall?" Dumbledore asked when she entered.

"They merely said Draco was minding his own business when Mr. Weasley attacked him."

"Mr. Malfoy, did you do anything at all to provoke Mr. Weasley?" Professor Snape asked tersely.

"No Sir," Malfoy feigned innocently as Goyle shook his head negatively, "we were just walking down to Potions."

"So you didn't make any remarks about Professor McGonagall and her broomstick?" Snape's voice dripped venom as Professor McGonagall looked on with interest.

"Well...um..."Goyle sputtered.

"Shut up you fool," Draco said furiously, nudging him in the ribs.

"This is quite serious," Dumbledore interjected, "your remarks were rude and inexcusable.

Severus, I want fifty points each deducted from Slytherin House immediately, and that includes Mr. Crabbe," he directed his Potions Master, referring to the injured boy. "In addition, all three boys will write a letter of apology to both Professor McGonagall and Miss Potter. It will be no less than one hundred words in length and will be reviewed by me prior to their being delivered. Finally, they will do a full week of detention, to be determined by Professor McGonagall."

"Yes Headmaster," Snape acquiesced as he glared at the two boys, "the two of you are to get down to class, and had better have your ingredients properly laid out by the time I get there. Pick up Mr. Crabbe on your way, and he is to do the same," he told them furiously as they scrambled for the stairs. He liked Professor McGonagall, even though they had their differences, and he had a good deal of respect for the witch.

"Albus... Severus..."she said looking from one to the other, "what did they do?"

"Minerva, I won't tell you the details. Suffice it to say they made a number of off color remarks about you and Harry," Dumbledore explained not wanting to cause his Deputy Head Mistress any embarrassment.

"So Mr. Weasley and Miss Potter are innocent of any wrong doing?" she questioned hopefully.

"Not entirely, Minerva. Mr. Weasley started the foray defending both of your honors,"

Dumbledore smiled, "however, he should have exercised better self control in a public place so fifty points will be taken from Gryffindor, and you will do this Friday evening's detention with Professor Snape. I believe he usually has someone clean the dungeon," Dumbledore looked at Snape who arched his brow in amusement.

"Yes Sir," Ron answered with a nod, "but what about Harry?" he asked worriedly, looking to where she still sat on the floor. She hadn't moved the whole time he had been speaking with the two professors, and Dumbledore and Snape both knew his concern was genuine.

"We'll deal with Miss Potter, I expect you to get to class and be prepared as well when I get there," Snape told him sternly.

"Yes Professor Snape."

No one spoke until Ron had left the office, when Professor McGonagall asked, "Albus, what ever is going on, why is Harry sitting on the floor?"

"Harry slapped Severus in the face. She became so distraught that she just sat down and hasn't moved since," Dumbledore explained. "Harry, do you have anything to say in your defense?" Harry didn't move or look up. Her breathing was even and regular, so they knew she wasn't crying, but she appeared to be ignoring them.

"Miss Potter, the Headmaster is speaking to you," Snape said harshly, annoyed by her attitude towards Dumbledore.

"Miss Potter, Harry, you need to talk to us," Professor McGonagall said in her crisp accent as she gently touched Harry's arm. Harry jerked her head up startled, wide-eyed with fright.

"Voldemort...no," she cried out confused and frightened. As her eyes flew open, she groped for her wand, as Professor Snape grabbed her by the wrist. "Professors...?" she questioned as her vision cleared and Snape released his grip. She stood up unsteadily, still unsure of what had just happened.

"My God, Albus, look at the child. She's totally exhausted. The poor girl fell asleep," Professor McGonagall said studying Harry. "Look at the circles under her eyes; she probably hasn't slept in days," she told him indicating the dark rings where Harry's make up had been smeared off. "It's no wonder she went off on Severus, her nerves must be frayed to the breaking point."

"Harry," Dumbledore spoke up quietly, "this still doesn't excuse your behavior, but it does help to explain it."

"Headmaster, if I may intervene on Miss Potter's behalf," Snape said slowly, studying Harry astutely. "I am uninjured, and I believe she hasn't been sleeping well since she and I returned from London," he informed his friend, aware that he would catch his meaning, as he refrained from mentioning the Prophecy aloud.

"Is this true, Harry?" Dumbledore expressed with concern as she looked at the three professors.

"Does it really matter Professor?" she responded lamely. She didn't really care what happened to her anymore. The whole wizarding world believed in The Prophecy and in her ability to defeat Voldemort. Too bad she didn't believe in herself. The nightmares and lack of sleep had begun to destroy her confidence.

"Minerva," Dumbledore frowned, "will you go and get Remus Lupin for us, and then see to Severus' class. I'll fill you in after I've decided on an appropriate disciplinary action for Harry."

Dumbledore did not explain why he wished to involve the other Professor, but Minerva McGonagall was a clever woman, and suspected it had something to do with the Prophecy.

"I'll see to it immediately, Albus," she replied looking at her dejected young Gryffindor. In the six years since Harry had been at Hogwarts, she had never seen the child so withdrawn and lost. "Should I tell Professor Lupin what's happened?"

"Yes, and tell Professor Sinestra to cover his First Year class." Professor McGonagall hurried from the room and Harry could see the concern etched into her face as Dumbledore redirected his attention back to her. "Harry, I'm still waiting for an answer to my question. When was the last time you got any sleep?"

"I...can't really remember...I...the nightmares..." she stammered, shifting uneasily, under the gaze of Dumbledore's intense blue eyes.

Snape was immediately alert, and his back straightened even further. "Nightmares, Miss Potter? What kind of nightmares?"

Harry didn't answer. She didn't want them to know she was worried.

"Miss Potter," Snape began slowly, gritting his teeth against losing his patience, "I suggest you..." He didn't get to finish the sentence for at that moment there was a sharp knock and the door opened revealing Remus Lupin.

"My apologies, Headmaster, for not waiting for your permission to enter, but I felt the urgency of the situation warranted ..."

"That's all right, Remus," Dumbledore interrupted, waving him into the room, "there is no need to apologize. It seems Harry is reluctant to talk to us."

"It seems Miss Potter has been having nightmares for some time," Snape informed him with a meaningful stare.

"Albus..." Remus started, but stopped as he got a good look at Harry. "My God Harry, you look awful. Albus, how could we have missed this?"

"Harry has very cleverly been hiding the circles under her eyes with makeup. It appears she has been quite skillful at it too," Dumbledore explained shrewdly, examining Harry's worn features for the second time.

"Harry," Remus said, putting his arm around her shoulders, "don't be frightened. We're just trying to help. Tell us what's been going on." His werewolf senses had alerted him to the smell of fear and confusion as soon as he had entered the room.

"Remus," she said sagging into his arms, "I think I'm going crazy."

"Crazy, Miss Potter?" Professor Snape asked with a nagging feeling of dread.

"It's all right, Harry," Dumbledore attempted to reassure her, "just tell us why you think you're going out of your mind."

"Nightmares...every night... and I think I'm being followed."

"Followed, Miss Potter, by whom?"

"I don't know who's following me. Can I sit down?" Harry asked timidly.

"Come, child, over on the sofa," Dumbledore directed, his demeanor softening, "now why do you believe you're being followed?"

Remus helped Harry to settle herself on the sofa, wrapping the blanket throw around her. He could feel her skin was ice cold, and knew it would also offer her a sense of security. He then sat down beside her in a show of support to help bolster her confidence. Dumbledore remained at his desk and Snape moved over to stand by the fireplace.

"Now answer Albus question, Harry. Why are you so sure you're being followed?"

"Because I can sense someone's presence," Harry told them shifting uncomfortably as the men glanced at each other.

"Do you feel threatened in any way?" Snape pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"No, not really...at first I thought it might be Peeves, but it's not."

"How do you know it's not Peeves?" Lupin inquired calmly, as he watched her expression.

"It's hard to explain..." Harry began, choosing her words carefully, "do you remember when you told me you could scent me?"

"Yes, so can Sirius, go on."

"I think it's kind of the same thing, only instead of smell I can sort of 'feel' a person's aura."

"Are you certain it's a human being?" Professor Snape asked his dark eyes boring into her.

"Yes, I'm sure."

"How do you know Child? For that matter how long has this been happening to you?"

Dumbledore seemed concerned, but Harry could still sense his anger, although it wasn't as pronounced as it had been earlier.

"I know because people and animals feel different. I remember Sirius once said that the Dementors couldn't feel him the same way when he was in dog form. That's what helped to keep him sane in Azkaban and helped him to survive. I can feel animals, but it's a different kind of energy, like when I was able to sense Remus' wolf."

"This is definitely a person," Remus said looking at her with interest, "not one of the castle ghosts?"

"No, it's not a ghost. They feel cold and clammy, depending on their incorporeal circumstances. And to answer Professor Dumbledore's question it started the night I read the Prophecy. I felt like someone else was in the room with us, but I just assumed it was Fawkes, even though it didn't feel right, and passed it off as nerves. Then, I felt it again later that night. I was up on the roof star gazing because I couldn't sleep; you know the place, by the missing gargoyle. Well, on the way up through the third floor tower, I felt like I was being followed." Snape shifted his weight as the men looked at each other again in silent communication.

"You've continued to have these feelings all this time, Miss Potter, and told no one?"

"I knew you'd all think I was losing my mind," Harry said growing distraught all over again.

"Hush Child, you're not crazy," Dumbledore reassured her.

"No, Harry, you're just more perceptive than we all realized."

"I don't understand," she stated looking at Remus perplexed.

"Headmaster, I think we need to give Harry an explanation," Professor Lupin said rising.

"I agree. Severus are you in accordance with us?"

"It would seem the wise thing to do."

"Very well, how long will you be, Remus?"

"It will only take me a minute," Professor Lupin said as he went over to the door and stepped out. He was back in less than five minutes.

Harry watched him with curiosity, wondering what was going on. As he resumed his seat she shifted uneasily, and looked beyond him. She could 'feel' another presence in the room. She stood up slowly, aware that the three men were watching her, and moved over towards Dumbledore's desk. She paused for a moment, and then moved halfway to the office door. Her heart was beating faster, and she instinctively reached out. She could feel the soft folds of an invisibility cloak. Grasping it firmly, she gave a hard tug, and jumped back in shock.

"I didn't mean to get you upset, Harry, and what's this I hear about you slapping Snape in the face?" Sirius asked, trying hard to sound stern, but was unable to keep from smiling. 'Hell, the SOB probably deserved it,' he thought to himself.

"Sirius... you all lied to me!" Harry exclaimed incredulous. "How could you do such a thing?" She was shaking from anger, hurt, and confusion, and her nerves were visibly frayed.

"Child, sit down and let me explain," Dumbledore said firmly, as Sirius steered his obviously distraught and exhausted goddaughter back to the couch. "First off we didn't lie about Minister Fudge. He did want to put the Dementors around the school. The Order was able to stop him, along with the Board of Governors. There were enough votes to override his decision. While all this was going on we all felt that Sirius should disappear again for his own safety, but he's as stubborn as you, and didn't want to leave you just now. So I gave him the invisibility cloak that was stored in with the Pensive and set up a room on the third floor in one of the storage areas. He's been keeping watch at night, without having to transform, and risk being seen, in an effort to protect you."

"Why wasn't I told?"

"We all agreed that if you knew Sirius was still here you might tell someone and unintentionally put him at risk."

"In other words I couldn't be trusted. I could live for almost sixteen years pretending to be a boy, and never tell a soul, but I couldn't be relied on to keep Sirius whereabouts a secret," Harry whispered, feeling her eyes fill up with tears.

"Of course we trust you," Sirius said, trying to put his arm around her in an effort to comfort her, but she shrank away from him. 'Oh, Merlin,' he thought worriedly, 'I've lost her trust. All I wanted was to try and protect her from Voldemort.'

"Sirius didn't mean to mislead you. He just wanted to keep the Dementors from using you to get to him. When it was decided not to put them around the school, he was in a better position to keep watch if you didn't know he was here," Professor Lupin responded logically.

"You can be sure the Dementors would have done so, Miss Potter. You've only had limited experiences with them, but they would have drained you of any feeling you possessed. They have ways of making people talk. I know...I've worked with them."

"Severus is right Child, and as an Empath you're particularly susceptible to their hungers. They are drawn to you like a moth to a flame."

"I'd go back to Azkaban if I thought it would keep you safe," Sirius said, his brown puppy like eyes meeting her green ones.

"Don't ever say that!" she replied sensing his concern for her was genuine, finally allowing him to comfort her. "You're still not out of the doghouse yet," she whispered in his ear, so that the others wouldn't hear. "It wasn't very nice to follow me up to the roof and listen to my worries about you."

"I promise I'll make it up to you," he whispered back. Inside his heart was in turmoil. He knew she wouldn't scan his emotions unless he gave her permission, and was grateful for it. His feelings about Harry were out of control. She was his goddaughter, but he wanted more. 'Just keep telling yourself she's too young yet, give her time to finish growing up. You've nothing to offer her right now but a life on the run. Oh, James, why did you do this to me?'

"Now that we're done with this Muggle greeting card moment," Snape interrupted their whispering sarcastically, "I believe we still have some disciplinary action to hand out." He didn't like their secrecy but refused to admit that he was jealous.

"Now, Severus, calm down. Harry knows that what she did was wrong and that she will have to be punished, despite the extenuating circumstances," Dumbledore admonished looking over his half-moon spectacles at all of them. "Sirius, wipe that scowl off your face. You and Severus may not always see eye to eye, but the fact of the matter is Harry did slap him without provocation. I will not condone anyone, student or otherwise, to commit a violent act against another person while in this building," the warning note was unmistakable in his voice.

"Albus," Professor Lupin began, "you're not going to expel her are you?" If that were the case, he would resign immediately and take Harry and Sirius home with him. He didn't have much, but what he did have was theirs if they needed it. Sirius was his best friend, and like it or not, he was becoming quite fond of Harry.

"No, Remus, you can relax," Dumbledore answered with the ghost of a smile. "As Headmaster it's my duty to maintain order, and as such, sometimes I have to mete out punishments." He rose from his desk and moved over to where Harry sat beside Remus and Sirius. "You, my dear child," he remarked, placing his hand on her head, "have a tendency to cause an old man to worry more than he needs to."

Harry could sense his affection for her and knew that he was no longer angry. She met his eyes and saw that the familiar sparkle was back. She was curious though about what he planned to do next. She knew he was up to something, and she wasn't going to be let off with a letter of apology and a weekend of detention.

"Now Harry, I saw several things today," he said looking down at her. "You are loyal and protective of those you care about, and you'll stand up for what you believe to be the truth. These are true Gryffindor attributes," Dumbledore beamed, "however you also have a good deal of Slytherin in you as well. You're cunning, and smart, and know how to attain your desires, but you need to learn how to control that part of you, and...you need to regain your self confidence."

"Professor?" she questioned. Harry didn't know how he knew she didn't believe she could really fight and defeat Voldemort, but true to his nature, he did.

"So...there will be no Saturday trips to Hogsmeade unless you need to replenish personal items. Then you will be accompanied by either me, Professor Lupin and Snuffles or Professor Snape for your own safety. Is that clear?"

"Yes Sir."

"You will be given private tutoring by both Severus and Remus. Professor Snape will work on advanced potions with you and both of them will teach you advanced techniques to protect yourself from the Dark Arts. Finally, even though Sirius isn't on my actual payroll, he has a genuine talent for transfiguration. You will spend Sunday's working with him and I will also come and give you some advanced charms to work on. This way Sirius gets to spend some time with you and we can all keep an eye on you. You will also be expected to keep up with your regular studies. Do you understand?"

"Yes Sir." Harry was secretly pleased, and had the feeling Dumbledore knew it as he returned to his desk.

"Now, today is Thursday," he continued as he resumed his seat, "you're both physically and emotionally exhausted. Therefore I'm excusing you from classes for the remainder of today and tomorrow. I'll see that you get your homework. I want you to spend this time sleeping and relaxing in your room. You are not to go to the common room or down to the Great Hall for meals. The house elves will see that you get a tray. We will all take turns keeping an eye on you. In short, you are under house arrest until I decide otherwise," he said with a wave of his hand. "I'm going to have Professor Snape bring you up some of his sleeping potion. You are to go right to bed and take it. This way you will be able to sleep without being disturbed by any more nightmares. Now Harry, in the future, tell us of any dreams, now matter how trivial, about Voldemort," he finished sternly.

"I will Professor," Harry replied quietly, her voice echoing her exhaustion.

"Severus, if you will go get the potion and stay with Harry after she takes it I would appreciate it. Madam Hooch can fill in for the rest of your afternoon classes."

"Yes Headmaster," he answered smugly as he moved swiftly to the door. Harry knew he was pleased with her punishment, and wondered if it was because he was getting to teach her about the Dark Arts.

"Remus you and 'Snuffles' escort Harry to her room and see that she gets settled in until Severus returns with the sleeping potion. Then come back and we will work out a schedule for her."

"Come on, you naughty pup," Sirius teased smirking, "you're being put on a leash because you landed in the dog house. It's off to bed with you." He transformed and the three of them left the office.

When they reached Harry's room, she uttered her password, "wildflowers," and they entered. Dropping her backpack by the desk, she went over to her dresser and chose a nightgown, while Professor Lupin lit a fire in the hearth.

"That's one thing I've always loved about school," she commented before going into the bathroom to change.

"You should," Remus Lupin replied wryly, "we don't have central heat, and the castle is one thousand years old."

"I love to just sit watching the flames, while my mind wanders."

"Harry have you ever been able to transpose your image into the fire to communicate with another wizard?" Sirius asked. "I know you've seen both me and Dumbledore do it."

"I've never really thought about it. The Dursleys have an electric fire place, and other than Ron's family or you and Dumbledore, there really isn't anyone for me to try it with."

"Well then," he mused, "you're going to learn, but not today. You need to rest. Now go and change your clothes and get into bed. You look as if you will fall asleep standing up."

"I feel like it," Harry agreed going into the bathroom to change into her nightgown. It was a lovely pale blue satin material which seemed to flow with her as she moved. Putting her dirty clothes into the hamper, she returned to her bedroom as a knock sounded on her door. "Enter," she called, knowing it was Professor Snape.

He was carrying a small vial of purple fluid, with a metallic cast that seemed to change with the light. She knew it was the sleeping potion, having taken it after Voldemort's return following the Tri-Wizard Tournament.

"I would have been back sooner," he addressed them all, "but I took the trouble to make the potion more palatable. I added some peppermint flavoring, Miss Potter, to make sure you drink it all. It is quite bitter otherwise; as I'm sure you're aware."

"What no hemlock?" she asked lightly as Sirius snickered at their exchange.

"No, I'm all out. I used arsenic instead," he countered with a straight face.

Climbing into bed, she reached out to take the vial. However, before she could open the stopper, she let out a painful cry, her hand automatically going up to her scar. The three men scrambled to support her.

"My head...Voldemort..." Harry moaned her eyes stinging with unshed tears.

"Albus, we need you now," Snape said into the fire, "Harry's scar is hurting."

"It's all right, Harry" Sirius comforted as he held her, "Albus is on his way."

"It's never been this bad before," she cried as another wave of intense burning pain seared through her head.

"Try and relax, Harry," Professor Lupin told her as he sat down on the bed behind her, and gently began rubbing the back of her neck, while Sirius continued to hold her.

"It's getting worse, please make it stop!" she begged.

"Try and fight through the pain, Miss Potter, just like you would a curse," Snape instructed, coming over and cupping her chin, so their eyes met. "That's right, you're doing fine," he coached, as they maintained eye contact as another wave of intense pain shot through her. She stiffened visibly, but continued to follow Snape's instruction, while Sirius held her, and Remus massaged her neck.

In the course of these events, Dumbledore came into the room. His keen eyes took in the situation immediately. He was pleased to note how well the three men had responded to the crisis, and that they were all working together. He could see the pain etched into Harry's face, and the tension in her body. He knew Voldemort was up to something major.

"I'm here, Harry, you're going to be all right," Dumbledore's soft voice soothed as he placed his wand to her forehead. He grew even more worried as he saw that the scar now looked like a fresh wound, it was an angry red, as if she had just received it yesterday, not sixteen years hence. Yet, he gave no outward sign of his concern, as he did not wish to alarm her, "Easy now, child, the pain will cease in a minute," he said gently, wiping a stray tear from her cheek. "Severus, is your mark hurting as well?" Dumbledore asked as Harry began to relax, still cradled in Sirius tender embrace.

"No, Headmaster, there is no pain. The Dark Lord is not attempting to summon me."

"Severus, you know better than to lie to me," Dumbledore shook his head, eyeing him astutely, "now give me your arm and explain yourself."

"Humph...wants to run back to the fold no doubt, and tell Voldemort Harry's weakening."

"No, Sirius, he wants to find out what he's planning. In case you don't realize it, Halloween is less than a fortnight away. If I recall the Prophecy correctly, I'm in for a rather bad time," Harry stated interceding on Snape's behalf. She had felt his pain and sensed his plans during their eye contact, which convinced her more than ever that he had some form of telepathic ability.

"Severus, is this true?"

"Yes, Headmaster, I thought that if I answered the summons I could discover his plans, preventing the possible attack on Miss Potter.

"Bad move," Harry said looking at Snape, "that may be just what he wants you to do."

"What makes you say that, Harry?" Lupin asked.

"Look, the four of you are looking at me like I don't know what I'm talking about, but try and think like Voldemort. You're planning something big to get to Potter, and maybe do some

other damage as well. So...why not try and lure Snape back and give him faulty information. This way you have a better chance of getting your quarry, because she's less protected. If it works, fine, you not only get rid of Potter, you can kill Snape for being a traitor at the same time. If it doesn't you haven't lost anything, you just go ahead with the original plan anyway." "Very interesting theory, Harry," Dumbledore replied weighing the possibility over in his mind.

"It's not a theory, Professor!" Harry exclaimed getting exasperated. "One of the reasons you gave me to my aunt and uncle was so I would be able to think like a Muggle. Voldemort, a.k.a. Tom Riddle, was raised in a Muggle orphanage wasn't he?"

"Yes Child, go on, what are you getting at?"

"It's one of the reasons he's so powerful. He thinks and does things like a Muggle. I mean, think about it...how many people has he actually killed himself? He only kills when his Death Eaters fail or he wants to prove a point. It's easier that way. If something goes wrong there's someone else to blame. You then kill the intended victim yourself and punish or kill the person whose job it was supposed to have been in the first place. That's how it's done in the Muggle world. You keep your hands clean as much as possible, using intimidation to keep your followers under control. There's no honor in it and everything's kept hidden under the table. It's not like that in the Wizarding world."

"I'm impressed with your reasoning Harry. I believe you may be right. Severus, give me your arm so that I can relieve your discomfort. Then I want you to sit with Harry while she sleeps."

"Very well, Headmaster," Snape replied doing as Dumbledore requested, exposing the skull and snake tattoo on his left forearm. It was almost black and Dumbledore knew it must be very painful, but Severus showed no outward indication of his discomfort.

"Now drink your sleeping potion, Harry. After you've rested Sirius will come back up and you can dine together in your room. One of us will be with you constantly, in one form or another," he winked at Sirius, "until after All Hallows Eve."

"Sleep well, and I'll be back later," Sirius smiled rising.

"Wait, before you go, there's something for you in that bag over there. Don't open now, wait till later. I think you'll be amused," Harry said indicating the bag she had brought back with her from London. "Now be a good dog and don't bite Professor Snape on the way out, I think he's had enough for one day. Remus can bring the bag for you."

Sirius just laughed and gave Snape a low growl as he transformed and trotted off towards the door.

"Don't worry, I'll take good care of him, and make sure he behaves," Remus teased, going along with the joke, as he followed him out.

"Harry...your potion..." Dumbledore said looking at her over his glasses.

"Miss Potter, sleep well," Professor Snape told her as she picked up the vial and swallowed the contents.

"Good afternoon, Professor...Headmaster..." she mumbled as the potion took effect almost immediately and she sank into a deep, dreamless sleep.

Harry never heard Dumbledore tell Snape to watch for any signs that Voldemort may be attempting to break through into Harry's unconscious and cause her to dream. Nor was she aware of Snape gently tucking the covers in around her and brushing her cheek with a kiss, before he settled down with the book she had given him.

He found the book 'enlightening,' to say the least. It had a recipe for a potion containing cow's dung, that was supposed to improve virility, and others that were made from perfectly ordinary herbs, promising a young woman instant gratification. Of course, it did not say exactly what type of gratification. The thing that really drove him crazy though, was the recipe to create a sleeping potion from pig's feet and corn. It sounded more like an afternoon snack than anything that would put you to sleep! If it worked, it was simply due to having a full stomach. Severus Snape was so amused he actually let out a soft chuckle and wondered

what Albus would say if he were to offer him the virility drink. Somehow, he did not think his longevity was due to leading a purely celibate lifestyle. After he finished reading he made up his mind to write an article, for The Potion Master's Monthly, on the ridiculous things that Muggles believed made up potions. He then sat back and kept a silent vigil on Harry, until Sirius came to relieve him for dinner.

PART 7 - HALLOWEEN

Halloween morning dawned clear and cold, and Harry awoke feeling refreshed, hoping nothing was actually going to happen. Prophecy or no Prophecy, she was looking forward to the evening's festivities.

She had been working hard on her additional studies. She found the challenge invigorating and stimulating to her mind. She wanted desperately to succeed for Dumbledore, since he never failed to believe in her abilities. Working with the professors and Sirius on a one to one basis was enjoyable and she found herself looking forward to the weekends more than when she could go into Hogsmeade with her friends.

Harry decided that Sirius was even better at transfiguration than Professor McGonagall was. She had started trying to become an animagus in secret, hoping to surprise Sirius, and each night before going to bed, she would attempt the complex spells with various results. She kept trying to become a hawk, after the story she had told Professor Lupin, and she loved to fly, so it only seemed natural. At first, nothing happened, then she gradually got various body parts to change, but she just couldn't get it right. Once she almost had to summon help, when she couldn't get her arms to change back from wings. Another time, Hermione almost caught her with talons instead of feet, and she had to jump into bed, sliding her feet beneath the blankets, before allowing her to enter. Her feathers also kept coming out in various colors, and her nose would become a beak, but her head wouldn't change. The beak also seemed to be wrong somehow, and she was worried her hawk was going to turn out to be a chicken. Still, she kept trying. If her father and his friends could do it, she felt she should be able to also. True, it may have taken them three years to do it, but they had started when they were younger, and not as skilled as Harry was now.

Harry also found her Defense Against the Dark Arts training to be more than she had expected. The two men would often startle her with unseen or unfamiliar creatures. She had met her first Banshee, and an evil Genie, and been attacked by a Leprechaun who was told she was trying to steal his gold. They also used the Bogart several times, to make her practice the Patronus Spell to perfection. However, the thing she really didn't like to do was to try to fight through curses. She felt like she was back in her fourth year, when Barty Crouch had posed as Professor Mad Eye Moody, the former Auror, and would hit them with curses to see how they responded. Of course, it was more to gauge Harry's ability at the time, but it brought back too many unpleasant memories.

Both Professors knew this, but told her it was more necessary now, since Voldemort knew she had such a strong will. Being able to fight the curse would help to buy her time, should either the Death Eaters or The Dark Lord himself corner her. It was often painful and frustrating, and Snape often would push her endurance to the limit. He would later explain that Voldemort enjoyed watching others writhe in pain, and if she could tolerate the curses, she might be able to hold on long enough to escape. It had gotten to the point where she would walk into class with a feeling of dread, but still they persisted, until she finally got so angry that she not only avoided Snape's *Cruciatus* curse, she hit him with one of her own, sending him flying into one of the dungeon work tables, while ducking another one from Professor Lupin.

She immediately ran over to him, as Professor Lupin stood grinning with pleasure at the sight. Harry was petrified she would not only be in trouble, but that Snape might be injured. To her utter astonishment, he just fought through the curse, got up, and gave her one of his rare smiles.

"Very good, Miss Potter, you avoided us both, and actually hit me," he said patting her on the shoulder to alleviate her concerns.

She had also been working with Snape on Advanced Potions, normally not even considered until the seventh year. He had allowed her to choose any potion she knew was extremely

difficult to prepare. He would then work with her until she got it right. He was more than a little surprised when she chose the Wolfbane Potion for Professor Lupin.

"It might be a good idea if more than one person around here knows how to do it in case of emergency," she had told him truthfully. "I know you still feel uncomfortable with him at times."

He had merely nodded and warned her that very few Potions Masters could mix the complex series of ingredients correctly, but he was secretly pleased that she was willing to try something so difficult.

Finally, there was the time she spent working with Professor Dumbledore. Harry was fascinated with his ability to perform any charm she could think of. He was almost as difficult a taskmaster as Snape, only without the temper tantrums. He liked to make up games with her. He had beamed with pleasure when she had made a miniature copy of Hogwarts appear, complete with Whomping Willow and the squid in the lake.

She had felt a burst of pride when he had told her that she had not only inherited her mother's ability with charms, she had surpassed it. Her self-confidence had been bolstered in only two weeks. She knew she had the ability to continue to hold her own against Voldemort.

As she dressed for the Halloween Feast, she kept thinking about how much fun it was going to be. The students had been delighted when Dumbledore had decided to make it a costume party with music and dancing. Prizes were to be awarded for the best costumes. While Harry didn't believe her costume was too interesting, she felt one of her escorts was going to cause a stir.

True to his word, Dumbledore had not left her alone since what she came to call "the Broomstick Incident." She had done a lot of begging and pleading with him, and Professor Lupin had looked askance, but they had finally agreed to her idea. Sirius, forever the practical joker, had loved it. Snape of course, was furious, and felt it was far too dangerous.

She was to have Professor Snape and Dumbledore keep watch during the festivities, and 'Snuffles' would keep guard out on the grounds hidden in the shrubbery. Professor Lupin would accompany her, as she went as Little Red Riding Hood. It was to be a full moon, and he would go in his wolf form, for the early part of the evening. Afterwards, she would bring him to 'Snuffles' and they would go into the forest. Since not all the students knew he was a werewolf, she had planned to pass him off as a Siberian Husky, since they were often used in films, instead of actual wolves, due to the close similarity. If anyone asked, she would say that Hagrid had borrowed him from a friend. While most of the older students knew he was a werewolf many of the younger ones did not, and Professor Lupin preferred to maintain that part of his life in privacy.

As she completed getting dressed to go down to breakfast, there was a knock on her door. "Who's there," she called, expecting Dumbledore, but Ron and Hermione answered instead. She quickly went over and opened the door.

"Hey Harry," Ron bubbled with excitement entering the room, "are you ready for tonight's festivities?"

"Sure am," she grinned back at him mischievously.

"What are you going as?" Hermione asked eyeing her curiously.

"She won't say. I've been trying to get it out of her all week."

"Sorry you two, its top secret, but I know you will both love it."

"I can't believe they're letting you go," Hermione stated seriously, "you could have been expelled for slapping Professor Snape."

"Are you kidding? Dumbledore knows how Snape can get, and there was Harry, totally pissed off because he practically accused her of attacking Malfoy."

"Ahem," Dumbledore cleared his voice from the door. They had been so busy talking they hadn't heard his knock.

"Good morning, Professor Dumbledore," Harry greeted him, her cheeks burning.

"Good morning, Harry, I see your two biggest fans have gotten here before me," he said, focusing his blue eyes firmly on Ron.

"Good morning, Professor," he mumbled in embarrassment.

"Hello, Headmaster, you look wonderful today. Are those new robes?" Hermione asked cheerfully in an attempt to change the conversation.

"No, Hermione, they're not, but thank you for the compliment."

"Did you ever feel like you've been caught with your hand in the cookie jar?" Harry giggled.

"Tell me about it," Ron responded guiltily.

"It seems I have another generation of Gryffindors who love getting into mischief,"

Dumbledore smiled, as Ron let out a sigh of relief, "the only difference is that this time it's two girls and a boy."

"Are you insinuating that my mother was a mischief maker?"

"Right up there with your father and Sirius. Remus kept them all from getting into worse trouble. He always kept a level head on his shoulders."

"How about that, Harry, it seems your mum was just as much into fun as you!" Ron laughed.

"You know Professor, I don't know too much about my mother. She and aunt Petunia did not get along. Most people always compare me to my father since we look so much alike. I'll bet you could tell me some interesting stories."

"How about we talk after your Charms lesson with me this week?" he offered, seeing the hopeful look in her eyes. "I think you'll find that the two of you have a lot more in common than just those green eyes."

"That's even better than getting a N.E.W.T. from Professor Snape!" she said, referring to the school's highest grade as they all laughed. Everyone knew the Potions Master rarely ever gave such a high grade, even to the Slytherins.

"Now young Gryffindors, how about we all go down to the Great Hall for breakfast? I'm famished."

"I'll vote for that Professor," Ron grinned.

He was always hungry these days. Harry supposed it was because he was growing again. His uniform trousers were starting to get short, along with his robes. Harry suspected he was going to be at least six feet tall, and he was already towering over her slight frame of five feet four. She knew he was self-conscious since most of his clothes were hand me downs, from his elder brothers. Harry decided she would buy him some new clothes for Christmas, to go with his mother's traditional hand knit sweaters that she had sent ever since Harry and Ron had met. She smiled to herself at the memory of her first Hogwarts Christmas, when she had received her first two real presents; the invisibility cloak from Dumbledore and the sweater from Ron's mother.

"What are you smiling about, Harry?" Hermione questioned as they went down the corridor towards the main staircase to the Great Hall.

"I'm just thinking about what to give everyone for Christmas this year."

"I'll worry about Christmas later; right now I'm focused on tonight's feast!" Ron told them.

"My mouth is watering just thinking about all that good food."

"Be grateful you're even going," Hermione rebuked him. "That howler your mum sent was absolutely scathing. I thought for a moment she was going to Apparate right out of the envelope and box your ears."

"Don't remind me. Mum's howlers are far worse than the detention I did with Professor Snape!"

"She almost came down to Hogwarts, Ron," Dumbledore informed him with a twinkle in his eye, "I convinced her not to. I made her understand your intentions were honourable."

"Professor, you're wonderful. I owe you one," Ron shook his head gratefully. "It's not easy to convince Mum of anything."

"Has she told you that she will be here for the Christmas Holiday? Your parents are planning to spend Christmas with the twins in Hogsmeade. I believe your mother is still trying to convince them to give up the magic shop and go to work for the Ministry. They will all be coming to dinner here at Hogwarts. They're especially looking forward to meeting the "new" Harry," Dumbledore teased placing his hand on Harry's head and ruffling her hair.

"I've got to give it to you Harry. You even fooled Mum and Dad."

"I hope they weren't too angry," Harry replied anxiously.

"Not at all, Child, after they got over the initial shock Molly Weasley felt really bad that you had to be disguised as a boy all these years. As a matter of fact, I got a bit of a howler from her myself," he confessed, laughing at the memory of Molly's fury that poor Harry not only had to be raised by Muggles, she had to be made to act like a boy!

"Professor Dumbledore, Harry won't tell us about her costume for tonight. You wouldn't happen to know what it is, would you?" Hermione asked trying to wheedle it out of him.

"That, my dear, is top secret. My lips are sealed. However, in the true Gryffindor style of mischief, I know you'll both enjoy it," he smiled mysteriously. "Ah...we've arrived...enjoy your breakfast, children. Oh, and Harry, classes may be cancelled today, but you still have a private lesson this morning with Professor Snape," Dumbledore reminded her.

"I know. Nine o'clock sharp in the dungeon."

"Very well, I'll see you all later," Dumbledore said withdrawing to the head table.

The three friends nodded good-bye to the Headmaster and took their places at the Gryffindor table for breakfast, before resuming their conversation.

"How's your costume coming, Hermione?" Harry asked. She had been so busy with her private lessons she hadn't had time to go and see for herself.

"Terrific, I'm going as Little Bo Peep, you know. Professor McGonagall showed me a quick way to transform my broom into a staff, and I got a stuffed lamb in Hogsmead. I charmed it so it would bleat whenever I touch the head. My mother got me the hat and dress from a costumer she knows. She did an emergency root canal on her, and the woman was only too pleased to return the favor," Hermione explained referring to the fact that her parents were dentists.

"How about your costume, Ron?"

"I'm going as a knight! Brings back memories, eh Harry? McGonagall is letting me use the knight to ride from her giant chess set. She also got me some chainmail to wear over my clothes. My brother Charlie gave me his old Dragons hide boots to complete the outfit," Ron beamed with excitement. "Come on Harry...tell us your costume."

"At least give us a hint," Hermione pouted.

"Sorry, Dumbledore made me promise. I will tell you this though," she said lowering her voice conspiratorially, "Professor Snape hates it!"

"Harry, what on earth are you up to? I thought Snape was helping to guard you tonight?" Hermione asked puzzled by this information.

"He is, but he doesn't like my costume. Dumbledore over ruled him though, so he has to put up with it," Harry grinned wickedly. "He was even more miserable when Dumbledore told him the teachers have to wear costumes too."

"What's he going as? Do you know?" Ron asked with interest.

"Zorro, that way he can still be comfortable in black."

"Do you think he'll have a real sword?"

"It's called a rapier, Ron," Hermione corrected.

"Well is he bringing one?" Ron questioned ignoring her.

"I think so. I'm not sure. He's a stinker for authenticity though, so I would venture to guess that he would.

"Ah Ha! You're going as the Commandant's niece, how romantic," Hermione guessed.

"Sorry, wrong again. You'll both just have to wait and see," Harry said slyly, with a coquettish tilt to her head.

Their conversation was interrupted by a commotion at the head table. They all sat watching curiously as Professor McGonagall and the Headmaster hurriedly excused themselves. Harry noted Professor Snape had not yet come in to the Great Hall to eat. Professor Lupin was absent since he was resting as it was a full moon, and Trelawney always ate in her room except at the beginning and end of the year.

"I wonder what's going on," Hermione said studying the instructors thoughtfully.

"I have no idea. Whatever it is, it must be something important, if both Dumbledore and McGonagall left together," Harry answered.

"Harry, you don't think it has something to do with the Prophecy, do you?" Ron demanded with concern. "It is Halloween, you know."

"I don't think so," Hermione interrupted before Harry could respond; "if it did they would have come and gotten Harry."

"Hermione's right. This is something all together different. We'll just have to wait and see what happens."

"Here comes Neville, and he's all excited. Maybe he knows something," Hermione told them studying Neville astutely.

"Hi guys," Neville greeted them bounding up to the table in a huff, "guess what's going on," he said grabbing a muffin. "Professor Snape caught Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle trying on their costumes. You'll never guess what they were coming as!" He said his eyes round with astonishment.

"I don't know, The Three Stooges, maybe?" Harry joked winking at Hermione as she snickered at the joke.

"What? No, who are they?" Neville asked in confusion.

"Never mind Neville, it's a Muggle thing," Ron said shaking his head. He was used to Harry and Hermione teasing him with things they both knew about the Muggles way of life. "What are they coming as?"

"Not what, who," Neville replied now that he had their attention.

"Neville, just get to the point," Ron said growing restless.

"Death Eaters!" Neville responded dramatically.

"What, you're kidding?" Ron gasped choking on a piece of bacon.

"Sounds like something they would do," Harry responded dryly, "how did you find out?"

"I had to go down to Snape's office to turn in the report he had me rewrite. He was just getting ready to come to breakfast. We were coming out of his office when Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle came from the boys' bathroom and rounded the corner heading towards the Slytherin Common Room in full costume; robes, masks, the whole get up. They must have been going to change out of them. Well, anyhow, Snape damn near had apoplexy. I never saw him so angry, and he's always getting mad at me. His face was practically purple. He sent me right off for both Dumbledore and McGonagall, and dragged the three of them into his office before anyone else saw them."

"I'll bet they get expelled," Hermione said with a toss of her head, "it'll serve them right."

"I'll believe it when I see it," Ron replied skeptically.

"I don't know, Ron," Neville replied hopefully, "everybody was pretty upset. Oh, there's Colin and Seamus," he said indicating their other friends. "I'm going to go fill them in, see you guys later," he said, glad to have someone else to relate his news to, and hurried off in the other direction.

"What do you think, Harry," Hermione asked, "do you think they'll get expelled?"

"I doubt it. Remember Malfoy's father is on the Board of Governors. All three of their fathers are also employed in the Ministry of Magic."

"Yeah, and they're also in You Know Who's inner circle, Death Eaters, every one of them," Ron hissed, "too bad no one wants to believe it."

"It's not that they don't want to believe it Ron, they need to be able to prove it. No, it'll be chalked up to good old-fashioned boyish pranks, or a very bad joke. They'll get detention and have to come to the feast as something else," Harry told them heatedly.

"Don't worry, Harry, they'll get what's coming to them," Ron reassured her. "Remember how we all cursed them on the train after fourth year?"

"I sure do. I needed that little reminder, thanks Ron," Harry revealed in the memory. "Now, if you two will excuse me, I have a lesson to get to."

"Aren't you supposed to wait and go down with Professor Snape? He's already in a bad mood and you're going down alone will just make it worse," Hermione reminded her gently.

"I can deal with it."

"Maybe we should walk you down."

"No, Hermione, I'll be fine. Snape took the boys to his office, remember? Therefore, he's probably still there. If they're still in conference I'll just wait outside the door."

"All right," she agreed doubtfully.

"Don't worry, Hermione. Harry can take care of herself. She is safe so long as she doesn't leave the castle, Snape and Dumbledore told her so. They're just keeping an eye on her because she's been having nightmares, and her scar has been hurting."

"Just take care, Harry, you have a knack for finding trouble."

"Not today, I have every intention of proving that silly Prophecy wrong!" she told them with determination, rising from her seat. She knew Snape would be angry, Hermione had tried to warn her, but she just needed some space and wanted to be alone.

Making her way out of the Great Hall, she took the stairs to the dungeon. She went directly to Snape's office, but found it empty, and assumed he had brought the three boys up to the Headmaster after all, so she went into the workroom.

Pulling out the Potion Master's text he had allowed her to use, she began checking which ingredients she had already collected, and which ones she still required for the Wolfsbane potion. Snape would not even consider letting her attempt to mix the potion until she understood all the ingredients. He demanded that she know the brewing and preparation requirements, side effects, precautionary measures to prevent injuring herself, and the consequences of mixing the potion incorrectly. To make matters worse, she was to memorize all this information, verbatim. She was sitting pondering over the use of so many toxic substances that were harmful to both humans and wolves in one potion, when she became aware that Professor Snape was watching her. She looked up, expecting him to yell, but was surprised when he merely stood with his usual stance, back straight, and arms folded across his chest.

"You were supposed to wait for me."

"I heard you were unavoidably detained."

"You could put it that way."

"Professor, they got away with it, didn't they?" Harry asked bluntly.

"Miss Potter that should be of no concern to you," Snape sneered, knowing what she was referring to.

"Yeah, right, nothing ever changes," she muttered in frustration.

"They were given detention and their parents were notified," he informed her. 'There you go again, Severus, you're getting emotional where this girl is concerned,' he told himself. 'You know better, she's too young for you. Besides, she's Potter's daughter. Why would she even look in your direction?'

"Oh, whoopee...I'm sure Lucius Malfoy is laughing at all of us hysterically."

"Actually, no," he said with the trace of a smile. 'Be honest with her, she'll respect you for it. Let her know just enough so that Dumbledore doesn't get angry with you,' he thought, his

mind racing. "He doesn't need Draco parading around in those robes and risking his family being exposed as followers of Voldemort," Snape explained with contempt.

"What about the other two?"

"Their fathers will do whatever Lucius tells them to."

"Professor, if I ask you a question about Draco and his two goons, will you tell me the truth?"

'Here's your chance Snape, go for it. You can earn her trust, then maybe as she gets a little older...' His mind struggled to reason with his heart, and aloud he replied, "If I feel it's relevant and something you should know," he said arching his left brow quizzically.

"Are they among Voldemort's younger recruits?"

"The robes and masks I found them in are the real thing. Does that answer your question?"

"Interesting way to hedge around saying yes," Harry mused. "Is Dumbledore letting them come to the feast tonight?"

"He feels he'd rather have them where they can be watched, so...yes...they'll be there, but not in their originally planned attire."

"Do you think they're involved in what ever Voldemort is going to try?"

"Possibly, but more likely he's using them to gather information," Snape responded with understanding. "The Dark Lord doesn't have any patience with inexperienced or inferior wizards, even if their fathers are members of the inner circle."

"Then why does he bother with me?"

"He considers you a worthy adversary. You almost killed him as a toddler, and keep managing to survive everything he throws at you," Professor Snape reasoned logically.

"Does he believe in the Prophecy?"

"No, he believes in what he can see and feel. He believes in his own power to make things happen. His worry is that the Prophecy will cause him to lose control of his followers, and they will start to see him as weak. That is why it is so important to him that he kills you."

"Didn't I say something to that same effect about two weeks ago?" she asked brightly.

"You're very perceptive. Now, how are you making out with the ingredients for the Wolfbane Potion?" he inquired, indicating their conversation about Voldemort and the Death eaters was at an end.

"Not too well. The number of toxic substances and plants confuses me, and their interactions do not make sense. There are so many that will counteract one another..."

They worked together for most of the morning, with Professor Snape demonstrating and explaining the intricacy of this particularly difficult potion. He was pleased to note that she was better at Potions than he had always thought, realizing that if it was something that interested her she could excel far beyond the usual requirements. He made a mental note to speak with the Headmaster about a change in curriculum for the upper level students in an effort to stimulate their interest.

They had their lunch sent down to them, and when they had finished, Professor Snape prepared to mix the potion. Harry knew Professor Lupin was expecting it, tonight being the full moon, and he was concerned about the welfare of both Harry and the rest of the students he would encounter in wolf form during the Feast.

As Professor Snape worked on the potion, he would quiz Harry about each plant, chemical, and animal ingredient that he was putting into it. She was not always right, but he did not expect her to be this soon; however, he was pleased with her progress. She watched in fascination as he measured, brewed, and mixed each item, some of which had to be prepared ahead of time, and others that were mixed separately and brewed for a specific time, before they could be added together with the rest of the potion. When he had finally finished, he realized that she was smiling at him.

"I don't see anything funny, Miss Potter."

"I'm sorry Professor; I was just thinking that this has been the most fun that I've ever had in Potions. I liked watching you work. You almost make it look easy."

"I'll take that as a compliment," he told her with a slight smile and the familiar arch to his left brow; inwardly he was thinking, 'Severus, she's doing it to you again. Making you feel like you're a school boy having his first crush.'

"How do you know what to mix, and how to do it?"

"I simply memorize it."

"Have you ever made a mistake?"

"That is not the best question to ask a Potions Master," Remus Lupin's voice chuckled from the doorway. "I'm sorry, Severus, I didn't mean to interrupt. It's getting late and I was wondering how soon the potion would be ready."

"It's ready now, Remus, don't let it sit," he said, handing him a glass of swirling green liquid.

"Miss Potter, explain to Professor Lupin the importance of drinking this particular potion immediately."

Harry knew he was quizzing her again, and directed her attention at Professor Lupin. "The potion contains a variety of toxins, which can be lethal if allowed to sit. Each one, in and of itself, is dangerous, but put into a solution of brine and wolf's blood they will interact with each other and create a calming effect on the central nervous system of a lycanthrope. When prepared in the right combination they are not fatal."

"Excellent, Miss Potter, you see, you can do outstanding work in potions when you take the trouble to try."

"Nice job Harry," Remus smiled. "Have you tried mixing it yet?"

"No, I don't think I'll be doing any mixing for awhile."

"Not until I feel she's ready, at any rate."

"Let me amend that, a long while," Harry laughed, looking over at the two Professors.

"Well, Miss Potter, you're going to mix quite a few batches before I even consider letting you mix one for Professor Lupin," Snape informed her stoically.

"What happens when I finally get it right?"

"Let me put it this way, If, by the end of the school year, you can mix the Wolfbane Potion correctly from memory as I just did, I will not only pass you in class I will give you a N.E.W.T."

"Professor Lupin, you're my witness. Now drink your potion. It shouldn't sit," she told him, crossing her arms in imitation of Professor Snape.

"Yes, Professor Potter," he teased, downing the bitter potion with a grimace. "It would be nice if the two of you could figure out a way to improve the flavor."

"I'll put him to work on the problem right away," Harry smirked, nodding over at Professor Snape.

"Miss Potter, it's getting late, you're excused. I will pick you up at seven o'clock, so be ready."

"You're sure you want to do this, Harry?" Professor Lupin asked warily.

"I'm sure. You drank your potion so you should be docile. You once told me you could recognize people you know when in wolf form by their scent. If I thought for a minute you might hurt someone I wouldn't do it," she reassured him. "You can hide under the table and I'll sneak you treats. Besides, Dumbledore and Professor Snape will make sure you don't get wild or nervous."

"All right, I'll see you later."

"Good bye, Professor Snape. Oh, and Captain, it's your job to keep the Princess safe from the evil wizard, so be alert tonight," Harry teased Lupin, as he laughed at the reference to the story she had shared with him, Professor Snape looking on bewildered.

Harry went directly to her room, and laid out her costume on the bed. It had been easy to find a long red dress and a red hooded cloak. They had been delivered to her from a shop in Hogsmeade. She also had white stockings and a pair of black shoes, known as 'Mary Jane's,' which she had borrowed from Ron's sister Ginny. The entire outfit was complemented with a basket of bread, which she could carry over her arm.

Taking a shower, she arranged her hair neatly around her face, hiding her scar, and then dressed for the evening. Finally, she put on some makeup, and surveyed herself in the mirror. There was an air of innocence about her, and she was pleased with the effect.

Sitting down to wait, she had the overwhelming desire to look at the photo album Hagrid had given her of her parents. She knew it was the anniversary of their death; tonight would mark fifteen years. How ironic that the Prophecy had foretold of an attack by Voldemort, tonight, of all nights. Coincidence? Fate? She didn't know. She could only hope it was wrong.

Harry studied the pictures for what seemed a long time. They had been a happy family, and she could see how much her father and mother loved one another. Looking at her baby pictures, she tried to imagine herself now, without the scar that marred her forehead. It was impossible to do so.

As she continued to flip through the pages, she came across some pictures of Sirius, and studied his features. He had been very handsome, with his thick black hair, and big brown eyes. You could almost see the mischief in them. She sighed, thinking he still looked almost the same, just somewhat older, but had become thin and pale with a haunted look behind his eyes. 'Maybe when this is all over we can go away someplace and find some happiness again,' she thought as she heard a familiar scratching sound at the door.

Getting up to open it, she found Sirius, now in dog form, sitting up begging. He had a note in his mouth, and his tail was wagging. "Snuffles, don't just sit there, come on in and visit," she told him taking the note from his mouth.

He trotted in as she closed the door, but didn't transform, and proceeded to sniff her as she read the note.

HARRY,

PROFESSOR LUPIN AND I WILL BE THERE SHORTLY. SNUFFLES WANTED TO COME AHEAD OF US TO SPEND A FEW MINUTES WITH YOU. HE MAY ALSO BE SNIFFING YOU TO GET YOUR SCENT IN CASE ANYTHING SHOULD HAPPEN TONIGHT. PROFESSOR LUPIN WILL DO THE SAME WHEN WE ARRIVE. YOUR FRIEND AND TEACHER,
ALBUS DUMBLEDORE

"All right wise guy," Harry said turning to where 'Snuffles' had been sniffing the back of her skirt and her ankles, only to find him standing there grinning.

"Miss me?" he asked, flashing his brilliant smile.

"Always," she replied as he hugged her. "How's Snape holding up?"

"Hard to say, he just keeps eyeing Remus with mistrust."

"Can you blame him? You nearly got him killed and I decide to take the same werewolf to a costume party during the full moon! I'm surprised he's not having apoplexy," Harry said, pretending to look innocent and failing miserably.

"It would serve the nasty SOB right."

"Sirius, be nice. Snape has some good qualities too. He just doesn't like to show them. I'm not sure why, but Dumbledore trusts him and that's good enough for me."

"For you," he said kindly, "I'll behave, but I still don't have to like him."

"You may be surprised if you really got to know each other. You're both worse than two stubborn little boys!" Harry cried defiantly with a stamp of her foot.

"I know," he told her fondly, his attitude softening, "and before I forget, you look adorable."

"Thank you," Harry beamed happily.

"What are you doing?" he asked sitting down on the bed. "Looking at pictures?"

"Old photographs. Hagrid gave me this album after my first year at Hogwarts," she said as Sirius began flipping through the pages and looking at the pictures.

A myriad of emotions crossed his features as he looked at the pictures of James and Lily Potter, along with their old friends. Harry sat down next to him on the bed, and gently put her arm around his shoulders.

"I miss them," he told her sadly, "has it really been so long?"

"Fifteen years tonight."

"I failed them, and I let you down."

"No, you didn't. You couldn't know Peter would betray them to Voldemort."

"But we read the prophecy...we should have realized..."

"That he was the rat and you were the dog? You couldn't have known that. Not when it was happening, any more than my father could have known he was going to die. The father mentioned later is most likely you," Harry said trying to comfort him.

"I heard you that night on the roof you know....when you asked if I had realized I was the dog in the Prophecy. I wish to Merlin I had. Maybe things would have happened differently."

"I like to believe things happen for a reason. I don't want to feel their death was in vain. What I do know is that you and I survived. It's up to us to make things right again. Whatever is going to happen tonight I am going to need you to be there for me in the here and now. I do not believe for one instant that it's a coincidence the Prophecy predicts trouble on the fifteenth anniversary of my parents murder. So stop brooding about what happened fifteen years ago and give me a hug," she suggested boldly, "I sure could use one about now," she finished unable to hide the quiver in her lower lip.

"Harry, don't cry. I didn't mean to make you sad," Sirius groaned, taking her in his arms.

"I'm o.k. now," she said after a few moments, "you always make me feel safe."

"I'm glad. At least that's one thing I can do right."

"You never do anything wrong. You just tend to be impulsive," she smiled shyly.

"And you don't?" he teased, tweaking her nose.

"Never, I always do what I'm told and think things through," Harry responded smugly, bursting into laughter, as there was a knock on her door. Getting up from the bed, she went over to open the door.

Professor Dumbledore, dressed as Father Christmas, stood there holding a leash, to which Remus Lupin was attached, in his wolf form. Professor Snape, dressed as Zorro, was standing off to the side, watching him cautiously. The wolf Remus was alert, and his ears were pricked, listening, while his nose quivered, scenting the air around him. He gave a low whine as Harry moved aside so they could enter, and as soon as she had closed the door, he began to sniff her wildly, his tail wagging furiously.

"Now aren't you just the prettiest puppy," Harry crooned, scratching his ears.

"Hey, I thought I was a pretty puppy?" Sirius pretended to pout.

"No, you're usually a naughty dog," she smiled looking at him over her glasses.

"Good evening, Harry," Dumbledore interrupted their exchange with a smile, "you look absolutely lovely. You make the perfect Little Red Riding Hood."

"Thank you, Headmaster, and I didn't mean to be rude. You make a wonderful Father Christmas," she grinned surveying his costume. Professor Dumbledore was resplendent in a hooded dark green velvet cloak with gold brocade. His white beard was neatly combed and his long hair framed his face, disappearing underneath the cloak. His robes were of a similar green with a gold cord around his waist. He had completed the ensemble with a pair of black suede dragons hide boots and a bag of goodies. "You should do a repeat performance at Christmas."

"I just may do that, Harry," he beamed with pleasure as Remus whined at Sirius.

"Harry, I have to transform. Remus wants to talk to me."

"Can you do that? I know you once told me Hermione's cat, Crookshanks, could tell you weren't a real dog."

"It's sort of a telepathy thing, with vocal sounds too, but we can understand one another," Sirius explained as Remus wagged his tail looking from one to the other.

"That's really cool," Harry remarked in fascination as Sirius transformed. He and Remus touched noses in greeting

"I'm glad all they're doing is touching noses," Snape said cryptically from over in the corner, where he was leaning on the dresser.

"Professor Snape!"

"My apologies, Miss Potter, it was a rude remark to make in the presence of a young lady."

"Apology accepted, but why are you standing all the way over there?"

"Let's just say that Lupin and I have some rather unpleasant history."

"Now, Severus that was a long rime ago and we didn't have the Wolfbane Potion then," Dumbledore reminded him gently.

"Professor Dumbledore is right. Lupin can sense your fear, and as an empath so can I," Harry reminded him, "just come over slowly and let him sniff you."

"I don't believe that would be wise," Snape hesitated with a frown, looking at both 'Snuffles' and Lupin.

Harry understood his feelings and turned to the two canines. "All right you two, I know you have some idea of what I'm saying," she informed Professor Lupin, "so be nice to Professor Snape, like your human half. Snuffles," she continued looking over her glasses at Sirius, "don't you go giving Remus ideas. If I think for one minute you're up to something I'll put a charm on you so you can't change back and take you to the nearest vet to be neutered!" Harry fumed at Sirius as Dumbledore choked on his laughter and Snape looked at her in shock.

Harry just blushed as Remus got up and walked over to Snape. He sniffed him cautiously as Snape very slowly offered Remus his hand and the werewolf wagged his tail. Snuffles never moved, but sat watching Harry with his head tilted and let out a low growl.

"I believe your godfather is in a bit of a temper," Dumbledore said with amusement.

"Well...if I know him...I think that growl means you're in big trouble for that last remark," she volunteered as Sirius let out a short bark of agreement.

"Well, Child are you ready to go?"

"Yes, as long as Professor Snape is."

"It will be my pleasure, Miss Potter," he said moving over to her watchfully, as the werewolf followed.

"Then I shall go on ahead and let 'Snuffles' out into the garden. You two go along with Remus," Dumbledore instructed handing the leash over to Harry. "I'll see you both in the Great Hall," he finished as he withdrew with 'Snuffles' on his heels.

"Miss Potter, if you would be so kind?" Snape asked offering her his arm.

"I'd be delighted," she said maneuvering the leash into her other hand, placing her free arm in his. "You make a dashing Zorro," Harry admired his costume. He had on sleek black pants, with a v-neck black silk shirt, and the traditional black leather boots. He had topped it off with a flowing black cape, a black bolero, kerchief mask, and a rapier on his belt.

"Thank you," he replied pleased with her admiration. "Your Red Riding Hood will be absolutely spectacular."

"I hope it will turn a few heads," Harry smiled, as they walked towards the Great Hall with Remus, still alert, tugging on his leash.

PART 8 - YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW

The Great Hall was decorated for the Halloween Feast with black cats, banners, cobwebs, and the traditional Jack-o-Lanterns. The floating black and orange candles helped to add to the desired effect and cast eerie shadows on the walls. The night sky reflected the stars and full moon of the October night.

The long tables had been arranged around the perimeter of the room so that the center could be used as a dance floor. The Weird Sisters were again employed to provide the music. A dais had been set up at the far end of the Great Hall, while a buffet table stood on the other side. Remus looked up at her as they entered and she spoke calmly, "Its o.k. Captain there's nothing here to hurt you." He whined softly in response to her quiet voice, pricked his ears, and wagging his tail moved forward.

"Harry, Professor!" Hagrid's voice boomed as he crossed the room to them, dressed as, of all things, an angel, "Dumbledore said ta watch out fer ya." Remus appeared to recognize him immediately, and was wagging his tail furiously. He jumped up on Hagrid affectionately, startling Professor Snape.

"Hagrid, be careful," Snape warned uneasily.

"It's a' right Professor, 'e's docile 'nough. Just like any other critter 'e is. Senses 'ow ya feel. Ya just got ter relax," Hagrid grinned as he pet Remus.

"Now who's afraid of the "Big Bad Wolf"?" Harry teased Professor Snape. "Seriously though, I can't fault you for feeling uncomfortable, it had to have been a terrible experience," Harry said referring to Sirius' prank exposing him to the werewolf, nearly costing Snape his life.

"Miss Potter, you have no idea," he replied looking down at the wolf, who sat up and offered him a paw.

"See Professor, 'e's saying 's sorry fer what 'appened all them years ago."

"Very well," Snape said, not wanting to appear afraid in front of Harry. "I believe you couldn't help what happened," he grudgingly took the offered paw.

Remus wagged his tail furiously, but somehow knew better than to try to lick his hand.

"Here come Ron and Hermione," Harry grinned as they made their way through the crowded room.

"You're 'Little Red Riding Hood' and the wolf!" Hermione exclaimed with delight.

"Harry...is that wolf...?" Ron quizzed looking from one to the other.

"Yup, sure is, say hello to Ron and Hermione," Harry laughed, speaking to the wolf. Remus very carefully sniffed each one and wagged his tail, as he recognized their scent.

"Oh...he's so big and beautiful," Hermione said with wonder, as she gently pet him, running her hands over his thick fur.

"Nice and fluffy," Harry agreed as the wolf looked at her with what seemed to be a smile.

"Professor, I think they're both candidates for St. Mungo's. You did give him the potion, didn't you?" Ron questioned Professor Snape.

"Yes, Mr. Weasley, you needn't worry."

"In that case...it's nice you could be here, um..."

"He answers to Captain," Harry explained.

"O.k. Captain," Ron replied petting him carefully.

"You young 'uns 'ave a good time an' I'll be right over there," Hagrid pointed to where Dumbledore sat, nodding at them in greeting. "An' Harry, if yer need help with Captain," he winked, "I'll be glad ter take 'im outside."

"Thanks Hagrid, but I think he'll be fine. Oh, and Hagrid, nice angel," Harry said trying hard not to laugh, as Hagrid just blushed and walked back towards Dumbledore.

"If you'll excuse me too, Miss Potter, I'd like to go and see Professor Flitwick. He was asking me about a potion for his arthritis."

"Of course, Professor," she agreed as he moved off to speak with the other teacher, leaving Harry, Ron, and Hermione free to talk among themselves.

"Harry, how did you ever pull this off?" Ron demanded eyeing the wolf uneasily.

"Begged, pleaded, and said he would be good protection."

"Well I think it's fabulous, look how well behaved he is," Hermione remarked wryly.

"I think maybe we should feed him before he's not so well behaved," Ron mumbled.

"Oh, Ron, all you worry about is food, you don't want to feed Rem...er, Captain, you want to feed your own stomach!" Hermione complained.

"Now stop it you two. This is a party. Besides, Ron's right, I promised Captain I'd sneak him some food under the table," Harry advised heading over towards the buffet table.

Putting the leash handle around her wrist to maneuver better, she heaped her plate full of food. She made sure she took an extra helping of all the meats for Remus to enjoy, especially the chicken, ribs, and sliced beef. Remus watched with baleful yellow eyes, and Harry was glad he didn't drool.

As they all seated themselves at one of the long tables, Colin Creevey passed by with his camera. "Hi, Harry, nice dog, what kind is he, a husky?" Colin asked cheerfully, obviously familiar with the similarity of the two animals. "Can I take your picture with him? Ron and Hermione can be in it too."

"Sure Colin," she agreed nodding to the camera bug student, who was a year behind her.

'Remus might like to see what he actually looks like as a wolf,' Harry thought to herself.

"Say Happy Halloween," Colin directed pointing his camera at the trio with the wolf seated in front of Harry.

"Happy Halloween," they all chorused as he snapped the picture.

The flash immediately startled the wolf and he let out a low growl, baring his teeth.

"I'm sorry, Colin, the flash must have scared him. It's o.k. Captain," Harry said soothingly, petting Remus. "Colin's a friend."

"Hello boy, you sure are a handsome fellow," Colin told him calmly, "can I pet him?"

"I don't think that would be a wise idea, Mr. Creevey," Snape's sardonic voice echoed from behind him, "the animal is decidedly nervous."

"O.k. Professor. I'll send you a copy of the picture, Harry," he said moving off to take some shots of the other students.

"Ever watchful, Professor Snape?"

"Always, Miss Potter."

"Nice costume Professor," Hermione commented with approval, not having had a chance to tell him earlier.

"Miss Granger," Snape nodded his thanks.

"I see the Weird Sisters are back again," Harry remarked placing a plate of food underneath the table for Remus.

"Would you care to dance, Miss Potter?" Snape asked as the music started.

"Not right now, Professor," Harry told him nervously.

Everyone knew he was an excellent dancer, having seen him sneak a dance on the garden terrace with Professor McGonagall during the Yule Ball. The two of them moved to the music like professionals, and Harry had only limited experience; besides, having had to pose as a boy, she was used to leading. Snape sensed her discomfort, his eyes glittering wickedly from beneath his mask.

"I'm sure Mr. Weasley and Miss Granger will sit with "Captain" for you," he indicated, handing the leash to Ron, "hold him tightly, he's quite strong," he instructed as Remus looked at him, tilting his head. Snape steered Harry onto the dance floor for a waltz. "Pay back for calling me Sevie while we were in London," Snape grinned evilly.

"I'm warning you Professor, I'm a terrible dancer."

"I've noticed, now you are going to learn the right way. Just put your arms around me and relax."

"This is not a good idea," she said putting one hand on his shoulder and the other around his waist. "We probably look like "Mutt and Jeff," Harry told him uncomfortably.

"Who?"

"Never mind, it's something from a Muggle comic."

"Now follow my lead," Snape told her easing her gently out among the other dancers. At first she felt clumsy and awkward, but Snape had a way with music and his fluid movements gradually helped her to relax. They began to flow in unison as he gracefully moved her around the dance floor. She could see Professor Dumbledore looking on with approval, Hagrid grinning, and Remus watching warily, as he gnawed on a rib bone. Three dances later, he returned her to her friends. She was out of breath, but Snape seemed to have barely broken a sweat.

"Miss Potter," he said seating her back beside Ron, "it has been my pleasure. Miss Granger may I?" he asked, not waiting for a reply as he guided her onto the dance floor.

"Snape is some dancer, isn't he Harry?" Ron remarked not expecting an answer to his question, as he watched him guide Hermione smoothly over the floor.

"Jealous, Ron? You could have asked Hermione to dance."

"Couldn't," he said pointing to Remus, "I was puppy sitting."

"You could have brought him over to Hagrid and Dumbledore," she teased him with a smile.

"You're just too shy to ask Hermione. I've seen how you look at her when you think no one is watching."

"Do you think she would go out with me? She's always yelling at me for something."

That's because she likes you. She knows you're a talented wizard and doesn't like to see you fail."

"Do you really think so?" he asked hopefully.

"It can't hurt to ask her out," Harry told him knowingly. "Now, if you'll excuse me, it's time to take 'Captain' outside."

"Aren't you supposed to wait for Snape?"

"Ron, I'm going out into the garden. There are plenty of people around. Just let Professor Snape know. The dance is almost over anyway."

"All right, if you think it's safe," he responded munching on a fried chicken leg.

"Snuffles is out there under the bushes," Harry reassured him taking the leash and moving through the crowd towards the garden doors. "Come on 'Captain' let's go and find 'Snuffles,'" she said passing through the doors and into the crisp fall night.

Remus was excited, as he smelled the night air, tugging impatiently on the leash. Nose to the ground, he headed off through the garden, tracking 'Snuffles' familiar scent. At the edge of the garden he stopped. Whining, he looked from her to the Forbidden Forest and back again.

"Don't tell me he went into the forest?" she asked the wolf absently. "What could he have been thinking?"

What Harry couldn't possibly know was that 'Snuffles' was being lured into the forest by a certain "rat" in an effort to get him away from her. Peter was also trying to lure him towards a Dementor, who was waiting in the forest, along with two other Death eaters. They were going to make him transform, and then the Dementor would give him "The Kiss of Death," sucking out his soul, leaving him worse than dead.

Remus whined again and began growling, ears laid back, tail between his legs, the hair standing up on his back. Harry knew something was wrong. 'Sirius is in trouble,' she thought, 'I should go for help but there may not be time.' Unhooking Remus from his collar, she let him go. He took off running in the direction of the forest, with Harry trying to follow as she groped in her cloak to find her wand...

"Mr. Weasley, where is Miss Potter?" Professor Snape asked uneasily, looking around The Great Hall.

"She took Pro...I mean 'Captain' out into the garden."

"Did anyone accompany her?"

"No, Sir, she said she would be right back. She was just bringing him to 'Snuffles', Ron replied shifting nervously in his seat under his intense stare.

"How long ago was that?"

"Not more than ten minutes," Ron stated, becoming alarmed as Professor Snape stalked across the room to the garden doors.

"Oh, Ron, Harry could be in trouble, why didn't you go with her?" Hermione wailed.

"She said she would only be a minute and that 'Snuffles' was out there," he defended himself, as a prickle of fear rose up his spine.

"Come on," she said dragging him out of his seat, "we have got to warn Professor Dumbledore. He'll want to help Snape search."

Professor Snape searched the garden rapidly, a gnawing fear growing in the pit of his stomach. 'Damn fool girl, what ever was she thinking? If only she had come and gotten me, and where the hell are Black and Lupin? They are supposed to be protecting her...You stupid ass, they are probably with her,' he worried inwardly, stopping at the edge of the garden.

Harry was not there, but even in the dark, the moon cast enough light for him to see two sets of footprints in the dead grass. They were facing in the direction of the forest. One set were those of a large canine, the other set...

"Severus?" Dumbledore's soft voice came from behind him, causing him to jump. It was not easy to catch him off guard, but Dumbledore was one of the few people able to do it.

"She's gone into the forest, Headmaster," he said indicating the footprints as he removed his mask. "Something has happened; Black and Lupin must be with her."

What happened next made Severus Snape's blood turn to ice. Dumbledore flinched, and Ron and Hermione exchanged terrified glances. Emanating from the forest came the long drawn out wail of a wolf. Not just an ordinary wolf, but one they all knew, a werewolf. He was closing in on his prey.

"Ron, Hermione, I want you both to go back into the Feast. Tell Professor McGonagall Harry is missing. She'll understand. Then have Hagrid go to his cabin. He's to alert the elves and wait for our signal. The two of you meanwhile, will act as if nothing is going on. Do you understand me?" Dumbledore asked. They nodded. "Professor Snape and I will go into the forest and find out what's happened," Dumbledore informed them in a voice that brooked no argument. He knew they wanted to come, but it was unsafe, and they didn't know who or what they would be facing.

"We'll do as you say, Headmaster," Hermione said before Ron could put up an argument.

"Mr. Weasley, Miss Potter will be all right, this is not your fault," Snape told him in an uncharacteristically nice tone. 'No,' he thought, 'it's mine, and I have to make things right again.'

The two frightened students did as Dumbledore instructed as The Headmaster and Snape moved off rapidly in the direction of the forest...

The moon cast eerie shadows as Harry moved along the path further into the forest. She could no longer hear Remus crashing through the underbrush. She was debating on going back to summon help when she heard voices up ahead. Stealthily creeping closer, she moved to a position behind a tree, from where she could see. There were four figures in a small clearing; two wore the robes of the Death eaters, but were unmasked. They were torturing a man with his face down on the ground and shielded from her view. Her heart started pounding in terror when the fourth figure moved further into her line of vision, and her head spun as she became dizzy. It was a Dementor!

Changing her position, she was able to get a better view of the men's faces. The two Death eaters were McNair and Peter Pettigrew! The figure on the ground moaned in pain, rolling over, revealing his face in the moonlight; it was Sirius!

The Dementor started to move towards him, and Harry knew she had to act swiftly. Stepping out from her hiding place behind the tree, wand held high, she put the thought of when Sirius had returned to Hogwarts into her mind and she had been so happy. Jumping with a swift agile movement, she positioned herself between Sirius and the Dementor, yelling, "*Expecto Patronum!*" Immediately there was a bright silver flash and a large Stag appeared. The Dementor backed away and disappeared. Sirius moaned and opened his eyes. Moaning again, he spit up some blood, and sat up groggily, looking confused and disheveled

"Fuck, Black's awake," McNair, yelled. "Pettigrew, grab the Potter bitch!"

"With pleasure, the Dark Lord will be pleased," Pettigrew answered as he advanced towards Harry.

"*Crucio!*" Harry exclaimed, directing her wand at the menacing wizard, and Pettigrew toppled over in pain. "The *Cruciatus* curse is too good for you, but I need you alive. *Petrificus Totalus,*" she shouted stunning Pettigrew into immobility as McNair turned, aiming his wand at her.

Just then, a huge gray shape charged out of the woods. McNair backed up in terror, dropping his wand in the dirt. It was Remus, fangs bared, his eyes round with fury, as he let out a long drawn out howl.

"Sirius, get up, we need help," Harry pleaded as Remus pinned McNair up against a tree.

"I'm o.k., Harry," his voice came from behind her, as he stood up shakily.

"Can you transform? Are you strong enough?"

"Yes...I...Pettigrew!" Sirius shouted furiously as he saw the unconscious man on the ground.

"I put a curse on him. Sirius, we need him alive," Harry cautioned, knowing that Sirius had no compunctions about killing the man who had betrayed her parents.

"Nice job, I would have killed him."

"Listen to me," Harry said impatiently, "Remus can hold off McNair, but that Dementor may come back..."

"Right, I understand. I'll go for Dumbledore. Will you be all right here by yourself?"

"I got this far didn't I? Besides, Remus is here too," she told him waving her wand in the direction of the wolf, "now go, and please hurry. There may be others somewhere in the woods we don't know about."

Sirius didn't wait to hear more. He transformed and took off through the trees at a run...

"Headmaster, I believe she may have gone this way," Snape remarked examining a small piece of red cloth, he spotted in the moonlight, "Harry must have caught her cloak on this bramble."

"You're right, Severus, let's keep moving," Dumbledore advised worriedly pushing on through the dead brush.

The forest had grown deathly silent. Dumbledore knew that with each passing minute Harry could be in more danger. 'Please Merlin, let the Prophecy be wrong. Don't let her have to endure what James inferred in the letters I found in his possession after he died,' he worried inwardly to himself, thinking of the two letters, which had been found secreted inside James Potter's clothes, one addressed to him, the other to Harry.

"Headmaster, listen..." Snape stopped short, standing stock-still, "someone or something is coming in this direction," he hissed as they both stood with wands at the ready.

"Who or whatever it is isn't making too much effort to remain quiet," Dumbledore whispered in reply.

Suddenly, a huge black shaggy dog appeared out of the underbrush, running in their direction. It was the first time in either Sirius Black or Severus Snape's lives that they were actually glad

to see one another. Transforming, Sirius collapsed, exhausted, as Snape grabbed to support him.

"Black, what's happened? Where are Harry and Lupin?" Snape questioned, as he helped Sirius to steady himself.

"They're back there, about a quarter of the way in, by the clearing," he gasped breathless.

"Take your time, Sirius," Dumbledore soothed noting the animagus swollen features. He was severely bruised; obviously having sustained a vicious beating.

"Albus, we have to go to them, Harry put a curse on Pettigrew and he's stunned. Remus has McNair cornered against a tree. Albus, she rescued me from the Dementor, but there may be others, along with more of Voldemort's men," Sirius told them rapidly, still trying to catch his breath, worry for Harry and Remus etched on his swollen features.

"Sirius, I want you to show us exactly where they are," Dumbledore spoke gently, as if addressing a young child. "Can you make it back?"

"Yes. I wouldn't have left except she made me. She knew I could find you faster in my animagus form," Sirius said turning back in the direction he had come from.

"Pettigrew...somehow he knew I was here...probably sneaking into the castle through the hidden passages as a rat. He let me see him. The bastard knew I would follow him into the forest. Oh, Merlin, how could I have been so stupid?"

"You did what any man would have done in your place, Black, you saw the opportunity for revenge and you went for it."

"Severus is right. He was responsible for both you and Harry losing the people you held dear. It is only natural you should go after him."

"After he got me into the forest, McNair stunned me," Sirius continued, "he then had himself a bit of pleasure beating me half unconscious. One of Voldemort's Dementors was with them. It was going to...well, you know," he said unable to voice the thought. "Then, out of nowhere, Harry showed up doing a Patronus Spell. The next thing I knew, Pettigrew was stunned and Remus has McNair cornered, shaking in his shoes. Shit....Albus...if anything's happened to her..."

"She'll be all right Black," Severus heard himself saying in an effort to calm the distraught man, "she's a very brave and capable witch, despite her youth."

"Sirius, always remember, Harry is at her best when the situation she's in can't seem to get any worse," Dumbledore counseled. 'Please Merlin, so far the Prophecy's wrong. Let it stay that way,' he thought to himself as they hurried through the forest, but somehow he knew it was a hopeless idea...

"Heh, heh, heh," McNair laughed coldly, "how long do you think this beast will keep me here, Potter?"

"Long enough. If you move, he'll gladly tear you to pieces. Of course, if you survive..." she smiled back evilly.

"What are you talking about?"

"Oh, don't you know? You obviously weren't listening to the conversation between Sirius Black and me. That's no ordinary wolf. That's Remus Lupin."

"Lupin? The werewolf?" McNair asked, trying to sink further into the trunk of the tree.

"The same. So I would stay very still if I were you." Almost on cue, Remus growled and snapped at McNair.

"Call him off!" The terrified man screamed, as a wet stain began to spread over the front of his robes, and Harry identified the acrid smell of urine.

Remus growled again. He seemed to be positioning himself to spring at McNair, when Harry felt a sharp stabbing pain burn through her scar, and she heard a cold voice emanating from the woods behind her. Spinning around on her heel, her heart skipped a beat, just as she saw the flash of a wand.

"*Crucio*," Voldemort's evil voice laughed maliciously as she was brought to her knees.

At the same moment, Remus tightened his muscles, leaping into the air to spring at McNair, and Harry heard a loud popping noise. The smell of gunpowder assailed her nostrils, as the wolf howled in pain, falling to the ground with a whine.

"A very nice weapon, these muggle hand guns," Lucius Malfoy mocked with an evil sneer, "especially when the bullets are made of silver."

"Remus," Harry called weakly, struggling to fight through the curse.

"Don't worry my dear, Lucius didn't kill him, the silver will do that," Voldemort smiled cruelly, looking down at her. "You know, I much prefer watching the struggle. Take McNair for example, he's useless, loves to torture his victims, but as you can see, he can't take being tortured himself. The damn coward has pissed himself and in front of a young lady. I loathe cowardice and he really should be taught some manners. *Crucio*," he uttered irately, pointing his wand at McNair, who screamed, crumpling in pain, writhing on the ground.

"That's probably the only useful thing you've done in your whole miserable life," Harry spat at him.

"Ah..., such spirit. I could spare your life you know..., " he told her mulling over the possibilities, "you and I together...what a force we would be!" His red eyes glittered madly, "the power we would have..."

"Fuck you!" Harry cursed furiously. "I wouldn't join with you if you were the last wizard on Earth!" she exclaimed fighting to stand up.

"Uh oh...we'll have none of that...*Crucio*!" He glared down at her, smiling as the wand blast struck her again.

"Your days are numbered Voldemort," Harry spoke through gritted teeth, "and I can't wait to see you sent to Azkaban Mr. Malfoy," she said looking over at where Lucius was standing.

"Haven't you heard? I'm not going anywhere, but you are," Malfoy scoffed.

"Shut up Lucius," Voldemort warned malevolently, his eyes glaring at him like hot coals.

"Dumbledore will be here any minute, Sirius has gone to get him," Harry warned trying to buy some time.

"Oh, well...I'll be gone by the time the old man gets here, and so my dear will you," he laughed harshly, "do you know what this is?" Voldemort demanded conjuring a huge hourglass. "Yes, it's a rather large time turner," he gloated, seeing the understanding in her eyes. "I've decided to give you exactly what you've always wanted, Mum and Dad. You won't have them for too long though...and then I'll be rid of you all like I should have been in the first place!"

"You're insane," she muttered, scrambling to her knees. The pain in her stomach making her want to wretch, and her head was pounding.

"Insane? No my dear, I've never been more lucid," he replied calmly. "Malfoy...unfreeze Pettigrew and get McNair on his feet."

"Yes Master," Malfoy responded, immediately doing as Voldemort instructed lest he withstand the brunt of his anger. "What about the werewolf?" he asked, as Remus whined, shivering in pain.

"Leave him. It's a pity we'll get to miss his demise though...and as for you my dear...have a nice trip," Voldemort laughed wildly, as he spun the time turner.

The last thing Harry saw was Dumbledore coming towards her at a run, and then the myriad flashes of wands, as she screamed, "Professor...heellppp...meee," before she felt her body moving through space and time.

Harry had no way of knowing that Voldemort apparated leaving his Death Eaters to fend for themselves. Malfoy and McNair were able to escape after a brief encounter, but Sirius transformed, leaped on top of Pettigrew, holding him by the throat, to take him prisoner. Dumbledore then bound him to keep him from transforming into a rat and escaping.

"Headmaster, Professor Lupin is injured; he has been hit by some kind of a projectile. Black us talking with him now," Snape informed Dumbledore after he had completed the binding spells, which secured Pettigrew.

Looking over to where the werewolf lay on the ground, he noted that 'Snuffles' had laid down on the ground beside him, making soft whining sounds and barks, as he nudged his friend.

"Severus, how serious is it?"

"I believe he was hit with a bullet from a Muggle hand gun. The wound is in his chest, but the real problem is that it was made of silver."

"Silver! Severus is there an antidote for silver poisoning in a werewolf?"

"None that I know of, I was hoping you knew of something."

"There are some very ancient charms, but as far as I know they haven't been used in generations, and require the use of a healer."

"I've read about them, they are touched on briefly in the History of Magic Class, I believe. The Muggles have a poem based on one of them," Snape replied.

"Will it help if we remove the bullet?" Dumbledore asked with concern.

"It may, but we have no healer, and the one in Hogsmeade is out of town at a seminar. In any event he wouldn't know the charm anyway."

"If the wound isn't too deep I may be able to at least get the bullet out. That will keep more of the poison from entering into him," Dumbledore stated as Sirius transformed and kneeled beside his friend.

"He's definitely been shot, Albus, he has silver poisoning. We need to do something," Sirius said despondently choking back tears.

"I'm going to try and remove the bullet. That should buy us some time. What else did you learn?"

"Voldemort hit Harry twice with the *Cruciatius* Curse, she fought back," he managed proudly.

"But where is she now, Black?" Snape demanded, looking around. "I could have sworn she was here...I heard her scream as we entered the clearing."

"She did," Dumbledore said flatly. "I got here too late to prevent this from happening. I just pray that she'll find it in her heart to forgive me."

"Headmaster, Miss Potter adores you. I see no reason for her to be angry, and even if there is one, she is a sensible young woman, and won't stay angry for long."

"Albus, do you know what's happened to her?" Sirius asked gently, seeing the worried look on the old man's face. "Remus said something about a time turner. Is it true?"

"The Prophecy," the old man groaned, "when time turned back and went awry..."he quoted from memory.

"Headmaster, do you know where he sent her?"

"I believe so...now we'll just have to wait and pray for her safe return," he said, indicating that he would not divulge Harry's whereabouts. "In the meantime we can try to help Remus..."

Harry opened her eyes to the night sky. Trying to sit up, she was hit with a wave of nausea, and her head hurt, making her dizzy. She felt like everything was spinning, and closed her eyes again, wondering where she was. Her last memory had been of Voldemort setting the time turner as he laughed maniacally amid flashes of light.

The ground was cold and she just wanted to go back home to Hogwarts. Maybe she could find someone here who could help her here, wherever here was. Sirius would be frantic with worry, and Dumbledore and Snape were probably furious with her for leaving and going into the forest. 'Oh my God...Remus...he was hit with a silver bullet,' she thought, trying to remember what had happened. Attempting to sit up again, she realized she was lying beside somebody's house, in their garden. Fighting off another wave of nausea and dizziness, she moaned in pain, her limbs refusing to respond. Closing her eyes, she heard a man's voice. There was something familiar about it. She felt she should recognize it, but couldn't place it.

"Excuse me Miss...are you all right?"

"Help me...Voldemort...", she whimpered as she fought down the dizziness and pain. Her voice sounded strange to her ears, "he cursed...me."

"Oh, Merlin!" The man's voice exclaimed as she felt herself being lifted and carried. He was warm, his voice was kind..., and he had said, 'MERLIN'...a wizard! she realized as she fought to remain conscious.

"Where am...I?"

"Godric's Hollow, Miss," the voice answered patiently.

'Why was that name so familiar?' Harry knew she'd heard it before, but her brain wasn't thinking clearly right now. She heard a door open and close, and felt herself being laid down gently. She tried to open her eyes again, but her head hurt and her scar was burning intensely.

"My head...", she moaned aloud.

"Shh...just take it easy. How did you get that scar on your forehead?" he asked soothingly.

"I was...a baby..." Harry stammered trying to open her eyes to see this kind stranger, but the room still wouldn't focus. "My...glasses...I..."

"Easy... They were beside you on the ground. I have them here. You just rest while I call my wife. She's upstairs with the baby."

Harry nodded feebly, "Thank you...for...helping me."

She heard him move around the room, and covered her gently with some kind of throw, before moving away again. A door opened, and she heard his voice from what she supposed was a hallway.

"Lily can you come here? I need your help."

'Lily? Godric's Hollow?' Harry thought in confusion. 'Think Harry...Oh my God!' She must have cried aloud, although she didn't think she had, but she found herself on the floor next to a sofa as the man ran back into the room. Helping her to sit up, he pressed a glass of water to her lips, gently forcing the fluid into her mouth to drink.

"Don't try to move, you're not strong enough."

"James, what is going on? Is everything all right?"

"I found this young woman outside, barely conscious; she said Voldemort put a curse on her."

"Voldemort! James, this may be some kind of trap. He doesn't know where we are."

"I don't think so. She seems too young to be working for him," he remarked doubtfully.

While Harry listened to their exchange, she realized she was still sitting on the floor, her back pressed up against the sofa. The room was dimly lit by a single lamp. She squeezed her eyes shut as another wave of nausea passed through her. She had no idea what to do. She wanted to hug them both...warn them...but somewhere in her memory she heard Dumbledore's voice telling her to interfere in time was absolutely forbidden; but she had interfered. Her and Hermione, three years ago, to save Sirius life, when Minister Fudge was going to have the Dementor do the Kiss of Death. They had helped him to escape. Why had Voldemort sent her here? What had he said, he would be rid of us all...of course, he had sent her here to die...

"Excuse me Miss...James she's barely more than sixteen," her mother said looking over her shoulder at her father.

"I told you she was young."

"Honey, can you stand?" Lily Potter asked gently.

Harry merely shook her head no. Her legs still felt like rubber, and she couldn't talk to them. Not yet, not until she could figure out what to do. If she saved them, would she wake up in Hogwarts, her life different, Sirius never having been sent to Azkaban? Her mouth felt dry...she was thirsty. She felt the tears well up in her eyes, and slowly trickle down her cheeks.

"It's all right, you're safe now, there's no need to cry," Lily Potter told her. Sitting down on the floor beside her, she put her arms around her, stroking her hair.

Harry just cried harder. She hadn't been held by her mother in fifteen years. 'Oh God, help me! I can't let them die!' she screamed in her mind.

"Lily, perhaps we should call Dumbledore. She seems so distraught."

"No. I'm alright...just scared," Harry managed to say. 'Please don't let them look too close at my face,' she worried to herself. "What time is it?" she asked aloud. 'What time did they die?' she wondered, angry that she had never thought to ask. All she knew was that it had been Halloween night.

"It's ten o'clock dear," Lily Potter told her as she heard a baby start to cry, "James, that's Harry, I've got to go."

"O.k. Lily, I'll stay with her," her father said as her mother slowly released her. "Maybe I can find out her name, or where she came from," he whispered to his wife. "Here little lady, you'll be more comfortable on the couch," he told Harry, helping her up and onto the sofa.

"Thank you," she replied feeling suddenly shy. "You said you found my glasses?"

"Yes, they're over on my desk. I'll get them if you like?"

"Please." She watched as he went over to his desk. The lamp caught his face and it was a mirror image of her own...except for the eyes... 'No wonder people look at me funny. I'm glad it's dark over here,' she mused as he retrieved the eyeglasses from his top drawer. She could hear her mother upstairs, talking to...the baby...

"Here you go," he handed her the glasses and waited while she put them on. "You're a witch, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Do you have a name? Your family must be worried."

"I can't remember," Harry lied, wondering what he would say if she told him, her name was Harry.

"Do you remember how you got that scar? You had to have been touched by a terrible curse."

'That's it! Tell him how you got your scar. He's smart, he'll reason it out!' she thought excitedly. "I only know I got it as a baby, the night my parents were murdered."

"Murdered," he questioned, "by whom?"

"Voldemort."

"Are you certain? How old are you?"

"I'm sixteen, why?"

"Voldemort has only been in power these past eleven years," he countered suspiciously.

'Oh..., Dear God, now what?' she asked herself.

"Who are you?"

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you."

"You are working for Voldemort, aren't you?" James Potter said his voice growing angry,

"I..."

"No," Harry said interrupting him, "I told you he murdered my parents."

"Why should I believe you?"

"I'll prove it if you answer a question for me?"

"Very well, what is it?"

"What do you feel is more important, doing what is in your heart, or doing what you know is right?"

"That's a rather odd question to ask a stranger."

"I have my reasons."

"Well...what we want in our hearts is not always what is right. That's why we have laws. Look at Voldemort. He wants power and will go to any means to attain it, but that doesn't make it right."

"You sound like Professor Dumbledore," Harry said with the ghost of a smile.

"You know Albus? Do you go to Hogwarts?"

"I can't answer that, even though my heart tells me I should," Harry explained, getting up unsteadily and walking slowly over to her father's desk. "No, don't get up," she told him as he started to follow her, "I told you I would prove how I got this scar. You were right; I have

been touched by a terrible curse. One that has haunted me for the past fifteen years of my life," Harry told her father as she sat down at his desk, and tilted the lamp so the light shown on her face.

James Potter didn't move. He knew that face. It belonged to the baby upstairs. Harry...his daughter...Slowly, he willed his body to move, and got up from the sofa, crossing the room. He looked down at Harry, removing her glasses. He stood silent; studying her features, until very softly Harry heard the words...

"You have your mother's eyes."

She opened her mouth to speak, but couldn't find the words. All she could do was look up into his mirror image face as the tears rolled down her cheeks. Finally, he pulled away, and brought up a chair to sit beside her.

"How did you come to be here, Harry?"

How odd it sounded in her ears. Her father was sitting here, talking with her. However, she knew she could only say so much.

"Voldemort...when you found me I was recovering from two *Cruciatus* Curses and being sent back through time."

"My poor child," he smiled gently, cupping her chin, "why did Voldemort send you back? Do you know?"

She thought first, choosing her words carefully, "To stop me from fulfilling the Prophecy."

"The Mathias Prophecy? You've seen it?"

"Only recently. Professor Dumbledore allowed me to read it."

"What about some of the predictions?"

"Accurate...I'm here...aren't I father?" How strange to say those words...father. From upstairs she could hear her mother's sweet voice accompanied by peals of baby Harry's laughter. Her laughter. Her father must have read the expression on her face, for he spoke up kindly.

"It hasn't been easy for you, has it?"

"No, not really, although I must admit that being disguised as a boy for sixteen years was different."

Any doubts James Potter may have had were assuaged with that one statement. Only four people knew Harry was actually a girl; himself, Lily, Dumbledore, and Sirius.

"You said your mother and I were murdered by Voldemort. Is your godfather good to you?"

"I don't live with Sirius," she replied, knowing he was making certain of what he believed to be the truth.

"Why not?"

"Re read the Prophecy. Pay close attention to the parts about the dog, the rat, and the wolf," Harry told him as she was distracted by peals of laughter from the baby upstairs. "What is she doing, that I'm laughing so hard?" The question sounded strange in her ears.

"Either tickling you, or trying to teach you a Muggle version of magic."

"Muggles can't do magic," she answered confused.

"Abra Cadabra," he grinned.

"Oh My God..."

"You remember something about how you got that scar, don't you."

"Yes...Father..."

"Shh...it's tonight isn't it, the night of the murder? Voldemort knows where we are, doesn't he?"

Harry couldn't meet her father's eyes. She couldn't bear the thought of losing him again. "Get my mother and go..."

"Harry, you told me you got that scar when your mother and I were killed. He obviously sent you back here to kill you. He will fail tonight, and I won't let him have a second chance by finding you here. You know as well as I do that anyone in this house when he arrives will be killed along with your mother and myself."

"But..." she tried to interrupt.

"No, remember what I told you? What we want isn't always what is right? Your mother and I want you to survive. It's why everyone thinks that baby upstairs is a boy. It's your destiny. You're the one that will stop this evil. You have to go on..." James Potter said taking her hands in his.

Harry shook her head with wonder, "Father in about ten years my best friend Ron Weasley will say almost the same thing to me when we keep Voldemort from securing the Philosopher's Stone."

"You see. I don't want to die. I don't want your mother to die. Most of all little girl I don't want you to die," he said firmly, as their ears were assaulted with another peal of laughter.

"Now listen to me carefully. You can't be here when Voldemort arrives. If you are he will get what he originally failed to do, and that is to kill you," he said tracing the lightning bolt scar on her head. "You can hide back outside in the garden. You know some of what is to happen; after it does, you're to be on left side of the house where I found you. The time shift should recur and you'll be sent home. Do you understand?"

"Yes Sir," Harry responded blinking back the tears in her eyes. Her father was both handsome and brave. Sirius had been right. He would and did die to protect his family.

Some of her thoughts must have shown on her face, for her father stood up and took her into his arms.

"We'll always be with you, Harry, don't ever forget that. Now I want you to go before it's too late! Leave out the back door," he told her decisively, steering her into the hall and pointing her in the right direction.

Harry fled the house, unable to see for the tears. Securing herself behind some yew trees, she waited. She had no idea her father was reviewing the Prophecy, or that when he was finished he wrote two letters. One was addressed to Albus Dumbledore, and the other to her. He made sure that he secured them inside of his shirt so that they would be found. He wanted to send them to Dumbledore by owl, but he wasn't at Hogwarts just now. He was attending some business for the Order, and he worried he wouldn't get them if they fell into the wrong hands. He then sat down to wait, his wand on the desk in front of him.

Harry heard a clock in the distance chime the quarter hour. 'It must be close to eleven by now,' she thought. 'Maybe he's not coming,' she thought in vain, for even as the idea entered her mind, she heard voices. Voices that she recognized!

"Master, I have no love for Potter. You know that, but there is no need to kill him or his family."

"No need, Severus? Potter has been a thorn in my side for some time now. He's a meddling fool. He refused to come into the fold, and Pettigrew was so sure he would, especially after I threatened his family. He's loyal to Dumbledore, and will stop at nothing to thwart my power."

"Master, even if you feel the need to kill Potter, what good will it do to kill his wife and child? They haven't done anything to you," she heard Snape arguing.

"Lily Potter is a Mud Blood; it will please Malfoy if I kill her. He hates Potter, and he hates his wife even more because of her parentage. He has served me well, so I will consider it a reward for him."

"And the child, surely he can't hurt you?"

"That child will one day grow up, and when he does don't you think he'll want to avenge his parents? No, I don't need any loose strings to clean up later."

"Master, can't you show them some mercy? A mother and child? Surely, you can control them. It will make you seem more justified to your followers. They will admire your compassion."

"Bah, compassion and mercy are for the weak, or do I detect some regrets? Remembering your wife and child, Severus? I let you live so that you wouldn't stray again. You haven't gone back to Dumbledore have you?"

"No Master, I remain loyal to you. Don't I tell you everything Dumbledore says?"

"Do you Severus, I wonder? Perhaps you're trying to play your own little game again. Is that why the death of a Mud Blood and her brat bothers you so much? You were probably hoping that the child had been a girl perhaps. Then, she would have been doubly doomed. Do you really think I would let such a child live? I've studied the prophecy. Even more reason to kill the Potters. They may have other offspring," Voldemort laughed cruelly

"But Lord Voldemort, if you spare the mother and child I could be there to make sure they came over to your way of thinking."

"Interesting notion, could it be you like Lily Potter more than you should? No, the Potters will be history before midnight, and those who are trying to thwart me will be taught a lesson."

"Master..."

"*Crucio*," Voldemort yelled the curse, hitting Snape in the stomach. "Go, I don't need your sniveling to spoil my hour of triumph. How dare you try to change my mind? Oh, and Severus..."

"Yes Lord," Snape replied fighting the curse without uttering a sound.

"Don't let me find out that you've been lying to me about your loyalty."

"No, Master, I remain loyal to you," Snape replied as he apparated, and Voldemort headed into the house.

All over, she heard the nightmare she'd had for the past fifteen years. She didn't need to see it. Only this time, when the final flash came, she knew what had happened. She knew baby Harry had picked up her dead mother's wand and tried to say *Abra Cadabra*, just as Voldemort pointed his wand at her. However, the words didn't come out right. Instead, a garbled version of *Avada Kedavra* hit Voldemort like a ton of bricks. It wasn't clear enough to kill him, but it turned him into the creature Harry had originally encountered. It was that creature she saw leave the Potter house as it blew apart. Her mother's love had not only spared her life, it had helped her to learn the words that slowed the onslaught of the Dark Lord, and bought her the time to grow up to face him again.

The clock in the distance began to strike eleven as Harry raced over to where her father had said he had found her. Harry held her breath, as off in the distance she heard the sound of a motorcycle coming towards the house; Sirius was racing towards his destiny and twelve years in Azkaban. It was the last thing she was aware of as she felt herself being pulled forward to what she hoped was home...

"Harry, thank Merlin you're safe!" Sirius voice said as he began to examine her for any sign of injury. "You vanished and we didn't know what happened."

"I'm o.k.," she replied looking at him as if she had never seen him before. How could she ever tell him she had been with her father...had heard his motorcycle? Her reverie was interrupted by a low whine that caught her attention... "Remus, he's been shot with silver!" she exclaimed getting up on wobbly legs, as Sirius steadied her.

"Yes, Child, I was able to remove the bullet, but the poison is still in him. He's dying."

"No, I can save him. I know I can. Snape, get me some Ash bark, NOW!" Harry said so forcefully that Professor Snape didn't wait for Dumbledore's nod, but disappeared into the forest. He was back in a few minutes, watching her closely, with a scowl.

"Hey, Captain," Harry said softly running her hand along the thick fur, "the Princess is one up on the Evil Wizard tonight. Now she's going to make it two. I have to work fast though; the moon is going to set soon. I learned in History of Magic about this old spell. I did a report on it and now I'm glad I did. Nevertheless, I will need to get it done before you change back. It may be painful though, so be good and don't try to bite."

"You can't, it's too dangerous Potter," Snape said grabbing onto her arm as Remus whined in pain.

"Do you know the spell?"

"It doesn't work. You need a healer and it has to be a real one, and even then, it doesn't always work. You're untried and we're not sure if you are a natural healer. You can kill yourself."

"Do you believe in prophecies, Professor?"

"What has one to do with the other?"

"You studied the Mathias Prophecy, did you not?"

"Yes..."

"Then shut up and help me. I'll need you to break the contact. No one knows more about the Dark Arts and Charms, except Dumbledore...I won't risk his health, I'm too pissed off at him," Harry said looking at the Headmaster.

"Harry, you're not going to do dark magic. I forbid it!" Sirius objected sternly. "Remus wouldn't want you to either."

"Sirius, she's going to do a healing counter curse, but it isn't always successful. It can also be dangerous. Because Remus is a werewolf, he is considered cursed with dark magic, the silver is considered pure, which is why it is lethal to him. What Harry wants to do is remove the silver, but it can be dangerous. She has to allow the poison to pass through her and into a magical healing substance, in this case the Ash bark," Dumbledore explained patiently.

"No, I won't risk them both!" Sirius said pacing with anxiety.

"Sirius, I saved more than your life tonight. Let me try and save Remus, you owe me that much," Harry said more calmly than she felt.

Sirius looked over to Dumbledore who nodded his assent, then looked back at Harry, "Harry I..."

"I'll be fine, I promise. I survived a killing curse, remember?" she did not wait for his answer, as time was running out. "Are you ready Professor?"

Snape didn't answer, merely nodded, looking at her with admiration and curiosity. He wondered what had happened when she had vanished, and knew it had to do with the Prophecy. He also knew that according to the same Prophecy she would be able to save Lupin. He held his breath and waited, wondering if the spell would work.

Harry took a deep breath and let it out slowly. She then ran her hands over Remus again. She could feel the energy within herself. Closing her eyes, she was almost immediately bathed in a blue light, which she transmitted into Remus. Then she began to chant a variation on an ancient gypsy rhyme...

HERE IS A MAN WHO IS PURE IN HEART
HE SAID HIS PRAYERS AT NIGHT
YET HE BECOMES A WOLF
WHEN THE WOLFSBANE BLOOMS
AND THE MOON IS FULL AND BRIGHT
POISONED HE CAME TO BE
FROM SOME SILVER
YES, YOU SEE
AS THE MOON SHONE BRIGHT AND CLEAR
AND MENS HEARTS ARE FULL OF FEAR
SO TRANSFER THE SILVER INTO ME
AS WAS DONE LONG PAST
AND FROM ME I'LL GIVE YOU SEE,
THE SILVER TO THIS ASH

As Harry said the simple counter spell, she kept one hand on Remus, the other on the ash bark. The wind blew in the trees and they could see a fine gray line going from Remus, through the blue energy stream and into Harry, who was transferring it into the ash bark. This

procedure went on for about thirty minutes, until the gray stream faded, just as the moon set. Snape then reacted quickly, pulling Harry away from Remus as the ash bark burst into flames, but Harry was unconscious.

She never saw Remus turn back into human form, or heard the anguish in Sirius voice, as they were both carried back to Hogwarts and placed into the hospital wing. She didn't know that Dumbledore had dispatched an owl to Mad Eye Moody informing him that Peter Pettigrew had been captured alive. He was being held at Hogwarts until Moody himself could pick him up for interrogation, to assure that he didn't escape, or that Voldemort's followers attempted to kill him before he could give them any information on the Dark Lords Plans.

PART 9 – HARRY REMEMBERS

Harry awoke about three hours later in the infirmary, confused and disoriented. It was dark, and she had a throbbing headache. Moaning, she tried to sit up, and fell back onto the pillows. Professor Lupin's soft voice spoke from the darkness, "Harry, are you awake?" he asked, moving over to stand beside her bed.

"My head hurts, what happened?"

"You saved my life. Don't you remember?"

"I...I think so..., I feel like I've been hit with a house."

"It's not quite that bad, Child. You did have us worried for awhile though," Dumbledore's quiet voice came from the other side of the bed. "Sirius was so upset I had to put him under a sleeping charm."

"Where is he?"

"He's sleeping on the bed next to me," Professor Lupin explained, "he transformed into 'Snuffles' just before we reached Hogwarts."

"Where's Professor Snape? The last thing I remember is that he grabbed onto me."

"I'm over here, Miss Potter," he said from the bed opposite from where she lay. "You collapsed after doing an old healing charm on Professor Lupin. He was poisoned with a silver bullet."

"Albus, I think you should wake Sirius. He'll be relieved that Harry has regained consciousness," Professor Lupin remarked.

"I agree," Dumbledore told him moving over to where 'Snuffles' lay curled up on the bed beside Professor Lupin's, his tail tucked over his nose. "By Merlin's magic arise refreshed. Wipe away sleep at my behest," Dumbledore muttered with a wave of his wand over the sleeping animagus. The big black dog whined, opening his eyes. "Sirius, Harry's awake." Sirius leaped over the bed to Harry's side, transformed, and sat down beside her on the bed speaking worriedly, "Harry, honey, are you all right?"

"I think so. I have a headache."

"It's the after effect of the healing charm. You passed the poison through your body, transferring it to the Ash bark," Professor Snape apprised her from where he still reclined on the opposite bed.

"Why is it so dark in here, what time is it?"

"It's past two in the morning. The moon set just as you finished the healing charm that saved my life. The wind has changed and I believe it is going to storm. It smells like snow," Remus told her. His heightened wolf senses detected the subtle differences in the air around him, alerting him to change of weather.

"*Illuminos*," Dumbledore said lighting the small torch lamps on the other side of the infirmary, causing Harry to wince as the light hurt her eyes.

"Headmaster...Albus...is Miss Potter awake?" Madame Pomfrey asked from the door of her room off the ward.

"Yes Poppy, she's regained consciousness," Dumbledore informed her with a brief nod, as the nurse came over to where Harry lay in bed.

She smiled thinly as the nurse shown a light in her eyes and took her vital signs. Harry noted that the nurse was dressed in a flannel nightgown covered by her robe and slippers.

"Albus, she'll be fine, but she should stay in the infirmary till at least tomorrow night."

"I agree, she will not be able to do any magic yet anyway, and needs to rest. She has had a severe shock tonight."

Nurse Pomfrey nodded, turning her attention back to Harry, "Miss Potter, at this rate the Headmaster should just give you a permanent bunk up here," she teased her patient gently.

"Sure, and they could put a plaque on it with my name and statistics," Harry joked back listlessly, "then after I graduate you could have it bronzed and sell tickets."

"Harry, there's no reason to be rude to Poppy," Dumbledore warned gently, "she has your best interests at heart."

"I know. I just want to be left alone," she looked over at Sirius, taking his hand, as the memory of his motorcycle returned to haunt her.

"You just try and rest, dear," Poppy said straightening the blankets around her before turning to go back to bed. "If she has any problems, you will wake me Albus?" she questioned the headmaster.

"Of course, Poppy, now try and get some sleep," he replied as she shuffled back towards her room.

"Harry what's wrong?" Sirius asked softly, noting the insecure look in her eyes.

"You don't know, do you?" she questioned attempting to pull herself up in the bed, falling back onto the pillow, as the movement increased her headache, making her dizzy.

"Here, let me help you," Remus adjusted the pillows behind her, enabling her to sit comfortably. "Now tell us what's wrong. What happened before you did the healing spell."

"You don't know either? What about Professor Snape?"

"All we know is that Professor Lupin was able to recall Voldemort had a time turner," Professor Snape answered solemnly.

"You know though, don't you?" she glared at Dumbledore, "how could you put me through that? You could have warned me!"

"Child...Harry...I had hoped the Prophecy was wrong."

"Well it wasn't, and if I recall it also said something about your having a letter for me," she wailed in agitation, her voice rising with anger.

"There were actually two letters, one for each of us," Dumbledore responded calmly, but his eyes reflected the pain in his heart.

"Harry," Sirius interrupted, "what is Albus talking about?"

"He knows where Voldemort sent me with the time turner. He tried to kill me again."

"I know, Child. I'm sorry that I arrived too late to try to prevent it. I could only wait with the others."

"Why didn't you tell them?"

"Because I only know what was in the letter James left to me. I never opened the one addressed to you. I merely held onto it and waited. I was not to give it to you until after tonight," Dumbledore explained sitting down beside her on the bed opposite Sirius. He wanted to comfort her, knowing the anger and confusion she was feeling. He also needed her to forgive him.

"Harry, please tell us what is going on," Sirius insisted worriedly, "it's not like you to be angry with Albus. He's always been there for you."

"I think maybe Professor Dumbledore needs to start with the explanation of what happened."

"I don't know everything, but I'll tell what I know," he replied meeting her eyes. "Harry and I were both left letters from James. They were found tucked inside of his shirt the night he was killed."

"Did Potter have a premonition of his death, Headmaster?"

"No, Professor Snape," Harry interrupted, "he knew he was going to die."

"Harry," Sirius, admonished kindly, "there's no way James could have known... the time turner?"

"Yes, he knew because I told him. Voldemort sent me back in time fifteen years ago tonight, to a little town called..."

"Godric's Hollow," Remus whispered stunned.

"Yes, Voldemort knew my father would find me and take me into his home."

"He wanted to finish what he failed to do fifteen years ago," Snape said in awe.

"Yes, Professor, but as you can see, he failed again. His ego let him miss the opportunity he had to kill me in the forest."

"Harry...honey...were you really with James tonight?" Sirius sighed, his face ashen.

"Sirius...I'm sorry. I didn't mean to get you upset," Harry cried, reaching out to him.

"I'm all right. I was just thinking about what you must have been through."

Child, how long were you there? It was only about five or six minutes you were missing."

"I guess close to an hour. I'm not exactly sure. I was confused at first and in a lot of pain."

"Princess," Remus began, using his pet name for her, "can you tell us what went on while you were there?"

"Child," Dumbledore put his arms around her, "if you don't wish to speak about it we will understand."

"Sirius, Remus, will you both be okay with this?" Both men nodded, Sirius taking her hand in support.

"How about you, Professor Snape?"

"Me? Why would I...? He asked his voice trailing off with understanding.

"Harry, what has Snape got to do with this?" Sirius demanded suspiciously.

"It's okay, Sirius. The professor played a role in my parents' death, but not the way you're thinking."

"Thank you, Miss Potter," he acknowledged, knowing she must be aware of his actions with Voldemort, the memory of which still haunted him, "Go ahead and tell your story."

"When I woke up, I was dizzy and in pain. I was nauseous and my head hurt. It still does."

"It's still hurting because of the curse you removed from Professor Lupin, Child. I'll have Severus give you some of the headache powder he supplies for Poppy."

Harry merely nodded in agreement, as Professor Snape moved to one of the infirmary's medicine cabinets. He removed a small packet and mixed it with some water as she continued her tale. "I was lying on the ground and could barely move, when a man comes along and helps me."

"James?" Remus asked.

"Yes, but I didn't know it then. He asked me what happened and if I was all right. I told him Voldemort cursed me."

"Honey, how did you know this man was even friendly if you didn't know it was James?" Sirius asked concerned about what may have happened if it had been a stranger.

"His voice, it was so kind and gentle. It seemed so familiar...I got no sense of danger," Harry responded, his meaning making her feel uncomfortable.

"I think, Child, your unconscious mind remembered it," Dumbledore said, offering her the warmth and comfort reflected in his blue eyes.

"I kind of thought that myself," Harry answered with a catch in her voice as she looked at Dumbledore sadly.

"Here, Miss Potter," Snape interrupted their exchange, "drink this," he instructed, handing her a glass of pale green liquid.

"What is it?"

"The headache medicine."

"What else is in it?"

"Why don't you see if you can tell me?" Snape asked quizzically.

"Harry, what's going on?" Sirius looked puzzled.

"Snape's trying to slip me a 'Mickey'."

"What!" Remus and Sirius exclaimed in unison.

"Now Harry, Sirius and Severus have been getting along well all evening, at one point they were actually glad to see each other."

"Professor Dumbledore, do you mean to tell me they were actually being nice to one another?"

"Hmm...for the most part," he beamed, "so don't get them started."

"You will fill me in on this little piece of information?" Harry smiled somewhat astonished.

"Tomorrow, Child, now take your headache medicine," Dumbledore instructed, relieved that while she may be upset with him she was not going to shut him out.

"Oh, all right," she pouted, "but I know there is something else in it."

"How do you know, Princess?" Remus asked playfully.

"It's green. The headache powder by itself is yellow."

"So what else did he put in it?" Sirius questioned, eyeing Snape curiously.

"Let's see if Miss Potter can figure it out."

"Do you know, Child?"

"Maybe," she sniffed the potion, taking a small taste, "guess you've run out of arsenic," Harry quipped at Snape.

"It's on order with the Hemlock," he countered deadpanned.

"Let's see..." she thoughtfully took another small sip and smiled, "the headache powder, some chamomile and green tea to relax, and peppermint."

"Is she right, Snape?"

"On the mark, she's quite good, Black, when she wants to be," he explained to Sirius, indicating that Harry could do quite well with Potions if she would take more of an interest.

"Now drink your potion," Snape directed, "you'll feel better."

"Snape's right, Princess, you have been hit with two curses, time displacement, and did a powerful healing charm, all within a few hours. You're going to be very sore in the morning."

"As much as I hate to agree with Snape," Sirius scowled, "he's right, Harry. Drink the potion, it'll help." Sirius flashed his most brilliant smile.

Harry didn't respond, merely did as they all asked lying back on her pillow with her eyes closed for a few minutes.

"Princess," Remus said quietly, "if you would rather finish telling us what happened in the morning..."

"No, I'm awake, just resting," Harry opened her eyes with a sigh, "I need to finish this." Harry looked at Dumbledore, who nodded with understanding. "Where did I leave off?"

"You couldn't place James' voice," Sirius replied soberly.

"Um..., when I told him Voldemort cursed me I knew he was a wizard though, because he called on Merlin."

"So what did he do?" Remus asked.

"I was still dazed and couldn't move, let alone open my eyes, so he just picked me up and carried me inside."

"That's exactly what your father would do," Sirius explained taking her hand again. He could see the lost expression in her green eyes, and his heart ached for her, and his long dead friend.

"Go on, honey."

"He put me down on a sofa. It must have been in a den or office because he had his desk there."

"He had his den off the hall," Sirius confirmed.

"I asked him where I was and he told me Godric's Hollow, but I couldn't remember where I had heard it before."

"Did he ask your name, Child?"

"Not just then. He was more concerned with my state of health. He was particularly interested in my scar."

"What did you tell him?" Remus queried.

"That I got it the night my parents were murdered. He seemed to know I had survived some kind of terrible curse."

"Miss Potter, I don't wish to interrupt, but you and your father bear a remarkable resemblance. Why didn't he recognize you, or at least believe you to be some sort of distant relative?"

"The room only had a small lamp lit on the desk. It was dark and we were in the shadows, he couldn't see me clearly, and I didn't get a good look at him either. Besides, you wouldn't expect your sixteen year old daughter to show up on your doorstep when she was a toddler."

"Points well taken," Snape agreed with a slight nod.

"I was still really confused, but for some reason I realized my glasses were missing. He told me not to worry he had picked them up outside and put them in his desk," Harry smiled weakly. "He was worried though; he put a blanket on me and went to call for help. He told me he would be right back; he was just going to get his wife. She was upstairs with the baby." Harry paused, fighting for control, absently rubbing her scar, as Sirius tightened his grip on her other hand.

"It's all right, Child, just wait until you're ready," Dumbledore counseled.

Harry nodded, sighing again, before continuing, "That's when he called Lily, and when she answered with James, my brain finally clicked into action. I was horrified. Voldemort had said something about giving me exactly what I had wanted, but that I wouldn't have it long though, that he'd finally be rid of me, as he should have been in the first place. Sirius..."

Harry's voice broke, and she started trembling.

"Shh..., I'm here," he comforted taking her into his arms. She put her head on his shoulder crying softly. "Albus, maybe she should stop. This whole thing has been an awful shock, and on top of everything else she healed Remus."

"No! I have to finish," Harry choked, sobbing, looking at Dumbledore for support.

Dumbledore nodded at her, his eyes warm and serious, allowing her to continue.

"All right," Sirius acquiesced, kissing the top of her head, as she composed herself.

"I didn't know what to do. I kept hearing Dumbledore's voice in my mind telling me that changing something in time was absolutely forbidden."

"Harry, when did Albus tell you that?" Sirius asked curiously.

"I told her the night you were being held in the tower, awaiting the Kiss of Death from the Dementor."

"Hermione and I used the time turner to save Buckbeak, Hagrid's Hippogriff, to help you get out the window from the tower and escape."

"So that's how Black got out," Severus remarked looking shrewdly at the Headmaster, one brow arched.

"But Princess, you interfered with time."

"No, Remus, I didn't. Remember when we were coming back from the shrieking shack and you turned into a werewolf? Well, after you ran off the Dementors came. I saw what I thought was my father from across the lake, and he sent a Patronus to rescue us."

"Albus told me something about it, before I left Hogwarts," he answered.

"Well it wasn't my father who I saw. It was me. In the dark...well...I made a mistake."

"Albus, is this true?" Sirius inquired. "I was already unconscious when the Dementors picked me up and never knew exactly what happened."

"Yes, she mistook herself for James, when in fact she was the one who sent the Patronus and stopped the Dementors."

"Yeah, and thanks to a certain Potions Master who very conveniently regained consciousness at the wrong time, Pettigrew was able to escape too," Harry remarked scathingly to Snape.

Suddenly she jerked away from Sirius as the memory of Pettigrew in the woods came back to her. "Pettigrew, I stunned him. Did he escape with Voldemort?" she asked them anxiously.

"No, Child, Sirius transformed and held him down while I bound him both physically and with magic. He's locked in a secure area of the dungeon until Professor Moody arrives in the morning with two other Aurors. Sirius will be going into hiding before then. We need to keep him secure while Moody questions Peter, and I also have to consider the reputation of the school."

"You're leaving?" Harry questioned unhappily.

"Just for a little while, and this time I won't be on the third floor," Sirius replied soothingly, to try to keep her from becoming upset. "It will be safer that way, but Albus will know how to contact me. I would have been gone already, except..."

"He refused to leave until he knew you were all right," Remus cut him off with a wink. "I don't think anything could have gotten him to go while you were unconscious."

"Indeed, Child, please try and understand. Moody may be a member of the Order and knows Sirius is innocent, but the others do not."

"Harry, I'll be back as soon as I possibly can, in the meantime I need you to try and understand how important it is for Moody to question Peter, for the two of us, and in the fight against Voldemort."

"Indeed, Miss Potter, Pettigrew may have valuable information about the Dark Lord's plans."

"I do understand," she pouted, "I'm just not happy about it."

"It won't be for long, I promise," Sirius told her, knowing she was trying to keep up a brave front. "Go on and finish your story."

"Okay," she answered gloomily. "I was all torn up inside after I realized who they were. I wanted to warn them, but I knew I couldn't come right out and tell them anything. I was so upset I fell off the couch."

"You fell off the couch, Miss Potter?" Snape smirked in an effort to distract her from her feelings over Black's having to leave.

"I think I tried to stand up, but my legs still felt like rubber," she defended herself,

"By that time my mother had come in and my father told her what I'd said about Voldemort."

"What was her reaction?" Sirius asked.

"She was suspicious at first, but after seeing how upset and weak I was she believed it. They considered contacting Dumbledore, but I told them I was just scared so they didn't. My mother saw how upset I was, and tried to calm me down. She just sat down on the floor beside me, like we were old friends," Harry remembered unhappily. She didn't tell them her mother had sat stroking her hair. It was a memory she just couldn't share with them. It was too special.

"Go ahead, Child, what happened next?" Dumbledore inquired sensing she was deliberately holding something back.

"I kept trying to remember what time..." Harry choked unable to continue.

"Albus, can't you see she's had enough!"

"Headmaster, I believe Black may be right. Miss Potter should rest for awhile before she continues."

"No!"

"Calm down, Harry, no one will make you stop if you don't want to," Remus defended her.

"We're just concerned because you've suffered a terrible trauma. Now take your time and if you feel you want to stop just tell us."

"I will," she replied. Collecting her emotions, and forming her thoughts, she went on, "I asked what time it was and my mother told me it was ten o'clock." Harry toyed with the blankets, unable to meet their eyes. "That's when the baby started to cry..."

"Child, did you ever see yourself?"

"No...just heard the baby upstairs," Harry could not say her name, and Sirius took her hand again in understanding. "My mother went upstairs and I was left alone again with my father. I asked him for my glasses and he went over to where he had put them in his desk. That's when I got a good look at his face in the lamp light..." Harry squeezed her eyes shut, clenching Sirius hand at the memory. Finally, she looked at Sirius for the solace she knew she would find in his warm brown eyes. "Everybody always told me, but even with photographs I never realized the resemblance was really that marked."

"Miss Potter, with exception of your eyes, it's like seeing your father's ghost."

Harry merely nodded at Professor Snape and continued, "My father asked my name. He said my family would be worried."

"What did you tell him, Princess?" Remus asked using her pet name in an effort to keep her calm. His wolf senses alerted him to her inner turmoil.

"I lied and told him I couldn't remember, and he asked about my scar again. That's when I got an idea. I knew if I told him about how I got my scar he'd figure the rest out."

"Did you tell James that Voldemort gave you the scar?" Sirius gently traced the lightening bolt on her forehead.

"I said that I got it as a baby the night Voldemort murdered my parents, big mistake."

"You were too old for Voldemort to have murdered your parents at that time for you to have been a baby."

"So I found out. My father was immediately suspicious, and accused me of spying. He demanded to know who I was."

"How did you respond, Miss Potter?"

"I told him he wouldn't believe me if I gave him my name. He got angry and insisted I was working with Voldemort."

"If James was angry you could have found yourself in a worse situation," Sirius stated matter of factly.

"I almost was, so I told him I would tell him who I was if he would answer a question for me."

"What did you ask him, Child?"

"I wanted to know what he felt was more important, doing what was in his heart, or doing what he believed was right."

"I believe your father would have said to do what's right. He asked me a similar question the night you were born, after reading the Prophecy," Dumbledore recalled aloud, the memory of James' face looking at his newborn daughter in awe, still fresh in his mind.

"No wonder I got that same answer," Harry pursed her lips, bemused, "I told him he sounded like you."

"What did he say when you said that to him?" Dumbledore asked with interest.

"He asked if I knew you and if I went to Hogwarts."

"Did you tell him, Princess?"

"No, I countered him. I said I couldn't answer his question even though my heart tells me to."

"Touché, Miss Potter. How did your father respond?"

"I didn't give him a chance to answer. My legs were finally working again so I got up and walked over to his desk." Harry held up her hand to keep Sirius from interrupting, as she went on, "I told my father not to get up, that I would prove how I had gotten the scar. I told him he curse I had been hit with had haunted my dreams for the past fifteen years. Then I sat down at his desk and turned the light onto my face."

Sirius let out a deep breath, while Remus whistled at the same time. Dumbledore just nodded knowingly while Snape remained stock still, his eyes glittering in the torch light. Dumbledore finally broke the silence.

"Go on, Child, finish your story. How did your father respond?"

"He just stared in shock at first, and then he finally got up and came over to where I was sitting and took off my glasses. He kept staring at me for a while before..." Harry swallowed hard, ready to cry again, and Sirius moved to put his arms around her in support, "he said I had my mother's eyes."

"Did he say anything else?" Sirius asked soothingly, looking at her in understanding.

"Not right away. We just stared at one another. Finally, he got another chair and sat down beside me at the desk. Then he asked how I had gotten there. He called me Harry...", she faltered, shaking her head, before continuing. "I knew I had to be careful about how much and

what to tell him, so I told him that Voldemort had hit me with two *Cruciatius* curses and sent me back through time."

"What was his reaction, Princess?"

"He was upset and asked if I knew why."

"What did you tell him, Child?"

"That he sent me back to keep me from fulfilling the Prophecy."

"Did he believe you, Miss Potter?"

"Yes, he asked if I had read it and whether it was accurate. I explained that Dumbledore had allowed me to read it very recently, and as far as accuracy...well...I was there, wasn't I? That's when I was distracted by the baby laughing upstairs."

"It upsets you to talk about yourself as a baby, doesn't it, Miss Potter?"

Harry merely glared at Professor Snape and continued her story, "My father sensed my discomfort and remarked that my life apparently had not been easy. He wanted to know if my Godfather was treating me well."

"Ah...a little trap perhaps, to make absolutely certain you were telling the truth?" Snape sneered, as Sirius gave him a dirty look.

Harry ignored their exchange and went on, "I told him I didn't live with Sirius, but that having to be disguised as a boy for sixteen years was rather...uh...different." She smiled slightly at the memory.

"I'm sure, Child, that your remark convinced him of your honesty."

"Did James ask why you didn't live with me?" Sirius asked anxiously.

"Yes...I told him to review the Prophecy and pay close attention to the parts referring to the dog, rat, and wolf. That's when the baby started laughing again..."

"Harry...honey...why is it so hard to think of yourself as a baby?"

"Sirius...I...that baby was happy...I can't ever remember feeling that happy. I have had happy times, but I don't think I ever felt that happy since then. That's why I always have to really concentrate before I do a Patronus," Harry explained looking from Sirius to Remus, who nodded his understanding.

"You were a very happy baby. I know since you used to ride on my back and pull my ears. In fact, I think your first word was 'oggie.'"

"Oggie?"

"Doggie," Sirius grinned, "you would see me and I would transform and play with you. James would hold you on my back and I would give you doggie back rides. Sometimes you would sit on the floor with me and pull my tail or tug on my ears. You used to fall asleep rubbing them."

"Are you kidding?" Harry asked smiling in wonder.

"No, in fact it seems to me you fell asleep in this very same infirmary scratching 'Snuffles' ears a little over a month ago," he said tweaking her chin.

"Snuffles has nice ears for scratching," she replied saucily.

"It's a wonder he's never given you fleas," Snape frowned, and for a brief instant, Harry sensed he was jealous.

"Now Severus..."Dumbledore warned.

"I apologize, Headmaster. Miss Potter, you're looking at me very strangely," Snape observed studying her expression.

"I was just thinking about what you would be if you were an animagus and could transform."

"Unfortunately, it's not a skill I possess, but what do you believe I would become if I did?"

"A snake," Sirius growled eyeing Snape arrogantly.

"Snuffles, behave," Harry admonished. "I think, Professor, you would be a black panther."

"Interesting choice, Miss Potter, why?"

"Your tall, prefer to wear black, and are stealthy and sneaky like a cat."

"It almost makes me want to try," Snape smiled thinly in amusement.

"Don't give him ideas, Harry. If he transforms then the fur really will fly between him and Sirius," Remus laughed as they all relaxed and Harry yawned.

"Harry, why don't you go to sleep and finish the story tomorrow?" Sirius chided gently, noting how tired she was becoming.

"Because you won't be here tomorrow. You'll be in hiding."

"Okay, but I don't like to see you doing this to yourself. You need to rest to get your magic back."

"So maybe I'll stay out of trouble for awhile," she smiled wickedly.

"Go ahead, Child, finish your story. Sirius is right, you do need to rest."

"Well, my father told me that my mother was probably tickling me," she deliberately left out the part about 'Abra Cadabra,' but could feel Dumbledore's eyes burning into her. She sensed he knew there was something she wasn't telling them.

"You were quite ticklish," Sirius said pretending to look innocent before tickling her in the ribs.

"Sirius, stop that!" she giggled uncontrollably, as he smiled wickedly, while she squirmed away from his hands. Catching her breath, she went on, "My father must have read into my expression because he knew he'd be killed tonight. I told him to get my mother and go...but he wouldn't do it."

"Why?" Remus asked sadly.

"Because of me. He knew I got this scar the night he and my mother died. He also knew I was there now, which meant Voldemort was on his way. He had sent me back in time to kill me. My father knew anybody in that house would be killed too."

"What we want in our hearts is not always what's right." Dumbledore quoted sadly. "He knew the right thing to do was to protect you so Voldemort couldn't accomplish his plans. He couldn't leave with you since it would disrupt the time line, and he knew it was forbidden."

"Yes...he believed it was my destiny to stop Voldemort. He made me go hide in the back garden. He told me that after...to be on the left side of the house...the time shift should recur and I'd be sent back. I guess he wrote the letters after he got me out of the house."

"He did, Child. He also reviewed the Prophecy."

"You had one hell of a night, Princess."

"Is that the whole story?" Sirius questioned studying her. "I thought you originally said something about Snape."

"Professor, do you want to finish it?"

"Very well," Severus agreed looking at Dumbledore, who moved over to his side in support.

"Why do I think I'm not going to like what I hear?" Sirius demanded looking over at Remus who just shrugged.

"Professor Snape was there too," Harry informed them, staring balefully at the Potions Master.

'She hates me now,' he thought mournfully, 'but maybe she'll be able to forgive me when she hears the truth. She said she forgave me in London, but that was before she witnessed what happened.' "Miss Potter is correct," he said aloud, "I accompanied Voldemort."

"What!" Remus and Sirius gasped in unison, as Sirius attempted to lunge at Snape. Harry blocked him with her body as Dumbledore placed himself in front of the Potions Master to protect him.

"Sirius...Remus ...let Professor Snape explain, you're acting as badly as he did the night he found us all in the Shrieking Shack!" Harry yelled angrily.

"Honey, how can you defend him? He helped to kill your parents."

"Princess, Sirius is right. Severus was working with Voldemort."

"Was he?" Dumbledore's calm voice came from across the room.

"Headmaster, you knew about this?" Remus asked shocked.

"Suppose you let Severus tell his story," Dumbledore instructed, "Harry already knows most of it, and it's time she knew the rest."

"Thank you, Albus..." Severus began choosing his words carefully. "Miss Potter...Harry...I can only assume you heard our conversation while you were hiding in the garden," Harry nodded as Snape went on undaunted by Sirius unwavering glare, "I didn't know we were going to the Potters, not until we arrived down the street and Voldemort told me. He didn't know I had gone back to spying for Dumbledore, but he was suspicious of my every move. My wife and child...well, they'd only been...gone six months," he stammered. Recovering himself quickly he was aware that Harry was scanning him, and she could sense that he knew it too. A wave of sadness hit Harry as Snape continued his tale.

"I had to try and convince him not to kill them, but he knew James and I didn't like each other. At least that's what we led everyone to believe. While it's true we didn't get along your father was in fact, one of my contacts, if I couldn't get to Albus with information. My hands were tied. I knew your father would defend his family so I argued with the Dark Lord to spare his wife and child. He refused to listen. He had made up his mind to kill all of you. Voldemort intended to kill Lily as a reward for Lucius, since she was a Muggle born. We didn't know Harry was a girl; he just didn't want any loose ends. He believed the boy would come back looking for revenge when he came of age. I begged him to listen and offered to turn Harry to Voldemort's side, when in fact I would have given the child to Dumbledore. Voldemort just laughed and threatened me. He shot me with a *Cruciatus* curse in the stomach before sending me away."

"Harry, is Snape telling the truth?" Sirius asked, still distrustful of the Potions Master.

"Yes, but what I want to know is where you went."

"He came for me, at great risk to himself," Dumbledore answered sadly. "We got help there, but it was too late. The house was destroyed."

"Your father saved my life, but I failed to save his family," Snape stared out the window into the darkness. "I should have stood up to the Dark Lord harder...could have drawn my wand..." he faltered.

Harry felt his pangs of guilt, regret, and remembered fear...Snape afraid? The only thing she had ever thought he was afraid of was Remus during a full moon. She thought quickly realizing she had to assuage his guilt, and keep Sirius from hurting him. She could feel his anger that Snape didn't stay and fight, as her father had, as he would have done.

"Professor...Sirius lives with the guilt of making them use Pettigrew for their secret keeper. He feels he failed them. You have the guilt of feeling you could have stopped Voldemort. You couldn't. He would have killed you in a heartbeat. Professor Lupin's guilt comes from his belief that he failed to trust his instincts that Sirius was innocent and allowed him to go to Azkaban," Harry said as Remus looked at her in wonder. "Our Headmaster feels guilty because he can't change the Prophecy. All he can do is to try and comfort us," Harry looked at Dumbledore sadly. "Finally, I have to live with the knowledge that I did what was right, not what was in my heart...I let my parents die because my father believed in my ability to stop Voldemort so much he was willing to sacrifice himself..." Harry had started to cry uncontrollably, but her words had the desired effect. The four men came over to her and did their best to comfort her.

"Harry, Child, you of all of us should not bear the guilt of your parents death," Dumbledore spoke for them all. "They loved you more than life itself. It's why your father left the letters. He needed both of us to understand. He wanted me to see you were safe and cared for. He wanted you to know he loved you," the old man soothed, his blue eyes reflecting her pain. Reaching into his robe, he pulled out two envelopes. The first had been opened and she could see the envelope was well worn. It was obvious the old man had read its contents many times over the years. This he held. The other was sealed. While it was somewhat faded, it bore her name on the front, Harry James Potter, in a neat even script.

"I want you all to hear what James wrote to me before he died. Then, when Harry is ready she can read hers."

"Professor...I can't..."

"Hush Child, you needn't read it tonight. I'll leave it here with you," he placed the letter on her bedside table, "when you feel up to it you can read it in private."

"All right," she sniffed as Sirius gave her a hug, eyeing the letter curiously.

Dumbledore gently unfolded his letter. Smoothing the crease lines, and adjusting his half moon spectacles, he began to read...

DEAR ALBUS,

TONIGHT I HAD A MOST ENLIGHTENING AND REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE. I MET MY DAUGHTER, HARRY. SHE'S SIXTEEN AND VOLDEMORT SENT HER BACK IN TIME TO TRY TO KILL HER. HE KNOWS WHERE LILY AND I ARE HIDING AND WILL BE HERE SHORTLY. I WASN'T GOING TO TELL LILY, BUT SHE CAME DOWN TO FIND ME REREADING THE MATHIAS PROPHECY. ALBUS, IT'S ALL THERE, IF WE JUST KNEW HOW TO DECIPHER IT. I WANT YOU TO REVIEW IT TOO. THINGS WILL HAPPEN, DREADFUL AND PAINFUL THINGS, BUT WE CAN'T INTERFERE. HARRY'S LIFE MUST PLAY ITSELF OUT THE WAY IT IS MEANT TO. ALBUS, YOU WERE RIGHT, I COULD FEEL HER POWER. IT'S HER DESTINY TO END THIS INFAMY. BY THE TIME YOU GET THIS, LILY AND I WILL BE IN A BETTER PLACE. I'M CHARGING YOU WITH THE SAFEKEEPING OF OUR DAUGHTER. KEEP HER HIDDEN AS WE PLANNED AT HER BIRTH, AND WHEN SHE'S OLD ENOUGH, TEACH HER WHAT SHE'LL NEED TO KNOW. I KNOW YOU WILL, FOR TONIGHT I HAD A GLIMPSE OF THE BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN SHE IS BECOMING. I WILL END THIS NOW, AS I WANT TO LEAVE HER A LETTER FROM MYSELF AND LILY. MY TIME IS GROWING SHORT.

YOUR FRIEND AND ALLY,

JAMES POTTER

When he had finished Dumbledore quietly folded the letter and put it away. He was watching Harry carefully, as were the others. She just sat her expression unreadable.

"Harry..." Dumbledore's voice came from far away, "Child, your parents knew you were special, and so do I. I sensed the power in you the night of your birth, that and your goodness. It's what Voldemort fears the most. Your uncanny ability to rise above adversity. It's like the Phoenix, rising from the ashes," he spoke softly, easing her from Sirius arms. "Sleep now, I'll see that Sirius stays safe while the Aurors question Pettigrew. We can talk tomorrow."

Dumbledore gently charmed her to sleep, and Sirius tucked her in.

"Albus, I'll keep watch on Harry, since I'm confined till tomorrow," Remus told him.

"Sirius, you know what to do?" Dumbledore asked quietly.

"Yes, but I hate to leave her like this."

"She'll be more upset if you're caught, Black. She knows your freedom depends on Pettigrew's confession."

"Odd, Snape, how you and I seem to agree on things when it comes to Harry," Sirius replied speculatively.

"Very well, then I will be in my chambers. We all need to get some rest," Dumbledore said motioning for Sirius and Severus to follow.

Remus put out the torch lamp and settled himself into the bed opposite to Harry's. "Sleep well, Princess. The Captain will see you're safe tonight from the evil wizard..." he whispered softly, his wolfish senses alert to the night around him, as he listened to the rhythm of her quiet breathing.

PART 10 - A RAT IN A TRAP

The first thing Harry saw when she opened her eyes was Ron's worried face looming down at her. It had snowed during the night, as Remus had predicted. Now the sun was out, glinting merrily off the fine white powder, and shining through the long windows lining the infirmary.

"Professor, Harry's awake!"

"You needn't shout, Ron. I'm sure Professor Lupin can see for himself," Hermione's voice came from the opposite side of the bed.

"It's about time you woke up sleepy head," Remus smiled.

Harry stretched lazily, "What time is it?"

"It's past eleven, Harry. You've been out cold," Ron replied.

"Dumbledore put a sleeping charm on me. It was a rough night," she explained gingerly testing her limbs. "How long have you both been here?"

"They showed up right after breakfast," Nurse Pomfrey answered as she came over to Harry's bedside, checking her pulse, "Professor Lupin told me to let them stay."

"Thanks," she grinned at Lupin.

"I thought they would cheer you up. Besides, I don't think either Poppy or I could have kept them out."

"We weren't going anywhere!" Ron nodded adamantly. "What happened last night, Harry? You scared the bejesus out of us."

"Ron's right, Harry, what did happen to you? One minute you were there with Pro...er...'Captain'," Hermione flashed the professor a quick grin, "then you were gone. Snape was really worried."

"Yeah, he was even almost nice to me; told me it wasn't my fault you disappeared."

"Did you tell them anything?" Harry asked eyeing Professor Lupin as she reached over to get her glasses off the nightstand, knocking her father's letter to the floor.

"What's this?" Ron asked snatching the envelope up from the floor where it had fallen by his feet. "You've got a letter. Do you know who sent it?"

"Yes, Ron, she knows who sent the letter," Professor Lupin quietly responded, watching Harry carefully. "I didn't say anything. I didn't believe it was my place to do so," he told her as Ron handed her back the envelope containing her father's letter.

"Harry, what's going on? You look like you've seen a ghost," Hermione's concern showed in her face.

"Harry, that letter, it's not bad news is it? Something hasn't happened to Snu...."

"No, Ron, he's okay. He'll be away for a few days though," she interrupted.

"That's a relief. Hermione thought she saw Mad Eye Moody and two other Aurors arrive early this morning, just as we were coming up."

Harry glanced at Lupin, who nodded before she replied, "She did. I told you it was a rough night, but some good came out of it."

"Harry, you've been talking in circles," Hermione tossed her head, "are you going to tell us what happened or not?"

"Of course I am," she took Hermione's hand giving it a quick squeeze.

"So...what's going on?" Ron demanded his face as red as his hair.

"Not so fast, Mr. Weasley," Madame Pomfrey retorted, "Miss Potter needs to get some food into her. The house elves have sent up this nice brunch on the Headmaster's orders."

"I can't eat all this!" Harry exclaimed looking at the huge platter of food.

"It's not just for you. Professor Lupin could use something too. He's not yet fully recovered from his ordeal either, not to mention your two friends..."

"Seems our Headmaster thinks of everything," Lupin laughed, quelling the nurse's tart response, as she just shook her head and walked away. "Help yourselves," he smiled snatching up a shrimp salad sandwich and a glass of pumpkin juice.

"Like my dad says, Dumbledore never seems to miss a thing," Ron said, digging into the food.

"Professor, what did Nurse Pomfrey mean, when she said you weren't fully recovered...recovered from what?" Hermione inquired as she helped herself to a hard-boiled egg and some salad, looking from Lupin to Harry and back again.

"Should we tell them, or keep them guessing in suspense?"

"I'll leave that up to you," Professor Lupin smiled, pleased to see she was grinning at him mischievously.

"Harry Potter...I know that look..." Hermione stamped her foot, her smile belying her anger.

"Well, I for one want to know what's in that mysterious letter," Ron stated, scooping some potato salad onto his plate, while Hermione shook her head wonderingly. She just couldn't believe he could eat so much and stay so thin.

"That's the one thing you aren't going to learn, not today anyway," Harry explained with a far away look in her eyes, her expression pensive.

"Why all the mystery? Who is the letter from?" Ron asked, puzzled by her response.

"My father, it was written last night, before he died."

"Harry," Hermione said gently, "your father died fifteen years ago."

"For me, last night was fifteen years ago. You see, time was turned back and went awry."

It was the first time Ron had ever stopped eating in mid bite. Hermione's mouth dropped open and Professor Lupin sat back waiting patiently. He knew Harry would tell them as much as she felt they should know.

Finally, Hermione found her voice, "The Prophecy? Harry...what...happened?"

"Well...I'll give you the quick abridged version. Then you can ask some questions, okay?"

"There's a quick version?" Ron was skeptical.

"Ron," Hermione hissed, "let Harry tell us what happened in her own way."

"Don't worry you two; you'll gradually get to know everything. It's just easier this way for now," Harry reassured them. "Last night I followed 'Captain' into the forest, looking for a missing pooch, where I chased off a Dementor, stunned a rat and watched a Death eater wet his pants in fright after 'Captain' cornered him," Harry told them pretending to look innocent, but her green eyes were laughing.

"Now let me see if I have this straight," Hermione thought aloud, lowering her voice to prevent Madam Pomfrey from overhearing. "Snuffles went into the forest because Pettigrew was there, but so were a Dementor and another Death eater. Then you stunned Pettigrew and 'Captain' cornered the other man scaring him so badly he peed in his pants?"

"Very good, Hermione," Lupin praised as if she were in class, his eyes laughing like Harry's.

"How did you get rid of the Dementor?" Ron posed the question, his eyes wide, sandwich still in mid air.

"Patronus spell, before he attacked the pooch, now his usual self, but he had been beaten up by the other Death eater," Harry went on, as Lupin noted she seemed to be enjoying her little bit of intrigue and mischief.

"Whew...no wonder you're giving us the abridged version. You really had one heck of a night," Ron shook his head in amazement, turning back to his sandwich, "then what happened?"

"I sent the pooch for help while 'Captain' and I guarded the stunned rat and McNair."

"McNair! He was the other one?" Ron gasped wide-eyed.

"Yup, for awhile..."

"Harry, what aren't you telling us?" Hermione tilted her head, studying her friend.

Harry looked at the three of them as Lupin winked his consent before she continued, "A certain pale blonde Death eater and evil Wizard showed up before the pooch returned with the Potion Master and Dumbledore."

"What?" Ron choked, spitting his food into a napkin, as Professor Lupin handed him a drink, "Lucius Malfoy and Voldemort?"

"Oh, honey, you're both lucky to be alive," Hermione hugged her friend, looking over at Lupin.

"I wouldn't be," he told her, "if it weren't for Harry. She saved my life."

"No, Professor. We're both alive because of my father. He saved me so I could save you," she responded her eyes becoming moist.

"Harry, I don't understand. How could your father..." Hermione's voice trailed off.

"Do you mean to tell us...Bloody hell, Harry, what went on?"

"When Malfoy and Voldemort arrived Malfoy shot Professor Lupin with a Muggle hand gun. The bullet was silver. The wound itself wasn't lethal, but the silver almost killed him."

"Werewolves are highly allergic to silver. It's poison to them," Hermione recited.

"I know that, Hermione," Ron defended himself. "What did you do Harry?"

"Nothing, not then anyway. Voldemort hit me with the *Cruciatus* curse, twice."

"Twice? And you didn't pass out?" Ron asked awed.

"No, but I wasn't exactly standing either."

"How come he didn't just try and kill you?"

"Harry..." Hermione interrupted, "he used a time turner didn't he? That's why the Prophecy says time turned back..."

"And went awry," Harry finished for her. "Yes, last night I was sent back in time fifteen years to the night my parents died. Dumbledore arrived too late to try and stop it," she didn't tell them that he probably wouldn't have anyway.

"Harry, you were really there? You met your Mum and Dad?" Ron was incredulous, all thoughts of food gone.

"Of course she did!" Hermione turned on him scathingly. "Oh, Harry, it must have been terrible. Wasn't there anything you could do to...to..."

"Change things? No, my father wouldn't let me. He knew about the Prophecy...believed in it. He believed in my ability to stop Voldemort, and got me out of the house so he wouldn't find a teenaged visitor at the Potter's and kill her too."

"How did you get back? Did the time shift recur?"

Yes, after...after it was over. I was sent back and found myself back in the forest. Voldemort, Malfoy, and McNair were gone. 'Snuffles' and Dumbledore caught Pettigrew before he could transform."

"How the hell did you help the Professor?" Ron demanded, sitting on the edge of his seat, totally absorbed in her story.

"I had done some homework in History of magic on old charms and healing, you remember the assignment?" she asked, and seeing them both nod she went on, "I just used one."

"Harry, if you're talking about the one the old Gypsy poem is based on you would need to be a Healer..." Hermione stared at her friend, eyes wide in amazement.

"Bloody hell, Harry, you never told us you were a Healer."

"Ron, it's in the Prophecy. Harry's saving Professor Lupin. I remember from when we all read it. Harry's hidden skill...it's healing."

"Yes, Hermione, Harry is a natural healer. Unskilled, but as you can see, still very capable," Professor Lupin enlightened them, "I owe her my life."

"You don't owe me anything. Friends don't owe friends for doing what's right."

"Harry, you sound like your parents. They would have said the same thing," Remus told her sadly.

"My father was a very brave and remarkable man, and my mother was a sweet and beautiful woman. Voldemort actually did me a favor. He gave me the opportunity to spend time with them, even though it was only for a short time," Harry commented softly.

Ron sat quietly with his friends and teacher for a minute, then looked at Harry. Picking up his glass, he raised it in salute, "To James and Lily Potter. I didn't have the opportunity to know them, but I do know their daughter. She is brave, true, and loyal and I am sure they are proud of her. They loved her so much they saved her life twice in the same night, as a baby and as a teenager. May God bless and keep them for this unselfish act of love."

Harry cried as Hermione hugged her; Professor Lupin raised his glass with Ron, and from the doorway, came the sound of clapping. It was Professor Dumbledore, Professor Snape and Mad Eye Moody, who both nodding in agreement, accompanied him.

"Well said, Mr. Weasley well said indeed!" Dumbledore beamed, moving over to look at Harry. She was pale, but her eyes were clear. He sensed she was worried about Sirius so he gave her a wink and nod to reassure her, before coming to sit down beside her.

"How are you feeling, Child?"

"Better than last night," she replied wiping her eyes.

"Did you sleep well?"

"Professor, you and I both know you put a sleeping charm on me," she responded, tipping her forehead so they were both looking over their glasses at one another. "Now, since I know one of your favorite games is letting people think you're a bit daft, we both know otherwise. So why don't you just tell me what you are up to? I do not think you brought Professor Moody up to the infirmary to make sure I'm recovering; Professor Snape maybe...but not Moody."

This was greeted with a bellow of laughter from Mad-Eye Moody, while Snape wore his usual sardonic expression.

"Potter, you had spunk when I thought you were a boy, and I see you're just as gutsy as ever. You are one spirited little filly. How would you like a crack at Pettigrew?"

"What do you mean? That's your department; you're the Auror, not me."

"Pettigrew's a smart little bastard, and he won't talk. Keeps saying Black's trying to kill him and has been all along."

"That's a lie!" Harry shouted as Ron leaped to his feet, ready to defend her, while Hermione looked worried.

"Damn it girl, I know that, but I would rather not use Snape's Veritaserum to get his confession. He has valuable information we could use. If we can get it without drugging him it will look better."

"So what do you have in mind?" Harry asked intrigued.

"How would you like to question him yourself?"

Harry considered for a moment, and Dumbledore could see her mind working. "Professors, does Pettigrew know I survived Voldemort's plan last night?"

"No, Child, he believes you to be gone."

"Claims he was there because Black lured him into the forest. Says he's been watching you to keep you safe," Moody said casting his blue eye around the room.

"That nasty little rat," Hermione commented, "he's despicable."

"Hermione, it's more like he's a..."

"Fucking murdering bastard. Sorry Harry, but I didn't want you to sound unlady like," Ron grinned red faced, watching Dumbledore for his reaction.

"Mr. Weasley, please refrain from the colorful language in the future," the Headmaster told him firmly, but his eyes were twinkling.

"Yes, Sir."

"Headmaster, may I come along to question Peter? James and Lily were my friends. At one time so was he. I can tell when he is lying."

"Professor Lupin, do you think Peter has a guilty conscience?"

"He may, Harry, Peter was a weak man. That's why he went over to Voldemort."

"He's also afraid of his own shadow," Snape added scornfully, "if he thought Voldemort were displeased with him, he would be petrified."

"Hmm...Professors....Headmaster..."

"Harry," Dumbledore said sternly, but his eyes belied his voice, "you're up to something."

"I'm kind of hatching a plan," she answered slyly. "My father and Sirius would be proud. I think it meets their standards. I'll need some help though, and a lot will depend on Professor Snape."

"Oh, no...I know that look, Harry..." Hermione said throwing up her hands, "Let's hear it."

"Okay. Professor Lupin about how tall was my father?"

"A bit taller than myself, roughly six feet, why?"

"Would you say he was lanky like Ron?"

"Honey, you know he was. What are you up to?"

"Just everybody bear with me for a few minutes. Professor Moody, how do you think Peter will react when he finds out I'm alive?"

"I think it will scare the crap out of him."

"Now, how about if we can stimulate his guilty conscience?"

"The little rat should sing like a canary," Moody watched her with both eyes.

"That's exactly what I'm thinking. Professor Snape, is Pettigrew afraid of you?"

"Miss Potter, Pettigrew has always done his best to avoid me."

"What if he thought you were still working with Voldemort?" Harry inquired. She noted Moody casting his floating blue eye in Snape's direction, studying him suspiciously.

"He'd be terrified," Snape replied coolly, ignoring Moody.

"That's what I thought you'd say," Harry smiled coldly, her green eyes flashing.

"Now, one final question. Professor Snape do you have any Polyjuice Potion?"

"Miss Potter, Polyjuice takes several weeks to prepare. You're aware of that," Snape replied noncommittally.

"Professor Dumbledore," Harry pleaded, "It's important to my whole plan."

"It's all right, Severus, go ahead and answer. Harry is well aware of the rules regarding the use of Polyjuice. I believe they all are," Dumbledore remarked reminding them he was aware of their use of the potion to impersonate Crabbe and Goyle several years earlier.

"I could have some ready by this evening."

"Good, now here's my idea. I go in to talk to Peter with Remus and Professor Snape, but before I do Professor Snape has to subtly let Peter think he's working with Voldemort. That will help to keep him off balance. Make sure he's aware the Dark Lord is particularly displeased over last night's fiasco, but don't let him know I'm alive," Harry directed to Professor Snape, who arched his brow curiously, "he'll find out soon enough."

"I like it so far, Potter," Moody commented casting his eye about suspiciously, "What's the Polyjuice for?"

"Ah...that's the best part. Peter's nervous because he sees I'm still alive, Snape is there making him think Voldemort is not pleased with him, and here's his old friend Remus Lupin throwing questions at him and telling him how he shouldn't have betrayed James, and tried to kill me. So then...we scare the pants off him."

"How Harry?" Ron asked amazed at how her mind could plan these things.

"With the Polyjuice, you're going to wear my invisibility cloak to make yourself look like a ghost. You'll appear and disappear to make Peter believe he's seeing the real thing."

"Whose ghost am I going to be?"

"My father, but you'll need to wear those boots you had on at the Halloween Feast to make yourself taller since you're still shorter than Professor Lupin."

"Miss Potter, you've forgotten one thing," Snape informed her doubtfully. "In order for the Polyjuice to work you need either hair or nail clippings from the person you wish to impersonate. Your father is not here to supply us with either of them."

No, he's not, but as you have all so often pointed out I bear a remarkable resemblance to my father; and I am here."

"Wait a minute, I have some questions," Ron interrupted putting up his hands. "I'm not going to turn into a girl am I?"

"I can adjust the potion so that you won't, Mr. Weasley. What else do you wish to know?" Snape queried amused by his discomfiture.

"What about Harry's eyes? They're different from her father's."

"I think a small charm will help us with that," Dumbledore commented, looking at Harry with admiration.

"How about Ron's voice?" Hermione questioned, "and can I do something too?" she pouted.

"Ron can whisper. We will all pretend we don't see or hear him. That should create quite an effect on Pettigrew. Maybe Professor Dumbledore could possibly hide and levitate him up near the ceiling; he is supposed to be a ghost."

"I'll see what I can do, Child," Dumbledore informed her with a twinkle in his eye.

"Just don't levitate me without warning," Ron remarked nervously. "Do you have an extra pair of glasses, Harry?"

"There is an old pair in my room in the top drawer that I keep for emergencies. Hermione you can bring Crookshanks. This way if Pettigrew somehow manages to transform the cat can go after him."

"She'll also make an additional witness. Miss Granger has a remarkable memory for details."

"Thank you Professor Moody," Hermione smiled, glad she would be able to participate.

"Now, I would like to speak with Harry in private," Dumbledore stated. "Remus have you recovered sufficiently to perform that little chore we spoke of earlier?"

"Absolutely, I'll get started right away. Ron, Hermione, I will walk you both down to Gryffindor Tower. We can pick up Harry's cloak and the glasses on the way," Professor Lupin said amiably. "Harry will need to rest this afternoon anyway."

"Yes Sir. See you later, Harry," Hermione hugged her.

"Professor Lupin is right, Harry. You had a rough night last night and tonight you will have to face Pettigrew. So you try to rest while Hermione helps me practice being a ghost. Maybe Nearly Headless Nick will give me a few pointers," Ron laughed pretending to glide out of the room.

"Potter, you've definitely got your father's mind. Ever thought about law enforcement?" Professor Moody questioned.

"No thanks Professor," Harry smiled.

"You ready, Snape? I think you need to get working on the Polyjuice and rattling Pettigrew's nerves."

"Just as soon as I get a clip from Miss Potter's hair," Snape informed him as he conjured up a scissors and clipped a lock of Harry's unruly hair.

"Professor Snape, Ron won't have my scar will he?"

"I can adjust for that, Miss Potter," Snape assured her.

"I don't suppose you need some help mixing it do you?" Harry asked hopefully, even a potions lesson was better than the afternoon in the infirmary.

"No, Child, you're not going to get up just yet. Severus will do just fine alone," Dumbledore chided gently, as Snape arched his brow in amusement, and then left the infirmary with Moody. "Now, I see you haven't read the letter your father wrote to you."

"I'm not ready. I think I want to wait until Sirius gets back, then we'll all read it together. Will you hold it for me until then?" she pleaded.

"I understand, Child," he replied, placing the letter in his robe. "I'm sorry I had to keep this information from you, but I couldn't go against your father's last wishes," Dumbledore informed her. Taking her into his arms, he hugged her warmly, as she rested her head on his chest.

"I know," Harry answered absently, stroking his long white beard, "it just hurt so much to actually be with them. I felt so powerless. I begged him to take my mother and go, but he wouldn't do it."

"He was a man who believed in his convictions. Your mother was the same way. They were true soul mates."

"Professor..."

"What's troubling you, Child?"

"I know how I stopped Voldemort. I remembered when I was with my father and I could hear my mother playing with...with...me," she forced herself to say the word. "I just don't understand how I could have been able to do it."

"Tell me," he said continuing to comfort her, as she toyed with his beard, twisting it in her fingers.

"My mother...when she fell...she...dropped her ...wand. I...picked it...up. She had been playing with...me...trying to teach me...to...to say...Abra Cadabra," she stammered, "I...it came out wrong...you know how babies talk. It was garbled. I said Avadra Kedavra, just as he...I was a baby...it shouldn't have worked," Harry's green eyes were round and confused, and sought his blue ones for consolation and clarification.

"Harry, you're very powerful. One day, you will be as strong as I am, if not more so. I knew it when you were born. I felt it. Our children can often do things without realizing it. I believe that is what happened that night. Something inside you sensed the danger, and your power was projected through your mother's wand. It worked for you because you were a part of her, an extension of sorts. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I think so," she yawned. She sensed he was slowly charming her again, but she didn't mind. He was warm and comforting. "Professor..."

"Hmm...?"

"Where are my parents buried?"

"They're in a little cemetery not far from here. Would you like me to take you?"

"Can Sirius come?"

"Of course, I don't think he's ever been there, either. He has been unable to go for fear of being caught."

"Then we'll go after he's cleared and I've read the letter," Harry sighed. The sound of his heartbeat and the charm were lulling her off to sleep, but she was fighting him now.

"Child, you need to rest. The healing spell and fighting the *Cruciatus* curses drained your power. It will take time to restore it."

"I know...is Sirius safe?"

"Sh...I can't say where he is, but yes, he's safe. Remus is sending him a message right now. He was still very worried about you when he left," Dumbledore whispered.

She sensed he was telling her the truth, but had one more thing she needed to tell him, "I love you, Professor, as if you were my actual grandfather."

"I love you too, Harry. I could not love you more than if you were my own granddaughter. I'll be here for you as long as you need me," the old man spoke quietly, cradling her in his arms.

"Then plan on living at least another hundred years," she mumbled, giving in to his will.

Harry slept through until dinnertime; when Nurse Pomfrey gently tapped her awake. "Miss Potter, Harry, it's time to get up."

"Oh, I don't want to go to class," she mumbled, her mind still fogged with sleep. Rolling over, she mumbled, "Hermione go away."

"Come on, Harry, it's Poppy," the kindly old nurse laughed. "It's time for dinner."

"Dinner?" Harry questioned opening her eyes in confusion. Groping for her glasses, she sat up, and focused on the nurse, taking in the dinner tray on her overbed table. "Nurse Pomfrey, how long was I asleep?"

"About four hours, dear. Did you sleep well?"

"Like I was charmed," Harry grinned, shaking her head.

"Headmaster's specialty," Nurse Pomfrey laughed, "he prefers it to sleeping potions, and you do need to rest. He knows if you could you would be up and trying to do more than you should right now."

"If I rest much more I'll need Prince Charming to come and wake me with a kiss."

"Could I have the job, Princess?" Remus Lupin spoke from the door of the infirmary.

"Hmm...", she smiled, "interesting notion. Prince Charming disguised as a wolf in sheep's clothing."

"Baa..."

"Nah...the howl is more your style," Harry teased, as he sat down beside her.

"The moon is waning, but if you like I might manage one more howl."

"No, that's quite all right. The one I heard last night in the forest was quite enough."

"Did I really howl? I don't always remember."

"Just before you charged out of the forest towards McNair."

"I'm sorry if I frightened you," Remus apologized concernedly.

"Actually, Professor, at that point it was the greatest sound I ever heard," she beamed.

"Then I'm glad to have been of service. Now, are you ready for tonight?"

"Ah, yes...Operation Pettigrew. Just tell me where and when."

"I'm to bring you down to the dungeon where we'll all meet after you've eaten and refreshed yourself. I believe Hermione brought up some clean clothes for you," he added looking at the nurse.

"They're right here, Professor, along with this envelope from the Creevey boy," she told them indicating the chair beside her desk.

"Oh good," Harry said with delight as she attempted to stand. Her legs gave out and Remus grabbed her to keep her from falling.

"It's all right, Harry," he calmly reassured her, "you're just very weak."

"This is what happens when you expel such a large amount of energy at once," Poppy explained. "If you were a trained Healer you would have known how to adjust your energy levels while working on the Professor. As it is, the spell was also dangerous, and you were already in a weakened condition. You'll be fine in a few days, but NO MAGIC, and plenty of rest," she directed sternly.

"Yes, ma'am," Harry responded contritely as Poppy placed her clothes by the bed and handed her the envelope Colin had left.

"What's in that envelope that you were so anxious to get it?" Remus asked curiously. "A love letter, perhaps?"

"No!" she flushed embarrassed. "Professor you know Colin is a camera bug. It's a picture from the feast," she explained tearing open the envelope excitedly. Smiling at the contents inside, she showed Remus the photograph.

"Is that me?" he asked astonished.

"It sure is," she told him studying the picture. Ron and Hermione were on either side of her. Remus was sitting at her feet, ears pricked, and alert. Like all wizard pictures, the figures were moving. "I told you that you were nice and fluffy."

"You know, I have never really seen what I looked like when I changed. I always wondered."

"Well, I think you're a very handsome Alpha male wolf. I want you to have this picture."

"Harry, I couldn't. You keep it for your album."

"No, Remus, I had it taken for you. The next time someone says you're a monster just because you get a little hairy with the full moon you show them this!" Harry laughed, adamantly placing the picture in his hand.

"A little hairy, huh?"

"Well, have you ever seen what Muggles think a werewolf looks like?"

"Once, in an old Muggle film. Something like a hairy man with a wolf's nose and teeth, with claws on their hands.

"That's about right," Harry rolled her eyes.

"Now, my dear little witch," Lupin said pushing the dinner tray in her direction, "eat your dinner; you barely ate anything at lunch. The Headmaster says you're to finish everything or he won't let you come and we will use the Veritaserum instead."

"He didn't say that! Did he?"

"Ahem..." Dumbledore cleared his voice from the door, looking at her over his half moon spectacles. Harry had not seen him enter, but knew he had ways to appear invisible. "I not only said it, Child, I meant it."

"Oh, all right," she pouted, "but it had better be something good," she told them taking the lid off the plate. "Pizza!" she exclaimed with delight.

"And to go with it..." Remus chuckled, waving his wand, "one cola."

"Now, Child, eat your dinner. If things go well tonight and I see that you're not too exhausted, I think a little trip to Hogsmeade is in order for tomorrow," Dumbledore beamed, his blue eyes twinkling, "you've been studying hard, and deserve a treat."

"I don't suppose I get to go with my friends?"

"No, Harry, but you can meet them in town," Professor Lupin assured her, "it's too dangerous for you to go unaccompanied, especially after what's happened."

"As much as I hate to admit it, you're both right," she said munching on the pizza.

"Then I shall see you both later. Moody and I need to go over the final details to ensure Harry's safety," Dumbledore winked, giving Harry a peck on the cheek, before exiting the infirmary.

"Remus, am I really in that much danger from Pettigrew?"

"Peter is bound right now, but there is always a chance he could get loose," he began, choosing his words carefully. "Remember, he's loyal to Voldemort, and right now your magic isn't working. Now, I'll be armed with my wand, as will Ron and Hermione, just for added safety."

"What about the others?"

"Albus and Moody will have theirs too, and will be in the room with us, but we won't be able to see them. The other two Aurors will be guarding the door. The important thing to remember is that Peter is tricky. He killed thirteen people with a single curse."

"Yeah, and Sirius got blamed for it! If I had my way I'd chain him to the wall and let the Dementors have him, only slowly," Harry remarked bitterly.

"Harry, I've never seen you like this," Remus studied her worriedly, "it's not like you."

"Oh, Remus ...I'm sorry. I think it is just that reality-hit home harder than expected last night. That man downstairs cost me my parents. Then he framed Sirius for the murder. Yesterday he almost got you killed and set a Dementor on Sirius, not to mention handing me over to Voldemort. I just can't understand how he could have been your friend."

"He wasn't always like that, something inside him changed, he's weak and afraid. Voldemort protects him and makes him feel powerful."

"Shouldn't a person's friends make him feel safe? What happened to him?"

"Princess...I doubt even Dumbledore could answer that question," Remus patted her hand sympathetically. "Now finish that pizza before the Headmaster has my head and you don't get to try your plan."

"Yes, Captain," she saluted as he smiled.

Harry and Lupin talked about school while she finished her meal. He was pleased to learn that she was enjoying her advanced tutoring sessions and liked them better than her actual classes. What really surprised him though, was her astute knowledge of various subjects. He discovered that like Hermione, she liked to read, but unlike her friend, she would only read about the specific item of interest, not the entire book. She also liked History, and found it a

shame Professor Binns was so boring. She was glad she had done the report for class that enabled her to save his life.

After she had finished her meal, he excused himself to use the men's room while Nurse Pomfrey helped her into the shower, as she was still very unsteady. Feeling thoroughly refreshed, she dressed in jeans, a sweater, and sneakers, since it was Saturday. Hermione had anticipated for the evening and brought up her hooded Gryffindor robe to go over her clothes. Nurse Pomfrey then helped her to style her hair and add a dash of blush to her cheeks, as she was still rather pale. When they returned to the ward, Remus was waiting patiently.

"Feel better?" he asked cheerfully.

"There's nothing like a nice hot shower to perk you up."

"Just keep an arm around her, Professor. She's still quite unsteady and needs to go slowly," Poppy instructed him.

"All right, Poppy. Come on, Harry, let's see if maybe we can get Peter to talk."

"Sounds good to me!" Harry agreed emphatically, allowing him to place his arm around her waist. As they headed out of the infirmary, she looked up at him before speaking, "Just watch out for students, we look a little too friendly," she warned knowing the gossip that could ensue.

"Don't worry," he laughed, "we're taking a short cut." Leading her down the hall, he went over to one of the hidden panels; opening it, he helped her to enter. "*Lumos*," Remus said as the door swung shut behind them. "Remember this one?"

"I believe it comes out at the end of the hall near Snape's office. It's one of Filch's favorites. Sh...listen..."

"Meeoowww..."

"Mrs. Norris," they laughed in unison.

"Does this mean we'll both get detention?" Harry teased as they moved through the narrow tunnel, descending downwards into the darkness.

"Sorry, Mr. Filch is expecting us. Mrs. Norris is on rat patrol along with Crookshanks."

"Then Peter had better not try and change form, or he could find himself on the menu," she smirked as the glow of the light emanating from Lupin's wand caught the reflection of the cat's eyes.

They walked through the rest of the tunnel in silence until the light caught Filch waiting at the end of the passage with Mrs. Norris. He startled Harry, as she did not expect to see him in the passageway itself, and she jumped. She would have lost her balance if Professor Lupin had not had his arm tightly around her waist. She nodded gratefully as he steadied her, and they approached the dour caretaker.

"Professor, Miss Potter," he nodded in greeting; "The Headmaster and Professor Snape are expecting ya in Snape's office with the others," his gravelly voice instructed them, his features sour.

"Thank you, Mr. Filch," Lupin replied as they exited the tunnel and the caretaker went on his rounds.

"That man gives me the whim whams," Harry commented.

"Whim whams?"

"It's a Muggle expression. It means the creeps."

"He's harmless. He's just angry at the world. You are aware he's a Squib?" he questioned, and seeing Harry nod he went on, "it must be hard on him; his whole family has shut him out. If it weren't for Dumbledore I don't know what he would have done."

"He doesn't have to be so nasty. Your family wasn't exactly all hugs and kisses when you became a werewolf, and you're not like that."

"It's his job to keep snoopy students out of trouble," he told her ignoring the remark about his family. The topic was still painful, and he did not want to go into his personal life with her just now.

"Well, Moony, I'll remember to tell Padfoot to hide the Marauders Map more carefully," she smiled, noticing his discomfort, as they entered Snape's office, and he squeezed her hand in understanding. She had no desire to cause him any further discomfort over his being a werewolf than he already felt.

"Ah, Potter and Lupin have arrived," Moody, barked.

"Sit, Child," Dumbledore directed, "how are you feeling?"

"Wobbly, but manageable," she winked, knowing better than to lie, taking the seat he offered. Hermione was sitting holding Crookshanks, who was purring contentedly on her lap. Ron was at Professor Snape's desk and the other two Aurors were over by the door. Harry didn't know them, and they were introduced to her as Martin Wood, and Tom Clancy. She wondered idly if wood was any relation to Oliver Wood, a former Gryffindor and Quidditch Captain. Oliver had graduated a few years earlier. Professor Snape was busy stirring a glass of dark liquid, resembling ink.

"The Polyjuice is ready, Headmaster."

"Good," Moody answered before Dumbledore could respond. "Potter, Dumbledore and I will follow you and Lupin in. We will be hidden by Albus' charm. Weasley, do you have the invisibility cloak ready?" He inquired brusquely, looking at Ron with his brown eye, while his blue eye watched Snape.

"Yes, Sir," Ron slipped the cloak on halfway, demonstrating his readiness, leaving only his torso and head visible.

"When Potter starts talking about her father you start to play ghost, in the meantime you stay invisible. Miss Granger, you walk in with him behind Potter and Lupin. Make sure the cat stays in Pettigrew's line of vision at all times."

"Yes, Professor Moody."

"Then let's get on with it. I don't think I need to tell you kids that this is a dangerous game, and that Pettigrew can't be trusted. If anything goes wrong, you let the adults handle it. Is that clear?" They all nodded in assent as he swung his blue eye towards each of them. "Snape, give young Weasley the Polyjuice."

"Headmaster?" Snape questioned, looking over at Dumbledore.

"Go ahead, Severus."

"Mr. Weasley," he said handing the liquid to Ron, "if you feel nauseous use the sink over by the last work station."

"One ghost to go," Ron quipped, saluting Harry with a grin. He then chugged the inky liquid and ran for the sink about thirty seconds later.

Professor Dumbledore followed Ron, as Snape looked on amused. Harry wondered if he made sure the Polyjuice was as foul tasting as when they had used it previously, without permission, to ensure no further experimentation. As soon as Ron recovered, Dumbledore performed the charm to his eyes, so they would appear brown instead of green, then spoke quietly, "Harry, brace yourself." He then gently turned Ron to face where they all sat at the table.

Harry immediately stiffened, and Lupin took her hand. "Ron?" she asked stunned, unable to say anything further.

"It's me, sorry for the pun, but you and Professor Lupin look like you've seen a ghost," he remarked with concern.

"We have," she replied simultaneously with Remus, and they smiled uncomfortably at each other.

Professor Snape's expression was passive, but his eyes were glittering wildly in the torch light. He handed Ron a mirror. Harry had the distinct impression Snape was enjoying Professor Lupin's discomfort, but when he glanced at her she thought she detected a flicker of regret.

"Wow, Harry...I've seen pictures of your dad, but this is uncanny," Ron told her studying his reflection. "Are you going to be okay with this?"

"How's your acting?" she asked and they all relaxed.

"Let's get on with it then. Albus, are you ready?" Moody questioned.

"Whenever Harry is."

"Let's go," she smiled, standing slowly.

She hoped he didn't realize how nervous and weak she actually felt, but as they left the room and walked towards the part of the dungeon where Pettigrew was being held prisoner

Dumbledore's soft voice came from behind her.

"I'll stop it if it gets to be too much for you."

Reaching Pettigrew's cell, the Aurors unlocked the door, one standing outside, and the other entering before them. "You have visitors, Pettigrew."

Snape entered first, followed by Professor Lupin and Harry. Harry had made sure to put the hood up on her robe and kept her head down, looking at the floor. Hermione followed Harry in, and she could sense Ron's presence beneath the cloak. She did not see Dumbledore or Moody, as they were hidden by Dumbledore's invisibility charm. Once they were inside the Auror who had been introduced as Tom Clancy closed the door and locked them inside with Pettigrew.

There was a large rectangular table in the room and Snape, Lupin, Harry, and Hermione all took seats around it. Pettigrew was seated on a chair facing them, his hands and feet bound and shackled, with both physical and magical bonds. If he attempted to transform the shackles would shrink with him, preventing him from an easy escape. Snape glared at Pettigrew with an unwavering stare and leaned his chair back on two legs, resting against the wall.

"Good evening, Peter, it's been a while," Lupin stated quietly.

"Remus," he breathed, "you've got to help me," Pettigrew begged, his beady little eyes glittering feverishly, "please believe me, I'm innocent."

"Are you, Peter? You certainly don't act like it."

"Remus, I haven't done anything. I was hiding in the forest to protect Harry. It was the least I could do for James. Remus, you were there when Sirius attacked me...he's mad, Remus. He gave Harry to Lord Voldemort."

"Why would Black give Miss Potter to Lord Voldemort?" Snape questioned without moving, his eyes boring into Peter.

"You know...uh...Voldemort wants her dead, Black, he's in league with him. Sirius Black betrayed her parents. You know that. He wants me dead so I can't testify against him."

"I didn't know you had testified against him in the first place," Lupin persisted, "if I recall correctly Sirius was sent directly to Azkaban without a trial."

"He killed all those people in the street and he tried to kill me. I tried to tell you that three years ago, when he came to try and kill Harry, but you wouldn't listen. Now he's given Lord Voldemort James and Lily's only child. The poor girl," Peter turned his head pretending to wipe a tear on his shoulder, "the Dark Lord has probably killed her by now."

It was the opening Harry was waiting for. She very slowly looked up, dropping the hood from her head, exposing her face in the dim light. Pettigrew blanched.

"Good evening, Peter," she said as if he were an old friend, "as you can see, I'm very much alive." Resting her elbow on the table she calmly placed her chin in her palm, smiling coldly.

"What were you saying about the Dark Lord?"

"He...he had you..." Peter looked desperately at Snape, who glared at him. Peter took it as a warning not to betray Voldemort. "You escaped...sweet child...Sirius Black has failed."

"Actually, what were you doing in the forest last night? I was at a Halloween Feast." Harry wanted to see if he would acknowledge McNair's presence.

"We were protecting you! The Dark Lord was coming to get you!"

"Oh...so you weren't alone and you were guarding me for the Dark Lord."

"Yes...you had to be protected."

"I see...you were guarding me for the Dark Lord just like you guarded my parents."

"Yes, yes...of course," Pettigrew stammered, not realizing she was twisting his words so he would implicate himself.

"So you were their Secret Keeper?"

"Yes...I mean no...it was Sirius Black. Remus you have to believe me, Harry doesn't know what she's talking about, Black has her convinced that he's innocent. Can't you see how he's using her?"

Snape made a subtle shift in position, and Pettigrew jumped, looking at him fearfully.

"Then you didn't betray them fifteen years ago, or try to hand her over to Voldemort last night?"

"No, of course not!"

"Then why did you think he had her?"

"Because he was coming."

"How did you know that?"

"Uh...McNair...he told me..."

"McNair?" Lupin questioned. "You were with a known follower of Voldemort?"

"What! I didn't know..." Peter lied, "he said he worked for the Ministry."

"Lots of people work at the Ministry, that doesn't necessarily make them honest," Snape smiled evilly, glaring at Pettigrew.

"Okay, this man, you said his name was McNair?" Harry asked innocently, "The two of you were guarding me, why?"

"I told you, the Dark Lord was coming. He wanted to kill you."

"Peter, Voldemort has been trying to kill me on and off since I was a baby. Why would he try again last night?"

"McNair, he said it was the night your parents died."

"You know, for someone who professes to have been such a good friend, you would think they would remember my folks died on Halloween."

"I wasn't there."

"You couldn't have been too far away, or Sirius Black couldn't have tracked you down."

"I tracked him down...I found him...if your father were here he would tell you," Pettigrew said licking his lips nervously.

"If my father were here, he'd be very angry," Harry accented each word, and Ron picked up his cue instantly. Harry's back was towards Ron, and she kept talking, pretending to be oblivious to his presence. "You betrayed him and framed Sirius Black for the murder. Last night you let Voldemort send me back in time to try and kill me with them, but my father was too smart for him. He told me you were the Secret Keeper," Harry lied. "It's in the Prophecy." Harry couldn't see Ron, but she could feel his emotions...anger...fear...joy...he was pacing and Dumbledore had levitated him so that he was shaking his head and pointing an accusatory finger at Pettigrew. The torchlights were flickering wildly and Harry could feel Moody enjoying the spectacle. Then she heard a cold rasping whisper...

"Peter, why? You killed me, Peter...Lily and me. You wanted to kill Harry...They blamed Sirius...Peter, the hour of reckoning has arrived..." Crookshanks took that moment to growl and spit, arching his back. Hermione had accidentally leaned on his hind leg, but the effect was perfect. Peter Pettigrew screamed in terror.

"I did it," he confessed. "James, I couldn't help it...The Dark Lord...he said he would give me power...keep me safe...no one would laugh at me anymore. He promised me anything if I gave him Harry..." Pettigrew, still bound, had toppled the chair and was on his knees, attempting to transform. Crookshanks immediately leaped onto his back, digging his claws into him, as Peter screamed in pain trying to throw the cat off. Hermione grabbed Crookshanks just as Snape moved fluidly across the room and righted Pettigrew. "Snape...don't kill me...you know...The Dark Lord's power. Please...Remus...keep Severus away...you don't know...he'll kill me..." Pettigrew gasped, his chest heaving in terror.

Ron had now disappeared back beneath the invisibility cloak. Remus nodded to Snape, who released Pettigrew. Hermione had reseated herself and was stroking Crookshanks to calm him down. Remus had taken Harry's hand beneath the table in a show of support and admiration. "Pettigrew....PETTIGREW!" Harry repeated forcefully, when he didn't answer immediately. "I want a full written confession of every thing you've been involved in from my parents murder and your framing Sirius Black to the events of last night."

"I...can't...Snape..." he said looking at the Potions Master and cringing, "you don't know him..."

"Either I get what I want now, or I will leave you alone in here with him. I also want a list of known supporters of Lord Voldemort. Is that clear?" Harry stated taking advantage of the situation.

"Professor Snape...he'll kill me...he's working for Voldemort..."

"Occasionally. He also works for Dumbledore...and sometimes he works for me. Snape is a Slytherin. He's smart, cunning, and ambitious. He works with whomever will meet his needs to achieve his current goals. In this case it's me."

"But..."

"Listen to me, Pettigrew," Harry glared, taking out a small vial she had secreted in the pocket of her jeans beneath her robe, and placing it on the table. "This bottle contains a very slow acting and painfully lethal poison. You either give me what I want, or I will instruct Professor Snape to force it down your throat," Harry threatened, as she squeezed Lupin's hand beneath the table for support.

"Remus, surely you wouldn't allow..."

"Do as she says and you may live to see Azkaban," Lupin informed him callously as Harry gave his hand another squeeze.

"Your father..."

"My father is dead, and thanks to the likes of you his soul can't rest," Harry spat at Pettigrew, and Ron reappeared on cue. This time he pointed his wand menacingly at Pettigrew.

"Mr. Pettigrew, is something wrong?" Hermione asked innocently. "You keep looking up at the ceiling..."

"The ghost...James...can't you see him?" Lupin stared at the spectre of Ron.

Harry and Lupin looked at each other, and then looked towards Ron before turning back to Pettigrew.

"You're daft."

"Peter, there's no one else here," Lupin placated him; "perhaps you have a guilty conscience."

"I have no patience for his games. He's pretending so he can get off on an insanity plea and go to St. Mungo's instead of Azkaban where he belongs," Harry yelled angrily. "Snape, give him the poison," she said tossing the vial to Snape. He caught it in one hand, and advanced on Pettigrew as Harry continued, "I may not get the confession, but at least I can have the satisfaction of avenging my parents death."

"Nooooo..." He screamed terrified. "Give me a parchment and a quill. I'll tell all I know. Just don't...kill me..." Pettigrew begged, crying, looking from Snape to Lupin.

"Here, Peter, start writing," Remus waved his wand and a parchment and quill magically appeared in front of him. The Auror came over and unbound one of his hands so he could write, and stood directly over him, wand at the ready, to prevent his attempting to escape. Snape sat watching him, playing with the vial of fluid.

Pettigrew wrote frantically for over an hour. He confessed to a variety of crimes, betraying the Potters, and framing Sirius for the murders, posing as Scabbers the rat as an unregistered animagus for twelve years, to watch Harry until Voldemort's return. He also swore to participating in various other crimes including helping Voldemort to return, murdering and torturing Muggles and other Wizards, and attempting to capture Harry for Voldemort on Halloween.

He finally listed the names of Voldemort's current followers. He didn't know them all, only the inner circle, and a few of the new ones he had helped to recruit. Harry recognized some, including Crabbe, Goyle, and Malfoy. One name though, stood out among the rest, and made her take notice. It was Minister Fudge. Pettigrew told them they had deliberately put the Dark Mark on his inner thigh, rather than his arm, to prevent anyone from seeing it, especially his old friend, Dumbledore. His position as head of the Ministry had helped to prevent captives from being questioned by the Aurors. Fudge would have the Dementors perform the 'Kiss of Death' before they could talk. He had believed the same would have been done to him, except Dumbledore and the Order were holding him since he and Fudge were not currently on good terms.

The confession was witnessed by the two Aurors, Dumbledore, Professor Moody, and Professor Snape. Harry, Remus, Hermione, and Ron did not sign. Remus because he felt his testimony may be questioned since he was a werewolf, and Harry and Hermione since they were minors, and Ron was not only a minor, he had played ghost, and was not officially there. Moody and Dumbledore felt it was wise to keep it that way.

Pettigrew had been given a sleeping potion before being apparated with the two Aurors to another secret location within the Order. Pending further investigation, and to prevent Voldemort's allies from finding him, he would be kept hidden to prevent his being killed or having the 'Kiss of Death' applied by the Dementors. They were all seated in Snape's office, and Moody was preparing to leave to meet them, but he wanted to speak with Harry first.

"Potter, you've got talent. When you have finished your training here at Hogwarts, if you would like a job as an Auror, it's yours."

"Thank you, Professor Moody, but I don't think that's what I'd like to do."

"Well, just keep it in mind. Albus," he turned to Dumbledore, "I'll be in touch, and will get things started on the investigations, and clearing Sirius Black."

"You will take the utmost caution," Dumbledore warned.

"Never fear," Moody growled, letting his blue eye rove around the room suspiciously. "I have no desire to spend anymore time locked in that trunk," he snorted. "Thanks to this little lady, I was rescued that time and now she's helped to put us one step ahead of Voldemort. We'll move swiftly on this, but with caution. There are a lot of important people on that list."

"Very well, I will see you at our next meeting of the Order. Should you need me sooner, you know where and how to contact me," Dumbledore said nodding, and Harry had the impression it was not in the usual manner.

"Take care, gentlemen, children," Moody said curtly and then left the castle. He apparated as soon as he was outside of the building as the charms on Hogwarts prevented his doing so from within.

"Ron, Hermione," Dumbledore smiled warmly, "you both did beautifully."

"Thank you, Headmaster," Hermione smiled, exchanging glances with Ron.

"We were happy to help Harry," Ron agreed. "Besides, I've decided to become an actor!"

"Ah...Ron," Harry grinned, "don't let your mum hear you say that. She wants you in the ministry with your father and brother, Percy."

"Not once this scandal breaks."

"Mr. Weasley, it would be prudent not to discuss what's happened here tonight, even amongst each other," Professor Snape warned them.

"I understand, Professors."

"I knew you would," Dumbledore asserted, "as does Hermione," he nodded in her direction, and she didn't miss the warning in his eyes. "Now both of you head up to Gryffindor Tower. We'll see that Harry gets up to her room."

"Yes, Sir," Ron answered for them both, turning to Harry. "We changed your password for you today."

"What is it?"

"Padfoot, Moony, and Prongs," he stated anxiously looking from her to Professor Lupin.
"Hmm...Padfoot, Moony, and Prongs," she shook her head, "never heard of them," she responded as they all laughed.

"Next week you might try Potion Master," Hermione chimed in.

"Miss Granger," Snape eyed her sardonically, "don't press your luck."

"Good night, Hermione. Good night, Ron," Harry smiled, shaking her head.

"Good night, Harry. See you tomorrow," Ron called over his shoulder as Hermione led the way out of the dungeon towards the stairs.

Once they were gone, Dumbledore turned to her, his blue eyes serious. "You made a powerful ally in Moody, Harry. He's impressed with you, always has been."

"Albus is right, Harry," Remus agreed, "It's not easy to impress Mad-Eye Moody."

"I'll keep that in mind," Harry yawned, tiredly. Even though she had been sleeping so much she still felt exhausted, and knew it was from her energy drain as they had told her.

"Child, you did a wonderful thing tonight. You may not realize this, but a lot of lives may be spared thanks to Pettigrew's confession."

"I'm glad. I'm worried about Ron and Hermione's families though. If Voldemort finds out..." she shuddered at the thought of what he would do to them all.

"Don't worry, the Order will see to Hermione's parents safety and I know the Weasleys will be protected. Now, I believe Severus wants a few words with you before you go up to bed," Dumbledore's blue eyes twinkled mischievously.

"Miss Potter, do you know the chance you took telling Pettigrew I was working for you?"

"I actually told him the truth. Severus Snape...free agent. One time Death eater, sometimes a spy, and tonight showing off his many sides," Harry smirked melodramatically. "I knew you'd play along without any problems."

"Like giving him the poison?" Snape arched his brow.

"Absolutely. I knew the coward would freak out when I tossed you that vial."

"Child, it isn't really poison, is it?"

"Harry, you wouldn't..." Remus began, but she cut him off.

"Professor Snape," Harry mimicked him, putting her arms across her chest, "suppose you tell me."

Dumbledore and Lupin both laughed, as Snape slowly opened the vial and sniffed the contents.

"Ambergris, alcohol, water, and a coloring agent," he said matter of factly, "it's your perfume."

"Yup, I slipped it into my pocket after my shower. Hermione sent it up to the infirmary with my clothes. In the end it came in handy," she explained happily.

"Well, Child, I think it's time you went up to bed. Severus will accompany you with us. He will also go with you into Hogsmeade tomorrow." Dumbledore held up his hand at the question in her eyes. "Remus has to do another errand for me, so Severus will accompany you instead."

"Unless of course, Miss Potter prefers to wait and go another time."

"Not a prayer," she shook her head impishly at Snape, "you have a habit of getting out of finishing a shopping trip with me."

"Then, Miss Potter, I suggest you let us accompany you upstairs. You're still very weak and need to rest adequately if you wish to regain your powers any time soon," Snape informed her knowingly, as Remus helped her to stand.

They accompanied her to her room, where she uttered her new password, as Remus grinned. Ron and Hermione had obviously been there as her cloak and extra glasses were lying neatly on the bed. She changed quickly in the bathroom and slipped into bed.

"Good night, Child. Have a good time tomorrow."

"Princess, if I should happen to run across a black dog in my travels, do you want me to relay a message?" Harry's face immediately lit up. Remus knew where Sirius was and might see him.

"Yes, tell him puppy prongs said to behave and get home ASAP, but to watch out for the dog catchers, and that a certain rat has been caught in a trap."

"Puppy Prongs, huh?" Remus smiled. "I like that," he winked, as Dumbledore shook his head. Snape looked impassive, but Harry sensed a pang of what...jealousy sadness...? She wasn't sure due to her tired state.

Remus and Dumbledore departed, but Snape settled himself in the chair by her fire.

"You're on guard duty?"

"For awhile."

"I don't suppose you'll tell me why?"

"We don't believe Voldemort is aware of your survival, but you're in a weakened condition and very vulnerable. The Headmaster doesn't want you left alone. It's a precautionary measure."

"You don't think Malfoy notified his father?"

"No, Draco would not have been aware of Voldemort's plan. His father is not foolish enough to have told him that kind of information."

"I see. I suppose you told Dumbledore that I should not go into Hogsmeade either."

"I did."

"Then we won't. I have homework to catch up on anyway."

"Why the sudden change of heart?"

"I respect your judgment when it comes to Voldemort. While I agree with Dumbledore that it would be safe enough, especially if I don't go alone, why rock the boat?" Harry smiled at him. Raising his left brow, he gave her one of his rare smiles. Lowering the lamps, he quietly spoke, "Good night, Harry."

"Good night, Severus," Harry yawned, curling up and closing her eyes.

Dozing off to sleep, she knew that it would be a few weeks until Sirius was exonerated. Soon though, she would at least have her Godfather permanently in her life. For the first time in a long while her future held the promise of happiness. She still had the rest of the Prophecy to deal with, but nothing much was in it until the spring. By then, she would be healed and ready. Her allies were the people she loved best; Dumbledore, Sirius, Remus, Snape, Ron, and Hermione. With them beside her, she knew she would prevail.