

# **The Mathias Prophecy Book III**

By

Esined

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## ***Privet Drive***

Harry was lying in bed reflecting about the last year at Hogwarts and her first week back with her Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon at their house on Privet drive. They had both been waiting for her when she stepped from the hidden partition which kept platform 9 ¾ blocked from the Muggle world.

It had taken them both a moment to recognize her as she walked towards them, since she no longer was disguised as a boy to hide her from Voldemort. She was wearing a skirt and blouse and her hair had grown down around her shoulders. Her aunt and uncle had known about this deception, Dumbledore having told them when her parents had been killed, and they had adhered to her parents desire to protect her by letting everyone believe she was actually a boy. They had done quite well, and when she was old enough to know that she was in fact female, they had made sure she kept quiet by telling her she would be sent away if she ever said anything to anyone. It was not until she was in her sixth year at Hogwarts that she was told the reason by Professor Dumbledore and her Godfather, Sirius Black. She had suspected they knew about this secret identity, and she had confronted the Headmaster for an explanation.

That was when she had learned about a series of predictions, known as the Mathias Prophecy. These prophecies foretold how a young witch with a Muggle born mother and a Pure Blood wizard father would have various encounters with Lord Voldemort and would ultimately defeat him. It was believed that Harry was this child. Indeed, many of the predictions had already come to pass. Harry's parents, along with Dumbledore, and Sirius, had deliberately deceived the world into believing she was a boy; making certain Voldemort would be unaware that the child who would be his undoing had been born.

Harry had not wanted to return to live with the Dursley's. Sirius had been cleared of her parents' betrayal and subsequent murder, along with the murders of thirteen other people. Her parents other friend had been the real murderer, and Harry had helped to bring him to justice, and clear her godfather. She had wanted to go and live with him, and would do so, by the end of July. In the meantime, she had to stay with Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon. She had been furious and upset with this, and Dumbledore had agreed to make some changes when he found out how they had been treating Harry.

Sirius and Remus had joined her on the Hogwarts express back to London, to make certain that her mother's sister and her husband knew their behavior was now suspect. They had changed out of their robes on the train, put on Muggle outfits, and followed her out into the station, walking behind her. Sirius had worn black jeans with a Harley Davidson t-shirt, the sleeves cut off, and a pair of ankle length black boots. His thick black hair had been pulled back into a neat ponytail. The only thing missing had been his motorcycle. Remus was almost his direct opposite. He was wearing khaki trousers with a neat blue polo shirt and a pair of Nike's. His hair was neatly trimmed and he looked like any other clean cut young man. The two of them created quite a contrast to one another. Her aunt and uncle had been unaware that they too, had come from Platform 9 ¾, or that they were even a pair of wizards. As usual, they were not overly affectionate, and greeted her curtly.

"I see that old fool Dumbledore has told you the truth," Uncle Vernon remarked looking her up and down, "it was a ridiculous idea anyway. Your parents were stupid to listen to such nonsense."

"My parents died trying to protect me, and their deception worked," she replied coldly, remembering how Voldemort had sent her back in time last October, to the night they died. She had watched helplessly while Voldemort had entered the house in Godric's Hollow, and murdered them. "And Professor Dumbledore is not an old fool."

"My sister would be alive today if she hadn't gone to that blasted school of yours, and met Potter," Aunt Petunia hissed. "You should just be grateful we agreed to take you in. All the neighbors believed you were a boy. Heaven knows what those weird people have done to them now. I saw them over there, talking to them. Humph, even Dudley didn't know until we told him when we picked him up from school."

"Really, what did he say?" Harry made no effort to hide the sarcasm in her voice.

"It's none of your business," Uncle Vernon gritted his teeth, "let's just get to the car."

"I don't believe that is a very gracious way for you to greet your niece," Remus pleasant voice said from where he was walking behind them."

"Who the hell do you think you are, butting into our business?" Uncle Vernon demanded turning to face him.

"I happen to be a friend of Harry's and one of her teachers. Her parents were good friends of mine."

"Oh, great it's one of them!" Aunt Petunia whispered to her husband.

"Actually, there are two of us," Sirius grinned evilly. "This is Professor Lupin and I am Professor Sirius Black."

"Sirius Black!" Aunt Petunia gasped, "You were that man who was accused of murdering all those people."

"I wouldn't worry so much, Aunt Petunia," Harry said slyly, "my godfather has been released from prison and cleared of any wrong doing. It was my parents other friend who arranged for their murder. Of course, prison did leave him a bit...well...touchy," she shrugged looking from one to the other. "It's Professor Lupin you really have to worry about. He goes a little crazy from time to time, seems he doesn't like the full moon."

"Sirius Black is your godfather?" Uncle Vernon asked nervously.

"I am. I just want to make sure Harry is being properly looked after while I am away on business. She tells me she has had some problems with bars on her windows?"

"We told that old fool Dumbledore they were simply for added security," Aunt Petunia snapped, looking at the two men nervously, "you can never be too careful."

"I don't consider Professor Dumbledore and old fool. He is actually a genius," Remus looked at Petunia smiling coldly.

"Now about these bars, I assume they were on all the windows of the house, including your son's room?"

"Well...er..." Vernon Dursley began nervously watching Sirius spin his wand.

"Mummy...daddy...what is taking you so long to pick up Harry? I want some ice cream! You said I could get some," Dudley's uneven voice greeted them as they reached the street where the car was parked.

He looked ridiculous in a pair of oversized plaid shorts with a white shirt and a bow tie. Harry had to suppress a giggle. If Dudley had his face painted, he would make an excellent clown.

"Come on Harry, you stupid girl. Mummy told me you were pretending just to make us look foolish. You're nothing more than a little twit with a stupid boy's name!"

"Now son, you mustn't speak to Harry like that..." Vernon Dursley began.

Nevertheless, it was too late. Sirius stopped spinning his wand, and his smile was pasted on, Harry's uncle paled, his voice trailing off.

"Now, Dudley baby, you mustn't upset Harry's friends."

"Friends, what friends mummy? You mean these two stupid gits you were talking with?"

"*Silens mutus*," Sirius glared pointing his wand at Dudley, who immediately had no voice. His mouth was moving with no sound coming out.

Aunt Petunia immediately started to scream, and Uncle Vernon grabbed her, shoving her into the car, trying to keep her quiet. He didn't want a scene in the station.

"Oh my," Remus said casually, "it seems your son has lost his voice."

"He did that!" Uncle Vernon sputtered looking askance at Sirius.

"If you weren't Harry's relatives it would have been a lot worse. You can rest assured that my friend here will be sending me reports on her while I am away," he winked at Harry, as he stuck his thumb towards Remus. "That was just a warning, Vernon. I can call you Vernon, can't I? After all, I am Harry's godfather, so we're almost related," Sirius was grinning broadly at Vernon Dursley's discomfiture. "Now, I expect to hear that she is having a good summer. I'm sure Albus Dumbledore also explained that she would not be with you on weekends and during the day on Wednesday. Oh, and by the way, Dudley will get his voice back in time for breakfast tomorrow."

Vernon Dursley could do nothing but nod. Harry thought he was going to have a stroke since the veins on his neck were bulging and his eyes were popping out of his head. He stared at Sirius in shock, but finally found his voice, sputtering a few words.

"Uh...of course...always did like the child...when did you say you would be back?"

"I will pick her up on July the twenty ninth, in time for her birthday. My friend will be there on Friday of this week to pick her up for the weekend."

"I shall be looking forward to seeing you again," Remus nodded as Sirius assisted Harry into the car. "Good day to you Mr. Dursley."

"Harry, honey you just send word if you need anything," Sirius said meaningfully, and then he and Remus both disappeared in front of the Dursley's after first making sure no one else would notice.

Dudley had cried hysterically all the way back to Privet Drive, and Aunt Petunia kept crooning about her little baby being attacked by those awful men. Harry just pretended not to notice, as her cousin kept mouthing words furiously with no sound. She actually thought it was an improvement over his loud and obnoxious behaviors.

For the rest of the week her aunt and uncle had barely spoken to her, and she was fine with that. Aside from a stiff good morning each day and handing her a plate of food at meals, they avoided her as if she had the plague. Her cousin though, would watch her from a distance and make weird faces. He also kept trying to walk in on her in the bath pretending not to realize she was in the tub. Harry was not allowed to do magic away from Hogwarts, so she decided to get even by baking him some chocolate cupcakes. What she neglected to tell anyone is that she liberally laced some of them with some chocolate flavored laxatives, making sure they were the ones that only Dudley ate. He was up all night in the bathroom, and her aunt was furious, suspecting Harry of putting some kind of a curse on Dudley.

She approached Harry the next morning, "What did you do to my baby boy?"

"Aunt Petunia, you know I can't do magic when I'm not in school," Harry looked at her feigning innocence.

"You put some kind of a curse on him. He can't get out of the bathroom, and he won't eat."

"Maybe he'll lose some weight," Harry knew the remark would land her in trouble, but it was worth it, knowing she had gotten even with Dudley.

"Harry Potter, you go to your room right now, and don't come out until you are called!" Aunt Petunia yelled as she fussed over Dudley, who suddenly jumped up and made a mad dash for the bathroom. "Oh my poor Dudley wudley."

"Yes, Aunt Petunia. I need to write a letter to my godfather anyway," she grinned on her way up the stairs. She really didn't, but enjoyed letting her aunt think she was telling him everything. The look on her aunt's face told her that she was nervous. As she passed the bathroom, she knocked on the door.

"Hey Dudley, this is what happens when you try and watch a witch in the tub. It's a special charm they put on all of us at school to avoid hanky panky," Harry lied, laughing to herself. She knew Dudley could not tell Aunt Petunia or Uncle Vernon without incriminating himself, and it would make him mind his manners.

She did decide to tell Sirius what had happened, knowing he would enjoy the way she had handled the situation without using magic. Reaching her room, she gave Hedwig an owl treat, and spoke quietly to the owl, "I wish I could send you with a letter to Sirius, but it's too dangerous. I will have to send word through Remus. I promise I will bring you with me tomorrow to Professor Snape's. I don't think even he would object to my pet owl. I can't wait to see Snuffles again. She is probably wondering why I haven't been home with her."

Harry had spent the entire day in her room, and her aunt had finally brought her a bowl of vegetable soup for dinner, along with a slice of bread and a glass of milk.

"Your uncle and I want to know what time you expect to be picked up tomorrow, and how they will arrive?"

"I'm not sure Aunt Petunia. I only know they will be here tomorrow evening. I believe it will be Professor Lupin picking me up this week. At least that's what he said at the station. If you'll let me I can send Hedwig with a note to find out," Harry suggested hopefully.

"Absolutely not, you know that you aren't supposed to let that bird out of her cage."

"But she needs the exercise. It will be good for her, and you won't have to hear her screech."

"You just keep that bird quiet, or your uncle will see that she is stuffed and made into a trophy."

"Yes, ma'am," Harry replied as her aunt turned and flounced out of the room.

Now, laying in the bed and reflecting over the first week back with the Dursley's, she was sure the summer would still be miserable, but not quite as bad as usual. She only had four more weeks to go with them, and then she would be going home with Sirius. They would have a month together, before she had to go back to school. Sirius too, would be going back to continue his teaching job, since Dumbledore was still putting in many hours at the Ministry of Magic, and Professor McGonagall, as Deputy Headmistress, had to run the school.

As Harry drifted off to sleep, she smiled to herself, thinking about the various ways Remus could show up. She knew that he would not use floo powder, since the Dursley's had again sealed their electric fireplace, following the fiasco with the Weasleys two years prior. However he showed up, she would be glad to see him...

The dream came slowly, and was very jumbled. Voldemort was talking to that young reporter from the Daily Prophet, Phineas Phibes, who had cornered her in the Leaky Cauldron last Christmas with Professor Snape. He was telling him to garner as much information about Harry and how she was going to spend the summer. He also was asking him to use his status as a reporter to interview the Weasleys. He wanted to know their whereabouts and was particularly interested in Ron. Harry could feel how nervous the young Death Eater was in the presence of his master, and his responses were not to Voldemort's liking.

"Master this will be extremely difficult. I am only a junior reporter. I probably won't be able to interview the Minister of Magic or his family."

"Tell them you are an alumna of Hogwarts. Get that fool Dumbledore to speak with you and have him arrange it. Say you want to do a story on the school, and how Potter and his friends are doing. Let him think you want people to see the real Harry Potter and not the celebrity, you idiot."

"You mean like a human interest story? How everybody had to adjust when they discovered that Potter was actually a girl?"

"Yes...let them think people are concerned for her welfare. Tell them they think she may have psychological problems from the deception."

"I will try master, but what about the Weasley boy? I doubt his father will let me speak to him."

"Then don't ask. Just follow him and tell him it will be a surprise for his family,"

Voldemort sneered angry with the young man's stupidity.

"I will do my best, My Lord," the young reporter bowed.

"See that you do not fail, Phibes. I do not like failure. I take harsh measures with useless wizards," Voldemort smiled coldly, reaching down to pat his pet snake, Nagini. The snake then wound itself around the young man's feet as Voldemort laughed at his fear. "*Crucio!* Let that be a warning not to fail," Voldemort's said quietly, his eyes glowing red, as he enjoyed watching the young man squirm in pain. "The *Cruciatus* curse can be most effective, don't you agree Phibes?"

"Master...please..." he screamed.

Harry jerked awake, her pulse racing, as the scar on her head throbbed in pain. Getting out of bed, she immediately grabbed a quill and some paper from her trunk, and wrote down the dream before she could forget it.

Returning to bed, she laid awake, listening to the crickets and worrying about Ron and his family. She hoped Sirius was safe, and that Dumbledore could keep the Death eaters away from them.

Mr. Dursley arrived home early from the office on Friday. Apparently he did not want to leave Aunt Petunia and Dudley alone knowing that another wizard would be coming to get Harry.

Harry had received a letter in with the morning post from Remus, although it had no stamp on it. She suspected it had come by owl and dropped into the mail slot. Remus had told her he would be there at precisely five o'clock, and that they would all be going out to dinner at the Leaky Cauldron. She was not sure whom he had meant by all, and wondered if she should wear muggle clothes or robes. She finally decided to wear a pair of black jeans and the green blouse Professor Snape had given her, with a pair of tennis sneakers. She put her hair up in a French braid, and put on some makeup, knowing Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia would disapprove.

"What is on your face, young lady?" Her aunt questioned sternly.

"Just some makeup. I don't wear a lot, just some mascara, liner and lip stick."

"You're too young to be wearing makeup," Uncle Vernon said with disapproval,

"Go and wash it off right now."

"I have permission to wear it from my godfather."



"Well, he isn't here right now, and I said to wash it off. You look ridiculous. Only harlots wear makeup."

"Harry the harlot, Harry the harlot," Dudley quipped scoffing at her.

"I am not a harlot, tramp, or whatever other word you want to use and I will not wash off my makeup," Harry gritted her teeth angrily.

"Don't you go talking like that to your uncle, young lady! You will wash your face or I will wash it for you!" Aunt Petunia glared angrily as the doorbell rang and they all jumped.

"I'll get it," Harry remarked moving swiftly over to open the front door. "Remus," she breathed with a sigh of relief, "come on in." Harry quickly moved aside to allow Remus to enter.

He too, was dressed in muggle clothes, and smiled happily at Harry, "You look lovely. Are you all set?"

"Yes, let me just go and get my bag." She led him into the living room where her aunt and uncle were sitting on the sofa.

"Good evening Mr. and Mrs. Dursley," Remus said politely, nodding to her aunt as he extended his hand to Vernon, who shook it grudgingly. "It is nice to see you again. Dudley I trust you have gotten your voice back?"

"Uh...yes, Sir," Dudley replied backing up and fleeing the room so fast he almost knocked Harry down as she returned with her back pack, and Hedwig.

"I hope Professor Snape doesn't mind my bringing Hedwig, but I can't leave her here alone," Harry glanced at her aunt and uncle meaningfully.

"I'm sure he will understand," Remus agreed. "I will have Harry back on Monday morning," Remus explained turning back to the Dursley's. "Professor Dumbledore will be picking her up on Wednesday morning for the day, and she will return by nine in the evening. I hope that will not be inconvenient for you?"

"No, I'm sure that will work out quite well," Vernon Dursley assured him.

"Then we shall be going. I have a car waiting out front. Professor Dumbledore was thoughtful enough to secure us transportation from the Ministry of Magic."

"A car...from the Ministry...?" Vernon Dursley began, as he and Petunia followed them to the door.

"We do use some of the more conventional methods of transportation, Mr. Dursley," Remus grinned, his eyes twinkling. "We didn't want you to feel uncomfortable if we just suddenly appeared in your living room."

"Yes...well... perfectly understandable. We will see you back on Monday, Harry," he said, quickly closing the door behind them.

Remus and Harry were both aware that the Dursley's were watching from the living room window as they got into the car. The car disappeared down the street, and turning the corner, it simply vanished from the Muggle world.

They reached a quiet London street, which appeared to be in a rather affluent section of the city, pulling up in front of a large three-story town home. Remus helped Harry from the car, and they walked up to the front entrance. The door was opened by Professor Dumbledore, who greeted Harry with a hug, his blue eyes twinkling.

"Child, it is good to see you. I trust you haven't been too miserable the past week?"

"Let's just say it hasn't been wine and roses," she smiled warmly.

"We will be meeting the others at the Leaky Cauldron," Dumbledore told her as he took her bag, and she put Hedwig's cage down. "Hello, Hedwig," the old man smiled giving the owl a treat, letting her out of the cage.

"Where is Snuffles?" Harry asked looking around for her pet.

"She is out back, in the garden. Come Child, I know you must be anxious to see her."

"Headmaster, I will see to Harry's things while you take her out to see Snuffles."

"Thank you, Remus, but don't let Dobby know. He might be upset that you did his job."

"Dobby's here too?" Harry asked as Remus disappeared up the stairs with her belongings. Hedwig followed happily behind him swooping up the long staircase.

"Dobby insisted on looking after us both. He said I was his employer and you were his friend. He has sworn to protect you."

"Then I had better buy him some more socks, and maybe a hat," she grinned. Socks were Dobby's favorite clothes.

They had reached a door off what appeared to be a small parlor, and going out into the garden, Snuffles immediately bounded up to them. She was wagging her tail furiously, and Harry had bent down to pet her as the dog planted slurpy wet kisses all over her face.

"I think she missed you," Dumbledore laughed.

"I think we missed each other. Look at how big she's getting, and her coat is so nice and fluffy," Harry laughed happily, pulling a dog treat from her pocket.

"Now how has it been at the Dursley's?"

"Strained, my cousin has become a Peeping Tom while I'm in the bath."

"Did you tell your aunt?"

"No," Harry admitted ruefully, "I didn't think she would believe me."

"It's quite possible she would have."

"I doubt it. My uncle just got finished calling me a harlot for wearing makeup and she ordered me to wash it off. They also didn't say a word to Dudley when he kept mimicking my uncle and calling me a harlot over and over."

"I see, and how did you handle both situations?"

"Muggle style, you know I can't do magic away from school."

"I see the twinkle in your eye, Harry. Tell me what you did."

"What she did when?" Remus asked as he came into the garden.

"Harry has had a few problems with her cousin trying to sneak a peek at her in the bath tub. Her aunt and uncle also seem to disapprove of her wearing makeup."

"So that was what the row was all about when I came to the door."

"You overheard us?"

"Some of it, I didn't want to pry. I figured you would tell us in your own good time."

"How much did you hear?"

"Just your aunt yelling at you to wash your face or she would do it for you."

"That was the makeup argument. My uncle said I looked like a harlot. They don't know about Dudley trying to watch me in the tub."

"From what I've seen of them, they would not believe you anyway. Your aunt believes Dudley is a sweet innocent baby."

"Indeed, and what does she think about Harry?"

"I'm the demon seed from Hell," Harry smiled as they left the garden and returned to the house.

"Now Child, I really don't think it's that bad."

"I know she blames my dad for my mum's death. She told me so. She said if my mum hadn't gone to Hogwarts and met my father she would probably be alive today."

"Painful as it is to admit, she is probably right," Dumbledore informed her gently.

"I don't believe that. My parents chose to stay behind and protect me. They were both very stubborn."

"That must be where you get it from," Remus teased, giving Harry a hug. "So what did you do about Dudley trying to watch you bathe?"

"I baked him some cup cakes," Harry grinned trying to look innocent.

"And what did you put into them?" Snape's sardonic voice came from the door to the parlor.

Harry jumped about ten feet. No matter how hard she tried, she never could get over his moving without a sound, and had not heard him come up the hall.

"Professor Snape, I didn't hear you come in."

"That's because I didn't want you to," He looked at her arching his brow, "now answer my question. What did you put in the cupcakes?"

"What makes you think I put anything in them?"

"You smiled when you said you baked them. It is an old woman's trick to put poison or some other toxic agent into food."

"Now look at this innocent face. Do you three really think I would do something like that to poor Dudley?"

"Yes!" they all chorused.

"Oh, all right. I just laced them with a popular chocolate flavored muggle laxative. Not enough to hurt him mind you, but I'm sure he had a sore butt for days."

"Now explain to me how that will keep him from watching you bathe?" Dumbledore asked pursing his lips.

"I just told him that it was a charm put on the students to keep them from fooling around in school," Harry smiled, her cheeks red.

Dumbledore laughed heartily, as he turned to smile at Harry with a glint in his eye, "I will have to keep that in mind. It is a very useful suggestion to keep the boys in line."

"Albus, I think we should be going. Circe and Phaedra will be waiting for us."

"I agree. Harry, you and Remus will use the floo powder while Severus and I apparate. We will all meet at the Leaky Cauldron," Dumbledore instructed handing them a can of floo powder.

"You ready Princess," Remus asked using her pet name, as he led her over to the hearth.

"So long as you are."

"Then follow me. Albus, we'll see the two of you in a few minutes," Remus said as he stepped into the hearth. "The Leaky Cauldron," he stated, disappearing in a burst of flames.

Harry then followed, and emerged in a few moments right behind him. Dumbledore and Snape were just coming in through the front door and they motioned for Remus and Harry to join them at a table in the back of the room. A slim woman with straight black hair and dark eyes was already seated there, and there was no mistaking the family resemblance to

Professor Snape. Sitting with her was a little girl of perhaps five years old. She was adorable with curly blond hair and big brown eyes. She was playing with a stuffed bunny with big floppy ears. Harry and Remus made their way through the crowded room towards the table Snape had indicated, and Harry could hear the little girl talking loudly to her mother.

"Mummy, look, Uncle Severus is here with Dumbledore!"

"Hush, Phaedra, you shouldn't yell," her mother corrected gently. "Uncle Severus can see us."

"Uncle Severus," she beamed jumping up and running over to him, despite her mother's attempt to stop her, "I missed you."

"I missed you too, little one," Severus Snape told his niece as he scooped her up into his arms. "Have you been being good for mummy?" Snape asked her, looking down at his sister.

"She has talked of nothing else except seeing you and the surprise you have for her for the past week. She keeps begging me to tell her who it is she is going to be meeting."

"Mummy won't tell me," she frowned looking at Snape, who was smiling in amusement. "Do you know Mr. Headmaster Dumbledore?"

"Yes, I do. It is someone very special."

"Remus is Snape actually smiling at his niece, or am I hallucinating?" Harry whispered as they walked across the crowded room.

"He adores Phaedra. Circe and her daughter are his only family, aside from a great uncle."

"I thought Professor Snape's sister was single," Harry said meaningfully.

"She is. Phaedra's father was killed in an accident before she was born. He and Circe were engaged to be married when he died, and then she found out she was pregnant. Don't tell anyone I told you."

"I won't," Harry promised, as they approached the table.

"Mr. Headmaster Dumbledore, please tell me who it is? I promise I will be good when they get here," Phaedra wheedled.

Dumbledore smiled patiently at Phaedra, "You will just have to be patient a few minutes longer, little one."

"Ooohhh...I can't wait. I want to know..."

"Phaedra sit down and behave," Snape told her gently but firmly, "play with Mr. Hoppity Hop while we wait. I want you to be a good girl."

"I will Uncle Severus, I promise."

"Good girl, because our guest has arrived," Snape said calmly as Remus and Harry reached the table.

"Mr. Remus," Phaedra bubbled, "did you bring my surprise? Who is it?"

"Who would you like it to be?" Remus asked since Harry was standing behind him, blocked from Phaedra's view.

"A Princess, or maybe a ballet dancer," Phaedra answered thoughtfully.

"Sorry, Remus often calls me Princess, but I'm not really; and I can't dance ballet," Harry said stepping out from behind Professor Lupin, amused by the child's vivacious personality.

"Hello," she said brightly, "I'm Phaedra Alexis Snape, and you're pretty. What's your name?"

"It's nice to meet you Phaedra Alexis Snape," Harry grinned, "and I'll bet you can't guess my name," Harry told her as she and Remus took a seat at the table.

Professor Snape and his sister were smiling, and everyone was looking amused. They all knew that the little girl would never guess her name, since Harry's bangs were covering her scar.

"Hmm...Is your name Althea? I have a friend in kindergarten and she has dark hair like you and her name is Althea."

"No, my name is not Althea, but it is a pretty name."

"Phaedra, maybe she would like to hear what you and Althea like to do in school. What are your favorite games?" Circe Snape spoke quietly to her daughter, as Tom came over to take their order. He winked at Harry as he had overheard the conversation, and knew not to call her by name.

Phaedra ignored her mother's question when she saw Tom. "Mr. Tom, do you know her name?"

"Sure do, Miss Phaedra, but I'm going to let you try and guess. If you get it right I'll give you a free ice cream for dessert."

"Can I have strawberry?"

"Any flavor you want," Tom grinned. He then took their orders and left the table.

The food appeared on their plates a few minutes later. Harry was having fried chicken, Remus and Snape each had a steak, Dumbledore had pork chops, and Circe had ordered flounder. Little Phaedra had gotten a smaller portion of chicken and some French fries, and they continued their conversation during dinner.

"Phaedra, mummy asked you a question before we ordered our food. Do you think our guest would like to know what you and Althea like to play together?"

"We like to play with our dolls and color, and we play make believe broom tag, cause we can't fly yet. Can you fly?"

"Yes, I fly quite often. I have a Firebolt Lightening Rod broom. But I'm only allowed to fly at school."

"Can you fly as good as Uncle Severus?" Phaedra asked jubilantly, beaming at Professor Snape, who shifted uncomfortably in his seat. "He flies real fast, and he can swoop and dive and everything. He played quidditch this year at Hogwarts with Harry Potter. She's just my favorite person, besides Uncle Severus."

"Why is that?" Harry asked trying to keep a straight face as the others sat smiling in amusement.

"Well, she's famous. I'll bet she's pretty too, but not as pretty as you are. I like to play Harry Potter in school with Alexis. We take turns pretending to be Harry Potter. Our teacher told us all about her in school. She says Harry Potter will be able to stop a really bad wizard. People are so afraid of him that they don't even say his name."

"No, they don't," Harry agreed, "but you should never be afraid to say a name, because it can't hurt you."

"Do you know the bad wizard's name?" Phaedra asked curiously.

"Yes, I do. He actually has two names. His real name is Tom Malvolo Riddle, but he changed it to Lord Voldemort to make people afraid of him," Harry told Phaedra quietly, so as not to be overheard by the other patrons in the Leaky Cauldron.

"Ooohhh...that sounds mean. Did you ever see him?"

"Uh huh," Harry nodded.

"Was he scary, like my teacher says?"

"Phaedra, you will give yourself nightmares," Circe cut in trying to avoid causing Harry an uncomfortable situation. "Maybe our guest would prefer to talk about something nice."

"Okay mummy. Do you go to school?"

"I go to Hogwarts."

"That's where Uncle Severus and Mr. Remus go to work. Mr. Dumbledore is Headmaster. Do you have Uncle Severus as a teacher?" Phaedra looked at Snape adoringly.

Harry looked at Snape, and had all she could do not to start laughing. He was extremely uncomfortable with his niece's display of affection out in public.

"As a matter of fact, I do. Mr. Remus is my teacher too."

"Do you like Uncle Severus? Is he a fun teacher?"

Dumbledore's eyes were twinkling, and Remus was grinning broadly, while Snape shifted uncomfortably in his chair.

"Phaedra, that is not a nice thing to ask our guest," Snape told his niece quietly.

"That's all right, Professor. I don't mind," Harry said looking at Snape mischievously. "Your Uncle Severus is a very good teacher, Phaedra. He teaches a very hard subject."

"He teaches how to mix magic potions!" The little girl smiled with delight. "Can you mix love potions?"

"No, Phaedra, we aren't allowed to mix love potions."

"I want to mix potions, but Uncle Severus won't let me. He says I'm too little. I have to be seven and able to read all the words and then he will teach me."

"Well, your uncle is right. How can you mix something if you can't read what to put in?"

"Hmm...I don't know. But mummy lets me help the house elves to mix things."

"Good practice. First you learn how to mix things, and then you learn what to mix," Harry told her logically, and they could all see her thinking about it.

"I guess so," Phaedra frowned. "Do you like Hogwarts?"

"Very much, I learn how to do all sorts of magic."

"Can you play quidditch?"

"I play quidditch all the time. It's a lot of fun. I'm on my house team."

"Are you in Slytherin? Uncle Severus is head of Slytherin, you know."

"No, Phaedra, I'm in Gryffindor. We are the rival house to Slytherin."

"I know, that's where Harry Potter is! Do you know her?"

"Yes, I know her quite well."

"Is she really brave, like everyone says?"

"I think she cares about the people she loves, and that helps to make her brave."

"Do you think she's pretty?"

"I never really thought about it."

"My teacher says she pretended to be a boy for a long time, but that's silly. How can you pretend to be a boy?"

"It's easy. You just dress like a boy and do everything a boy would do. Harry just got too big to do it any longer."

"Why did she do it?"

"Because of the bad wizard. Her parents knew he would try and hurt her."



"Why did he want to hurt her?"

"He knew she would try to stop him."

"My teacher says she has done all kinds of wonderful things. She even killed a basilisk!"

"Phaedra," Dumbledore looked at her, his blue eyes alight with mischief, "if you ever meet Harry what would you say to her?"

"Excuse me, Miss Phaedra; did you guess her name yet?" Tom asked returning to the table.

"No, is it almost time for dessert?"

"Not just yet, Phaedra," Snape told her, "some of us are still eating dinner."

"Oh, good, I really want some strawberry ice cream."

"I'm sure Uncle Severus will get you the ice cream even if you don't guess her name," Circe remarked to her daughter.

"Will you, Uncle Severus?" She asked hopefully.

"Yes, Phaedra, so long as you continue to behave," Snape assured her, the corners of his lips turned up in a slight smile.

"I will, I'm being good, aren't I everybody?"

"I think you're being very good," Dumbledore smiled warmly. "Tom we'll be ready in a little while," Dumbledore told the innkeeper. Tom nodded and left to wait on another customer. Dumbledore then redirected his attention to Phaedra. "Now, tell us what you would say to Harry Potter."

"I would tell her that she should hurry up and make the bad wizard go away. I would also ask her what the scariest thing she ever had to do was."

"Is there anything else?" Dumbledore coaxed.

"I would want to see if she really has a scar like a lightning bolt. My friend Althea says that she doesn't believe it, cause the healers would have fixed it."

"Phaedra, didn't I tell you that Miss Potter does have the scar on her forehead?" Professor Snape inquired.

"Yes, but Althea says..."

"Well, Althea is wrong. She does have a scar like a lightning bolt," Harry grinned.

"Did you ever see it?"

"Every day," she said trying to give Phaedra a clue as to who she was.

"Really? " She asked her brown eyes wide with excitement.

"Ever time I look in the mirror to comb my hair," Harry laughed, unable to contain her delight with Phaedra.

"But that means.... "You're her!" She gasped kneeling on the chair to reach across the table and pushing Harry's bangs off her forehead. "You do...you do have the scar!"

"Phaedra, sit down, you are being rude to Miss Potter," Circe corrected the little girl.

"I'm sorry, mummy. I didn't mean to jump on her."

"That's quite all right, Phaedra," Harry smiled, "I never thought my scar could cause someone such delight."

"Miss Potter, forgive me for not introducing myself, but Phaedra was having such a good time trying to guess who you were that I didn't want to spoil the surprise for her. I'm Severus' older sister, Circe Snape."

"It's nice to meet you. You have an interesting name. Was everyone in your family named something either Latin or from ancient Rome?"

"I see you know your mythology and languages. Do you know where the name Circe comes from?"

"I believe she was a supposed to be a famous sorceress"

"What's a sorcess?" Phaedra demanded mispronouncing the word.

"No, Little One, Sore cer ess," Dumbledore corrected, breaking the word into syllables so she could say it. "It is another name for witch."

"I know mummy is a witch. So am I." Phaedra shook her head at Dumbledore. "Miss Harry, did you really kill a basilisk?"

"Yes, Phaedra I really killed a basilisk."

"Were you scared?"

"Yes, I was scared."

"Why didn't you just run away?"

"My best friend's sister was in trouble. I couldn't just leave or she would have died," Harry explained as Tom returned to take their dessert orders.

"I heard you guessed who your surprise guest was," Tom laughed, "so you will get a free dessert of strawberry ice cream with two scoops!"

"Hooray, I'm getting two scoops everyone!" Phaedra bounced up and down in her seat, as they all grinned.

Tom quickly took their dessert orders, and they all sat back and relaxed as they ate. Phaedra was quiet while she concentrated on her ice cream, and Harry watched her with interest. She had little experience with young children, and watching Phaedra she wondered what it would have been like if her parents hadn't died, and had other children after her.

She thought of the Weasley's, they all seemed so happy. Would she have been close with her siblings too? A part of her yearned for the comfort and companionship of a brother or sister. Dumbledore must have sensed her thoughts since he put his hand on hers, and gave it a gentle squeeze.

"Phaedra could use a surrogate sister to look up to, and I can't think of a better one than you," he commented softly, his blue eyes serious.

"She's adorable," Harry replied noncommittally.

"Miss Harry, you still didn't tell me when you were scared the most," Phaedra said looking up from her ice cream.

"It was during the Tri Wizard Tournament."

"What's a tournament?"

"It's a kind of contest. This one was between Hogwarts and two other schools. I had to get back something that I valued most."

"That doesn't sound scary."

"How about if you have to do it underwater and only have an hour, or you will loose it forever?"

"What did you have to get back?"

"My best friend, Ron, was being held captive by the Merpeople. If I didn't save

him, he would drown. At least that is what I thought. It was really just a test, and he would have been released."

"But you did save him, didn't you?" Phaedra asked wide-eyed.

"She not only saved him Phaedra, she saved another little girl, and helped to save two other people," Dumbledore beamed proudly.

"Did you win the contest?" Phaedra asked as Harry shifted uncomfortably.

"Yes, Phaedra, Miss Potter won the contest. However, she doesn't like to talk about it," Professor Snape told her noting Harry's discomfort at the memory of Cedric's death at the end of the tournament.

"Why?" She asked innocently.

"Because another student died at the end of the contest, Phaedra," Harry said quietly.

"Miss Harry, I didn't mean to make you sad. Mummy, Uncle Severus, please tell her I didn't mean it."

"She knows, Phaedra," Remus replied as Snape pulled the child onto his lap, cradling her to calm her down. "Maybe she would like to see your bunny. It might make her feel better."

Phaedra picked up the stuffed toy and handed it to Harry.

"His name is Mr.Hoppity Hop. He is nice and warm and keeps me company at night."

"Thank you, Phaedra. I never had a bunny when I was little. I feel better already."

Phaedra smiled happily, "Are you going to stay with us at Uncle Severus' house tonight?"

"Yes, Phaedra, Miss Harry will be coming every weekend and on Wednesday during the day," Remus informed the little girl. "Your uncle will also be taking care of her dog over the summer."

"You have a doggie? My mummy says I can't have one because we live in a partment."

"You mean an apartment." Harry corrected her.

"That's what I said!" Phaedra insisted. "Can I see your doggie?"

"Of course, she is at your uncle's house. So is my pet owl."

"Mummy has an owl. His name is Jupiter. Mummy says he's a barn owl."

"I have a snowy owl and her name is Hedwig"

"Jupiter bites, does Hedwig?"

"Sometimes she will nip my finger when she's mad at me."

"Jupiter bit my finger once and I got all bloody. Uncle Severus cleaned it and put a potion on it and it was all better in a few minutes," she proudly announced, hugging Professor Snape.

"Phaedra have you finished your ice cream? If so, we should be getting on home. It is almost your bedtime," Professor Snape said affectionately.

"Mummy please can I stay up with Miss Harry? Please?"

"We'll see dear," Circe told her patiently.

"Uncle Severus, please can I stay up with Miss Harry?"

"It's up to your mother. If you behave she may let you stay up for a little while longer."

"Phaedra, we will all be going out tomorrow. If you're really good maybe Headmaster Dumbledore will tell you where," Remus told the little girl as they stood up to leave.

"Miss Harry do you know where we're going?"

"No, so be good so we can find out," Harry chuckled curiously.

"I promise Miss Harry, I'll be real good," Phaedra said taking her mother's hand.

"Circe would you like me to take Phaedra?" Snape inquired, "Or are you traveling with floo powder?"

"Can I go with Miss Harry?"

"No, Phaedra. Miss Harry is using floo powder and she is not used to traveling the system. She's been known to come out of the wrong grate," Dumbledore smiled, his blue eyes twinkling. "Would you like to apparate with me?"

"Can I?" She asked awed.

"Of course, Little One," the old man beamed taking her in his arms, and Harry felt a pang of jealousy.

"Come on, Princess, let's get back. I'm sure Phaedra would like to help you feed Snuffles," Remus steered Harry back towards the hearth. "Snape town home," he threw the floo powder and disappeared into the system.

Harry then followed and re-emerged in the parlor to find Dumbledore already there with Remus and Phaedra. Snape and Circe entered from the hall a moment later.

"Miss Harry, can I see your doggie now?"

"Of course, Phaedra. Professor, Snuffles needs to be fed, where are you keeping her dog food?"

"I believe Dobby has probably fed her for you. He wanted to help with her, so I put him in charge of seeing that she has food and water," Snape replied as he rang for the house elf, and Dobby appeared.

"Harry Potter, welcome, welcome!" Dobby bounced over to her happily.

"Thank you Dobby. Has Snuffles been fed?"

"Yes, Miss Harry. Dobby has taken good care of Harry Potter's dog. Two cups of dry food and one can daily. Dobby also makes sure she gets plenty of water. She has been staying with Professor Snape at night. Do you want her in with you?"

"Yes, Dobby," Harry smiled at Snape who shrugged and arched his brow.

"Dobby would you bring us a pot of tea and some milk for Miss Phaedra."

"Dobby will see to it, Sir. Tea for the adults and milk for Miss Phaedra," Dobby repeated and disappeared with a snap of his fingers, and a wink at Harry. A moment later, the tea tray appeared along with two glasses of milk and some cookies and cakes.

"How come there are two milks?" Phaedra asked puzzled.

"One is for Miss Harry, Little One," Dumbledore explained patting Phaedra on the head.

"Come on Phaedra, lets go and see Snuffles. She likes company. She's really still a puppy."

"Snuffles is a funny name. I like it."

"Maybe Remus would like to come too?" Harry asked looking at the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher.

"Of course, Princess. I would enjoy being in the company of two such lovely young women."

Remus sensed that Harry needed to talk to him, while Dumbledore and Snape both looked at her curiously. The trio headed off into the garden as Snape and Dumbledore sat back while Circe poured the tea.

"Albus, she's lovely. I half expected a monster for all the times Severus would complain to me about Harry Potter. I wondered why he suddenly changed his tune over the past year."

"Circe, Severus never really disliked Harry. In the beginning, when he believed her to be a boy, he found it easier to make her dislike him so he could keep an eye on her. That way any of Voldemort's supporters would not become suspicious. There was a time during her first year when Harry actually believed Severus was the one trying to steal the Philosopher's stone. Now that Severus has realized she is actually the witch from the Mathias Prophecy, it has given him a renewed hope that the Dark Lord can be defeated," Dumbledore studied Snape who was sitting straight and stiff with a scowl on his face.

"Now little brother, I know that look," Circe reprimanded him in a motherly fashion, "you know Albus is telling the truth. I can also see you are becoming quite fond of her. Just be careful, she is still underage, and you are quite a bit older than she is."

"Circe, I am well aware of Harry Potter's youth. I am old enough to be her father. I have no desire to start another relationship. Voldemort took that part of me away a long time ago. I am merely concerned for her well-being. Her youth is both a hindrance to Voldemort and a help."

"What makes you say that, Severus?" Dumbledore queried.

"Her youth makes her brave enough to challenge him, but it also makes her reckless. She doesn't fully recognize his power as of yet, and while she fears him, she will not back down."

"It is her loyalty and affection for the people she cares about, Severus, which will help her to win. Voldemort can't understand that. He will leave his Deathaters to fight and disappear. She will stand with her supporters until the end. She puts others before herself. Something Voldemort has never done."

"Albus do you really believe in the Mathias Prophecy? I know that Chandra Mathias made some startling predictions about you too," Circe remarked with awe. Even when she had been in Hogwarts herself, and he had just been a teacher, she had admired him, and could feel his power. She was getting a similar feeling about Harry.

"Chandra Mathias was never wrong. So far, everything she stated about Harry has happened. Nevertheless, Severus is right; her youth does make her vulnerable. She needs to be trained to protect herself and I fear we are running out of time," Dumbledore stated worriedly as he set his teacup down at the sound of the garden door opening.

Snuffles bounded in and ran directly over to him, and he pet her affectionately. She then sniffed Circe, as Phaedra laughed with pleasure. Snuffles then went over to Snape who made her sit, before giving her a dog treat from his pocket. Phaedra then climbed onto her uncle's lap and contented herself with her milk and cookies. Harry too, helped herself, and sat back to relax as Remus poured himself some tea.

"Uncle Severus could you get a doggie and we could keep it here?"

"No, Phaedra. I am away from home at school most of the year, and you are in Cornwall."

"I'll tell you what, Phaedra, how about if you share Snuffles with me. She comes to Hogwarts with me, so your uncle and I can send you pictures and reports about how she is. Then, when we're not at Hogwarts you can come to visit her."

"Could I mummy?" Phaedra begged.

"I think it could be arranged," her mother smiled taking the little girl into her arms. "Now I think it's time you went to bed. It's past eight o'clock and we have a busy day tomorrow."

"Where are we going?"

"Little One, we are going to the zoo. If you are a very good girl, maybe Miss Harry will talk to the snakes for you if there aren't too many Muggles around," Dumbledore said looking at Harry with a twinkle in his blue eyes.

"Will you, Miss Harry? Please?"

"If there aren't a lot of people there I will talk to the snakes provided you go up to bed and go right to sleep."

"I will, I promise," Phaedra yawned, taking her mother's hand and following her out of the room to get ready for bed.

"Headmaster, Harry needs to speak with us. She said her scar was hurting last night," Remus informed them quietly.

"Child, are you all right?"

"Yes, I'm fine, but I had a dream last night. I wrote it down for you so I wouldn't forget." Harry took a piece of paper out of her pocket and handed it to Dumbledore.

"Professor Snape, that reporter, Phineas Phibes was in it. He was talking to Voldemort about me and the Weasley's."

"Harry, this is very important," Snape looked grave, "do you feel like it was a warning, or just a regular dream?"

"I've had dreams like this before, and they seem to be accurate. It's like the time Voldemort knew when I scanned you the night you found out I was a girl. You remember, it was when Professor Dumbledore realized I was empathic?"

Snape nodded and exchanged glances with Dumbledore, "I told you that I suspected Phibes was a Death eater, this may just confirm it."

"Possibly," Dumbledore replied as he unfolded the paper and read Harry's dream. "Harry, you said these dreams are similar to the time Voldemort knew you were empathically linked with Professor Snape. Do you feel that you are linking with him empathically while you are asleep?"

"I don't know. It's more as if I'm in the room watching. Like I can see through his eyes."

"Princess, do you get the feeling he is aware of you?"

"No, not at all. If he were, he would let me know it, of that I am certain."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Remus, he wouldn't discuss his plans in front of me. He is usually planning my demise or at least an attempt on someone close to me. I think if it were a trap or a ploy I would be able to feel it. I usually block his emotions because they are so intense with hate and anger, but I am still aware of them. I can feel the darkness in his soul, much like I can feel the wolf in you," Harry explained referring to the fact that Professor Lupin was a werewolf.

"Miss Potter, Harry, are you sure you have no telepathic ability?"

"Professor Snape, I'm sure I don't. I think this has more to do with my scar. Voldemort and I are linked somehow. He said it himself the night Malfoy attacked you. He knew I was there in the room, despite my cloak. He claimed he could sense my presence. He also felt me when I scanned you that time."

"Hmm... Dumbledore sat back thinking, his eyes closed. They all sat quietly while he contemplated the situation, and Harry wondered if he weren't asleep. "Harry has this ever happened while you were awake?"

"No Sir, only at night while I sleep. Unless you count the time in divination, but I really think I fell asleep. I don't believe I went into an actual trance."

"I believe that this happens because you are relaxed and your mind is clear. Have you ever felt like Lord Voldemort was in touch with you?"

"No, Headmaster, no wait! It happened once, my first year at Hogwarts. It only just occurred to me, but that night, after I had been sorted into Gryffindor, after telling the sorting hat not to put me into Slytherin. I had a weird dream that Professor Quirrell's turban was talking to me. It said that I had to transfer into Slytherin immediately, that it was my destiny. I just suddenly realized, but it had to have been Voldemort talking to me from inside the turban," Harry remarked worriedly, "do you think that when I have these dreams and he is talking with his Death eaters he is aware of me?"



"No, Child, I don't. I think you are able to find him because of that scar. He is correct when he says you are linked, I have told you that myself. The only thing that will break the link is when one of you dies. It is one of the reasons you are such a threat to him. That scar is like a divining rod, instead of water it points to Voldemort. I think that first time at Hogwarts he was able to contact you simply because you were in such close proximity. He has a powerful mind, you know."

"That is an interesting theory, Albus, but why can't she just go and look for him?" Remus contemplated the notion but was ready to dismiss it.

"It will only work when she is asleep because her brain wave pattern changes and must be similar enough to Voldemort's that she actually is seeing through his eyes."

"Then maybe we can find out what he is up to. How about a sleeping potion to help her relax and we could monitor her dreams."

"No, Remus, I have something else in mind. Harry, how would you feel about hypnosis?" Dumbledore asked looking at her over his half moon spectacles.

"Hypnosis? I've never really thought about it. Does it really work?"

"If it is done properly, yes. Would you be willing to let Severus hypnotize you?"

"I don't know, can I think about it? It rather reminds me of a form of the *Imperious* curse. I've heard stories about people being hypnotized to act like chickens or do things they didn't want to do."

"Child that is a myth, you can't be made to do anything against your will while hypnotized, like you can under the Imperious Curse."

"Just the same, I would prefer to think about it."

Dumbledore noted that Harry was uncomfortable with the idea.

"Of, course Child, no one wants to push you to do something that will distress you. Just remember if you agree to it, you will not be asleep, merely in a state of intense relaxation. Severus will bring you out of the trance immediately if there is any sign of trouble."

"I'll remember. Now if nobody minds. I'm tired. It has been a long day and because of the dream, I didn't sleep well last night. I'd like to get some rest."

"Of course, Child," Dumbledore kissed her on the forehead.

"I'll show you to your room, Miss Potter," Snape rose from the chair by the fire.

"I won't be going with you tomorrow, Princess. Do you want me to give Padfoot any messages?"

Harry grinned at Remus, "Tell him all about my week with the Dursley's. Remind him he will owe me big-time by the time of my birthday for this. Let him know about the dream too. It concerns him and the Weasleys. I know Dumbledore will tell you all about it anyway once

"I'm safely tucked away," she smiled wickedly at the Headmaster, who met her gaze with one of his own.

"Good night, Harry," Remus Lupin said amused, "have fun tomorrow."

"Good night, Remus," Harry responded following Professor Snape from the room.

He led her up a curved wooden staircase with beautifully carved spindles and newel posts and down a long hall to a room overlooking the garden. Snuffles had accompanied them, and Harry noted there was a dog bed set up in the corner of the room for her. A canopy bed stood in the middle of the room, and her clothes had been put away in the dresser by the house elves. A small bath stood off to one side, so she didn't have to share. She smiled with pleasure, and Snape was pleased that she liked the room.

"I see the room is to your liking, Miss Potter."

"It's very pretty, and please call me Harry."

"You might try calling me Severus. I believe I gave you permission to do so several months ago so long as we were not in school."

"You did, Severus. I'm just used to calling you Professor Snape. I have visions of myself forgetting and calling you by your given name in class. God I would be doing detention for my whole seventh year," Harry groaned with a look of mock agony.

"I think you are more than capable of remembering not to call me Severus in class," Snape smiled amused.

"You absolutely glow when you smile. I told you to do it more often. I would love for Ron to see you now," she smirked, "he would go into a state of shock."

"Then he will just have to content himself with believing me to be a tyrant. He gets quite flustered when I catch him off guard."

"And you just love doing it to him too."

"He needs to be more alert to his surroundings, especially since you and he are so close."

"I worry about him, more so now after what happened with Hermione and Voldemort," she replied thinking about how Hermione had betrayed her while under an *Imperious* curse from Lord Voldemort. This had resulted in Hermione's suspension from Hogwarts for two months, due to her jeopardizing the safety of the students.

"He and his family are being given as much protection as possible."

"I know, Sirius is one of the people helping to keep them safe," Harry could not keep a trace of bitterness from creeping into her voice.

"He has a debt to repay, and he is doing it for you. The Weasley's are the family you were denied, and he knows that."

"I just hope nothing happens to him."

"Black is a smart wizard even if he is impulsive. He survived Azkaban for twelve years. His ability as an animagus will also be an asset should there be any trouble."

"I know all that...it's just...never mind," Harry said sitting down on the bed and studying her hands.

Professor Snape gently tilted her chin up and looked her in the eye, "you're still angry with him."

"I suppose I am. I just feel that he could have stayed to protect me instead. He owes a debt to the Weasley's for helping him, but maybe he owes a bigger one to me. I don't know, maybe I'm just being selfish. Just when I think something good is within my reach..." Harry looked away again, unable to hide her pain. "You know, Ron complains that his family is poor, but he doesn't know how rich he really is. I think I would trade all the money in my vault at Gringott's to have a loving family like that."

"Miss Potter...Harry...one day when this is all behind you, I'm sure you will have that which has so far eluded you. Perhaps it is better right now that you don't have a close family. Voldemort would only try to get to you through them. Believe me...I know..." Snape's voice trailed off, and a far away look came into his eyes. Harry could sense his pain.

"Professor...er...Severus...I'm sorry. I didn't mean to dredge up painful memories. I'm just tired and it's making me morose. I know Sirius really cares about me."

Snape recovered himself quickly, "Good night then, Harry. My room is across the hall and Lupin and Dumbledore are sharing a room two doors down on the right. Should your scar hurt during the night do not hesitate to wake us."

"I suppose if I don't you'll never let me hear the end of it?"

"You're right, I won't. Black may be on a mission for the Order, but so am I."

"Then I shall make sure I bang on your door first. It wouldn't be right to wake Dumbledore too soon. At his age he deserves a good nights rest."

"I shall be looking forward to it. I don't sleep most of the time anyway."

"So I've noticed," she grinned remembering all the nights she had encountered him up at school.

"Good night, Harry. I shall see you at breakfast if not sooner."

"Good night, Severus."

Snape just arched his brow, and left the room without a sound. Harry was tired, but decided to soak in the tub before going to bed. She found some scented bath oils and poured them into the tub, settling herself into the steamy water. Her body immediately began to relax, and she was amazed to realize how tense she had actually been. Twenty minutes later, she climbed out of the bath and put on her nightgown. The heady scent of the garden wafted in through the

open window. The bed was extremely comfortable, and she fell asleep to the chirping of the crickets down below in the garden, with no dreams of Voldemort to disturb her.

## ***Encounter at the Zoo***

Harry awoke to the sun streaming in through the windows and a little face peering at her from the side of the bed.

"Are you awake?" Phaedra asked softly.

"I am now," Harry smiled, reaching for her glasses, "what time is it?"

"I don't know how to tell time. Uncle Severus says he will teach me so I can learn to mix the potions when I'm bigger."

"Come here," Harry said patting the bed and helping her to climb up next to her. She then took her watch off the nightstand and checked the time. "How would you like to start learning today? You can surprise your mum and uncle."

"Really, Miss Harry? You will teach me how to tell time?"

"You can't learn it all at once, but you can get started and then we'll practice."

"Okay, what do I do first?"

"Look at my watch. The big hand is the minute hand and the little one is the hour hand."

"What is this other one that is going around so fast?"

"It's called the second hand. You will not need to use that to tell time. It is used more to time things out like how long it takes you to run from the top of the stairs to the bottom," Harry explained hoping Phaedra understood. "Now the watch is numbered from one to twelve. The twelve is on top and the six is on the bottom. The three and the nine are opposite one another in the middle. Now from the twelve to the three is fifteen minutes, from the twelve to the six is thirty minutes, and from the twelve to the nine is forty-five minutes."

"From the twelve to the three is fifteen minutes to the six is thirty minutes and to the nine is forty-five minutes. What happens when you get back to the twelve?"

"That is one hour," Harry answered amazed at the quickness of Phaedra's mind.

"What about the other numbers? How do they work?"

"Each one is five minutes. You see these little lines in between, each one is one minute. So if you start at the twelve you can count: one, two, three, four, and the number one will be five."

"Then why is it a one?" Phaedra asked confused.

"For the hour. Every one of the big numbers is five minutes."

"So the little line after the big one will be six minutes?" Phaedra asked with a frown.

"Yes, that's right! Now keep going."

"Seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty!" Phaedra exclaimed proudly.

"That's wonderful, now keep going."

"I can't, Miss Harry."

"Why not honey?"

"I can only count up to twenty." Phaedra looked downcast.

"That's all right, I'll help you," Harry chuckled giving her a squeeze. Together they counted up to sixty, and Phaedra beamed with pleasure. "Now, you see that the big hand is on the twelve and the little hand is on the seven, which means it is seven o'clock. Whenever the big hand is on the twelve that means o'clock and the little hand is the hour. If the little hand was on the eight it would be eight o'clock."

"So that would be the hour, because the little hand is the hour hand?" Phaedra asked eagerly.

"Yes, Phaedra, see how easy it is. Now what time is this?" Harry asked setting her watch to eleven o'clock.

"It is eleven o'clock!" Phaedra said excitedly. "Can we do another one?"

"Sure, what is this one?" Harry asked as she set the watch to two o'clock.

"Two o'clock!"

"Very good, see how easy it is? Now you can tell what hour it is, later on we'll do some more," Harry told her as she reset her watch to seven o'clock. She would set it more accurately when she got downstairs. "You still need to learn how to tell the half and quarter hours, then we'll work on the minutes."

"Can't we do it now?" Phaedra begged with excitement. "I want to surprise mummy and Uncle Severus today."

"You already have," Professor Snape's silky voice came from the open door to the hall. Apparently, Phaedra had failed to close the door all the way, when she had crept into Harry's room.

"Professor Snape!" Harry gasped startled, "I didn't hear you come in. Have you been there long?"

"Actually, we have all been out here for the past fifteen minutes. When Circe found Phaedra had gotten up without her we started to search. She has the habit of getting into mischief," Snape smiled sardonically as he pushed the door open. Harry was embarrassed to see Circe with Dumbledore and Remus. They were all grinning, and Harry turned red with embarrassment. "We didn't want to interrupt her lesson."

"Uncle Severus, mummy, I can tell time! I know all the hours!"

"Yes, Phaedra, we heard," Circe said coming in and picking Phaedra up in her arms. "You should not have woken up Miss Harry. It wasn't nice."

"She didn't really wake me up. She was sitting here with Snuffles and waiting patiently," Harry smiled.

"You did really well teaching her how to tell the time, Princess. You should consider becoming a teacher after Hogwarts."

"Maybe I should see if anyone is planning on retiring soon," Dumbledore beamed, "then I could keep her at Hogwarts. Anything in particular you would like to teach, Harry?"

"Well, if Professor Sinestra leaves, Remus could teach Arithmancy, since Hermione told me he's as good at it as he is at Defense Against the Dark Arts."

"Oh, and I suppose you're going to teach Defense Against the Dark Arts?" Snape questioned sarcastically.

"Of course not, you are. I'm going to teach Potions!" Harry stated tossing her head impishly as they all laughed and Snape arched his left brow. She knew he was pleased with her idea.

"I'll keep your suggestion in mind," Dumbledore remarked eyeing his two professors playfully, "however at the moment I think we should go and have breakfast since Phaedra has seen fit to wake us all up."

"I'm sorry Mr. Headmaster Dumbledore. I tried to be real quiet. I didn't know mummy would get scared and come looking for me."

"That's all right, Little One, next time you will remember to wake your mother before you get out of bed," Dumbledore smiled, looking at her over his spectacles.

"I will notify the house elves we will be down shortly for breakfast. I know Remus would like to get an early start, and we can spend the morning at the zoo."

"That is an excellent suggestion, Severus," Circe said to her brother as the three men left to do their morning toilet. "Harry, the dining room is the third door on the left off the hall when you come downstairs," Circe informed her pleasantly. "Thank you for staying with Phaedra; she can be quite a handful."

"I think she's adorable," Harry replied winking at Phaedra as she swung her legs out of the bed. "I'll bet I beat you downstairs," she teased Phaedra.

"No you won't! Come on mummy, we have to get dressed," she pleaded squirming out of her mother's arms and running towards their room.

"I'll see you in a few minutes," Circe excused herself and hurried after her daughter.

Harry hurriedly washed and dressed, putting on her jeans and polo shirt with a pair of sneakers. She wondered if she should wear robes instead, since she didn't know if there was a wizard zoo, but decided she could always change if necessary. Following the directions Circe had given her, she found the dining room with little effort after seeing that Dobby put Snuffles

outside in the garden. She was relieved to note that except for Remus they were all wearing Muggle clothing.

Snape cut an excellent figure in black trousers and a gray sport shirt, and Circe was wearing a yellow sundress and sandals. Phaedra looked adorable in a pair of pink shorts and a matching shirt with a pair of sneakers. Dumbledore too, was dressed in Muggle clothes. Harry thought he looked the epitome of dignity in a pair of navy blue slacks with a white shirt. His beard was neatly trimmed and his hair was pulled back and tied neatly. A bowler hat sat nearby along with a walking stick. Harry wondered if his wand was concealed in the walking stick. She knew that Lucius Malfoy kept his hidden in one.

"I won, Miss Harry. I got downstairs before you did. Do I get a prize?"

"Phaedra!" Her mother exclaimed, "that is rude. Mind your manners."

"I'm sorry mummy," Phaedra responded her lower lip quivering. "I'm sorry, Miss Harry."

"Don't cry, Phaedra. I will buy you a balloon at the zoo."

"You will!" she exclaimed with delight giving Harry a hug.

"So long as you behave."

"I will, I promise," Phaedra said as Harry took a seat at the table beside Dumbledore.

"I didn't get a chance to ask you before, Child, did you sleep well?"

"Like a baby."

"No dreams, then?"

"Only pleasant ones."

"I don't suppose you thought any more about our conversation from last night?"

"No, I was too tired. I soaked in the tub for twenty minutes and then went right to bed. I was asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow."

"Then I won't push you. When you decide, you can tell me either way," Dumbledore patted her hand.

"I know," she said as they touched foreheads affectionately.

Breakfast was an enjoyable affair, and they all ate well on eggs, bacon, kippers, scones, and fresh fruits. There was also tea, coffee, juice, and milk. The conversation centered on the plans for the day. Remus was going to check in with Sirius, and then had some other business for the Order.

The others were all going to the London Zoo. Harry had only been there once, and that was just before her eleventh birthday. She had gotten to go when there was no one to watch her while her aunt and uncle brought Dudley and his friend. It had been Dudley's eleventh



birthday. Harry had enjoyed herself, until she had accidentally made the boa constrictor's glass enclosure disappear. Dudley fell in, and the snake escaped. She was punished by the Dursleys since they knew she was a witch, and did not want her to find out she had magical abilities.

Harry was looking forward to today's outing as if she were Phaedra's age. The only times she ever really had gone anywhere had been shopping for school or with Professor Snape. She had also been allowed to visit with Ron's family and go to the Quidditch world cup, but suspected it was because the Dursleys wanted her out of the way.

"Miss Harry, are you still going to talk to the snakes for me?" Phaedra asked as they left Snape's town home. Dumbledore had arranged for a car to pick them up from the Ministry.

"Yes, Phaedra, but you have to be very careful about what you say at the zoo. The Muggles will not understand. I can only do it if no one is around."

"I know, mummy told me all about the Muggles. She said they are just like us only they can't do any magic. Do you know any Muggles?"

"Yes, my aunt, uncle, and cousin are Muggles. So were my mother's parents. My good friend, Hermione, is a Muggle born witch. I live with my aunt and uncle when I'm not in school, and all of our neighbors are Muggles."

"Can I meet your aunt and uncle?"

"No, it would be better if you didn't."

"Why?"

"Phaedra, don't be asking Miss Harry personal questions. It isn't nice," Circe told her quietly, sensing Harry's reluctance to talk about her family.

"That's all right, Circe. Phaedra, some Muggles aren't very nice to Wizards and Witches. They are afraid or don't understand our magic. My aunt and uncle are like that."

"They don't like you?"

"Little One," Dumbledore interrupted, "Harry's family are not comfortable with magic. They don't like to know about our world and Harry would not want to upset them."

"Do you know any other Muggles I could meet?"

"Maybe, I'll have to think about it."

"Okay, but if you can't find some I won't be sad," Phaedra assured her with a smile as the car pulled up in front of the zoo.

"Harry, you understand Muggle money better than I do, would you be so kind as to pay the admittance charges. I have the money with me, but I always get confused," Circe admitted red faced.

"No problem, I will be happy to help you learn it later on if you like," Harry said taking the money from her, but she insisted on paying for herself. She then paid the clerk at the window and gave Circe her change once they had passed through the gates.

"Phaedra hold onto mummy's hand. The zoo isn't too crowded yet, but it will be busy later on. I don't want you to get lost."

"I want to walk with Uncle Severus and Miss Harry."

"Of course," Snape took her hand.

"Miss Harry you take Uncle Severus other hand."

"How about if I take your other hand instead," Harry grinned, red faced, as Snape stared straight ahead.

"We'll go into the petting zoo first, since I know Phaedra will like to see the farm animals," Dumbledore remarked leading the way. "I grew up on a farm and still love the country."

"Can you ride horsies?" Phaedra asked curiously.

"Not for many years, Little One."

"Were they winged or regular horses?" Harry queried softly.

"Both." he answered, blue eyes twinkling. "Did you know there is also another part to the zoo?"

"I wondered if their might be. How come I didn't see it the only other time I came here with the Dursley's?"

"You very well may have," Professor Snape told her, "but they couldn't, so you wouldn't have gone in."

"I'll bet Hagrid loves the place."

"No doubt," Snape agreed and Dumbledore smiled as they entered the petting zoo.

"Look, mummy! They have a pony ride. Can I go on it? Please can I?"

"I'll put her on, Circe," Snape told his sister, taking Phaedra over to the pony stand. They all watched as Phaedra went around the ring four times, and waved happily each time she passed them.

"What is it, Child?" Dumbledore asked watching her expression.

"I'm just thinking how much different my life might have been if my parents hadn't died."

"I know."

"Professor," Harry turned to face Dumbledore, "why is it the things we crave the most are the things we can't have?"

"Child, I wish I could answer that question for you, but I can't."

"I know," she sighed as Phaedra came running over to them.

"Did you see, Miss Harry? Did you see how I rode the pony?"

"Yes, honey, you did beautifully."

"Can we see the deer next?" she asked pointing over towards a large enclosure with several does accompanied by their fawns."

"I like deer. I think they are very beautiful," Harry said as Phaedra grabbed her hand and pulled her over towards the enclosure.

"Isn't your Patronus a deer, Harry?" Snape asked casually.

"A stag actually," she smiled.

"What's a stag?" Phaedra asked innocently.

"A stag is a boy deer," Circe replied. "Look over there," she pointed into the next enclosure, "see the one with the antlers? That is the stag."

"Is he the daddy deer?"

"I would think so," Snape replied amused.

"Phaedra," Harry whispered, "my father could transform into a stag."

"He could? Did you ever see him?"

"If I did I was just a baby, and can't remember it."

"Uncle Severus said your 'tronus was a stag. What is a 'tronus?"

"No, Phaedra, it's Patronus," Snape corrected.

"Puh-tron-us," she said slowly breaking the word into syllables. "What is it?"

"It's a very powerful protection spell. Not everyone can do it."

"Can you Uncle Severus?"

"I can."

"Can I ask what your Patronus is?" Harry looked at him with interest.

"You can ask, but I won't answer," Snape smiled sardonically.

"Professor Dumbledore, he won't tell us what his Patronus is," Harry pretended to pout.

"That's because it is a rather sore point with him," Dumbledore laughed as Snape scowled at him. "If I tell, he'll be furious with me."

"Don't be silly, Headmaster. Professor Snape cares for you just like we do."

"I know what his Patronus is too," Circe looked at her younger brother with a wicked smile.

"Circe, I would prefer it if you stay out of this," Professor Snape warned his sister, crossing his arms over his chest.

"Oh, little brother, do you really think I would tell them that your Patronus is a ..."

"Circe!" Snape cut her off. He was beginning to become annoyed at his older sister.

"Uncle Severus, please don't be mad at mummy. She's just teasing you like she always does."

"I'm not mad at your mother," Snape comforted her picking her up in his arms.

"Circe, do you have a Patronus?"

"I could never master it. It is among the more difficult spells."

"So I was told."

"How long have you been able to do it?" Circe inquired curiously. She could sense the power of the younger witch.

"I learned it in my third year."

"You what?!" she exclaimed astonished.

"Harry is telling you the truth, Circe," Dumbledore affirmed. "It was taught to her by Professor Lupin, before we all knew that Sirius Black was innocent."

"But Albus, she couldn't have been more than thirteen! The Patronus isn't even taught until the seventh year," Circe reminded him as they walked over to the duck pond. "Severus couldn't even do it until he was almost sixteen."

"Now that is interesting," Harry smirked, giving Snape an evil smile. "What did you say your Patronus was?"

"I didn't," he replied curtly.

"I wouldn't push him, Child. His Patronus is a sore point with him."

"Why? Is it something silly?"

"No, Child, it is just something he would rather not have."

Harry studied Snape intently, and he was aware she was scanning his emotions. After a minute, she nodded to herself and looked at Snape.

"I won't bother you again to tell me, Professor. It obviously distresses you."

"Aren't you going to ask me what my Patronus is?" Dumbledore eyed her over his spectacles mischievously.

"It's probably a Phoenix."

"Wrong, it happens to be a Griffin."

"Is it really, or are you teasing me?"

"He's serious. I have on occasion seen him use it," Professor Snape stated matter of factly,

"Miss Harry," Phaedra interrupted, "these ducks are boring. All they do is swim in circles. Can we go over and feed the goats?" she asked pointing to another enclosure.

"Okay, I'll get some of those crackers to feed them from the vendor." Harry stopped for the crackers, which proved to be made from rye, and took Phaedra over to feed the goats.

Phaedra delighted in the farm animals, and kept pulling them to every exhibit. She loved the cows, and laughed at the pigs rolling in the dirt. As they walked, Harry had the feeling she was being watched, but didn't see anybody suspicious. Several times she thought that Professor Snape was glancing over his shoulder a bit too frequently, but when he saw her watching, he stopped. Leaving the petting zoo, they went in to see the monkeys.

"Look, look," Phaedra ran ahead pointing at the monkeys. They were swinging from the tree limbs that were a part of the exhibit. "They can hang by their tails."

"They're called Spider Monkeys," Professor Snape said picking her up so she could see better.

They then moved further along and looked at the chimpanzees, orangutans, gibbons, and a mandrill. Phaedra was impressed with the blue and scarlet ribbing on the mandrill's face.

"Can we go and see the snakes now?"

"Very well," Circe sighed knowing Phaedra wanted to hear Harry speak Parsel Tongue. "Remember what we told you about the snakes and Miss Harry."

"Yes, mummy, I won't bother her," she called over her shoulder, skipping ahead of them. "Do you like snakes, Miss Harry?"

"They're okay. I wouldn't want one for a pet, but they serve an important purpose."

"What do they do that's so 'portant?"

"Important," she corrected, "and they help to control the rodent population. It means they eat the rats and mice."

"Yech...that's gross!"

"I think so too," Harry agreed, thinking about all the times Sirius had eaten rats to survive following his escape from Azkaban. "Lets see what kind of snakes they have."

Harry led the way down the aisle and they looked at black snakes, cobras, garter snakes, American rattlesnakes, and finally came to the large boa constrictor. After the incident with her cousin Dudley, the snake had been recaptured. As Harry stood looking at it the snake picked up it's head.

"I remember you," it hissed, "you helped me to escape for a few hours. Thank you, I had a great time."

Harry glanced around, and seeing no other visitors nearby, she decided to answer the snake. Lookin at Phaedra, she put her finger to her lips so she would stay quiet and then answered the large boa.

"I'm surprised you remember me. It was several years ago. I look quite different."

"Not to me. I knew you were female by your scent and the heat you emit from your body. Males and females are different."

"I'm glad you enjoyed a few hours of freedom, even if you didn't make it back to Brazil."

"Come again sometime. I don't get to talk to humans very often."

"What do you mean, very often? Is there someone else you talk to?"

"Yes, sometimes a strange male comes in. He talks to us all and calls us his children. He has red eyes and comes in the night, when no one is here. He brings a female of my kind with him, that he calls Nagini."

"This is very important. Does this man ever say or do anything unusual?"

"Yes...he will often meet with others who keep their faces hidden. Sometimes he exerts his dominance over them. He carries a stick of fire."

"Listen very carefully. This man is a danger to my kind. He kills for pleasure. Do not let him know you spoke with me."

"I will do as you ask," The snake replied and then curled up and went back to sleep.

"Miss Harry that was really something. Can you do it again?"

"No honey, there are people coming this way. Where is your mum and uncle?" Harry asked looking about worriedly. Large groups of children from a summer camp had arrived and were running all over the place unsupervised.

"They went over there with Mr. Headmaster Dumbledore," she pointed to an open door, and Harry could see some benches outside to sit on. Grabbing Phaedra by the hand, she ran for the door. "Miss Harry, slow down! You are going too fast!"

"I'm sorry, honey," Harry slowed down, "I have to find your uncle and Dumbledore, it's important." Just then, a man bumped into Harry and blocked her path.

"Excuse me, Miss Potter. It is Miss Potter isn't it. I don't think you remember me, I'm..."

"Phineas Phibes," she finished for him. "I have nothing to say to you, now please move."

"Who might you be little girl? Are you a friend of Harry Potter?"

"Never mind who she is, get out of my way," Harry demanded, trying to go around him.

"Please I just want a story for the Daily Prophet. I'm a reporter and you're news."

"You want a story," Harry remarked softly, "I'll give you a story."

"Wonderful, can we go somewhere and sit down?"

"That won't be necessary; your story will be quite short. Your headline can read Harry Potter testifies against Phineas Phibes. Phibes was arrested and taken into custody by the Aurors under suspicion of being a follower of Lord Voldemort." Harry then reached out and grabbed his left arm, pushing the sleeve up to reveal the dark mark tattoo. "Phaedra run and get Dumbledore, now!" the child darted out the door at a run as Harry held onto Phibes.

"Let me go!" he hissed, attempting to pull out his wand, but Harry quickly kicked him in the shin, and the wand fell with a clatter to the floor.

The next thing Harry knew everyone in the room was frozen in place, and Dumbledore and Snape were there with her. A group of Aurors was also there, and took hold of Phibes, stunning him, to keep him from screaming and cursing.

"Thank you for coming so promptly Alastor," Dumbledore was saying to Mad Eye Moody.

"No problem. We've had our eyes out for Phibes ever since you told us he might be one of Voldemort's supporters," Moody replied as they walked over to Harry. "Nice job, Miss Potter. You didn't need to use any magic. We were the ones who froze the Muggles. They won't remember a thing."

"Thanks, but I found out that Voldemort has been visiting the zoo at night with his Death-eaters."

"Who told you that?"

"The boa constrictor," Harry grinned.

"I forgot you were a Parsel Mouth," Moody shook his head.

"I would say that it is most fortunate she is, Alastor," Dumbledore remarked, his blue eyes serious. "Did the snake say anything else, Harry?"

"Only that he brings his pet snake Nagini with him. I didn't want to attract attention to myself. All these kids came in from the camp."

"It's all right, Harry. We have Phibes. I don't think he will be too uncooperative during questioning," Moody claimed soberly. "Albus why don't you all go on along and finish your outing. I will send word when we learn anything from Phibes."

"Do you wish to continue, Harry?" Snape inquired.

"I don't see why not, unless you think Phaedra is too upset."

"She is with Circe. We'll check with her and see what she says." Snape steered Harry out the door as the Aurors returned the people in the zoo back to normal. "Circe is Phaedra all right?"

"I'm okay Uncle Severus. Did the bad man hurt Miss Harry?"

"Do I look hurt?" Harry tweaked Phaedra's chin.

"I thought he was going to hurt you. What was the funny mark on his arm?"

Harry and Snape exchanged glances as Harry replied, "It was just a tattoo. Lots of people have them."

"His was scary like the one on Uncle Severus'. Is Uncle Severus a bad man too? I heard you say the bad wizard's name."

Snape shifted uncomfortably, and a look of pain crossed Circe's face.

"Phaedra, let's sit on the bench and I'm going to tell you a story," Harry said leading the child over to sit down. Dumbledore had come from the building and was talking quietly with Snape and Circe, both of whom looked worriedly over at Phaedra.

"Now, you have seen the tattoo on your uncle's arm."

"It looked like the one the bad man has."

"That mark is called the Dark Mark. If you ever see it on anyone, you keep quiet and do not say anything. Then you go and tell your mum or Uncle Severus."

"Why?"

"Because, it is the sign used by the people who work with the bad wizard."

"Does Uncle Severus work with him too?" Phaedra asked looking scared.

"No, honey, he does not! He was a spy for Dumbledore and pretended to be one of them. In order for the bad wizard to trust him he had to let him put that tattoo on his arm. Do you understand?" Harry explained telling Phaedra only the part she needed to hear. It was up to Snape to tell her the entire truth when she was old enough to understand.

"Yes, Miss Harry. I know what a spy is. They watch people to find out stuff."

"That's right. Your uncle did just that. He is somewhat of a hero, too. The things he heard helped to save many people."



"How come he didn't save your mummy and daddy?"

Harry glanced at Snape, and then turned to answer Phaedra, "He tried honey, but it was too late," she said, swallowing hard at the memory of Snape's presence in Godric's Hollow the night her parents died. He had been brought there by Voldemort to see if he were trustworthy, and then sent away. Snape had summoned Dumbledore for help, but it had arrived too late.

"Phaedra, would you like to finish seeing the zoo?" Circe asked her daughter.

"Yes, mummy, can we go see the wizard zoo now?"

"Of course," she took Phaedra by the hand and headed off down a narrow sidewalk off to the left.

"Did you know Uncle Severus is a hero?" Harry overheard her ask Circe as they moved out of sight.

"I suppose you expect me to say thank you, Miss Potter?" Snape asked arrogantly, looking down his nose at her.

"No, Severus," she sneered, "it's one of the benefits of being an empath. You can look down your nose at me all you want, but I still know what you're feeling. Besides, I wasn't going to tell that sweet little girl what an SOB you used to be. She only needs to know the man you have become. It's up to you to tell her the whole story when she's older. Even I don't know the entire thing, but I will eventually," Harry tilted her head coquettishly, winking at Dumbledore, who stood beside Snape, beaming at her with pride.

"Come, Child, let us catch up to Circe and Phaedra. I'm sure you will like to see the animals. You have probably studied them in class," Dumbledore remarked taking her arm in his.

"Are you coming, Professor, or are you going to stand here all by yourself like a naughty little boy, who's been caught with his hand in the cookie jar?"

Snape scowled at her, following slowly after them. 'Damn that girl, she knows how I feel. Does she realize how hard this is for me? I never thought I could have any feelings for anyone again. I have been numb for so long...Oh, Merlin, Black had better appreciate her or I'll...'

"Uncle Severus, hurry up! Come and see the Hippocampus. Look they have eggs with babies inside!" Phaedra called excitedly looking at the strange animals, which were swimming inside of a large glass tank.

They had the head and forequarters of a horse and then the body tapered off into that of a large fish. The eggs were semitransparent and you could just make out the infant on the inside.

"Cool," Harry stared into the tank, "I always wondered what these looked like. They are actually quite pretty. If I recall correctly the Merpeople have domesticated the roans."

"You are quite correct," Dumbledore commented, "Hagrid would be proud."

"Hagrid would want to own one," Snape corrected him.

"I dare say you are right, Severus," Dumbledore sighed, "Hagrid does have a penchant for animals. He truly cares for them."

"Look mummy, look at the pretty turtles."

"No, Phaedra, they aren't turtles. They're fire crabs. They look like turtles though."

"They're so pretty," Phaedra, pressed her face up against the glass. Can we get one?"

"No, honey, they can be dangerous. They shoot fire from their rear ends."

"If I recall they are also a protected species," Harry remarked admiring the jeweled shells.

"You are quite right, Miss Potter. They are hidden from Muggles who would take the jewels out of their shells."

"Not to mention unscrupulous wizards who would use them as cauldrons," she smirked at Snape. "I'm surprised you don't own one."

"I do. It has been in my family for many generations. I inherited it, but I don't use it. It is too valuable."

Harry looked at Snape sideways to see if he were teasing her, and noted he was watching her with his usual sardonic stance.

"Now children, behave yourselves," Dumbledore admonished gently, "you both need to learn when to back down."

"You are of course, right, Albus. I apologize for my behavior."

"Headmaster, I think he's been hit with too many *cruciatus* curses. He actually is trying to be humble," Harry chuckled moving off to stand with Circe and Phaedra.

They continued through the zoo and passed many of the creatures Harry had learned about at Hogwarts. There were many birds, and Harry was glad to see there wasn't a Phoenix among them. There was however, an Augury, Fwooper, Jobberknoll, Diricawal, also known to Muggles as the Dodo Bird, and a Snidget, which was originally used as the Golden Snitch in earlier versions of quidditch. It was now protected, and reminded Harry of a Hummingbird.

Wandering back outside to see some of the larger exhibits, Harry and Phaedra were both quite taken with the Mooncalves. The exhibit was charmed to make it look like nighttime and a pale moon stood in the sky. The mooncalves were doing the intricate dance for which they were noted. They then went into an exhibit that was underground, and found it was the home of a group of Niffler's. Harry had some experience with them in her fourth year during Care of Magical Creatures class. These adorable animals were often used by Goblins to find treasure.

"Oh, mummy, cant we..."

"No, Phaedra, we can't have a Niffler," Circe told her daughter, exasperated, "they are destructive when kept in a house, and need to live underground."

"We could live in a cave," she reasoned hopefully.

"Phaedra, I don't think you would like living in a cave. They're too damp."

"How do you know?" Phaedra asked obstinately. "Did you ever live in a cave?"

"No, Little One," Dumbledore said coming to Harry's rescue, "but she knows someone who did."

"You do?"

"Yup, my godfather; he's good friends with Professor Lupin."

"You mean Mr. Remus?"

"Uh huh, they went to Hogwarts together."

"Does Uncle Severus know him too? He went to Hogwarts with Mr. Remus."

Harry could feel Snape watching her intently. "Yes, your uncle knows my godfather. They went to school at the same time too."

"Was he in Slytherin with Uncle Severus?"

"Phaedra, it isn't nice to keep asking questions to Miss Harry."

"But how will I ever learn anything if I don't ask?"

"It's all right Circe. I really don't mind, although I'm not too sure about your brother."

"If you don't answer her question she will pester us unmercifully all night," Snape told his sister, while Dumbledore winked at Harry amused. She had the distinct impression that he was enjoying Snape's discomfiture.

"No, Phaedra, my godfather was in Gryffindor just like Mr. Remus. Harry informed the curious child.

"I'm going to be in Slytherin when I go to Hogwarts. Mummy and Uncle Severus said so."

"I think you're too smart to be in Slytherin. I hope the sorting hat puts you into Ravenclaw."

"Not Gryffindor, Harry?" Circe asked with interest. Dumbledore was watching her curiously and Snape looked genuinely surprised.

"No. She is really clever and smart. I don't see any of the desires you would see in a Slytherin. She doesn't have that kind of ambition. I don't know about how brave she is yet, and I know she isn't a hard worker. She won't need to struggle to attain her goals. No it would do her well to be in Ravenclaw."

"I was in Slytherin, Harry," Circe smiled shrewdly.

"Was her father?"

"No...No he wasn't."

"I apologize. I didn't mean to appear like I was prying."

"It's all right, Harry. Circe's father was a Muggle. He was killed in a car accident on his way to our wedding."

"Circe...I...I'm sorry. I didn't know," Harry could feel the ache in Circe. She was mortified and didn't know what else to say to her.

"Harry, Dumbledore interceded, "didn't you promise Phaedra a balloon? I see the vendor right over by those trees."

"I had almost forgotten," she said giving Dumbledore a grateful look. "Come on Phaedra, let's go and pick out your balloon."

"Can I mummy? Can I go and pick a balloon with Miss Harry?"

"Of course," Circe smiled at her daughter.

Harry was grateful to escape the uncomfortable situation and much to Phaedra's delight bought a balloon for all of them. Phaedra's was in the shape of a unicorn, Dumbledore got a big red bird, and Circe and Severus both got a green snake, while Harry bought herself a lion.

Dumbledore beamed with pleasure, Circe laughed, and Snape looked dumbfounded.

"Severus, you need to let your hair down and do something impulsive once in a while," Dumbledore looked at him affectionately. "Harry you need to teach him how to live."

"Professor he knows how to live, he has to learn how to enjoy life. I think between the two of us we can fix what ails him."

"Have you any suggestions?"

"Well for starters, you can give him some of those lemon drops you have hidden in your pocket."

"Child, what makes you so certain I have lemon drops?"

"I saw you put them in your pocket before we left the house this morning."

"I really don't want a lemon drop."

"Nonsense, Severus, Harry is right. You have been too tense for too long. Have a lemon drop."

"Albus, I really don't..."

"Severus, I'm an old man, humor me," Dumbledore said with authority. Harry giggled with pleasure as the Potions Master succumbed to his superior. "And don't try to spit it out when I'm not looking."

"I won't," Snape scowled, putting the lemon drop into his mouth. "I look ridiculous, holding a balloon and sucking on a lemon drop."

"No Professor, you look like any other man who has spent a morning out with his family and friends at the zoo," Harry grinned as they headed for the pen containing the Graphorn.

Harry was standing looking at the Graphorn with Circe and Phaedra. The area was becoming crowded with visitors as it was now late morning. A wizard with his two sons accidentally bumped into Harry and she turned to face him startled.

"I beg your pardon, Miss...he began. "My word, you're Harry Potter!" he exclaimed loudly. "Look, Geoffrey, William, it's Harry Potter," he proclaimed shoving the two boys forward.

Harry could hear the crowd becoming excited, and they immediately began to move in around her to get a better look. She was being pushed and shoved and the eager crowd kept trying to touch her.

"Please everyone," she gasped, "stop shoving or someone may get hurt!"

Just as she uttered those words, a small boy, of perhaps three, toppled from his father's shoulders and fell into the pen with the Graphorn. The animal had become agitated by the crowd, and was now rubbing the thumbs on his feet into the dirt. Lowering its head, horns pointed directly at the crying child, it got ready to charge. Harry reacted without any thought for her own safety and leaped into the pen. The Graphorn immediately became confused, and spun around to look at her. Snorting, it sidled over to her left, and she was able to place herself between the animal and the terrified child. She could hear yells and screams in the back of her, but ignored them, as she continued to keep the Graphorn distracted. The Graphorn then lowered its head one more time and charged.

Harry could see the animal coming towards her in what felt like slow motion. She immediately dove over to her right, rolling up in a ball to protect herself. As she did so, she heard Dumbledore yell.

"*Accio*, little boy!" the child sailed through the air and straight into Dumbledore's arms.

Harry pulled her wand from the pocket of her jeans. "*Stupefy*!" she stunned the Graphorn within inches of being gored. As the Graphorn fell over, she felt a pair of strong arms around her. It was Snape. Picking her up, he carried her over to the edge of the enclosure and they were levitated to safety by Dumbledore, along with the Graphorn's keepers, amid cheers from the crowd.

"Get me out of here," Harry whispered to Professor Snape. She was shaken, and did not want any more attention than she had already garnered.

He carried her swiftly away from the crowd, putting her down on one of the nearby benches.

"Are you injured?"

"I don't think so," she trembled.

"Miss Harry, you saved the little boy!" Phaedra ran up to her, flinging her arms around Harry's neck.

"No, honey, Dumbledore saved the little boy. I just bought him the time and nearly got myself killed in the meantime."

"No, you jumped in with the Graphorn! You stopped him from hurting the baby!" she insisted.

"Are you able to stand, Child?" Dumbledore asked coming over to her with a strange man. He was about thirty, with sandy hair and a crooked smile.

"I think so," she said getting up slowly. Her legs felt like jelly, and buckled. The man with Dumbledore reached out to steady her as she sat back down.

"This is Jeremy Sloan, the child's father. He is also an alumnus of Hogwarts," Dumbledore smiled.

"I was in Hufflepuff. I knew Professor Snape and your father, but only in passing, they were a few years ahead of me. I just wanted to say thank you for saving my son. If you hadn't jumped in to distract the beast he certainly would have been killed."

"See, I told you that you saved the little boy!" Phaedra insisted, hands on her hips, and everyone smiled.

"It was a joint effort. I distracted the beast and Dumbledore got the child out of the pen. Then your Uncle Severus distracted the animal long enough for me to stun him. In any event," Harry addressed Mr. Sloan, "I'm glad your son is all right. The whole thing would never have happened if that stupid man had not caused such a commotion."

"I don't know what happened to him, but he seemed to have disappeared when my son fell," he told her angrily.

"No matter, Jeremy," Dumbledore soothed, "little Patrick is safe. Why don't you go on home? I daresay he now has a story to tell his grandchildren."

"My wife is waiting for me at the gate. I just wanted Miss Potter to know that I am in her debt."

Harry knew better than to argue, and just nodded, shaking the young man's hand. She had learned long ago, that when one wizard saved the life of another, their code of behavior required that debt be repaid.

"Come Child, let's retire back to Severus' town house and have some lunch. It has been a very exciting morning. I will notify the Ministry that there was no misuse of magic since you are underage. You were in a life threatening situation, and as such magic is permitted."

Harry smiled gratefully as they all trooped back to the street where the Ministry car was waiting for them. Circe and Phaedra had collected the balloons that they had let go when

distracting the Graphorn, and Snape secured them in the trunk. Harry was tired and scratched from her encounter with the Graphorn. She was beginning to wonder if the man in the crowd had not caused the commotion on purpose. Mulling this over in her mind, she was staring out the window, when she realized that both Dumbledore and Snape were watching her intently. She got the distinct impression that they both were thinking along the same lines.

Freshening up before lunch, Harry changed from her soiled clothes, and put on her robes. They were to have their meal out in the garden, and Harry was glad to relax among the flowers and shrubs. There was also a formal herb garden, and she noted that most of the herbs were useful for potions. Snape noticed her interest.

"I like to grow some of my own ingredients. I also enjoy gardening. I find it very relaxing."

"Professor Sprout would be pleased to know you like to grow things. Unfortunately, like potions, I have to work at Herbology. I try to plant things, but they usually do not do well. I do not have a green thumb."

"You passed Herbology with an O.W.L."

"It is not my best subject. Oddly enough, Neville Longbottom has a wonderful talent with plants. You should be nicer to him. Someday he may own a greenhouse and be supplying you with potions ingredients."

"One never can tell where they will end up," Snape replied not rising to her baiting.

"No, they can't."

"Mummy, can I play with Snuffles?" Phaedra asked when she had finished eating.

"You will have to ask Harry. It is up to her."

"Miss Harry, please can I play with Snuffles?"

"I don't have her ball with me," Harry told her.

"That's no problem," Snape replied, taking out his wand and conjuring one.

"How come you didn't do that Miss Harry?"

"I'm not allowed to do magic outside of Hogwarts. None of the students are."

"But you did at the zoo."

"Uh...yeah, I suppose I did. Are you planning on expelling me Headmaster," she grinned at Dumbledore.

"I could, you know. I am sure Severus would be delighted. He is constantly on me about your flagrant disregard for the rules," Dumbledore looked at her over his spectacles, eyes twinkling.

"Uncle Severus, Mr. Headmaster Dumbledore is going to e'spell Miss Harry 'cause you want him too. What is e 'spell?"

"It is pronounced expel, and means to throw me out of school. They will break my wand too."

"Now, you three, stop teasing Phaedra," Circe interrupted, seeing the worried look on her daughter's face. "Miss Harry is not going to be expelled, but she really isn't allowed to use her magic outside of school. What happened at the zoo was an exception."

"What's a 'ception?"

"It means it was okay because there was an emergency."

"I'm glad. Now can I play with Snuffles?"

"Can I play too?" Harry laughed, taking the ball and tossing it for the dog to catch.

Phaedra was delighted, and laughed wildly, as they both took turns making Snuffles catch and fetch. After about a half hour, they gave Snuffles some water, and it was time for Phaedra to take a short nap. Circe excused herself, and took Phaedra upstairs, amid the child's protests that she wasn't tired.

Dumbledore excused himself too, using the excuse of having some Ministry business to attend to. Harry was left alone in the garden with Snape.

"Would you like to mix the Wolfbane potion for Professor Lupin again this month?"

"The moon won't be full for almost three weeks."

"Eighteen days to be precise. Would you like to mix the potion? You will be here since it will be a Sunday."

"Do you have a place in the house where you mix potions?"

"I have a potions lab in the basement. Would you like to see it?"

"If you really want to show it to me."

"Follow me," he said rising.

Harry followed him up the hall to a hidden door behind the stairs. She was reminded of her old cupboard at the Dursley's; only instead of a storage area, there was a steep flight of stairs.

"*Lumos*," Snape held his wand up lighting the stairwell. They went down two flights and were in the basement. It was just like any other old basement, with garden implements, tools, and assorted odd items put away until needed. Harry was beginning to feel uncomfortable, and wondered what the Potions Master was up to when they reached a wall lined with various bottles and jars.

"You don't have to worry Miss Potter; you have nothing to fear from me," Snape told her dryly. "It is not my custom to seduce underage witches."



Harry stared at him wide eyed. He had known what she was thinking. Was it just common sense, derived from her body language, or was it the telepathic ability she knew he possessed?

"I never said you did, but if your sexual prowess is as good as your dancing I may just look you up after I turn eighteen," she quipped, her face burning, unable to look him in the eye.

He stood frozen in place, staring down at her, and tilted her face up to look at him,

"Do not trifle with me, Harry," Snape warned his voice barely more than a whisper. "I am not someone whose affections you would want to play with."

"Professor, I did not mean...you've been hurt...I ...merely wanted to...to...make you feel..."

"Like a fool, Miss Potter?"

"No!"

"Than how?"

"Flattered or happy inside," she reached up to touch his cheek. "We share a similar loneliness, Professor. I didn't mean for you to feel like I was leading you on."

"Very well, come on," He turned abruptly, tapping the third brick on the left with his wand. Silently the wall swung inward. "I need light," he said to the air, and the torches on the walls sprang to life.

Harry followed him into a large room, similar to the dungeon classroom he used at Hogwarts, except this one was lined with shelves full of jars and pots. Two large cauldrons stood off in a corner and a smaller one stood off to one side. There were also several locked cabinets. Harry noticed that all the jars and pots were neatly labeled with their contents, and recognized the handwriting as belonging to Professor Snape. He was watching her carefully as she looked around.

"What do you keep in the cabinets? I see they are locked, and I assume they are also charmed?"

"Some of them have charms, others merely locked. They hold some of my more exotic ingredients."

"Can I ask what they are?"

"You can ask, but that won't guarantee an answer."

"I hope you're not doing anything illegal."

"No, I'm not, but I do know how to obtain some of the more, shall we say, expensive items."

"Humph, you have items which the Ministry would find, shall we say, unusual."

Professor Snape smiled sardonically, "So would you like to work with me from time to time over the summer or not?"

"Just answer me one question first. Does Dumbledore know..."

"About the unusual items in my stores?" Snape finished for her. "Yes, he has helped me to secure some of them. They may be useful in the fight to stop Lord Voldemort."

"Then I'll work with you. It would be good to practice making Professor Lupin's potion too. When do we start?"

"Tomorrow we will start making Polyjuice. It will take a month to prepare properly, so we will need to make quite a bit."

"Will we be doing anything else?"

"Veritaserum, and some of the sleeping and healing potions you already know. They are kept on hand for the Order. Alastor Moody has also asked if I would make some for the Aurors."

"Everybody is expecting more big trouble aren't they?"

"Perhaps, you should not worry yourself."

"Easier said than done," Harry said as Snape put out the torches and she followed him out of the hidden potions room.

Her mind was whirling. Snape was actually letting her help him. Was he doing it because he liked her, or just to keep an eye on her so she didn't get into any trouble? She wasn't sure, but thought it may be both.

The rest of the afternoon Harry spent reviewing her potions so she would be prepared for the next day. Snape had the necessary books for her to use and was more than happy to let her use them. Professor Lupin returned by dinnertime, quite cheerful, and delivered a message from Sirius.

"He says he finds your solution to your Peeping Tom of a cousin quite interesting," and he laughed over it for nearly ten minutes. "However, he said to be careful. He also wants to know about anything suspicious or if the Dursley's are being particularly difficult. He says to send an owl to Dumbledore as well as any of us. You just can't send one directly to him."

"I know," Harry frowned.

"He sent you a present too," Remus smiled.

"Miss Harry got a present?" Phaedra came into the room with her mother. She was rubbing her eyes, and had just woken up from her nap.

"Phaedra, it's not nice to pry into other people's business."

"I don't mind," Harry smiled. "How was your nap?"

"I dreamed I was flying on a big bird. It wasn't very nice. We went to a haunted house with a big snake in it. Then I woke up."

"Phaedra are you sure there was nothing else in your dream?"

"Phaedra had a dream?" Dumbledore smiled as he came into the room.

"Yes, she dreamed a large bird flew her to a haunted house with a big snake in it."

"You ate too many cookies after lunch, Little One," he smiled tousling her hair affectionately, looking at Harry with understanding.

"Miss Harry got a present. Mister Remus brought it for her, but I don't know who it's from."

"It is from my godfather. Do you want to help me open it?"

"Can I?"

"Sure," Harry handed her the package Remus had brought. Phaedra tore off the paper to reveal a small box. Harry showed her how to open it. Inside was an ivory and ebony hand carved Wizard's chess set. There was also a brief note:

*Harry,*

*I thought you would enjoy playing with Remus and Snape, so I got this for you. I promise to be back by your birthday. Miss you very much. Keep me posted about what is going on. Love,*

*Sirius*

"Miss Harry, what are these funny little men for?"

"It's a game of Wizard's Chess. I will teach you to play, but not tonight."

"Why?"

"Tonight you need to finish learning how to tell time, remember?"

"I remember, can we do some now?"

"It's almost dinner time, and I have to see that Snuffles is fed. Do you want to help?"

"Can I?"

"Of course, she really likes you. She is just a puppy yet, even though she looks big."

"I like her. I wish I could have a pet."

"Well, maybe we can ask your mum to think about something that will do well in an apartment," Harry grinned at Circe. "But you have to remember a pet takes a lot of work. They need to be taken care of."

"Please mummy, can't I have a pet?"

"You help Harry with Snuffles and her owl, and if you don't get bored I will see about getting you something small when the summer is over."

"Oh, thank you mummy, I won't get bored. I promise I won't," Phaedra said flinging her arms around her mother and hugging her. She then went over to Harry and hugged her too. "Will you help me to pick out a good pet for a 'partment?"

"If your mum says it's okay after the summer we will pick something out before you go home and I go back to Hogwarts. Now let's go feed the dog and then get ready for dinner."

Harry and Phaedra saw to Snuffles food and water and then Harry went to freshen up for dinner. The evening meal was delicious and consisted of a roast beef, mashed potatoes, corn, broccoli, salad, and carrots. Conversation centered on their activities of the day, and Remus listened intently to the story about the young Death eater in the snake house. He was also very proud of Harry for being so brave and distracting the Graphorn. He too, had known the child's father, although only to say hello to. He then told everyone that the Weasleys were doing fine, and that Sirius was counting the days until he could be back for Harry. He also had a surprise for everyone, and following dinner, the house elves brought out the desserts that included a large tray of home made cookies from Molly Weasley. Phaedra was more than a little pleased.

Following dessert, they all retired to the parlor facing the garden. Harry had brought down some pieces of paper and pencils and made up some clocks to help Phaedra, and by her bedtime, she had learned to tell time correctly. All she needed to do was practice. Circe took her to bed with her for the night in case she had any other bad dreams. Harry had the feeling that Dumbledore told her about the similar dream she had some time ago, and it had been about Lord Voldemort.

Harry was looking for a chess partner, so Dumbledore accommodated her since Remus was tired from his trip and wanted to retire early with a good book, and Snape wanted to get ready to work on the potions tomorrow. Dumbledore was more than pleased that Harry was going to help with the preparations. He did not pursue the idea of hypnosis again, and she was grateful. Harry needed to sort out her thoughts on the subject and wanted to do a little reading about it first. She wished Hermione had not gone to America for the summer since she would have been happy to help her gather some information.

Finally, Harry yawned, and folding up the chessboard, she gave Dumbledore a hug and a kiss on his cheek.

"Now what did I do to deserve that?" he beamed.

"That was just for being you, and for letting me win those chess games. You didn't have to you know."

"I wanted to, Child. Now off to bed with you. It has been a long and eventful day, and I can tell you're tired."

"You're right, I am," she replied, gathering the game, and saying good night. She left Dumbledore to talk with Snape, who had just returned from the basement.

Harry changed into her nightgown quickly, and climbed into the big comfortable bed. She fell into a deep and dreamless sleep almost as soon as her head hit the pillow.

## ***Tea Leaves and Trances***

The weeks passed quickly, and Harry was spending all her weekends at Professor Snape's town home, as promised. She was also going out on Wednesdays during the day, usually with Remus, and had been helping Snape every Sunday with the potion making. Her birthday was only ten days away, and she would finally be leaving the home of her aunt and uncle for good.

Voldemort had been making raids on Muggle and Wizard homes, and the Aurors were being kept quite busy. It was believed that they were trying to find the Weasley's, but thus far had failed. Harry had been getting weekly letters from Draco, and had been passing on the information to Dumbledore. He was concerned about where she was acquiring her knowledge, but she had thus far refused to divulge her source. Once she had made certain that Draco Malfoy was trustworthy, she dared not say anything, or else he might be put in further jeopardy. This particular day, she had been picked up by Dumbledore, and decided she needed to confide in him.

Draco wanted to escape from Voldemort, but he needed help. If the Aurors caught him, he would be sent to Azkaban Prison, since Harry was the only one who knew he was not a traitor. She had gotten a letter that morning, delivered to her room by Dobby the house elf, who had used his magic to get into the Dursley's just as he had five years earlier when Harry had met him. The note was terse and to the point. It had stated that both she, and the Weasley's, were in grave danger and that Voldemort was going to try something within the next few days. He wasn't sure, but thought that the Dark Lord may have gotten a clue as to the whereabouts of the Weasley's. He was also concerned that he was possibly being watched, and if Voldemort found out he was a traitor his life was forfeit. He was to be on the next raid, and if the Aurors knew he wasn't really one of them, maybe they could take him prisoner to help him get to safety.

As Harry came downstairs to the living room in the Dursley's house, she found Dumbledore sitting comfortably on the divan, sipping a cup of tea. Aunt Petunia was catering to him, as if he was an old friend.

"Albus, it is so nice to see you again, you came so seldom in the past; we were worried you weren't well. You know Lily always said you took on too much. She really worried about you."

"I made sure Harry was safe and you were taking care of her," the old man smiled, but his blue eyes were icy. "She has turned into a lovely young woman, Petunia. Lily and James would be very proud of her. Don't you agree Vernon?"

Uncle Vernon just grunted his agreement from his chair, and her cousin was keeping to the kitchen. He kept peering out at Dumbledore, and eyeing the tray of pastries her aunt had placed in front of him. Harry couldn't resist making him a little jealous.

"Professor Dumbledore," she beamed, "this is a wonderful surprise. I expected to see Remus Lupin."

"He has gone to see your godfather on business, and I didn't want you to be disappointed, so I came in his stead."

"I am so glad. I need to speak to you about something."

"Oh, is anything the matter, Child?"

"I'll tell you when we get outside. Aunt Petunia, may I have a pastry?"

"Certainly, Harry, help yourself," Petunia answered, smiling sweetly, but her eyes were glaring at Harry. Harry deliberately took the large chocolate éclair, knowing it was Dudley's favorite, and poured a glass of milk to go with it.

"Petunia, I'm sure you're going to miss Harry, once she leaves. I will see to it that she stays in touch and continues to visit. Not that I will have to tell her to do so," Dumbledore's blue eyes twinkled over his spectacles.

"I really will miss having her here; she and Dudley are so close."

'Yeah,' Harry thought, 'I was his punching bag and teasing toy for the past sixteen years.'  
"Don't worry, Aunt," she said aloud, "I will send Hedwig with all the news and you can send back a reply. She will sit quite nicely; just give her an owl treat," Harry smiled wickedly, knowing her aunt was deathly afraid of Hedwig.

"Are you ready to go, Harry? I believe Circe wants to take you and Phaedra shopping for some new clothes."

"Cool. I could use an afternoon out shopping. Are we planning anything this year where I will need formal attire at school? I could purchase it now."

"That hasn't been completely decided yet. You will find out when the list of supplies is sent out by the end of next month. Petunia, thank you for being so gracious while I waited for Harry. Vernon, it has been nice to see you again. It's a pity that Dudley is so shy, I would have liked to talk with him."

Uncle Vernon stood, and shook Dumbledore's hand, withdrawing it a bit too quickly. Dudley moved further back into the kitchen. Harry and Dumbledore showed themselves out, but knew her aunt and uncle were watching covertly through the living room curtains.

"How are we traveling?" she asked curiously.

"You said you wanted to talk, so we will go for a short walk. Have the Dursley's been giving you a hard time?"

"Are you kidding? They're too scared of you, and are terrified that I am telling Sirius everything they do."

"Then what is wrong?"

"Two things, but we can relate one to the other. I am concerned for a former Hogwarts student."

"Who might this student be? One of the Weasley boys?"

"No, I know you are taking every precaution with all of them."

"Then you obviously have been keeping something from me. I know you have been receiving letters from Dobby. Are you ready to confide in me?"

"I didn't deliberately try to deceive you. I just needed some time to be certain I could trust the person who has been sending me the letters. Now I believe he may be in grave danger from Lord Voldemort." Dumbledore did not say anything, merely raised his eyebrow and nodded for her to go on. "It is Draco Malfoy. He helped me to escape from Lord Voldemort last spring. He does not want to be a part of Voldemort's Death eaters. He's scared to death."

"I take it he has been sending you the information about the raids?"

"Yes, I told him to that day at the Riddle Mansion. We set up a system where the owls would be sent to Dobby under the name of Jamie Evans. He then would deliver them to me. I do not send any reply so that Draco will not be implicated. Unfortunately, he feels he is being watched, and they keep taking him on raids. So far he has just been made to watch."

"What does he say about his father?"

"He said he constantly likes to practice *Cruciatius* curses on him and his mother. His father is a madman, blinded by prejudice and hate."

"You believe Draco is telling you the truth?"

"Yes, he was terrified of Voldemort. I scanned him that day before he helped me to escape."

"How did he aid you in your escape?"

"Voldemort had him guard me, but while he was gone Draco asked me to help him. That's when we agreed that he would keep me posted of anything happening. Once I was certain he was telling me the truth, and the information was good, I would see what I could do to help him. Here, these are all the letters he has sent me," Harry pulled out a small stack of envelopes held together with a rubber band, and gave them to Dumbledore. "He's scared to death that he will be caught and sent to Azkaban."

"You should not have kept this information from me, Child."

"I passed on everything he told me. I just didn't want Voldemort to find out he was a traitor, but he is getting suspicious. Headmaster, we need to get Draco to safety. He will let himself be captured if you can alert the Aurors he is on our side."

"They will still want to question him under the influence of Veritaserum."

"He knows that, and is willing so long as you are there. I think Snape should be there too. Draco always liked him, and they do have something in common now, don't they?"

"To some degree, yes. I will see what I can do to help the boy."

"Thank you," she hugged the old man.

"Is there anything else you wish to tell me?"

"I am worried. Draco says Voldemort is up to something concerning the Weasley's and myself. I'm used to his trying to get to me and feel safe, but I am scared for Mr. and Mrs. Weasley."

"What about Sirius?"

"You know I'm worried about him too. If something should happen..." Harry couldn't finish the thought, and Dumbledore put a comforting arm around her shoulder.

"Every precaution is being taken to keep them all safe. You know that."

"Not every precaution," she looked up into his blue eyes, her green ones reflecting her worry, "I have decided to let you have Severus hypnotize me. I have done some reading for the past few weeks, and it seems to be okay; but I want you and Remus to be there with me. The thought of someone playing with my head scares me."

"Child, I would be surprised if it didn't. Of course, I will be there with you. Would you be willing to allow him to do so this evening?"

"This evening?" she questioned alarmed. "Do you think we need to do it so soon? I thought perhaps this Friday when I would be staying."

"I can arrange for you to stay tonight. I'm sure Circe will find you something to sleep in. I understand your anxiety, but if things are as imminent as Draco has told you we need to gather as much information as possible as quickly as we can."

"I understand, Headmaster," Harry responded nervously.

"Now, hold onto me. We will apparate to Severus town home."

Harry put her arms around Dumbledore, and they quickly vanished, reappearing outside of the Potion Master's London residence. Harry had learned that many wizards lived in the area, and worked for the Ministry. Circe met them at the door with Phaedra in tow.

"I was getting worried. You are late returning, Albus."

"Harry and I took a little walk. She needed to discuss a few things with me. Harry will be spending the night tonight, Circe. I would appreciate it if you would go and get Severus and meet me in the parlor. I need to speak with both of you. Harry will you keep an eye on Phaedra while I speak with her mother and uncle?"

"Of course, come on Phaedra, we can go and find out what Dobby is up to."

"The house elf? Mummy says you should not disturb them when they are working."

"Well Dobby is a personal friend of mine. He is a free house elf and gets paid by Dumbledore," Harry explained leading the way into the house. "Which way is the kitchen?"

"Over this way." She replied leading the way.



They entered the kitchen, which was large and bright. The elves were scurrying about making sandwiches for lunch and setting up for the evening meal. Dobby was sitting at a long table chopping carrots. He had looked up when they entered and his face broke into a huge grin.

"Harry Potter," he beamed, "what can Dobby do for you?"

"You can put that knife down and tell me if you have had any other news."

"No, Miss Harry. I brought you the letter that came yesterday. Have you heard from Master Ron or Miss Hermione?"

"Yes, Ron is having a blast and so is his sister Ginny. They are really learning a lot about dragons. Ginny is also interested in some boy she met in Romania, but with two brothers keeping a close watch it isn't easy to date," Harry grinned with understanding. "Miss Hermione is in New York, and went to the Museum of Natural History."

"Miss Harry, are they your friends?" Phaedra asked curiously.

"Yes, honey, my best friends. We all met on the Hogwarts Express almost seven years ago."

"Miss Phaedra, forgive my bad manners," Dobby jumped up from the table, "can I get you some cookies or juice?"

"Can I have a cookie, Miss Harry? Mummy doesn't usually let me eat so close to lunch time."

"I don't think one cookie will hurt. I will tell your mum I let you have it," Harry said as Dobby gave Phaedra a big oatmeal cookie.

"Thank you Dobby."

"Dobby is Phaedra doing a good job helping with Snuffles?"

"Yes, yes ,yes...she feeds her with me every night and makes sure she gets water. She also plays with her every day before her nap," Dobby replied jumping up and down with excitement.

"Good, now I think maybe we had better go back upstairs and let the elves finish their work."

Harry took Phaedra by the hand and returned to the hall. Snape, Circe, and Dumbledore were just emerging from the parlor.

"Phaedra, I see you have a cookie. You know you aren't supposed to eat this close to lunch."

"I let her have it Circe. I didn't know how long you would be. I didn't think one cookie would hurt," Harry explained calmly.

"That's all right, Harry. I understand. Are you both ready for some shopping? I need to buy Phaedra some new clothes. She's growing like a weed. I also want to get you some things, Harry, my treat."

"Thank you, Circe, but I can't accept."

"Nonsense, I have something in mind that I think you will enjoy. I know Phaedra and I do."

"You'll like it Miss Harry. Can I tell her mummy? Please?"

"No, Phaedra it will be our surprise. Harry has a lot on her mind just now, and this will help her to feel better and relax."

"Oh...all right," The little girl pouted at her mother.

"Harry we are going to Diagon Alley, so you will need some floo powder. It is in the can over here by the hearth. Come on Phaedra, you will go with me and Harry will follow," Circe said taking her daughter by the hand. "Diagon Alley," she stated, entering the hearth, and throwing the powder disappeared.

"God, I hate floo powder. You really should teach me to apparate," Harry grinned at Dumbledore and Snape who were both shaking their heads negatively. "Diagon Alley," she threw the floo powder and felt herself moving rapidly through the floo system. Harry appeared in a little shop just at the beginning of the street.

"Welcome, Miss Potter," a plump little witch, no bigger than Professor Flitwick greeted her, as Circe and Phaedra looked on. "I am Agatha Flitwick. I believe my brother is one of your teachers at Hogwarts."

"Yes, he is, and a very good one at that," Harry replied, and the little witch beamed back at her.

Glancing about the shop, Harry realized they were in children's clothing shop. The clothes were all expensive looking and tailor made. Phaedra was looking at some pretty dresses, and Circe motioned for Harry to follow her. They went over to the little girl who was picking out what she wanted.

"Can I have this pretty blue one, Mummy?"

"Let's try it on first. Miss Flitwick will help you," she told her daughter as the other woman led her to the dressing room.

"I have been wanting to get you alone, Harry. I need to talk to you about Severus."

A knot formed in Harry's stomach, "Is something the matter?"

"No, you are actually starting to bring him out of his shell. Nevertheless, I must warn you. He has suffered a great deal. I know that as an empath you can feel his pain. I love my little brother very much, and I don't want to see him hurt again."

"Look mummy, see how pretty I look!" Phaedra skipped from the dressing room.

"You look absolutely adorable," Circe smiled, "now go and try on the green one."

"Yes, mummy," Phaedra ran back to where Agatha Flitwick was waiting.

Circe turned her attention back to Harry. "He suffered a great loss when his wife and son were killed. It caused him to become bitter and withdrawn. The only good that came out of it was that he realized he had been wrong to follow the Dark Lord. All he wanted was revenge. Do you know how they died, Harry?"

Harry just shook her head, unable to speak. She had not expected Circe to address her in this fashion.

"My brother did not want to kill Muggles. He saw no point to hurting innocent people just for the sport of killing. He told Voldemort that he could use his talents to better purposes and that he would no longer go on raids that would not help to further their cause. He believed the Muggles posed no threat to our world and told the Dark Lord he should use his powers to improve the wizarding world. He didn't understand then that Voldemort was a mad man. All Voldemort wanted was to eradicate the Muggles from the world completely. He was nothing more than a tyrant, no better than some of the Muggle dictators through out history. Instead of a witch hunter he was a Muggle hunter."

"Mummy I don't like this one," Phaedra interrupted coming out of the dressing room.

"Hmm...Turn around and let me see the back," Circe instructed her.

Phaedra modeled the back and Circe frowned. "Agatha do you have something similar but with a lower waist?" Circe asked the shopkeeper.

"I most certainly do," she pulled out another dress. "Come along Phaedra, let's see if this one looks any better." Phaedra followed her back to the dressing room.

"So what happened?" Harry asked timidly as soon as they were out of earshot.

"Voldemort was furious. He sent Severus out on another raid, but he refused to participate in the torture. When he got back, Voldemort was smiling at him, and sent him home. When he got there the dark mark was hanging over his house. He couldn't believe it, and rushed inside. Camilla was in the living room, hanging upside down. She had been raped and tortured, and then her throat was cut. He found baby Marcus up in his crib. At first he thought he had been spared, but when he got close...he saw..." Circe stopped to control her emotions, and Harry could feel the pain and anguish. "He was lying there; just staring...he had been given the Dementors Kiss. Severus had to...to...perform the *Avadra Kedavra* curse on his soulless little body."

"Mummy, look at me now! Don't I look pretty?" Phaedra had come from the dressing room.

"That's more like it. What do you think, Harry?"

"I think Phaedra looks pretty no matter what she has on," Harry smiled at the little girl, but inside her mind was swirling. Snape had been forced to stop his child from living as a soulless shell. His wife was tortured to death and all because he stood up to Voldemort. 'God how many families has this evil wizard torn apart?'

"Miss Harry! You aren't listening to me!" Phaedra said sharply, distressed by Harry's distraction.

"I'm sorry honey; I had something else on my mind. I didn't mean to ignore you."

"I said which one do you like better?"

"I like them both. How about trying on a pink one?"

"Mummy said only two dresses today. She wants to buy me some other things too."

"Try on the pink one anyway. If it looks good I will buy it for you. All little girls should have at least one pink dress," Harry said adamantly and Circe eyed her with curiosity.

"Did you have a pink dress?" Phaedra asked curiously.

"No, Phaedra, I had to dress like a boy. So I will buy you the pink dress I never got to have," she smiled, her eyes moist. "Miss Flitwick, could you help Phaedra find a pretty pink dress. Something like a princess might wear?"

"Of course, Miss Potter, I will be delighted to do so." Agatha Flitwick led Phaedra back to the dresses while Harry and Circe finished their conversation.

"Circe, what happened after..." Harry couldn't bring herself to finish the sentence.

"Severus was on the verge of collapse. He called me and I sent for Dumbledore for him. He was like a broken doll. He had married young, like your parents, and now it was all gone. All he could think about was avenging his family. He went to work for Dumbledore as a spy. He didn't care what happened to him anymore. When Voldemort disappeared and you were spared he knew he had to look out for you. We all knew the Dark Lord would come back, it was just a matter of time."

"He hated me you know. At least now I know why," Harry could not look at Circe. She was as confused by her feelings for Severus Snape as she was for Sirius. 'Damn, why is this happening to me? Why can't I just be attracted to someone closer to my own age?'

"It doesn't always work that way, Harry," Circe was looking at her oddly, and Harry jumped, realizing that Circe was as much a telepath as Harry was an empath. "I apologize. I had to be sure you weren't playing adolescent games with my brother's affections," Circe hugged Harry, realizing that she was confused and worried. She whispered softly into her ear, "You are right. He was angry that James Potter's son was allowed to live, while his was not. He knew he was also bound to fulfill his obligation to that child since James had saved his life."

"You know what happened?"

"With the werewolf, yes, I know all about it. I also know you care a good deal for Lupin too."

"Well James Potter's son turned out to be a girl and threw a monkey wrench into the whole thing," Harry said trying to smile at the memory of Snape's expression when he found out.

"He stopped hating you long before that. He wanted everyone to believe he had it in for you. It was safer for you that way."

"I know, it hasn't been easy for any of us. How can one man be so evil?"

"I wish I could answer that question. Now here comes Phaedra, and she looks absolutely precious."

"Do I really look like a princess, Miss Harry?"

"Your Highness," Harry teased, "you will be the belle of the ball."

Phaedra giggled with delight and curtsayed to Harry.

"Do you have the other items I requested, Agatha?" Circe asked the shopkeeper.

"Oh my, yes, I have all the new outfits and under things all ready. Do you want the dresses?"

"We'll take all three."

"No, I insist on paying for the pink one myself," Harry told her stubbornly, "it's the pink dress my mother never got to put on me, so I will see that it goes to Phaedra."

"Very well, but you are spoiling my daughter," Circe grinned, "first cookies and now clothes."

"She's like my little sister," Harry looked at Phaedra with affection.

They paid for their purchases and left the shop. Phaedra couldn't help stopping to look in all the windows. She was fascinated when they passed Ollivander's and saw a young wizard buying a wand. Mr. Ollivander nodded to them from the shop and came over to the door. He gave Phaedra a lollipop and spoke briefly with Harry and Circe.

"When can I get a wand, mummy?"

"When you are old enough to go to Hogwarts," Circe informed her.

"How old is that?"

"Eleven," Circe and Harry said in unison smiling.

"Am I old enough for a broom?"

"Not yet. It would be better if you wait to learn to fly when you go off to Hogwarts."

"How come I can't do anything."

"You have to learn how to control the magic, otherwise someone might get hurt."

"Don't worry, Phaedra, you will learn very fast when the time comes," Harry comforted her, as Circe checked the time.

"Oh, my goodness, it's time for lunch. Come on Harry, we will go to The Golden Dragon for lunch."

"Sounds like a Chinese restaurant."

"It is the only one on Diagon Alley. They make the best sweet and sour chicken this side of London."

"Can we have our tea leaves read mummy?"

"Naturally, it is part of the atmosphere."

Circe led the way up the block and into the restaurant. It was crowded and they had to wait a few minutes for a table. Harry was interested in this part of Diagon Alley since she was unfamiliar with it and kept looking out the window at the different shops. There were two other restaurants, a haberdasher with a variety of witches and wizards hats displayed in the window, and a beauty shop. Harry assumed it was a unisex shop as both wizards and witches were coming and going.

"How many please?" a familiar voice asked, and Harry whirled around,

"Cho!" she smiled with delight at seeing an old school friend. Cho Chang

had been a year ahead of her in school and had completed her wizard's training this past year.

"Harry, how have you been? Are you having a good summer?"

"Better than usual, what are you doing here?"

"I work as the hostess. My family own the Golden Dragon."

"I never knew, if I had I would have come in sooner," Harry laughed in response. "Cho this is Professor Snape's sister, and her daughter."

"I know, Miss Snape and Phaedra come here all the time Is it just the three of you for lunch?"

"Yes, Cho," Circe replied smiling at the two young witches.

They followed Cho to a secluded booth near the rear of the restaurant. Harry noticed that an old Chinese wizard was sitting in a little alcove, drinking tea. He was wearing red and gold robes embroidered with Chinese dragons. The old man looked up as Harry sat down. She had the distinct impression that he had been waiting for her.

"That is my great grandfather, Chin Chang," Cho whispered to Harry, "he is good friends with Dumbledore, though not as old. You seem to have caught his interest."

"Is that a good thing?" Harry asked uneasily.

"It generally means he has been waiting for you. He will want to read your tea leaves," Cho explained as the old man smiled and nodded towards Harry, "just go over when you have finished your meal. Phaedra will take you, she loves having her tea leaves read," Cho winked. "The waitress will be here in a minute. Would you like something to drink?"

"Can I have some soda, mummy?"

"You can have some lemon soda," Phaedra. "What would you like to eat?"

"I want some noodles, you know the kind mummy."

"Lo Mien," Circe commented, "as soon as the waitress comes, I will order it for you."

"Harry would you like something to drink?" Cho inquired.

"I'll have an iced tea with lemon."

"Make that two," Circe nodded and Cho disappeared with a smile.

"I should have realized you would know Cho. It was silly of me not to."

"Not really, she was a year ahead of me and in Hufflepuff. We aren't close friends, but share our love of Quidditch."

"Do you have many friends, Harry?"

"No, not really. I have two best friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. I'm really friends with all the other Weasley's too. I'm also friends with Neville Longbottom, and a few of the others in my house. Mostly the boys in my year, since I was with them for so long. I'm considered one of the guys. Ginny Weasley and Hermione are my two closest girl friends."

"How about amongst the Muggles. Have you any friends there?"

"No, I was picked on in school because of my clothes. I was made to wear my cousin's hand me downs, which were too big for me. I kept to myself a lot because my cousin was such a bully. He would intimidate anyone who tried to be friendly with me."

"Your mother's family do not sound very friendly."

"Dumbledore says they're afraid of the magic," Harry said trying to excuse them.

"Humph...that is no excuse, especially since your mother was a witch. Your aunt should have been used to it. Seems more like she is jealous."

"Don't feel bad, Miss Harry. Me and mummy are your friends and so is Uncle Severus. Mr. Remus and Headmaster Mr. Dumbledore are too."

"Phaedra, I'm going to tell you a secret. It isn't how many friends you have, but the kind of friends you have that's important. I would rather have a few good close friends than a whole lot of friends who don't really care about me."

The waitress appeared then, and took their orders. Circe ordered Lo Mien for Phaedra as promised, and sweet and sour chicken for herself. Harry had decided on shrimp with lobster sauce.

The food was delicious, and Harry and Circe got to know each other better. Circe was surprised when Harry asked her about the jewelry Snape had given his sister for Christmas. She had been delighted with the present, and wondered why her brother had changed his usual selection of just earrings.

"So, you were last years Christmas detention student?" she had laughed with delight. "You have such good taste I'll just have to tell my little brother to make sure he gives you detention again this year."

"No thanks, but I will offer to help him pick you something anyway," she laughed.

"Uncle Severus sent me a pretty dolly from Santa," Phaedra chimed in, "she cries and everything."

"Can I see her sometime; I never had a doll of my own."

"You never had dolls?" Phaedra wondered wide-eyed.

"No, I was pretending to be a boy. I did have an old stuffed animal; I believe it was a dog, but my aunt threw it away," Harry's face darkened at the memory.

It had come with her as a baby, and she had carried it with her everywhere. Her aunt had thrown it out when she was four. Harry could still remember crying as the trash was picked up. Dudley was laughing. She suddenly became aware of Circe watching her and knew the older witch was using her telepathy.

"I apologize, Harry," Circe lowered her eyes.

"Mummy can I share my dollies with Miss Harry?"

"Of course dear," she smiled lovingly at her daughter, placing one of her hands on Harry's shoulder to comfort the painful memory.

Following their meal, Circe ordered dessert for all of them consisting of Chinese pastries, cakes, and a pot of tea, along with a glass of milk for Phaedra. The Chinese tea was stronger than the English tea Harry was used to drinking, and she found it to her liking. She sat relaxing as Phaedra stuffed a cookie into her mouth.

Looking up, she had the distinct impression that she was being watched and saw Cho's great grandfather staring at her. He smiled and bowed his head, motioning to Cho. They spoke to each other in Chinese and then Cho came over to their table.

"Great grandfather has asked me to tell you that there will be no charge for your meal. He is honored that someone as renowned as Harry Potter has seen fit to dine in our humble restaurant. He hopes you have enjoyed your meal," Cho related graciously, amused at Harry's discomfiture.

"Tell your grandfather he is most welcome," Circe nodded smiling in the old man's direction as Harry opened her mouth to protest.

"Harry, my great grandfather would be insulted if you refused," Cho informed her knowingly. "He would also like to meet you. I told you he would like to read your tea leaves."

"Can I have my tea leaves read too?" Phaedra begged.



"Of course, Little One," a soft voice spoke from behind Harry, "don't I always have time for you?"

Harry turned around and saw Mr. Chang standing there smiling. Harry had not seen him move from the alcove.

"Mr. Chang, you did not have to get up. I would have sent Harry over to you," Circe nodded. "We are honored to have you at our table."

The old man bowed and Cho pulled over a chair for him to sit on before returning to her duty as hostess.

"I am honored to have the Phoenix come into my humble establishment," he looked calmly at Harry, his dark eyes warm. Harry was immediately put at ease.

"I am fortunate then to have someone as wise as you to help guide me on my journey." Harry had no idea why she had made this reply, but it had seemed to make sense.

"Why do you call Miss Harry a phoenix? What is it?"

"Hush Phaedra, do not interrupt Mr. Chang," Circe scolded gently.

"There was no dishonor intended Circe; the little one is just curious. A phoenix is a magical bird. It is native to my country, China. Harry Potter possesses its virtues," the old man explained. "She is like the phoenix."

"Is it a pretty bird?"

"Phaedra, have you ever seen Dumbledore's bird?" Harry questioned.

"The pretty red one?"

"Yes, he is red and gold. His name is Fawkes, and he is a phoenix."

"I've seen him. He cried on my boo boo when I fell and cut my knee. He made it all better. Can you do that too?"

"Yes, Phaedra, I can," Harry winked with a chuckle.

"You are most remarkable, Miss Potter," Chin Chang smiled broadly. "It is most unusual to find one with the heart of the lion, cunning of the serpent, and power of the phoenix. The fates have seen fit to bless you. Your destiny is to be one of greatness, but your way has not always been easy, and there is still much strife ahead," he studied her intently frowning at her tealeaves. "You have suffered much pain and there is great darkness and evil which is yet to be overcome. You must remember that fear will be your greatest enemy; love your staunchest ally. When you speak to the one who knows your soul you will be speaking to yourself. Look for her before the final battle. To conquer the evil you must first conquer your fear, and then the love will see you through. Trust in the power of the three, for they are your courage, your strength, and your endurance, as you will be theirs. This has been written in the stars. The love of your mother will guide your hand, and the one who is like a brother will be there when you need him."

Harry stared at the old man, who smiled and bowed his head. She knew her tea leaves had told him of the prophecy, yet there were things he had told her that had not been mentioned. She was confused and worried. What was he talking about when he said she would talk to herself? Then there was the fear. How did he know she was still very much afraid that she may be going to die fighting Lord Voldemort. How would the love see her through? Finally, he too had mentioned Ron, just as the watcher elf, Artemis had done. What role was her dearest friend going to play in the final battle? It was all too much for her to digest. The old man simply patted her hand with understanding, and like Dumbledore filled her with warmth.

"Will you read mine now?" Phaedra asked confused by the look on Harry's face, as Circe shifted uncomfortably.

"Ah...Little One. It will be my honor," the old man beamed at Phaedra. He studied her tea leaves, and scowled, his frown deepening. "Little One, a time is coming when you will need to be very brave. You will be afraid but someone will come and help you. You will take a journey with the Phoenix who will bring you to a place of safety."

He then looked solemnly at Circe, studying her leaves too. "You will do your best to protect the Little One, but it will fall to the Phoenix to bring her safely back to you. There will be many hours of great heartache, but the three whose destiny lie with the Phoenix will be there to offer comfort and support. Trust in them and the guardian of them all."

The old man then stood, bowed, and walked back to his alcove. Circe was visibly shaken, and Harry was unnerved by his reading. The only one who seemed unaffected was Phaedra, who was babbling about going on a trip with the Phoenix. Circe collected their packages and hurried them all from the restaurant. They followed her up the street and Phaedra was becoming aware that something was wrong with her mother.

"Mummy are you sick? You look like I did when my tummy hurt."

"What? Oh no, I was just thinking," she told her daughter with a forced smile. "It's time for us to give Harry her surprise. Do you think she will like it?"

"I know she will," Phaedra laughed excitedly. "Will we see Miss Amanda?"

"Yes, we will be seeing Miss Amanda, and then we will make one other stop."

"Where are we going?" Harry asked curiously.

"You'll see," Circe chuckled, her mood brightening as Phaedra skipped along side of them.

Harry followed Circe through the myriad twists and turns of Diagon Alley. She had no idea that it was actually as long as this. They turned off onto another street after a few minutes and she found herself on Pentacle Alley. She looked around amazed. Up to now, she had only been on Diagon Alley, and had a brief and unpleasant experience on Knockturn Alley just prior to her second year at Hogwarts. This street was full of shops, and other businesses, which catered to an elite clientele. Circe noticed Harry's nervousness, and winked at her playfully.

"I know what you're thinking, and you don't have to worry. This is mine and Phaedra's treat."

"I know you are not in my head, so I can only assume you noticed my body language?"

"Naturally, so don't you worry. I will not invade your privacy again without your permission. Like you, I can block out others," Circe reassured her. "Ah...here we are," she stopped in front of Amanda's beauty salon, "we are going to have our nails and hair done. My dear you need a little pampering and feminizing. Mrs. Weasley has agreed with me. The men and women at Hogwarts along with your girl friends have done a remarkable job, but you need some polishing. A new hair style and manicure will work wonders. It also helps to perk one up when they are worried or feeling depressed."

"You spoke with Molly Weasley?"

"Certainly, I work for the Ministry, didn't you know?"

Harry just shook her head and followed Circe and Phaedra into the beauty salon. Her nostrils were immediately assaulted with the smell of ammonia, hair spray, and nail polish remover. She had never been in a beauty parlor, let alone one for witches. Apparently, they used many of the same techniques as the Muggle women. A young witch of perhaps thirty, came over to meet them.

"Circe I see you are right on time. It's good to see you again, and how are you doing Phaedra?" she smiled at the little girl.

"I'm fine, Miss Amanda. We're having a day of beauty."

"I know, your mum told me. Is this the young woman you said you would be bringing along?" she asked turning to face Harry. "Oh my gosh...you're..."

"Harry Potter," Harry finished for her. It was just another case of Harry Potter shock syndrome. "I'm very pleased to meet you Miss...Er..."

"Amanda Whitehead. It is such an honor to meet you Miss Potter. I didn't know you knew the Snape family."

"Circe's brother teaches at Hogwarts. He is the Potion Master."

"I didn't go to Hogwarts myself, I went to school in France, Beaubaxtons. You must have heard of it. I believe they were in the last Tri Wizard Tournament a few years back."

"Yes, we competed against them; Hogwarts won."

"That's right! I had forgotten you were in the tournament."

"Amanda, I don't think Harry wants to talk about herself. She is a very modest person," Circe informed the beautician. "I brought her here so you could work some of your magic on her. She is so pretty, but needs a little finishing off."

"You're absolutely right. I know her history. They made her pretend to be a boy. I have heard of the Prophecy of Mathias. We actually studied it while I was in school. It was dismissed when He Who Must Not Be Named disappeared," Amanda babbled as she led Harry over to have her hair washed. She then seated Circe and Phaedra.

Once they were all shampooed, she curled Phaedra's long blond hair, and pulled it off her face with a blue ribbon. She looked absolutely adorable, and Harry knew that she was going to be a beautiful woman. Next, she turned to Circe, who preferred to keep her black locks fairly short. She had Amanda style her hair in layers, and while not a beautiful woman, she was quite handsome. Harry had the feeling that her brother would look more like his sister if he put on some weight and did something with his hair. Unfortunately, they both had the same nose. She supposed it was a family trait.

"Now, Miss Potter, it's your turn. How would you like your hair?"

"I have no idea. Now that it has gotten fairly long, I have just been braiding it. I do want some sort of bang though to cover my scar."

"Your hair is very thick, I think you should have it layered and styled to frame your face. It can be left long.. This way you can still wear a French braid or put it up."

"I think that is a wonderful idea," Circe agreed, "let's see how it looks, and go from there."

Harry watched nervously as the beautician cut her hair. She had taken great pains to let it finally get long, and now they were going to cut it. She had no idea how to work with her hair other than what Professor McGonagall had shown her. She was just praying it would come out okay. Amanda finally finished and turned Harry to face the mirror.

"Miss Harry, you look beautiful," Phaedra said happily.

Harry stared at the image in front of her and smiled. For the first time in her life, she felt pretty, and was stunned at the difference the new style made. She had thought of herself as plain, but she was anything but.

"Now, lets get her a manicure and trim her brows. Then we will make our next stop," Circe announced pleased with the results.

Harry suffered through another half hour of nerves, not to mention the discomfort of having her eyebrows waxed. Her nails had been painted and neatly manicured, and she was finally finished. She left the shop grinning happily.

"Where are we going now?" she asked Circe as they walked back in the opposite direction.

"You'll see," she answered with a mysterious smile.

"Mummy is going to make you even prettier," Phaedra giggled.

"This is our final stop, "Circe said as they came to a halt in front of the local eye doctor.

"Circe, my glasses are fine. I don't need new ones."

"You aren't getting new glasses. I think you need to stop hiding those beautiful green eyes. It's time for contact lenses. When your a little older there is eye surgery to correct your eyesight if you want to have it, but this will do for now."

"Circe, I can't afford contact lenses, and the Dursley's won't pay for them."

"No, but your godfather will. Molly Weasley spoke with him, and he agreed you should be allowed to get them," she told Harry, nudging her into the shop.

The eye doctor had been expecting them, and took Harry's glasses. He then did a thorough eye exam and told them that after she turned eighteen and had stopped growing she could have the eye surgery to correct her near sightedness. In the meantime, he made up a pair of contact lenses with a wave of his wand. Harry found them uncomfortable at first, but the eye doctor showed her how to put them in and out and take proper care of them. She would keep her glasses for days when she didn't wish to wear the lenses or if she had to get up during the night. She was to get used to the lenses gradually, and wear them for several hours each day until the end of the week, when she should be able to tolerate them on a daily basis for long periods. They were extended wear lenses, so she need not worry if she fell asleep with them in, but it would be better if she didn't always sleep in them. By the time they were ready to leave the eye doctor, she felt like a different person.

"What do you think everyone will say?" Harry asked nervously as they prepared to return to Professor Snape's house.

"Their heads will all turn. We will have to take a picture for your godfather. It will be another ten days until he returns. Remus can see that he gets it."

"I think they will all say you look like a princess!" Phaedra hugged her, pleased that Harry liked her new self.

"Then lets go and show them how we all look, since we all had a day of beauty," Harry grinned saucily.

They stepped up to the hearth in the eye doctor's and took some floo powder. As usual, Circe and Phaedra went first, and Harry followed.

Emerging from the hearth in the Snape's parlor, she looked around and saw Remus Lupin sitting with Severus and Dumbledore. Phaedra had run over to her uncle and was sitting on his lap. Circe was talking with Lupin and Dumbledore.

"Princess," Remus Lupin was grinning broadly at the sight of her, "Phaedra said you were beautiful, and she was right. Sirius will want to keep you under wraps. He was nervous before, but when he sees you now..."

"Miss Potter...Harry...", Snape said coming over to her. He gently cupped her chin in his hand, his dark eyes sparkling, locked with her green ones. "If Antony had seen you first, Cleopatra wouldn't have had a chance."

"Thank you, Professor," Harry replied graciously, cheeks burning. 'Damn you Severus Snape, you have my stomach in knots,' she thought as Phaedra giggled.

"Uncle Severus, who was Cleopatra?"

"She was a queen of ancient Egypt. Many men sought her, but Antony won her heart."

"I think we need a picture to send to Sirius. He will never believe this," Remus shook his head.

"I have a camera in the other room," Circe told them, "I brought it just for this occasion. Albus, I'm glad to see that at least you are not acting like a love sick school boy," she said going to get the camera.

"I'm too stunned to move. Perhaps I should reconsider your proposal Harry?" Dumbledore teased recalling their conversation last June. Harry had told him that she wanted the man she married to be just like him, and had playfully asked him to marry her.

"Anytime, Professor Dumbledore," she winked laughing.

"Miss Harry, are you really going to marry Headmaster Mr. Dumbledore? I want you to marry Uncle Severus."

"Phaedra, right now I'm not going to marry anyone. I'm too young to get married," Harry explained as Snape went over to his niece, eyeing Harry speculatively.

"Okay, here's the camera," Circe said coming back into the room.

"I think we should all be in the picture. I want Sirius and Mrs. Weasley to see how nice we all look," Harry told Circe, motioning for Phaedra to come over to her.

"Then we should take one of you alone, since I'm sure Sirius Black would want one."

"I have a better idea. My godfather is noted for his history of playing practical jokes so..." Harry grabbed Snape and Remus and positioned them on either side of the sofa. She then carefully sat down between them on Dumbledore's lap, with her arm around him. Now take the picture, but I want to write something on the bottom of it," she grinned playfully.

"This I have to see," Circe remarked as she snapped the photo. She then took the Polaroid from the camera and handed it to Harry.

Harry had Circe wave her wand over the picture as she whispered into her ear. Circe laughed aloud and then showed the picture to the three men, who laughed in unison. She had put a brief inscription on the bottom. *"Payback is a bitch. You left a sly old fox, a snake, and a wolf guarding the hen house!"*

"I do believe he will be extra sure to return on time, Harry, once he sees this, now how about a picture of all three of you lovely ladies together," Dumbledore suggested warmly.

"All right, but I also want a picture of Circe and Phaedra."

They took a few more photos and then moved into the dining room for dinner. Harry was happy and relaxed, and Dumbledore was glad, since once Phaedra was put to bed he would have Severus do the hypnosis. Circe had agreed to be present too, this way if Harry became frightened she could contact her telepathically along with Severus. Remus would see that everything was written down, so they could plan what to do, and notify Alastor Moody.

Following dinner Harry relaxed with Remus over a game of chess, with Phaedra watching intently. Remus won two out of three games and then Circe announced that it was time for Phaedra to go to bed.

"Do I have to Mummy? I want to try and play chest."

"Not chest, dear. It is Chess. There is no 'T' on the end of it."

"Chess," she repeated. "Can't Miss Harry teach me tonight?"

"Not tonight, Little One. Miss Harry needs to do something with me. "She will teach you on Saturday," Dumbledore said picking her up and handing her to her mother with a kiss.

"Oh, all right," Phaedra pouted with a yawn.

"I will be down in a little while," Circe told them as she left to put her daughter to bed.

Harry just sat quietly, petting Snuffles who was lying on the floor beside her chair. She was missing Sirius, and wished he were here with her. She wondered what he would say when Remus delivered her picture and smiled inwardly. She was counting the days till the end of July. Her thoughts were interrupted by Remus.

"He'll be back in only a few more days. Then you can leave the Dursley's. I know he's looking forward to it as much as you."

"It feels like forever since he left, yet it is only a few weeks."

"I know, he feels the same way. He sent you something. I had forgotten to give it to you," Remus reached into his robe pulling out a small box. Harry opened it and found a pair of gold earrings.

"They're lovely, but I don't have pierced ears."

"He knows, he said if you want to have them pierced to go ahead and he would pay for it. If you don't he can exchange the earrings for something else."

"Not a prayer. Do you think he would say anything if I got a tattoo? It's all the rage with the Muggle teens."

"I don't know about Black, but I will personally see that you do detention for the entire school year if I so much as hear the word tattoo," Snape said from where he was sitting reading.

"He means it, Child. Severus does not want to hear of anyone ever getting a tattoo."

"That wasn't the kind I had in mind, Professor. I was only kidding, anyway; but I will defer to your judgment in this matter," Harry relented realizing the subject of tattooing was a very touchy one with him.

Circe picked that moment to reappear and began lowering the lamps.

"Ah...Circe, why are you lowering the lamps? I thought your brother was going to hypnotize me. I didn't think he was in the mood for a séance," Harry quipped.

"The darkened room will help you to relax. Besides, we are only lowering some of them. If we were having a séance we would have only candlelight," Circe replied amused. "I think you

might like some incense too. This one is an apple cinnamon," she explained, setting the incense to burn.

Harry could feel Snape watching her. Dumbledore was sitting off in a corner, his head resting on his chest. He appeared to be half-asleep, but Harry and the others knew better. Remus had removed his quill and parchment from his briefcase. Seating himself at the desk in the corner, he was ready to record her statements.

"Severus, whenever you feel Harry is ready, you may begin," Dumbledore's soft voice came from the corner; he had neither moved nor opened his eyes.

"Very well, Albus," Snape replied moving over to where Harry sat watching him.

"You're too tense, Miss Potter," Snape remarked softly, "let me help you relax so we can begin." He calmly reached down and began to massage the back of her neck.

"Your muscles are very tight, there is no reason for you to feel anxious," he spoke softly, carefully kneading the muscles going down her shoulders. "Hypnosis is merely a deep state of relaxation. It is similar to REM sleep, when you are dreaming."

Snape's voice reminded her of a soft melody she had heard somewhere a long time ago. Harry couldn't help but remember the time he had massaged her cold feet when she had been trapped on the roof at Hogwarts last winter. 'I still think no man should have hands like that,' she thought groggily, nodding off. The incense was making her head spin, and Snape's massage was putting her to sleep. 'Crazy fool, he's supposed to hypnotize me, not put me out for the night. I feel like I could sleep for days...'

"Very nice Severus," Dumbledore looked up from where he had appeared to be dozing. "I think this may be some kind of record for you."

"Thank you, Albus. She didn't realize what I was doing, so she relaxed much faster. I was concerned she would fight against me."

"Are you sure she's not really asleep?" Remus asked doubtfully.

"Lupin, she is merely in a state of deep relaxation. Let me show you." Severus took a seat next to Harry. "Miss Potter, you will listen only to my voice. You will keep your attention focused on what I have to say. No one will hurt you and you will remain relaxed and calm. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"You feel free and your mind is clear. I want you to think back to your first look at Hogwarts. Can you tell me what you were doing?"

"We had just gotten off the train. The castle stood across the lake...I thought it was...beautiful."

"How did you feel?"



"Afraid...what if I really had...no...magic. What if it...were just a...pleasant dream. I would...wake up in...the cupboard...under the stairs."

"Okay, now you can move forward a little in time. You have the sorting hat on your head. It is looking into your heart and soul."

"Yes...I told it...not Slytherin." Snape looked sharply at Dumbledore. He had heard her say this once before, when she had told them about her dream. "The hat said...I...would do well...in Slytherin. I kept...saying not to...put me...there. It said...if not...Slytherin...it would...have to be...Gryffindor!"

"So you were sorted into Gryffindor?"

"Yes. I was...happy. My new...friend Ronald Weasley...was in Gryffindor. He told me...that most of...the wizards who...went bad had been...in Slytherin."

Snape shifted uncomfortably and sat up straighter.

"I want you to relax some more. You are going to think back to when you were four. Tell me what you see."

Harry started to cry like a little child, and Snape and Remus were immediately taken back.

"Why are you crying?"

"Aunt Petunia has thrown my doggie into the garbage. She called it a filthy rag! I want my doggie. Papa gave it to me! Aunt Petunia please give it back! Dudley is laughing. I want my toy doggie..." Harry wailed heartbroken.

"She told me this story this afternoon. We were talking about Phaedra's dolls," Circe whispered to her brother.

"Harry, it is all right, your doggie is safe. You can stop crying. Now I want you to listen to me. I want you to come forward in time. You are in the first day of Potions Class. I have just come into the room. What are you doing?"

"I am waiting. You stormed into the class as if you are angry. You are talking about defeating death...I am...taking notes...but you are upset with me...You are asking me...questions...I can't answer..."

"How did you feel when I questioned you?"

"Angry. You wanted to make a fool out of me. You were jealous. I could feel it. I told you to ask Hermione...you got nasty...embarrassed me...took five points...from Gryffindor. I sensed you...didn't like...me."

"All right. It was a long time ago. Do you think I don't like you now?" Everyone's attention was on Harry.

"No...you are...attracted...to...me. You are jealous...of Sirius. You think...I am...falling...in love...with him."

"Are you?" Snape questioned as Dumbledore cleared his throat warningly.

"I have...mixed...emotions. I care...for...all...three."

"Three? Who is the other one?"

"Remus," Harry's voice softened, "I don't mind that he's a werewolf. I think... it... makes him... rather interesting. I understand his pain."

"Severus, I believe you are supposed to be asking her about Lord Voldemort," Dumbledore had come to stand by Harry's chair, a look of stern disapproval on his face.

"I apologize, Headmaster," Snape lowered his eyes, "it was wrong of me to ask her personal questions. If you wish, I will tell her when she awakens and apologize for my invasion of her privacy," Snape looked at his mentor repentantly.

"See that you do so," Dumbledore nodded with approval. He knew it would be a difficult thing for the young wizard to apologize to Harry. "Now carry on with the questioning about Voldemort," he instructed resuming his seat.

"Harry, I want you to let your mind drift," Snape instructed her slowly. "I want you to feel the scar on your forehead and think about Lord Voldemort. Think about where he is."

"The scar...hurts...he...will know."

"No, Harry, he will not. You are safe in my home and Voldemort cannot touch you here. Let your mind find him."

"He's in a dungeon. McNair is with him...*Imperious* curse...They have...a...wizard...laughter. They're torturing...him. They want...to know...where...Mrs. Weasley is...his name...oh no...It is the Auror...Tom Clancy...He won't answer...*Cruciatus* curse...Voldemort is...impatient...No!" Harry screamed in terror.

"Harry you are in no danger. What did Voldemort do?" Snape asked smoothly, although he already knew the answer. They all did.

"*Avadra Kedavra* curse...Clancy ...wouldn't talk...Voldemort is leaving...anger...hatred...make it stop...pain...my scar..."

"Bring her out of it Severus," Remus concern showed in his face, "she's told us enough for now. We can try again some other time."

"Remus is right, Severus, we now know she can feel and see what he is doing. Their link is a strong one," Dumbledore considered thoughtfully.

"I'll raise the lamps," Circe told them quietly. "Albus do you want me to notify Moody about Tom Clancy?"

"Please do so immediately," he instructed as she quickly penned a letter to send to Mad Eye Moody at the Ministry.

"Harry, as I rub your neck you will begin to waken. You will feel relaxed and won't remember what happened. You will have no pain in your scar."

Snape had resumed his original position behind Harry and was gently rubbing her neck. She opened her eyes and looked around.

"I wish you would get this over with. If Professor Snape keeps this up, I will be ready for bed. He's supposed to hypnotize me, not put me to sleep for the night."

They all snickered, and Dumbledore spoke from across the room.

"Harry, Severus did hypnotize you. You have been under for about a half hour."

"Professor, that isn't funny. I have been sitting here just letting him rub my back. No body is that good."

"Princess, come over here and I'll prove it. I wrote everything you said down."

Snape immediately stiffened and Harry sensed his anxiety.

"Professor, why are you so tense?" she asked turning to look at him.

"I have to apologize to you, Harry. I asked you some questions which may disturb you," Snape explained stiffly, his face a mask.

"Like what?" Harry asked suspiciously, going to look at the parchment that was on the table in front of Remus. Snape did not answer; he just remained where he was, unmoving, while she scanned the parchment. "Oh no, Voldemort killed Tom Clancy! Isn't he the Auror that was with us when we questioned Pettigrew?" Harry demanded visibly upset.

"Yes, Child, we believe so. Circe has written a letter so Alastor Moody can investigate. That will tell us for certain whether your information is accurate."

"Miss Potter...I..." Snape began puzzled by her lack of expression about his asking about her feelings.

"Professor, there is nothing here that either of you didn't already know," she looked from one to the other. "It won't change how any of us feel or act towards each other. I'm only going to be seventeen. If Voldemort has his way, I may not live to see eighteen. In the mean time, we are all in checkmate, unable to make any kind of move. The three of you can't do anything until next summer when I will come of age. I can't do anything or it may jeopardize both your job and your lives. Voldemort has already targeted the three of you. If he even suspects there may be any kind of emotional involvement...Well I don't want to think about the possibilities."

"Princess," Remus began, "I doubt that even Albus could have said it better than that."

"Thank you," she smiled. "Professor Snape," Harry directed her attention to the Potions Master, "the next time you want to know about how I feel, just ask. If I want you to know, I'll tell you," Harry tossed her head defiantly.

Snape arched his brow in the familiar sardonic manner with the trace of a roguish smile, "I shall take that under advisement, Miss Potter."

"Professor Dumbledore, please let Sirius know to be extra careful. I have a bad feeling about all of this. I think Lord Voldemort is getting desperate. His followers are becoming more doubtful every time he fails to kill me. I won't feel safe until we're all back inside the walls of Hogwarts."

"I will, Child," Dumbledore cupped her chin gently. "I fear you are right, and time is growing short. Promise me that when you are with the Dursley's you won't venture outside very often."

"I promise, besides it isn't all that easy to try and ditch the Aurors you have shadowing me."

"I have no idea what you are talking about."

"Headmaster, you're a terrible liar," Harry grinned looking at him affectionately. "Now if no one minds, I'm going up to bed. Circe, do you want me to check on Phaedra when I go up?"

"Thank you, I would appreciate it. Sometimes she sleep walks."

"No problem. I will see you all in the morning. Good night."

"Good night," they responded in kind.

Harry went upstairs and quietly looked in on Phaedra. She was sleeping soundly with Mr. Hoppity Hop in her arms. Going into her own room, she changed her clothes putting on the nightgown that had been laid out for her and climbed into bed. She was worried about Sirius and the Weasleys. She was also embarrassed that her true feelings had been exposed. It troubled her that she had such conflicting feelings, but she had told them the truth. If Voldemort knew she cared for them, he would step up his attempts on all their lives. 'Oh, well,' she told herself drifting off to sleep, 'if I do survive my seventeenth year I'm going to have one hell of an eighteenth birthday.'

## ***Deatheaters and Dementors***

It had been over a week since Snape hypnotized Harry. She had been waiting for Dumbledore to tell her what he had learned, but thus far, there had been no answers forthcoming.

She was up in her room at the Dursley's lying on the bed following dinner and contemplating her birthday on Saturday. Sirius was to pick her up tomorrow, as he had promised. They were to spend the weekend at Professor Snape's town home. Where they were going from there, she had not been told for security reasons.

Harry smiled thinking about Sirius and Snape under the same roof. At least at Hogwarts they could be somewhat cordial since they were able to put a good deal of space between each other. It was going to be an interesting weekend.

Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon had been acting strange all week. They had been cleaning out the attic when Aunt Petunia had come across an old trunk. Her aunt had immediately sent Harry to her room, instructing Uncle Vernon to put the trunk into their bedroom. She had told him the articles they wanted would definitely be in there. After much grunting and swearing, the trunk had been moved from the attic to the master bedroom.

Her aunt had also been doing some rather odd things. Harry had found her in her room picking hair off of her pillowcase. She had also upset Hedwig. Uncle Vernon then came into the room yelling at Harry, "to keep that bloody bird quiet." During this commotion, her aunt had taken one of Hedwig's feathers from the floor and slipped it into her apron pocket. If she did not know better, she would have sworn that her aunt and uncle were trying to do magic. As she contemplated this ridiculous idea in her mind, a noxious odor seeped upstairs from the kitchen.

"Ugh, whatever is Aunt Petunia making? It smells awful!" Harry uttered wrinkling her nose. Hedwig hooted in agreement. She then peeked furtively out of her bedroom door at the sound of Uncle Vernon's voice from down the hall.

"I have it for you, Petunia, dear, you left it in the trunk."

"Well hurry up and bring it here. I think I have it right this time."

"Coming my dear," he bristled heading down stairs.

Harry couldn't believe her eyes. He was carrying a wand! Whose was it? Obviously it had come from inside of that trunk. Harry wasn't worried since she knew Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon had absolutely no magical ability what so ever. What they thought they were doing couldn't possibly work. Curiosity getting the better of her, she grabbed her invisibility cloak from where she had packed it in her trunk, and headed off down the hall to investigate.

Moving furtively so her aunt and uncle wouldn't hear her, she entered their bedroom. The trunk stood over by the window, and its lid had been left open. Kneeling down beside it, she cautiously began to examine the contents. Checking the name on the baggage label she was flabbergasted. It had belonged to Lily Evans! These were some of her mother's things. Upon closer examination she found an assortment of old textbooks from Hogwarts. There was also a

stack of old letters. Removing the rubber band, which held them together, she opened the one on top. It was a letter from her father written just prior to their wedding

*Dear Lily,*

*As I write this I can't help but shiver with the anticipation of holding you in my arms again. You are the light of my life, my true soul mate. No man has ever been happier than I am. I know that on Sunday you will be the most beautiful bride there ever was. I promise I will always make you happy and will love you till my dying day.*

*Sirius is here with me and is taking his duties as Best Man seriously. He says to tell you he will see to it that I get to Hogwarts in plenty of time for the ceremony, even if he has to put an imperious curse on me! Dumbledore has made all the arrangements to enable your family to travel to Hogwarts for the ceremony. Sirius and Remus are taking me out tonight for a last bachelor's night together. I promise not to look at any other girls.*

*I have to go now since it is almost time for Remus to pick up Sirius and me. I love you and miss you. You will be in my thoughts day and night and Sunday cannot come soon enough. I shall be waiting for you until then, when you will become my wife.*

*Love always,*

*James*

Harry realized tears were running down her face, as she had read her father's letter. Wiping her eyes furiously she had all she could do to control herself. These were her mother's things. How had Aunt Petunia gotten them and why had she kept them secreted in the attic all these years? As Lily's daughter they rightfully belonged to her. Her aunt had no right...

The doorbell suddenly rang and a moment later Harry was almost immediately aware of a spatial shift. It was similar to the one she had felt at Hogwarts the night Severus was attacked. Closing the trunk back up, she crept back out into the hallway. She could hear muffled voices coming from downstairs. Wrapping the invisibility cloak tightly around her, she tip toed to the top of the stairs and held her breath. Her uncle was speaking to whom ever had come to the door.

"Good evening, Mr. Malfoy, so glad you could come. Is this your son?"

"Yes, Mr. Dursley, this is Draco. I brought him along since I felt he needed to learn how business ought to be conducted," Malfoy replied smoothly, his icy tone lost on Vernon Dursley.

"Please come in and sit down. The parlor is this way," he said directing them into the living room.

Harry's heart was pounding. Whatever her aunt and uncle had thought they were doing it had placed them all in jeopardy. Harry slipped back into her room and grabbed her wand, concealing it beneath her clothes. Next she grabbed a piece of parchment and wrote a terse note: *Deatheaters at the Dursley's. Send help immediately.* Initialing it, she studied Hedwig and made a fast decision.

"I'm sorry, Hedwig, but I have to change your color. They will be watching for a white bird." She didn't want to use magic, knowing her enemies would be alerted that she was aware of their presence, so she took out the polish for her broom handle and rubbed it into Hedwig's feathers. The owl nipped at her indignantly, but did not try to escape. She was now a dark brown, and would not be easy to spot flying in the lengthening shadows of the early evening.

"Get that note over to Professor Snape's house fast. Dumbledore and the others should be there." Harry went over to the window, quietly sliding open the sash, allowing her to fly away. What Harry couldn't possibly know, was that Dumbledore was only a few blocks away, embroiled in a life and death battle to protect the Weasley's with Sirius. Voldemort had located their hiding place and sent in his Dementors...

Sirius had been in his animagus form of a large black shaggy dog, dozing by Molly Weasley's chair, when his sensitive hearing and olfactory nerves alerted him to some one moving around outside. Arthur Weasley and his son Percy had been sitting at the table, engrossed in a game of chess. Growling deep in his throat, he stood up; alerting the three Weasley's that something was wrong. They instantly grabbed their wands. Listening intently, his nose in the air, Sirius tail went between his legs in fear. He transformed swiftly, and Percy's mouth dropped in shock. He had not been told that Sirius was an animagus nor that he was there to protect them.

"Mr. Black?!"

"Sh... Percy! Arthur Weasley whispered to his son, "Sirius has been our body guard until your mother leaves for Romania tomorrow."

Sirius flashed Percy a quick smile. Pulling out his wand he directed his attention to Arthur.

"We have company. Voldemort has sent his Dementors. Can any of you do the *Patronus*? I've never mastered it myself," he whispered.

"Percy can, but Molly and I never mastered it either."

"We're going to need help. Arthur if you would contact Dumbledore. Molly go over behind the door. Dementors can be injured if you don't let their gloom overtake you first. Percy, I hate to ask you to do this..."

"No problem, Mr. Black. It's nice to see you again. I wondered why you weren't with Harry this summer. Ron told us she was at the Dursley's."

Only until tomorrow. I will be picking her up then," Sirius smiled as Percy took the front in order to direct his Patronus.

Arthur Weasley meanwhile had been contacting Dumbledore from the fire he had conjured in the hearth.

"Albus, we haven't much time. Voldemort is on to us and has sent the Dementors. We need help fast."

"I'm on my way; we will be there in a few minutes. I'll contact Moody," Dumbledore answered tersely.

Arthur then returned to take up a position behind Sirius but on the opposite side of the room from his wife.

"Is this room getting darker?" Percy asked nervously.

"It's from the Dementors; they are pulling the energy from the room," Sirius whispered to the young wizard. "Stand ready," he warned as they were plunged into darkness.

The atmosphere in the room felt like that of an old sepulcher. Their nostrils were assailed with the smell of rot and decay as doors burst open and the Dementors seemed to slither into the room all around them. Molly Weasley screamed...

*"Expecto Patronum!"* Percy yelled directing his wand towards the Dementor, which was looming down upon them. Almost immediately a stream of silver erupted from his wand followed by the image of a large bear.

Arthur Weasley grabbed one of the Dementors, throwing him to the floor, while Sirius, armed with a small knife, was slashing his way towards Molly. She was pinned to the wall, and was about to receive the Dementor's kiss. Stabbing the creature in the side he threw it aside as another came towards him. He immediately transformed into his dog shape, and sprang at the Dementor

*"Expecto Patronum! Expecto Patronum!"* Percy kept yelling, as he directed his wand at the onslaught of the Dementors.

"Percy, quickly, over by your father!" Molly yelled at her son. One of the Dementors had Arthur on the floor, and was bending over him to suck out his soul.

*"Expecto Patronum!"* Percy screamed, directing his wand at the creature. The Dementor screamed as if in pain as the Patronus closed in on him.

Sirius bounded over and transformed back to his human self. "Arthur, are you all right?" he asked helping the older wizard to stand.

"Yes, but there are two many of them. We can't keep this up forever," he replied breathless.

"Where the hell is Dumbledore?" Sirius swore as he struggled hand to hand with another Dementor.

"Percy look out!" Molly Weasley screamed as two Dementors attacked him simultaneously, but it was too late. They were able to disarm him and had pushed him to the floor. Sirius again transformed and went to try and help the young man. Molly grabbed her son's wand from the floor as her husband engaged in combat with another Dementor.

*"Expecto Patronum!"* Three voices chimed in unison from the door, and there was a loud booming sound. Immediately the room was filled with silver light, and three *Patronus* appeared. One was a large gray wolf, the other an eagle and the third was a Griffin. Remus, Moody, and Dumbledore stood in the doorway.

The Dementors continued their onslaught for another ten minutes with the seven of them fighting with all means available. Another two Aurors arrived then, and each was able to



summon a Patronus. The Dementors finally vanished, unable to withstand the feelings of happiness each of the wizards Patronus invoked.

"Is everyone all right?" Dumbledore asked calmly lowering his wand.

"Molly, are you all right?" Arthur Weasley inquired helping his wife to a chair.

"I'm fine, how is Percy?" she looked around the room for her son, who was just getting up from behind the sofa.

"I'm okay, mum. I just tripped over my own feet," he grinned sheepishly.

Molly Weasley began to cry with relief, "Oh, Sirius if you hadn't been here to alert us I dread to think what would have happened."

"Molly is right, Sirius. My family owes you a debt of gratitude. If you or Harry ever need anything don't hesitate to ask," Arthur extended his hand to Sirius.

"Right now, I think it would be wise if we all retired back to Severus Snape's town house. The Dementors may decide to try again," Dumbledore spoke up with authority.

"I need to check in with my men in the field. One of them failed to report back and he was assigned to watch the Dursley house. In view of what has just happened I am concerned that Harry and her mother's family may be in trouble," Alastor Moody informed them worriedly.

"Harry's in trouble?" Sirius immediately snapped to attention. "I'm going with you."

"No, Sirius, you are injured," Remus indicated the blood which was staining his friend's robes. I will go and report back to you and Albus."

"Remus, Harry's...."

"No Sirius," Dumbledore chided him, "Remus is right. You and the Weasleys will return with Remus to Severus home. Alastor and I will go to the Dursley's to check on the household." Dumbledore's attitude indicated that he would tolerate no arguing. "We shall all disapparate on the count of three. Wands at the ready, one...two...three..." They all vanished to their assigned destinations.

Severus Snape was pacing nervously in his drawing room, his sister, Circe, sitting at the table. She had put Phaedra to bed early for misbehaving.

"Severus, you won't do any good pacing back and forth. Dumbledore left you here to act as messenger should they need more help. He did not want to put you at risk too. He knows how much Voldemort would like to kill you."

"I am well aware of Voldemort's feelings towards me, Circe," Snape scowled darkly at his older sister. "I just feel I could have been more helpful fighting off the Dementors. I am able to do the *Patronus* too, you know."

"Little brother, every one knows you are able to stop the Dementors. Did you ever think that maybe Albus wanted you here to protect Phaedra and me? If the Dementors were able to get into the safe house, maybe they will try here too."

Snape froze staring at his sister in disbelief, "Do you honestly feel that Albus believes we may be compromised too?"

"Little brother I know he is worried about it. I am a full telepath, you know," Circe arched her brow in mock imitation of her brother. Dumbledore had obviously allowed Circe to read his mind.

"Is there anything else I should know about, Circe? Or is Albus only confiding in you these days?"

"Stop acting like a spoiled child. Albus only has your best interests at heart. He loves you like one of his own. If ever there was a good and honest caring human being in this world it is Albus Dumbledore. He would trust you with his life, Severus, and don't you ever forget that!" Circe reprimanded her brother. "I am not one of your students, so don't even try to intimidate me," she continued as he started to open his mouth to speak.

"You're right as usual, Circe,"

"That's better," she smiled affectionately at her little brother, "besides, if anything happens to all of them who would look after Harry?"

"You honestly believe he would leave me to see to her safety?"

"I know he would. He knows you better than you know yourself."

"For once we agree, Circe. He's right, you know. If something did happen to them I would go and get Potter. She would need my help to survive and get away to safety," Severus quietly informed his sister as a scratching noise sounded at the window.

"Someone has sent us an owl. You don't think something has happened at the Ministry?" Circe asked getting up to open the window. The owl flew directly over to Severus and lifted it's leg.

"What the devil? This bird has been covered in polish to conceal it. If I'm not mistaken it belongs to Potter," Severus told his sister as he removed the note. "Shit! Circe get a message to the Aurors and have them meet me over at the Dursley's. Then take care of the bird and clean her up. Harry is in trouble," Snape yelled over his shoulder as he ran into the garden and disappeared, leaving his sister to stare after him in disbelief.

Circe bent down and picked up the note from the floor that the owl had brought. One glance at the message and she went tearing over to the fireplace to send for help just as Remus, Sirius, and the three Weasley's entered through the front door...

Harry cautiously made her way back to the head of the stairs and listened to her Uncle Vernon talking with Lucius Malfoy. She let down her guard and could feel the fear emanating from Draco. She also knew that he was in pain and injured. Lucius must have done the *Cruciatuus* curse on him again. Dudley had just come into the living room with Aunt Petunia.

"Sit down, all of you," she heard Lucius say softly. See how they behave with the *Imperious* curse on them. The Dark Lord was right to have them make the potion. It was such a stroke of luck that our spy saw Mrs. Dursley open that trunk and take out that wand," Lucius sneered at his son, who shifted uncomfortably. "Now, Draco, if you know what's good for you I suggest you go and find Potter. If Lord Voldemort ever finds out you were trying to betray him..."

"If Potter was here, she would try and help them," Draco argued lamely.

"Mrs. Dursley, is your niece at home this evening?" Lucius smiled coldly. "I would like to meet her."

"She is upstairs in her room."

"Now, Draco, go and fetch her for us like a good boy," Lucius told his son, and Harry could feel the icy rage inside of him.

Draco got up and started upstairs without a word. 'What am I going to do? Father and Voldemort can't be trusted not to kill me. Potter has to get us out of here,' reaching the top of the stairwell, he felt someone grab onto his arm. The next thing he knew he was under Potter's invisibility cloak with her.

"Draco, we have to get out of here. How many are there?"

"McNair and Avery are outside with two other new recruits. My father is in the living room with your family. They have been under an *Imperious* curse and a memory charm for the past week."

"So I gathered. What kind of potion did they make and how did they get it to work? That wand shouldn't have done anything. My aunt is a Muggle."

"I heard the Dark Lord say that the potion was some kind of old magic used to break the protections on this place. They needed something of yours in it though."

"My aunt took some hair from my pillow. She also used one of Hedwig's feathers. What about the wand?"

"It didn't work. It couldn't. Your aunt had the window opened and my father did the spell from the outside. He directed his wand into the mixture as your aunt put it onto the sill. That way half was outside and half inside. Anyway, it worked. We were able to come inside through the front door."

"Listen, I sent Hedwig for help. We have to keep them busy until Dumbledore gets here. He knows all about you and will help you, but the Aurors will still question you. He said he would stay with you while they do."

Draco seemed to go even paler, but nodded his understanding.

"Harry, you have got to hide. The Dark Lord is on his way here and he sent the Dementors over to the Weasley's safe house. He will kill all of us. My father knows about the owls I was sending you. I don't think he told Lord Voldemort, but I don't know for sure."

Harry's stomach dropped with worry about Sirius and the Weasley's. Suddenly she winced as a searing pain shot through her scar.

"As a matter of fact, he didn't need to tell me of your treachery, Draco," Voldemort's malicious voice spoke sneeringly as he whipped the cloak from over them. He had come up the stairs soundlessly, and was standing behind them, wand drawn. His eyes were burning like hot coals, "Lucius should have known better than to keep your betrayal secret. Now get downstairs, both of you!"

Harry's scar was throbbing, and she felt dizzy from the pain. Voldemort nudged Harry sharply in the ribs as he flung Draco backwards down the staircase with a wave of his wand.

"Draco," Harry cried as she descended the stairs and kneeled by where Draco lay at the bottom, "are you badly hurt?" she asked noting that his leg was twisted awkwardly and appeared to be broken.

"*Crucio!*" Voldemort hit Harry with a *Cruciatus* curse. "Leave him where he is."

"I won't you lousy bastard, he's hurt!" She yelled through gritted teeth.

"He will be dead if you don't move away from him," Voldemort smiled as Lucius stepped into the hallway.

"Lord, what has Draco done to anger you now?"

"You know very well what he has done. I do not take betrayal lightly, Lucius." Voldemort spoke in a whisper, but Lucius heard every word.

"Lord, he is my only child. I have already chastised him with the *Cruciatus* curse several times for his disloyalty. I know if you spare him he won't let you down again,"

Lucius looked nervously from his son to Lord Voldemort.

"Perhaps, but I do not need another incident like the one I had with Severus. No, I should make an example out of him. In fact I should have you prove your own loyalty by doing it for me," Voldemort smiled at him.

"Lord, what will I say to my wife? He is our only child," Lucius attempted to reason with him.

"Kill her too. You can always sire other offspring. I believe McNair's sister is looking for a husband. She would be more than willing to share your bed and your wealth." Voldemort spoke as if it were merely a formality.

"What about the Muggles?"

"I would like to play with them for awhile. Harry is going to watch. Then she can see what I do to traitors."

"Are you sure Sally McNair will have me?" Lucius asked kicking Draco in the ribs. "Draco and his mother have been quite tiresome lately."

Harry couldn't believe her ears, and Draco was just staring, his mouth open. His father was going to kill him.

"She has told me that she wished you were available. She believes your current wife has no conception of how to make you happy."

"Then Lord, I shall obey your command with pleasure. Move aside Potter," he looked coldly at Harry. "Don't worry, Draco, it will be quite swift."

"No, not yet Lucius. We can have some fun with him too. Into the living room, now!" Voldemort waved his wand and forced them to move, Draco wailing in pain as he stood on his shattered leg. Harry tried desperately to fight his will, but it was difficult. She found herself forced into the living room, and made to sit beside Draco on the floor. Her aunt, uncle and cousin were sitting frozen on the couch.

"Now, I think it's time for you all to awaken from your stupors," Voldemort waved his wand, "*Enervate!*" The Dursley's stirred, and looked around in confusion. It was Uncle Vernon who spoke first.

"Now see here, Mr. Malfoy, what is going on? Who is this man and why is he in my home."

"Ah...Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, allow me to introduce myself. I have waited many years for this moment. I am Lord Voldemort," Voldemort smiled and bowed mockingly, but Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia just stared at him blankly.

"I don't give a crap, who you think you are, but I see you are dressed like one of them and have a wand. I will not have any of that nonsense in my house. Now get out!" It was the worst thing Vernon Dursley could have done.

Voldemort blinked in disbelief, "I beg your pardon. You have no idea who it is you are speaking to. I could crush you like an ant, Muggle, in fact..."

"*Expellarmus!*" Harry shouted pulling her wand from where she had hidden it beneath her clothes, disarming Voldemort, as Lucius pulled his at the same time.

"*Crucio!*" Lucius Malfoy hit her with a *Cruciatus* curse, and Voldemort grabbed Harry's wand and flung it across the room, picking his own up from the floor.

Harry doubled over in pain, "Leave them alone, they never did anything to you," she cried fighting the curse.

"Oh, but you're wrong. They have protected you for the past seventeen years."

"Harry, who is this man?" Aunt Petunia whispered, her eyes wide with terror.

"This is the bastard wizard who murdered my parents. He used you to mix that potion in the kitchen and it allowed him to break through the charms Dumbledore had on the house to protect us. He used a charm on you to make you think you were doing the magic.

"This is the man that killed my sister, Lily?" Petunia stared in disbelief and horror.

"I am one and the same. You will be happy to know she protected her child with her dying breath. Will you do the same?" Voldemort laughed with an insane glee, and turned his wand towards Dudley. "*Imperio*," he made Dudley stand up. Spinning his wand, he made him turn around in circles, faster and faster.

Aunt Petunia screamed, diving towards Voldemort. Harry took her cue and jumped onto Lucius Malfoy, knocking him over, just as a figure appeared in the doorway. It was Severus!

"*Expellarmus!*" he shouted disarming Voldemort as Aunt Petunia jumped on him.

"*Stupefy*," Malfoy yelled attempting to hit Snape. Harry deflected his wand, sending a shower of white sparks onto the floor.

"Stop this at once!" Vernon Dursley yelled going to help his wife as Voldemort punched her in the face, causing her to fall backwards.

"*Accio wand!*" Harry and Voldemort both yelled simultaneously, summoning their wands to them. Voldemort caught his first and spun on Snape.

"*Avada Kedavra!*" Voldemort yelled but Snape had anticipated him and ducked behind the wall, as Harry grabbed her wand.

"Draco, use your wand!" she yelled to the younger Malfoy.

"I can't, my father took it from me when he found out what I was up to," he cried trying to move out of the line of fire.

"Now I'm going to kill you, Draco. You have always been a whiny little brat," Malfoy said directing his wand at his son.

"Severus, how nice of you to join us," Voldemort's smile was like a spider moving in for the kill as he moved in the direction of the hall, stepping around Dudley, who was still under the influence of the *Imperious* curse, spinning like a fat top.

"No!" Harry screamed as Malfoy's lips formed the *Avada Kedavra* curse.

Lucius Malfoy never knew what hit him as his whole body flew aside like a rag doll, and his wand shot a stream of green light into the ceiling before clattering to the floor beside him. Harry had used her telekinesis to stop him. He fell to the floor with a loud thud just as an inhuman scream of rage filled the house. Stunned for a moment the elder Malfoy looked around and then grabbed his wand.

Alastor, 'Mad eye', Moody was just starting into the room.

"*Stupefy*," Moody directed his wand towards Lucius, but it hit the air. Lucius had disappeared.

Dudley finally stopped spinning and was sitting on the floor looking like he was about to throw up. Aunt Petunia was holding him, sobbing frantically. Uncle Vernon had his arms around her. Harry moved over to Draco, and using her healing skills, she mended his broken

leg, and any other injuries she found. She looked up when she was done, to find Moody, Dumbledore, and Snape watching her.

"Talk about the cavalry coming over the hill in the nick of time," she grinned looking up at them. "I'm glad you could all make it."

"Potter, if you ever want a job..."

"Yeah, I know, as an Auror. No thanks, by then these guys will be history and there won't be anything to do," she laughed shakily. "I am going to guess that the scream was Voldemort."

"Yes, Child, he is injured, but he escaped me," Dumbledore said ruefully.

"Oh my gosh, I almost forgot, Malfoy told me that Voldemort sent the Dementors..."

"It's all right Child, Sirius and the Weasley's are safe. The Dementors were stopped and thanks to Sirius the Weasley's were able to alert us all in time."

"I guess you got my owl?"

"I received it. Dumbledore and Remus were with Moody fighting the Dementors. I got here first and took care of two of Voldemort's newer recruits outside. The Aurors have them in custody. Avery and McNair escaped," Snape explained as he helped Harry onto her feet. "I found this in the kitchen," Snape handed the wand to Harry. "Do you know where it came from?"

"I think it belonged to my mother. They had a trunk full of some of her belongings in the attic and I never knew."

"The authorities sent it to me after Lily and James were killed," Petunia Dursley's shaky voice came from the other side of the room. "They had pulled it out of the rubble. I had forgotten all about it till we were cleaning the attic. I was going to give it to you to take with you."

"The question is, how did Lily's wand get inside of it? She used her wand that night against Voldemort to protect Harry," Dumbledore mused aloud, "we found James' wand beside his body, but Lily's was never located."

"Somebody probably found it when they found the trunk and just put it inside for safekeeping and forgot about it," Moody speculated. "It should be destroyed."

"No, it should have been buried with my mother. Since it wasn't, it should be up to me to take care of what will happen to it," Harry looked at the three wizards, her expression daring any of them to try to take it from her.

"Very well, Child, but I will expect you to see that it is kept locked up until you decide how to dispose of it."

"I will."

"Petunia, Vernon, are you both feeling calm enough to tell us what happened?" Dumbledore inquired patiently, expecting an onslaught of anger and fright.

"Tell you what happened? Thanks to you we were nearly killed! That's what happened," Vernon Dursley sputtered. "Take this little trouble maker and get out of our house. I don't ever want to see her or any of your kind again."

"Mr. Dursley," Snape stepped forward angrily, "thanks to your niece you are still alive. She very bravely stayed in this house to protect you and this is how you repay her? You should be proud of her for standing up to one of the most powerful wizards there ever was. All you have ever done is to treat her like she is a piece of garbage, and yet she still wanted to try and save your lives. You are among the vilest of Muggles, and if it were up to me..."

"Severus, let it go," Harry put her hand on his arm, "you are just wasting your breath. Let's get out of here."

"Very well," Snape looked down at her, brushing the hair from her face, "come on, I'll take you to Sirius. The Headmaster said he was frantic when he told him he couldn't come to your rescue, but he wanted him to see the healer. Professor Lupin is with him at my town house along with the Weasleys."

"Mr. Malfoy, you have some explaining to do for us. Dumbledore has asked me to question you in his presence. I think maybe we should all go to the Snape residence until we can find you a safe place with your mother's people. You know you will be questioned under Veritaserum?"

"Yes, Professor Moody. I know, and I don't care. My father was going to kill me," Draco replied still shaken and weak from shock. "I think he is going to kill my mother."

"Everything will be all right, Draco," Dumbledore soothed him. "Do you know where your mother is now?"

"No, Voldemort never told us where we were. Only the higher ups in his organization ever knew where we were actually at," he said getting up gingerly, testing the repaired leg.

"I'll have my men keep a sharp watch then, son, just in case she is able to escape," Moody told him quietly, but his voice indicated that he believed she would be lost.

"Professor, what about my things?" Harry questioned.

"I will see to Harry Potter's things," Dobby's voice came from the door. "Dobby heard Harry Potter might be in trouble and came to help."

"Thank you, Dobby." Harry bent down and kissed him on the head. He turned an odd shade of pink and his ears curved inward. "There is the trunk in my room and Hedwig's cage. There is also another trunk in My aunt and uncle's room. If you could see that they arrive safely I may just have an extra pair of socks for you as a reward," she beamed. Socks were Dobby's favorite piece of clothing.

"Dobby will see that Harry Potter receives both of her trunks and Hedwig's cage," he snapped his fingers and disappeared.



"I will see that new charms are placed on the house for your relative's safety," Dumbledore said as they entered the hall. "I will also alter their memories so that they do not remember what happened."

"I kind of thought you would," Harry hugged the old wizard.

"I will be along in a few minutes with Draco and Moody. You two go on ahead. I'm sure by this time Sirius is ready to come tearing over here, despite my instructions," Dumbledore winked.

"It sounds like something Black would do," Snape commented shaking his head. "Are you ready, Harry?"

"When ever you are."

"Potter, wait," Draco interrupted before Snape could apparate the two of them back to his home. "I owe you. You saved my life tonight when you had no reason to do so."

"I saved your life because I though there was something there worth saving. Besides, Slytherin needs a quidditch team. I can't always beat the teachers."

"I heard about how Professor Snape beat you. I intend to have him teach me that move. That is if Dumbledore will see fit to let me back into school?" he looked at the old wizard uncertainly.

"Everyone deserves a second chance, Draco," Snape smiled at his mentor and Dumbledore's blue eyes twinkled with delight.

"Don't worry Draco. You will be there," Harry laughed, "then Professor Snape can teach us both how to do that upside down thing." Putting her arms around Snape he raised his wand and apparated them both back to his town house.

They appeared in the garden, and entered through the French doors into the parlor. Circe immediately ran over to Snape, throwing her arms around him, while Sirius got up and went over to Harry. He hugged her so tightly she almost couldn't breathe.

"Thank Merlin you're safe. I was worried when you ran out of here alone!" Circe admonished him, tears in her eyes.

"Circe, you know I can take care of myself."

"Harry, you had me scared to death. I wanted to come even though Dumbledore made me come back here. Remus put a binding spell on me until the healer came. He only just left."

"You didn't miss much. Just a few *Cruciatius* curses, memory charms, and *Imperious* curses. You know the usual stuff," Harry teased, trying to set his mind at ease, but a delayed reaction to all the excitement had set in and she was trembling.

"Come on, lets go and sit down. I want to make sure you're okay."

"Sirius, I'm fine," Harry smiled losing herself in his warm brown eyes. "Circe, you will be happy to know that your brother is somewhat of a hero. He arrived just at the right time to keep Voldemort from having some fun with Muggle torture and murder."

"Harry let's sit down and you and Severus can tell us all about it," Sirius insisted steering her towards the table.

Circe and Severus followed. The scowl on the Potion Master's face was almost as deep as his sister's smile was broad.

They then proceeded to tell them everything that had happened, as Dumbledore arrived with Moody and Draco. Stories were quickly exchanged, and then Moody signaled to Dumbledore and Snape that it was time to question the young wizard about what he had seen and done while amongst the Death eaters. Circe was also asked to be present due to her telepathic ability. Remus and Sirius both stated they would stay with Harry and see that she got to bed. Dumbledore agreed and promised to tell them about the boy's statements, especially about anything he knew of the evening's encounter with the Dementors.

Sleeping arrangements were quickly arranged, and the Weasley's retired for the night since Mrs. Weasley was leaving early in the morning. It turned out that Sirius would be sharing a room with Severus. Harry nearly choked and started laughing so hard she almost couldn't stop. The idea had been Dumbledore's so of course no one would offer an alternative, even though there were several. Severus went off to get some Veritaserum from down in his potions lab while Harry prepared to go upstairs to bed. Just as she had started up the stairs, Phaedra started to cry and Circe went to see what was wrong.

"Mummy, I had the dream with the big snake and the haunted house again. There was a man with red eyes and he wanted to hurt Miss Harry."

"Oh, he can't hurt me," Phaedra, "I'm too smart for him. He is just a dream person. They're easy enough to get rid of," Harry smiled following Circe into her room.

"Miss Harry, I though he would feed you to the snake."

"Did he say he was?" Harry asked looking over at Circe with understanding.

"Yes, he doesn't like you."

"Well the next time you dream about him, you just tell him to go away, that this is only a dream. Then you tell him that Miss Harry isn't afraid of him."

"Will he hurt me?"

"No, honey, he is just a dream."

"He's the bad wizard, isn't he?" Phaedra asked looking from her mother to Harry. Remus and Sirius shifted uncomfortably by the door, catching Phaedra's attention.

"Mr. Remus. Who is your friend?"

"This is Miss Harry's godfather, Sirius Black."

"Hello Mr. Sirius Black. Aren't you the one my uncle Severus doesn't like?" Phaedra questioned looking at them all with interest. Sirius was blushing and Harry and Remus were grinning.

"Phaedra, that's not a nice thing to say," her mother reprimanded gently, "apologize to Mr. Black."

"I'm sorry Mr. Sirius Black. How come my uncle doesn't like you?"

"It's a long story, but maybe Miss Harry will tell you sometime," he replied amused at the child's audacity and looking at his goddaughter lovingly.

"Phaedra! Mummy told you not to ask questions!"

"It's okay Circe, better she hears it from us than someone else," Harry told the older witch. "Sirius and your uncle are learning to be friends. They didn't get along in school and it got worse when my godfather played a mean joke on your uncle. He didn't think about what he was doing and your uncle Severus was almost killed. My father saved his life."

"Really? Your daddy saved Uncle Severus."

"Yes, he did."

"I'm glad. I love Uncle Severus. I think Mr. Sirius was mean to try and hurt him."

"Phaedra, Sirius didn't want your uncle to be killed. He was just very angry with him. He didn't stop to think about what it was he was doing," Remus spoke softly, his hand on Sirius arm.

"Are you sorry you tried to hurt my uncle?"

"Yes, Phaedra, I am. Your uncle has been helping me to protect Miss Harry."

The little girl thought about this and nodded her head as she looked at Sirius, studying him. "I guess it is okay then. Mr. Remus were you there too?"

Remus shifted uncomfortably. "Yes, Phaedra I was there, but I don't remember what happened."

"The important thing is that now Sirius and your uncle are trying to be friends. They are both trying to help me to make the bad wizard go away. In order to do that they have to get along."

"How was my uncle almost killed?" Phaedra asked innocently, and Harry saw Remus wince.

"Phaedra," Snape's voice came from the door, "I don't think you will understand what happened. It is not good to dredge up old rivalries."

"Uncle Severus, you always tell me I'm too young or I won't understand!" Phaedra argued frowning at Snape. "How can I forgive Mr. Sirius Black if I don't understand why he tried to hurt you?"

The adults just looked at one another uncomfortably. Harry decided to take a chance.

"Phaedra, your uncle said something mean to Sirius about his family, so my godfather decided to get even with him. Your uncle used to like to spy on my father and his friends in Gryffindor. That's probably how he got to be such a good spy for Dumbledore," she said giving Phaedra a little hug of encouragement. "Anyway, what Sirius did was to tell your uncle how to open a secret passage which led from the school. The only problem was that there was a werewolf at the end of the passageway."

"A real werewolf?" she gasped, brown eyes wide. "Werewolves are bad!"

"No, honey, werewolves are just humans who have a disease."

"What's a zeeze?"

"Not a zeeze, dazeeze," Harry broke the word into syllables for her. "It means sickness."

"Why don't they go to the healers?"

"This sickness can't be fixed. It makes them turn into a wolf every month when the moon is full. It hurts a real lot, and most werewolves are shunned because people are afraid of them."

"Why?"

"Because they become real wolves and can attack people. If they do you could be killed, otherwise if they just bite you they will pass the sickness on and you will become a werewolf too."

"How did Mr. Sirius Black know about the werewolf?"

"The werewolf was a friend of his and my father's. He was sent down that passage every month so he could be in a safe place when he turned into the wolf and wouldn't hurt anybody."

"Does he still have to go there every month?"

"No, he doesn't. There is a potion that your uncle makes for him every month. It makes him friendly. It keeps him from acting wild and hurting people."

"Uncle Severus helps the werewolf?"

"Yes, Little One, your uncle has learned that being a werewolf does not make you less of a human being," Dumbledore looked at Remus, his eyes warm. "I was concerned when Severus didn't come right down with Circe. Obviously something caused this little history lesson?"

"Phaedra insisted on knowing why Severus and Sirius did not get along," Circe explained.

"Did you know that Mr. Sirius Black sent my uncle down to where a werewolf was?" Phaedra questioned Dumbledore.

"Yes, Little One, I knew all about it. I was the one who had to see they were all punished for misbehaving."

"Miss Harry, you said Uncle Severus mixes the werewolf a potion to make him friendly. How come I have never seen him?"

"You know you aren't allowed in Uncle Severus' potions lab," Circe told her daughter sternly, pretending to misunderstand.

"No, mummy, I meant the werewolf."

Remus looked pale, and Sirius put his hand on his shoulder. He understood how difficult this was going to be for his friend.

"Phaedra, you have seen the werewolf many times. Remember he only changes when the moon is full, otherwise he is just another wizard, and a friend of all of us."

"Is he my friend too?" Phaedra asked innocently.

"Yes, Phaedra, I'm your friend too," Remus spoke quietly, looking at the little girl. His hazel eyes were wide and concerned and everyone knew how painful it was for him to tell her.

"Mr. Remus, you're the werewolf?"

"Yes, Phaedra, I am. I will be changing again the night of Harry's birthday. She has been helping your uncle to mix the potion to make me like a big friendly dog."

"Mr. Remus, you can't ever be mean. I think you are very nice."

"Thank you, Phaedra," Remus smiled with relief going over to pick up the little girl. "There are many people who don't feel that way. I'm glad that you do."

"Did you really try to bite Uncle Severus?"

"They say that I did, but I don't remember. In those days, the sickness was much worse than it is now. I want you to understand that Sirius did not mean for your uncle to be hurt. He just wanted to scare him."

"So he did something bad, but he didn't mean for Uncle Severus to be really hurt?"

"That's right, Little One. Now he and your uncle are trying to be friends. They will even be sharing a bedroom together," Dumbledore beamed with amusement, knowing the two men were not happy about it.

"Then, Mr. Sirius Black, I will be your friend too. I love Miss Harry and she will be sad if I don't like you. I do bad things sometimes too," she confessed looking at Sirius. "Miss Harry, how come you didn't tell me your godfather was so pretty?"

Harry and the others burst out laughing and Phaedra looked confused.

"I'm sorry, Phaedra, we're just laughing because we didn't expect you to say that. Did you know that all the girls think he is handsome?"

"What is handsome?"

"It is the word you use for a man that is nice looking. Girls are pretty or beautiful, men are handsome," Circe smiled at her daughter.

"If I were you Professor I would keep a close eye on her. She already has an eye for good looking young wizards," Harry snickered teasing Snape.

"Now that the situation is settled, I need Severus and Circe downstairs to help with the questioning," Dumbledore reminded them his tone serious.

"Of course, Headmaster," Severus nodded. "I have the Veritaserum in my pocket."

"Circe are you ready?"

"Mommy please don't go. What if I dream about the man with the snake again? I know he is the bad wizard cause he wants to hurt Miss Harry."

Circe was torn. Phaedra was her child and needed her, but Dumbledore needed her skills as a telepath. Harry sensed Circe's dilemma.

"Phaedra how would you like to sleep in with Miss Harry tonight? This way you will be safe and your mum can help Professor Dumbledore."

"Can I mummy, pleeeasssee..."

"Very well, but you are to be a very good girl and don't wake Miss Harry up too early."

"I will be good, I promise," she flung her arms around her mother giving her a big kiss.

"Then we had better get going into my room. I don't know about Phaedra, but I'm tired, and would like to take a shower," Harry said as Remus and Sirius followed her out and Circe kissed her daughter good night.

Harry picked out a nightgown and headed into the shower. When she came out, she found Sirius playing on the bed with Phaedra. He had her giggling while Snuffles did tricks.

"Mr. Sirius, can you make her shake hands again?"

"Of course," he smiled, "give me your paw," he instructed the dog, who complied with a wag of her tail.

"Woof," Snuffles gave a short bark of greeting to Harry.

"Miss Harry, did you know Mr. Sirius can make Snuffles do tricks?"

"I know a secret about Mr. Sirius. He can do a special trick. In fact he hasn't done it for Miss Harry in quite some time."

"Harry, you know you aren't supposed to say anything about that," Sirius looked at her sternly.

"I know that you could have been worse than killed tonight, too."

"I get the feeling you're mad at me," Sirius frowned.

"I'm not exactly mad, but I'm not happy either. You have no idea how I felt when I heard about what happened."

"Miss Harry, Mr. Sirius, please don't fight. Mr. Remus why is Miss Harry mad at Mr. Sirius? I thought she loved him."

"She does, Phaedra, but she worries about him. She has lost too many people who she cares about, and she could have lost him tonight too."

"I could have lost her too," Sirius looked at Harry with sorrow, "she is very special to me." Sirius put his arms around Harry. He understood that she was tired, and all her anxiety over his being separated from him had come to the surface. "I promised you I would come back in time for your birthday, and I kept my promise."

"But you almost didn't. If you ever pull a stunt like that again Sirius Black I'll...I'll...oh, I don't know what I'll do," Harry sobbed trying not to cry, clinging to him as he sat her gently on the bed.

"Miss Harry, please don't cry. I don't like it when people cry."

"I'm okay, Phaedra. I just worry about him. I get scared that the bad wizard will kill him like he did my parents."

Phaedra put her arms around Harry and cuddled her. "My mummy says that sometimes a hug can make you better faster than almost anything."

"Your mum is a very smart woman," Sirius responded warmly. "I'm glad you are Harry's friend."

"She says I'm like her little sister."

"She's quite right, Phaedra," Remus told her as he sat down on the bed with the three of them.

"Mr. Remus, I'm glad my Uncle Severus helps you to feel better. Can I learn to make the magic potion for you too?"

"When you are old enough, I think maybe your uncle or Miss Harry will teach you. It is a very hard potion to mix, and it has to be done very carefully."

"Miss Harry you know how to make the potion too?"

"Your uncle taught me how to do it, but it is very very hard. He still has to watch me to make sure I get it right."

"Do you know how to make it too Mr. Sirius?"

"No, I am not that good at Potions. It is a very special talent."

"Do you have a special talent?"

"That's the special trick he used to do for me, but only a few people know about it. It is a secret."

"What is it?"

"Harry, you shouldn't tease Phaedra."

Harry could not hide the hurt expression in her eyes. She wanted Sirius to transform. She didn't know why, but she wanted the comfort he gave her as Padfoot.

"Miss Harry, don't look so sad. It's okay if you tease me," Phaedra hugged her again sensing her hurt feelings.

Harry didn't say anything; she just lay down and buried her head in the pillow. She didn't know why Sirius wouldn't transform for her and was confused by his reluctance to do so in front of Phaedra. She hoped Phaedra wouldn't realize she was crying. It was a short-lived hope.

"Mr. Sirius, I think Miss Harry is crying."

"Honey, what is it?" Sirius asked gently rubbing her back.

"Princess, is something hurting you? I know you were hit with some curses earlier."

Harry just shook her head. She wanted Padfoot. Could her need be some kind of repressed childhood memory? Sirius had told her she used to go to sleep rubbing his ears. In fact, she had done so this past year at Hogwarts in the infirmary, when she was being kept hidden until Dumbledore could inform the staff that Harry Potter was in reality a girl.

"Come here," Sirius gently lifted her into his arms. "Honey, everything is all right. We're both safe, and tomorrow Mrs. Weasley will be safely on her way to Romania. Sunday is your birthday and we are all going to have a special dinner. So why are you so sad?" he looked down at her, brown eyes worried.

"Sirius I have only asked you for two things in my whole life and you have turned me down both times."

"What two things?"

"I asked you not to leave me this summer, but you insisted on helping the Weasley's, and put yourself and me at risk. The prophecy came true again and the charms on the Dursley home failed."

"What was the other thing?" he was puzzled.



"I wanted you to show Phaedra your special trick. I knew it would make her happy, but I also needed you to do it for me. I don't know why, but I have this ridiculous desire to curl up with Padfoot."

"Princess, that's because when you were little and got scared, he used to do that to make you feel better. I think maybe that part of you is looking for that security again. Tonight you were very brave, but Voldemort struck in a place where you have always felt secure, and he hasn't been able to do that since the night you lost your parents," Remus recalled sensibly.

"Miss Harry, did you see the bad wizard tonight? Is that why you came over early?"

"Yes, Phaedra. You are a very smart little girl. I had a fight tonight with the bad wizard."

"What did he do?"

"I will ask your mum to tell you tomorrow. I don't want you to have any more bad dreams."

"Mr. Sirius, what does Miss Harry want you to do that she thinks is so special?"

"Can you keep a really big secret, Phaedra?"

"Yes, I won't tell. I'm good at secrets."

"Well I will do what Miss Harry wants, but only for a few minutes. Then I will sit and hold her hand while you both go to sleep. I think Miss Harry will feel better then."

Harry wiped her eyes, and hugged Sirius. "I know it sounds silly, but I want to see Padfoot."

"I don't think it sounds silly at all. I know how much you always loved Padfoot. In fact, once we are settled you will get to see him quite frequently, Miss Wings."

"Why do you call Miss Harry Miss Wings?"

"He calls me that because Mr. Chang said I was like the Phoenix."

"That's silly. Who is Padfoot?"

"You're about to meet him," Harry smiled as Sirius stood up and moved over to the middle of the floor. He transformed into his animagus form of a big black dog, and came over to Harry and Phaedra.

"Mr. Sirius can turn into a doggie," Phaedra said with delight. "My mummy told me about wizards that can turn into animals. Mr. Sirius is a very nice doggie," Phaedra said as they both pet him. He then gave Harry a big wet kiss and turned himself back.

"Now go to sleep," Sirius smiled as Remus lowered the lights and bid them good night.

Harry curled up holding onto Sirius hand. She put her other arm protectively around Phaedra, who fell asleep quickly, a slight smile playing about her lips.

"Promise me you won't leave again," she whispered to Sirius.

"I promise. Molly will be safely off in the morning, and then I'm all yours," he gently leaned over and kissed her on the forehead. "I know how hard this has been for you."

"I'm sorry about being so immature and selfish, but sometimes I have to be seventeen. Right now I just want people around me that I care about who make me feel safe. Did you get my picture?"

"You mean the one with the little note about the old fox, the wolf and the snake guarding the hen house?" he asked giving her one of his wicked smiles. "Did you get the earrings I sent you?"

"Yes, I need to get my ears pierced, but I love them. You have very nice taste."

"I'm glad you think so. What do you want for your birthday? I still have to get you something."

"You already did. You're here and safe. That's all I care about," Harry answered looking up at him squeezing his hand tightly. "Which reminds me, remember when I told you about what happened earlier and I mentioned the trunk full of my mother's things?"

"Yes, what about it?"

"Dobby brought it here. I think it is over in the corner. Would you like to go through it with me?"

"When ever you're ready. Do you know what's in it?"

"I saw some old textbooks from Hogwarts, and letters. I read one from my father. He sent it just before they were married. I hope you didn't get him into too much trouble when you and Remus took him out just before the wedding."

"That is one story I will refrain from telling you," he smiled arching his brow at the memory of James' bachelor night foray. "Was there anything else in it?"

"Her wand, but I have it in a safe place. Dumbledore has given me permission to see that it is properly taken care of. I didn't want to break it in half. I don't know what else is in the trunk. I had just started investigating it when the Malfoy's showed up."

"I'm very proud of you for saving both your mother's family and Draco Malfoy."

"I'm just glad that you're safe. Every time I think about the Dementors..." she shuddered.

"You go on and get some sleep, and I insist that you only have happy dreams tonight."

"With you here I can't help but not to," Harry yawned, closing her eyes, drifting off to sleep.

Sirius sat watching her sleep for about half an hour, lost in thought. Remus had told him what had occurred while she was hypnotized. 'James, I really care for her and she has feelings for me too. If it's meant for us to be together then I promise I will always make her happy. If she chooses one of the others, I will always be there for her no matter what. Only time will tell where we will go from here.'

## ***Happy Birthday***

It was Sunday morning and the Weasleys had left the day before. Harry had been sad to see Molly Weasley go, and felt a pang of guilt over her selfishness regarding Sirius. She had arrived safely in Romania, and her son Percy had gone to visit his fiancé in Wales. Mr. Weasley was now staying with Dumbledore at the Snape residence for security reasons.

Draco too had left, to go and stay with his mother's family. Unfortunately, Lucius had indeed murdered his wife. Her body had been unceremoniously dumped one block from the Ministry of Magic. Harry and the others had done all they could to ease Draco's loss. In return for their help, he had promised them that when the time came he would stand with them against the Dark Lord and his followers.

Harry considered these thoughts as she awoke to find the sun streaming through the bedroom windows and Phaedra looking down at her from the side of the bed.

"Happy Birthday Miss Harry, how old are you today?"

"I am seventeen.," Harry smiled, stretching lazily.

"Are we going to go out today?"

"I don't know. I just know that today I feel happy and glad to have people who love me here."

"Mummy took me shopping and we bought you a present, but I'm not allowed to tell you what it is." Phaedra giggled, excited at the prospect of Harry getting a present from her.

"That's because you are not supposed to open your presents till after you sing Happy Birthday and eat the cake."

"Are we having cake for breakfast?" The little girl asked hopefully.

"No, silly, we aren't having cake until later on; probably this evening, after dinner."

"Oh, pooh, I like cake. I want to give you your present."

"It must be something very special if you want to give it to me now."

"It is. I helped mummy pick it out. It was..."

"Phaedra..." her mother's warning voice came from the door, "you almost gave away Harry's surprise. You have to keep the secret. You don't want to spoil it for her, now do you?"

"No, mummy, I'm sorry I didn't mean to."

"I know dear. By the way, happy birthday, Harry, I know you will have a simply fabulous day."

"Thank you, Circe," Harry replied tossing back the cover and climbing out of bed. "Now, little miss," she addressed Phaedra, "how about if we get dressed and go on down to breakfast?"

"Can we have a race to see who gets there first?"

"I have to take a shower, so unless your mum was planning on putting you in the tub, it wouldn't be fair."

"Actually, Phaedra does need a bath," Circe looked at Harry arching her brow. She was immediately reminded of Severus.

"In that case, you're on. First one down will get to open my birthday presents later," Harry said gleefully as she began grabbing clothes from her closet. It was a warm day so she hurriedly decided on a sundress and sandals.

Phaedra and Circe hurried from the room so Phaedra could have her bath while Harry showered. Not that it would really matter. Circe knew Harry would let Phaedra win.

Following her shower, Harry dressed quickly and then styled her hair in the manner the beautician had shown her. She then put in her contact lenses and applied some make up, and completed the ensemble with the medallion of Luna the Watcher Elves had given her.

She wanted to look pretty for Sirius. He had been more reserved towards her since their reunion. She was confused and hurt by this new attitude and wanted to get him alone to find out why he was acting so strangely. As she pondered his behavior, she heard Phaedra and Circe coming down the hall and smiled.

"Hurry, mummy, Miss Harry's door is still closed. She hasn't gone down yet."

"Don't run. You might fall and hurt yourself," Circe called after her.

"Phaedra!" Circe screamed and Harry heard a loud crash, and Phaedra crying.

Running out of her room, Harry flew to the stairs. Phaedra was lying in a heap halfway down on the landing. Her arm was dangling oddly and a huge purple lump was forming on her forehead where she had hit the wall. Her mother was frantically trying to comfort her as Snape came running up the stairs with Sirius. Dumbledore, Remus, and Mr. Weasley were all behind Harry at the head of the stairs.

"Mummy, I fell. It hurts," she sobbed.

"Sh...It's okay. We'll send for the healer."

"Phaedra, how did you fall baby?" Severus asked gently as he examined her injuries.

"I was running and tripped on the stairs. I wanted to beat Miss Harry downstairs. She said if I got downstairs first I could open the presents for her later."

"Well I didn't expect you to try flying," Harry teased coming down to sit by the landing. Phaedra started to smile, but Snape picked that moment to examine her broken arm.

"Noooo...", she wailed. "It hurts, Uncle Severus."

"It's all right, Little One. Your Uncle Severus will give you a potion so it won't hurt, and then Miss Harry will heal you," Dumbledore's warm voice came soothingly over Harry's shoulder.

"Miss Harry, are you a healer?"

"Just like the Phoenix," she winked.

"I'll go and get that potion for you now, so it won't hurt when we move you. What flavor would you like?" Snape smiled at his niece affectionately.

"Can I have strawberry?"

"Hmm...That's a tough one. Will cherry do?"

"Okay. I like cherry," Phaedra smiled wanly, as her uncle nodded, moving off down the stairs towards his potion room in the basement. "I want Mr. Hoppity Hop. Where is he mummy?"

"I'll get him. He's on the bed right where you left him," Circe told her daughter, heading back upstairs to retrieve the stuffed rabbit.

"Phaedra, you are being very good," Sirius smiled at the little girl. "Would you like to see Padfoot?"

"Your doggie?"

"Uh huh," he winked mischievously, and transformed into the big black shaggy dog. He then proceeded to sniff Phaedra and she managed to giggle weakly. Circe had returned and he snatched the bunny from her fingers, bringing it over to Phaedra in his mouth, who squealed with delight.

"Albus, where did this dog come from?" Circe inquired confused. "It isn't Snuffles."

"Mummy, it's Mr. Sirius. He can turn into a doggie!"

"Oh?" Circe looked at Dumbledore.

"Circe, I would appreciate it if you would keep the fact that Sirius is an animagus confidential. He is unregistered for security reasons at this time," Dumbledore explained calmly.

"If it weren't for his being able to transform without any one knowing my family would have been in serious jeopardy," Arthur Weasley informed her. "He posed as our dog in order to help guard us until my wife left for Romania and our son for Wales."

"Of course I shall keep this confidence. Does Severus know?"

"Yes, Circe, I have been aware that Black is an animagus for a number of years now," Snape said coming back up the stairs.

"Phaedra had calmed down and was happily petting Padfoot's head. She took the potion and drank it obediently. "It was good, Uncle Severus," she smiled at Snape, and then turned her attention to the others. "Mr. Remus, can I see your wolf sometime?" She asked innocently. Remus shifted uneasily as Circe and Snape froze.

"I don't think your mum or uncle would want you to," Remus looked at the little girl sadly.

"Well I think it's an excellent idea," Harry ventured boldly, looking at Dumbledore for support. "I think Circe and Mr. Weasley should too. It would help them to understand how people's attitudes can be wrong. The sooner people realize Remus affliction is nothing more than a disease the sooner they will get over their fear and prejudice, right Padfoot?"

"Woof, woof," Sirius barked in agreement.

"I agree with you, Harry. I think it would do a world of good, and not just for them. It will help Remus to feel more comfortable during his periods of transformation," Dumbledore beamed at her, patting Remus on the back.

"I don't know," Remus worried, "I don't want to frighten them."

"Doesn't my uncle make you a special potion to make you friendly?"

"Actually, Harry was going to make it today, with his supervision. She wants to practice doing it," Remus replied nervously.

"Mummy please can I see Mr. Remus wolf? I know he won't hurt me."

"Phaedra...I...", Circe began. She herself was afraid to confront Remus in his wolf form, but she did not want to frighten her daughter. Her logical adult self realized that his affliction was indeed a disease, but she had been taught from a young age to shun and fear werewolves. She had known about Remus when he had come. Severus and Albus had assured her that the potion made him quite harmless and he usually just curled up and went to sleep. Albus had also told her how Harry had brought him to the Halloween costume ball at Hogwarts and that he was quite docile.

"Circe, I have seen Remus in his wolf form, and he is nice and friendly. He pretty much also knows who we are, although he doesn't always remember what happens. He will just give you a good sniff and wag his tail. If you like, I will go with you. I would never jeopardize you or Phaedra, and neither would Dumbledore."

"Severus, what do you think? I know that you're uncomfortable when Remus is in his wolf state," Circe looked at her brother uncertainly.

"Circe, I am only uncomfortable because of what happened when I was a student at Hogwarts. I was there on Halloween and Remus was quite docile. He also protected Harry as much as he could during the confrontation she had with the Dark Lord in the Forbidden Forest. I think it would be a good lesson for Phaedra. She needs to understand that she should be cautious around werewolves, but the malady can be controlled."

"Miss Snape, I too need to learn the same lesson," Arthur Weasley spoke up soberly. "My son goes to school with Harry and is her best friend. He assures me that Professor Lupin is quite

docile when he receives the Wolfbane Potion. I know Albus would not let him teach if he felt the students were in danger, and that Professor Lupin would resign if he thought he might harm them."

"He did too, at the end of my third year. Fortunately, he has come back. Many of the students know about his affliction, although he doesn't like it to be broadcast about the school. He worries the younger students will be afraid of him."

"Please mummy. I'm not afraid of Mr. Remus. I'll bet he's real pretty, like Mr. Sirius doggie."

"Albus, will you come in with us?" Circe questioned hopefully.

"Naturally, and so will Harry and Sirius."

"Mr. Remus, how come you can't turn into a wolf all the time?"

"It isn't like Sirius. He changes by magic. I change with the moon because that is how the disease works. It also hurts me," he explained truthfully.

"Then maybe you would like Mr. Hoppity Hop to keep you company. He always makes me feel better."

"Thank you, Phaedra, that is very nice of you to offer to let me use him, but Sirius usually stays with me."

"I'll take good care of him, Phaedra," Sirius told her transforming back to his human form. "Now I think your uncle wants to take you back up to bed so Miss Harry can fix your arm and heal the bump on your head."

"Professor, why don't you carry her down to the parlor? I can heal her just as easily down there."

"Very well, here we go Little Miss, how about if I give you a little ride?" Snape easily levitated the little girl and floated her downstairs much to her delight. He settled her on the couch, as Harry entered.

"Hey, Phaedra, guess what? You got down here ahead of me. You won after all, and will get to open my presents for me!"

"Did you hear that every body? I won! I can open Miss Harry's presents for her," Phaedra cried with pleasure, while the others all smiled. They knew Harry had deliberately told Snape to bring her down ahead of her.

"Now you just lie still for me, and I'll fix you right up. Then we can all have breakfast."

Harry closed her eyes for a moment to gather her thoughts so she could project the healing energy into Phaedra's injuries. Opening them, she began the process of mending the child's arm. It had broken in two places, but Harry mended it without any problem. Phaedra watched patiently as the blue energy stream flowed from Harry and into her. Harry then put her hand on Phaedra's forehead and was relieved to note there was no skull fracture. She healed the bruise quickly and then sat back on her heels.

"That's it, you're all done. Your arm is all fixed and the bruise on your pretty little head is all gone."

Phaedra moved her arm gingerly, and smiled, "Mummy look, Miss Harry fixed it. I'll bet she's the best healer there ever was."

"I'll bet you're right," Circe hugged Harry. "Now lets all go in to breakfast, shall we?"

"That my dear, is an excellent idea," Dumbledore agreed.

"I'll be right in. I need to sit and rest for a minute," Harry told them as everyone moved towards the dining room.

Remus hung back at the door and turned back to Harry. "Is something wrong, Princess?"

"I'll be all right. Why don't you go on ahead?"

"Aren't you feeling well?"

"No. I'm fine, honest."

"Something is troubling you? Now out with it, what's wrong?"

"Remus is Sirius mad at me? Did I do something to make him upset?"

"Why would you think that?"

"He hasn't been acting like himself since he came back. It's almost as if he is deliberately keeping his distance from me. I don't want to scan his emotions, not without his permission, but I don't know what else to do."

Harry stared out the window, unable to meet Remus gaze. She didn't want him to see how worried she really was.

"Have you tried asking him what is on his mind?"

"Every time I try to get him alone he finds an excuse to do something. I had to practically beg him to transform the other night, yet he did it for Phaedra without a problem."

"He was just trying to make her feel better."

"But I needed him to make me feel better too. I always loved it when he would transform for me. He knows it makes me feel safe. The other night it took all I had to face off again with Voldemort. I needed the feelings of security I always get when I put my arms around him, yet he avoided me. I almost lost him to the Dementors again, and I needed to know we were still there for each other."

"I see," Remus shifted uneasily.

"Something is wrong, isn't it?" Harry asked her voice barely above a whisper.



"You really need to talk to Sirius about this," Remus hedged, unwilling to give her a definite answer.

Harry just stared, her eyes wet, refusing to allow Remus to see her cry. He knew the answer to her question, but his loyalty to Sirius prevented him from telling her anything. She hadn't felt this alone and isolated in a long time.

"Go on into breakfast, I'm not really hungry," she said turning and walking out into the garden. 'Happy birthday, Harry, the one person on this earth you thought truly cared about you has turned his back on you. What am I going to do now? I can't go back to the Dursley's.' She considered the possibilities desperately trying not to cry. She was frightened and confused. She felt like her heart was breaking. Moving further into the garden, she transformed, and flew up into the trees. She wanted to be alone to cry where no one could see her. A few minutes later Sirius and Dumbledore came out into the garden.

"Albus, she isn't here."

"She's here," Dumbledore smiled looking up into the tree. Harry's tears had fallen onto his head. "Come on down, Child, we want to talk to you."

"Harry, honey, it's not what you think," Sirius said looking up into the tree where she was perched. "I don't want to see you unhappy on your birthday. Heaven knows you haven't had too many that were happy over the years."

Harry stayed where she was. She didn't know if Sirius was serious or just trying to get her down. As she looked down at them, some more tears fell on Dumbledore's head. The old man just continued to smile, and then Fawkes flew down from one of the second floor windows. He perched next to her, and began to sing, resting his head on hers. The Phoenix song, helped to soothe her, and she stopped crying. He was trilling softly in his throat, and Harry felt a wonderful sense of comfort. He then flew down and perched on Dumbledore's shoulder, continuing to trill peacefully. Harry knew he was telling her it was okay to come down, so she cautiously took to the air, flying in a circle over the garden to stretch her wings, fluttering softly down to perch on the arm Sirius held out for her.

"Child, you know you shouldn't transform without my permission. Circe and Phaedra don't know you are an animagus," Dumbledore reprimanded her softly, but his eyes were warm and kind. "Please turn yourself back and then we can talk. I know you are upset, but Sirius was telling you the truth. It isn't what you think."

Harry flew to the ground and transformed. "Why are you avoiding me?" she questioned Sirius uncomfortably.

"I'm not, Albus and I have been having a difference of opinion about how to protect you, and unfortunately, it has kept me preoccupied. You interpreted it as my avoiding you," Sirius put his arms around her. "I told you the truth the other night. Nothing will keep us apart from now on."

"Am I allowed to feel foolish for thinking you were deliberately trying not to be with me?"

"You are," Sirius grinned, "by the way, you look very pretty today."

"Thank you. I dressed in this outfit just for you."

"Ahem," Dumbledore cleared his throat. "Can we continue this happy reunion over breakfast? I was looking forward to some of those pancakes."

"Did he say pancakes?" Harry's face lit up.

"He did. They have strawberries too," Sirius said as they walked back in from the garden. "I hope they saved some for us."

"Me too," she replied as Sirius put his arm around her waist and they all went into breakfast.

Remus grinned as they entered, happy to see Sirius had smoothed things over with Harry. "We saved you all some pancakes and strawberries."

"Ah...now I won't have to turn you all into rubber duckies," Dumbledore joked, winking at Harry as he helped himself to the food and passed the platter around.

"Mr. Headmaster Dumbledore," Phaedra frowned, "would you really turn me into a rubber ducky?"

"No, Phaedra, he wouldn't turn you into a rubber ducky," Harry reassured her. "He might change your uncle Severus though."

"Indeed, Miss Potter. Perhaps I should change you into one," Snape sneered taking out his wand.

"Harry, why are you blushing?" Sirius asked turning on his famous charm.

"No reason," she choked trying not to laugh.

"Sirius, as her godfather I suggest you take her to task," Circe smiled wickedly. "If you knew what was in her mind just now..."

"Circe! Do you mind?" Harry got even redder.

"Mummy, why is Miss Harry all red? Is Uncle Severus really going to turn her into a ducky?" Phaedra asked innocently."

"Ahem, I think we should end this discussion right now," Dumbledore eyed them all over his spectacles, his blue eyes bright with laughter.

"I believe the Headmaster is right," Snape replied looking down his nose at Harry, as she popped a bite of pancakes into her mouth, pretending to concentrate on her food.

"Mr. Sirius are we going to do something special for Miss Harry's birthday today?"

"As a matter of fact Phaedra, we are. Miss Harry and your uncle have to mix Mr. Remus potion first though. Then we will be going out for the afternoon."

"Where are we going?" Phaedra asked her brown eyes sparkling.

"It's a surprise for Miss Harry, so you will just have to wait to find out."

"Oh...nobody ever tells me anything," Phaedra pouted.

"Don't worry Little One, I can guarantee you will have a good time," Dumbledore winked at Sirius.

"Remus, I know Sirius won't tell me what he is up to, but you being such a sweet, kind, and wonderful..."

"Forget it, Harry. All the cajoling in the world won't get it out of me."

"Professor Snape," Harry looked at him innocently, "I don't suppose you would be willing... On second thought you're more closed mouthed than a Jobberknoll."

"What's a Jobberknoll?" Phaedra asked curiously

"It is a kind of bird that never utters a sound until it is about to die," Snape explained. "Its feathers are used in truth drugs and memory potions."

"Headmaster, you're such a sweet amiable old man. You know how much I care about you..."

"I think she really wants to be a rubber ducky," Dumbledore laughed waving his wand as Harry dove under the table.

"Look, Miss Harry! Headmaster Mr. Dumbledore made a big duck out of the stack of pancakes!" Phaedra squealed with delight.

"Nice duck," Harry said cautiously popping her head up over the table. A giant yellow rubber duck was sitting where the pancakes had been.

"Child, what made you think I was serious about turning you into a rubber ducky?"

"The last time you waved your wand at me, I ended up with a rash and had to spend the night in the Hogwarts infirmary," Harry grinned getting up from the floor.

"Headmaster Mr. Dumbledore gave you a rash?"

"Only a heat rash. He did it the night your Uncle Severus and Mr. Remus found out I was a girl and not a boy." Harry smiled at the memory. It seemed like it had been a long time ago, yet it was actually less than a year. "He had to hide me so he could have time to tell the other teachers and students the truth."

"Uncle Severus what did you say when you found out Miss Harry was only pretending to be a boy?"

"I really don't recall."

"Don't you fib to her," Harry scolded. "He stood up as straight as he could, and then said what an unexpected surprise it was to meet me. His left brow was arched just like it is now."

"Mummy says Uncle Severus does that when he thinks something is funny. She can do it too, but I can't."

"How do you know, have you ever tried?" Harry queried.

"No," Phaedra admitted. She then sat and started trying to arch her brow, and proceeded to make them all laugh at her outlandish expressions.

"Headmaster, can we have our pancakes back. I don't know about you, but I'm still hungry."

"Can you reverse the spell, Child?"

"Are you giving me permission to use magic."

"We both are," Mr. Weasley spoke up brightly.

"Miss Harry, they're going to let you do some magic?"

"They just want to see if I can do it, Phaedra."

"Can you?"

"I think so," Harry remarked contemplating a reversal spell. "*Patina massa reddo*," Harry directed her wand at the duck and it immediately returned to the pancakes.

"My word, she did it. Very nice, Harry," Arthur Weasley smiled.

"Thank you, Mr. Weasley."

"I told you she was good, Arthur," Dumbledore remarked proudly.

"I don't see what the big deal is. You asked me to reverse the spell, so I did."

"Child, you reversed someone else's spell with out the help of a more experienced wizard or witch. You didn't use a counter spell from a textbook."

"In other words, Princess, you were able to create your own counter spell. You didn't use a standard one."

"I don't follow what you all are trying to tell me."

"Honey, it just shows that you are able to think independently when the need arises. You didn't ask for help and you didn't try to use something common like, *Dissolvo incantamentum*," Sirius smiled proudly. "What you did is considered advanced magic."

"I liked the rubber ducky," Phaedra sighed.

"I'll buy you a real rubber ducky, Phaedra," Professor Snape informed her with the trace of a smile. "I'm sure Miss Harry will know where to find one."

"Any Muggle toy store would carry them. It is a common bath tub toy."

"Will you get it for me today, Uncle Severus?"

"If Miss Harry will come with me."

"I think that will be a wonderful idea. You can both go after you make Remus potion. Then we will meet for lunch at the Leaky Cauldron," Dumbledore told them, giving a conspiratorial look to Sirius.

"I thought I would be spending the morning with Sirius after doing the potion for Remus."

"I'm sorry Child, but Sirius and I still need to discuss the matter of protecting you. I think we should get that out of the way first." Dumbledore looked meaningfully at both the younger wizard and Mr. Weasley.

"Can I go with you Miss Harry? I have never been in a Muggle toy shop."

"I guess it would be all right, so long as your mum and uncle agree."

"Severus, do you mind taking her with you?" Circe asked her brother. "I know what a handful she can be."

"I think Phaedra will enjoy coming. I know she will like the toy shop."

"Whoopee...I'm going to a toy store with Miss Harry and Uncle Severus. Can we go now?" She looked eagerly from one to the other.

"No, Phaedra. We have to mix the potion for Professor Lupin."

"Will it take long?"

"Professor Snape doesn't it take about an hour?"

"If I don't have to stop you or if you don't need my help you should have it done in approximately an hour. You haven't done it since last month, and I expect you to be a bit slow since you haven't had access to the ingredients to practice."

"Nice to know you have faith in my ability to mix the Wolfbane potion," Harry replied sarcastically.

"I know you will do just fine, Princess," Remus looked at Harry fondly.

"Can I watch Uncle Severus?"

"No, Phaedra. I do not want you down in the potions room. There are too many dangerous ingredients and instruments. You could get hurt."

"Miss Harry please tell Uncle Severus that I will be good. I just want to watch."

All eyes were on Harry, and she could feel Professor Snape staring at her. She knew she had to choose her words carefully.

"Phaedra, I have something more important for you to do. I need you to take care of Snuffles. I happen to know she has not had a nice walk since she has been in the city. If maybe you and Professor Lupin could take her for me I would really appreciate it."

"Can I mummy? Will you come with me Mr. Remus?"

"You will have to let Remus hold onto the dog, but yes, you may take her for a walk."

"I will be happy to help you walk Snuffles. We can take her to the park around the corner. Circe, would you like to join us?"

"I'm afraid I have some work to do for Albus and Head Minister Weasley."

"Please, Miss Snape, call me Arthur," Mr. Weasley smiled cordially. "I'm still not used to being called Head Minister."

"Only if you call me Circe, we aren't at work and there is no need to stand on formality."

"I will be happy to. Now I just have one request of Harry."

"What can I do for you Mr. Weasley?"

"If you happen to see an interesting Muggle toy that you think I could add to my collection..."

"I will be happy to pick it up for you," Harry chuckled wryly. She was aware of his collection of Muggle artifacts, and had given him a CD player last Christmas.

"I suggest we all get started on our morning's business since we will be going out for lunch," Dumbledore advised standing and motioning Sirius and Mr. Weasley to follow.

"I will see you later, honey. I know you will do a good job for Remus," Sirius winked playfully as he followed both Dumbledore and Mr. Weasley from the room.

The others also rose and headed out of the room to perform their planned morning chores. Harry and Snape descended to the basement potions room and Harry began to gather the necessary ingredients. She worked quietly while Professor Snape worked on some medicinal and truth potions for the Order. She was aware he was watching her though, and smiled inwardly. It pleased her to know that he felt he didn't have to stand over her while she worked. Finally, she heaved a sigh, and turned to where he was sitting.

"Professor, I'm finished."

"I can see that, Potter. Is there a problem?"

"Not unless you think I made an error mixing the formula."

"If you had, I would have stopped you immediately. Some of those ingredients are quiet expensive and I'm sure Professor Lupin would not like to have to purchase extra ones because you made a careless mistake."

"He pays for the ingredients for you?"

"He does, but before you get upset I will tell you that he insists on doing so."

"That sounds like him. I hope you are able to get him a decent price on some of the items?"

"Naturally, or at least he thinks so," Snape replied with the trace of a smile. Harry understood that he had been paying for some of the items without Remus knowing it. "Now I believe I heard Lupin and Phaedra come in a few minutes ago. Go on and give him his potion. I will be up shortly and then we can go to the toy store."

"Okay," Harry answered pouring the potion into a glass for Remus. Heading upstairs, she found Phaedra and Remus in the garden, having a glass of lemonade. "Professor, I have the potion for you."

"Thank you, Princess." Remus drank the potion with a grimace. "You need to get Severus to find a way to make it taste better."

"Mr. Remus you should ask Uncle Severus to make it in cherry. He always makes medicines for me in flavors."

"It isn't always that easy, Phaedra. Sometimes you can only mix certain things together," Harry explained patiently.

"Oh. I didn't know that. Mr. Remus are you still going to let me and mummy see you later on as a wolf?"

"I told you I would, and I meant it. I don't want you to be afraid though, so do as Dumbledore tells you."

"Will you really sniff me like Snuffles does?"

"He will," Snape's voice came from the garden door, "you are to stand still while he does so too."

"Can I pet you?" Phaedra asked looking curiously at Remus.

"Of course, just give me the time to sniff you so that I can recognize you by your scent."

"You'll like Mr. Remus wolf. He's big and fluffy."

"Is he more fluffy than Snuffles or Padfoot?"

"Yeah, he is," Harry nodded looking playfully at Remus. "Now I think your uncle would like to get going to the toy store for that rubber ducky he promised you."

"Remus thank you for keeping an eye on Phaedra while Harry mixed the potion for you," Snape nodded taking Phaedra by the hand.

"It was no problem, Severus. She is a delightful little girl."

"Would you like to come with us to the store?" Harry queried.

"No Harry, I am going to lie down. My body is aching quite a bit."

"I understand Remus," Harry gently placed her hand on his arm, and sent him some healing energy.

"I will see you all later then. I believe Albus said you would meet us at the Leaky Cauldron?"

"Yes, we will join you for lunch," Severus nodded arching his brow.

Harry followed Professor Snape out onto the street, and he hailed a Muggle taxi. Noting the look of surprise on her face, he arched his brow, but didn't say anything. They traveled for a few blocks and then pulled up in front of a large toy store on a main thoroughfare. Paying the cabbie, they then went inside. Phaedra was delighted, but knew better than to run ahead of her uncle.

"Look at all the pretty dollies," she cooed. "I have one like her!" she pointed to a doll with long blond hair, dressed in a fancy blue dress, with white socks and shoes.

"I like the stuffed animals, myself. They're nice and soft to cuddle at night," Harry smiled at Phaedra, picturing her holding Mr. Hoppity Hop. "Is your bunny the only one you have?"

"Oh, no, but he's my favorite. I take him where ever I go."

"I gave her that bunny when she was a toddler, and she hasn't let it go since," Snape smiled affectionately at his niece.

Harry could see how much he cared for her, yet she could also feel the sadness inside of him. Was he thinking about his lost son? 'How different he is when he isn't tense or worried. If Ron and Hermione could see him like this, they wouldn't believe it. He can be so nice, and I'll bet that he loves as passionately as he hates,' Harry thought as she watched him showing Phaedra a group of stuffed monkeys up in a banana tree display.

"Here we go, bath and water toys," Harry indicated the aisle they were looking for. "Look Phaedra, they have lots of rubber duckies."

"Look! Look! Uncle Severus they have one like Headmaster Mr. Dumbledore made," Phaedra pointed excitedly at a large yellow rubber duck. "Can I have that one?"

"Of course, baby," Snape reached up and took the toy off the shelf. "Harry we have time if you would like to browse around and see if there is anything Mr. Weasley might like."

"Sure, I saw an aisle back there with electronic toys and another one with mechanical items."

They made their way through the crowded store back in the direction they had come. Harry looked at battery operated cars and toys that sang or talked when you pressed them in certain spots. She finally decided to get him one of the moving toys, and settled on a singing and dancing chicken. Snape just pursed his lips and shook his head. Paying for their purchases, they left the store. It was a warm summer day, but not humid, so Professor Snape suggested they walk.

"Are we that close to the Leaky Cauldron?"



"It's only a few blocks from here. If Phaedra gets tired I can carry her."

"Look Uncle Severus," Phaedra pointed wide-eyed, "that store has puppies in the window."

"It is a pet store, honey. Would you like to look in the window?" Snape asked her pleasantly.

"Could we?"

"Of course, Harry you don't mind, do you?"

"No, not at all; I keep trying to convince your sister to get Phaedra a pet, but she wants to wait."

"Uncle Severus, please can I have one of the puppies?"

"No, Phaedra. You don't have the room for one. Besides, I thought you were going to help Harry with her dog?"

"I am, but I still want a pet of my own."

"Phaedra, as soon as your mum says you can have a pet, I will personally get one for you," Harry smiled trying to make Phaedra feel better.

"Really, Miss Harry?"

"Really, now lets get moving. It's getting hot and I could use a cool drink."

They continued for three more blocks, and then turned the corner. Snape consulted his watch, and appeared satisfied. Harry knew he was always punctual and just shook her head. She spotted the sign for the Leaky Cauldron about half way up the street and was glad. She was looking forward to lunch and wondered where they were going afterwards. Reaching the door, Snape indicated Harry should go in first. Pulling the door open, she stepped inside and her mouth hit the floor.

"Happy Birthday Harry!" A chorus of familiar voices all chimed at once. "Surprise!" Everyone was laughing and cheering as she was temporarily blinded by the flash from a camera.

Harry didn't know if she should laugh or cry, and realized she was doing both. For the first time in her life, she was truly shocked. She hadn't even been this stunned when she found out it was Professor Quirrel and not Snape who had been trying to kill her and steal the Philosopher's Stone. Everyone she knew was there. Hermione and her parents, Professors McGonagall, Flitwick, Sprout, Hootch and Moody. Hagrid with Madam Maxime. Neville Longbottom, Seamus Finnigan, Dean Thomas, and Colon Creevey was there with his camera. Oliver Wood, and Lee Jordan, had come too, and were sitting with Cho Chang. However, the thing that probably shook her most was that the entire Weasley family was there. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, and all their sons, Bill, Charlie, and Percy, with his fiancée Penelope Clearwater. The twins, Fred and George, her best friend Ron, and the only Weasley girl, Ginny. Ron was grinning broadly.

Sirius was laughing smugly, and Remus smiled and winked as Phaedra took Harry's hand and Snape pushed her further into the room. Circe was smiling, her left row arched in the familiar Snape family fashion. Dumbledore came over and hugged her, blue eyes twinkling, a broad smile radiating affection, while Tom hung out a sign indicating the Leaky Cauldron would be closed until five P.M. for a private party.

"Miss Harry, did we surprise you?" Phaedra asked happily.

"Yes, honey you did. Did you know about this party?"

"Uncle Severus and mummy told me this morning. We had to take you out so you wouldn't know. Did I keep the secret good?" Phaedra asked looking around at the adults.

"Yes, little one, you kept the secret very well," Dumbledore affirmed, and Phaedra grinned with pleasure.

"What is everyone doing here? The Weasley's are supposed to be in Romania, and Hermione was in New York City."

"You really didn't think we would not come to a surprise party for you?" Molly Weasley beamed. "I was originally supposed to stay in Romania, but when I found out Sirius wanted to give you a party I knew we would all want to be here."

"That's right, Harry. It's about time you had a real birthday and not one where we're pulling bars off your bedroom window, or sending owls with your presents," Ron quipped, reminding Harry of some of her previous birthdays with the Dursleys.

"I made sure we would be getting back from America on time just to be here," Hermione hugged her. "It was worth seeing the look on your face."

"Yeh can say that again," Hagrid said coming over grinning from ear to ear. "Dumbledore an' Sirius both sent me a owl, tellin me ta 'urry up back from Romania. Said it would be a cryin' shame if I missed yer party. Well I jus' told Ron and Ginny 'bout it an' they told their mum, and well, 'ere we all are."

"Miss Harry," Phaedra interrupted, "is he a giant?"

"No, he's half a giant. Hagrid this is Miss Phaedra Snape, Professor Snape's niece. She is like a little sister to me."

"Nice ta meet ya Miss Phaedra. I be Rubeus Hagrid, keeper o' the keys and game over ta Hogwart's. I also teach Care o' Magical Creatures. If Miss Harry says yer like her sister than I'm glad. She'll look out fer yeh, she will," he said picking Phaedra up, and putting her on his shoulders.

"Wheeeee..." she laughed with delight at being up where she could see everyone. "Look at me; I'm up in the air."

Hagrid beamed and walked over to where Phaedra's mother was sitting with Professor Snape and the other teachers. She too knew Hagrid from her own years at Hogwarts.

"So do I get a hug for surprising you?" Sirius asked, his smile reminding her of the images she had of him at her parent's wedding.

"Actually, I could kill you. You are one sneaky devil. Telling me you had to talk to Dumbledore about protecting me..."

"Whoa, honey, that was the truth. Of course we also had our hands full with planning this party," Sirius grinned even wider. "We purposely had it in the afternoon since we knew you would want Remus to be here too."

"In that case, you deserve a kiss," Harry said kissing him on the cheek. "I would have been very unhappy if Remus wasn't here. Of course we could always have..."

"No, you couldn't," Remus chuckled. "A party at Hogwarts is one thing, but not one in the heart of London," he hugged her warmly. "Now let's get some food, I'm starved."

"You guys go on ahead, while I say hello to everyone."

"Can I get you something, honey?" Sirius inquired.

"I could use a cold drink. If you could get me one I would very much appreciate it."

"Anything special, or just something cold?"

"Butterbeer, since this is a party," Harry grinned happily.

"All right, but remember I will be keeping an eye on you," Sirius snickered moving off to get her drink. Harry greeted each one of her guests personally and thanked them for sharing her birthday. She was happy and excited, but soon realized there was one person missing. Looking around she frowned, and Sirius caught the expression on her face, as she helped herself to a plate of food.

"Harry, what's wrong? I couldn't help but notice you were glowing a moment ago," Sirius inquired as she took a seat at the table next to him.

"Nothing really...it's just that someone is missing."

"I thought I asked everybody. Who did I miss?"

"Dobby. I know he's a house elf but..."

"Harry Potter shouldn't be sad," Dobby's cheerful little voice came from behind her, "Sirius Black didn't forget to ask Dobby."

"Dobby, you are here!"

"Dobby apologizes for being late, but Dobby wanted to do something special for your birthday. So Dobby spent the morning making your present from him."

"Dobby, you made my present?"

"With Sirius Black's permission. Dobby wanted to do something he knew would make you happy, so Dobby made your birthday cake!"

He then snapped his fingers and a huge cake appeared on the table in the front of the room. It was decorated with flowers and rainbows. '*Happy Birthday Harry,*' written across it, with seventeen candles, and a larger candle placed on the top for good luck. Harry smiled broadly, and kissed the house elf on the forehead. He blushed and hid his eyes beneath his large pliable ears.

"I hope someone gets a picture of the cake, Colin," she remarked loudly. A moment later, there was a flash from his camera. Dobby then bounced off to get some food, and Harry settled back to talk with Ron and Hermione who were sitting opposite her.

"So, Harry, how bad is it staying with Snape?" Ron questioned taking a bite of his sandwich. "Is he as nasty and mean during the summer?"

Sirius and Remus were grinning, and Harry started to take a drink and nearly choked as Ron was startled by a very familiar soft oily voice from behind him.

"Mr. Weasley, it's good to see you again too. I hope you have been enjoying Romania. Perhaps you will be able to give the other students a lesson on the many uses of dragon's blood in anti-aging potions," Snape was sneering as he looked at Ron down his long nose.

"Professor Snape," Ron gasped, his voice cracking, "I was just saying how nice it was of you to have Harry and my dad as your guests."

"Indeed, perhaps you would like to spend some time with me also? I'm sure it could be arranged."

Harry was doubled over with laughter. The tears were running down her face, and she had to bury her face in Sirius shoulder as Ron glared at her from across the table.

"Ron," she managed to choke, "this may surprise you, but Professor Snape has a very nice side to him. He just loves to catch you off guard."

"You see, little brother," Fred Weasley quipped, "you aren't even back in school yet and you're getting on the wrong side of Professor Snape."

"Yeah, what you need is to have a really good reason for him to give you detention," George Weasley winked at Snape. "Now I can hook you up with the new and improved versions of our Furry Fingered Foulies. They are able to..."

"George!" Ron yelled at his brother. "Honestly Professor Snape, George was just kidding. I would never bring any of their jokes to class."

"Wouldn't you?" Snape's thin smile causing Ron to shift uneasily as Hermione rolled her eyes. "Let me see, Mr. Weasley, I seem to recollect the time you set off a dung bomb when you thought I wasn't looking, then there was the time you poured the fluorescent dye into the cauldrons so that all the potions came out lime green, and of course..."

"Severus, I think Mr. Weasley has gone beyond all those childish pranks," Professor McGonagall said coming over from the buffet table with a second plate of food.

"Have you Mr. Weasley? I wonder. I shall be looking forward to hearing all about your trip to Romania."

"Any time, Professor Snape, when ever you're ready I'll be glad to tell you all about it."

"Why not right now?" Snape inquired, enjoying watching the look of utter disbelief slide across Ron's face as he took a seat beside him.

"Now?" Ron swallowed hard, looking wildly at Harry for support. The last thing he wanted to do was to tell Professor Snape all about Romania.

Harry and the others were beside themselves with amusement. Looking over at Snape, she winked and then said to Ron, "Why don't you tell him all about the Potion Master who worked with the dragon keepers. You know the one who was able to secure some..."

"Harry, what on earth are you talking about?" Ron paled ready to panic.

"Why don't you ask the Professor?"

"Ron then spun back around, only to find Professor Snape smiling broadly, his left brow arched in amusement, as he set off a noisemaker and a package of chocolate frogs appeared. He immediately pushed them over towards Ron, who grinned sheepishly. It was then that Ron finally realized that Snape's ranting and ravings in class were merely an act. True he really was strict, but he wasn't the ogre he had always believed. Harry and Hermione had been right all along.

The rest of the afternoon flew by, and Phaedra was all excited when Harry called to her to open her presents, after they had all eaten their fill of the strawberry short cake that Dobby had made for her. The little girl beamed with pleasure as she opened each package while Harry sat beside her and read the cards. Harry received many nice gifts. Fred and George gave her a gift certificate for their joke shop in Hogsmead. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley gave her a lovely crocheted handbag with an intricate beaded design, which Harry suspected Mrs. Weasley had made herself. Hermione had bought her a book all about Native American Shamans and Cho gave her a lovely Chinese robe made of silk, embroidered with a scene depicting a Phoenix in flight. She told Harry her great grandfather insisted she should have it.

The Professors had all chipped in and bought her a miniature quidditch game, similar to Wizard's Chess. The playing pieces were moved with a wand and floated in the air. It was a game of skill, as the person had to maneuver all the players at the same time to simulate an actual quidditch match. Hagrid and Madam Maxine gave her a gift certificate for Polly's Perfect Pooches Primping Palace so she could have Snuffles bathed and groomed.

Percy and Penelope gave Harry a set of new school robes designed for her role as Head Girl. Bill, Charlie, and Ginny gave Harry a new watch and some fancy hair combs. Her other friends all made up a photo book of Harry at Hogwarts, starting with her second year and on through the present. Ron bought her a new pair of Dragon hides gloves, monogrammed with her initials.

She finally came to the presents from the Snapes, Remus, Sirius, and Dumbledore. There were two gifts from the Snape family, one from Severus and his sister and the other from Phaedra.

"Open mine first, Miss Harry," Phaedra begged her eyes bright with excitement.

"Do you want to unwrap it for me?" Harry asked, but Phaedra had already begun to pull off the paper. Inside there was a beautiful doll dressed in a long pink dress. She had black hair and green eyes, "Phaedra, she's beautiful. Did you pick her out because she reminded you of me?"

"Yes, Miss Harry, I thought she looked just like you and she had on a pink dress."

"I'm going to keep her on my bed so everyone can see her," she hugged Phaedra, trying to hide the tears in her eyes as she thought of her mother's last letter to her. "Now help me to open your Uncle Severus and mum's present."

Phaedra happily pulled the paper off a small box. Inside was a ruby birthstone ring with a dragon etched into the stone. Harry examined the ring carefully and found the gold band was inscribed with the Hogwarts Motto: Never wake a sleeping dragon. She could also feel the power the ring emitted..

"Do you understand the significance?" Circe asked quietly as her brother watched Harry closely.

Harry knew they both had vast knowledge into the dark arts, which was one of the reasons Snape had been tutoring her with Professor Lupin. The ring would help to protect her.

"The ruby is the July birthstone. This particular ring has been made to enhance its magical powers provided by nature. Rubies protect from all types of evil and unfriendly spells; they promote healing powers, and instill courage into the wearer. It will get darker when evil or danger is nearby. The dragon etched into the stone helps to increase the power of the person wearing it and this is enhanced by the gold band. The inscription is the translation of the motto over the entrance to Hogwarts," Harry told them as she examined the ring carefully.

Snape and Circe were both smiling. Harry knew they were pleased that she had understood the significance of such a gift. It was not just a pretty bauble; it was a gift of protection against Voldemort. Harry slipped the ring onto the ring finger of her right hand. She immediately felt the power flowing into her and realized that the ring had also been enchanted so that Harry could not remove it.

"I see by your expression that you understand the enchantment we have placed on it."

"Enchantment?" Sirius looked from Snape to Circe.

"The ring will not come off until the dangers she is yet to face are over," Snape told him quietly. "It will help to protect and guide her over the next few months."

"Then I thank you both for thinking so highly of her that you would assist me to see to her safety," Sirius replied as he and Snape locked eyes.

Harry could feel the emotions the two of them were feeling. Animosity and jealousy towards each other, and yet a growing respect; each was in denial that they could ever be truly friends. There were also strong feelings of affection for her.

"Miss Harry, I like the pretty ring. Mummy told me it would help to keep you safe from the bad wizard," Phaedra babbled causing the two men to break their eye contact.

"She's right," Harry smiled. 'God bless the timing of little girls,' she thought to herself. "Now lets open some more."

"Goody, lets open this one," she handed Harry a long narrow box, with a smaller box attached to it.

Harry read the card and saw that it was from Remus. Opening the two parcels she grinned, "Are you trying to tell me something?"

"I thought you would appreciate them," Remus laughed.

"What did Remus give you honey? He wouldn't tell me," Sirius asked curiously, nudging his friend good-naturedly.

"First he gave me a moonstone," she displayed the smaller box. A round translucent white stone sat in the middle of a recess on red satin. "Now I will never have to be in the dark."

"What is in the other one?" Ron asked looking over at her with interest.

"It seems Remus has a bit of a sense of humor. He gave me a Lunascope to study the phases of the moon. He even signed his card Moony." Everyone in the room knew Lupin was a werewolf and laughed. "Professor Lupin, did anybody ever tell you that you have a rather strange fixation with the full moon?" she asked lightly, her tone teasing.

"Well, Harry, it does seem to bring out the beast in me," he joked back.

"You fell into that one, Miss Potter," Snape remarked as he leaned his chair back against the wall.

"Quite right Professor, and on that note I think I will open the next gift." Harry handed a large square box to Phaedra, who willingly tore into the wrapping. "This is from our lovable Headmaster," she quipped as Dumbledore's cheeks turned pink. "Cool, I could get into this."

"I seem to recall you got into mine once," he laughed.

"What is it Miss Harry? It looks like a funny kind of bowl," Phaedra asked bewildered.

"It's called a pensive, Little One. It is used to store thoughts and memories for a later time."

"You will show me how to use it properly?" Harry inquired looking at Dumbledore with a smile.

"Naturally, I wouldn't want you to fall in and get lost."

"Nah, too many empty thoughts in it," she laughed back, replacing the pensive in its box.

"This is the last one, Miss Harry. Who is it from?"

"This one is from Sirius. I saved it for last, since he's my godfather."

"It feels like this box is empty," Phaedra said as she ripped off the paper and handed the box to Harry.

Sirius was grinning from ear to ear, and Harry looked at him suspiciously.

"Fred and George, before I open this present just tell me if he has been in the joke shop recently. He gave me some of those Furry Fingered Foulies last Christmas."

"Nope, hasn't been in ours anyway. Of course he could have mail ordered something," Fred answered.

"Sirius I want your word of Honor that there is nothing in this box that will jump out at me," Harry smiled lovingly at her godfather.

"I promise that the item in that box is not a joke and you will absolutely love it."

"Okay, but if something crawls out at me, you'll be sorry," she sneered wickedly. Lifting the lid, she let out an exclamation of pure delight. "Yes! I love it, and you too!"

"What is it Harry?" Ron demanded. "You look like you just found a pot of gold."

"I have something even better. Season's tickets to a top box for four people to the Chudley Cannons games."

"What!" Ron dove off his chair and landed on Harry, toppling her chair onto the floor, as she waved the tickets in the air. Everyone in the room fell laughing. The Cannons were Ron's favorite team. "You did say they were for four people. I am your best friend."

"If you don't get off me, I think Sirius will have something to say about that," she laughed as her godfather pulled him to his feet pretending to look menacing.

"Sorry, Professor Black. I uh..." Ron blushed embarrassed.

"Just see that it doesn't happen again," Sirius replied trying to sound stern, but failing miserably. He was unable to hide his smile at the youth's exuberance and friendship for Harry.

Harry thanked everyone profusely and they all settled down and relaxed talking about the upcoming school year and what they had all been doing for the summer. Harry told Ron and Hermione all about what had happened at the Dursley's and they were amazed about how Draco had been helping her. Hermione felt sorry for him, but Ron still wasn't sure, even though Draco's mother had been killed. He did agree not to judge him prematurely and would see how he behaved towards them when school started. They were all excited about the upcoming school year, and Dumbledore had seen that Hermione had been informed that she would be a Prefect for Gryffindor after all.



Harry politely excused herself when talk turned to what they would be doing after Hogwarts. Dumbledore had overheard and followed Harry into the quiet corner she had found for herself. He didn't need to say anything, he just put his arms around her, letting her feel safe and comforted. He knew that she was more than aware that for her after Hogwarts might mean nothing more than a funeral.

The party finally broke up and Harry thanked everyone again for coming. The Weasley's decided to go on back to the Burrow, and Moody had arranged for additional protection for them.

Harry was happier than she had ever remembered being on her birthday, and hugged Sirius affectionately. As they prepared to depart, he told Dumbledore he would take her with him back to Severus town home. Following him out back, she smiled and shook her head. He was using his old Motorcycle. Hopping on behind him, she held tight around his waist and off they went. It was thrilling and exhilarating to ride behind him, and it was a lot better than floo powder. He landed the bike out back in Snape's yard, just missing the herb garden, much to the Potion master's relief.

He then went upstairs to stay with Remus until he transformed. Harry went and put away all of her gifts, while Circe gave Phaedra a bath with her new ducky. Following her tub, Phaedra came into Harry's room, and curled up on the bed with her.

"What will you name your new dolly?"

"I think I will call her Jamie, for my father."

"How come you don't name her after your mummy?"

"My mum had red hair. I look like my father and his name was James. My dolly looks like me, so I think Jamie suits her."

"Do you have any pictures of them?"

"Right here," Harry told her pulling over the album she kept at her bedside.

Phaedra looked at the pictures in the album and smiled at the baby pictures of Harry. She was also able to recognize Sirius and Dumbledore.

"Miss Harry, I think your mummy and daddy loved you very much. They were always smiling in these pictures with you."

"You know something, Phaedra. I think you're right. Now I see your mum and Dumbledore are here with your uncle which means it's time to go and see Mr. Remus wolf. Do you remember what we told you to do?"

"Yes, to stand still and let him sniff me. I promise to be very good."

"Then let's go," Harry led her up the hall to Remus and Dumbledore's room, with Dumbledore and the others following.

She knocked and Sirius answered, moving aside for them to enter. Remus was lying on the bed and looked up as they came in, his ears pricked. His nose was in the air, and Harry could see him testing the air to see who had come in. Jumping off the bed he sniffed Harry, tail wagging. She pet him fondly. He then looked over at Phaedra and walked cautiously up to her. He began to sniff her feet and then moved up to her legs, torso, and then her head. The more he sniffed the harder his tail wagged, and he whined happily.

"Look, Miss Harry, he knows who I am!" Phaedra announced with pleasure, petting him, and giggling with delight. "He is just like a big doggie! He isn't mean. You and Uncle Severus made him nice and friendly."

Remus then went over, sniffed Severus, and offered him his paw, as he had on Halloween. He recognized Dumbledore almost immediately, and rubbed up against him with a wolfish greeting from deep in his throat. Finally, he went over to Circe, who stood nervously. The wolf could sense her fear and sat down in front of her, tilting his head. He then moved over to her very slowly and began to scent her as he had Phaedra. Once he had finished he sat back down and offered her his paw.

"Hello Remus," she said cautiously extending her hand and taking the proffered paw. "You really are a beautiful wolf," she remarked as he wagged his tail while she pet him, beginning to relax. "I never realized how hard this must be for him. Remus I'm sorry," Remus wagged his tail and rubbed up against her with a whine, noting his understanding.

They all visited with him for about an hour, allowing Phaedra to play with him and Sirius, who had transformed. The little girl was delighted, and giggled happily, when Harry too, got down on the floor and joined them until it was time for Phaedra to go to bed.

"Do I have to go to bed, mummy" I want to play with Mr. Remus some more and Mr. Sirius and Harry."

"It is well past your bedtime, and you have had a very busy day. I'm sure Miss Harry is planning on going to bed soon too."

"Your mum is right. Mr. Remus needs to rest too, and so does Sirius. Now thank Mr. Remus for letting you see him as a wolf. He doesn't usually let people see him."

"Yes, Miss Harry. Mr. Remus you are really pretty. Miss Harry told me you were big and fluffy and you are. Thank you for playing with me tonight. You too, Mr. Sirius," Phaedra said turning to Sirius who had changed himself back to human form.

"You're welcome, Phaedra," Sirius told her while Remus came over and gave her his paw, wagging his tail.

"Good night, Lupin, Headmaster. I will see you in the morning," Snape nodded politely. "Harry, have a good night's rest. Black I will see you later in our room," Snape acknowledged as he departed behind Phaedra and Circe.

"I don't know about Phaedra, but I'm exhausted," Harry said yawning. "I will see you all in the morning."

"Good night, honey," Sirius hugged her while she pet Remus.

"Harry, I will want to speak with you tomorrow. Sirius, and I have been talking with Arthur about protecting you, and it's time we talked the whole idea over with you."

"Now that sounds ominous," she frowned worriedly, "please don't tell me you are sending me back to the Dursley's"

"As you youngsters would say, not a prayer," Dumbledore smiled looking at her over his spectacles. "You have nothing at all to worry about. I just want you to be a part of this decision, and Sirius has agreed. You are old enough now to be allowed to have a say in your life. It would be unfair of us not to let you do so."

"I knew there was a reason I loved you so much," she hugged the old man as he tousled her hair.

"Now off to bed with you. I'm an old man and I want to go to sleep."

"Humph...sleep indeed," she snorted as she headed for the door, "you're probably planning on sneaking on down to the kitchen to get some more cake."

"I would never even think of such a thing," Dumbledore sniggered as she left the room, rolling her eyes.

Harry climbed into bed and relaxed, too tired to wonder what Dumbledore would talk to her about tomorrow. It would come soon enough. For now, she just wanted to remember this day in her heart, and when Dumbledore showed her the proper way to use the pensive, she would store as many of the memories of it that she could recall in it.

## ***The Protectorship***

Harry rose early the next morning, and following a quick shower, she dressed, ran a quick comb through her unruly hair, and donned her glasses. She preferred them to her contacts when she was just relaxing in the house. Heading on down to breakfast, she met Sirius just leaving his room. Professor Snape had already risen and gone down some time ago.

"Good morning, Harry. I see you have on your glasses today, how come?"

"Well my handsome godfather, I like to hide behind them. This way all the boys will leave me alone," she laughed teasingly.

"In that case, I will see to it that you get several pairs of them for all occasions."

"Actually, I usually wear them when I'm not going out or doing anything special. It's just easier and I'm used to using them, but if you would rather..."

"No, honey, I was just curious. You look just as pretty with glasses as you do with your contacts in," Sirius grinned reassuringly as they descended the stairs to the first floor.

"Are you going to be very busy today?"

"No, actually I have nothing planned since it is Sunday. Remus will rest most of the day, and Severus and I do not usually spend the afternoon gossiping. I thought I would just relax with a good book, or get a head start on the lesson plans for September. Do you have something in mind?"

"I thought I would look through the trunk of my mother's things. I know there are letters and books, but there may be other things too. Would you like to help?"

"I seem to remember telling you I would."

"You did. I just wanted to make sure you had the time."

"If I didn't I would make the time. I know how important it is for you, besides, I'm curious myself."

"Yeah, I still think it's weird how this trunk wound up in my aunt's attic. How did it get there? She said it was sent to her after my mum died. It had to have been in the house because her wand ended up being put into it too."

"We will probably never know," Sirius looked thoughtful as they sat down at the table.

Snape had already eaten and the others had not yet come down. Harry could hear Phaedra upstairs talking to her mother in the hall. She wondered where Dumbledore was. She hoped he had gotten some sleep.

"Harry Potter, good morning. Professor Black it is good to see you too!" Dobby appeared bouncing happily. "What can Dobby get Harry Potter and Professor Black for breakfast?"

"Scrambled eggs, toast, bacon, and some fried potatoes," Sirius told the house elf with a wink. He liked Dobby even if he couldn't keep still.

"Does Harry Potter want the same thing?"

"Do we have any fresh fruit too? I would like some if there is any."

"Dobby will see to it, Miss. I know there are oranges, and grapefruits, and melon, and..."

"Okay, Dobby, you don't have to get carried away. Just some melon will be fine."

"Dobby will see that you get some melon," He smiled happily, snapping his fingers. The food appeared almost as soon as he disappeared.

"Miss Harry, Mr. Sirius," Phaedra skipped into the room, Circe at her heels. "Good morning. Mummy is going to take me to the park today."

"That sounds nice. Do you like the park?" Sirius asked pleasantly.

"Yes, she will let me play on the swings. There is also a sand box and things to climb. Would you and Miss Harry like to come?"

"Thank you, Phaedra, but maybe your mum would like to spend some time alone with you," Harry smiled. "Mr. Sirius is going to help me look through my mother's things in that trunk."

"Can I help?"

"I thought you wanted to go to the park?" Circe smiled tolerantly.

"Hmm...I guess so. Do you think there is any treasure in the trunk?"

"Treasure?" Sirius looked puzzled.

"I read her a story to get her to sleep last night. It had a part about Leprechauns hiding their treasure in a trunk," Circe explained with a smile.

"Well, Phaedra, I don't think we'll find treasure. I think it will just be books and letters and maybe some personal items," Harry told the little girl who screwed up her face with displeasure.

"I think I will go to the park, instead. Mummy can I have some eggies for breakfast?"

"Of course, dear. I will have some too, along with a cup of coffee." The food appeared as soon as Circe has spoken.

"Good morning, Child. Did you sleep well?" Dumbledore asked as he entered the room.

"I did. The question is did you, or did you sneak down to the kitchen for another piece of Dobby's cake?"

"I went right to sleep," Dumbledore smiled, his blue eyes shining with mischief.

"After he had Dobby bring him up another piece of cake and a cup of tea," Severus spoke from the door.

"Now, Severus, what makes you think that?"

"Because Dobby is under orders to let me know when you sneak too many sweets. Honestly, Headmaster, you need to take better care of yourself."

"Severus, at my age a little indulgence in life is a good thing," Dumbledore beamed at his Potions Master and friend.

Harry lowered her head and snickered.

"Is something funny, Miss Potter?" Snape asked coolly. "I only have Albus best interests at heart."

"Is that why Dobby brought you a piece too? I heard you just as I drifted off to sleep," Harry grinned catching him off guard. It was one of the rare times she actually saw him taken aback.

"I simply joined him to make sure he did not eat too much," Snape replied with aplomb, recovering himself.

"Mummy can I have some cake for breakfast? I promise to finish my eggies first."

"No, Phaedra, you do not have cake for breakfast. Now see what the two of you have started with your talk of cake," she reprimanded the two men as Phaedra pouted.

"Phaedra, how about if you and I bake a cake together later. We can have it with dinner. This way you can practice mixing for when your uncle teaches you how to mix potions."

"Can I mummy? Uncle Severus will the house elves let us mix a cake?"

"Yes, the house elves will let you mix up a cake," Snape smiled indulgently at his niece.

"You just be good for Miss Harry and do as she shows you," Circe instructed.

"Goody, I'm going to mix a cake and go to the park today."

"Child, when you finish your breakfast I need to speak with you. Arthur wanted to be here too, but I told him it would not be necessary just yet."

"This wouldn't have anything to do with what you said to me last night?"

"It does, but it won't take long, and I will tell you again you needn't worry. Sirius would never let you go back to your aunt and uncle unless you requested to do so."

"Fat chance of that," Harry smiled as Sirius gave her a squeeze.

"Mr. Headmaster, Dumbledore, where is Mr. Remus. I want to tell him how much fun I had with him last night."

"He's sleeping, Little One. He needs to rest when the moon is full. You'll be able to see him this afternoon."

"He'll be glad he made you so happy," Harry smiled at Phaedra.

"Uncle Severus can you make his potion so it tastes good next time? I saw him drink it yesterday and it didn't taste good."

Snape studied his niece calmly before replying, "That potion has to be mixed a special way. I will need some time to work out the formula for it to taste better, otherwise it may not work."

"Miss Harry told me almost the same thing, but I know you can do it! You're the best potion maker ever."

"It seems Phaedra has just committed you to improving on the Wolfbane Potion," Sirius smiled meaningfully. "It wouldn't be right to disappoint her."

"No, it wouldn't," Snape answered coldly.

"Mummy, could I have some juice?"

"Of course," Circe responded, but before she could reach the juice pitcher, it floated over to her, landing gently on the table.

"Thank you, Albus."

"You should thank Harry. It seems she has been practicing," Dumbledore replied studying her intently. "I have been working with her, but sometimes she even surprises me."

"Miss Harry, you can make things float, like Headmaster Mr. Dumbledore?"

"Sometimes, but I really have to concentrate unless I'm mad or upset, then it can get out of control."

"Will you teach me?"

"Phaedra, you're too little to do magic yet," Snape reminded her gently. "You may not even be able move objects, most of us can't. It is a special power."

"Oh, I'll never learn how to do anything!" Phaedra crossed her arms over her chest with a sullen expression.

"Okay, I was wrong. She will definitely be in Slytherin by the time she gets to Hogwarts. That is a Snape stance if I ever saw one, and I know that particular one quite well," Harry informed them all shaking her head in amusement.

"Did I miss something?" Sirius asked confused.

"Harry felt my daughter should be in Ravenclaw since she didn't seem to have the ambition for Slytherin," Circe smiled. "I guess she realized she was wrong."

"Miss Harry tell Uncle Severus to let me do magic. I want to make something happen."

"Hmm...If I show you how to do something easy, will you behave?"

"Mr. Headmaster Dumbledore is watching you. Will you get in trouble? I don't want you to be e'spelled!"

"You let me worry about that," Harry said getting up from her seat and taking out her wand. She could feel everyone watching her, and sensed they were not pleased.

"Now you hold the wand like this," she said placing Phaedra's hand over hers and you say '*Abra Cadabra*,' as you wave it at them."

"Mummy says that doesn't do anything."

"Oh yeah, look at them. What are they all doing?"

Phaedra looked at the others and laughed, "They're all smiling! It made them smile."

"Exactly, you see there are different kinds of magic. There is good magic, and dark magic, but the best magic is what comes from right here," Harry placed her hand on Phaedra's chest. "It is the magic from inside your heart. That's what makes them smile."

"Miss Harry, I love you. Please don't go away."

"What makes you think I'm going anywhere?"

"Mummy says you are going home with Mr. Sirius."

"That doesn't mean you won't see me, Phaedra. Mr. Sirius is my godfather and guardian. I am simply going home, like when I go back to the Dursley's."

"Will you still come on Friday and Wednesday?"

Harry looked over at Dumbledore and Sirius. Dumbledore nodded and Sirius winked at her. "I'll still come, and when it's time for us to all go to school I will send you letters by owl post."

"I'll get real mail?"

"Uh huh. You can tell your friend Althea that you get letters by owl post from your friend Harry Potter."

"Althea will be mad. She doesn't get letters, especially from Harry Potter!" The little girl gloated, and Harry was reminded once again of her uncle. "Mummy can we go to the park now?"

"Yes, so long as you have finished your breakfast."

"I'm all done. Do you have my pail and shovel to play in the sandbox?"



"They're right by the front door," Circe said wiping her mouth on her napkin. "You go and get them and I will be there in a minute."

"Okay, mummy." Phaedra skipped from the room.

"Harry that was very nice teaching her about '*Abra Cadabra*,' Circe smiled. "Where did you ever learn that?"

"It's a long story, Circe. Let's just say it was the last gift my mother ever gave to me," Harry looked sadly at Dumbledore, who smiled lovingly with understanding.

"Mummy, come on. I'm ready to go."

"Be patient, Little One, your mother is coming," Dumbledore told her from the door.

"Thank you, Albus. Harry I will be back before lunch so you and Phaedra can do your baking."

"All right. Enjoy the park; I think it is going to rain later," Harry called as Circe left the room. "Headmaster, if you want to talk with me, I'm all finished eating."

"Excellent, we can relax over some iced tea while I explain what is going on. Sirius if you would check on Remus, I would appreciate it."

"I'll be happy to," Sirius agreed leaving the room. He knew Dumbledore wanted to talk to Harry alone.

"I will be down in the potions room. I have to finish the burn potion. Moody has also requested some more sleeping and pain potions."

"Yes, yes, Severus. He is making sure he has a good supply. The raids on both sides have been increasing," Dumbledore acknowledged with a worried frown. "Harry, if you would follow me. Severus has graciously given me the use of his private library to use as an office."

Harry rose and followed Dumbledore up the hall to a set of double doors. He opened them and she found they were in another short hall. There were a few rooms off this wing, and Dumbledore stopped at the second door on the right.

"Strawberry ice cream," the headmaster uttered and the door unlocked itself. "Come, Child," he ushered her into the room.

They were in the front of the house, facing the street. The outside wall had three long windows, and the other three were covered with bookshelves, lined with thick volumes. A plush maroon carpet covered the floor, and a dark green leather couch and chair flanked the fireplace. A large desk with a comfortable chair stood off to one side. It was definitely a man's room.

"Headmaster," Harry began slowly, as he directed her towards the couch, "are you and Sirius quarrelling?"

"No, Child. We simply had a difference of opinion. We finally agreed to have you be a part of this decision, since you are the one most affected. It is something that hasn't been done in about seventy five years, and then the circumstances were different."

"You talk like it is something really bad. Are you sending me away someplace?"

Harry asked expressing her worst fears.

"What? Oh, no, Child, I would never do such a thing unless you wanted it. Didn't I tell you it was nothing to worry about?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Now, relax and I will get us some iced tea. Then I want you to listen to what I have to say." He rang for the house elves and an elf Harry didn't know appeared. "Gem, please get us some iced tea," He directed the elf who nodded and disappeared. A moment later a tray with a pitcher of iced tea appeared on the table with two glasses. Dumbledore poured them each a glass and then sat back, studying her. "First of all, let me tell you that Arthur Weasley has never read the Mathias Prophecy. He is familiar with it, but doesn't know what is in it. So, when he approached me with this idea I was more than a little surprised."

"So this is something from the Prophecy?"

"Yes, Child, but don't get ahead of me. Have you ever heard of the Ritual of Protectorship?"

"Professor Binns went over it in the History of Magic. It is done to protect a witch or wizard who is in such great danger that the Ministry believes ordinary means of protection will be unsuccessful. He said it is more than a guardianship and less than a marriage, although there is a joining ceremony. There is no sexual relationship involved. Protectors can be male or female, and the Protectorship lasts for life, unless the person who was the subject of the Protectorship dissolves the relationship when the danger is passed, and if they choose to do so."

"I see you were paying attention in class that day," Dumbledore's blue eyes were twinkling. "The individual who is the protected person can marry within the Protectorship when they are of age, and witches and wizards in such a relationship have been known to fall in love quite frequently. Other times, they are more like parental or family relationships, especially if the witch or wizard is just a child. The point is each one is unique."

"So what does this have to do with me?"

"Arthur Weasley has suggested you enter into a Protectorship," Dumbledore held up his hand to keep her from interrupting. "Never having read the Prophecy he was unaware that it spoke of you having three protectors."

"I would assume the Keeper of the Trust is also one of the Protectors?" Harry asked shrewdly remembering that the Prophecy specifically mentioned Dumbledore in that role.

"A Protectorship involves five people one for each point of the pentagram. The person to be protected is placed at the top.. Then there are three who will act as guardians, they are the actual Protectors, each of whom is given a specific role or reason for being chosen. They must

be adults and experienced wizards or witches. Finally, an older witch or wizard is selected who will be their teacher and help to guide their decisions, and is considered the Keeper of the Trust. That person must be a minimum of fifty years old. That witch or wizard must be a member of either the Order of Merlin or the Board of Governor's and in the Order of the Phoenix, since these are such uncertain times. He or she will maintain the trust and bond the relationship by guarding the immediate Protectors, and the person being guarded. It is considered a great honor to be a member of a Protectorship."

"What if something happens to the Keeper of the Trust?"

"If the danger still persists, a new one must be chosen. If the reason for the initial Protectorship has passed than the person does not need to be replaced, even though the Protectorship lasts for life. Now do you see why it is a unique relationship? The Muggles do not have anything like it."

"You said that Mr. Weasley never read the Prophecy, yet this was his idea?"

"It was. He does not know that I have been specifically mentioned in the role of Trust Keeper."

"This is so weird. I feel like I'm being pushed along by forces that are beyond my control. It's almost as if all this really was preordained."

"Perhaps it was," Dumbledore shrugged, "you know that Lord Voldemort was the heir of Slytherin. He is the last direct descendant of Salazar Slytherin."

"Yes, but that really had nothing to do with me. I'm not descended from Slytherin."

"Not from Salazar, no. I had hoped not to have to tell you this until you were older. You are aware that our world does keep track of all wizard marriages, and births, just as in the Muggle world."

"Yes, isn't there a magical quill that writes down the name of each magical child born? Isn't that how you know who to admit to Hogwarts?"

"Very good, Harry. It is one way we know who our ancestors are, and you have a very interesting set of ancestors."

"Do I?" she asked skeptically.

"Yes, you do. For one thing, like me, you are descended from Merlin, yet we are not directly related," Dumbledore explained, watching her intently.

"I always said the old boy was having a better time than people thought with Morgan le Fay in that cave," Harry muttered aloud to herself, and then realized Dumbledore had heard her. She felt the blood rush to her cheeks, as he looked at her over his spectacles, eyes twinkling merrily, but refrained from commenting. Instead, he continued to explain her heritage.

"You also have some other distinctive ancestors. Your father was a direct descendant from Godric Gryffindor, and your mother, even though she was Muggle born, was descended from

Salazar Slytherin's younger sister. It is why you were able to yield Gryffindor's sword, and have some of the Slytherin traits."

Harry had jumped visibly. She was stunned, and her heart was racing. This was the reason she had survived Voldemort's curse. This was why Voldemort had told her mother to step aside. He would have spared her because she was his kin, however remote, but Harry was also descended from Gryffindor. She was a threat to his plans even then. Her mother's love and her parent's genes had combined to send out the old magic, as she played with her mother's wand that fateful Halloween night.

Harry could hear the blood rushing through her veins. She did not say anything. There was nothing to say. Gryffindor and Slytherin had been against one another all those centuries ago. It had been Godric Gryffindor that had caused Salazar Slytherin to leave Hogwarts. How ironic that Slytherin's last descendant was going to have to fight the descendant of his sister and the man that had caused his original downfall. This was made even more astonishing by the fact that Slytherin had been a purist and did not believe in the mixing of Muggles and Wizards; yet both Voldemort and she had Muggle lineage as well.

"Is there anything else you have never told me?" Harry whispered staring out the window.

"No, Child. I had hoped never to have to tell you under these circumstances," Dumbledore answered, but Harry suspected he was still holding something back.

"You said that Mr. Weasley never read the Prophecy of Mathias. Did you tell him any of this?"

"I told him after he suggested the Protectorship. He said that now it all made sense. He is very proud of you, and of his son, Ron. You see, Gryffindor's best friend was a wizard by the name of Ronald Weasley. The Weasley's of today are his direct descendants."

"No wonder it seems so important to them to be in Gryffindor House. Yet Ron is not mentioned in the latter parts of the Prophecy."

"No, he isn't, but that doesn't mean that he doesn't play a role. Perhaps Chandra Mathias did not see him there. He is mentioned in the earlier parts of the Prophecy. You have also had encounters with Voldemort that were not specifically mentioned. Hermione betrayed you, yet there is no specific mention of what occurred with Voldemort, nor was she designated by name as the one who would betray you. It also doesn't say anything about your ability to transform."

"That's true. Other people have said things though. Artemis said he would be there for me when the time came, and so did Cho Chang's great-grandfather."

"Circe told me that Chin has read your tea leaves. She is worried about both you and Phaedra."

"So am I. It isn't in the Prophecy, but she is Severus niece. Voldemort may try to get to him through her."

"It is very likely."

"What if I don't want to do a Protectorship?"

"You are old enough to refuse. If you had been younger, it would have been arranged for you. Sirius especially insisted that you be given the choice of whether to go ahead."

"Am I allowed to choose the three actual Protectors and the Keeper?"

"You may do so, but it must be approved by the Order and the Ministry."

"Naturally, now I do have some stipulations. I will only do this if the Ministry and the Order agree to my selections. I can almost guarantee they will not be pleased with them. There will be no changes. The three actual Protectors will be of my choice and must also agree. If any of them refuse it will not be done."

"Very well. I will inform the Ministry and the Order of your stipulation."

"While you're at it remind them that I'm the one who will be sticking their neck on the chopping block to try and stop Voldemort. My choices may very well be my last requests. You see, I haven't forgotten how vague the Prophecy is about whether I live or die, but it does say that Voldemort will fall."

"Do you wish to give me the names of those who will act as Protectors? I can present them to the Governor's and if they agree I will call a meeting of the Order."

"The situation is that grave?"

"It should be done before you return to school. Voldemort will try to get to you and is getting desperate. If he is to try to defeat you, it will be easier before you turn eighteen. I believe that is why the Prophecy specifically says your final battle with him is in your seventh year at Hogwarts."

"I don't understand. What has my eighteenth birthday got to do with it?"

"Your powers will come into full play once you become eighteen. Right now, you are still developing them. I don't think you will find any new ones, but now you will begin to perfect them and grow even stronger."

"No invisibility huh? I really did want to learn how you do it," Harry grinned winking at him.

"If you are capable, it has not presented itself. However, that is one power that often will not present itself until you are older. It usually remains dormant for a long time. I was almost thirty when I found out I possessed the skill. It often goes with being telekinetic. Yet you are an empath and I am not."

"How about telepathy? I have often wondered about you."

"Have you? Let's just say that I can't read your mind, but that doesn't mean I don't know what is in your head."

"Now there's an enigmatic answer if I ever heard one."

"You are getting off the track. Do you have any idea of who you would want to act as your Protectors?"

"That's the easy part of this whole thing. The names should be obvious to you," Harry smiled slyly. "Sirius Black, Severus Snape, and Remus Lupin are to be the actual protectors. We already know you will be the Keeper of the Trust, not that I would want anyone else."

"It will be interesting to see how the Governor's react to the names of the Protectors."

"Just tell them I said it's the ex con, the ex deatheater, and the werewolf or there will be no Protectorship. I have my reasons for selecting them. Will you inform the three I have chosen of my decision?"

"Not yet. They will not be told until their names are presented to the Order. Then they all must agree."

"Do you think they won't?"

"I think they will all be honored, but they may also feel they are not worthy of it."

"I have already anticipated their arguments. Sirius will say that he is my godfather, and this is a much more in-depth relationship. Severus will say that he is also marked for death by Voldemort and isn't ready for such a relationship, especially with me. Then there is Remus. He will quite simply say he is a werewolf."

"How should I respond to their arguments?"

"Tell Sirius that we never got the chance to develop a parent child relationship, we have been apart more than we were together. Severus should know that I too have suffered a great loss. It will also annoy Voldemort to no end knowing that his former follower is now protecting his worst enemy. We are truly opposite sides of the same coin. As for Remus, I can't change his being a lycanthrope, but maybe I can make it more bearable. I don't mind his being a werewolf."

"Remind them that as an empath I am aware of what is in their hearts. I have asked for them quite simply because we all care for each other. The reasons for each are written in the Prophecy. You see, Sirius is my strength, Severus my courage, and Remus my endurance. Didn't I tell you that the day we walked back from Hogsmeade? It took a strong man to survive Azkaban for twelve years, a courageous one to walk away from Voldemort, and lastly, no one should have to endure what Remus goes through every month, yet he never complains. I don't know what is going to happen to any of us, but maybe we can all find some kind of happiness and solace together. If I die, then at least I will have had people who care by my side. If I survive mores the better. Who knows what may develop. I will always have them close to my heart."

Dumbledore studied her for a few minutes, before speaking. He gently tilted her chin up to look into his eyes. Harry could feel his power, strength, love, and wisdom. He finally broke the silence, smiling down at her with such intense warmth that she wanted to hold onto it and store it deep into her soul

. "I have watched you grow, and struggle, laugh, and cry. I counseled you, and reprimanded you, taught you, and learned from you. I have watched you emerge from your cocoon and come out of hiding. You have changed from a Tomboy to a girl before my weary old eyes. Today I have seen that girl cross over the bridge to become a woman. I have asked a great deal from you and more yet to come. You have always given me your best; you are good, and kind, loyal and loving. You are as the Phoenix," he intoned quietly, hugging her to his chest, as she wept softly. They stayed that way for several minutes until Dumbledore released her. "Go on and enjoy the day. I will have an answer for you by tomorrow evening."

Harry dried her eyes and quietly left him alone in the study. Her head was spinning. She was descended from both Gryffindor and Slytherin. She also must have had some ancestor who was descended from Merlin himself. She was racing towards a destiny that both frightened and intrigued her. She had powers that were strange and unusual. Certainly none of her friends possessed the ability to speak Parsel Tongue, or had telekinesis. She was also an empath, a healer, and an animagus. How many of these skills would she need to defeat the Dark Lord? She had already used some of them in their confrontations. As she reentered the main part of the house, she was lost in thought. Could she find some of the answers in her mother's belongings? She doubted it. Her mother probably never knew she was descended from Slytherin's sister. Her reverie was interrupted by Sirius, who was just coming back downstairs.

"Harry, watch where you're going!" he called from the stairs as she nearly walked into a potted plant.

"What? Oh my gosh," she grabbed the pot just before it crashed to the floor from its pedestal. "Thanks, I guess I was so busy thinking about my conversation with Dumbledore I forgot to look where I was going," Harry admitted sheepishly.

"Did you come to any kind of a decision?"

"I did. I agreed to it, with certain stipulations. I'm sure Dumbledore will go over them with you later. Right now I want to tackle that trunk."

"What ever you want," Sirius eyed her curiously. She was being closed mouthed about the Protectorship. He knew it was her decision, and decided to leave the situation alone. If she wanted to tell him, she would. He followed her up the stairs to her room. "You said you read a letter from James just before he and Lily were married. Can I see it?"

"Sure," she grinned, "here it is. You are mentioned prominently."

Sirius took the letter and scanned it quickly, a smile etching his features. "I remember when he wrote this. We had a good time that night. It was the three of us, Peter didn't come."

"Good, that bastard shouldn't even have been invited," Harry was surprised at the vehemence of her tone. "Sorry, I didn't mean to sound so angry, it's just that..."

"Harry, there is no need to apologize. I agree with you."

"Good, let's see what else is in here. Hang on to these letters, we can read them later," she said handing him the neatly bound stack. "These seem to be some of her old books from Hogwarts. I don't suppose we'll be using any of them?"

Sirius looked them over quickly, shaking his head. "I'm afraid not, honey. These aren't the current books, but they sure bring back memories."

"Well maybe I can find something interesting in them. If nothing else I know Hermione will read them, especially the spell book," Harry told her as she dug further into the trunk. "Here's another book." Pulling the book out, she thumbed through it, and smiled, "Look, Sirius, it's my baby book." There were pictures and a page with Harry's birth weight of seven and one half pounds, just as Dumbledore had told her. "I was 20 inches long with a ring of dark fuzzy hair."

"I told you that you looked like Harry in the newsstand where I lived. That's how you got your name. I'm just surprised you haven't wanted to change it."

"I like having a boy's name. It raises a lot of eyebrows," Harry chuckled diving back into the trunk. "Now what is this?" she lifted out a package wrapped in plain brown paper. Opening it, she found some of her mother's old robes from Hogwarts. She couldn't resist the urge to try them on, but they were too long for her. "I guess mum was taller than I am."

"She was, by about two inches. I guess she was about five-six."

"I wonder who I take after that I'm shorter than they are."

"I believe James' mother was about your size. She passed away when we were in our sixth year."

"I have all these relatives that I never knew. I have vague memories of my mother's parents, but they died when I was about four."

"Both of them?"

"Yeah, I heard my Aunt Petunia talking one time. My grandmother had been ill and died, and then my grandfather just kind of didn't want to live any more. He died a few months later."

"What else is in the trunk?"

"Here's another package," she told him pulling out the parcel. "Baby clothes! Look how tiny they are. Oh how cute."

"Are you going to save them?"

"Sure, maybe I'll use them one day."

"You'll make a very good mother, judging by the way you are with Phaedra."

"Thank you, but I have no desire to use them too soon," Harry laughed, as she wrapped them back up. "Now what is this?" Harry had found a rather large bulky package. It was pliable and Harry could tell that whatever was in it was soft.

"Maybe it's more clothes," Sirius suggested as she carefully unwrapped it.



"I don't believe it!" she exclaimed grinning broadly. "Look at what she saved for me. They're practically brand new." Harry lifted out three teddy bears, all of different sizes.

"It's the Teddy Bears we all brought the day after you were born, when we had to tell Lily about the Prophecy!"

"Can you remember who gave me each one?"

"I can still see it as if it was yesterday. I gave you this one," he said pulling out a large black one. "This one was from your father," indicating a medium sized brown and tan one with button eyes, "and the Panda was from Dumbledore."

"Put them on the bed for now. I have my first toys back. They can sit with my new doll."

Sirius did as she asked, shaking his head. He had been worried that going through her mother's trunk might upset her, but so far, she was quite pleased with the contents.

"Hmm...Now what is this? I think it may be a picture." It was a rectangular object and appeared to be framed. Opening it, Harry found that it was actually two pictures in a folding frame. On one side was her father, and on the other her mother. They were their wedding portraits. Like all wizard photographs they were moving, and looking at each other smiling. "I think my mother made up this trunk for me. It contains things that were important not just to her, but my father. Things she wanted me to have. I think she wanted to safeguard these items for me in case something happened to her."

"What makes you say that, honey?"

"No woman would put away her wedding pictures. They weren't married for that many years. She also put in some baby clothes and the teddy bears. Let's see what else is here." Nearing the bottom, she pulled out another picture. It showed her parents with Sirius and Remus while at Hogwarts. It had been taken down by the lake. "Ah ha! It is a picture of my parents with you and Remus."

"Let me see," he took the picture and smiled, "this was our seventh year. It was taken the day we got our exam results. Peter took it."

"Probably one of the few decent things the man ever did. Put it on my dresser with the wedding pictures of my parents." He did so as she dug deeper into the trunk. "Here is another picture. This one is Dumbledore. He still looks the same, his beard is just longer."

"I know. I'll put it on the dresser with the other ones. Is there anything else?"

"No, that's all of it. Let's read some of the letters," Harry remarked taking the sheaf of letters. She began reading them aloud. There were letters from her paternal grandparents to her father, letters from James and Lily Potter to one another, and letters from James to Sirius and Remus after he had asked Lily to marry him. They both laughed and cried as they read them, secure in each other's company. They had just finished and were putting them away when they heard Phaedra and Circe come in the front door.

"I guess it's time to go and bake that cake. Phaedra will want to start right away."

"What kind are you going to make?" Sirius asked as they started out of the room and down the stairs.

"What kind would you like?"

"Chocolate would be nice," Remus soft voice came from behind them in the hall. He had gotten up for the afternoon, but Harry could tell he was in pain.

"Then chocolate it will be. What time does the moon rise tonight?"

"Not until ten. You would know that if you had used your new Lunascope," he teased.

"I had a busy morning. I investigated the trunk that was found in my aunt's attic. My mother left me a legacy."

"A legacy?"

"Yeah, the trunk had letters form my parents to each other, along with you and Sirius. There were also teddy bears, baby clothes, and photographs of all of you. She also had some of her old books and robes from Hogwarts."

"What about her wand? I thought you said it had been in the trunk too?"

"Originally it was. I have it in a safe place for now. I may see if it can be placed in her grave with her. I understood from Dumbledore that my father was buried with his."

"Miss Harry!" Phaedra interrupted as they reached the first floor hallway, "Can we bake the cake now?"

"Sure can, I heard you come in and knew you would want to get started."

"Mr.Remus are you feeling better? Headmaster Mr. Dumbledore said you were very tired and needed to rest from being a wolf."

"I am feeling better, Phaedra," Remus smiled at the little girl. "I understand you had a good time playing with me last night."

"Yes, you're a very nice wolf. I had a good time. Can we play again some day?"

"We'll see," Remus replied noncommittally. Harry understood he still worried that he could cause her injury. "I am looking forward to having some of your cake. Miss Harry had agreed to make a chocolate one for me. Do you like chocolate?"

"I love chocolate and strawberry short cake. Can we make both Miss Harry?"

"Maybe we could do a chocolate strawberry short cake?"

"Umm...I would like that. Let's go!" Phaedra grabbed Harry by the hand pulling her towards the kitchen, as the two men laughed.

They were met in the kitchen by Dobby, and the house elf Harry had seen earlier, Gem. They gave them a recipe for chocolate cake, and Harry explained what she wanted to do.

"Dobby will get the strawberries, Harry Potter." He dashed off to another part of the kitchen, returning with a bowl of fresh strawberries.

"Phaedra you can help me to mix the dry ingredients," Harry said as she picked up a measuring cup.

"What are dry 'gredients, Miss Harry?"

"Ingredients," she corrected, "and they are just that. Flour, sugar, baking powder, any thing this isn't a liquid, like water."

"How do I do it?"

"Like this," Harry said taking a spoon and scooping some flour into the cup. You need to do it at eye level. This says you need four cups of flour, which is this line here. Can you read yet?"

"A little bit, and I can count to twenty and know my numbers. What are these funny numbers on the cup?"

"Those are fractions. They tell if it is a half or three quarters full. I will help you with that."

"How do I hold the cup at eye level and fill it?"

"Keep it on the table until it seems to be where you want it at the line, then you can hold it up."

Harry helped her measure and pour out all the dry ingredients. Phaedra was a quick learner, and with the help of the measuring cup began to understand her fractions. Harry then helped her to add the other ingredients, and allowed Phaedra to crack the eggs.

"Yech...raw eggies look like boogies," Phaedra grimaced, curling her lower lip.

"Kind of, the whites anyway," Harry agreed. "Now we have to mix it all up. Since I can't do magic, and Wizard houses don't use electric, I think we will have to do it by hand." Picking up a large wooden spoon, Harry began to stir the mixture. She took turns with Phaedra, while the house elves looked on with wonder.

"Harry Potter mustn't do such hard work," Dobby said trying to take the spoon. "Dobby can use his magic to stir the cake."

"Dobby, I think we are done anyway. Now we have to put it in the oven." She poured the batter into the cake pans, and handed them to the house elves to bake.

"How long will it take to bake, Miss Harry?" Phaedra inquired.

"The recipe says thirty five minutes. Therefore, we will clean up our mess while we wait. Then we will need to clean you off too," Harry smiled surveying her. Phaedra was covered in

flour, with chocolate batter on her mouth, having scraped the bowl when they were done, licking the spoon.

Harry helped Phaedra to clean off the table, and clean up their utensils, much to the chagrin of the house elves. Once they were done, the cake was finished, and she took it out of the oven to cool. While the cake cooled, she took Phaedra to a small powder room on the first floor and helped her to clean up. Returning to the kitchen to check on the cake, they rinsed off the strawberries Dobby had brought them. Harry then showed Phaedra how to make whipped cream. Putting some of the fluffy mixture in between the two layers, they added some of the berries and then iced the cake with the rest of the whipped cream, decorating the top with the rest of the berries. The cake was finished, and the house elves used their magic to keep it chilled until dinner. Circe met them as they returned from the kitchen.

"Here you both are, did you finish the cake?"

"Mummy we made the best cake ever. Miss Harry taught me how to mix dry 'gredients and I got to break eggies. They were all gooey like boogies."

"Raw eggs can be rather messy. Now how about we go and have lunch and then you should take a nap."

"I don't want to take a nap. Can't I stay up and play with Miss Harry?"

"If you take your nap I'll share my teddy bears with you."

"You don't have teddy bears," Phaedra tossed her head unbelievably.

"I found three of them in the trunk. They were given to me when I was a baby and my mum put them away for me."

"Can I pick one to sleep with?"

"You can sleep with all three if you want to. I think they were lonely all that time in the trunk with no one to cuddle them," Harry told her as they went into lunch. It had started to rain so they were eating in the dining room instead of the garden.

"Then I will sleep with them and they can meet Mr. Hoppity Hop," she replied thoughtfully as they sat down to lunch.

Snape, Sirius, and Remus had already come in and were helping themselves to a plate full of sandwiches and salads.

"How did you like mixing things, Phaedra?" Snape asked as she sat down beside him.

"I learned about 'gredients and fractions. Now can I mix potions?"

"You are still too little, but you can keep practicing. When you can read I will teach you a very easy potion."

"Really, Uncle Severus? You will let me do a potion?"

"Once you are able to read, I will help you to learn how to make some perfume for your mother. It will be awhile yet, though."

"How long?"

"After you finish first grade."

"That's a whole year away," Phaedra pouted.

"It will go quickly, Phaedra," Snape assured her.

"In the meantime you can practice by making cakes and cookies," Harry commented.

"I guess so. Miss Harry did you mix potions after first grade?"

"Miss Harry did not mix potions until she came to me at Hogwarts," Snape told Phaedra, arching his brow at Harry.

"Really?"

"My Muggle family did not mix potions. Your uncle taught me how."

Phaedra seemed satisfied with this answer and settled down to eat her lunch. Conversation was light, and no one asked where Dumbledore was. She wondered if he had gone to see the governors, even though it was Sunday.

Following their meal, she excused herself and went upstairs. She helped Phaedra to collect the teddy bears, and Circe tucked her in. Harry then retired back to her room, and began planning her Quidditch plays for the upcoming season. She also scheduled the practice sessions, since she was the Gryffindor Captain.

Dumbledore had returned in time for dinner, and when no one was looking, he nodded to Harry. She understood that the governors had agreed to her choices. Dinner conversation centered on the day's activities, and Dumbledore announced that he was calling a meeting of the Order for tomorrow afternoon at two o'clock.

"Harry will you stay with Phaedra while the meeting is in progress?"

"I'll be happy to Circe. I will help her with her chess game. She is enjoying learning how to play."

"I am afraid I have something else for you to do, Harry. Circe, Gem will keep an eye on Phaedra. I have arranged the meeting around her nap time anyway."

"But I want to stay with Miss Harry and play chess."

"We can play chess when you wake up. You will do better after your nap since you will be able to think better."

"Oh, okay. Can I sleep with your teddy bears again tomorrow?"

"Are they feeling better yet? They were very lonely."

"No, they need more cuddle time," Phaedra beamed going along with Harry's game.

"Then you had better sleep with them again tomorrow."

Phaedra was delighted to get to play with the 'new' toys again, and Harry was glad they were making her so happy. Following dinner, she brought the bears downstairs and played with Phaedra until it was time for her to go to bed.

Harry was also tired, and excusing herself went up and soaked in the tub. She knew Dumbledore would tell her what was going on in his own time and way. Drying off after her bath, she put on her nightgown and sat looking out her window at the garden petting Snuffles. Just as she was about to retire for the night, a soft knock sounded on her door.

"May I come in, Child?" Dumbledore's soft voice called from the hall.

"Of course," Harry said opening the door for him.

"I won't stay long," he smiled. "I just want to tell you that it took a bit of doing but the governors agreed. The Order will also not be easy to convince, so I have a plan."

"What kind of plan?"

"One that you should enjoy," his eyes were twinkling, and he was smiling slyly. Dumbledore explained what he had in mind, and Harry laughed with delight at his little plan. The Order was in for a big surprise...

Dumbledore and Harry had arranged for her to meet him in Professor Snape's library office a half hour before the scheduled meeting of the Order. His plan had been a simple one, and Harry would get to do some magic. She was excited, and hoped everything would work out. Her three protectors did not yet know they had been chosen, and had yet to agree, but she felt that her arguments were valid and everything would work out.

The actual meeting was to take place in another room off the wing by the library. It was a large front parlor, connected to a formal dining room by a set of pocket doors. These could be opened to make a ballroom for large parties. They had been opened for the meeting and chairs had been set up facing the long dining table, which was in the front. The elder wizards who held dominant positions within the Order would sit there.

A large crowd of wizards and witches filled the chamber, waiting anxiously. Sirius, Remus, Snape, and Circe were seated towards the middle of the room. Molly Weasley joined them along with Professors McGonagall, Flitwick, and Hooch.

"Does anybody know why Albus called this meeting on such short notice? Nothing has happened to Harry, has it?" McGonagall inquired worriedly.

"No, Harry is fine. She is doing quite well in fact," Sirius reassured the elder witch. "I'm not sure, but I believe I know the reason for the meeting. It has to do with protecting Harry."

"How would you know?" Snape asked looking at Sirius shrewdly.

"I am her godfather and have taken responsibility for her," Sirius snapped as Dumbledore entered the room, placing Fawkes on his perch before sitting down with the other senior wizards, which included Arthur Weasley as Minister of Magic, Alastor Moody, as Chief Auror, the wand maker Ollivander, and Chin Chang, the old Chinese master.

Dumbledore tapped a gavel that was on the table to bring the meeting to order.

"I wish to welcome you all and thank you for coming on such short notice. We are here tonight to discuss the protection of Miss Harry Potter. Everyone here has either read or is aware of the Prophecy of Mathias. Most of you believe, as I do, that Miss Potter is the witch mentioned in this prophecy who will liberate us from the evil of Lord Voldemort. Miss Potter is in danger from Voldemort and it is up to us to make sure she stays safe so that she may fulfill her ultimate destiny."

"How are we supposed to protect her, when we have enough problems trying to protect our own families?" A short stout wizard asked from the back of the room.

"I am glad you asked that question, Minniver. A few days ago, Arthur Weasley, as head of the Ministry made a proposal that would enable us to protect her, and help to safeguard Hogwarts when she returns there for her seventh year in a few weeks." Dumbledore addressed the room, answering the wizard's question.

"What about Sirius Black? Isn't she his goddaughter? Why hasn't he made arrangements to safeguard her?" Arabella Figg asked from where she was sitting up front.

"I have," Sirius replied hotly. "Mr. Weasley feels that we need to do more."

"If you will allow me to continue," Dumbledore spoke firmly, his voice brooking no argument, "I will tell you what Arthur has proposed. I have already been to each of the Governors, who are here tonight, and they have agreed to Arthur's proposal. I discussed it with Sirius Black also, and he wanted Harry to make the final decision, since it will directly affect her life."

"Albus," Professor Flitwick stood up on his chair to be seen and heard, "what has Arthur proposed that we have been called to order on such short notice? Surely, Harry has been doing well so far. She is becoming a very powerful witch."

"She is quite powerful, but she is young and still learning how to control her abilities. The prophecy predicts she will have her final encounter with the Dark Lord this year. I believe this will occur, as he needs to make a move before her next birthday, when her powers will be set. Arthur agrees and so does Alastor Moody."

"Headmaster, you said this will affect Miss Potter for the rest of her life. What can have such a far reaching effect?"

"Arthur has suggested she undergo the Right of Protection," there were audible murmurs through out the room.

"The Right of Protection is only used when a person is in grave danger," Ollivander stated calmly. "I know Arthur has never read the Prophecy, so I can only assume that he does not know that it states she will have three protectors. It also says Albus will act as Trust Keeper."

"I was unaware of this until Albus told me after I made the suggestion."

"What does Miss Potter have to say about this?" Ollivander asked, his silver eyes shining eerily.

"She has agreed, with the stipulation that she choose the protectors and that they must also be willing to accept the Protectorship. She will not do it if they do not want to. She has given me her reasons, and they are plausible. Interestingly enough they are mentioned in the Prophecy."

"Is she aware that the Order must approve of her selections?"

"She is acutely aware, and has asked me to speak on her behalf. She wanted me to remind all of you, as I did with the Governors, that she would be the one facing Lord Voldemort. She also knows that she may not survive this encounter, but if the Prophecy is to be believed, Voldemort will be destroyed. She has asked that you remember that when you make your decision."

"I believe we should waive the vote," Chin Chang spoke up quietly, "The Prophecy has stated it will be so, therefore it is."

"I will take that as a motion, will anyone second it?"

"I want to vote on the matter. I hear all these things about the Potter girl, but I have never seen her do anything." Minniver said and others nodded their agreement.

"If Miss Potter were to give you a demonstration, would you waive the vote?"

"I would."

"I want to know who she wants as protectors, first. Why all the secrecy?" The stout bald wizard, Minniver, demanded.

"There is no secrecy. If you wish, I will give the names of the three Protectors. She has stated that she wishes me to be her Trust Keeper."

"Give the names. Then, if we can't agree, you said she would demonstrate her power," Arabella Figg reiterated, shifting uncomfortably on her chair.

"Does everyone agree to Arabella's suggestion?"

"I will second it," Flitwick announced.

"Then the motion is passed," Dumbledore nodded. "The names of the three she has chosen to act as protectors are Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, and Severus Snape."

There was an audible rumble through out the room. Sirius smiled, Remus blinked with wonder, and Snape jerked to attention, visibly stunned that Harry would select him, despite their recent encounters.



"Dumbledore, does the girl realize that her godfather spent twelve years in Azkaban. Even though he has been proved innocent, it has to have affected his mind," The wizard known as Minniver spoke up.

"I can't believe she would want Lupin. Surely she is aware the man is a werewolf?" A wiry little witch spoke up from the middle of the room.

"Yeah," Minniver continued, and why Snape? He was a Death eater for Merlin's sake."

"Silence," Dumbledore roared above the din. "Why don't you ask her for yourselves? It will give her the opportunity to demonstrate her skill, and answer your questions while she dictates the role she wishes each of the young wizards to assume."

"Albus, should I go and get her?" Circe volunteered. She was astounded that Harry had named her brother. She worried about the emotional bond. If Harry died, he might not be able to survive another loss like the one he had before.

"That will not be necessary, Circe. Harry has been here all the time."

Sirius, Remus, and Severus eyes all flew over to Fawkes. Sirius grinned as Harry transformed, and the room erupted into a sea of voices, and screams of shock. Harry stood her ground, crossing her arms over her chest in imitation of Professor Snape, and waited for the din to die down before speaking.

"Good afternoon. For those of you who don't know me, I am Harry Potter," she spoke calmly, but with a quiet dignity. The scar on her head was clearly visible to all in the room. She had not attempted to hide it. "You wanted to see what I could do. My Phoenix is just a sample. I have been told that a magical animal animagus is quite rare. Most of you have heard that I can also speak Parsel Tongue. That was a little gift from Voldemort the night he gave me this scar. Mr. Minniver, I see you have a bruise on your hand and that it is swollen with arthritis," Harry said laying her hand on the purple mark. "I think that should do it."

Minniver gasped as she removed her hand, "She healed the bruise, and the pain is gone," the wizard told the group with awe.

"Arabella Figg, it's nice to meet you. How are all your cats? If you would still like to vote on the matter, I believe there is a quill on the table along with a piece of parchment. I'll get it for you." The quill and parchment flew across the room to land in her lap, as another ripple of conversation spread through the room. "You have all wanted to know why I picked these three wizards to be my protectors. The answers are quite simple.

"Sirius Black is my godfather, but we never did get to develop that relationship. He was thrown into Azkaban without a trial. Interestingly enough that has become an advantage." Sirius cocked his head curiously. "It has made him a stronger person. I doubt many of you here could have survived for twelve years with the Dementors. He gives me some of that strength every day. Maybe he is a little daft, but you would have to be to stand up to Voldemort. Severus Snape, former Death eater. He gives me the courage to keep on going. I doubt anyone in this room except for maybe Dumbledore and Mr. Chang could do what he has done. He walked out on Lord Voldemort. He had good reasons to. It took a lot of courage to do that, and he has been teaching me how to use that same courage." Snape arched his brow in the familiar sardonic expression, and Circe smiled. "Finally there is Remus Lupin. What

can I say? He's a werewolf. I can't change that. I can mix his potion every month to make it a little easier, that's true. However, for those of you in this room that think he isn't human and have branded him a monster, you're all wrong. I have never met a more caring and kind human being in my life. He merely suffers from a disease that causes him great pain, both physically and emotionally. I defy anyone of you to endure what he goes through. Yet, in all the time I have known him, he has never once complained. We could all learn the meaning of endurance from him. I know I have." A tear escaped from Remus eye, and he nodded his head so no one would see.

"These are the reasons I have chosen them. Professor Dumbledore has agreed to act as the Trust Keeper, and I wouldn't have it any other way. He has been doing so for me for the past seventeen years. I see no reason to change that," Harry commented. She then transformed back into her Phoenix, and flew once around the room coming to rest on Dumbledore's shoulder.

"I move that the vote be waived and the Protectorship be approved," Mr. Chang said standing in his dignified oriental manner. "Harry Potter is the Phoenix. She has seen and embraced her destiny. We should do the same and honor her request."

"I second the motion," Minniver answered. "May the spirit of Merlin guide and protect her."

"Let the record show that the Order has approved the Protectorship. Now if each of the young wizards will come forward and proclaim his desire to either accept or reject the honor please do so now," Dumbledore announced standing regally in the front of the room.

Sirius approached him first, his voice husky with emotion, "I accept the Protectorship, and will be her strength, as is decreed by the ancient laws." Dumbledore placed his hands on Sirius head and nodded.

Snape followed him, and stood straight and tall, his voice etched with pride, "I accept the honor bestowed on me as Protector. I will be her courage, as it is decreed by the ancient laws." Dumbledore then repeated the process, and Severus Snape went to stand beside Sirius Black.

Finally, Remus approached Dumbledore. His voice was barely audible, "I have endured and will continue to endure the pain and hardship that has been set upon me. I accept the Protectorship. I will be her endurance for all that lies before her, and help to ease her pain, as she has eased mine; as is decreed by our ancient laws." Dumbledore place his hands on Remus, before he moved to stand beside Snape.

Harry then flew from his shoulder, and transformed to face him as Dumbledore spoke firmly, his voice confident, "I accept the honor of being The Keeper of the Trust, and Protector of each one, as is decreed by the ancient laws set down at the beginning of time." He then placed his hands upon Harry's head, and she understood that he was bonding with each one of them. The room then went wild with applause. He waited for it to die down, and then addressed the wizards and witches. "The formal bonding ceremony will take place one week from today. At the request of Miss Potter it will be a private affair with only close friends, family, and the Elders present, along with the Governors. If there are no further questions or matters anyone wishes to discuss, then this meeting will be adjourned."

"Let the record state that there have been no further requests for discussion. This meeting has now been adjourned," Moody said from his place at the table.

The witches and wizards all relaxed as refreshments appeared on the table. Harry quietly slipped from the room, seeking to escape the crowd and any questions they may have. As she quietly moved up the hallway she was stopped by a quiet voice.

"Princess, thank you. You have given me something today that I thought I had lost. My humanity."

"She has also given me back my self respect, and returned pride to the name of Snape," Severus said following him from the room.

"Not to mention restoring my soul," Sirius smiled coming forward and kissing her gently on the forehead.

"Humph...I didn't do anything. All those things were there, you just misplaced them for a while. Voldemort has that effect on people. I just gave you the opportunity to find them again," she smiled, embarrassed at this show of affection. "Now let's go and find Phaedra. I'm sure she is awake by now, and probably bored. She would probably like to go out for some ice cream."

"Good idea, but we had better bring some back for Albus, or he will never forgive us for ditching out on the buffet," Sirius grinned.

"Don't be so sure. I think he is leaving Moody and Mr. Weasley to finish up with Circe," Snape answered pointing towards a beaming headmaster.

They all laughed, and Harry went and got Phaedra. The afternoon was spent having ice cream and taking Phaedra to play in the park. They returned to Severus' town home in time for dinner, bringing Circe a peace offering of her favorite flavor ice cream, butternut toffee. The rest of the evening was spent just relaxing and talking while Harry entertained Phaedra by working on her chess game.

## ***The Ritual of Protection and the Rite of Vision***

The formal Rites of Protection Ritual took place the following week. It was held in the Snape residence where the Order had met to discuss that same issue. The Board of Governors, Elder members of the Order and friends and family members of all parties involved were invited to attend..

Harry studied the guests quietly as she waited for the Ceremony to begin. An old witch, who appeared in poor health, was there. Harry had never seen her before, but did not need to be told who she was, since she recognized Sirius eyes. It was obviously his grandmother. There was also another couple, who remained on the fringes of the gathering. They appeared uncomfortable, and Harry realized they must be Remus' parents. His features resembled his mother's, but he had light brown hair like his father and the same slight build. Circe and Phaedra were there for Severus, as was his Great Uncle. He too, was tall and thin, his black hair was now streaked with silver, but he had blue eyes. His stance was stiff and proud, like that of his nephew.

The Dursley's did not come. Harry had known they would not, but the entire Weasley family was there. Hermione, too, had been invited to attend. She was all excited about the whole affair, having read all about it. Ron just rolled his eyes, while Harry grinned. He had gotten new dress robes, and Harry learned that he too was to play an important role in the ritual. While not a member of the actual Protectorship, as her closest and most trusted friend, he would become the Guardian of the Goblet. In time, Harry would understand the significance of this, as it would enable him to see through her eyes when he stared into it. It was a unique gift, and not to be taken lightly. If he were to misuse it in any way, he would be permanently blinded.

It was a warm August day, and Harry's dress robes felt quite uncomfortable. She found herself wishing for air conditioning, or at least a spell to cool down the room. The Rites of Protection was a formal ritual, with Mr. Ollivander presiding, since Dumbledore was to be Keeper of the Trust. As usual, she found his silver eyes disturbing. He always made her feel as if he were looking through her.

Harry stood at the top of the Pentagram, with Mr. Ollivander in the middle. Ron stood at his side to act as a witness. Finally, a bell sounded, and the room went silent. The ritual was about to begin.

"The Ritual of Protection is one of our ancient ceremonies, and one of great importance," Ollivander intoned. "It has been handed down through time, and the magic contained in it is old magic of the strongest kind."

Ollivander then lit the Goblet of Fire with a wave of his wand. He then gave his wand another wave and a jeweled handled antique ceremonial dagger appeared. Moving over to Harry, he took her hand, and made a small deep cut along her lifeline. Placing her hand over the goblet, he then let her blood run down into the fire. The flame sparked a brilliant blue, shooting sparks into the room.

Harry then followed him to each point of the Pentagram, where the Protectors had taken their positions. Ollivander then added their blood to the goblet. As each of them pledged to offer her their strength, courage and endurance, for the dark times ahead, she would then accept

their gift. As she did so, a rope of golden light would erupt from the goblet and join them by their right hands at the wrist, before disappearing back into the flames. When she reached Dumbledore, and accepted his pledge to be Keeper of the Trust, the golden light came from the goblet and whipped around the Pentagram, joining them all together. Ollivander then turned to Ron.

"Ronald Weasley, I offer you this Goblet of Fire in the name of the Protectors, the wizards Sirius Black, Severus Snape, and Remus Lupin, along with their Trust Keeper, the Magus Albus Dumbledore. It is now their sworn duty to guard and protect the witch known as Harry James Potter, as written in our ancient laws. As Guardian of the Goblet, you will be granted the Right of Vision. As her most trusted friend and confidant, you will see through her eyes so that you may send them to her aid whenever the flame appears. Do you accept this honor?"

"I Ronald Weasley, trusted friend of Harry Potter, accept the Goblet and the Right of Vision."

"Then perform the charm that will ensure your fidelity for all who are present. For it is they who will witness your pledge and will know of your false heart should you be deemed untrue." Ollivander then handed Ron the burning goblet.

Ron held the goblet between himself and Harry, and chanted the spell that came with a message of forewarning.

*"Soon this flame will burn out,*

*But when it springs to life*

*The Protectors I will summon them*

*For she'll be in great strife*

*Into the flames then I shall look,*

*To find her near or far.*

*For I shall see*

*What she doth see*

*Friend or foe in kind.*

*But should I falsely use this gift*

*I'll be forever blind."*

A beam of red light then snaked itself out from the goblet, hitting both Harry and Ron directly into their eyes. Disappearing back into the goblet, there was a sucking noise, and the flame disappeared in a flash of sparks.

"The ritual is now complete. May we all celebrate to the health of those who have been joined in this right that it will be successful," Ollivander announced as the room erupted into wishes of success and health.

The rest of the afternoon was spent in a Feast of Celebration. The guests and witnesses were all eager to talk with Harry, but she would have liked nothing better than to go upstairs out of the limelight.

Ron, of course, was in his glory, and Harry was glad to let him enjoy the attention. She knew it often bothered him that she was such a celebrity, but people often forgot he was her friend. His family was visibly proud, and Hermione kept smiling at him in admiration. He had taken on an awesome responsibility, with a dire consequence for misuse. Harry knew that Hermione and Ron were in love with one another, but both were too stubborn to admit it. She had known they were meant for each other that first day on the Hogwart's express, when the three eleven year olds met and formed a bond of friendship. She determined to see them together before her final confrontation with Lord Voldemort. Her reverie was interrupted by a soft voice from behind her.

"My grandson chose his best friend wisely. You are very much like you father, but the fire in your eyes comes from your mother."

Harry whirled around and found she was looking at the old witch, with Sirius soft brown eyes.

"You knew my parents?"

"I did. I watched James and Sirius grow up. They were like brothers. I am Andromeda Black, Sirius grandmother. It warms my heart to see him smiling and free. He would not let me come and see him in Azkaban, and stayed away after he escaped. I owe you a debt of gratitude for helping him to be exonerated. This is the first time I have seen him in almost sixteen years."

"Surely he contacted you after he was cleared of any wrong doing?"

"Only briefly. He wanted to keep me away. He was afraid Lord Voldemort would exact his revenge on me for Peter Pettigrew being captured. In a sense, his parents were victims of the Dark Lord, as were yours. Your parent's death devastated him, yet he refused to proclaim his innocence, not even to me. Yet I knew in my heart he wasn't guilty."

"Have you spoken to him yet? Does he know you're here?"

"He is aware that I am here, but he is avoiding me. It was Dumbledore who arranged for me to come."

"Wait here," Harry said as Dumbledore approached them. "Professor, will you stay with Mrs. Black for a few minutes while I go and knock some sense into Sirius?"

"I will be delighted," the old man beamed.

Harry spotted Sirius on the opposite side of the room talking with Mr. Chang. Making her way through the crowd, she bowed to Mr. Chang, interrupting their conversation.

"Forgive my intrusion, Mr. Chang, but I need to have a word with Sirius."

"Ah, the Phoenix is in need of your attention," he smiled at Sirius, "I will leave the two of you alone." He bowed graciously, and then moved off.

"Harry, what's wrong?"

"What makes you think anything is wrong?"

"Your eyes are flashing and you're glaring at me. If looks could kill I would be in big trouble."

"You are in big trouble. Why are you avoiding your grand mum?" Harry fumed. "You're all that old woman has left, and instead of making her feel better you're breaking her heart."

"Harry, honey, you don't understand..."

"I understand well enough. She needs you, Sirius. She is very ill and may be dying. I can sense it."

"She's ill...dying?"

"Yes, I don't know what is wrong, but I can feel her pain and sickness. She's heartbroken over you and it's made her condition worse. She is losing her will to fight her sickness. Now get over there and beg her forgiveness. She believed in you when no one else did!" Harry hissed angrily.

Sirius stared at her for a few seconds, and then moved off across the room to where his grandmother and Dumbledore stood talking. Harry watched as he looked at her and then took her into his arms, both of them crying. Dumbledore looked over at Harry and nodded with approval as Sirius helped his grandmother find a place to sit. Wandering off, she spotted Remus talking with his parents. She could sense their discomfort. 'Let me see why they treat him so miserably,' Harry walked over to where they were sitting

"Really, Son, you should have known better than to call such attention to yourself," his father ridiculed him. "Your condition is not something we like people to know about. What possessed you to accept a Protectorship?"

"I asked him to," Harry said coming up to them. "You blame your son for his being a werewolf. Maybe if you had kept a closer eye on him as a child, you wouldn't have to make him feel guilty for your mistake," Harry looked at Mr. Lupin coldly.

"Miss Potter," Mrs. Lupin began, her face red with embarrassment, "my husband does not mean to sound like we don't care about Remus. It's just that people have shunned him for so long. He's afraid that he will be hurt again."

Harry could feel Mrs. Lupin's conflicting emotions. She was defending her husband, but knew it was a lie.

"No, Mrs. Lupin, he's ashamed of him. He blames Remus for his having to move around and not being able to keep a steady job. Instead of trying to defend and protect him, he ran and hid. What's worse is that you allowed it to happen," Harry told them with disgust. "You are his mother! Yet you too have treated him as less than human."

"Harry...don't...you don't understand what they have been through," Remus looked down at her sadly.

"I'm sorry, Remus, but this should have been said a long time ago. You can be mad at me, but I'm going to say it," Harry turned her attention back to the Lupins. "For all your hiding and wishing he didn't have this condition you should get down on your knees and thank whatever god you believe in that your son grew into such a fine man! I asked for him specifically because of his humanity. He has endured your shame and disgust along with the ignorance of people who believe he is less than human, not to mention the physical pain he goes through. I would have ten of him if I could, for he has more than earned this right." Harry stood defiantly looking up at Remus' parents. Mr. Lupin shrugged and stalked away, red faced and angry.

"Miss Potter, thank you for caring about Remus. It has been difficult for all of us," Mrs. Lupin lowered her eyes. "My husband, Roman, wanted to have him permanently confined to St. Mungo's but I wouldn't allow it. Remus is our only child, we do love him, but my husband well...he hasn't been able to face the fact that our son is a werewolf because of him. He was supposed to be watching Remus the night he wandered off...."

"Mum...please...don't..."

"No, Remus, she's right. This needs to come out into the open. Maybe then, your father will forgive himself. Anyway, as I was saying, he was watching Remus. I was away visiting my sister. Remus was a curious child, and it was a warm night. He saw what he thought was a big dog outside of his window and wanted to play with it. My husband heard the door close, and then the screams," Mrs. Lupin was crying, "he was too afraid to do anything. By the time he got his wand, and had worked up the courage to face the werewolf, it was too late. Remus was alive, but he had been bitten on the leg. We tried everything we could think of, but it was no use."

"Miss Potter," Mr. Lupin had seen his wife's distress from across the room, and controlling his anger returned to face them. "My wife and I have lived with our son's affliction for over thirty years, what would you have us do? Announce it to the world?" Roman Lupin asked her bitterly, putting his arm around his wife.

"Yeah, I would. You should be shouting from the rooftops. Look our son is a werewolf, yet he is a finer human being than you. He cares about people and doesn't ridicule or isolate them for being different. He would never willingly allow himself to be placed in a situation where he might injure someone and cause his illness to spread. He has a disease like cancer or tuberculosis; he's not a monster. I love him, because he is still my son, no matter what!" Harry's face was red, and her green eyes were like ice. She was shaking with anger, when a little girl's voice spoke from beside her. It was Phaedra.

"Miss Harry, tell them that I played with Mr. Remus and his potion makes him friendly. He is a nice wolf I love him. They don't have to be afraid."

The Lupin's were staring at Phaedra as if she had two heads. Harry looked down at her in surprise as Remus gently brushed her blond curls with his hand.

"I think you already told them, Phaedra."

"This child...he didn't harm her?" Mr. Lupin asked in disbelief.



"No, the Wolfbane Potion makes him docile. He would never have allowed her near him otherwise. I myself took him to a Halloween party. I went as Little Red Riding Hood. He was the wolf," Harry grinned at the memory. "We even took pictures."

"We...we didn't know. He never tells us..."

"Maybe it's because you have never given him the chance. Why don't you start now? I think you will be more than a little surprised. I saved his life you know," Harry grinned as they looked at her puzzled. She could sense Remus getting annoyed. Now he would have to tell them everything.

"Remus, what does she mean she saved your life? What happened?" His father asked swallowing hard as Harry steered Phaedra over towards her mother and uncles.

As they moved off, she could feel Remus' parents anxiety that their son had nearly died. 'Two down, one to go,' she muttered to herself as she approached the Snapes.

"Miss Potter, I am Tiberius Snape. I am honored to make your acquaintance." The elder Snape stood up offering her his hand. "You have bestowed a great honor on our family. Perhaps it will help us to erase the mark upon our name."

"The mark on your family name is your own fault. If it is to be erased then it will be through your family's actions, not my asking your nephew to act as my protector."

"Nobly said!" Tiberius Snape praised her, arching his left brow."

Harry couldn't help but snicker softly.

"I apologize, Mr. Snape, I do not wish to be rude, but I was thinking of my friend Ron."

"The young wizard who has been given the Right of Vision?"

"The same. Your nephew takes particular delight in sneaking up on him when he least expects it. My thinking is that you are even better at it."

"Why would you think that?"

"You're hiding something."

"You're an empath."

"You're a telepath. Lower level than Circe, but more so than Severus."

"My nephew tells me you are able to mix the Wolfbane potion. That is quite an accomplishment. What else are you capable of doing?"

"I can talk to snakes."

"I know. It is not a common skill. Are you versed in the Dark Arts?"

"Only enough to know I want no part of them. It seems to be a favorite subject among the Snapes. I certainly hope no one tries to interest Phaedra in them at a young age. It would be a shame to see her have to suffer like the rest of you did." Harry locked eyes with the older wizard, holding her ground in the manner she usually did with Severus.

Neither of them was willing to give up, and Circe and Severus looked on with interest. It was a battle of wills, and they knew that their Uncle Tiberius was a formidable figure with an incredible mental capacity. He had been the one to teach them how to impose their will on another person. It was a favorite sport with him.

"You cannot win, Miss Potter."

"You think not?"

"Your will is strong, but you are not yet ready to try and pit it against The Dark Lord. If you have ever looked into his eyes you would know this," Tiberius Snape said casually, without breaking his eye contact.

"I have looked him in the eye, and I'm still standing," Harry refused to back down so easily.

"Then you are indeed blessed, or just very lucky."

"Probably a bit of both," she replied feeling herself beginning to weaken.

"Indeed, did you know it is the wise person who knows when to back down, but a foolish one to try and keep going?"

"As in live for today to fight for tomorrow?"

"Interesting analogy, but it is accurate," Tiberius said still maintaining eye contact. He knew Harry had begun to weaken.

"Great Uncle Tiberius, you said you would get me some ice cream, but you didn't"

"I will just as soon as Miss Potter and I finish our little game."

"Very good, Mr. Snape, you still haven't broken off despite the distraction."

"I might say the same for you. You're a fighter if I ever saw one."

"No, Sir, I'm a survivor," Harry smiled, as she blinked, breaking off their contest. "Now I think you should get Phaedra that ice cream."

"I will be happy to do so. Would you like some too?"

"I think I would prefer a cold drink. Someone should outlaw formal ceremonies during the month of August."

"I will cool the room," Severus Snape told her taking out his wand. "*Refrigeratio conclave*," he casually waved his wand, and the room temperature immediately became more comfortable.

"Come, Phaedra, I will get you that ice cream. Miss Potter would you like some iced tea?"

"Yes, thank you."

Tiberius Snape immediately moved off towards the buffet table with Phaedra.

"You have impressed Uncle Tiberius," Circe smiled. "He likes you."

"How can you tell?"

"Trust us, Harry," Snape told her with a thin smile. "He is not an easy man to please. As our family patriarch he likes to feel he is in control."

"And you don't?" she asked sarcastically.

"It's a family trait. We like to come out on top."

"Yeah, and it nearly got you all screwed. You need to know when to back off."

"We're learning, Miss Potter," Tiberius voice said from over her shoulder, and she jumped. Like his nephew, he moved swiftly and silently. "Did I startle you?"

"Let me put it this way, I have got to turn you loose on my friend Ron. He goes bonkers when your nephew sneaks up behind him. You would positively cause him to pee his pants," Harry laughed with delight accepting the glass of iced tea he had brought her. She actually liked the elder Snape, and was enjoying his company.

"Would I?" Perhaps I should go and introduce myself to the young man. I do know his family. I went to Hogwarts with his grandfather, and have had occasional dealings with Arthur Weasley. He is a fair and intelligent man."

"Then by all means, go and say hello. I'm sure Ron would like to meet you."

Tiberius Snape smiled satirically, and moved off to speak to the Weasley's, making sure to come up behind Ron, who jumped visibly when Mr. Snape spoke. Harry could see that he and Mr. Weasley were not only acquainted, but also appeared to be on very good terms with one another. Ron took the opportunity to wander over and talk to Harry.

"You did that on purpose," Ron smiled sheepishly.

"Just reminding you that we start back to school in three weeks; I thought you had better be prepared. Professor Snape will be going back to his usual strict self. Aren't you glad we have him instead of his uncle?"

"You can say that again," Ron looked at his Professor warily.

"Miss Harry, is Uncle Severus a nice teacher?"

"Phaedra, your uncle is a strict teacher, and Miss Harry and her friends tend to get detention quite often."

"Are you naughty in school?"

"Miss Harry talks back to the teachers in school. It is not a good idea, especially with your Uncle Severus," Harry chuckled impishly.

"Yeah, and your uncle can get very angry with her," Ron chimed in smirking.

"Uncle Severus you won't get mad at Miss Harry when you go back to Hogwart's will you?" Phaedra asked concerned.

"Not if she behaves herself. Otherwise I will give her detention."

"Miss Harry what if Uncle Severus tries to get you e'spelled?" Phaedra was clearly becoming worried and upset, and was starting to cry."

"Oh, honey," Circe picked up her daughter, "Uncle Severus isn't going to get Harry expelled. He will only give her a detention if she misbehaves in class. He is her protector and will look out for her where ever she is."

"Do you promise, Uncle Severus?"

"I promise," Severus smiled at his niece, taking her from his sister. Ron looked stunned at this display of affection towards the little girl.

"Harry," he whispered, "is Snape actually smiling?"

"He does sometimes. Contrary to popular belief the Snape family is quite human," Harry cast a mischievous glance at Snape who had overheard Ron speaking to her.

"Mr. Weasley, I would not make this display of emotion known amongst your fellow students. You might find that gutting the salamanders is a permanent job," Snape looked down his nose at the young wizard, an unmistakable warning in his voice.

"Honestly Professor Snape, I won't say a word," Ron promised curling his lower lip, dismayed that he had been overheard. "Come on Harry, let's go and sit with Hermione."

"I'll be there in a few minutes. I still have some people I have to speak with."

"Okay, I'll tell my mum you're still greeting people. She wants you to come and visit us for a while. She worries about you."

"I know, and tell her I worry about all of you too," Harry said as Ron moved off towards his family and Hermione.

Harry glanced around the room, and spotted Dumbledore talking with a man she knew had to be his brother, Aberforth. Excusing herself, she went over to where they were sitting.

"Ah...Harry, I want you to meet my brother, Aberforth," Dumbledore smiled.

"I'm happy to meet you, Sir," she told him politely, shaking his hand.

"I was wondering when I would finally get to meet you. My brother has denied me for years. I would beg and cajole, but he absolutely refused to introduce you to me."

"He knows I don't like a lot of attention. People wouldn't want to meet me if I were just any old witch. They want to meet the person who survived Voldemort's curse."

"The boy who lived that was actually the girl in the Prophecy," Aberforth Dumbledore replied ruefully.

"Exactly, if it wasn't for your brother I never would have had any privacy or the chance for a somewhat normal life," Harry smiled at the Headmaster.

"You chose him to act as your Trust Keeper. I am a bit astounded. There are times when he wants people to believe he is daft."

"There is a fine line between genius and insanity, and we're all a little bit of both," Harry grinned as Aberforth laughed jauntily. "Besides, I just made what he has always done for me official."

"Child, you know how to make an old man happy."

"I could make you even happier. I have a present for both of you. If you are anything like your brother," she smiled at Aberforth, "you will enjoy this too." Harry reached into her pocket and pulled out a bag of lemon drops. Both old men reached for them at the same time. "Now wait just one minute. You have to share them. I expect you to divide them evenly," she looked from one to the other.

"I promise to share them, Child," Dumbledore waved his wand and the bag was turned into two smaller ones, and the two Dumbledore brothers each took one with a smile.

"That's better, now you two behave. I am going to go over and visit with the Weasley's."

"Miss Potter," Aberforth stopped her, "could I have your autograph?"

"Headmaster, your brother wants my autograph," Harry pursed her lip in vexation.

"Aberforth, Harry does not give autographs."

"Okay, I meant no offense," Aberforth replied pleasantly. "I do hope we will meet again. I would love to hear about some of your adventures. My brother always just says you are a lovely child."

"Really? He tells me I'm more like the Wicked Witch of the West," she teased evilly, backing away across the room. Dumbledore looked at her over his glasses, blue eyes twinkling. Harry was still smiling as she approached the Weasleys.

"Harry, dear, sit down and join us," Molly Weasley hugged her; "we are so happy for you, and proud of Ron. I just know that You Know Who will think twice about going after you now."

"Harry, this is just such a fascinating ritual. Did you know it goes back to before the time of Merlin?" Hermione asked excitedly. "You are one special witch. The last time it was done was seventy five years ago."

"Hermione, I was told. I am just happy that Dumbledore was able to convince the Governors. I wouldn't have done it otherwise."

"What about the Order of the Phoenix? How did you convince them to let you have a former Death eater and a werewolf? I could see them saying okay to Sirius. He was actually innocent and is your godfather, but the other two? How did you do it?"

"Why, Hermione, it was magic," Harry answered mysteriously.

Hermione and most of the Weasleys did not know that she was an animagus, let alone a magical one. Dumbledore had sworn the Order to secrecy after Harry had transformed during the meeting.

"Are you getting ready to move into your new house with Sirius? Or will you be staying here now?" Mrs. Weasley asked cordially.

"Molly, dear, I told you they will all be shifting to the house Sirius bought just outside of the village of Ottery St. Catchpole," Arthur Weasley informed his wife.

"We're going to Ottery St. Catchpole?" Harry asked with surprise. "Isn't that the village near your house?"

"Yes, Harry dear, we're going to be neighbors," Mrs. Weasley responded brightly.

"How come nobody told me?"

"It was supposed to be a surprise," Sirius soft voice answered from behind Harry. His grandmother was with him, and she was smiling happily at Harry. Apparently, their reunion had been a happy one after all

"I am surprised. We'll be neighbors with the Weasleys," she hugged Sirius happily. "Who else is coming? Is there enough room?"

"Originally, it was just to be the two of us," Sirius explained, "but with the Protectorship, Severus and Remus will be coming with us. Circe and Phaedra will also finish out the summer with us, before she retires back to Cornwall; but Dumbledore will be heading to Hogwarts to oversee the preparations of the new term. He will check in with us daily, though, to make sure everything is okay."

"It is also easier for Moody. The Aurors can keep watch easier since we will all be so close," Arthur Weasley explained. "Andromeda, would you like to sit down?" He asked getting up to give her his chair.

"No thank you Arthur, I was just getting ready to leave. Alastor Moody will be escorting me home, but I wanted to say good bye to Harry before I left."

"Do you have to leave so soon?" she questioned the old woman.

"Yes, dear, I'm afraid so. I have an appointment with the Healer in the morning. I will have to be in hospital for a few days. My illness is a difficult one to treat, but not impossible, but the treatments tire me out for several days."

"May I ask the nature of your illness?"

"I have a very deep seated cancer. It is difficult to find a full healer to get to the root of it, so I have a combination of magical healing and chemotherapeutic agents. The local healers feel they can affect a cure, but it will take time."

"I see, and would a full healer be able to destroy the cancer cells?"

"Yes, but they are very expensive, and the few that are available are all booked for months in advance when their skills are needed outside of their regular practices."

"Have you tried to get one to come and help?"

"Yes, but I either can't afford their fees or they can't see me for at least six months. My local healers feel that they should have the disease under control by that time."

Harry studied Andromeda Black intently, and used her healing ability to scan for her disease. Andromeda Black would be dead before the six months. The cancer was deep and getting worse. The chemotherapy had helped to slow it, but not enough. She needed to be healed and soon. Making a decision, she looked up at Sirius.

"Sirius, may I see you privately for a minute. Mrs. Black don't leave just yet, please?"

"Of course dear, I'll just visit with the Weasley family."

"Harry, is something the matter?" Sirius asked as she took him aside to a quiet corner.

"Sirius, I have to heal her. She will not last another six months. I scanned her and the cancer is getting worse. The healers and the chemo have helped, but it is starting to grow out of control."

"Honey, are you sure?" Sirius looked sick.

"Positive. You have to convince her to let me help. Get Dumbledore and the others if you have to. She may not believe I'm capable."

"Meet me in the parlor by the garden. I'll bring her if I have to carry her," he answered tersely.

Harry quietly exited the room while Sirius got Dumbledore and the other Protectors together. They explained to his grandmother that while untrained, Harry was a full healer. The old woman was reluctant, but Sirius begged her, using his charm.

"Sirius, it's no wonder you were such a hit with the girls, but I'm your grandmother!"

"You're also my best girl, and I want to keep you that way," he smiled boyishly.

"Andromeda," Dumbledore looked serious, "trust us with this. Harry would not do it if she thought you were not seriously ill"

"She healed me, and saved my life. I was shot with a silver bullet. She healed the wound and removed the poison from my body with old magic," Remus assured her.

"She has also healed me, Mrs. Black. I recently had two broken kneecaps. She has also healed my niece. The child fell a few days ago and broke her arm."

Mrs. Black just looked at all of them and shrugged, "I suppose it will be all right, even if she is unable to effect a cure, she may slow down the cancer some more. You're all sure she knows what she is doing? She is very young."

"Grandmum, Harry may be young, but she is very powerful. If she didn't think she could help you she wouldn't even have said anything. She doesn't like to draw attention to herself."

"All right then, I'll let her try. Where is she?"

"She has gone into the other part of the house. Sirius and Albus will escort you. It would draw too much attention if we all left at once," Snape answered thoughtfully.

"You are quite correct, Severus. If anyone asks just say that Harry has gone to get something for Andromeda before she leaves and that Sirius accompanied her. Tell them I have gone to the lavatory."

Snape arched his brow, but merely nodded, moving off with Remus while the other three quietly exited the room. They led Andromeda Black down towards the parlor, where they found Harry nervously pacing the floor. She looked up and smiled at they entered, relieved that they had managed to convince the old witch to allow Harry to attempt to heal her.

"Mrs. Black, thank you for listening."

"Have you ever tried to argue with this handsome devil? It isn't easy."

"Which one? I think they're both kind of cute," Harry grinned at Dumbledore and Sirius, as Sirius grandmother laughed softly.

"Harry, do you need my grandmum to do anything special?"

"It will be easier for me if she is lying down."

"Of course, dear. I'll just lie on the sofa," Andromeda said sliding off her shoes and stretching out."

Harry knew Sirius could see how tired and drained his grandmother looked, and she could feel his anguish and worry. She looked up at him and smiled setting his mind at ease, and then turned her attention to his grandmother.

"Just close your eyes and try to relax. This will probably take a while. You might just want to take a nap while I work."



"Then I'll warn you that sometimes I snore," the old woman smiled, closing her eyes.

Harry knelt down beside her and took several deep breaths. She then began the healing process. She wanted to scan Andromeda Black's entire body to make sure she found all of the diseased cells. She quickly scanned her head, working on down to her torso. The cancer had started to spread into her lungs, and Harry quickly killed the cells she found there. She then worked her way down into Andromeda's abdomen and pelvic area. There were tumors in her intestines, and one kidney. The other kidney and her liver had a few cells that were easily taken care of. Harry found that the primary source of her cancer had been in her ovaries, and had been snaking itself outwards. She worked backwards, killing the tumors in her other organs first. She then began the tedious task of working on her primary site. Her whole pelvis was involved, and the cancer was more advanced than Harry had at first thought. Still she kept on going, unaware of how much time had been passing.

She was in a deep healing trance, when Mrs. Weasley came to find them. People had been asking for her and she had determined to find out what was going on. Entering the small parlor, she was completely taken back. Harry was kneeling beside Andromeda, staring straight ahead of her, and a blue green light was emanating from her hands. Dumbledore had looked up when the door opened and immediately put a finger to his lips to silence any comment she may have had. Taking her by the elbow, he quickly took her from the room.

"Albus," she whispered, "I had no idea Harry was a healer. I thought she was just able to do the usual healing spells. Will Andromeda be all right?"

"We hope so. She has a very involved cancer, and was unable to afford a full healer."

"Harry is a full healer? That is a rarity. When did this all come about?"

"Last year, Molly, but let me go back inside for now. There are many things you do not yet know about Harry. I shall have Arthur fill you in later," Dumbledore informed her calmly. "In the meantime tell anyone who asks that Harry will be back shortly. If they press you, just say that she had to lie down for a little while due to a headache from the stress of the ceremony."

"Anything you say, Albus."

"Oh, and Molly...if you will get her something to eat. Harry will need to eat and rest when she is done. This healing has taken almost an hour. I believe she will be done soon."

"I will see to it at once. The poor lamb will be exhausted," Molly Weasley went back to the feast, her mind in a whirl. She wondered what Arthur would tell her later, and how much did her son Ron know about his best friend. If Molly had ever had any doubts about Harry being the witch in the Mathias Prophecy, they had been quelled.

Ten minutes later, Harry sat back, pale and exhausted. It had taken all her healing powers to get to the core of Andromeda Black's cancer, but Harry had succeeded in curing her. She looked at Sirius and smiled, as the old woman opened her eyes. Her cheeks were flushed with color and her eyes sparkled.

"I feel twenty years younger. I don't know what you did young lady, but I haven't felt this good in a long time."

"I'm glad," Harry smiled wanly. "Now you can enjoy the rest of the feast with Sirius. I'm sure you have a lot of catching up to do. Just check with your regular healers tomorrow, the cancer was deep, but I believe you are totally cured."

"Andromeda, if they should ask any questions, just tell them you were at a party and one of the guests was a full healer. Tell them they would prefer to remain anonymous, since they did not charge you. I wouldn't want Harry to get into any trouble since she is unlicensed," Dumbledore told the old witch, who nodded.

"They won't hear it from me that I was healed by a seventeen year old without any formal training," she smiled at Harry, her brown eyes warm.

Sirius could see how weak Harry had become, and helped her to her feet.

"I'll meet you both back inside," he said to Dumbledore and his grandmother.

"In that case, may I have the pleasure of escorting you back?" Dumbledore asked offering his arm to Andromeda, as they exited.

"Oh, Albus, you always were a bit of a flirt," she said as she linked arms with him and they went back to the feast.

"Now don't they make a cute couple?"

"That's my grandmother you're trying to pair off. He's far too old for her," Sirius responded protectively.

"Don't be silly. I think they would do quite well together," Harry looked up at him as he supported her. "Besides, she's old enough to make her own decisions."

"How are you feeling?" he asked ignoring her remarks.

"Weak, and very tired. I need to rest and eat something," she leaned her head on his chest.

"Molly Weasley will have something already for you when we get back inside," he said helping her from the room.

"Mrs. Weasley?"

"She came in and saw you healing grams. Albus is going to have Arthur tell her about your special talents. How much does she know?"

"I think she knows most of it, since she was at the meeting the other night, but didn't realize how strong my powers actually are," Harry explained as they approached the corridor leading back to the feast. "She'll be happy to give me some mothering."

Harry couldn't have been more right. Molly met them as they came in and sat Harry down with her family. She fussed over her, filling her plate so that she would eat a good meal. She kept checking to make sure she was feeling all right, and worried that she wouldn't get the rest she required after such an extensive healing procedure. Ron smirked, but Harry loved every minute of it. If she couldn't have her real mother, Molly Weasley was the next best thing.

Glancing around the room, she noted that Remus was sitting with his parents, and they were actually smiling at one another. Professor Snape was sitting nearby with his uncle and sister, while Phaedra came over to sit with Harry and her friends. Sirius kissed Harry on the forehead, and went to sit with his grandmother. Both of the Dumbledore brothers were seated with them. Harry snickered and told Ron and Hermione that he was looking out for his grandmum's virtue. They too, laughed, and asked Harry what had happened. Since they knew she was a healer, she whispered to them how she had healed Mrs. Black, and that was why she was so tired. They then brought her up to speed on what had been going on during her absence from the feast.

Remus and his parents were talking for the first time in several years, and his mother couldn't look happier. She nodded her thanks to Harry from across the room. Tiberius Snape was looking proudly at his nephew. He had known that Severus had been a spy for Dumbledore after quitting the Death Eaters, but the stigmata of being associated with the Dark Lord had stuck with the family until now. People were talking with them that had been avoiding them for years. The senior Snape looked at Harry from where he was sitting, left brow arched, and a thin smile on his lips. He had been more than pleased with her, and was telling his nephew various tricks he should be teaching her to defend herself.

The feast finally wound down towards evening and Harry was happy to see it end. With the exception of Tiberius Snape, all of the guests had departed. He had lingered a few moments longer to speak with his nephew and niece. Harry was exhausted, and was looking forward to a hot bath, and a soft bed. She had found out from Dumbledore that they would be leaving tomorrow evening for Ottery St. Catchpole. She had already packed most of her things, since she knew she would be leaving soon anyway, and would do the rest in the morning.

She also learned that since her three protectors were teaching at Hogwarts, they needed to be there before the students arrived for time for the fall term. She was to go up on the train, as usual, and one of them would accompany her. The other two would see her off and apparate. They had decided not to let her travel alone, even on the Hogwart's Express, for her own safety. They had left it up to Harry who would travel with her, and she decided it should be Professor Snape. She had come to this decision since the last night of the full moon was the day before they needed to be at school, and Remus and Sirius had taken the train with her last June. Besides, it would be fun to see how the other students acted with Snape on the train. She wondered if he would favor the Slytherins. She also reminded him that he had to be nice to Neville Longbottom since she had won the bet last spring and made the Wolfbane Potion, earning a N.E.W.T. for her final grade.

"I would also like to remind you" he sneered, "that I will expect an equally outstanding performance during your independent study as a seventh year. You have seventh year O.W.L.'s this year too.

"I had a feeling you would say that," she cringed. "I just don't know what to try and make."

"How about doing the Draught of False Death?" Tiberius Snape suggested overhearing the conversation as he prepared to leave.

"We usually do not allow the seventh years to attempt it," Dumbledore remarked. "It is difficult to mix, and can be dangerous."

"Is it not among the advanced potions like the Wolfbane Potion?"

"It is," Dumbledore nodded, "but many feel it comes under auspices of dark magic."

"Isn't that the potion you like to use in your little speech to all the first years? You know, the one about cheating death?" she grinned at Severus, remembering her first year.

"It is. Would you want to try it? Since it is so difficult, you will only have to do the one. Should you choose something easier, you will need to do two."

"Will you allow it?" she asked looking at Dumbledore, her eyes shining with determination.

"Very well, but you are to follow Severus direction at all times."

"Do I earn another N.E.W.T. at the end of the year if I get it correctly?"

"If you can do it from memory, and pass your Potions exam with an O.W.L., yes, you will garner yourself another N.E.W.T. Otherwise you will be graded accordingly."

"I can live with that," Harry agreed. "Have Hermione and Ron given any thought to what they are going to do?"

"Mr. Weasley has not given me any indication of what he will prepare. Miss Granger is going to do two potions. One will temporarily cure baldness and the other will change the color of your eyes for twenty four hours."

"Cool, now all she has to do is find a bald man who wants to grow hair and change his eye color. Which reminds me, we don't have to test these potions to see if they work, do we?"

"I haven't decided yet," Snape smiled evilly.

"Well then, I don't know why you're smiling, since I will make you drink mine," Harry tossed her head, and Tiberius Snape laughed aloud.

"I see he's had you test some of the potions on yourselves?"

"He has, especially the poisons. Of course, no one has ever died so I guess he knows what he's doing," Harry grinned at Tiberius

"He should, half of the books in the library were written by our family. He has been doing potions since the age of six." She suspected that Severus had been very much like him before he had undergone the loss of his family, and his abuse at the hands of Lord Voldemort.

"I'll remember to make sure Phaedra knows that. He promised her she could start to learn after her first year of primary school. She will be six then."

Severus and Tiberius eyed her shrewdly and Circe smiled. She was aware of the growing affection between Harry and Phaedra.

"Harry, just make sure you're there when she starts to learn. You have the patience to deal with her. I'm not sure my little brother will be able to do so as easily as you do."

"I think he can be a lot more patient than he wants any of us to know. I'm beginning to think that all the aloofness and temper tantrums he likes to display are just an act. Besides, he dotes on Phaedra."

"Are you guys talking about me?" Phaedra demanded coming over with Sirius and Remus, whose family's had departed earlier.

"Yes, Little One, we are," Dumbledore said looking down at her kindly. "Miss Harry is saying how much your Uncle Severus loves you."

"I love him too, and Uncle Tiberius, but I love my mummy the most."

"What, you don't love us too?" Harry asked waving her hand towards Dumbledore, Remus, Sirius, and herself.

"I love you Miss Harry. You're like my big sister. And I love Headmaster Mr. Dumbledore, Mr. Remus and Mr. Sirius, even if he did do that mean trick on Uncle Severus in school."

Sirius grinned and Severus just looked at his niece with a scowl, while Remus snickered. Dumbledore ignored them all and looked over at Tiberius, who was watching the group with interest.

"Tell me, Tiberius, are you still in the import and export business?" Dumbledore asked steering the conversation away from the now infamous prank.

"Yes, Albus, I am still at it. It is amazing what people will collect. I also have a contract to buy artifacts for the British Museum. Of course, I need to work closely with the Ministry so that there is no contraband getting through."

"Indeed, have you had any recent problems?"

"Only a few minor ones. The Aurors and the Dept. of Magical Cooperation along with the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office have been keeping close watch on all items which may be considered irregular or contraband," Tiberius responded. "In fact I must be on my way as I have an early shipment coming in tomorrow morning. Gentlemen, ladies, I shall be watching the outcomes of the Protectorship with interest. Severus, I will be in touch with you and your sister soon. Good evening," he nodded, and stepping out the front door disappeared.

Harry went directly upstairs, as did Phaedra and Circe. They were all tired and Circe wanted to give Phaedra a bath before putting her to bed. Harry decided not to soak in the tub after all, and took a hot shower to save time. The healing process had taken its toll and she desperately needed to sleep. Pulling on her nightgown, she crawled into bed, and fell right to sleep.

Two hours later, she awoke screaming. The nightmare had been vivid. Voldemort was angrier than ever, and swore he would make sure they all died. He would kill Remus slowly with silver, Sirius he would give to the Dementors, but slowly, so they could savor that which he had cheated them of by escaping Azkaban. Then there was Severus. His former Death eater and ally, would be made to suffer the most. He would torture him until he succumbed to the *Imperious* curse; then he would make him kill the one person that had truly believed in him. The one person he had called friend all these years; Albus Dumbledore. Harry would be made to watch it all, and then he would make her watch while he killed Severus, before he finally

killed her. All this she had seen, and Phaedra would be used to bait the trap. She was sitting up in bed, crying and holding her scar when the door burst open.

"Harry, what is it? What has happened?" Sirius asked as he flew into the room and wrapped her into his arms.

"Child, is it Lord Voldemort?" Dumbledore's voice came to her as through a haze.

"Headmaster, look at her scar," Snape told him, "it is an angry red again, as if it were fresh."

"Princess, hold on. Albus will help."

"Harry, everything will be all right. Just try and relax," it was Circe, "she has had a nightmare. Voldemort is angry and aware of the Protectorship."

"Circe, how did you know?" Harry managed to gasp out.

"I'm a telepath, remember. I was just dozing off when I picked up your dream unintentionally. I make it a habit to check on everyone mentally before I fall asleep."

"Where's Phaedra? Is she all right?"

"Phaedra is fast asleep, and didn't hear you cry out. Fortunately she is a sound sleeper."

"Child, come, let me help you," Dumbledore gently eased her trembling body from Sirius arms, and touched his wand to her forehead. The pain ceased immediately, but she clung to the old man. "Severus, have you any sleeping potion? Preferably the one for dreamless sleep."

"I shall get it directly," he replied leaving the room in one swift silent move. He returned a few minutes later with the purple liquid.

"Here, Child, I want you to sleep. Circe can tell us about your dream, but I want you to remember that it is just that, a dream. Voldemort is merely trying to intimidate you to try to weaken you. You must not let him."

"He means to try and kill all of us. He will kill Remus and Sirius while I watch and then will torture Severus until he succumbs to the *Imperious* curse. He wants to make him kill you, and then he will kill the two of us. He intends to use Phaedra some how as bait," Harry sobbed in panic, ignoring Dumbledore's suggestion that Circe repeat Harry's dream for them. "Circe you have to take her away, please," Harry begged terrified for the little girl.

"Miss Potter," Snape said using the soft icy tone he reserved for instilling terror into the students to get her direct attention, "you may rest assured that Voldemort will in no way lay his hands on my niece."

"Severus, you didn't see his face. I did, he just kept laughing and saying he would kill us all. He's totally insane." Harry clung to Dumbledore and refused to let go.

"Harry, honey, calm down. You know that is how Voldemort works. You have said so yourself. He uses intimidation. Your dream was sent to intimidate you. He knows you care

about us and will use it to try to weaken you." Sirius said sitting putting his arms back around her in an attempt to get her to release Dumbledore.

"Princess, would you say we were in danger before you had the nightmare?" Remus asked logically.

"You know we were. It's why we're all here. There is safety in numbers, but what will happen to Circe and Phaedra when they go home?"

"Miss Potter do you think for one minute Albus would let them go home unprotected? They were in just as much danger before the Protectorship as they are now. They have been for some time, which is why they are guarded by the Aurors. After all when your brother walks out on the most powerful dark wizard there ever was, he is bound to want to exact revenge."

"Listen to Severus, honey. It takes a brave man to admit the truth of his mistakes," Sirius said looking Snape in the eye. "Now take your potion. You need to get some rest. I will stay with you."

Harry looked from one to the other. She was beginning to calm down, but she was still trembling with fright. Phaedra was just a little girl, but that didn't matter to the Dark Lord. 'Circe, promise me you will be extra careful when you go home to Cornwall.' Harry directed the thought towards at Circe.

"I promise," she answered aloud, having heard what Harry had said to her mentally. "We'll be fine, besides we will be giving up our apartment and going to stay with Uncle Tiberius."

Harry's face visibly brightened, "Are you certain? You aren't just saying that to make me feel better?"

"No, we are really going to live with him," Circe replied as Harry used her empathic ability to determine if she were lying. She wasn't and Harry began to settle down, finally relinquishing her hold on Dumbledore and allowing Sirius to cradle her.

"Now take your potion," Dumbledore pressed the glass to her lips, and helped her to drink.

The effect was almost instantaneous. She was overcome by sleep, and Sirius gently tucked her in, as he looked at Albus.

"I'll stay with her tonight. It would be better if she isn't alone."

"No, Sirius, I will," Remus said with conviction, " She needs to be able to endure these dreams and the pain in her scar. You go on to bed with Albus. Severus if I may use Sirius cot from your room..."

"I will go and get it immediately. Circe go on back to bed," he hugged his sister. "Harry should sleep peacefully the rest of the night."

"One moment, Circe," Dumbledore stopped her. "Is there anything we should know about her dream?"

"No, she basically told it to you. She only left out the methods of execution. I believe he will try to use Phaedra to get to us though, so we had better be on our guard. Mr. Chang warned us when he read our tea leaves."

"Yes, he told me that Voldemort would try to capture Phaedra, but that it would be all right. He said the Phoenix would protect her," Dumbledore said as they left the room.

Snape returned a few minutes later with the cot for Remus, who lowered the lights and made himself comfortable. He lay awake for a long time thinking about Harry, Sirius, and the others. He knew he had found his family once again, and would protect them with every fiber of his being.



## ***Return to Hogwarts***

The last three weeks of summer were spent in a whirlwind of fun and relaxation. There were no new nightmares, although Harry was unable to completely forget the dream. She did however put it into perspective.

She could not remember the last time she had enjoyed not being at Hogwarts. Sirius especially went out of his way to make sure she was relaxed and happy. They attended the professional quidditch matches, bringing Ron along. Either Remus or Snape would also accompany them, and on one occasion, Dumbledore came along. Harry had told him more than once, that next to seeing Sirius name cleared, the season's tickets to the Chudley Cannons was the best gift she had ever received.

They were all developing a unique relationship, and while Snape and Sirius were not exactly best friends, they were getting along quite amiably. Of course, being crowded into a small three-bedroom house made it more of a necessity. Fortunately, a little magic helped to finish the attic into another large room and Harry and Phaedra claimed the space as their own. Circe took the smallest of the three bedrooms on the second floor, while Sirius and Remus shared the largest one. Professor Snape had taken the one in the rear of the house, and a cot had been placed in it should Dumbledore decide to stay the night.

The only real drawback had been that the house had only one bathroom. Molly Weasley, who had suffered with this same problem for many years, came to the rescue, providing them with a schedule. It had been divided into morning and evenings, and if you missed your turn, you went last. Fortunately, hot water was never a problem, as it was kept that way magically. Phaedra was given priority when it came to using the lavatory and the men all agreed to defer to the ladies if both needed to use it at the same time.

Harry was spending a good deal of the time with the Weasleys, Phaedra in tow, and the little girl absolutely adored Fred and George. The twins had moved back to the Burrow to be near their parents after the failed attack by the Death Eaters. They had both passed their test and were now licensed to apparate, so they were able to go back and forth daily to Hogsmead. Phaedra, unlike Harry, could not tell them apart, so she just called them Mr. Fredgeorge, insisting they were the same so one name was all they needed.

All too soon, the summer break came to an end and they would all be leaving in the morning. Harry's trunk was packed, and Hedwig sat placidly perched in her cage. Dumbledore had come earlier that day and brought Snuffles back to Hogwarts with him. Arthur Weasley had arranged for Ministry cars to transport them all to the station in the morning.

They had all spent the day with the Weasleys, having an end of vacation barbecue. It was a fun day, but by nightfall, the clouds had rolled in, and the ominous sound of thunder rumbled in the distance. Harry couldn't escape the feeling that it was a portent of things to come.

Late that night, as she lay in bed, another thunderstorm rolled through, shaking the house. Unable to sleep, Harry had been lying in bed staring up at the attic ceiling and was reviewing the day's events in her mind, when Phaedra's voice came from the bed next to hers.

"Miss Harry, are you awake?"

"I'm awake. What's the matter?"

"I'm scared of the thunder."

"Come into bed with me. I will protect you," Harry comforted her as she slipped in beside her. "There is no reason to be afraid. Do you know what thunder is?"

"No."

"Well, I've heard two different funny stories about thunder."

"What are they?" The little girl asked clinging to her as another loud clap sounded overhead.

"Let me show you," Harry answered reaching onto the nightstand for her wand.

"Miss Harry, you're not supposed to do magic."

"I won't tell if you don't," she whispered mischievously to Phaedra, who giggled with delight. "Now look at the ceiling." Harry played her wand onto the attic ceiling, causing a picture to appear. "See the angels? They're bowling, that's what causes the thunder."

"What makes the lightening?"

"Watch," Harry had one of the angels bowl a strike, causing the score board to flicker. "There's the lightening."

"Miss Harry, you're funny," Phaedra snuggled up to her. "What else causes the thunder? You said there were two things"

"The Cloud People," Harry intoned making her voice deeper.

"Cloud People?" Phaedra questioned.

"Uh huh, watch." With another wave of her wand, the bowling angels disappeared. The ceiling now depicted big gray clouds in the shape of giant fluffy cherubs. They were scowling at each other, and trying to knock one another down, pushing and shoving with their buttocks. As they pushed, the thunder sounded and when one would fall there would be a flash of lightening.

"They're bumping hinnies," Phaedra laughed, clapping her hands. "Does anything else cause thunder and lightening?"

"How about your Uncle Severus catching Harry doing magic when she isn't supposed to?" A silky soft voice came from the top of the stairs startling them both.

"Uh oh, Miss Harry. I think Uncle Severus is mad," Phaedra remarked as they looked over at the Potions Master. He was standing with his arms crossed, in his robe and slippers. Harry was surprised to see Professor Dumbledore with him, and knew he must have apparated from Hogwarts; both men had their wands drawn.

"Professor Dumbledore," Harry leaped out of the bed. "Is anything wrong? Has something happened to the Weasleys?"

Dumbledore heard the panic in her voice, realizing she thought Lord Voldemort had struck at the Weasley home.

"No Child, the Weasley's are fine," he answered calmly. "I did however, get a message from the Improper Use of Magic Office about fifteen minutes ago, not to mention a call from Moody to make sure everything was okay. You are very lucky they agreed to let me handle this."

Harry sat back down on the bed. She knew Dumbledore was not pleased. She also wondered where the others were. Her unasked question was answered when she heard Sirius voice coming up the stairs.

"Albus, the grounds are clear. Remus and Circe have checked the house. Everything is secure, and Moody has been notified."

"I'm sure he will not be happy when he finds out a certain witch has been playing. She didn't bother to stop and think that we may have thought she was in trouble," Snape glared angrily.

"Harry, you should know better!" Sirius brow furrowed into an angry frown, He had been terrified the spells protecting the house had been breached, leaving Harry to try to protect herself and Phaedra. "We thought you were in danger!"

Harry blinked in shock. Sirius had never yelled at her before. Her empathic senses told her that all three of them were angry. It was then that Phaedra started to cry.

"Muuuummmmyyyy...everybody is mad at Miss Harry for making me feel better," she sobbed hysterically as Circe barreled up the stairs with Remus following, the moon having set. "Now they're going to e'spell heerrr..."

"Phaedra, baby, no one is going to expel me," Harry cuddled the little girl, trying to soothe her.

"It would serve you right if they do!" Circe looked angrily at Harry. "Come on Phaedra. Come downstairs in mummy's bed," she took the crying child from Harry, carrying her back downstairs.

"Noooo...I want to stay with Miss Harry. She made the angels bowl and the cloud people..." Her sobs trailed off as the attic door slammed shut.

Harry stared after them, her mouth open. This couldn't be happening. She had been so happy. All she did was try to ease a little girls fear. She looked at her Protectors, her green eyes wide, reflecting her hurt and confusion. Phaedra had left Mr. Hoppity Hop behind in the bed, and Harry wrapped her arms around the stuffed rabbit, craving some kind of security. Their anger was more than she could bear, and because of the joining during the Protectorship Ceremony, she was finding it was more difficult to block their emotions. The room had started to spin, and she felt like she was going to throw up. Getting up, she started towards the stairs, but they misunderstood her actions and moved to stop her. She immediately felt a rush of fresh anger, and was unable to control her ability to block it. The room was closing in on her and her head

felt like it was going to explode. Looking at Severus, she screamed in her mind, opening it up to him, 'Help me, I can't block the anger. I'm in pain...' Then the darkness overcame her...

"Harry!" Sirius yelled as Snape broke her fall. "Severus, what just happened?"

"She was unable to block our anger and other emotions. She is more aware of our feelings due to the Protectorship. It has caused her to faint."

"Is that why she was trying to run?" Remus questioned.

"She wasn't trying to run away. She thought she was going to vomit," Snape replied checking her mouth, to make certain she did not throw up and aspirate. "She called out to me telepathically for help just before she passed out."

Sirius and Remus looked at Snape in astonishment. It was the first time he had actually admitted in front of either of them that he had any telepathic ability.

"Severus have you any smelling salts to help revive her?" Dumbledore asked calmly as Snape gently laid her on the bed.

Before he could reply, Circe's voice came from the top of the stairs, "What has happened to Harry? Phaedra and I both heard her scream to you for help."

"Phaedra is a telepath too?" Sirius asked looking from Snape to his sister.

"This is the first indication that she has the ability. It is a family trait," Snape told him.

"Miss Harry is dead," Phaedra sobbed looking at the pale figure stretched out on the bed as she followed her mother into the room.

"No, little one, Miss Harry has fainted," Dumbledore comforted, picking her up and carrying her over to the bed. Harry still had the bunny clutched in her hand.

"She took Mr. Hoppity Hop to feel better. I heard her crying in my head. Mr. Headmaster Dumbledore, Miss Harry was just protecting me from the thunder. Why is everyone mad at her?"

"She wasn't just playing a game with you?" Dumbledore questioned the little girl.

"No, I was afraid of the thunder and she showed me funny stories about what causes it. There were bowling angels and cloud people who bumped hinnies."

"Now that is funny," Dumbledore's blue eyes twinkled at the little girl, "if I had known that is what she was doing I would not have been as angry."

"I tried to tell mummy, but she wouldn't listen," Phaedra sniffed.

"No, Little One, none of us did. I'm sorry."

"Is Miss Harry still in trouble?"

"Not as much as she was."

"Will you e'spell her?"

"No," he smiled warmly, "I won't expel her, but I will have a long talk with her."

"Mr. Sirius, Miss Harry was crying because you were yelling at her. She could feel you being mad, and you made her really sad."

"Phaedra did you hear her say this in her head?" Sirius inquired nonplussed.

"Yes, she didn't know what to do. You never yelled at her before," Phaedra told him as Harry moaned softly.

"I suggest we all get our anger and any other negative emotions under control," Dumbledore instructed firmly.

"Mummy can we stay and help Miss Harry to feel better?" Phaedra asked her mother anxiously. "Maybe then she won't feel bad cause you yelled at her."

"Yes, baby, we'll stay. Mummy only yelled because she worried that you and Miss Harry were in danger. We all did, then when we found her doing charms, we got mad. We didn't know she was trying to help you."

Phaedra went and climbed back onto the bed beside Harry. The little girl gently brushed her hair back, and kissed her. "Miss Harry, please wake up. Please don't be dead. I love you..."

Harry stirred again and opened her eyes, looking around in confusion. "Phaedra?" she asked looking at the little girl with a frown.

"Mr. Sirius, Headmaster Mr. Dumbledore, Miss Harry is awake."

"Yes, Phaedra, I see that," Dumbledore answered warmly. "Will you go down with your mother and get her some cocoa? I think it will make her feel better."

"You just want to talk to her with Mr. Sirius alone. I always get sent away when grownups want to talk," Phaedra replied indignantly to Dumbledore. "Miss Harry do you want me to go?"

"I would like some cocoa, I'm cold. Can I keep Mr. Hoppity Hop until you come back?"

"Okay, I know he will help you to feel better. Come on mummy. We have to get the cocoa," Phaedra pulled Circe by the hand.

"I will help you Circe," Remus said quietly, his face pale and haggard. "I think we could all use some cocoa."

"Do you wish me to leave, Headmaster?" Snape asked looking at Harry, his dark eyes no longer angry. She could sense his concern.

"No, Severus, you may stay," Dumbledore said motioning the two men to sit.

"Child, Phaedra told us you were trying to keep her from being frightened by the thunder. Is this true?"

"She was scared so I took her into bed with me and showed her some funny reasons that Muggles tell their children about where thunder comes from. It helps them not to be afraid. I didn't think anyone would realize I was sneaking a little bit of magic. Hell, I have friends who do magic at home all the time. How come I always get into trouble for it?"

"What makes you think they don't?" Dumbledore's eyes twinkled.

"I've never heard of any of them getting warnings from the Improper use of Magic Office, like I do."

"Their parents are generally there to supervise them, and they are sent notifications from the Ministry. Why don't you ask the Weasleys? The twins were in trouble quite often with some of their magical jokes."

"Headmaster, don't lie to me. It doesn't suit you. They track me because of Voldemort. They're not always trying to protect me, they're afraid of me, aren't they?"

Dumbledore did not answer right away, and Harry looked from Sirius to Snape and back to Dumbledore. Sirius shifted uncomfortably, while Snape sat as frozen as a Statue.

"Child, no one is afraid of you. They are merely concerned because you have been touched by a terrible curse. They know you have extraordinary abilities, and do not yet have full control of them."

"Harry," Sirius cupped her chin, "if anyone is afraid of you it's Voldemort. You're the only person who has ever survived his wrath. There is something special about you. Something that comes from deep inside of your soul; Albus was aware of it the day you were born."

"They don't know, about me, do they?" Harry looked at Dumbledore, and there was no mistaking her meaning.

"No, but it's time that they did." He answered as Circe and Remus returned with Phaedra.

"Miss Harry, mummy made cocoa with peppermint and marshmallows."

"Umm...That sounds yummy," she replied taking the cup Remus offered.

"Once we have finished our drinks I think it will be time for Phaedra to go back to sleep. She has a busy day tomorrow," Dumbledore tussled the little girl's hair affectionately.

"Do I go to first grade tomorrow, mummy?"

"No, dear, you start the day after, but we will be going home tomorrow."

"I want to go to Hogwarts with everybody else. Why can't I go?"

Harry smiled, and had begun to relax. "Phaedra you're too little to go to Hogwarts. You have to be eleven."

"I could go now. I'm smart enough. Mummy says I am as smart as Uncle Tiberius." She replied proudly.

"What about your Uncle Severus?"

"Him too," she smiled sweetly, looking at Snape with her big brown eyes.

"You my dear little niece are a little conniver. You are too young to go to Hogwarts," Severus hugged her adoringly, and they all smiled.

"Oh...can I at least stay with Miss Harry tonight? I'll make her promise not to do any more magic."

"Very well, but you are to go right to sleep," Dumbledore looked at her over his spectacles.

"I promise," she said handing her cup to Circe and lying down. "Miss Harry, can I have Mr. Hoppity Hop back now? He wants to go to sleep too."

"Of course," Harry tucked the bunny in with her, and they all kissed her goodnight. Phaedra never saw Dumbledore wave his wand to charm her to sleep so they could talk to Harry.

"Now, my dear sweet little rule breaking Gryffindor," Dumbledore put his arm around her. "I want you to promise me you will do no more unauthorized magic."

"I can't promise that," Harry looked at him fondly. "I can however, promise that I will try not to do any more unauthorized magic."

"Very shrewd answer, Harry," Remus quipped.

"It's the only honest one I can give. It just bothers me that people believe I can't be trusted."

"Child, you are trusted. You just need to learn to control what you are capable of doing. We put the no magic rule into place just for that reason. Young witches and wizards were getting hurt or causing destruction of property."

"Albus, you said something before about there being a reason for Harry's abilities and her having survived the Dark Lord's Curse. What is it?"

"Is this true, Albus?" Remus asked and Circe looked on curiously.

"What I am about to tell all of you is to go no further than this room. This is for Harry's protection as well as her privacy. I want your word of honor on this as Members of the Order of the Phoenix."

"You have my word," they all replied simultaneously.

"Harry is a direct descendant of Godric Gryffindor on James side, and indirectly from both Merlin and Salina Slytherin, Salazar's younger sister, on Lily's. This is why she is able to command such power, and has so many traits from both the houses."

Sirius whistled, Snape made a swift movement of his head to look at her, Remus jaw dropped. Circe merely gave a thin smile and arched her brow. She had suspected all along that there was more to Harry than they all knew.

"Remind me never to study genealogy," Harry joked. I liked it better when I was just plain old Harry. "So much for Voldemort saying I was just a baby with no extraordinary powers that time in the Chamber of Secrets."

"Voldemort doesn't know this?" Snape's dark eyes were glittering dangerously.

"I think he may suspect something about Lily. According to what Harry can remember, he tried to get her to move aside when she tried to block his path. He only killed her since she refused to move. Otherwise he does not know."

"Honey, I never knew James was a direct descendant from Gryffindor. He never told me."

"Sirius he probably thought you either wouldn't believe him or that he was bragging. I only found out myself when Dumbledore asked me to do the Protectorship."

"Princess that is one hell of a family tree," Remus shook his head, still trying to grasp the implications of the situation.

"Albus, was it not Godric Gryffindor that stood up to Slytherin, causing him to abandon Hogwarts?"

"You are well aware that it was, Severus. Why would you ask?"

Snape shifted, "Do you have any idea what the actual reasons were? Surely it wasn't just the question of who to admit as students."

"No, Severus, it was not. Slytherin was a practitioner of the Dark Arts. That is why he built the Chamber of Secrets. He wanted all students to be well versed in what the others felt was a blight on the magical world."

"Of course," Circe said looking at Dumbledore, "it was Medieval Times. The Muggles were suspicious of anything magical. He probably wanted to instill control over them with intimidation and fear."

"Hello," Harry waved her hands, "does anybody besides me see a parallel here?"

"Very good, Child," Dumbledore nodded.

"It comes down to nothing more than an old fashioned power struggle. As Voldemort has said there is no good and evil, only power. Too bad he's only partially correct."

"What makes you say that, Harry?" Snape asked quizzically.

"I'd like to know myself, Honey," Sirius agreed.

"Of course there is good and evil," Remus frowned, otherwise we would have chaos."



"You too my loveable werewolf are also partially correct. You see good and evil are the same power. If you take your powers and do something beneficial, it will inherently amount to something good. Use that same power to cause pain and suffering it becomes a thing to be abhorred, ergo evil."

"How does this theory of yours do with such things as werewolves?" Snape asked sardonically.

"Actually Remus is a prime example," she flashed him a smile. "Remus is a good hard working man, who wants nothing more than to have a home and family to care about. He is patient and kind and generally an overall nice person. He is well liked until people find out he's a werewolf. Then they become afraid and shun him. He is considered evil and an unnatural thing to be feared and abhorred. He has a sickness that people don't understand. If it is any help, they still react the same way to people with HIV and leprosy. They are considered unclean; therefore, they are something evil. Ignorance promotes evil."

"Child, I couldn't have said it better myself," Dumbledore hugged her warmly.

"Thank you princess, you are truly a remarkable witch."

"Thanks, now that I have given my seventeen going on thirty speeches for the night, I really would like to go to sleep. I don't know what Circe put in this cocoa, but it has put me into a very nice state of lethargy. If you're all going to yell at me for doing a few charms to make a little girl unafraid, then you had better do so now," Harry yawned, stretching out lazily, her eyes heavy.

"No, Child, but I expect you to keep your promise. I have to be getting back to Hogwarts, so behave yourself or I will let Severus keep you occupied in the dungeons for a month."

"Not a good idea, just think of all the things I could mix up!" She grinned wickedly at Snape, and Circe laughed. "Remus, go to bed. You look like you were out chasing too many rabbits tonight. It may be raining but it was still the last night of the full moon."

"I can assure you I wasn't. I was with Sirius and he will vouch for me."

"Now I know you were up to no good," she giggled. "Sirius, will you stay for awhile?"

"Of course, honey. I'll stay till you fall asleep," Sirius said taking her hand in his as the others bid them good night.. "I'm sorry I yelled at you. You had me scared half out of my mind. I just pictured you up here trying to keep Voldemort away from you and Phaedra..."

"I didn't mean to scare everyone. I just wanted to make Phaedra feel better. I'm sorry," Harry yawned again.

"Will you do something for me?"

"You bet I will, what do you want?"

"Will you show me what you showed Phaedra? I've never seen bowling angels or clouds that bump their butts," Sirius gave her his best smile.

"You are one handsomely wicked wizard. It's a good thing you're such a nice guy or Voldemort wouldn't stand a chance. You would have every single witch for miles around eating out of your hand. Talk about power. I should lock you up to keep the female populace safe."

"Go to sleep Harry," Sirius laughed, and she closed her eyes obediently, as he kissed her on the forehead. "I will see you in the morning."

Harry was asleep within five minutes. Sirius lingered for a few minutes more watching her. 'I love you Harry James Potter. Hurry and grow up so I can tell you. I know you can feel it, but like me, you are honor bound to wait. I don't know if you and I are soul mates yet, but if you are destined for another, I promise I will always be near. I am your strength, but you have also been mine.'

Sirius quietly went downstairs and returned to bed. Tomorrow he would be back at Hogwarts and there would be all the preparations to be done before the feast. It would be interesting to see how Harry would make out with Snape on the train. He laughed, knowing that Snape had never really cared for the train back in the old days. As he settled himself into bed, he could hear Remus snoring softly. It had been a bad transformation this month, and he knew his friend was exhausted. The scare Harry had given them hadn't helped either. As he drifted off to sleep, he made a mental note to tell his friend how much he appreciated him. He knew only too well that Harry had been right about what she had said. He also thought that maybe next month their 'little phoenix' might like to join them on a romp. He would ask Dumbledore, and it could be used as a learning experience in the forest, but he would not tell Harry, not until the old man approved it.

Harry woke to a warm sunny morning. Phaedra was already up and had gone down to breakfast. Checking to make sure she had everything she needed in her trunk, Harry dressed quickly in her jeans and cotton shirt, pulling on a pair of sneakers. She then secured Hedwig's cage, and went downstairs to eat. She and Remus arrived at the same time.

"Well it looks like our two sleepy heads have finally gotten themselves up and dressed," Sirius quipped, drinking a cup of hot black coffee.

"Miss Harry, you didn't forget that you will send me mail with Hedwig?" Phaedra asked munching on a piece of toast with jelly.

"I didn't forget. I will send you one by the end of the week. I will tell you all about the feast tonight, and how your uncle behaved on the train," Harry looked wickedly at Snape.

"Miss Potter, I don't know why you seem to think I have a problem with taking the train with you. As your protector it is my obligation to see that you are kept safe."

"Yeah, but that doesn't mean you have to like it," she smiled even wider, and Remus winked while Sirius snickered.

"Oh, honey, this came for you early this morning. Dumbledore sent the names of all the four prefects for each house and the Head Boy. I know he doesn't need to remind you that you will all be in the first two cars."

"So tell me what is so special about those two cars?"

"I haven't a clue. Your father and mother were Head Boy and Girl and Remus was a Prefect. I was not allowed," Sirius curled his lip, and Snape grunted.

"Really now, I have it on good authority that you were sneaked into the front car. Isn't that right, Professor Snape?"

"I have no idea. If he was, I didn't see him."

"Oh, is that why you sent me that letter complaining about how they flagrantly got away with disobeying the rules?" Circe questioned her younger brother.

"Ha! I was right, besides, Dumbledore told me. Severus was a Prefect too and he ratted you all out, but all you got was detention."

"Yes, if it had been up to me..."

"You would have expelled them, we know," Harry smirked sarcastically.

"Miss Harry, do you tease Uncle Severus in class like that? Is that why he always gives you 'tention?"

"Detention, Phaedra. Do you think I'm being naughty to your uncle?"

"Yes, do you do it a lot?"

"Professor, do I do it a lot? I really never kept track."

"Miss Harry gets detention about once a month, Phaedra. I don't expect you to be naughty like her when you go to school. Will you promise your Uncle Severus you will behave?"

"Um...I guess so. What if my teacher is mean? What if she wants me to do something I don't like? Shouldn't I tell her?"

Harry had to put her hand over her mouth to keep from laughing. Sirius was grinning wickedly, and Remus poured himself a cup of tea, pretending not to hear.

"Phaedra, you have to do what your teacher tells you," Circe told her gently.

"But mummy what if I don't want to. What if it is something I don't like to do?"

"Then you tell your mum what happened and she will make sure your Uncle Severus puts your teacher in her place," Harry said brightly, putting Snape on the spot.

"Will you put a spell on her if she does that?" she asked her uncle.

"No, Phaedra, I will talk with your mum and we will talk to the teacher to see what the problem is."

"Oh pooh, I hoped you would turn her into a pony. Then I could ride her to school."

"Phaedra, how about if I turn Miss Harry into a pony, then you could ride her?"

"Miss Harry, would you let Uncle Severus turn you into a pony? We could play before you go to the train."

"That is not such a good idea, Phaedra. We don't have the room, but he could turn me into a dog or a cat," Harry dared Snape, while Remus watched with interest and Sirius looked at Harry shaking his head negatively. Harry grinned at she turned back to her breakfast. Too late, she saw his wand move, and the flash of white out of the corner of her eye. Harry had been transformed into a black Labrador retriever puppy.

"I warned you, honey. Now what are you going to do?"

The pup jumped down from the table, and went over to Phaedra. She sat down and begged. The little girl giggled, and gave her a piece of bacon.

"Mummy, can we keep Miss Harry as a puppy?"

"No, I don't think she would be too happy. Your Uncle Severus only transformed her to teach her some manners. Your reaction time is too slow, Harry. You underestimated your opponent," Circe said to the pup, which tilted her head listening. She then waddled over to Sirius and began to whine.

"You brought it on yourself, honey. I think you should think twice about daring Severus to transform you from now on," Sirius said picking her up in his arms. She licked his face affectionately. "Now go over and apologize to him," he set her down on the floor and she waddled over to where Snape sat, reading *The Daily Prophet*."

"Ruff...ruff..." She barked wagging her tail and sitting up.

Snape ignored her. "Circe, pass me the preserves please," he asked his sister as he took another piece of toast.

Harry rolled over and began to whine. Snape merely reached down and rubbed the puppy's tummy. "Ruff...Ruff..." she tried again wagging her tail. Snape still ignored her.

"Uncle Severus, Miss Harry wants to be a people again."

"That's person, Phaedra, not people. People mean more than one," Snape corrected as he continued to read the paper.

Harry wandered over to Remus and began to cry. She knew Snape was deliberately toying with her, but she was getting angry and scared. It would be just like him to suggest they leave her as a dog to keep Voldemort from finding her. Remus picked her up petting her gently.

"Don't cry, puppy Harry. Severus will turn you back when he's ready. He is just trying to scare you," Harry continued to cry, and was getting louder. "Severus, don't you think she's had enough?"

"I have no idea what you're talking about. She offered to let me transform her to play with Phaedra, so I did," Snape answered derisively.

Remus put Harry back down on the floor, and she wandered back to Phaedra, who gave her some more bacon, but Harry refused it. She began to think of ways to make Snape turn her back to a human. She knew that Sirius and Remus could do it for her, but they wanted her to get Snape to do it herself. She considered taking Phaedra's stuffed bunny, or growling at the little girl, but thought that would be mean. She was mad at Snape, not Phaedra. She then decided to let him now she was getting mad. Scooting under the table, she grabbed the hem of his robe in her mouth and decided to play tug-o-war.

"Look Uncle Severus, Miss Harry wants to play with you," Phaedra laughed with delight.

"She'll be sorry if she tears my new robes."

"Uncle Severus, you wouldn't hurt her would you?"

"Don't worry, Phaedra, your uncle wouldn't hurt Harry. He just wants to get her mad."

"Why?"

"You wouldn't understand, Child," Dumbledore's voice came from the door to the kitchen.

"Headmaster," Snape rose from his seat with Harry still clinging to the hem of his robes. "This isn't what it looks like."

"Isn't it?" Dumbledore asked mildly. "Harry you make a lovely puppy. I see you have already started to get on Severus bad side, and classes haven't even begun. Now come over here and I will turn you back, but you have to promise you won't instigate any more little pranks."

Harry looked at Dumbledore, and then at Severus. She knew it was a promise she would never be able to keep so she kept on pulling at Severus robes. She wanted him to change her back, not Dumbledore.

"Headmaster, apparently Miss Potter likes being a puppy," Snape remarked, through clenched teeth. He wanted to kick her off, but didn't dare for fear of upsetting Phaedra.

"Miss Harry, Uncle Severus is getting mad at you," Phaedra said picking her up. Harry let go of Snape's robe and happily wagged her tail, licking Phaedra's face. "You're a funny puppy. Would you like to go outside?" she asked opening the door, and Harry barked, leaping to the floor and scooting out the door.

"Phaedra, no!" her mother yelled too late.

"Shit! " Snape swore under his breath, as Sirius transformed and ran out after Harry.

Harry made it as far as the end of the road before Sirius caught up with her, cornering her by the fence separating their property from the neighbors. He didn't transform to avoid being seen by any Muggles even though it appeared no one was about. He growled his displeasure with her, and picked her up by the scruff, carrying her back to the house. He then unceremoniously plopped her onto the kitchen floor at Dumbledore's feet. The headmaster bent down and picked her up.

"Child, you certainly know how to get into trouble. You could have been injured outside or picked up by the dog catcher," he chastised gently. "Now why won't you let me turn you back?"

"Ruff, ruff, ruff..."she barked. She had the uncanny feeling he knew she was telling him she wanted Snape to do it. She wondered idly if Sirius understood her too. He barked in response, looking at her down his muzzle.

"Look mummy, Miss Harry and Mr. Sirius are talking to one another."

"I do believe you are right, Phaedra. I wonder what they are saying."

"She told him she wants Uncle Severus to change her back, and not Dumbledore or one of them. She is mad at them for leaving her as a puppy. I can hear her talking in her head."

"Phaedra, you possess a wonderful gift, but it is not polite to listen to what people are thinking unless they give you permission or it is a matter of life and death," Dumbledore smiled at the little girl.

"Mummy told me that last night and showed me how not to hear them, but Miss Harry and Mr. Sirius are dogs right now. Does that make a difference?"

"Woof, ruff," Harry and Sirius both barked telling her it was okay in their minds.

"They said it was okay," she smiled petting them.

"Severus, I would dearly love to allow the two of you to continue your battle of wills," Dumbledore looked serious, "but the Hogwart's express leaves promptly at eleven and the ministry cars will be here in an hour. I will be needing Sirius and Remus back at Hogwarts. I only came this morning to check on Harry after her fainting spell last night. I see she has fully recovered," he looked at the puppy, and she wagged her tail going over to give him her paw. "Now please turn her back."

"As you wish, Headmaster," Snape waved his wand, and Harry reappeared sitting on the floor, looking a bit confused.

"Thank you, Headmaster. If it weren't for you I would have been a puppy for at least another few minutes, but I have to go now."

"Harry, you shouldn't run off on Albus. He will only be here for another few minutes," Remus told her as he sipped his tea.

"You misunderstand me. I really have to go. If Severus hadn't changed me back his new boots would have been christened," she said running up the hall to the bathroom. She could hear Dumbledore laughing as she ran.

She gave Sirius the silent treatment for the rest of the morning, until he finally came up to her and pulled a big red rose out of his wand.

"That is an easy trick, anyone can do it," she told him coldly.

"You're still mad at me?"

"You let him transform me and then told me you wouldn't make him turn me back."

"I wanted you to learn not to underestimate him. Severus is a very strong wizard and you are lucky to have him as an ally."

"That's an odd thing to hear from someone who professes to hate him so much."

"I've grown up a bit. We may never be close but we have come to respect one another's abilities. Besides, he has been helping to protect you from the time you got to Hogwarts seven years ago. He wanted you to know that if he had been Voldemort there would have been no second chances. You would have been killed."

"Traitor," she pouted.

"No, protector. You can expect a lot of surprises from all of us in your tutoring sessions this year. I for one want to make sure you stay alive," he looked at her fondly. "Now go on. I see the Weasley's are here, and Severus does not like to be kept waiting."

"She has found that out on more than one occasion," Snape smiled thinly from the front door.

"Where is Remus?" Harry asked ignoring Snape's remark.

"Here I come," he said coming down the stairs with Circe and Phaedra, "now behave for Severus on the train. I don't want to find he's turned you into a toad by the time you get to school."

"He'd like that too much. I could just see him putting me into some jar to be gutted for one of his mad experiments."

"Would you really do that to Miss Harry, Uncle Severus?"

"Miss Harry was just teasing, baby."

"That's right. He would turn me into a kitten and give me to you for a pet."

"Miss Harry, you're still teasing me," Phaedra smiled.

"You're right. Now I have a surprise for you before you go. I know you're mum will like to kill me for this, but I went ahead and got it anyway. You did such a good job helping with Snuffles all summer that I have a present for you."

"Harry, I hope it isn't a puppy. Even living with Uncle Tiberius we don't have time to train a dog," Circe said worriedly.

"No, I know how much work a dog is. So, I thought and thought and came up with the perfect pet for Phaedra. Come here," she pulled Phaedra into the parlor while the others watched from the door. A medium sized cage was on the coffee table, covered with a towel. "Meet Mr. Hoppity Hop Jr." Harry pulled the towel off the cage to reveal a small floppy eared gray rabbit.

"Oh Miss Harry," Phaedra squealed with delight, "He's beautiful. Is he really for me? Can I keep him mummy? Please?"

"Yes Phaedra," Circe smiled, "you can keep him."

"Thank you...thank you..." Phaedra hugged Harry tightly.

"This bag has his rabbit food, and a book for your mum to read with you that will teach you how to take care of him," Harry said giving Circe the bag. "Now you have to remember not to squeeze him, or he could get hurt, he isn't stuffed like your other bunny."

"I'll remember, Miss Harry. I promise to take good care of him."

"Okay, cause if you don't I will take him back. He needs lots of love and he likes to be pet very gently." Harry carefully took the rabbit out of the cage and showed Phaedra how to hold and pet him.

"Look mummy, he likes me," Phaedra beamed merrily.

"Okay, now lets put him back in the cage, because we have to be leaving for the station," Harry gently put the rabbit back in his cage, and handed it to Professor Snape to carry out to the car with Phaedra.

"Now try not to drive my little brother too crazy this year," Circe smiled, "and keep in touch," she hugged Harry, before getting into her car with Phaedra, the rabbit cage between them.

Harry then hugged Remus, "you try and get some rest today. You look like one good hex will finish you off."

"Now where have I heard that before," Remus smiled hugging her good bye.

"As for you Mr. Don Juan of Hogwarts..."

"Have another rose?" he interrupted her with a huge grin; his charm at it's fullest, as he pulled another flower from his wand.

"Arrrggghhh...what am I ever going to do with you?" Harry shook her head, taking the flower and giving him a hug.

"We'll see you tonight at the feast. Have fun on the train."

"I will," Harry smiled getting into her car with Ron, Snape getting in beside her. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were in the first car with Ginny. Harry waved at Remus and Sirius until they were out of sight. She knew they were just going to lock up the house, and then apparate to Hogwarts. They would be at the school before she even got to the station.

"Harry, what is in the letter in your hand?" Ron asked as she settled herself in the car.

"This is the names of the four prefects, two for each house and the name of the Head Boy. As Head Girl I have to have a meeting with all of you before we get to school."



"Professor Snape, will you be apparating from the station once Harry is safely on the train?"

"You didn't tell him?" Snape asked arching his brow, a thin smile forming on the corners of his mouth.

"Tell me what?"

"I'm not allowed to travel alone. Professor Snape will be escorting me on the train," Harry looked at Ron keeping her face deadpan.

"You're daft. No offense Professor, but she is joking, isn't she?" Ron's lip curled and he looked from one to the other.

"No, Mr. Weasley she is not. However if you prefer I will sit in a different car."

"Oh, no, Professor I wouldn't hear of it," Ron choked, glaring at Harry, who was grinning from ear to ear.

"Would you like to know who the new Prefects are?"

"Who?" Ron managed, eyeing Snape doubtfully.

"Aside from you and Hermione, the Head Boy is...Neville. Oh, I'm so happy for him. He tries so hard; this will help to bolster his confidence."

"Who are the Prefects in the other houses?"

"Let's see, in Ravenclaw the Prefects are David Mandrake and Padma Patil, and I'll bet David will have fun trading places with his twin to drive us all crazy," Harry smiled rolling her eyes.

"Who are the others?" Ron asked.

"Let me see," Harry scanned down to Hufflepuff. "In Hufflepuff, we have Susan Bones and Chad Ravenwood."

"Susan is a nice girl. I talk with her on occasion when we have class with the Hufflepuffs. I don't really know Chad though," Ron informed her. "Who are the Slytherin's?" he asked looking at Snape who was watching for his reaction.

"Oh fu...dge," Harry corrected herself quickly as Snape looked at her down his nose. "You aren't going to like this."

"Don't you dare tell me it's Malfoy," Ron moaned, already knowing the answer. I know he helped you and everything, but isn't he still half a year behind?"

"Yeah, but you don't have to be a seventh year to be a Prefect. Besides, he will be able to make it up just like Hermione."

"Miss Potter is correct; he will be taking additional classes to finish on time," Professor Snape offered, with a thin smile. "Everyone deserves a second chance."

"Don't rub it in. I still don't particularly care for him, although I do feel badly about what happened. How has he been?"

"The Headmaster told me he is living with his aunt. He is very angry about the death of his mother, and wants to avenge her."

"I can't say I blame him for that," Ron agreed. "His old man is a real SOB. What kind of sick person murders his wife and tries to kill his only son?"

"One who would do anything the Dark Lord asks. One who is so blinded by hate and the lust for power that human life whether Muggle or Wizard means nothing to him,"

Professor Snape told them quietly.

"Well, let's try and be nice to him. He's been through a lot. I know; I was there. Besides, he did help me to escape from the Riddle Mansion."

"I'll be civil, Harry, but only because he helped you. Who is the other Prefect?"

"It is none other than Millicent Bulstrode. Maybe we should tell Hermione to watch out for the cat hairs?" Harry laughed, and Ron joined her, remembering the disaster with the Polyjuice potion as they pulled into King's Cross.

It was ten forty five, and they had to hurry to get to Platform 9 ¾. The Hogwarts Express always left promptly at Eleven A.M. Snape helped with the luggage, and Harry grinned as he passed through the barrier between platforms nine and ten. He merely leaned against it as if he was casually watching for the next train and allowed himself to fall through. Harry and Ron went next, at their usual run, and almost collided with Hermione who was waiting on the other side.

"Honestly you two, can't you be more careful?" she shook her head smiling.

"Where's Snape?" Ron asked, glancing around.

"I'm right behind you, Mr. Weasley. I was warned by Miss Granger that you are a reckless driver with that cart." Ron looked up to see Snape staring down at him. Harry couldn't help but laugh out loud.

"Come on, we get the first two cars. I'm curious to see if there is anything special about them like the Prefect's bathrooms."

"Is something the matter, Potter?" He asked snidely.

"Yeah, you're the matter," she looked down at him from where she was standing. "I don't like to see my friends sitting all alone," she said loudly, and all heads turned. "Come and sit with us, and we'll pig out on some goodies from the cart. There are also special treats just for us too." Harry could feel the whole car watching them. "We can sit and make fun of those too goons you used to hang out with, Crabbe and Goyle. Don't know what you ever saw in them. They kept their brains where the sun don't shine."

Some of the students snickered, but they were all waiting to see what Malfoy would do. Most had heard what had happened to his mother and there were rumors that his father had tried to kill him. Somehow, they all knew that Harry had been there and knew the entire truth, but Malfoy's father was a Death eater. Could Harry Potter actually be forgiving her former rival? Would she associate with the son of a Death eater? Was Malfoy someone that they could trust? Dumbledore had made him a Prefect; did that mean he was not bad like his father?

"I will be delighted," Malfoy stood up to his full height of six feet. Harry had to admit he was nice looking. He offered Harry his arm and she took it. Ron was glaring at her, but she knew he would understand. Hermione placed her hand on Ron's arm, and whispered something in his ear. She could see him nod, and they both got up and met Harry half way.

"Hey, Malfoy," Ron extended his hand, "how have you been?"

"Holding up, Weasley, and yourself?" Draco replied accepting Ron's handshake.

"Managing pretty good I suppose."

"You been doing okay too, Granger?"

"I'm still recovering, but I'm getting there. I'm glad to see you back, come and have a seat. We've plenty of room."

"Yeah," Neville chimed in, "we were concerned that you wouldn't want to come back. You're smart, and should be able to catch up without a problem."

Gradually one by one all the students started to talk to Draco Malfoy. He was being accepted back into the fold. If Harry Potter could forgive him, than everything would be okay.

"You are to be commended, Miss Potter," Snape whispered to her with quiet dignity, "he still has a difficult road ahead, but you have just removed some of the bumps."

"Everyone deserves a second chance, Professor. You of all people should know that. Just do me a favor and keep an eye on him. He will need all the support he can get. There are those who will still despise him for what he did and what his father is. He will need to learn how to deal with them. He's lonely and afraid for all his outward aplomb. I can feel it."

"I will do what I can for him."

The rest of the trip to Hogwarts was relaxing and everyone was talking about the upcoming school year. Ron was even getting into discussing the upcoming Quidditch season with Draco, and they fell into a friendly argument over who would win the house cup. Draco was also interested to know about the student teacher Quidditch competition and hoped they would play again this year. He was eager to see if he would make the team, since the students did not have to play their regular positions. He also felt he had grown too tall to be a seeker and wanted to become a chaser or keeper. He was even being nice to Neville Longbottom and offered to help him with his Potions. A new, mellower, Draco Malfoy, would step off the Hogwarts Express.

Halfway through the trip the witch came with the food cart, and much to everyone's surprise Professor Snape bought them all extra goodies. Their new positions as part of the student

hierarchy also entitled them to special snacks of sandwiches, and juice, which were provided free. Everyone ate their fill, making sure to save room for the dinner feast. It was a good day, and the sun was low in the sky as the train pulled into Hogsmeade Station.

Hagrid was there as usual and greeted Harry as she got off the train. He was herding all the first years into the boats for their trip across the lake. The castle was ablaze with torchlight reflected in the dark water. Harry stood for a moment looking up at the castle. She wanted to remember it as if it was the first time she had ever seen it. She looked back at the train, and felt a tear fall from her eye.

"Is something wrong Miss Potter?"

"No, Professor. I was just thinking that this is the last time I will ever be doing this. I wanted to remember it in my mind for the rest of my life, however long that may be."

"I understand, Miss Potter, take your time."

"Professor, promise me something."

"What?"

"Promise me that if I die you and Remus and Sirius will all stay together."

"I won't promise that, because you aren't going to die. You are going to defeat Lord Voldemort and live a long and happy life. You are just feeling morose because you are in your seventh year and are remembering when you first came to Hogwarts," Snape said adjusting the tie on her uniform. She had changed into robes just before they reached Hogsmeade. He could feel Harry's eyes burning into him. 'Don't you start crying on me. I don't want you to sense how worried I really am about you,' Snape thought as he took her arm and steered her to the carriages.

The Great Hall looked splendid with the candles all lit, and the night sky reflected in it. Harry took her seat at the table and saw Snape go around the back to come up the dais to sit with the other teachers, taking the vacant seat between Sirius and Remus.

Interestingly enough there were no new teachers this year. Dumbledore looked positively regal in gold brocade robes with a matching hat. He smiled at her as she took her seat. Snape was deep in conversation with Remus and Sirius. 'You old devil, you're probably telling them what I said about dying.' Sirius looked over at her and immediately changed the frown on his face to a smile and winked. Remus gave her a quick wave.

Finally, McGonagall came in and placed the three-legged stool with the sorting hat at the front of the room. She then reappeared with the first years as they filed in two by two. There were about fifty of them, and the sorting took awhile. Harry watched the boot maker's son, Samuel Coffee with interest as his name was called. He walked up to the stool and put on the hat.

"Hmm...Interesting," the hat said thinking as it looked into his mind, "you have a good heart...strong willed...Gryffindor!" It announced, and Harry greeted him into her house as Snape nodded in her direction. Gryffindor added twelve new students, ten to Slytherin, and fourteen each to Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff.

Next came the school song. Harry and Ron and the rest of the Prefects all sang loudly, as did the rest of the student body. They had arranged to do it as a show of unity in these uncertain times. By this time, they were all-hungry and were waiting for Dumbledore to announce the beginning of the feast. He looked down from the dais at her, and winked.

"Before we eat it is my pleasure to inform you that this year we will again have a student teacher Quidditch competition." The students went wild with delight. "There will also be no weekend trips into Hogsmeade due to the volatile situation with Lord Voldemort." The students murmured amongst themselves nervously at the mention of the Dark Lord. "All students are again reminded that the Forbidden Forest is off limits, and the third floor girl's bathroom remains closed due to the plumbing problems."

"Yeah, Moaning Myrtle," someone called out from the back of the room and the older students all laughed.

"We have also scheduled a May Day formal feast for the spring, and it will be open to all fourth year students and up. Those of you who do not have formal robes are encouraged to get them if you will be attending. Finally, let me say that I am glad to see you all again. Let the feast begin!"

Harry and her friends heaped their plates with food, and ate until they were stuffed. Harry felt it was the best feast ever, and Ron agreed. She was happy to be home, but could not shake the feelings of foreboding. Ron and Hermione sensed her feelings, and did their best to keep her mind off the Prophecy. By the time the feast had ended and Dumbledore dismissed them to their dorms, Harry was ready for bed. All the Prefects had their own rooms, and Harry had been able to keep hers from the year before. As she headed up the hall from the common room, the torch lamps flickered wildly. Nearing her room she saw three figures waiting for her, and smiled.

"You didn't think we would let you go without saying good night," Sirius hugged her. "Those Prefect robes suit you. You're a born leader."

"He just likes to show you off," Remus laughed. "I on the other hand, think you look good no matter what you have on."

"Professor," Harry turned to Snape, "you had to tell them what I said when we got off the train."

"I was concerned. It isn't like you to be so morose. It is our job to worry for you."

"Sorry, but it's not going to work. Am I worried, yes. Can I do anything about it? No. I am just going to have to live one day at a time and hope for the best. Nothing in life is certain Professor with the exception of death and taxes. Most people will face having to pay taxes before they must confront their mortality. I have to hope I live long enough to worry about paying taxes." She looked at them all squarely, and stood as proudly as she believed her parents would have done in the same situation. "The only good thing about the whole situation is that one way or another a monster by the name of Tom Malvolo Riddle, a.k.a. Lord Voldemort is worrying too. He is sitting out there somewhere tonight worried that a seventeen-year-old girl has the guts and the power to bring him down. He knows it and so do I."

"My dear, you are a true Gryffindor," Dumbledore appeared from the shadows. "You sound like your father, and have the spirit of your mother."

"I know. I watched them die, twice, remember?" It had been almost one year now since she had been sent back in time by Voldemort to witness the final hours of her parents lives. Her father had sent her to safety knowing he was about to die. "Dumbledore," she said uttering her password and letting them into her room. The fire was burning in the grate, and the lamps were on low. The room was cozy and she couldn't wait to climb into the huge four-poster bed.

"Harry, your password is Dumbledore?" Remus asked with a smile.

"Yeah," she smiled, "the Headmaster was pressed for time, so he gave me his name. He's entitled to a little bit of vanity now and then. Where is Snuffles?"

"She is over at Hagrid's. There will be more room for her there and she won't have to be cooped up during the day," Sirius explained.

"Child, we can bring her up if you wish?"

"I think I would like her here at night, but maybe if Hagrid can keep her during the day?"

"Of course," Dumbledore nodded, "I will send for her."

"It can wait till tomorrow. I'm sure Hagrid is as tired as I am."

"Go on and change then, and we'll wait for you," Sirius smiled disarmingly.

"Okay, I know that look. What are you all up to?"

"It was Severus' idea, Princess, Dumbledore approved, and we agreed."

"What was his idea?"

"This," Severus held up a small vial of purple liquid which Harry recognized as the dreamless sleeping potion.

"That is the best idea you have all had all day. I am exhausted and absolutely do not want that nasty SOB of a wizard getting into my head tonight. Give me ten seconds to change," Harry grabbed her nightgown from where the house elves had laid it out, and went into her bathroom. She changed quickly and coming out hung up her robes and put her soiled clothes into the laundry.

"Child, you are being so obedient that I am wondering if you are under a charm of some sort," Dumbledore teased her as she climbed into bed.

"Would it make you feel better if I do a little mischief to prove I'm perfectly fine?"

"It would."

"Oh, goody, I have been wanting to do this for ages," Harry looked at them with a devious smile, her eyes sparkling. Picking up her wand, she waved it at the Headmaster, and his beard immediately began to weave itself into a long braid.

"Mr. Chang would be pleased," Dumbledore laughed referring to the old Chinese gentleman who was his friend. "I do believe it is a nicer one than he has, and I can see mine." They all erupted into waves of laughter, including Snape, who found the idea of braiding one's beard ludicrous.

"I assume she can take the potion now?"

"It would be a wise idea, Severus, before she finds a way to do some more antics."

"Princess," Remus smiled, sleep well. I will see you in class tomorrow."

"Harry do you want me to stay for awhile?" Sirius asked kissing her on the forehead.

"No, this stuff works quite swiftly. Go on to bed and get some sleep."

"All right. I will see you at breakfast in the Great Hall." He then departed with Remus leaving her alone with Snape and Dumbledore.

"Have either of you anything to say before I go off to dreamland, or should I say dreamless land?"

"Child, try not to fret about the Prophecy. I know you will come out all right."

"Headmaster, I wish I had your confidence, but I will try not to worry. That's what I have Protectors for. They do all the worrying and I get to be the Heroine."

Dumbledore smiled and hugged her gently, "Sleep well, Child."

"Professor Snape, do you have anything to say to me?"

"Yes, I do. I wouldn't advise wandering around at night with your invisibility cloak. I might just catch you this year, and you wouldn't want that particular detention."

"That's my Sevie," she quipped to annoy him, "Always the epitome of decorum . Catch me if you can."

"Good night, Miss Potter."

"Good night, Professor Snape. I will be looking forward to Friday's class," she gave him an evil smile and then downed the potion. It worked almost instantly and he tucked her in gently.

"Sleep well, Harry, for there will be many nights ahead that you will need to rely on your strength, courage, and endurance to see you through," Snape spoke softly to the sleeping figure. He then lowered the lamps and left the room with Dumbledore. They parted at the end of the hall. Dumbledore to go to his tower and Snape retired to his rooms in the dungeon.

## ***To Everything there is a Season***

"This potions homework is killing me, Harry," Ron moaned. They were sitting in the library going over some of the advanced potions they were responsible to know, in addition to their independent study project. "You'd think Snape would be a little easier on us being as how he is your Protector."

"Ron, I told you before, the fact that Professor Snape is Harry's Protector doesn't mean he is going to make our studies any easier," Hermione admonished him shaking her head, her brow furrowed into a frown. "He still has to teach his regular set of standard curriculum. You're just mad because you couldn't decide what to do for an independent project, so he assigned you one."

"Yeah, and what a one he got, too," Harry laughed, looking out the window at the October sunshine.

"It's not funny, you two. How was I to know he would give me the limb-restoring potion? It is one of the hardest potions to make, and the ingredients are down right disgusting. Most of them are the livers of different animals that have to be boiled with bloodroot and catgut. Then there are the worms. You have to section them and remove their heads, for the regeneration properties; but the worst is the spider venom. I have to milk the spiders," Ron shuddered, "I hate spiders."

"Maybe that's why he gave it to you," Harry smirked.

"That's not funny. The man is down right evil!"

"My dear Mr. Weasley," Snape's soft icy voice came from the aisle behind him, "you have no idea exactly how evil I can be."

Ron blanched as Harry and Hermione went into gales of laughter. Madam Pince, the librarian looked up from her desk, scowling irritably.

"Sh...Madam Pince will throw us out," Hermione choked.

"And that's a bad thing," Harry quipped.

"It is, Miss Potter, judging by your last homework assignment," Snape eyed Harry arrogantly. "Perhaps I should have you do some extra credit assignments?"

"You're right, Ron, he's back in his evil mode."

"Oh, you two, knock it off. You both could do with a little more time studying instead of worrying about playing Quidditch."

"Ron, grab Hermione's books. We need to get her to the infirmary quick. Professor Snape has given her some kind of mind-altering potion. She thinks studying is more important than Quidditch!" Harry grinned at Snape wickedly.



"It's a pity I didn't have enough of that potion to try some on the two of you," Snape countered coolly, giving her a piercing look. He then closed the book he had in his hand, and returning it to the shelf, moved swiftly out of the library, without making a sound.

"How the hell does he do it?" Ron asked puzzled. "I never saw anyone who could move around so silent and fast."

"Wrong, his uncle Tiberius can. Remember the Protection ceremony?"

"Oh, yeah," Ron agreed sheepishly. Tiberius Snape had snuck up behind Ron in the same manner when he had gone to greet Arthur Weasley, a business acquaintance.

"Look! Here comes Hedwig," Harry indicated the Snowy Owl Hagrid had given her in her first year. "I'm getting some mail."

"Who is it from?" Hermione asked.

"Phaedra, she and I write to each other once a week."

"Harry, Phaedra is only in the first grade. How can she write to you?" Ron shook his head in disbelief. "She's only just started to read and write."

"No, dummy," Hermione rolled her eyes, "her mother writes them for her."

"Phaedra helps though, see..." Harry held up a note written in large uneven script.

"What does it say?" Ron questioned curiously.

"She says Mr. Hoppity Hop is getting big. That's the rabbit I gave to her just before we left for school. The other note is from her mother, Circe."

"Does she have any interesting news?" Hermione inquired with interest.

"Professor Dumbledore has invited them to come to Hogwart's for the Christmas Holiday along with Tiberius. She says Tiberius will be away on business, but that she and Circe will be here on Christmas Eve."

"I wonder why Snape didn't invite his sister, himself," Hermione remarked.

"Humph... why would you even ask?" Ron muttered under his breath as Harry kicked him under the table. "Ow...what was that for?"

"Oh, Ron, really, that wasn't a very nice thing to say," Hermione scolded him. "Harry said that he seems to be very close with his sister and niece. You don't know if he asked them or not. Harry could have done a lot worse than just kick you."

"Well in any event they're coming," she interrupted her friends quibbling. "Oh how nice. Phaedra is going to be in a Halloween Pageant at her school. They will send me a picture of her. She goes to a private school that is just for the children of witches and wizards, so they will all be wearing little dress robes and hats. She also says Phaedra would like me to send a picture of all of us standing outside of Hogwarts. It seems her friend, Althea, does not believe

that she is really getting letters from me. I'll fix the little twit. I'll have a picture done outside with the three of us and her Uncle Severus."

"You should get Dumbledore too. That will really shut her up."

"Ron is right, Harry. Nobody would argue with her if Dumbledore is in the picture."

"Good idea. I have a private tutoring session with him in about fifteen minutes," she remarked glancing at her watch. "I will ask him then."

"You are so lucky to be getting additional training. It will take me ages to catch up to you. I have already ordered a few books for after we finish here at Hogwarts."

Ron rolled his eyes, shaking his head, "Hermione, if you are interested in advanced studies you should apply for an apprenticeship. I am going to apply for one as an Auror."

"I am, but there are so many possibilities. I don't know what I want to do. What about you, Harry?"

"I haven't decided yet," she lied. Harry was hoping to get a position from Dumbledore as a student teacher, but didn't know if she would be alive come next September. "Look, I have to go. I don't want to keep the Headmaster waiting," she said hastily gathering up her papers and leaving the library.

"What was that all about?" Hermione asked turning to Ron perplexed.

"Hermione, you are one of the smartest people I know," Ron replied looking at her with respect, "but when it comes to understanding people you have a lot to learn. "

"I don't follow you."

"Hermione, it's Harry's seventh year! The Prophecy said she would be going down in great pain. She may not be around to do an apprenticeship."

"Ron, you have my permission to just kick me. I'm such an ass. I wasn't thinking. I mean, she has the Protectors and you have the goblet..." Hermione let her voice trail off. The thought that her friend might be going to die sent a chill up her spine.

"I know, Hermione," Ron gently got up and put his arms around her. "I don't want to lose her either." They just stood there holding onto each other seeking the solace of each other's company...

Harry hurriedly walked to the tower where Dumbledore's office was located, and stopping at the gargoyle uttered his password, "chocolate cupcakes," and the hidden door swung open revealing the moving stairs. Hopping on in one swift movement, she ascended to the upper level and knocked on the door.

"Enter," Dumbledore's voice called, and Harry stepped inside. "You're early, Child, I'm glad. Sirius and I were just talking about you." Sirius was sitting in a chair beside the Headmaster's desk.

"What have you been up to, my little mischief maker?"

"Just the usual, you know, tormenting Professor Snape to see how long it takes him to get mad. Why do you ask?"

"This is why," Sirius dumped a sheaf of papers he had been holding onto the desk in front of her. "I am not happy."

Harry didn't have to look at them to know they were her recent tests. She had only passed one, and that was transfiguration. She had even failed her Defense Against the Dark Arts quiz.

"So I failed a few quizzes, what are you getting excited about?"

"No, Harry, you failed every quiz except one, and that you barely passed. What is the problem? You should have aced every one of these."

"Not Potions, Snape's quizzes are always tricky," she replied tartly.

"That's not the point. You are a Head Girl and a good student. Most of this is already like child's play for you. Remus was fit to be tied."

"No surprise there. If you had said Snape was fit to be tied...well then..."

"Harry, that will be quiet enough," Dumbledore was becoming angry at her back talk. "Perhaps if you are suspended from this Saturday's Quidditch match, so that you can spend the time studying, you will show an improvement."

Harry blinked, taken aback. Dumbledore had hit a nerve. This week's game was against Slytherin, and if she didn't play, Gryffindor would probably lose. She turned sharply and looked at Sirius for support. It was not forthcoming.

"You brought this on yourself, honey. You should never have talked back to me in front of Albus."

"Sirius...Headmaster...don't do this. Don't take away the one thing that still matters in my life. I need to play that game."

"I'm sorry, Harry, but you should have known better than to speak to us like that. We are all here to protect you, and you have been behaving as if you don't care. You will just have to forfeit Saturday's game," Sirius told her firmly, exerting his authority as her godfather.

"It doesn't really matter. Letting people down seems to be going around these days. Why should either of you be any different?"

"Harry, you're the one who let down your team mates, by being suspended because of your giving me lip about those test scores. I don't see why you think otherwise."

"I came up here early on purpose to see the Headmaster. You both always said to come when I had a problem, so I did. The only thing is that when I got up here I found my Godfather and my Trust Keeper more worried about a few quizzes than me," Harry looked from one to the other. Sirius was watching her with interest while Dumbledore leaned back in his chair, blue

eyes intense. "Neither of you asked me why I failed them deliberately. It was obvious that you knew I had done so. Instead you started blasting me for it. I talked back because I was angry. I failed those quizzes because there is no point in taking them anymore. When I looked to Sirius for his support about playing in Saturday's Quidditch match, he refused to support me. It didn't matter if I was right or not, all I wanted was for you to give me your support."

"Child, sit down. Something is going on and I want to know what," Dumbledore indicated the other chair next to Sirius. She settled herself and then looked up at Dumbledore. He could read the desperation in her eyes, and she didn't like that. "Now tell me what happened."

"It's too hard to explain."

"Try," Dumbledore spoke firmly.

"The last few weeks I have been pretending not to hear what people are saying...my friends I mean. I couldn't avoid it any more today in the library."

"Harry, Severus said you were fine when he left the library. He stopped here just before you came up," Sirius explained when she looked up sharply at the mention of her encounter in the library; obviously Snape had been watching her.

"I was, until Hermione started saying how lucky I was to be getting advanced tutoring. She was telling me that it would take her ages to catch up to me, so Ron asked her why she wasn't going to apply for an advanced training apprenticeship."

"How did she reply?" Dumbledore asked. "I have been waiting to see if she would apply for the one position I will have."

"Oh..." Harry looked crestfallen.

"Honey, what is it? Are you going to apply for it?" Sirius asked growing worried at her look of defeat.

"She hasn't decided on what to apply for yet. That's what she said to me in the library. Ron wants to be an Auror," Harry couldn't look at Sirius.

"Child, did she ask you what you wanted to do after your seventh year?" Dumbledore's warm blue eyes told her he knew the answer.

"She didn't realize what she was asking. She didn't think that for me there might not be a next year. I can't apply for any position, no matter how badly I want to. Why bother to even go to class? The only thing that has been keeping my mind off the whole thing is playing Quidditch. People see me as just plain old Harry then. I can be free to let go and don't have time to think about Voldemort or dying or prophecies. You have both effectively taken that away from me now, too," Harry's voice cracked, but she didn't cry. She refused to allow them to see her cry.

"Harry," Dumbledore began slowly, "I am going to ask you some questions and I want you to answer me honestly."

"Yes, Sir."

"You admit to deliberately failing these tests because you see no point in taking them because the outcome of the Prophecy is unclear?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe you are going to die?"

"I don't know. I just can't get this awful image out of my mind of all of you standing around me in a casket," she shuddered.

"I see. If I were to say to you that you are going to live a long and happy life and that I don't want to hear any more talk about dying what would you do?"

"I'd say you were a sweet old man who was just trying to make me feel better by saying that I should stop worrying about what might happen in the future and concentrate on the present."

"That's our little phoenix, eh Fawkes?" Dumbledore smiled talking to his pet phoenix across the room. The bird immediately flew off his perch and landed in front of Harry. He began to sing softly.

"You're playing with a loaded deck, Professor," Harry smiled as she gently pet Fawkes on the head.

"Phoenix song," Sirius smiled, "will increase the courage of the pure of heart."

"Exactly," Dumbledore beamed, "now apologize to Sirius for talking back," Dumbledore advised his tone brooking no argument.

"I'm sorry. I was being a little twit."

"I shouldn't have been so angry. I thought you failed those quizzes just to annoy us. I knew you know the material. It never occurred to me that you might be worried. I thought we had resolved that with the Protectorship."

No, that's why Fawkes is singing to me. He knows I'm worried, scared, even a little hurt inside."

"What is causing you so much pain, Child?"

"Everybody who sees me whispers about the prophecy. They all know that sometime over the next few months I'm going to have a major battle with Voldemort. Yet, in all this time, not one of them has come up to me and said they would stand behind me, nor have they said a simple thank you. All they care about is themselves, and knowing they can go to sleep at night and not have to worry any more. It doesn't matter to them that I may die, or that I will be the one who tried to make the world a little bit nicer. They will be safe and happy in their own little lives and deny that anything was ever wrong."

Fawkes sang louder, moving to sit on her shoulder.

"Harry, you are not going to die. I don't want you to think that way. You're right though, about people. They can't look at you because of their own guilt. They're ashamed that the only

thing that stands between them and Voldemort's Deathaters is one lonely orphan girl, with a boy's name," Sirius took her in his arms, hugging her tightly to his chest. Harry wished he would never let go. Fawkes stopped singing and returned to his perch.

"That's better," Dumbledore beamed looking at her over his spectacles. "Now I have one more question for you?"

"What is that?"

"Do you want to play Quidditch this weekend?"

"Yes."

"Then if Sirius agrees to let you play, I will rescind my previous decision."

"Hmm...what do you think, Albus? Should I let her play?" Sirius teased her gently, his brown eyes full of laughter.

"Harry, do you have at least one good reason why Sirius should allow you to go ahead and play with your team?"

"If I don't then Slytherin has a good chance of winning and Snape will never let you live it down," she smiled timidly.

"Good reason, you can play," he laughed hugging her. "I want you to promise me you won't fail any more tests or quizzes on purpose though."

"I promise."

"Good. Now I will leave you alone with the Headmaster. I have a class to teach," Sirius smiled looking down at her. "I will see you both at dinner," he said exiting the office.

"Now, Child, lets get to your lesson."

"Wait, I have to talk to you about Phaedra. I need a favor."

"Is something wrong?"

"Nothing that we can't all fix, but we will need Professor Snape's help too," she stated matter-of-factly.

Harry then proceeded to tell him all about Phaedra's friend, and her doubts that Phaedra really knew Harry. Dumbledore was delighted about having their pictures taken in front of Hogwarts. He agreed to get Snape to sit for the picture too, and then he and Harry began her lesson. He was working with her telekinesis today, and making her move objects from across the room. It was strenuous and difficult, but when she finally moved his astrolabe from one side of the shelf to the other, Dumbledore seemed pleased.

"That will do for now, Harry. I know you are tired. Your ability to focus has improved immensely. Next week we will do some more."

"I'd rather do charms," she pouted.

"You don't need to practice your charms as much. I want you to work on the skills which you find most difficult, but will prove most useful against Voldemort."

"Charms can be useful against him too."

"Yes, they can, but you are able to do and create spells and charms easily. You have also almost completed all aspects of transfiguration, with the exception of transforming a human being. That will be one of your final lessons in class, and I happen to know that Professor McGonagall has always liked teaching it."

"Couldn't Sirius teach it to me now? I like doing transfiguration."

"No. I want you to wait."

"Sure, just let Professors Snape and Lupin torture me in advanced Defense Against the Dark Arts. All I ever get to do anymore is that and practice telekinesis. I either end up battered, bruised, and scared out of my wits, or with a splitting headache."

"Have you learned anything from it?" he asked amused, his blue eyes alight with laughter.

"Yeah, that I had better start ducking faster or I'll be in big trouble," she looked at him over her glasses.

"You might try blocking the spells they throw out at you," Dumbledore replied meeting her gaze with one of his own, and they both laughed. "Now, before you leave, I have something else to talk to you about."

"What did I do now?"

"Nothing that I'm aware of, are you feeling guilty about something?"

"No."

"In that case I want you to fill this out," he handed her a quill and a long parchment.

"What is it?"

"Your application for a full time teaching position next fall. You do not need to apprentice; you can be a full time adjunct. You have enough advanced training already to qualify you. I believe I will be having an opening. Of course if you aren't interested..."

"Of course I'm interested, but since when do you have a full time adjunct?"

"Since the Ministry approved my request. Now fill out the form. I would appreciate it if you do not say anything to anyone about it. I have not yet made it official."

Harry filled out the form, and handed it back to the Headmaster, "Professor, could I ask you something?"

"Of course, Child, what is it?"

"Would you mind very much if I skipped the Halloween Feast? My heart just isn't in it this year."

"Harry, I know you are still thinking about what happened last Halloween, but you have to remember that it was actually sixteen years ago. I want you to come to the feast on Friday."

"I'll come, but I won't be happy. It just seems that bad things happen to me on Halloween."

"Nonsense, Child. Now go on to your next class. I believe it is Divination?"

"Unfortunately, it is. I am definitely not in the mood for Professor Trelawney. All she ever does is predict my death. It's no wonder I'm getting neurotic," Harry grinned, and Dumbledore shook his head.

"Child, you are no more neurotic than I am."

"Well, a little daft then?"

"Good afternoon, Little Phoenix," Dumbledore smiled dismissing her.

"Good afternoon, Headmaster," Harry winked as she stepped onto the stairs to go to Divination. She met Ron just as she reached the entrance to Professor Trelawney's tower. He had waited for her, and smiled with relief as she approached.

"I was worried about you. Sometimes Hermione doesn't think. Are you okay?"

"I am now. I got reamed out by Sirius and the Headmaster for failing all those quizzes though," she said as they climbed up into the tower. "They knew it was deliberate."

"Don't say I told you so."

"I know, I know. Everything is okay now though."

"Good, I don't like to see you preoccupied with the Prophecy," Ron whispered as they took their seats.

The incense and heat in the room were stifling as usual. Harry looked around and saw Parvati sitting alone. She wondered where her friend, Lavender Brown, was. Her question was answered a moment later when she came from the other half of the tower accompanied by Professor Trelawney.

"Oh, Professor, thank you so much. My mother will be thrilled to know that I will be going into Fashion Design," Lavender gushed happily.

"My crystal showed you clearly doing sketches for *Witches Fashion Monthly*," Trelawney smiled serenely as she glanced around the room. Lavender took her seat beside Parvati; Ron rolled his eyes, while Harry covered her mouth so Trelawney would not see her smirking.



"It is time for our weekly Tarot practice. If you will all take out your cards I want you each to do a reading for your partner," Professor Trelawney directed the class as she wandered about the room.

"You first; you know that somewhere along the line she will be predicting my death," Harry whispered to Ron, "she always does."

"Right," Ron picked up the deck of Tarot cards and began to shuffle them. He then cut them into three piles placing the first on top of the third and then on top of the one in the middle. Handing them back to Harry, she began to lay them out on the table in front of him, in the prescribed manner.

"Now that's interesting, Ron. If I am reading this correctly, you have a secret involving a girl with light brown hair. Is she anybody I know? I see she is positioned with the lovers," Harry teased him, thinking about Hermione.

"I'll never tell," Ron blushed.

"Hmm...That's odd. Look at this. Your significator card is the Page of Cups and you are covered with the hanged man which signifies divination or prophecy. You are facing the Knight of Pentacles, the Knight of Cups, and the Knight of wands. There is also a Queen of Pentacles. The Magician is next to the Devil and the Fool is next to him. You have many Major Arcana cards. See, here are the High Priestess and the Moon. There is also Justice and the Emperor."

"Ah..." Trelawney had come over to look at Ron's cards, "are you not the Keeper of the Goblet?"

"Yes," Ron replied nervously.

"You will be using it... See the three Knights? They are the three Protectors. The dark haired woman is in turmoil, with the Magician, Devil, and Fool in control. The Emperor is most probably Dumbledore and Miss Potter is the High Priestess. The Moon Goddess stands before her with hidden enemies. Miss Potter, place the next card over the High Priestess. Perhaps it will give us another clue as to what is going to transpire." Harry did as Professor Trelawney instructed. She drew the Page of Wands. "Ah...a young blond child," Trelawney nodded.

Harry's stomach felt like it dropped. A name came into her head, 'Phaedra.' However, Phaedra was safely back in Cornwall with her mother and uncle. This was just another of Trelawney's bad predictions and Harry's imagination running wild.

"I see you know in your heart what Mr. Weasley's cards indicate. Mr. Weasley do Miss Potter's reading and let me see it."

"Yes, ma'am," Ron scooped the cards up and handed them to Harry. Her face had become mask like and pale. She took her time shuffling and cutting before handing them back to Ron. Carefully, he laid them out on the table in front of them.

Harry scowled as he turned over each one. The High Priestess appeared over her significator, the queen of cups. The Devil, the Fool, and the Magician were also present again as was the Page of Wands, and the Moon. In addition, she had the Death card,

Fortitude and the World. Fortunately, the Cracked Tower did not come out in the spread.

"The Magician, the Fool and Devil are waiting for you," Trelawney said studying the cards thoughtfully. "You will again face Death. The Sun and the World indicate that you will overcome their obstacles, and take flight for a new destination. The Moon indicates some hidden enemies, but they are not yours. The Moon is in a position to guard you and you are guarding the Page of Wands."

"I knew death would show up somewhere in this class. It usually does," Harry's green eyes bored into Professor Trelawney.

"Oh, Harry," Parvoti Patil said from where she sat on the next table. "You really need to take this seriously. It's your seventh year!"

"Parvoti, shut up!" Ron looked up angrily. "Harry knows what year this is."

"I'll worry when the Cracked Tower appears with the Devil and the Death card or the Magician. In the meantime, I will just wait. It will be up to Voldemort to make the first move," Harry remarked nonchalantly watching Parvoti cringe at the mention of the Dark Lord's name. "Come on Ron. The incense and the heat in here have combined to give me one heck of a headache. I think I'm going to throw up. Walk me up to the nurse, the room is spinning."

"Right with you, Harry," Ron gathered their books, handing Harry her backpack.

"Class is not yet over," Trelawney studied them warily.

"It is for us unless you want puke all over," Harry called as she scrambled down the ladder from the tower, Ron behind her.

"Harry, the infirmary is that way," Ron indicated the opposite direction from the one she was heading.

"I know that. We're not going there. We're going outside instead. I want some fresh air and it's a lovely fall day."

"You are aware that if we get caught we will be given detention?"

"Since when has that ever stopped us? Besides, I really do have a headache from all that damned incense."

"I know how you feel," Ron agreed, "it could be the end of June and she still keeps it stifling hot in there. I just hope Snape doesn't find us. He will make sure to find a particularly nasty detention for us you know."

"Yeah, but I'd rather do detention with him than stay another minute in Divination."

"Harry, I don't know about you, but I was getting spooked in there today. You don't suppose..."

"I don't know, Ron. I just hope it was a fluke," Harry replied as they walked out the front door and headed towards the lake. "I promised the Headmaster I would let the Protectors do the worrying for me," she said as they reached the bench and sat down. The October sunshine was warm but the air had the hint of colder weather ahead. "I asked Dumbledore if I could skip the Halloween feast this year."

"What did he say?"

"No. He told me not to brood on the past."

"Good, the feast wouldn't be the same without you. He's right you know. It will do you no good to remember what happened last year."

"I can't help it. I just wish my dad had listened to me. He knew you know. He knew he would die, but he made sure I didn't."

"Harry, your dad was a good man, and he really loved you. He knew you had to go on."

"You know I told him you said the same thing all those years ago when we had to play our way across McGonagall's chess board."

"It's the truth. You're special. That scar on your forehead tells the whole story. You really are great. It's in your soul."

"You know Ron, sometimes you can be very intense. I'm glad you're my friend."

"Thanks," he shifted uncomfortably. "I kissed Hermione today. It was in the library, after you left."

"Did she return the kiss?" Harry smiled with pleasure.

"Yeah, she did. I didn't mean to at first. It just happened."

"I'm glad. I always knew you were meant for each other."

"Funny how things happen, we always seemed to be at odds with one another. Now...well..." He shrugged, his face red.

"Love is a strange thing. You never know where it will strike."

"I don't know about love, but I do know that there are at least two students who aren't where they are supposed to be," a quiet familiar voice came from behind them.

Turning around, Harry smiled as she looked into the soft hazel eyes of Professor Lupin.

"See Ron, you got your wish. Professor Snape didn't catch us this time. It's our favorite Defense teacher."

"Flattery will not get you off the hook, Harry, nor will it help you either, Ron."

"It was worth a try," she grinned at Lupin who just rolled his eyes.

"Come on, both of you."

"Yeah, we know the drill. Up to the Headmaster's office," Ron sighed getting up. "What kind of detention do you think we'll get this time?"

"I have no idea. You would think they would be running out of things by this time," Harry laughed. "Between us and when Fred and George were here they will probably need to put out a manual."

"Now that is an interesting idea," Lupin couldn't entirely hide his amusement. "I will mention it to the other Professors. We could all collaborate on it," he remarked, herding them up the stairs and towards Dumbledore's tower. "Chocolate cupcakes," Lupin spoke the password and they all ascended the moving stairs up into the tower.

"I see you have found our two truants, Remus. What mischief were they up to now?"

"Actually they were sitting out by the lake, talking."

"What have you both to say for yourselves?" Dumbledore looked at them both sternly.

"I take exception at being called a truant, Headmaster. I went to class. Ron will affirm that I became ill."

"I am aware of your excuse. Professor Trelawney asked me to make sure you two both went up to the infirmary. You didn't."

"We went outside because I felt nauseous. My head was pounding from all that incense she uses. Besides, as usual death came up in her class, namely mine. You told me to worry about the present, not the future, but I swear if she tells me I'm dying or facing death one more time..."

"Calm down, Harry," Dumbledore noticed her voice was getting high with renewed anxiety. "I will speak with Professor Trelawney. You should have gone to the infirmary, or you could have come back up here to me."

"I don't want to keep bothering you. It's not fair. You have your work to do on top of everything else."

"Child, you are part of my work. I know you feel that you don't want to worry me, or any of your three protectors, for that matter, but you need to confide in us," Dumbledore looked at her seriously. "As for you Mr. Weasley, you need to come to us when you think she needs our help and support. Now, you will both do detention and I am taking fifty points from Gryffindor. I will inform you both later when your detentions will be, is that clear?"

"Yes, Sir," Ron responded.

Harry merely glared at Dumbledore. She had never been this mad at him before. 'You want me to confide in you, but then when I try to you take fifty points from Gryffindor,' she thought feeling betrayed. 'I would at least expect a little help from Professor Lupin, but he doesn't seem to be on my side either.'

"Harry, the Headmaster is talking to you," Remus soft voice came from over her shoulder, breaking into her thoughts, "I think you should answer him."

"Do you?" Harry asked as she looked around at him, and noticed the window was open for Fawkes. "In that case, good day, Headmaster," she said coldly, swiftly transforming and flying out the window before any of them could stop her. Catching an updraft, she flew too high for their wands to reach her, and headed straight for the Forbidden Forest. 'Hell, if I'm going to lose points, I may as well go for broke...."

"Mr. Weasley, go and get Professors Black and Snape, immediately. Then I want you to go to your room and get the goblet. Harry has no idea how much danger she may get into in the forest. You may be needed to read the flames." Dumbledore instructed with authority.

Ron did not have to be told twice; he had the goblet with him, and placed it on the desk, noting the approval in Dumbledore's eyes. He then hurried from the office to get the other two protectors. As soon as he was gone, Professor Lupin turned to Dumbledore.

"Albus, I have never seen her so angry. What could have touched her off like that?"

"I believe it was when I punished her. She expected a detention, but not losing house points."

"Maybe she just needs someone to talk to and listen. I don't know what happened in her Divination class, but I think that it really must have upset both her and Ron. I didn't catch what they were saying outside, other than he and Hermione have finally discovered each other."

"Very well, I will question him as soon as he returns. Then we will try to find Harry. She did say Trelawney was predicting her death again, and she was distraught earlier." Dumbledore was worried, and suddenly felt as though he had failed Harry. He should have questioned her further before meting out her punishment.

Ten minutes later Ron was back in Dumbledore's office and he explained exactly what had happened in their Divination class. Snape was very still, when Ron mentioned the part about the young blond child, but did not say a word. Dumbledore paced thoughtfully for a minute, and then turned to face Ron.

"Mr. Weasley, I want you to return to your classes and take the goblet with you. Should it flame you are to alert the three protectors at once. I will go and find Harry."

"Yes, Professor Dumbledore," Ron gathered both his and Harry's things intending to drop them off in her room, and left the office.

"Headmaster," Snape looked at his friend, "perhaps one of us should come with you?"

"No, I will need the three of you here in the event Harry falls into some kind of danger and I can't find her. I also think you need to send an owl to your sister."

Snape nodded, relieved that Dumbledore had the same worry as he did. He also knew Harry had thought of Phaedra, too, and was worried.

"Albus, as Harry's godfather and Protector I think I should accompany you. If she turns back to human form I will be able to track her."

"No, I think you should stay here. If I'm not back by evening the three of you are to come and try to find me."

"Albus, I..."

"Don't argue with me Professor Black," Dumbledore's eyes flashed. "I will go alone and that is all there is to it. Harry is very obviously angry and I don't want her to get any more out of control than she already is."

"I apologize Albus; it's just that I'm more than a little worried. I feel we may have pushed her into this."

"I just wish she would talk to us more," Remus added, "she used to come and see me and we would talk when she was upset, but since we've come back to Hogwarts...well...", " he shrugged looking out the window with a worried frown. Dumbledore had no reply, but put a gentle hand on Remus shoulder.

"We'll find her and sort this out. I think part of it is simply her desire to grow up combined with her independent nature and her worry about Voldemort," he stated grabbing his broom. He felt it would be better to try and follow her from the air. They descended the moving stairs and the three instructors went back to their duties with trepidation, as Dumbledore headed out the double doors of the castle, and mounted his broom flying towards the Forbidden Forest....

Harry flew into the forest without thinking about where she was going. She was so angry with Dumbledore! He just did not understand what Trelawney had done to her. 'Talk to her indeed! What does he think I am, stupid? He wants me to relax and not worry, but how can I with the woman constantly telling me I am going to die? Then there was that stuff about a little blond child. Damn if something happens to Phaedra because of me I will never be able to bear it,' she worried as she finally settled onto a branch to rest. Looking around she realized she had no idea where she was. This part of the forest was totally unfamiliar to her. 'Oh great, now I'm lost on top of everything else. No matter, I'll just fly above the trees and find out how to get back.'

Harry took off again, but was suddenly struck with a hard object squarely in her chest. She began to fall back to the earth, and spotted a troll out hunting! Fluttering frantically, she managed to land herself in a clump of bushes, but the troll was crashing through the underbrush to get to her. Wobbling through the deep brush she managed to elude him, but not for long. She could hear him breathing nearby and his fetid odor was making her feel sick. She had to get to a safe place and transform. It hurt to breathe, and she was sure her ribs had been cracked. She was getting light headed and could feel fluid building up in her chest. 'Oh God, for once that stupid witch, Trelawney was right, I'm going to die out here in the forest and no one will know what ever happened to me,' Harry thought in deep distress. 'Headmaster, I'm sorry, you were right but I was too stupid to look at things objectively,' she told herself as she heard the troll checking the underbrush for her broken body....

Dumbledore had been flying low above the treetops, when he spotted Harry. She had gone into the forest and landed on a tree. Swinging his broom around in a wide arc to avoid being seen, he spotted the hunting troll. Racing back, he was just in time to see the creature aim his

slingshot, bringing down a large scarlet bird...Harry! He saw her flutter and knew she was seriously injured, as she managed to take cover in the thick underbrush. Dumbledore carefully turned again, and perused the forest to make sure the troll was alone. Satisfied that he was not part of a large group, he landed his broom in a thicket behind the huge creature, intending to surprise him. He could hear the troll searching the underbrush looking for Harry. It was then that he heard the screech of a Phoenix in peril....

Ron had been sitting in Defense Against the Dark Arts with Professor Lupin, when he suddenly felt a prickling in his spine, and his vision blurred. Looking down at his open backpack, he saw the goblet spring to life.

"Professor Lupin," he yelled interrupting the lesson on the Lethifold, and the use of the Patronus spell to repel them, "Harry is in trouble, the goblet is burning."

"Hermione, go and get Professor Black, Seamus you go for Professor Snape. Class is dismissed," Lupin reacted instantly, rushing over to Ron.

The students immediately clambered from the classroom, Seamus and Hermione running in opposite directions; Hermione to the transfiguration classroom on the second floor, and Seamus down to the dungeons.

"Professor, what should I do?" Professor Lupin could hear the panic in Ron's voice.

"Calm down and take a deep breath. It will be all right, Ron. Now put the goblet on the desk in front of you, and try to relax. We need you to keep a cool head. Harry will be fine if we all work together," Lupin replied calmly in an effort to reassure Ron, when in fact his own stomach was in knots.

The door suddenly opened and Sirius burst in with Snape almost immediately on his heels.

"Remus has Ron looked for Harry yet?"

"No, Professor. It only started a minute ago."

"I stopped my class immediately and sent for you as soon as Ron alerted me."

"Mr. Weasley, I do not mean to pressure you, but time may be of the essence. Are you prepared for what you must do?" Snape looked down gravely.

"Professor Snape, Harry is my best friend. I won't let her down," Ron replied indignantly. He then tuned and began to stare into the fire. For a moment, he did not see anything, and then he gasped with wonder, "she is under some bushes, and her vision is blurred. Harry is still in her Phoenix form. She seems to be hiding."

"Is she hiding from Professor Dumbledore?" Lupin asked confused. Harry might be angry, but it would not be like her to be afraid of Dumbledore.

"No, she doesn't seem to be...Oh my gosh! Professors, she's being hunted by a troll! I think she may be hurt!" He exclaimed his wonder turning to fear.

"Can you see anything else?"

"The troll is raking the underbrush with his club where she's trying to hide. He appears to be angry..." the flame then went dark.

Harry ducked further back into the brush, as the troll continued to sweep the undergrowth with his club. Her breath was coming in rasps, and her head was reeling. She had no room to transform and her wand was in her backpack back at school. She was terrified. The troll was getting angrier that his dinner was eluding him, and gave one final dig with his club. As he did so, a sharp notch on the end of the club, caught Harry on the side, and she let out a screech, partially losing consciousness from the pain as she felt herself being pulled forward. She had been snared! In another moment, his club would come crashing down on her head, but mercifully she lost consciousness before the final blow...

"We have to go now!" Sirius shouted when the flame went out. He immediately transformed into his animagus form of a large black shaggy dog, while Remus grabbed his broom out of his office. Professor Snape raced through the secret passage down to the dungeon and grabbed his broom, meeting them both outside of the castle. Sirius immediately sniffed the air to try to catch a scent, and smelled blood coming from the direction of the forest. It was human. Letting out a long agonizing howl he took off at a run, the other two following on their brooms. A moment later, the flash from a wand alerted them to Dumbledore's position. Ron watched them go from the classroom window, before returning to the Gryffindor common room to find Hermione...

Dumbledore knew he had to act, and swiftly. Harry was caught and in another minute, his "Little Phoenix" would have her head crushed. Raising his wand, he yelled angrily, "Stop!" He knew the troll had no idea what he said, but he had accomplished in startling him. The troll swung around and a limp form fell from the end of the club. "*Stupefy! Stupefy!*" Dumbledore yelled giving the huge beast a double blast from his wand. The troll let out a loud bellow and toppled over unconscious. Dumbledore immediately uttered a binding spell to restrain him should he awaken before he could get Harry to safety. He then moved over to the immobile Phoenix, and was relieved to see she was still alive. As he examined her, she opened her eyes in terror.

"It's all right my Little Phoenix, I'm here," he told her softly. She then focused on him and began to trill weakly. Raising his wand into the air, he sent a signal for help. When he looked back at Harry she had changed back, but he could tell it had been extremely painful for her.

"Headmaster, I'm sorry, I don't know why you put up with me," Harry rasped, each breath coming with an effort.

"Hush Child, you are badly injured," he admonished gently, "and I put up with your antics because I love you. You have learned a valuable lesson today."

"In that case you have my permission to give me detention for the rest of the year," she winced as he checked her injuries.

"Don't temp me," he smiled, the twinkle in his blue eyes making her smile back weakly.

"It hurts to breathe and I don't have the strength to try and heal myself."



"I believe you have a punctured lung, and a number of other broken ribs. Your shoulder is also dislocated, and you are covered in cuts and bruises," he stroked her forehead gently. "I have sent for help."

"I'm cold."

"Here, Child," Dumbledore conjured a fire to warm them as he sat down on the ground. Covering her with his cloak, he rested her head on his lap to help her breathe. "Try to relax," he said as she winced in pain. "They will be here in a little while."

"Who?"

"The three young wizards that are worried sick about you, who else?" Dumbledore replied amused.

Even as he answered, a large black dog came crashing out of the brush and bounded over to them. Sirius immediately transformed, and Remus and Snape both glided down on their brooms, and ran over to where she was lying propped up on the Headmaster's lap.

"Harry," Sirius immediately began checking her over, and she winced, coughing blood, "thank Merlin you're safe."

"We need to get her back to Hogwarts. Her injuries are severe," Dumbledore said quietly.

"How did you find me?"

"The goblet sparked into flame in the middle of my lecture on the Lethifold, and how to use the Patronus. Ron saw what you did, and we came immediately. As we were heading to the forest we saw Albus wand signal," Remus replied quietly, relieved she was alive. "Albus did you stop the troll?"

"Yes, but not before Harry got hooked on the edge of his club."

"Miss Potter, you are lucky Albus cared enough to follow you, otherwise you would be roasting on a spit tonight."

"It would have saved you the trouble of trying to have me expelled," Harry tried hard to smile, but merely coughed up more blood. "I've ruined your cloak," she looked at Dumbledore in dismay. She had started to shiver, and they could tell she was going into shock.

"Sh...It's only a cloak. Don't fret over it."

"Headmaster should we release the troll?" Sirius asked and Harry cringed.

"You may do so, but do not revive him. He will waken on his own in a little while. Sirius you take my broom back. The three of you are to meet me back at Hogwarts. I will apparate with Harry. Sirius if you will levitate her she will be more comfortable when I get up."

"Of course," he levitated Harry easily, but could see she was in pain. "Take it easy, Miss Wings. You'll be in the infirmary in a few minutes, and I'll be there before you can blink." Sirius gently eased her into Dumbledore's arms.

"Promise?" Harry asked feeling vulnerable.

"Promise," he kissed her gently on the forehead, alarmed that she was so cold.

Cradling her carefully, Dumbledore raised his wand and disappeared. Professor McGonagall met him at the apparition point.

"Ah, Minerva, you always did have a good sense of timing," he smiled as he levitated Harry.

"Poppy has been alerted. I also sent for the healer. They're both waiting in the infirmary."

"How did you know I was injured, Professor?" Harry asked struggling to take in air.

"Don't try to talk, Harry," she replied crisply, but her features belied the severity of her voice. "Mr. Weasley and Miss Granger came and told me what he saw in the flames. They were frantic that you were severely injured or worse."

Harry smiled and then began to cough again. The gurgling sound in her chest was becoming louder, and she was growing more alarmed. She was dizzy and closed her eyes. The sensation of floating was restful, and she wondered idly if this was how it felt to an unborn child in its mother's womb. Harry was semiconscious when they reached the infirmary.

Nurse Pomfrey, and the local healer, Angus McBride, set to work immediately examining her injuries. Harry's left lung was punctured in two places, and six of her ribs had been broken. Her right shoulder was dislocated and the forearm had shattered when she had hit the ground. She also had a ruptured spleen, along with numerous cuts and bruises. The healer had Poppy give her a mild sedative to take the edge off her pain while he went to speak with Dumbledore following his examination.

"Albus, she is a very lucky lass. Her injuries are quite serious, but she will be fine in a few days with treatment. I have given her something to help her relax, but I can no' give her anything stronger just yet. She needs to be awake while I tend to her or it may mask the severity of the injuries while I work on them."

"I understand, Angus," Dumbledore responded as the other three wizards entered the infirmary.

"Albus how is she?" Sirius asked with a worried expression.

"She is in serious condition, but she will recover," Dumbledore quickly brought them all up to speed. Angus was glad to have them there. He was going to need the attributes they had linked to Harry to get her through the worst of the healing procedures

"Is she aware of what you need to do?" Remus inquired frowning.

"No' yet," McBride answered in his thick Scottish brogue.

"Then let us tell her."

"Aye, I think yeh will all make a world o' difference."

Sirius, Remus, and Snape all entered the same isolation room where Harry had stayed last year pending the staff meeting about her true gender and the Prophecy. Poppy was with her, tending to her minor cuts and bruises.

She looked up as they entered, "I will just leave all of you alone for a few minutes."

"Thank you, Nurse Pomfrey," Snape replied stiffly. He did not want Harry to see how concerned he actually was.

"Do I look as bad as all that?" Harry quipped, spitting up more blood into a basin on her lap. She was sitting upright to aid her breathing. The healer had partially dried out her lungs to make her more comfortable until he could heal the punctures.

"I think you look beautiful, Miss Wings," just a trifle pale. Sirius replied sitting beside her on the bed, taking her hand in his.

"Oh god, I'm turning into Severus. If my nose starts to grow like his just put me out of my misery," she tried to laugh, but it turned into a sob of pain. Remus and Snape both sat down beside her. Remus tenderly rubbed her head, while Snape took her other hand.

"Potter, you never cease to amaze me," Snape shook his head, "here you are, injured, in pain, and having broken a dozen or more rules again, yet you still find it in you to make jokes about my nose." Snape eyed her with the ghost of a smile.

"Professor Snape, hasn't anyone ever told you that laughter aids in healing? Besides, I'm in too much pain to block your emotions effectively. I can feel that all of you are worried and need to tell me something."

"Harry, honey," Sirius began nervously, "the healer says you're in bad shape, but you'll be better in a few days. He's going to work on you shortly some more, but you will need to be brave and strong. It is going to be very painful, and Remus will help you to get through it with us."

"What is wrong with me?"

"Lassie," Angus McBride spoke from the door, "Yeh have a couple o' broken ribs, and yer left lung is punctured in two places. I've already partially healed the rupture in yer spleen."

"What about my arm?"

"The shoulder is dislocated and the forearm is shattered. I am goin' to make it all right, but if I give yeh too much painkiller now, I might miss something. I also need to watch yer breathing as I heal yer lungs. I am goin' to cast a spell to remove the two ribs that have caused the punctures and the shattered forearm. Ye will need to drink some Skele-gro to regrow them. Afore I remove the forearm bone, I will put yer shoulder back into place. That will be the worst o' it. Lassie, I know ye be a healer yerself, but I don't want yeh to expend any energy. Yeh ere too weak"

"Dr. McBride, you make the Dark Lord's chief torturer look like a saint."

"Do ye think so? I've had to heal some o' McNair's work," Angus McBride smiled jovially. "He ken do some pretty nasty things."

"Have you ever had to drink Skele-gro? I have, and it isn't pleasant."

"Lass, I'll be honest with yeh, I never tasted it. I'm partial to the Scotch whiskey the Muggles make myself."

Harry grinned, she liked the big Scotsman and wondered idly if he were married, and decided to ask him. He would be perfect for Professor McGonagall. "Tell me, are you married, Dr. McBride?" .

"I think I be a might old for yeh, lass," he grinned blushing.

"Not me, but I happen to know a very nice Scotswoman who would be just right for you."

"If ye be thinking o' Miss Minerva McGonagall she's already turned me down fer a date twice."

"I'll work on her. She can be quite stubborn."

"Aye, so I've seen. Now I need to get to work on yeh, lass, afore yeh start coughing up too much blood again. I ken hear the fluid buildin' up in yer lungs."

Harry shifted uncomfortably. She couldn't entirely hide the fear in her eyes; she was too tired and sore.

"Honey, it will be all right, I promise I'll hold your hand the whole time. You have a strength of character that is rarely seen, but I can share some of mine."

"I too will stay right with you, not that I think you lack the courage..." Snape arched his brow sardonically in challenge, easing her fears.

"Princess, this won't be any more difficult than what I have to go through. I will help you," Remus looked down at her warmly, continuing to stroke her head. "You just lay back and close your eyes."

Harry lay back as she was told, and looked over at Dumbledore, who was standing at the bottom of her bed.

"I will be here too, Child. You just get well."

McBride started slowly, giving her time to relax, probing her abdomen to finish healing her spleen. He then went up to her broken ribs, and worked on the fractures. Harry shifted from time to time, but he was a skilled healer and a kind man, talking to her kindly to keep her calm.

"I'll need the three o' yeh to keep her as still as possible. Lass, I won't lie to yeh, it will be painful when I work on yer lungs. I'm goin' to remove the two ribs, and yeh will start to bleed. I need to do one at a time so yeh don't hemorrhage."

Harry nodded, closing her eyes. He quickly dissolved the first bone with the same spell that Professor Lockhart had used after he failed to heal her broken arm following the Quidditch match five years ago. She immediately felt the blood begin to flow into her lungs and tried to sit up; she was choking and frightened. Sirius and Snape kept tight hold on her, as her first instinct was to grab at McBride.

"Relax, Princess, you're in good hands," Remus soothed as Sirius squeezed her hand.

"You're doing fine, Harry," Snape's silky voice said calmly, "I have seen grown men fall apart with less discomfort than this."

"Ah, Lassie, Professor Snape is right. Yeh just hang on a wee bit longer," McBride said as she choked up more blood and he stopped to wipe her mouth. "Ye just rest a bit now, and then I'll do the last rib. Try not to fight when yeh feel like ye be chokin'. I know it's hard, but I need to heal the lung and make sure there be no bone fragments from the fracture."

"I feel like I'm drowning," she responded weakly.

"Aye and ye ere, on yer own blood. That's why yeh have to be still. I need to stop the bleeding and the more yeh move the harder it will be. Are yeh ready?"

Harry looked at Sirius, her lip trembling. She wanted him to hold her, but knew he couldn't just yet. He sensed her desire, and winked, giving her his best smile to let her know he understood.

McBride then spent the next ten minutes healing her lung after he disposed of the other offending rib. When he finished, Harry was nauseous, and began throwing up more blood. McBride assured them that it was simply the blood and mucus she had swallowed during the procedure. Running his hands over her chest, he sent her an additional burst of healing energy, satisfied that everything was in order.

"Lass, these three young bucks are right proud o' yeh. Now this be the worst, and when I'm done yeh ken have something to help yer sleep after the Skele-gro. Now I'm going to work on yer arm. I have to put the shoulder back in place and that will hurt, but it's going to be worse than usual because I need to push up from the elbow. I won't be able to do it if I take out the forearm bone first."

"Just hold on tight, Princess. We're all here, and it won't take long."

"I won't let go, honey," Sirius said shifting so that Angus stood by the bed, but he could still hold her hand while the healer manipulated her upper arm.

"Potter, I'm going to tell Phaedra how brave you've been. She will take special delight in telling her friend Althea," Snape told her, admiration in his dark eyes.

Harry didn't see that he was deliberately distracting her from Angus, who had been checking her arm carefully. Too late, she realized what they were up to, and McBride deftly gave her shoulder an upward lurch, snapping it back into place. Harry screamed in agony. The three of them had a tight hold on her, as the healer removed the lower arm bones, leaving her lower arm like rubber. Once this was accomplished, they eased their hold and Sirius and Snape caressed her carefully due to the missing ribs. Remus never moved and gently stroked her

forehead, crooning to her and praising her efforts. She just sobbed, tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Hush, now lassie. I know these three bucks would do almost anything fer yeh, and it's upsettin' fer them to see yer in pain. Now drink the Skele-gro so I ken give yeh somethin' to help yeh sleep." McBride gently pressed a glass to her lips, but Harry pulled back sobbing, shaking her head.

"Harry, come on, drink it so you can get some sleep. I don't want you to be any more uncomfortable than is necessary," Sirius coaxed.

"Potter, I happen to know my strongest sleeping potion is locked in the closet by Poppy's station. Unless Dr. McBride says otherwise I will get some for you after you take the Skele-gro." Snape looked down at her trying to appear stern, but she read the worry in his emotions.

"Princess, it's all over. You can sleep through the discomfort of the bones growing back and we'll all stay with you."

"Child, if it makes you feel any better I'm sure that troll has a splitting headache and his stomach is growling with hunger tonight," Dumbledore smiled warmly, his blue eyes twinkling. He moved around the side of the bed and took the glass of Skele-gro from McBride. "Now make an old man happy and drink this so Severus can give you the sleeping potion," he nodded to Snape to go and get the potion as he sat down beside Harry. "Then, if you're up to it tomorrow you and I will share some hot chocolate and a delightful Muggle candy I have found called Three Musketeers." He held the glass as she took a sip, and made a face at the foul taste.

"Does it really taste that bad, Honey?"

"You want...a...taste?" she asked Sirius trying to stop sobbing.

"Come on, Child, take a little more...that's my Little Phoenix," the Headmaster coaxed as she took a larger gulp, "that's my girl, take the rest and finish it, and then you can go to sleep." Dumbledore eased the glass back up to her mouth and Harry took the last of it with a grimace. "Severus do you have the sleeping potion?"

"Right here, Headmaster."

"Here you go, Child. Now get some sleep. I promise you we'll all keep watch if you want," Harry nodded as she drank the sleeping potion, and Dumbledore tucked her in carefully. Her eyes were heavy, but she managed a weak smile before the darkness overcame her.

Harry never saw McBride leave after having a cup of tea with Dumbledore and the others, who had camped out around her bed. They were all relieved that she would be all right, and McBride had said that she would be out of the infirmary by Friday for the Halloween feast. She would also be able to play Quidditch on Saturday as planned.

The Protectors also agreed she should have some sort of detention. Dumbledore finally decided she would not lose any points for her house, and that the ones he took earlier would be restored. Snape scowled in disapproval, feeling his friend was being too lenient, but Dumbledore just laughed it off. He made sure Severus had sent the owl to his sister, and this

had helped to make him acquiesce. Harry would only receive detention for not going to the infirmary and going outside instead. Dumbledore also made it a point that from now on he and the others would question her a little more thoroughly before passing judgment. They then all set up a schedule to come up and give her the required lessons so she could keep up and not feel bored during her recuperation. It would also give them all some time alone with her to further cement the bond of Protectorship.

## ***Phaedra's Dark Adventure***

Harry was happy as she worked her way down to the dungeons to see Professor Snape. She wanted to show him what she had gotten for Phaedra for Christmas, and hoped he would approve.

She had fully recovered from her ordeal with the troll two months earlier, and had indeed learned a valuable lesson, as Dumbledore had told her. She had acted without thinking, and would not be so stupid again. Her actions could have had serious consequences. She had also accepted her detention quite happily. Dumbledore had made her clean all of his books, and the bric-a-brac in his office. All metal objects had to be polished until they shone and there was to be no dust anywhere.

She had not been allowed to use magic, and could not leave until he checked everything with a white glove. She had hummed happily while she had worked, and he had almost felt guilty as he reviewed his ministry paperwork. What she had not known was that he had put a spell on the room so that no matter how hard she cleaned, nothing would change. He had wanted to see how long it took her to figure it out. Going over to his desk, after she had finished, he looked at her sternly.

"Harry, I don't even need to get up to see that you have not yet come anywhere near completing your assigned duty."

"Headmaster, what are you talking about? I have never seen this office so clean," she told him whirling about. The books were covered in dust, and his other articles were dull and dirty looking. Her eyes opened wide, and she had such a look of utter confusion that he had all he could do not to break down. 'I must be going crazy,' she muttered to herself. 'It looked fine a minute ago.'

"I suggest you get busy, Harry, or you will miss dinner tonight."

"Yes, Sir," she had replied puzzled. She then had cleaned the entire room again, and went to wake him from where he had lain on his sofa for a nap.

Of course he had actually been awake watching her the whole time, and when she gently shook him, he opened one eye and looked at her with what he hoped was a groggy expression.

"I take it you are finally finished, Child?" he asked as she helped him to sit up.

"Yes, and I'm starved. The menu says were having roast pork with gravy for dinner tonight with roasted potatoes, applesauce, carrots, and salad.

"Very well, let me see," he said conjuring a white glove onto his hand. "Harry, you have barely touched this dust, my astrolabe and the model of the solar system are as dull as ever, not to mention all the bird seed on the floor by Fawkes."

The look of consternation on her face was almost more than the old man could bear, but then she started laughing.



"Headmaster, you are brilliant! You have a spell on the room. Every time I get done and turn my back to tell you, the room goes back to being dirty."

"Ah, here you have spoiled my fun," he smiled, blue eyes twinkling over his half moon spectacles. "It only took you two times to figure it out. It took Sirius and your father all night," he laughed at the memory of the two boys, growing more and more frustrated and tired, but too proud to admit something was out of the ordinary. They had never had to clean anything by hand before.

"My dad and Sirius had to do this?"

"Oh, yes, but I won't tell you what they did to warrant it, only that it is not the notorious prank that almost cost Professor Snape his life."

"Oh, come on," she wheedled, "tell me."

"I can see you won't give up until I do," he pursed his lips.

"Very shrewd deduction."

"Well, they were in their fifth year at the time. Professor McGonagall caught them sneaking in at five in the morning. Of course we did not know they had become animagi, so they gave her the story that Sirius had seen a unicorn come out of the forest and wanted a closer look. Of course she did not believe them, since they were covered in dirt, and obviously had been up all night, but they stuck to their story. Now I know they had actually been running around in their animal forms with Professor Lupin."

"That's my lovable godfather," she replied fondly. "You wouldn't happen to know any good unicorn jokes?"

"None that I would tell a young lady," Dumbledore smiled fondly.

"Why Professor Dumbledore, you're blushing," Harry grinned giving the old man a hug.

"Shall we go on down to dinner," he inquired. "I'm starved, and the thought of that roast pork is making my mouth water."

"I refuse to go until you fix the room the way I cleaned it," Harry pretended to pout. Dumbledore flicked his wand and the room sparkled.

"You know, if this hadn't been a detention I would actually award you twenty five points for doing such a good job."

"You could set a new precedent," she had chuckled playfully as they left the office together for the Great Hall.

She was still smiling at the memory as she knocked on the door to Professor Snape's quarters. Most of the students had gone home for the Christmas Holiday yesterday, and the building was quiet. Ron had stayed behind again this year since there was always the possibility he would be needed to read the flames in the goblet, but Hermione, Ginny, and Harry's other friends had left.

Professor Snape was taking an unusually long time to answer his door, so Harry knocked again, this time more insistently. Snape's sister, Circe, and her daughter, Phaedra would be arriving on the return trip of the Hogwart's Express this afternoon. Professor Dumbledore had arranged it thinking Phaedra would enjoy riding on the train, and Circe could relax and be fresh for this evening's activity. It was Christmas Eve, and they would all be eating together in the Great Hall.

Harry was growing impatient, and knocked for a third time, calling out, "Professor Snape, are you in there? I need to speak with you." A moment later Snape pulled open the door.

"There is no need to shout, Potter," he said toweling his wet hair, "as you can see I was taking a shower."

"I'm sorry, Professor, it's just that you are usually up very early."

"I was up late last night doing a detention with a fourth year Ravenclaw, not that it is any of your business. Even I will occasionally sleep in."

"Well you might invite me in. I have something I want to talk to you about."

"Indeed, can't it wait? I am rather busy at the moment."

Harry was taken aback, not that Snape had ever been overly polite, but he had his good points, and she had actually grown quite fond of him.

"I...I guess so," she stammered.

"Good," he slammed the door shut in her face without as much as a good morning, and she was left standing alone in the chilly hallway. Dejected she started walking back upstairs towards Gryffindor Tower, and was about half way there, when she was stopped by a familiar voice from behind her.

"Harry, wait!"

Turning around, she almost bumped into Sirius.

"I called you three times, why the long face? You are usually quite happy on Christmas Eve."

"I'm sorry, I didn't hear you. My mind was elsewhere."

"I'll say it was. What's making you so down in the mouth today?"

"Professor Severus Snape."

"Snape? What's he done to make you look so unhappy?"

"Nothing, really. I went to show him what I got for Phaedra for Christmas and he practically threw me out of the dungeon." Harry then proceeded to tell Sirius exactly what happened, and when she finished, he laughed heartily.

"Harry, honey, I'm sorry. It's just that I have a feeling I know why he was so short with you, and it isn't because you interrupted his shower."

"Then what is it?"

"Ah, Miss Wings, that is a secret. I will, however, make sure he is made aware of how he hurt your feelings, and have him apologize."

"Fat chance of that," she pouted as they continued up the hall. "Want to fly with me today? I haven't had the chance to spread my wings in awhile."

"I'll see if the Headmaster will let you fly outside. I know that Snuffles could use a good run and I could transform too."

"I would like that. Could we go up to the cemetery for a little while? I should put some flowers on my parents' grave."

"Of course, but I don't want any more long faces, it's Christmas," he grinned like a schoolboy.

Professor Dumbledore agreed to Harry working on her transformation outside since there were only a few students left. He was happy to have Harry practice even though she was becoming extremely adept at her animagi. He also suggested that perhaps Fawkes would like to go with them, so Harry transformed and asked him. Dumbledore laughed at the two birds, and Fawkes looked at him and blinked, an expression of disbelief in his dark eyes.

"What did he say to you Harry?" The Headmaster queried when she turned back.

"He says you're daft. Why would he want to go out on such a cold day when he can sleep in front of a warm fire?"

"You my beautiful Phoenix," he stroked the bird, "are getting very spoiled. Very well, Harry, you and Sirius have a good time. Just don't either of you transform where you can be seen."

"I'll see to it Albus. Miss Wings needs to learn patience when it comes to changing shape," Sirius laughed tousling Harry's hair. "Come on honey, let's go and get Snuffles from Hagrid's and then we'll head over to a quiet place to transform. Will Ron be upset that you aren't spending the day with him?" he asked as they left the office.

"Actually Ron got special permission to visit his brothers in Hogsmeade today. Fred picked him up after breakfast, and he will be back by two. He is having lunch with them at the Three Broomsticks and then they are bringing him back here before they go home to the Burrow for the holiday."

"How come you didn't go with him? I'm sure Albus would have agreed. One of us could have gone with you."

"I can tell you in one word, George. He has been pressuring me lately to have more of a relationship than just being friends."

"He hasn't asked you to have sex with him has he?" Sirius asked nervously as they exited the building and started across the lawn towards Hagrid's cottage.

"No! He hasn't. I wouldn't anyway. I'm not ready. I'll worry about that when the right man comes along. I have told you that before."

"I know, but I wouldn't feel right if I didn't look out for you as your godfather as well as your protector."

"Sirius," Harry stopped and looked at him seriously, "I really need you to trust me on this one. If I were even considering a sexual relationship, I hope to god that I would have enough sense to practice safe sex. Besides, I have too much on my mind with Voldemort right now to even think about it."

"I do trust you. This is just one of those things that would have been easier to discuss if you had been a boy."

"Sure, I could see it all now, you would just pat me on the back with that wicked grin of yours and say go for it!" Harry teased him. She wasn't quite sure which of them was blushing more. He just pulled her to him and gave her an affectionate hug as they walked.

Reaching Hagrid's cottage, they knocked and he opened the door with a huge smile.

"Hello, Professor an' you too Harry, I haven't see yeh in a while except in class. I was beginnin' ta think yeh fergot 'bout ol' Hagrid."

"That will never happen," Harry beamed at the gentle giant as he ushered them into his cabin.

"Will yeh both stay an' have a cup o' tea with me then?"

"I'm afraid we can't today Hagrid. I am going to the cemetery. I want to put some flowers on my parents' grave."

"Good people your parents were. They would be right proud o' yeh. James was probably rollin' over in his grave when they arrested yer godfather for their murder. Course I never believed it me self," he remarked looking at Sirius. "I'm sure he's happy now the two o' yeh are together."

"Thank you Hagrid," Sirius nodded warmly. "Would you like to come with us to the cemetery? It's a nice brisk day for a walk." Sirius looked over at Harry, who nodded her understanding.

"I'm afraid I got some things ta get done afore we have dinner tonight. But say somethin' nice from me."

"We will," Harry hugged him affectionately. "Where is Snuffles? I thought she would like a good run with us."

"She be out back with Fang. The poor thing's not feelin' well."

"What's wrong? I though she was a bit under the weather the other night. She threw up in my room, but I just thought it was something she ate."

Hagrid shifted uncomfortably, "It's my fault I reckon. Please don't be mad at me, Harry. I didn't mean fer it ta happen."

"Hagrid what is wrong with my dog?" she asked growing agitated. "You know more about animals than anyone. If you can't fix it ..."

"Harry, calm down, she'll be right as rain in a few months. I 'spect I should o' told yeh sooner, but I was a feared yeh wouldno' understand."

"What's the matter with her? Hagrid, please tell me. Sirius, do you know?" she whirled on him frantically.

Sirius smiled at her fondly, "Honey, Hagrid hasn't said anything to me but judging by the way he's talking, I have a feeling Snuffles may be pregnant."

"Snuffles, pregnant, but where...Fang! Hagrid, I swear if I get my hands on that overgrown lothario of a Boar Hound..."

"Harry, I promise yeh, I'll find homes fer all the pups."

"You'll do one better. I want you to have Fang neutered."

"But Harry, they were just doin' what come natural to em."

"That's why she will also be spayed," Harry looked at Hagrid, pretending to be mad. In truth, she was as excited as he was.

"Yer sure yeh want 'im neutered? It seems a damn shame is all."

"Hagrid, have you any idea how many animals are put to death each year for want of a home? It is all because people allow them to breed indiscriminately. I'm going to have Snuffles spayed too. We'll bring them at the same time."

"I reckon yer right."

"Now when can we expect the puppies?" she grinned brightly.

Hagrid grinned back, "near as I ken figure it will be sometime near the end of February. She ken have 'em here. I promise I'll take right good care of em all."

"You better, or I really will be mad."

"Now that that is settled, I think we should be on our way," Sirius laughed.

"Sirius, you wouldn't want a dog would you?" Harry chuckled as they bid Hagrid good-bye and walked in the direction of the road, which led to the cemetery.

"Sorry Miss Wings. I have to take care of a wild Potter bird."

"I am no wilder than you and my dad were."

"You don't say?"

"I do say, and just for that I'll bet you can't catch me," Harry taunted as she transformed and started flying low in the direction of the cemetery. Sirius immediately followed suit, and kept pace with her from the ground, barking playfully. She landed outside the cemetery gates, and laughed happily. "I think we should walk from here."

"I agree, it would be disrespectful if we were not acting with some decorum here."

Sirius put his arm around her shoulders and they walked slowly through the cemetery. Harry wondered if Artemis were watching, but she saw no sign of movement when they reached the gravesite. They both stood with their arms around each other's waists, taking comfort from one another. Sirius pulled a bouquet of Lilies from his wand, and Harry conjured a small statue of a deer, which she placed on the headstone.

"Sirius, do you believe in an afterlife?"

"I think there must be something, after all, we live in a haunted castle."

"Yeah, I just hope they're happy. I still remember when those shadows came out of Voldemort's wand. You don't suppose they're trapped somewhere trying to get out do you?"

"No, I don't. Your dad was a smart man, and he would find a way to escape. If he's not at rest it's because he is watching out for you."

"Then I hope they're at peace. I have plenty of protection," Harry sighed sadly. "Mum, Dad, please be happy. Sirius is here with me today, and he really misses you. Hagrid would have come too, but he still had some work to do. He said to say hello." Nothing stirred, and Harry clung to Sirius, each lost in thought.

A short time later, she saw a figure coming up the path towards them, and recognized it as Professor Snape. He moved towards them swiftly, his robes flowing behind him. He had a subtle fluid grace, which was not lost on her.

"Good morning, Black," he greeted Sirius curtly. "Miss Potter I wish to apologize for my rude behavior earlier. I should not have sent you away. If you had needed my help it could have been disastrous."

"I did need your help, but you obviously had no interest in helping me."

It was one of the few times that she had ever seen a flash of consternation pass across his face. She sensed he was worried he had failed in protecting her.

"Miss Potter, I will not be so abrupt or lacking in my duties as your protector again."

"If it's any consolation to you Professor it was not a matter dealing with protecting me that I wished to speak with you about. I wanted to show you what I had gotten Phaedra for Christmas."

"You had best be more careful Severus. She was really down when you sent her away. She adores Phaedra. We all do. It's hard to believe the two of you are related," Sirius grinned egging him on.

"I fail to see why you would think so. Phaedra has many of the Snape family attributes."

"Well, thank Merlin she doesn't look like her uncle."

"Both of you stop it right now! I will not have your petty jealousies ruining the Christmas celebrations. Besides, I do not find Severus all that bad looking." Professor Snape arched his brow at her use of his first name. She usually only used it when given permission or when she needed his support as a Protector. "I think he would be kind of cute if he grew a beard and mustache. His hair wouldn't be so oily either if he didn't condition it every time he washed it. A blow dryer would help too. Not everyone can be as handsome as you Sirius Black," Harry said stomping her foot. "I am quite fond of the two of you, so knock it off or you will have to answer to me. I will personally see that the two of you do some sort of detention."

"Honey, in case you have forgotten, Severus and I are the teachers here. You are the student. You don't have the authority to give us detention."

"No, but the Headmaster and I have a plan should you two go back to fighting again. I will ask him to implement it, so there!" she tossed her head indignantly.

"Potter you still amaze me. You are definitely your parents' daughter. Your mother would toss her head just like that when she was angry."

"Maybe she should change her name to Lily," Sirius smiled tweaking her nose.

"Oh...the two of you make me so mad sometimes..."

"Tell me Black, is she doing any better in class since that little quiz failing episode?" Snape asked purposely ignoring her.

"Oh, yes, quite well in fact. I was especially pleased with her last Potions test. She's right; you do make them very tricky."

"She would have gotten a perfect grade if she had read the last question a little better. She knows to put the bezoar before the antivenom and the boiled scorpion's tail."

"Stop talking about me as if I wasn't here," Harry was getting angry and her cheeks were bright red. "You're both trying to make me mad on purpose."

"It seems we have succeeded," Snape smiled sardonically. "You haven't even lost your temper in class the past few months. I was growing concerned that something was wrong."

"I was just doing what you all keep telling me to do. I was letting you do the worrying for me. I've seen the stories in the Daily Prophet. I know what has been going on in the outside world. Voldemort is growing stronger. I know it. I can feel it. My scar has been hurting on and off for the past week."

"Harry, why didn't you tell us?" Sirius asked sharply.

"It hasn't been all that bad, besides, I thought I just did."

"Potter, you should have come to one of us immediately."

"The Headmaster knows. I told him this morning after breakfast."

"What did he say?" Sirius demanded.

"Nothing, just to tell him immediately if it starts again," Harry turned away pretending to study her parents' headstone. "He was annoyed at me, but didn't get mad. I think he understands I don't want to feel like a burden."

"You are not a burden, Harry Potter. You are a very brave and headstrong young woman," Professor Snape spun her around to face them. "What you keep failing to understand is that Voldemort's destruction will be a joint effort. The Prophecy says you will be his downfall, but do you honestly believe you will do it alone?"

"That's what scares me. I don't want anyone else to die; not you, or Sirius, or Remus, and especially not Dumbledore. I don't think I could bear it if something were to happen to him."

"Honey, nothing will happen to him. He has more power in his little finger than Tom Riddle will ever have," Sirius soothed her quietly. "Severus, you tell her. She respects your opinion." Sirius hated having to ask this of him, but he had to get through to Harry.

"Your godfather is right. What you have seen is just a sample of what he can do. Albus just needs the right time and place to bring him down. You are the key to how it will all transpire. He knows this. He is merely making sure you are ready to do what needs to be done."

"Now that sounds ominous," she frowned.

"It was meant to. Voldemort will make his move, and some of us will die. It is your fear that is holding you back. You have to focus on the moment and not worry about anything else. It is why you can't best Remus or me at dueling. You don't want us to be hurt, so you keep letting us hurt you."

"But..."

"No buts honey. Severus has told you this because you need to face it. I didn't want it to be today and I'm sorry if we ruined your Christmas, but it needed to be said."

"One or all of us may die. You need to face your fear of death. We are all expendable if it means we can put a stop to this terror."

"You don't understand. I'm not afraid of my own death. I'm afraid of being left all alone. Something deep inside of me remembers when it happened before," she indicated, looking at the grave. "I don't want it to happen again. You see a part of me died with them. I lost a piece of my soul that night. So did Sirius and Remus. Just as you lost yours when he killed your family; this time it will be worse," Harry whispered, her voice unsteady. "I don't think I can do it..." Four arms embraced her as a lone tear escaped down her cheek.

"Harry Potter, you are a strong and powerful witch. You never let yourself be intimidated by me, which is something few students are capable of doing. When the time comes, you will prevail," Snape looked at her down his nose. In that moment, Harry knew he was her soul mate. What she failed to realize was that Sirius knew it too...Professor Snape released her. "The Headmaster sent me to find the two of you. It is almost lunchtime and he wanted to



know if Harry wished to accompany me to Hogsmeade to meet Circe and Phaedra at the station. The train will arrive by three o'clock."

"I'd like that. Do you mind if Sirius comes along too?" she asked linking arms with them and moving off down the path to return to Hogwarts.

"If he wishes to; do you want Professor Lupin to come also?"

"He is still resting from the full moon last night," Sirius replied. "I'm afraid I will have to decline too, Harry. I still have some gifts to wrap."

"Anything I can help with?"

"No, since they're for you," he grinned boyishly.

"I hope there will be no Furry Fingered Foulies this year."

"No, I promise. Of course I can't guarantee there won't be any Exploding Puffskeins."

"Exploding Puffskeins, that's horrible! Wait till I get my hands on Fred and George Weasley."

"They aren't real Puffskeins," Snape informed her rolling his eyes, "just a fuzzy copy. When they explode, everything turns pink. The first years set some off in class," Snape smiled evilly.

"Sirius, he has his evil smile," Harry laughed.

"I know, he gave them all a two hundred word report to write over the Christmas recess on the uses of salamander bile."

"Oh, you're so mean," Harry teased. "Couldn't you have found it in your heart not to give them such an awful assignment?"

"I am being nice. I didn't make it five hundred words or ask what to do with the rest of the salamander," Snape arched his brow, and despite feelings of jealousy, he and Sirius looked at each other and laughed.

The three of them entered Hogwarts arm in arm and were met in the entrance by Dumbledore.

"Ah...I have been waiting for you to get back. Did you and Sirius have a good run?"

"Of course, then we all walked back together. I would have preferred coming the other way," she grinned knowing he understood she meant transforming, "but it would have been rude to Professor Snape."

"You could have done so, I would have just apparated," Snape sneered.

"Stop rubbing it in or I may be tempted to break my promise to the Headmaster, and then he will be very angry at both of us."

"Why on earth would Dumbledore be angry with me?"

"For instigating me into doing something I shouldn't," Harry replied contritely.

"She is quite correct, Severus. When I feel she is ready I will teach her to apparate myself."

"Sirius, how come you don't like to apparate?" Harry asked curiously. She sensed something was bothering him.

"I just preferred my motorcycle. I always was a bit of a rebel," He looked down at her warmly.

"In that case my handsome rebel, I shall sit with you at lunch since I have that luxury, and tame your wild streak."

"Do you really believe you could tame a confirmed bachelor like me?"

"Why Sirius," she curled her lip in a mock pout, "I stole your heart the day I was born."

"Did you now?" he asked sarcastically, his brown eyes unfathomable.

"Uh huh," Harry smiled touching her hand to his cheek just before they entered the Great Hall. "Sirius, what's the matter? I can sense something is bothering you."

"It's nothing, Miss Wings."

"Please tell me. I care too much about you to see you feeling so unhappy. I don't usually pry, but it's Christmas, and I want us to be happy."

"This is not the place to discuss it," Sirius replied firmly.

"Then promise me you'll tell me after lunch," her green eyes bored into him, and she couldn't hide her anxiety.

"I don't want to mess up your holiday more than I already have while we were at the cemetery."

"If you don't tell me you will do just that."

"All right, but you have to promise me you will try to understand and not get upset by what I have to say. I had wanted to wait until after the situation with Voldemort was resolved and you were a bit older, but I will tell you."

"Sirius unless you are planning on giving up your guardianship of me, there is very little that would upset me."

"Well, Miss Wings, I can assure you that I am not planning on doing that."

"Good, because you would have broken my heart," Harry looked at him fondly. 'I love you Sirius Black. You are my heart, yet you are not my soul, or my conscience,' she considered this thought to herself as she watched him place some pot roast on her plate.

They teased one another during the meal and tried to guess what they were getting for Christmas. Sirius guessed that she had gotten him something special from the joke shop and she just laughed. She knew he would love his present, but he would also be furious that she had spent such an exorbitant amount of money on him. Still, since she had entered into the Protectorship, they had told her she could use her money any way she wanted. They would be responsible for her tuition and anything else she needed. Sirius was her actual guardian, but they had all agreed to contribute to her needs. Dumbledore himself, as her Trust Keeper and Headmaster of Hogwarts School had paid her tuition. So she had searched her heart to find each of them the perfect gift to show how much she cared and appreciated them.

She smiled to herself as she reviewed her purchases in her mind. She had gotten Remus a new Wizard's Chess Set made out of ivory, and jade. Each piece was inlaid with semiprecious stones, and was stored in a velvet lined Dragon leather case. Snape got an invisibility cloak along with an enclosed note that said he couldn't use it to catch any student out of bed until next September. Dumbledore had been particularly difficult, until she thought about what he loved the most, candy and music. So she had ordered him a giant candy kiss and attached tickets for the summer season of the Wizard's Philharmonic Orchestra in London. Finally, there was Sirius. She bought him the one thing she knew he would cherish, a new Harley motorcycle. Dumbledore knew of course, and had put the enchantments on it for her after receiving permission from the Ministry of Magic. She was sitting with a smile on her face when Sirius gently poked her from across the table.

"Miss Wings, wake up! You are a million miles away."

"What? I'm sorry, I was thinking about what you will look like when you open your present tomorrow."

"Oh, really, so what did you get me?"

"None of your business, but I guarantee you will love it."

"Can I exchange it if I don't?"

"If you don't you will be facing one very angry little witch, and since I see you have finished your lunch, lets go for a little walk. You promised to tell me what is bothering you."

Sirius didn't answer, merely stood up and followed her out of the great Hall. "Where shall we go?"

"It's cold outside, so how about we go up to the Library? No one is there right now and we can talk in private," Harry suggested thoughtfully.

"Lead on," he smiled pointing her in the direction of the library.

Harry had been right and the only person present was Madam Pince, the librarian, who merely nodded as they entered. Taking a seat in the back of the library Harry sat down and looked at Sirius, taking his hand.

"Now tell me what is wrong," she looked at him anxiously. "I don't like you to worry."

"I saw something today, and it took me by surprise."

"I think I know what you're going to say. Did this something happen to be in the cemetery?"

"Yes, it occurred there. Harry, I don't want to see you hurt. I would do almost anything for you, you know that don't you?"

"I would do the same for you."

"Honey, please don't. He's your soul mate, not me; would that I was. I wasn't going to say anything until next summer. I wanted to give you time to finish growing up, we all did."

"Sirius, I am going to tell you something only Dumbledore knows. You are my heart and I love you. Severus is my soul, and I love him too. Remus is my compassion and I love him. Dumbledore is my conscience and mentor and teacher to all of us, and we all love him. One day I will have to decide if I am in love with one of my three protectors more than the others and if he loves me in the same way. It's why I agreed to the Protectorship. It is the only way I can have all three of you in my life. I know you are all in love with me," Harry sat smiling at Sirius, who was dumbfounded.

"Harry...how...when..."

"I have known for a while. Like you, I am bound because of my age to remain quiet, but I will tell you now, not to worry. No matter what happens I will always love you, and we will always be together in some manner. If not by marriage, then by the Protectorship that has joined us, and you will always be my godfather. I'm not ready to make any kind of decision. Who knows, maybe I'll end up with George Weasley," she grinned mischievously.

"You know what, little girl, I'm a fool. I should have known you knew all along. You are an empath. You just look out for that Weasley boy, he's wild and reckless."

"Gee, I wonder who he reminds me of...Hmm..." She threw back her head and laughed, her green eyes sparkling. 'Sirius is in love with me!' She wanted to shout it to the world, but knew she could not. She was also confused, because Severus Snape was her soul mate. 'Oh well, whatever fate has in store for me, it will definitely be interesting.'

"You, Miss Wings, are a very special witch. Come on, it's time for you to go with Severus to pick up Circe and Phaedra."

"I know, but now I wish we could just sit here," she said drinking in his presence. 'I wish he would kiss me. It would make this day so special...'

Sirius eyes were locked with Harry's, and he knew Madam Pince was busy straightening out her card catalogue. Very slowly, he reached over to Harry, and put his arms around her...

Harry watched as the Hogwarts Express pulled into Hogsmeade station. It was empty except for Circe, Phaedra, and a few of the people of Hogsmeade who preferred an alternate means of transportation. They were permitted to use the train for return trips during the Holidays and summers. Harry could see Phaedra jumping up and down in the window and waving madly when she spotted her. She smiled happily realizing how much she had actually missed the little girl. As Phaedra descended to the platform, she let go of her mother's hand, and ran towards Harry, who greeted her just as excitedly.

"Miss Harry," she bubbled happily, "I missed you."

"Not half as much as I missed you," Harry hugged her tightly. "Look how tall you've gotten. You must have grown at least an inch!"

"How is Snuffles? Is she with you?"

"No, she is staying with Hagrid. I also have a secret. I only found out today."

"What is it?" Phaedra asked her eyes wide with anticipation.

"Snuffles is going to have puppies."

"Really, mummy, Uncle Severus, did you hear? Snuffles is going to have puppies!" Phaedra stated excitedly as her mother came up with Professor Snape.

"I was unaware that the dog was pregnant," Snape looked at Harry arching his brow. "When did this occur?"

"I have no idea, but I have told Hagrid Fang will be neutered at the same time as I have Snuffles spayed."

"Hello, Harry," Circe smiled, "how is my brother treating you in class?"

"The usual, I haven't had to do any detentions though, but I've lost a few points for Gryffindor," Harry grinned, giving Circe a welcoming hug.

"Mummy can we have one of Snuffles puppies? Pleeasssee...."

"I will ask Uncle Tiberius. It may be difficult to train a puppy when we are all working."

"Uncle Severus, please talk with Uncle Tiberius. I know he likes dogs. He told me."

"I will talk with him, Phaedra," Snape assured her as they walked down the platform and into the station. Harry noticed that he seemed extremely tense and alert. Circe noticed it too.

"Mummy I have to go to the bathroom."

"I'll take her, Circe," Harry said glancing over at Professor Snape to indicate she knew he was worried about something.

"Harry, stay with her in the stall, will you? You know how these public washrooms are. I would wait, but little girls do not always have enough control."

"Hey, when nature calls..." she chuckled. In her mind, she sent Circe a message, 'I think something is wrong. I will try to get her out of the way'

Circe's telepathy picked up on it immediately, and she nodded. She then bent over and whispered in Harry's ear. "If something starts you and Phaedra run for safety and let the adults handle it."

"Miss Harry, I really have to go, now!" Phaedra accentuated the last word, and Harry took her by the hand and went into the ladies room.

There was another woman in the bathroom with them, putting on her makeup. She looked up as Harry entered and smiled. Harry was reminded of a barracuda. She would have left the room immediately, except that Phaedra really had to go.

Harry took her into the stall, and helped her to undo her cloak. Turning politely, Harry peeked out the crack of the door and noticed that the witch was still there. She was watching them. Harry did not know who she was, but she didn't like the feelings the woman imbued. As soon as Phaedra was finished, she helped her to wash her hands, and headed to the door.

"Excuse me, aren't you Harry Potter?" the woman asked. She was tall and thin, with dirty blond hair, and a hooked nose. Harry ignored her and continued towards the door. "I asked you a question, dearie."

"Miss Harry, do you know that lady?" Phaedra whispered.

"Shush, let's get back to your mum and uncle," Harry answered, but the woman was blocking the door.

"Hello, little girl, didn't you get off the train and call Professor Snape your uncle?"

"Madam, I suggest you move out of my way," Harry told the woman angrily. 'Phaedra call your mother in you mind. Scream and tell her to hurry,' Harry prayed that Phaedra picked up the mental message.

"I'm afraid I can't do that dear, there is a price on your head. The Dark Lord will pay handsomely for you."

"I don't think so," Harry pulled out her wand.

'Mummy, Uncle Severus, help us,' Phaedra screamed in her mind, and there was immediately a pushing at the door.

Harry aimed her wand at the woman, but suddenly Phaedra screamed as someone grabbed her from behind, and Harry spun to help her. As she turned, she felt a shove on her back and a hood was thrown over her head. Harry toppled forward and her wand clattered to the floor, just as she heard Professor Snape's voice, and felt the heat of wand flashes, but it was too late. She felt herself being transported with some kind of portkey...

"Severus, they've been taken," Circe cried in panic, "my little girl...and...Harry...You have to get them back."

"Circe, don't panic. We will get them." he told her picking up Harry's wand. "Come on we will signal for Albus," he moved swiftly out the door and through the lobby. Once outside he shot a flash of light into the air. Less than two minutes later, Dumbledore, Sirius, and an exhausted looking Remus joined him.

"Severus, what has happened?" The Headmaster asked looking around.

"Where are Harry and Phaedra?" Sirius demanded.

"Albus, they've been kidnapped," Circe was shaking with worry, and Dumbledore gently took her into his arms. "They were attacked in the ladies room while we were detained in the waiting area by a wizard pretending to be drunk."

"There were at least three. Two in the bathroom and one out here," Snape told him briskly. "They do not appear to be professionals. I heard the one-woman say Voldemort had put a price on Harry's head. I believe they may be going to try and collect."

"We must get back to Hogwarts immediately. I will notify Moody and get the Aurors searching. I do not believe they have gone far. They will probably try to contact Voldemort by owl. Remus, I believe Ron Weasley is still visiting his brothers. He will be either in the magic shop or at the Three Broomsticks. Get him and bring him back to school. The goblet may activate at any time."

"Let's hope so, it may give us a clue as to where they are."

"Albus, they knew Phaedra is Severus niece. Lord Voldemort...he'll..." Circe could not finish the sentence. She knew what would happen to Phaedra. She would be used as bait to get her brother and then killed...or worse... Severus took her in his arms and they all apparated back to the school...

Harry felt herself being tied up and then was flung onto a cold hard surface. She was frightened and angry that she had lost her wand. Her head was still covered and she could no longer hear Phaedra. Scanning with her empathic sense, she could feel the little girl nearby. She was afraid and confused. Harry sent her a mental message, hoping the child could hear her with her telepathic ability. 'Phaedra, Miss Harry is here too. Try not to be afraid. I will try to get us out of here.'

"I can't see Miss Harry," Phaedra answered, her voice muffled.

'They have us blindfolded. There is a hood over my head.' she replied mentally.

"Me too."

'Phaedra try not to talk. They may hear you. I will keep talking to you in your head, like I have been doing. You try to do what I tell you. They have us tied up. Are you able to follow my thoughts and try to roll over to me?'

Phaedra did not answer, but Harry could hear her scuffling and a moment later, she felt Phaedra's fear as she brushed up against her.

'It's okay baby. It's just me. Our hands are tied behind us. I want you to lean up against me. I will try to feel the ropes.' she told her telepathically.

'Yes, Miss Harry.' Phaedra responded timidly.

Using her fingers Harry shifted her weight and began to feel behind her. It took a few tries, but she finally found the ropes. Running her fingers over them, she was able to picture them in her mind.

"Miss Harry, why are you thinking about the ropes?"

'Sh...Miss Harry is going to try and untie them with her mind, like the time I moved the juice, remember?' Harry reminded her mentally. 'I need you to be quiet and patient. I have to concentrate extra hard because I can't actually see the ropes.' Harry began the tedious task of using her telekinesis. 'Professor Dumbledore, I promise if I do this I will never complain again about practicing my telekinetic skills,' Phaedra giggled, and Harry knew she had heard her thought.

She had no idea how long she worked, but slowly she felt the ropes around Phaedra's wrists begin to loosen. Harry concentrated harder.

"Miss Harry," Phaedra whispered excitedly, "it's working."

'I know, just hang on baby. I will have you free in a minute,' Harry thought as she increased her concentration. She could feel the ropes coming loose and her head hurt, but she kept on going. Finally, Phaedra was able to wriggle free.

Pulling the hood off her head, she hugged Harry. Harry could feel her relief, but the little girl was still very frightened. "Miss Harry, you did it!"

"Phaedra, take my hood off, so I can see where we are," Harry whispered as Phaedra hugged her tighter. A minute later Harry felt the air on her face and took a deep breath. The air was damp and cool and as her eyes adjusted to the light, Harry observed they were in some kind of basement storage room. "Can you untie my hands?"

"I'll try Miss Harry," Phaedra went behind her and started to try to undo the knots, but after a few minutes, she started to cry. "I can't get them Miss Harry. They are tied too tight."

"Don't cry honey. I want you to look around for something sharp to cut them with. See if there are any tools or glass or something."

"Okay," she sniffed. Getting up she moved around the room and Harry watched as she stopped in a far corner. "Miss Harry, there is a hedge clipper up there but I can't reach it." She pointed up on the wall.

"Move back and I will try to get them down," Harry replied. She knew that she should not be talking aloud, but her head hurt from so much mental work, and she still had to do more. Focusing her attention to where Phaedra was pointing she could barely make out the clippers on the wall. Closing her eyes for a minute she concentrated hard and the clippers flew off the wall landing half way across the room.

"Miss Harry, you did it," Phaedra clapped running over to pick them up. "I will try to cut you free." She came and sat behind Harry, and struggled to use the clippers. The handles were too long for her little hands but she was able to get the blades beneath the ropes. "I'm too little, they won't cut for me," she said growing anxious.

"Phaedra, you are being very brave, and I need your help. I want you to lean on the handle and push it down with your weight. Don't worry about hurting me; I can heal myself if you cut my hands."



"But Miss Harry, what if it doesn't work?"

"Then we will try again, and if it still doesn't work, we will find something else."

"Okay, I will try," Phaedra stood up and put her weight on the handle of the clippers. They slipped, and fell sideways, still on the ropes as Phaedra tumbled to the floor skinning her knees. She started to cry.

"Sh...Baby don't cry. It's all right."

"I hurt my knees."

"Miss Harry will heal you as soon as I'm free. Phaedra, you are being very brave and your mum and uncles will be very proud of you. Now dry your eyes, and tell me how the ropes look."

Phaedra sniffed and wiped her eyes. "Miss Harry, they cut part way. Do you want me to try again?"

"Are you feeling brave and strong?"

"I can do it!" She took the clippers and pulling them upright used her weight again. Harry felt the ropes snap as the clippers and Phaedra tumbled to the floor.

Pulling free, she turned around and helped Phaedra back up, hugging her tightly.

"You did it honey. I am very proud of you. Wait till your uncles hear," she smiled giving the child a boost in confidence. Her senses told her she was still scared, but happy to be free. She then quickly ran her hands over the little girl's knees healing the scrapes.

"Can we go home now?" she asked innocently.

"I will see if the door is unlocked, but I don't think it is and I have no wand. I dropped it when they grabbed us in the bathroom." Phaedra followed her to the door, but it was shut tight.

"Miss Harry..."

"Hmm...?"

"I just wet my pants," Phaedra started to cry with embarrassment.

"Oh, honey, don't cry. It was an accident. We'll just take off your wet panties so you won't be so uncomfortable." Harry helped her calmly, and gave her a hug. She then disposed of the wet undergarment.

"Mummy will be mad at me."

"No, mummy will be happy you're safe. She'll know you didn't wet yourself on purpose. Now let's look around and see where we are. Maybe we can find another way out."

"I saw another door over where the clippers were."

"Show me," she took Phaedra by the hand, and sure enough, there was the outline of a door on the wall. Trying the handle she found it was unlocked. Going in, Harry found another storeroom, and realized where they were. They were in Honeydukes! Harry could have gotten them back to Hogwarts through the hidden passage she knew was below them, except Dumbledore had sealed all exits except the main one for her safety. "Phaedra, I can get us out of here. I know where we are, but we have to be careful."

"Miss Harry, how are we going to get back to Hogwarts?"

Harry grinned at her. "Once we get outside we will fly..."

As soon as Dumbledore reached Hogwarts, he sent urgent messages to Moody, and the Ministry. Arthur Weasley was very concerned, and told Ron to keep the goblet with him at all times. It had not flared into life, which Dumbledore took as a good sign. He also notified Tiberius Snape, who was going to apparate to Hogwarts immediately.

"Albus, what if the goblet is not burning because Harry is..." Circe sobbed unable to finish the sentence.

"Circe, Miss Potter is very much alive. She is a smart and talented witch and will do everything in her power to protect our Phaedra and get them both to safety."

"But what about Voldemort. Severus you know what he will do to Phaedra..." Circe completely broke down, and Severus took her into his arms.

"Sh...Circe...that won't happen to Phaedra. Harry won't let it. She will protect her with her own life," he held tightly to his sister, the memory of finding his infant son without his soul burnt into his mind.

"Circe," Remus put his hand on her shoulder. "Why don't you sit down and try to remember what the attackers looked like. It may help us."

"The woman was tall and thin with dirty blond hair. I didn't see the other man. The one who pretended to be drunk was overweight and had thin brown hair. I think he was wearing a set of dirty gray robes with a brown cloak. Did you get a better look at him Severus? You were closer."

"He had blue eyes, and a full beard, but I think it was false. He also smelled of acetone. He may have been working with potions, judging by the stains on his hands."

"I will notify the Aurors immediately," Dumbledore said writing the information and attaching it to his owl. "This will go directly to the Aurors Moody stationed in Hogsmeade."

"Where were they today when my little girl was being kidnapped?" Circe asked angrily, beginning to cry again. "I thought he put them here to help protect Harry and Severus."

"Apparently they were given a false tip that there was a group of Dementors on the other side of town and they went to investigate."

"Obviously a ruse to get to either Harry or Phaedra. Did anyone know she was going into Hogsmeade today?" Sirius asked.

"No one. I only decided to see if she wished to go with Severus this morning. I think that they were trying to get Phaedra and ended up with Harry too," Dumbledore considered thoughtfully. "Circe who knew you were coming to Hogwarts for the holiday?"

"Only the Ministry and Uncle Tiberius. I told no one else."

"What about Phaedra. Could she have told someone without you knowing?" Sirius inquired gently.

"I suppose so, but she would only have told her friends in school... You don't think they said something to someone without realizing...?" The thought triggered her to start crying again.

"Circe, you are a strong woman. I know you are worried about Phaedra and Harry too, but you need to be able to think clearly, and keep a positive frame of mind," Remus encouraged her firmly. "They will be returned safe and sound. Sirius and I will be going out together when the sun sets and the moon rises. We will try and find them by scent. Be patient it will be another hour yet."

"Come Circe, it was a long trip. Lie down on the couch and take a nap. I promise to wake you as soon as we hear anything," Dumbledore gently guided her to his sofa.

"Albus...I..."

"Hush," he said with a gentle wave of his wand. Her eyes drooped and Severus gently laid her down and slid off her shoes, covering her with the blanket.

"Headmaster, I will stay with my sister," Severus Snape looked at Albus, his dark eyes worried. "She will need me when she awakens."

"I will wait with you. Ron are you prepared should the goblet flames emerge?" Dumbledore asked acknowledging the boy's presence for the first time. He had been sitting quietly, the goblet on Dumbledore's desk.

"Yes, Headmaster, I'm ready, but I know Harry will be all right. She is very brave and these situations are not new to her. She has a cool head during an emergency. I just wish you would let me do more."

"You can," Dumbledore smiled. "When Circe Snape wakes you can keep her company and encourage her. She is very worried about her little girl."

"I will sir."

"Now all we can do is wait until the moon rises," Dumbledore told them as they settled down to keep vigil. The clock on his wall said four, and the moon would rise within the hour.

"Headmaster, if I may undress in your bedroom, it will make things easier for me."

"Of course, Remus, go ahead. Do you want Sirius to stay with you?"

"No, I will be fine. He can transform as soon as the change is completed and we can be on our way."

"Severus, do you have something with Phaedra's scent on it?" Sirius asked. "We are both familiar with Harry's but will need something to track Phaedra."

"Yes, Circe was holding onto her toy rabbit. She is still lying down with it."

"Don't wake her. We should be able to get the scent without disturbing Circe." Sirius uncharacteristically laid a comforting hand on the other wizard's shoulder. "We'll do our best to find them; you just take care of your sister and keep watch with Ron and Albus."

"Black, find my niece. Don't let Voldemort do to her what he did to my son," Snape's voice was husky as he turned to look at his old rival. "Don't let him give her soul to the Dementors...."

Sirius was horrified. He had not known how Severus' son had died. He was unable to hide his shock. "I'll bring her back safely or die trying," he whispered. "I'll bring them both back...."

"Come on Phaedra, but be very quiet. We have to go up these stairs and we will be in Honeydukes. That is the candy store here in Hogsmeade."

"Can we get some candy?"

"No, the store is probably closed. It is too dark to see my watch. I'm sure the owners went home for Christmas dinner by now," Harry told her moving cautiously up the stairs. "Besides we don't know who it was who kidnapped us. I need you to be brave and quiet."

"I will Miss Harry, I promise," she said following Harry up the narrow staircase.

Harry stood very still and listened when she reached the top of the stairs. She couldn't hear anything. Slowly she pushed up the trap door and peeked into the store. It was dead silent and no one appeared to be around. "Come on, but be quiet," she instructed the little girl, opening the door so they could climb out. Phaedra scrambled out behind her, and Harry closed the door.

"Miss Harry, are we going to go home now? I want mummy, and I'm cold and hungry."

"Sh...Baby, we have to make sure it is safe," Harry went and looked out into the street. No one was moving, and it was dark outside. She had enough light from the street lamps to check her watch and found it was past six. The moon had risen in the distance. She unlocked the door, and opened it without a sound. "Phaedra hold my hand and be ready to run on my say so. The kidnappers may be watching the building," Harry told her as she felt a stab of pain go across her scar.

"I thought you said we would fly?"

"We will, but first I need to get us to a safe place so I can transform."

"Transform?" Phaedra questioned wide-eyed.

"Yes, Miss Harry needs you to keep her secret. Only a few people know, but Miss Harry is an animagus. I am a Phoenix just like Professor Dumbledore has."

"But how will I fly?"

"I will carry you with my feet. Do you know the story about how I got out of the Chamber of Secrets?" Harry asked, and Phaedra shook her head. "Fawkes flew me, Ron and Professor Lockhart out. Phoenix's can carry extremely heavy loads. Therefore, I will pick you up and we will fly together. You're not afraid are you?"

"No, it sounds like fun."

"Good, now come on, we will go over into that alley," Harry had her by the hand, and they sped across the street. As they ran, she heard a shout, and entering the alley, realized they were being followed. She could hear several sets of footsteps coming after them, and her scar was searing.

"Nice try, Harry Potter," a malevolent voice spoke from the top of the alley.

Harry's stomach dropped. She had come face to face with Voldemort who had just apparated into the alley. Looking over her shoulder, she could see at least two Death eaters in full robes.

"Shit, Lord Voldemort! You fucking bastard, you arranged this somehow."

"It is nice to see you too, Harry Potter. I see you have a little friend with you, Phaedra Snape isn't it?" he smiled evilly as he indicated to the Death eaters to hold their position at the opening to the alley.

"Miss Harry, I'm scared. Is that the bad wizard?"

"Yes, honey, he is the bad wizard," Harry whispered, "you just be ready to do what I told you."

"Such a sweet child, I'll bet your Uncle Severus is very worried," Voldemort gloated, red eyes glowing with pleasure and anticipation.

"My uncle will come and make you sorry!" Phaedra yelled, and Harry could feel the buildup of her untrained energy, fear and anger combining to make a powerful force.

"Your uncle will not find what he expects," Voldemort said ominously, ignoring the energy in the air.

Just then, the wind picked up and a large water barrel went flying through the air, hitting the drainpipe. It fell over above Lord Voldemort, distracting him long enough for Harry to transform. Grabbing Phaedra in her talons, she took off, using the wind to speed her up and out of the alley. Looking down at Voldemort, she saw something totally unexpected. There was fear in his eyes. Dodging the wand flashes to protect Phaedra, she flew in the direction of Hogwarts.

"Stop them, you fools," Voldemort screamed. "*Accio broom!*" He summoned a broom from a store on the other side of the alley, as did the two Death eaters, and they took off after them.

Phaedra was heavy, and Harry was weighted down. She had to get to safety. Looking down she saw the cemetery, and remembered she had on the amulet the Watcher Elves had given her. Landing by the tree at her parents' gravesite, she transformed and pulled out the amulet.

"Miss Harry they will catch us."

"Hush, I'm getting us some help," she whispered. "*Luna Servo, Luna Servo, Luna Servo,*" she chanted just as Artemis had told her to do if she was in trouble. Almost immediately, they were surrounded by watcher elves, and were pulled into an opening in the tree. They were sliding down into the earth and came to a halt in a large room. It was a cave and the crystals in the minerals sparkled in light given off from the iridescent phosphorus. Artemis stood before them, and Phaedra peeked at her from around Harry, as she clung tightly to her hand.

"Welcome to our home, Harry Potter, and you too, Little One," Artemis smiled, her lavender eyes bright with kindness.

"Miss Harry, where are we? Who are these little girls and boys with the funny colored hair?"

"Phaedra, this is Artemis. She is a watcher elf, and this is her home. She is two hundred years old."

"No, she's just a little girl, like me," Phaedra shook her head in disbelief as Artemis laughed.

"Believe what Miss Harry tells you, little one. I was old when the wise one you know as Dumbledore was a baby." Her voice had the tinkle of bells. "You are safe with us. We will send word to the castle. My people tell me that the one named for the Dog Star and the one who has been touched by the curse from the sun god are both out searching for you. I will send my people to tell them to meet you inside of the Hogwarts grounds to take you home. Dumbledore has intercepted the Dark Lord. Your friend saw him in the fire."

"Miss Harry, what is she talking about?" Phaedra asked confused.

"Sirius and Remus are out looking for us. The moon is full so Remus is in wolf form. It is an old legend among their people. I will tell it to you later. Sirius is named for the Dog Star and is in his dog form. The goblet showed them we were in trouble with Voldemort. My friend Ron saw it in the flames."

"I like him, he is cute. Can we go home now? I'm hungry and want mummy. I need to go to the bathroom again too."

"Shawna, take the little one to a place where she can relieve herself. Then we will feed our guests."

"Miss Harry?" Phaedra clung to her afraid to go with the elf.

"It is okay. She will bring you right back. The Watcher Elves are our friends."

"You won't leave me here alone?"

"No, I will be right here when you come back," Phaedra went off reluctantly, and Harry turned to talk to Artemis. "Thank you for coming to help. I couldn't have made it back otherwise."

"It is why we gave you the amulet. It is our pleasure to assist you in your endeavor to stop the Dark Lord. Now come and sit. You need some nourishment and rest."

Artemis led her to a low table, and Harry sat down on the floor. She was too big for the toadstools they used as chairs, but knew Phaedra would enjoy it. Artemis had steaming bowls of soup and fresh fruits and vegetables set out. Harry was starving, but waited for Phaedra to return before eating. She didn't have long to wait.

"Miss Harry, are these really grown ups?" she asked sitting down.

"Yes, Phaedra, they are really grown ups. Now rest for awhile and have something to eat."

Phaedra did not have to be told twice. She ate the soup happily and then munched on an apple. She looked around curiously, as she ate.

"It's pretty here. I like it. Mummy told me there were watcher elves but I didn't believe her."

"We do not like people to see us. It is our duty to watch and care for the wild creatures and plants around us," Artemis smiled, and Phaedra smiled back. "You are the niece of the one they call Snape?"

"I am Phaedra Snape. The bad wizard tried to hurt us but Miss Harry fooled him and flew away. She is an animagus."

"Sh...Phaedra I told you not to say anything."

"It is all right, Harry. We have seen you fly many times. We watched when you encountered the troll and had you summoned us would have come to your rescue then, but Dumbledore appeared."

"I couldn't call you and I didn't have my amulet that day. I know better now than to leave it home."

"You have learned a valuable lesson then," Artemis told her as another elf came and whispered in her ear. "Come now, we will take you to the wolf and the dog. Dumbledore will also meet you on the way."

"Come on Phaedra, we're going to go to the castle now. Your mum will be very happy as well as your uncle."

"Do you think Father Christmas came yet?"

"I really don't know, but if he didn't he is probably on his way," Harry smiled as they followed Artemis through a maze of tunnels. She was glad to be going home too. Glancing at her watch, she saw that it was almost eight o'clock. She couldn't wait to get back and have a hot bath and go to bed, but knew she would have to tell her story. It would be one that Phaedra would be telling her grandchildren one day, and Harry hoped, she would be telling them too.

## ***Phaedra's Hogwarts Christmas***

Harry and Phaedra emerged from the maze of tunnels into the woods not far from Hagrid's cottage. As they came out into the moonlight, the baleful howling of a wolf could be heard coming towards them accompanied by a series of deep barks.

Phaedra tightened her hold on Harry's hand. They waited patiently surrounded by Artemis and a number of other Watcher Elves as two large canines came running into view, one a gray wolf and the other a large shaggy black dog. Approaching the group the wolf lay down, crawling on his belly in a show of submission. The dog transformed into a tall black haired man.

"Harry, Phaedra," Sirius gasped with relief, hugging the two girls.

"Come on, Remus," Harry called to the wolf who immediately jumped up and began sniffing and licking them.

"Mr. Remus, you're a funny wolf," Phaedra hugged the werewolf.

"Artemis, thank you for helping," Harry smiled, but she had disappeared into the trees.

"Miss Harry, where did they all go?"

"Home, and so should we," Harry smiled at the child as Sirius picked Phaedra up to carry her. Harry linked her arm with Sirius who hugged her happily. Remus walked ahead of them, ears pricked, and nose to the wind. Halfway to the castle they were met by Dumbledore.

"Child are you all right?"

"I'm fine but I could use a hot shower and a cup of your special hot cocoa."

"How are you little one? Your mother has been very worried."

"Headmaster Mr. Dumbledore, is my mummy here?"

"Yes, she is in my office with your Uncle Severus," he reassured her.

"Is she real mad at me for causing trouble?"

"Little one, you haven't caused any trouble. No one is mad at you. We are all happy and relieved you and Harry are safe," he beamed taking her from Sirius arms as they entered the castle.

"Headmaster, Artemis told me that Ron saw us in the goblet."

"Yes, Child, you were facing Lord Voldemort. It only burned briefly and went out a short time later. You were in the cemetery."

"The Watcher Elves came when I used my amulet."



"I surmised as much. We had been searching for you for some time when I received Artemis' message."

"Phaedra had quite an adventure tonight," Harry smiled at the child, who was nestled contentedly in the Headmaster's long silver beard.

"What's a 'venture?'"

"Adventure, Little One," Dumbledore corrected her, "it means you did something exciting."

"Where's mummy?" she asked as they stopped in front of the gargoyle guarding the entrance to his office.

"Right upstairs in my office; do you want to open my secret door?"

"Can I? I don't know how."

"I'll give you the password," he whispered in her ear.

"Cream Puffs," she giggled.

Harry noted that he must have changed it since this afternoon as the giant bird like creature slid aside revealing the moving stairs. They mounted them, and Phaedra was delighted with the action. Opening the door to the office, they were immediately surrounded by the Snapes, and Ron.

"Harry, thank god you're all right. I knew that had to be 'You Know Who,' and I could see you mouth his name," Ron hugged her with relief. "I have never actually seen him until today, you know."

"Well, you haven't missed much. You know tall thin, red eyes, evil expression, and all the usual evil wizard stuff," she looked at Ron grinning wickedly.

"Phaedra, baby, mummy was so worried. Thank Merlin you are safe. Harry thank you for taking care of her," Circe hugged the younger witch, tears of relief streaming down her face.

"Mummy, why are you crying?"

"Sometimes grownups cry when they are happy, honey," Circe hugged her daughter.

"Phaedra, what happened to your panties?" Circe said letting the little girl down and looking worriedly at Harry.

"I had an accident, mummy. You aren't mad are you? Miss Harry helped me so I wouldn't stay wet."

"No, Phaedra, mummy isn't mad," Circe answered with relief, "thank you for helping her Harry. The whole ordeal must have been horrendous for you both."

"Headmaster Dumbledore said I had a 'venture.'"

"You mean adventure," Snape smiled fondly at his niece. "You seem none the worse for wear."

"She was very brave, weren't you honey?" Harry beamed at the little girl. "She was actually a very big help in our escape."

"Of, course; she is a Snape, after all." Harry looked over to the sofa where the voice came from and was surprised to see Tiberius Snape.

"Mr. Snape, I hope we haven't inconvenienced your business trip too much?" Harry asked cordially, going over to shake the elder Snape's hand.

"I take it you have become accustomed to meeting the Dark Lord?"

"Why, old Tom and I are practically on a first name basis," she quipped.

"Miss Harry, who is Tom?"

"That is the bad wizard's real name, Tom Riddle."

"That's a funny name. It sounds like a puzzle game," Phaedra said thoughtfully.

"Harry, are you prepared to tell us exactly what happened?"

"No, we aren't. Phaedra needs a nice bath, and I would like to take a hot shower first. Then I will tell you over a snack and some cocoa. All we've eaten is some soup and fruit with the Watcher Elves."

"Harry, you dined with the Watcher Elves?" Ron asked astounded.

"Yeah, it was kind of neat, too."

"Mummy, did Father Christmas come yet? Will he know I am here at Hogwarts?"

"He will come after you fall asleep, and he knows you're here," she smiled hugging Phaedra again. "Miss Harry is right. You both need to freshen up and you need to get into your pajamas."

"Can I sleep with Miss Harry?"

"Actually, little one, you and Miss Harry and the Protectors will be spending the night with your Uncle Severus. We have set up some extra cots in his quarters," Dumbledore chuckled, looking at Harry.

"Ron, I'm being relegated to the dungeon for Christmas!"

"He will be there too. You are the only two students left in Gryffindor this Christmas, since Ginny went home on the train. We have a very light group this year, since many families wanted to be with their children due to the situation with Voldemort."

"Oh great, Gryffindor's in the Snake pit," Harry pretended to pout.

"Actually, Miss Potter," Severus looked at her, his dark eyes sparkling, "we will be outnumbered. It is five Gryffindors to three Slytherins. Phaedra is not assigned a house."

"Hey, hat, we need to assign Phaedra an honorary house. Do you think you could help us out?" Harry joked looking over to where the sorting hat sat silent vigil on its shelf.

"Eh, Potter, not something I would usually agree to, but it might be interesting to see her now and again when she is old enough to be truly sorted," the Sorting Hat answered to everyone's surprise except Dumbledore.

"Miss Harry, what is that hat going to do?" Phaedra asked suspiciously, as Dumbledore removed the hat from its shelf and it began to sing:

*I'm the Hogwart's Sorting Hat*

*And will tell you all tonight*

*If Phaedra's brave enough for Gryffindor,*

*And has the lion's heart*

*Or hard working Hufflepuff*

*Whose work she will impart,*

*Perhaps she'll be in Ravenclaw*

*Where she will be most clever,*

*But it is likely she will be*

*Just like her kith and kin,*

*Showing strong ambition*

*To be in Slytherin*

"Are you willing to put the hat on your head, little one?" Dumbledore asked his blue eyes twinkling.

"Does it hurt?"

"No, he just can see what is in your mind. This is the famous Hogwarts Sorting Hat. I'm sure your mum and uncles have told you about it," Ron smiled at the little girl.

Phaedra blushed at the attention he gave her, and taking the hat from Dumbledore plunked it on her head. The hat immediately fell onto her shoulders. "It's dark in here," her muffled voice came from inside the hat.

"Hmm...Interesting...she's young yet...but has much potential. Her powers will be strong...she has a quick wit...and passionate...brave too...This is most difficult...but for now I must say...Slytherin!"

Dumbledore removed the hat from Phaedra's head and put it back on the shelf. "Well, Harry, what do you have to say?"

"That hat doesn't know everything. Besides I have six years to work on her."

"Indeed, Miss Potter. I understand that hat originally said you would have done quite well in Slytherin," Tiberius Snape looked at her with the familiar Snape arch to his brow.

"Big mouth," Harry glared at Severus who was smiling wickedly.

"But she's doing even better in Gryffindor," Sirius said coming to her rescue, and Remus whined in agreement.

"Miss Harry, I don't understand. Are you in Gryffindor or Slytherin?"

"Well, Phaedra, I have some very interesting ancestors, so I could have been in either. I chose to be in Gryffindor, like my father and mother. If I hadn't made that request, I would have been placed into Slytherin."

"Harry, what are you talking about?" Ron asked in confusion.

"Headmaster, I am going to assume that all the adults in this room, as members of the Order of the Phoenix, know what it is that you told me when you asked me if I would consider the Right of Protection."

"That is correct," Dumbledore looked at her seriously over his half moon glasses.

"Which means Ron is unaware, of my rather interesting set of ancestors, being too young to be a member of the order, and his parents are not able to share this information despite his being the Guardian of the Goblet?"

"Headmaster," Ron looked at Dumbledore, "what is Harry talking about?"

"I have the feeling Harry is going to tell you herself, Ron. I would prefer she didn't, but it is her right to do so."

"I have every intention of telling him, Professor. I think he deserves to know. He shoulders almost as much responsibility as I do. I merely have one question. Does he know about the ancestor he is named for?" She grinned mischievously.

"No, Harry, he does not."

"In that case, I am going to break a few rules, just for the fun of it, and because Ron really does deserve an explanation, and tell him. Ron, walk me down to my room since I really want a shower, and Phaedra's mother needs to get her ready for bed. I will tell you an interesting story on the way. Then I will meet you all in the dungeon since we are all spending the night

in magic potions land. If Phaedra is still awake when I get there we will tell you all what happened."

"Albus, is she always this insolent to her superiors?" Tiberius Snape asked with interest.

"I have been known to bring her to task from time to time."

"Humph...if you think I'm insolent with the headmaster, you should hear how I talk to Voldemort," Harry tossed her head in defiance.

"Miss Harry said a lot of naughty words when she saw the bad wizard," Phaedra chimed in, wanting to be a part of whatever was going on.

"Did she now, Little One?" Dumbledore smiled glancing at Harry. "Do you think Father Christmas will leave her coal?"

"No, but he will leave it to the bad wizard."

They all laughed, and Harry and Ron both headed for the moving stairs to exit Dumbledore's office.

Harry explained to Ron on the way down how she was a direct descendant of Godric Gryffindor and Salazar Slytherin's younger sister. She also told him about Gryffindor's friend who had always been at his side. A wizard by the name of Ronald Weasley. The wizard who was his ancestor and whom he had been named for.

"Harry, do you mean to tell me that you and I, well...maybe we were meant to be friends...that our relationship was destined from the beginning?"

"Ron, I don't know. I only know what Dumbledore has told me. He said I am also somehow descended from Merlin, like he is, yet we aren't directly related."

"Wow, Harry, you're almost a real princess," Ron whistled astounded.

"Hardly, I'm really just plain old Harry; and you're my first and best friend. I love you like a brother, and I always will."

"Oh, Harry," Ron blushed, "don't go getting all mushy on me. You know I will always be there for you. You're funny, and brave, and care about the people around you. It is my honor to call you my friend."

"Now who's getting all mushy," she hugged him. "Keep talking like that and you'll get Hermione jealous."

"Hey, she may just end up Mrs. Weasley. It will be a while yet, but who knows?" He winked blushing. "I think she's my soul mate. I hope one day you will find yours."

"I have, but I don't know where it will go, because he is not my heart's passion."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"Just that, I love three men, each one in a different way; one is with a passion I never knew I could feel, one that I will do anything to please, and finally one that is always there to listen and comfort me."

"Harry, you're talking about your Protectors, aren't you?"

"Yeah, and I think I am going crazy. I have such a bad feeling that something awful is going to happen. I do not want to lose any of them. I truly love them all."

"Even Snape?" Ron curled his lip with frown.

"Even Snape. There are things about him that you cannot possibly know. Underneath that sour and stern facade is a good and kind loving human being."

"Harry, I think you've gone daft on me."

"You'll just have to trust me on this one, Ron, but I know what I feel inside of him."

"If you say so," he agreed doubtfully. "Now stop being so maudlin. It is Christmas Eve and if I have to spend the night in Snape's quarters I will need you to be your usual perky self."

"One perky witch coming up. I will meet you downstairs. Just give me a little while to shower," she said with a brief smile.

"You take the high road and I'll take the low road and I'll be in the dungeon afore ya," he sang, murdering the old Scottish folk song, as he turned to walk down to his rooms.

"Oh, and Ron," Harry called after him, "what I told you about Gryffindor, that's just between you and me, okay?" He did not answer, but turned, giving her a wink and a salute, and walked down the hall.

Harry hurried into the shower and then found a pretty flannel nightgown, should it be chilly in Snape's dungeon quarters. Donning her robe and slippers, she threw on her invisibility cloak to have a little fun, and headed towards the dungeons. She did not see anyone until she reached the lower floors, and spied Remus. The moon must have set, because he was his human self again. He was ahead of her, and she decided to tease him. Doing her best to make her voice sound ethereal she called to him.

"Reeemmmuuuusss...Luuuuppppiinnnnn...I...knnnnooowwww...whaaaatttt...yoouuuu...  
arrreeeee...giiivvviinnnggg...Siirrrruussss...Blaaaaccckkk...ffoorrr...Chrrriisstmaaas"  
Remus immediately spun around, and Harry knew she had made a big mistake.

"*Petrificus Totalus!*" he yelled aiming his wand in the direction of her voice.

Her advanced training in Defense Against the Dark Arts stood her in good stead, and she hit the ground before being hit with his wand stream. The commotion caused the others to come from out of Snape's quarters just as Ron rounded the corner of the corridor.

"Harry!" Ron and Remus both yelled at once. She was disheveled and her cloak was half on and half off, exposing her head and legs.

"It seems Miss Potter was able to duck in time, which is quite commendable," Tiberius Snape addressed his nephew.

"Thank you uncle," Snape answered as Remus and Ron were helping Harry to her feet. "Professor Lupin and I have been working quite hard with her on her dueling and how to avoid hostile attacks."

"Princess, are you all right?"

"Yeah, but I learned never to try and sneak up on you after you have just gone through a transformation. You're really touchy," she replied dusting herself off, "thanks for helping me up."

"Mr. Sirius, where is Miss Harry's body? Is she under a spell?" Phaedra asked wide-eyed as she scooted out from behind him. Only her head was visible now that she was standing up.

"No," he laughed, "she's wearing her invisibility cloak. I suspect she was planning to play some games with us. She has a habit of playing ghost and wandering around the castle at night."

"Harry, I see you have your sense of humor back," Professor Dumbledore beamed.

"I inherited it from my father, and my godfather has been perfecting my skills, but I refuse to be as mean as they were. I would never hang anyone upside down exposing their under wear or anything like that," she smiled at Dumbledore, who was looking at her very strangely, as were her protectors. "Headmaster, did I say something wrong? Why are you all looking at me so strangely?"

"Strangely, Harry? I have no idea what you are talking about. You must be overtired from your ordeal today," Dumbledore relaxed, but Harry had the distinct feeling he was hiding something; they all were.

"Come on, Harry," Ron interrupted her thoughts; "I want to hear your story. I could use a late night snack too. I never seem to get enough to eat these days."

"Sirius, remind me if I ever get married and have children to tell my husband I only want daughters, son's eat too much. The food bills would be outrageous."

"I'll keep it in mind, honey, but the last I heard it was still a fifty fifty chance," he laughed as they entered Snape's quarters.

"Oh, it's my tree with added decorations for Phaedra. You were decorating the room this morning when I came to speak with you!" she looked happily at Snape. He had put up the Christmas tree with the ornaments Sirius had charmed for her last year, lilies and deer in memory of her parents. Snape had added bunnies and puppies for Phaedra.

"Isn't it pretty, Miss Harry?"

"Yes, Phaedra, it is. The room is all decorated too."

The torches were ablaze and some of them were glowing with green and red light. A blazing fire was in the hearth, and cots were set up for Snape, Sirius, and Remus. The sofa bed was open for Tiberius and Dumbledore, with a sleeping bag on the floor for Ron.

"I guess we ladies get the bedroom?"

"Of course, Phaedra and Circe can have the bed, and there is a cot set up for you," Snape informed her looking down his nose. She knew he was defying her to argue in favor of getting the bed, but she did not give in to him. She would just use her cloak to sneak back upstairs to her own bed when they were all asleep.

"Come on Princess; sit down with us, we are all anxious to hear what you and Phaedra have to tell us," Remus indicated a seat at the table where a meal had been set up so they could all have something to eat. Apparently, no one had felt too much like eating earlier after they had disappeared.

"I want Miss Harry to sit with me, next to Ron."

"How about if you sit facing me so we can see one another," Harry suggested.

"Okay, Miss Harry. Do you think Father Christmas will come soon?"

"He will come some time tonight, don't you worry. He usually gets here quite late, isn't that right Professor Snape?"

"Harry is right, Phaedra. I'm sure you will be sound asleep."

"I'm going to wait up so I can give him a big hug," Phaedra crossed her arms in front of her stubbornly.

"Well I'm not," Ron told her. "Don't you know that if he finds you awake he may not leave anything? He is very busy and if you interrupt his work, well he might get mad."

"Are you lying to me?"

"Nope, I knew a kid once who came down and interrupted him while he was putting out the stuff, and he turned it all to coal because the boy was peeking."

"Uncle Tiberius, you wouldn't let him do that would you?"

"Phaedra, Father Christmas has a good deal of magical power. I do not believe I would be able to stop him. You should probably just leave him a snack and a nice note and let him do his work."

"Miss Harry, what do you think?"

"Unless you like getting socks like Dobby the house elf, I would suggest you go to sleep. I know I am."

"Yech...I don't want socks. If he thinks I was bad they might be smelly," she responded, wrinkling her nose, while the others laughed.



"So, Child, are you going to tell us what happened?" Dumbledore asked casually.

"Phaedra, shall we tell them all about our adventure?"

"Okay, Miss Harry, but we can't take too long or Father Christmas might pass us by."

"Do you want me to start or do you want to tell what happened?"

"You can tell them. I want to eat these cookies," Phaedra said helping herself to the desserts.

"All right," Harry said settling back in her chair, as Sirius put his arm around her shoulders. Phaedra and I were in the ladies room, when I realized there was a woman watching us. She was making me nervous and I didn't like the way she was making me feel so I did my best to get Phaedra out as soon as possible. Well she blocked our path, so I pulled out my wand, but she didn't move."

"That's when Miss Harry told me in my head to scream for mummy," Phaedra chimed in. "She told me to call for her in my mind."

"That's right, I didn't want to let her get away, or cause Phaedra to be injured. What I didn't know is that she had an accomplice hiding in one of the other stalls. When Circe and Professor Snape came to the door to try to get in they threw something over our heads, and used a portkey. That's when I dropped my wand. I was completely taken off guard." Harry slapped her hand to her head. "Shoot, I just realized, did anybody find it?"

"We were wondering when you would ask," Snape said sardonically. "*Accio*," Potter's wand," he said pointing his own wand over to towards his desk. Her wand immediately flew over to him, and he handed it back to her.

"Thank you Professor. I only just realized it was still missing. In all the commotion of our getting back safely I just didn't think about it," she replied humbly.

"You're welcome, Harry," he answered pleased that she had admitted her mistake.

"What happened, next, Honey?" Sirius prodded her to continue.

"I was thrown on a cold stone floor, tied up, and then I heard a door close. I could sense Phaedra nearby and sent her a message hoping she would hear me telepathically."

"Did she?" Circe inquired.

"Loud and clear, I told her I was going to try and get us out of there. I had her follow my thoughts to where I was tied up."

"Then Miss Harry used her 'kinesis to get me loose."

"You mean telekinesis," Professor Lupin smiled.

"That's what I said!"

"You were able to untie the bonds, Harry? You said you couldn't see because your head was covered," Dumbledore looked at her with interest.

"It was, Phaedra was sitting in back of me and I used my hands to feel her wrists. I then pictured the ropes in my head and started willing the knots to untie."

"I am impressed, again," Tiberius Snape nodded to her.

"It actually took me quite awhile to do it."

"But it worked!" Phaedra smiled happily, as Harry took a sip of cocoa, and a bite of her tuna salad sandwich.

"Yeah, it did."

"Miss Harry how come you were talking to Headmaster Mr. Dumbledore in your head too?"

"Uh...yeah," Harry sputtered red faced.

"What was she saying, Phaedra?" Dumbledore inquired his blue eyes laughing.

"She said something about not complaining anymore about practicing her 'kinesis.'"

"Did she now?" Dumbledore looked at Harry over his spectacles, but did not say anything more to her.

"Well, anyway," Harry continued quickly, "once Phaedra was untied she took off her hood and then took mine off for me. I could not untie myself since I couldn't see what I was doing and my head was hurting."

"Your scar had begun to hurt?" Severus asked from across the table.

"Not then, I just had a headache from concentrating on getting Phaedra loose. Anyway, I had Phaedra look around for something to cut me loose. We were in a basement or storage room. Later on I found that we were underneath Honeydukes!"

"Princess, you could have used the secret tunnel to get back to Hogwarts."

"I wished I could have, but they are all still sealed as per Dumbledore's orders for my safety."  
"Harry is quite correct. I shall consider giving her a charm to be able to open them again in an emergency."

"What I find interesting is that she was right in Hogsmeade, and in the basement of Honeydukes," Snape mused thoughtfully.

"I shall alert Moody to have the building searched. I don't believe the owners were involved, but he will want to question them anyway," Dumbledore stated matter of factly. "Please continue your story, Harry."

"Phaedra found some hedge clippers on a wall, but she couldn't reach them."

"That's when Miss Harry made them fall down with her 'kinesis."

"It seems all that practice was beneficial," Dumbledore smiled with satisfaction.

"You don't have to gloat about it," Harry snipped contritely.

"Go ahead, honey, finish telling us what happened."

"I had Phaedra cut me loose. She couldn't do it at first, and fell skinning her knees. The trimmers were quite large."

"But I kept trying and it finally worked. Miss Harry was free. I was so happy and excited that I wet my pants."

"That's okay, baby. Mommy told you that she isn't mad. I am very proud of you."

"You should be. Phaedra was very brave." Harry winked at Phaedra and the little girl beamed with pleasure at the compliment. "Once I was loose we tried the door, even though I was sure it would be locked. I had no wand so I couldn't open it that way."

"I found the other door," Phaedra informed them all proudly.

"She sure did. It was cleverly hidden in the wall where the hedge clippers had been. She pointed it out to me."

"It was unlocked, and we went into the other room where the stairs were," Phaedra told them all with a smug look.

"That's when I knew we were in the Honeydukes basement. Anyway, I knew the stairs led directly into the store behind the counter. I knew it was probably closed for the night, so we went on up. I made sure the coast was clear and once we were in the store proper I then unlocked the door and we went out into the street."

"I have a secret. Miss Harry do they all know the secret?"

"Yes, Phaedra, they know."

"Miss Harry can fly! She's an animagus like Mr. Sirius. She turns into a big bird like the one Headmaster Mr. Dumbledore has."

"I see you like that, Little One."

"Yes. Uncle Severus, how come you, mummy, and Uncle Tiberius don't turn into animals?"

"Very few witches and wizards are able to perfect the skill," Severus answered patiently.

"None of us has ever wanted to do it. Our talents lie elsewhere."

"Well I want to. I will become a kitty."

"Then you should see Professor McGonagall," Ron grinned, "she can turn into a tabby cat."

"Oh, goody, do you think she will do it for me?"

"I will ask her for you," Professor Snape smiled affectionately at his niece.

"Well before you are able to even try you need to be much older. Miss Harry is very young to be an animagus," Circe explained to her daughter with a smile.

"I thought you wanted to mix potions like your uncle?" Harry asked playfully.

"I can do both! I am a Snape, you know," Phaedra stated proudly, and they all smiled.

"Well we know where she gets that from," Sirius whispered in Harry's ear.

"Harry," Remus redirected the conversation back to her earlier activities, "what happened when you finally got outside."

"My scar was hurting. I steered Phaedra towards the alley so I could transform in safety. It turned out to be a big mistake."

"Is that when you came into contact with Lord Voldemort?" Ron asked.

"Yeah, two Deathaters were behind me and he apparated in front of me."

"I kinda figured that. That's when the goblet flamed, and I went to work."

"I guess you told them what happened?"

"Yeah, but I didn't really understand it. Did you use your telekinesis?"

"No..."

"She used bad words though," Phaedra interrupted. "Mr. Sirius will you wash her mouth out with soap? Mummy does if I say words like that."

"Phaedra!" Harry exclaimed red faced.

"Hmm...Harry as your godfather I think I should inform you that such language is unbecoming of a lady," Sirius teased trying to sound angry, but he was grinning wildly, his brown eyes shining with mirth.

Harry rolled her eyes and continued her story. "That's when I got really worried. I had been cleverly maneuvered into a blind alley. I had two Deathaters in full regalia at the entrance, so I couldn't turn around. Voldemort was in front of me smiling like a reptile about to devour a good meal."

"So that's when you used your telekinesis to move the drain pipe?" Ron queried having witnessed the events in the flames.

"Wrong. He knew who Phaedra was. That really worried me. I had to get her to safety, especially after she told him her Uncle Severus would make him sorry."

"Phaedra did you really say that to the bad wizard?" her mother asked nervously.

"Yes, mummy, it made him give me a mean smile and I got scared."

"Which turned out to be a good thing," Harry shook her head. "There is nothing like a good energy buildup to cause a distraction."

"Harry...are you telling us that Phaedra's emotional state caused her to emit a negative energy flow?" Dumbledore queried looking serious.

"Headmaster, let me put it this way, I wouldn't want to get in her way when she's able to direct it."

"So that's why the drain fell..." Ron remarked with understanding.

"All I know is it got real windy and a barrel went flying causing the drain pipe to pull loose."

"Is that when you transformed, Princess?"

"Pretty much, Voldemort was distracted for just a second. I took advantage of it and grabbed Phaedra in my talons. The wind helped to get us airborne faster too."

"It was fun! Miss Harry had to zigzag. They were sending spells at us," Phaedra told them innocently.

"Spells?" Snape questioned, his dark eyes unfathomable.

"Yes, they summoned brooms and were in hot pursuit. Nothing like having to dodge red and green wand flashes," Harry said quietly as they looked at her with understanding. "Phaedra's weight was slowing us down. I was afraid she might be hit at any moment. They were gaining on me. I knew we wouldn't make it back. I landed by my parent's grave and used the amulet Artemis gave me to summon help."

"That's when all the cute little elves came," Phaedra clapped her hands with pleasure.

"It's also when the goblet went out. It scared the bloody hell out of me," Ron stated emphatically.

"Mr. Weasley, if you would mind your language in front of my niece please!" Professor Snape corrected him.

"Sorry, Sir."

"I liked the elves. They were nice. Their house was pretty."

"You were in their home?" Professor Lupin uttered amazed.

"We were. It was a beautiful underground cavern. The rock crystals glowed with phosphorescence to make light. The chairs were big mushrooms. It was like something out of a Muggle fairytale."

"They gave us soup and fruit too," Phaedra added.

"Artemis told me you were able to head off Voldemort," Harry looked over at Dumbledore

"He was stopped by the spells and charms protecting Hogwarts. We had a bit of a tiff in the air, but he apparated. The Aurors did succeed in catching one of the two Death Eaters. It was none other than young Crabbe."

"Harry, you should have seen the Headmaster on a broom!" Ron exclaimed. "You would never have thought that at his age he could still fly like that. I watched the whole thing from his office."

"Mr. Weasley, I have been flying for nigh on one hundred and forty years. It is a skill I still have the pleasure of enjoying quite often."

Harry giggled as Ron's face turned beet red. "Anyway, she also told me that a certain pair of canines were out trying to sniff us out too."

"We were, honey. Remus and I were searching in the forest when an elf appeared and told us to come to the woods by Hagrid's cottage. He said we would find you there."

"The elves brought us there through a maze of underground tunnels. They disappeared as soon as you both arrived."

"Harry, I'll never be able to thank you enough for protecting Phaedra," Circe came over from where she had been sitting and hugged her again.

"I think we're all glad they are home safe and sound," Sirius brushed Harry's cheek affectionately.

"Of course we have also allowed the Dark Lord access to the knowledge that Harry can transform," Professor Snape frowned.

"Harry, why are you smiling like that?" Dumbledore asked shrewdly, staring at her expression.

"Because I just remembered what happened when Professor Snape mentioned that Voldemort saw me transform."

"What is it, Child?"

"Do you remember the time our wand streams connected and he seemed to be afraid of the shadows of his victims?"

"Yes...but there were no shadows tonight," Dumbledore replied carefully.

"No...No, there wasn't, but I looked down at him as I started to fly away. Headmaster, there was fear in his eyes. It was only there for a minute, but I saw and felt it nonetheless."

"Indeed," Tiberius Snape looked intrigued. "How did that make you feel?"

"For the first time I felt really powerful against him. I thought that just maybe I could stop him. I was exhilarated," Harry locked eyes with Dumbledore as no one moved.

Circe broke the silence, "On that note, I think I will put Phaedra to bed. Come on, baby"

"Do I have to? I want to stay with the grownups."

"You want Father Christmas to get here don't you?" she asked picking her up.

"Yes, but Miss Harry and Ron aren't going to bed."

"Who says we aren't? I'm bushed," Ron smiled at Phaedra, stretched and went over to his sleeping bag preparing to turn in.

"That makes two of us. I'll be in as soon as I say goodnight," Harry winked.

"Good night Uncles," Phaedra stated giving them each a kiss. She then went around the table and kissed everyone else. She stopped when she got to Professor Lupin. "You need to go to sleep. You are a pretty wolf, but you look real tired now."

"I am," he said hugging her gently. "Now off to bed with you. Your mother is waiting."

Circe took Phaedra into the bathroom and then they disappeared into the bedroom. Tiberius excused himself and headed into the shower. Ron was snoring softly having fallen right to sleep. Harry stretched lazily, and looked at her protectors.

"I thought you were going to bed, Princess."

"I am. I just have to work up the energy to go to the bedroom. I am exhausted."

"You did well tonight," Snape looked at her arching his brow.

"I did the best I could under the circumstances. I was more concerned for Phaedra than myself. Do you know if the people who took us were caught? They told me that Voldemort has a price on my head. I never saw them after that."

"They probably collected the money and left," Sirius said quietly.

"Then I wouldn't want to be them. I got loose and got away. Voldemort is going to be very angry at someone."

"Then we will probably hear something in a few days," Snape replied dryly. They all understood his meaning.

"Poor Ron, he gets really stressed when he watches me in the flames. It must be terrible for him to see what is happening and not be able to help," Harry told them as she got up to go to bed.

"He does very well," Sirius stated truthfully, "he keeps a cool head and does what he needs to do."

"Well, I have to get some rest. Headmaster is that special gift all taken care of?"

"Yes, it will arrive here on schedule. The elves will deliver the others, as usual." Dumbledore whispered in case Phaedra should overhear.

"In that case, *Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night,*" Harry quoted with a grin. She then headed off to bed.

Phaedra was almost asleep when Harry let herself into the bedroom and crept onto the cot, which had been set up for her. She was exhausted, and wished she were in her own bed, but had no choice but to use the cot. The others were still up, and she knew she could not get by them safely even with her cloak. She thought she would be able to sneak out in about an hour; in the meantime, she would just try to rest.

She had no recollection of falling asleep, but the dream began slowly. She was in a house that she didn't really know which had all kinds of serpents. There was a picture of a woman and she was yelling about mudbloods and traitors. For some reason an address came into her head, *number twelve Grimmauld Place, London*. She had no idea where this house was, but understood it had something to do with the Order of the Phoenix. She was troubled, and had no idea why, and then she saw herself feeling very sad. She realized she was younger, and was looking down at something. It was a letter to Ron with a prefect badge for his fifth year. She wanted to cry, and then the dream changed.

There were wand flashes and she was in some kind of building. There was a room with an archway, covered with a thin tattered veil, and everyone was fighting. She was dragging Neville Longbottom out, and something very important was broken. Then she saw Sirius falling with a look of shock. He fell behind the archway, and she was waiting for him to come back. Remus was pulling her away yelling that it was too late; Sirius was dead! She woke up drenched in sweat, and tears were coming down her face. It was pitch dark and at first she was confused as to where she was. Sitting up, she realized that Circe and Phaedra were sleeping not ten feet from her in Severus four-poster bed. Slipping out of bed she quietly let herself out into the other room. The fire had died to a soft glow. Ron and Lupin were both snoring softly. Dumbledore and the elder Snape were sleeping back to back on the sofa bed. Severus had his cot over near his desk, and Sirius was closest to the door. Slipping into the bathroom, she looked in the mirror. Her face still had fresh tears, and she was shaking. After splashing some water on her face, she went over to look at Sirius. She was standing there, listening to his soft breathing, when she started to cry again. She wanted to reach out and hug him. Her tears must have fallen on his face, because he jerked awake, startled. He went to reach for his wand, and then realized where he was, and that Harry was standing over him, wiping her eyes.

"Honey, is everything all right?" he whispered, sitting up to look at her closer. "You're crying."

"I had a nightmare, but it seemed so real," she whispered shakily.

"It wasn't about Voldemort was it?" he asked sharply.

"No...I don't think so. I'm not sure; I think there were Death Eaters in it. You were dead. I saw you fall through some kind of arch with a veil over it, and you didn't come back," she was crying harder and shaking so badly that she reached out for him "Remus was there and he told me you were dead, to get Neville out."



"Sh...It was just a bad dream," he comforted taking her into his arms. "I'm right here with you, see," Sirius said kissing her gently on the forehead.

Dumbledore had opened his eyes and was watching them both intently.

"Do you remember anything else about the dream?" Sirius asked sitting her down beside him on his cot.

Her back was towards Dumbledore, who continued to listen, feigning sleep, although Sirius was aware he was not.

"I don't know, I seemed younger, and Ron was a Prefect. I remember wanting to cry, because I was so hurt that Dumbledore did not want me as a Prefect. I know it's silly."

"Honey you're Head Girl and Ron is a Prefect too. I think you are just overtired from the day's events."

"No, I was younger, fifth year, I think. There was also this strange house with a portrait that kept yelling about Mudbloods and traitors. I even knew the address, number twelve Grimmauld Place. I think it was in London. It seemed very important that I knew it. The whole thing seemed so real. Especially the part where Remus kept telling me you were dead," she started crying again and hung onto him. "I'm, scared it means you're going to die, but everything was so distorted. I was still disguised as a boy, and I just felt so hurt and confused."

"Sh...I'm fine and I'm going to stay that way," he smiled warmly, brushing the hair off her scar. "Why don't you just stay here with me? I'll turn into Padfoot and you can scratch my ears. I know it makes you feel better."

"I'd rather just sit here and have you hold me for a little while. I have this tremendous sense of loss. If this is what it feels like to have a broken heart, then it's no wonder Severus can be a cold SOB at times. I wouldn't want to let anyone else in either. It hurts too much."

"You just try and get some sleep," Sirius eased her down on the cot, and squeezed in beside her. "It was just a bad dream. Some dreams are just more vivid than others." Sirius continued to cuddle her and stroke her gently, and she gradually began to relax. She would start to fall asleep and then jerk awake, her eyes wide and confused, but fatigue and his comforting presence finally overtook her. He knew Albus would be more than a little concerned but would wait until tomorrow to speak with him.

Harry slept fitfully, and continued to have strange dreams. She had no idea that all of the protectors had been awakened and were watching her to keep her safe. She was awakened early in the morning by Phaedra.

"Father Christmas was here! Father Christmas was here! Harry wake up, everybody wake up!"

"Happy Christmas, Phaedra," Harry mumbled opening one eye. "What time is it?"

"It's half past six," Dumbledore responded smiling down at her.

"Oh..." she yawned and realized she was sleeping next to Sirius. Flushing with embarrassment, she hoped Dumbledore would not question her. She could explain about the nightmares later.

"Harry, what are you doing in here?" Ron asked sitting up, as Phaedra curled up on her Great Uncle Tiberius lap and Circe took a seat on the opened couch bed.

"Sirius and I snuck out last night for some holiday cheer at the Three Broomsticks," Harry chuckled teasing him.

"In your wildest dreams, young lady," Remus laughed from across the room. "Sirius knows better than to take an underage witch out partying."

"Now you went and spoiled my fun. The plain truth of the matter is that I was in the Potions Classroom whipping up a love potion when Professor Snape caught me. I have been up all night cleaning the cauldrons."

"Uncle Severus, you were being mean to Miss Harry, and its Christmas. It's not nice to give her 'tention on Christmas," Phaedra scowled at her uncle.

"Harry is just teasing him, Phaedra. She came out here in the middle of the night because she had a nightmare about her godfather," Severus smiled down at his niece.

"Miss Harry is Uncle Severus lying? Did you have a bad dream?"

"Yes, honey, I did. I must have fallen asleep out here after I calmed down."

"Did the bad wizard make you dream? Mummy says sometimes he does."

"No, it was just a dream. Miss Harry is fine now. How about we have some tea and open our presents? Ron is poking around already."

"Mr. Weasley, I would suggest you be careful. You never know if something bites," Snape arched his brow with an evil smile.

"Good idea," he curled his lip in dismay, moving back from the presents.

They all opened their gifts amid oohs and aahs. Harry gave Phaedra a book of very simple potions for children she had found in a used book catalogue. It was out of print since under the new laws she was now considered too young to do magic, but she knew Snape would find a way. She also gave her a big doll that had green eyes and dark hair like Harry's, and a large black stuffed dog similar to Snuffles. Phaedra was delighted, and hugged Harry so tightly that she fell over backwards, and everyone laughed. Professor Snape was delighted with his invisibility cloak, and Harry made him promise in front of Dumbledore not to put it to use chasing down students who are out of bed until next fall. Remus took one look at his chess set, and gasped.

"Harry, this is too expensive. I can't accept it."

"Remus, take it. If you should ever fall on hard times again, it may just come in handy," Harry admonished firmly.

He smiled happily, and gave her a kiss on the forehead. "I can't wait to see what you gave Sirius. Snape got the cloak, and I got this fabulous chess set."

"Sirius will just have to wait. Ron needs to open his gift first, and so does Dumbledore."

"Ah...Ron what did Harry get for you? I know what she gave to her protectors, but what does the Keeper of the Goblet get?"

"I have it here, but I haven't got a clue," Ron replied ripping the paper off a large box. "Harry, it's a pair of tickets to opening day for the Chudley Cannons! All right!" He waved the tickets in the air with glee.

"Child, you know how to please an old man," Dumbledore beamed looking over his half moon glasses. "Candy and music. Would you like to accompany me to the orchestra?"

"If I'm able to, I will," she looked at the old man with a forced smile. Her meaning was not lost on the Protectors, and Ron was not paying close attention, still staring with glee at the tickets.

Harry was very happy with her gifts as well; having received a book from Snape on dueling and blocking unfriendly spells and moves. It was even more advanced than what he and Remus had been working on with her. She had the feeling it was going to get even tougher. Remus gave her a gift certificate for the dress shop she had gone to with Snape the previous year. He wanted her to have a proper gown and robes for the formal dance Hogwarts was planning for the spring. Ron gave her a new sneak-o- scope. Finally, she opened Dumbledore's gift, and laughed with pleasure.

"This is for real?" she asked as they looked over their glasses at one another.

"It is."

"You really know how to make me happy, don't you?"

"Most of the time. I make a blunder from time to time."

"Harry, what did the Headmaster give you?" Ron asked curiously.

"Do the other three know?" Harry asked cocking her head in their direction, ignoring Ron's question.

"I thought you might like to surprise them. I am afraid young Mr. Weasley may be a little jealous, but Molly said no. She wants him to wait until after his birthday."

"You're right, Headmaster. I'm coming over here to sit with you where he won't try and get me," Harry grinned moving over to sit with Dumbledore.

All right Harry, what did Dumbledore give you that mum wouldn't let me have too?" Ron asked suspiciously.

"A permit to learn how to apparate," Harry ducked behind Dumbledore.

"What! Professor Dumbledore, Harry is younger than me, that isn't fair!" Ron exclaimed, trying to snatch the permit from Harry.

"Ron, your mother wants you to wait till your birthday, and I could not dissuade her."

"I won't do it either then, if it makes you feel better."

"Of course you will. You need to know how. What if You Know Who tries to corner you again, Harry. My birthday is only a few months away any way, and if mum thinks you are doing okay with it, maybe we can persuade her to let me get my permit too."

"I shall personally work on her some more, Ron," Dumbledore winked. "Harry, we will begin on your regular lesson day. First, we will work on your telekinesis and then your apparition lesson."

"Can't we do it the other way around?"

"No, this way maybe you will concentrate a bit more when you move things around, and don't try to argue with me, that permit can be revoked as easily as it was obtained," Dumbledore warned her with a twinkle in his blue eyes, but his voice told her he meant it. "Now open your present from Sirius."

"Yeah, open mine. I have been sitting here waiting patiently. I hope you like my gift as much the one Albus gave you."

"I'm sure it will be my favorite," Harry grinned hugging the box. She knew it had to be something special, and was most likely jewelry, judging by the box. Opening it carefully, she beamed with pleasure. It was a ruby and diamond heart pendant with a matching pair of earrings."

"You certainly know how to please a girl. No wonder they all want you," she quipped. "I shall make sure it matches the formal gown I get for the spring dance."

"You'll be the Belle of the Ball," Sirius smiled as he fastened the necklace for her.

"Miss Harry, Mr. Sirius gives you pretty presents. He loves you a lot," Phaedra smiled.

"You're right," Harry smiled, blushing.

"Uncle Severus, how come you didn't give Miss Harry something pretty like you gave to mummy?"

Snape's usually pale face flushed slightly.

"He gave Miss Harry a very important book. It will help Miss Harry to fight the bad wizard. It is all about dueling."

"Can you duel? I watched Uncle Severus and Uncle Tiberius duel once. They said they were practicing."

"Who won?" Harry asked looking from Professor Snape to his uncle.

"It was a draw. My uncle and I were going over some advanced moves. I will be teaching them to you shortly."

"Harry, I hate to spoil your chat on dueling," Sirius interrupted, "but what is this special present you got for me?"

"Headmaster where did you hide it?"

"In my pocket," Dumbledore laughed taking out a small package and handing it to Sirius."

"Honey, what could you have possibly gotten for me?" He tore the wrapping off the package and took out a miniature motorcycle. "I know you knew how I missed riding. We had a great time after your birthday when Hagrid let me use my old bike. It was a nice thought." Harry was grinning like a Cheshire cat, and Sirius looked at her curiously. "What is going on?"

"Oh, Sirius," Dumbledore began, "I have made a grievous error. May I see that for a moment?" he asked as Sirius handed him the little bike. Dumbledore set it down and waved his wand. "That's better. I had forgotten to return it to normal size," he laughed with Harry.

"Harry..." Sirius jaw dropped in shock.

"Way to go, Harry. Sirius will you take me for a ride?" Ron asked with enthusiasm.

"Not till he takes me first. I'm told it has all the proper enchantments. You can thank the headmaster for helping me to secure the permission from the ministry."

"Harry...Albus...I...I don't know what to say."

"Try, thank you honey, I love it," Harry smiled as Dumbledore beamed patiently.

"I do you know..." He smiled and then threw back his head and laughed. "I'll take you all for a ride after breakfast." Sirius then reduced the motorcycle back down in size and put the little box aside until after he got dressed. He would enlarge his new "toy" once they completed their breakfast in the Great Hall.

Ron sat with Phaedra during breakfast and they had great fun pulling on the crackers. As each of the silver noisemakers popped with a loud bang, a surprise appeared, and Phaedra clapped her hands with glee. She was delighted when a miniature wand appeared along with a tiny flying dragon.

Dumbledore convinced Snape to pull one with Harry, after Sirius left to check out his new bike, taking it for a test run to get the feel of it before taking the others for a ride. Snape's prize turned out to be a miniature cauldron.

"Now that is truly appropriate. A mini cauldron for our Potions Master," Dumbledore laughed patting Snape on the shoulder. "Let's see what Harry gets."

She pulled another one, and was taken aback when a small version of the Slytherin Serpent appeared, and slithered across the table. It startled her so badly she upset her glass of pumpkin juice.

"I'm sorry. I wasn't prepared for that snake," she apologized as Dumbledore waved his wand to clean the spill.

"Child, what is it? You seem rather distracted today."

"I'm fine, Headmaster, just a little tired. That dream last night really spooked me."

Dumbledore studied her intently before nodding, "I think a nice nap after your outing with Sirius may be just what you need."

"The way he flies that motorcycle I'll more likely need a trip to St. Mungo's," she chuckled.

Inwardly she was confused and worried. Something was not quite, as it should be, but she could not put her finger on it. Harry hung back as they left the Great Hall. She needed to talk with Professor Snape. The tiny serpent had put an idea into her head, and she could not shake the feeling that she should know something important.

"Excuse me, Professor Snape; may I have a word with you in private before you retire with your family for the rest of the morning?"

"Of course, Potter. Haven't I told you that as your Protector I am always available? It was a mistake on my part not to talk with you when you came to my quarters yesterday," Snape remarked leading her to a corner of the Great Hall where they could talk without being overheard.

"Professor Snape...Severus..." She began uncertainly.

"Harry is something bothering you? You seem rather distressed," he asked softly, a note of concern etched into his voice.

"What is Occlumency?" she blurted out biting her lip.

He stood absolutely still, his dark eyes boring into her. "Where did you hear that term?"

"I...It just came into my head. I had this ridiculous feeling you were trying to teach me."

"It is a method by which a person can keep another from entering their mind. When was I supposed to be instructing you?" He curled his lip in a sneer.

"I must have been mistaken," Harry averted his stare. "I'll see you later, Professor. I'm sorry I detained you. Sirius is waiting for me."

"Till later then, Potter," he dismissed her.

He waited until she was safely out of sight with Black before turning swiftly on his heels and heading upstairs to Dumbledore's office. He knew the Headmaster would want to know about her having asked about Occlumency immediately. Harry's mind was growing stronger, as Voldemort's powers increased.

## **Memories**

"Headmaster," Severus began, his dark eyes studying the old man as he sat down opposite him at his desk, "Potter is getting worse. I have been observing her at night as you instructed. She is talking in her sleep and crying out. She has also begun to sleep walk."

"Has she said anything more since Christmas to you about Occlumency?"

"No, but I have overheard her asking questions to her friends on various subjects. She asked Mr. Longbottom how his wand had gotten broken. Fortunately, his memory is poor on a good day, so when he could not remember she just shrugged it off."

"Has she said anything to young Weasley or Miss Granger?"

"She asked Miss Granger and Mr. Weasley about Professor Umbridge."

"What did they say?" Dumbledore asked his expression reflecting his worry.

"They had no idea what she was talking about. Potter kept insisting she had been their Defense Against the Dark Arts instructor during their fifth year."

"Miss Granger simply told her that Professor Lupin had come back that year and to stop making jokes. Weasley was more to the point. He told her she was daft, and that a Delores Umbridge used to be employed by the Ministry of Magic."

"Have there been any other instances?"

"Almost daily, she watches Lupin and Black. Sometimes I see her just sitting alone with a look of intense concentration."

"Hmm...Harry has asked some questions of me as well, mostly about the Department of Mysteries. She has also reread the Mathias Prophecy," Dumbledore pursed his lips, "she seemed to think there should be something else. She asked if it were the only prophecy involving her. She was troubled and felt something was missing."

"Headmaster, I do not wish to appear impertinent, but is it possible she is fighting through the memory charms?"

"It is not only very possible, it is extremely likely. Harry is no ordinary witch. She is Voldemort's equal," Dumbledore stated, ignoring his Potion Master's grimace at the sound of the Dark Lord's name. "She is also his opposite; one good, one evil."

"Will you modify her memory again?" Snape questioned with a slight tilt to his head.

"No, Severus. It is time she knew the truth. We shall tell her what happened and restore her memories. I purposely stored them in my pensieve."

"Is it wise to completely restore her memory? She will be angry."

"No, actually she will probably be quite furious with me. At the time though, it was necessary. Sirius will need to tell his story."

"What about her friends?"

"Their memories will be restored as well. As for the rest of the student body, they were not a part of what happened at the Ministry, and will not know the difference. It will be a simple thing to remove the blanket charm on the building regarding Umbridge," Dumbledore remarked matter of factly. "Inform Sirius and Lupin to report to my office after dinner tonight. I shall arrange for Harry to come up too."

"And the other students, will you bring them up as well?"

"We can adjust their memories in the morning. Harry will want to be present."

"I shall do as you wish," Snape rose from his seat. "I only hope reliving the experience of Black's death is not too traumatic for her."

"She is older now, Severus. You and Black have come to terms with one another. She was understandably angry at the time. As her soul mate, you of all people should understand how she felt at the time. As I recall, you were in a similar frame of mind when you lost your wife and son."

"You are of course correct. Had it not been for you and my sister, Circe, I probably would be either dead by the Dark Lord's hand or permanently committed to St. Mungo's," Severus admitted ruefully as he mounted the stairs from the tower. "That old man never fails to amaze me. I never said a word about being Potter's soul mate, yet he knows..." Severus Snape scowled as he headed off to inform Black and Lupin about the Headmaster's plan before going off to his dungeon refuge...

"Hermione, are you sure you've never heard of a house elf named, Kreacher?"

"For the last time, Harry, no! Hermione frowned annoyed at the interruption in her Transfiguration homework.

"Why don't you ask Dobby?" Ron asked chewing on his sugar quill.

"I did," Harry replied flatly, "he denied knowing him. I think he was lying."

"Harry, why would Dobby lie? You know he's devoted to you."

"He may be free, but he's loyal to Dumbledore for giving him a job," Harry answered getting up to pace the length of the common room while Ron quietly whispered with Hermione.

"That's how house elves are, Hermione," Ron reminded her, "but why would Harry believe that Dumbledore would ask him to lie."

"He wouldn't do that, Ron. Harry has been acting strange for weeks now. I know Dumbledore is worried. I caught him watching her a few times in the Great Hall."



"Yeah, I can't argue that she has been acting rather daft for the past two months, but if Dumbledore thought it was serious he would have put her into St. Mungo's in a heartbeat," Ron whispered eyeing Harry as she stopped to stare into the fire.

"Ron, don't be stupid. I'll bet Dumbledore knows exactly what is wrong with her. He knows everything that goes on in this building, especially when it concerns Harry or You Know Who."

"Then why doesn't he do something? All these questions about strange people and places she's never been to. She hasn't been sleeping well either. She admitted to me that she is having nightmares. You don't think You Know Who is up to something do you?"

"I don't think so. Has she complained about her scar hurting?"

"No," Ron replied as the common room door opened and Professor McGonagall entered.

"Harry Potter," she looked around, searching the room full of students for her quarry, "please come with me." Her crisp brogue brooked no argument. "The Headmaster requires your presence in his office."

"Yes, ma'am," Harry looked at Ron and Hermione with a shrug. Following the Deputy Headmistress out through the open portrait of the Fat Lady, she questioned her cautiously. "Professor McGonagall, am I in some kind of trouble? I haven't done anything I can think of."

"The Headmaster will explain everything Miss Potter," she relaxed her stern countenance just enough to let Harry know that she was not being summoned for a disciplinary problem. "Pralines and cream," McGonagall opened the hidden door behind the gargoyle. "You are to go right up."

Harry mounted the moving staircase with trepidation. 'What on earth could Dumbledore want? I have been doing everything he's asked, and even studying for my seventh year O.W.L.'s.'

"Welcome, Harry," Dumbledore smiled looking at her over his spectacles, "sit down and have some refreshments with us."

Harry looked around as he ushered her into his sitting room, becoming aware that Sirius, Snape, and Lupin were also present. Her godfather and Professor Lupin were sitting on either end of the sofa. Snape had taken one of the two wing chairs by the fire. Dumbledore's pensive was sitting on the table beside a tray of cakes and a pot of tea. There was also a pitcher of cider. She eyed them all suspiciously, as the Headmaster sat down in the other chair opposite Professor Snape.

"Come on, Harry, sit with us," Professor Lupin indicated the vacant seat on the couch.

"Why? Maybe I prefer to stand," her green eyes flicked from one to the other. Dumbledore was studying her shrewdly. Professor Snape was sitting straight and stiff, his legs out stretched in front of him. Remus smile seemed forced and Sirius was distracted, his eyes haunted. She was reminded of when he had first escaped from Azkaban.

"Suit yourself, Potter, we may be awhile."

"It wouldn't surprise me. If Dumbledore has his pensive out then I doubt I have been invited here for a friendly little get together, Professor Snape."

"Harry, sit down please. You're right about this not being a friendly little get together. It is something quite important." Sirius voice was hollow and pained.

"Sirius are you all right? What is the matter?" She immediately let her guard down and scanned his emotions. He was in a state of turmoil. She could sense fear, pain, and heartbreak. There was a sense of confusion and worry. Taking his hand, she sat down beside him to try to comfort him.

She knew the others were scrutinizing her. Suddenly she felt a rush as Professor Snape intruded into her mind. He was forcing his thoughts on her. Harry immediately attempted to block this intrusion, and screamed in her mind, 'Get out Snape.' Concentrating hard, she attempted to make her mind blank by dividing it into a series of doors. She then slammed them shut one by one to cut off his invasion. It worked.

"Congratulations, Miss Potter, I see the Occlumency lessons weren't a total loss after all," Snape, sneered.

"What are you talking about, Professor? You have flatly denied ever teaching me Occlumency," Harry looked at him visibly shaken by his mental assault. Her breath was coming in swift gasps and her brow was wet with perspiration. She was looking around in confusion.

"You didn't need to do that, Snape," Sirius growled irritably, "this will be hard enough as it is."

Harry started to get up, but Remus put his hand on her arm to restrain her, "Stay still, Princess. Albus will explain everything in a minute."

Harry locked eyes with Professor Dumbledore. They stared at each other for fully five minutes without wavering. The only sound was the ticking of Dumbledore's twelve-handed grandfather clock. Harry broke the silence.

"What is going on, Professor?"

"How much do you remember of your fifth year at Hogwarts, Harry?" his blue eyes were bright with interest.

"How much do I really remember, or how much did you want me to remember?" She countered him.

"Why ever would you ask such a question, Child?"

"Because I firmly believe you have altered my memory. I would like to know why."

"I will not deny that your memory has been modified. Nor will I deny that you have begun to resist the charms we sought to protect you with and have been having flashes of the events of two years ago."

"Have you also done this to my friends? They keep thinking something is wrong with me."

"We have, but for good reason. Their memories will be restored tomorrow. Tonight we have asked you here to listen to our reasons, and help you to understand. You will have to face some very painful and frightening memories, and then Sirius will tell you his story."

"Will you answer my questions first?"

"If you wish, Child, although all your answers will be found with your memories."

"Perhaps they won't seem as bad if I know some of them first."

"Very well, we will do our best to answer."

Harry thought for a moment, and looked around the room.

"Who is Kreacher?"

"He was my family's house elf, Harry. He was devoted to my mother," Sirius responded quietly.

"The address I keep remembering, number 12 ..."

"Grimmauld Place, London," Sirius finished for her, "it was my family home, and where I lived until I was a teenager."

Harry studied Sirius intently, and they could see her mind working.

"You...you ran away...lived with my father's family, I think."

"That's right, Harry, can you remember anything else?"

"The woman in the portrait...she was...your mother?" she asked uncertainly.

"Yes, can you recall any more?"

Harry got up and began to pace, and then spun around to look at the portraits of the former Headmasters of Hogwarts.

"Phineas Nigellus, you are Sirius great-great-grandfather?" she addressed the man in the portrait.

He looked down at her haughtily, studying her, before responding.

"You are very powerful to be able to break through Dumbledore's memory charm. Yes, Sirius is my great-great-grandson. He is the last of the Black's"

Satisfied, Harry nodded to him, and turned away. She was aware of all the portraits watching her.

"Professor Dumbledore, was Sirius house the headquarters for the Order of the Phoenix?"

"Yes, Child, it has since been abandoned. What else do you remember?"

"I was hurt, you could have made me a Prefect and didn't. You passed me up and were practically ignoring me for almost the entire year. What is worse I had to suffer the indignity of Draco Malfoy rubbing it in. He just loved showing off his badge to me," Harry felt a burst of pain and anger. "You caused more damage than Voldemort ever could have. I was more alone in those few months than I had ever been living with the Dursley's. I hope you rot in hell for it. I will never forgive you."

"I know, Harry, it was an old man's mistake," Dumbledore's voice remained calm. "Do you remember why I distanced myself from you?"

"I...Voldemort...he became aware of the link between us. You didn't want him to use me...you old SOB," Harry yelled angrily, "that's why you hypnotized me last summer. You wanted to see if it was still possible for me to see him. You saw it starting all over again."

"Potter, the Headmaster had to be sure you were not being controlled by the Dark Lord. He would use you without mercy," Professor Snape informed her acerbically. "You of all people should be aware of the dangers."

"You had no business poking around in my head!"

"As I recall you gave me permission to do so," Snape replied evenly.

Harry's green eyes flashed, but before she could reply, Remus' voice stopped her cold.

"Harry, Severus is merely trying to point out the facts. Calm down, and let us help you. I know this is difficult for you. It is difficult for all of us. You have only remembered some of what occurred, but there is much more."

"I think '*Snivellus*' can take care of himself, he had no reason to call my mum a Mudblood. She was trying to help him!" Harry froze. The memory of what she had seen in the Pensieve of Snape's relationship with her parents had hit her like a ton of bricks. She turned to Snape, her lower lip quivering, "I...I...didn't mean...to..." She was unable to finish the sentence. She could feel his pain at the memory, and it was exacerbated by her having thrown it out at him. Snape was staring at her as if it was her first day at Hogwarts.

"Severus, don't act like an ass. Harry's memories of the year are only in bits and pieces. She came to me afterwards, upset by what she had seen. I explained that you and James had never liked one another and that at fifteen we were all arrogant and acted like idiots. Remus and I both wanted her to apologize and go back to taking Occlumency lessons."

"I am well aware of what transpired after I found her in the pensieve, Black. I merely did not anticipate her dredging it up and reminding me of it."

"I felt just as guilty then as I do now, Professor," Harry looked at Snape apologetically. She was quiet for a few minutes, as she concentrated.

"Fred and George, they've moved the magic shop. They started it in Diagon Alley. I know they did...the swamp...what happened to it?"

"They moved the shop because we asked them to. It has not hurt their business at all," Dumbledore smiled, "as for the swamp, Professor Flitwick removed it. A small piece of it still remains, but he now has it in his quarters."

"My head hurts. I feel like it is going to explode if I remember any more."

"Then use the pensive, Child, there is no shame in doing so. You have shown extraordinary ability in just remembering some of what transpired."

"No, I... You were gone, for a long time. That awful woman... Professor Umbridge... she was Fudges' watchdog. She called herself the *High Inquisitor of Hogwarts*." Harry sat thinking for a moment and then laughed, "She was the reason the twins made the swamp. I needed to talk to Sirius. I was upset over how my dad had treated Snape. It was a ruse so I could use her office to talk to him in the fire. He had to re-teach me last year. I must have forgotten how when my memory was altered."

Sirius smiled, "that's right. Go on, can you think of anything else?"

"Who is Tonk?"

"She's my cousin, and it's Tonks, not Tonk. Do you know any more about her?"

"I think that isn't her real name... I... can't remember. Is she an Auror?"

"Why do you ask, Child?"

"She came... I... the Dursley's kitchen. She was there with Mad Eye Moody and Remus!" Harry grinned, pleased that she could remember this. "I think there were some other people too, but I can't remember who."

Harry sat quietly for a few more minutes, concentrating. Remus handed her a cup of cider, while they waited to see if she could recall any more events. Heaving a long sigh, she looked at Sirius.

"Is there a tapestry in your house? I think it was a kind of family tree."

"That's right, honey. Do you know any of the names on it?"

"You have a cousin... Andromeda... She's named after your grandmother. You have other cousins... Narcissa Malfoy and Bellatrix Lestrange..." Harry's voice trailed off. "I'm tired. I don't want to know anymore." She was beginning to feel afraid and curled up on the couch. Inside she knew they would not let her go.

"Harry... honey... why don't you use the pensive. You need to understand why this is happening to you," Sirius commented trying to put his arms around her, but she pushed him away.

"No! I remember too much pain! I can't go through that again. You don't know what pain does to an empath. Noooo..." Harry sat rocking back and forth, holding her head, it was pounding, and now her scar was hurting. She didn't know why, but she had to get away from Dumbledore. Then she heard his laugh... Voldemort's laugh... he had gotten into her mind again and she wondered idly if Snape and Dumbledore knew.

"Princess, calm down. Everything will be all right, I promise," Remus' voice seemed to come from a long way off.

Voldemort was taking control of her thoughts. Harry had to get him out. 'It won't work,' he intoned. 'I am way better at this than you,' his laugh was like chalk grating on a blackboard in her mind.

"I don't think so you fucking bastard, not this time," she yelled aloud.

"Albus what is wrong with her?" Sirius gasped as Snape and Dumbledore both jumped to their feet simultaneously.

"Move away from her, Black. I need to stun her."

"Like hell you will. I told you this was a bad idea."

Harry let out a loud scream of fury, "Get out or I will put you out." Grabbing Sirius, she looked at him, and let herself feel what she had been keeping hidden. She felt all the pain come back...the horror...she had watched him die. "I love you Sirius Black," Harry said looking into his puppy brown eyes. Her body contorted and an ungodly scream came from her mouth, as Voldemort fled.

"Voldemort's gone," Dumbledore said quietly, coming over and brushing the hair from Harry's scar as he delivered her into Sirius arms. "You did well, child."

"You told me how, that night after you came back from the Department of Mysteries. I just wouldn't listen. I was in too much pain. You didn't know I was an empath then."

"If I had it wouldn't have made a difference. You were too angry and upset. I did make one other mistake though. I forgot I was dealing with the emotions of a girl, and not a boy."

"There is another Prophecy, you told me about it that night. You said that the seer who gave it was descended from another very famous seer. Professor Trelawney's ancestor was Chandra Mathias, wasn't it?"

"Yes, Child," Dumbledore answered sadly, his blue eyes wet with unshed tears.

"Harry, how much do you remember about what happened?" Remus asked.

"Just now with Voldemort or what happened two years ago?"

"Both," Sirius and Remus replied in unison.

"Quite a bit, do the three of you know what is in the second prophecy? The one Professor Trelawney made?"

"No. Child, they do not."

"Then I think it is time they knew. I also think I need to use the pensieve now. I know I watched Sirius die, I must have been mistaken."

"Then come with us and we will go into the pensive with you. Then we will explain everything." The four wizards gathered around the bowl with Harry, and Dumbledore gently stirred the bowl. The silver fluid rippled as it drew them into their pasts so that they could plan their future....

A whole year's worth of memories came flooding back to her. Memories of Hagrid and the young giant he had brought back. Anger at her friends and people whispering about her, thinking she was mad. Cho believing she was a boy and planting a big wet kiss on her lips over Valentines Day. Dumbledore being ostracized from the various wizarding associations. Harry's strange ability to see the thestrals, Firenze teaching her divination class when Umbridge sacked Trelawney, and Luna Lovegood. Her father was the editor of the *Quibbler*. There was the day when Umbridge had taken over as Headmistress of Hogwarts when she had found out about their meetings of Dumbledore's Army. Severus attempting to teach her *Occlumency* and her memories of what she had seen of his childhood. Finally, there had been the battle in the Ministry of Magic and the door she had been dreaming about. The door to the Prophecy room. The second prophecy that had been given by Trelawney in one of her rare actual trances. The one that foretold that either she or Voldemort must die, "*for neither can live while the other survives.*"

Harry was crying and hanging onto Sirius in confusion. He had died. They had all said so. She had watched him fall through the veil. Bellatrix had hit him with her wand stream. Dumbledore had come and dueled with Voldemort. He had tried to kill her by telling Dumbledore to kill him while he was controlling her. He wanted Dumbledore to believe he possessed her.

"Albus, this second prophecy, it refers to the person as a boy. Are you sure it's Harry?" Sirius asked worriedly.

"She bears the mark, and remember the Prophecy of Mathias said she would be hidden. Sibyll saw Harry as a boy. I was certain when she received the scar. It is mentioned prominently in both prophecies," Dumbledore explained quietly.

"Albus, does that mean...?" Remus was unable to complete the sentence.

"It means just what it says. The headmaster told me two years ago, before I ever heard of the Prophecy of Mathias. He had to tell me about that one when I started asking gender questions. To put it bluntly gentlemen, I'm screwed."

"Potter, you are not, as you so aptly put it, screwed. They both say you have the power to defeat the Dark Lord."

"Well thank you Professor Snape. As I recall you went out of your way to humiliate me along with everyone else. Including making me say I had to take remedial potions. As for Dumbledore, the Head Girl crap is too little too late. Where were you two years ago when I was hurting and believed you had turned your back on me? I wasn't good enough then, but the little Slytherin scumbag Draco Malfoy was. Thanks for the vote of confidence," Harry's confusion was rapidly turning back to anger.

"Harry, don't speak to Albus like that," Sirius, reprimanded her gently.

"Shut up, you were supposed to be dead. I was sent home to the Dursley's and hoped Voldemort would come and kill me. I had watched everyone who had ever had any kind of affection for me die. Unfortunately, that is the one place on earth where I was safe from him. At least I was until this past year. He finally found a way to get around the charms. Once he did that, he knew my aunt would protect her son over me. The link, which bound us by blood, was broken."

"Princess, that isn't true. I care for you a good deal, and so does Albus. You know Severus also cares. You were in such an awful state. We thought you would do better if you knew Moody and I were watching. If it hadn't been for your aunt we wouldn't have known how you really were handling the situation."

"Remus, I wasn't there, what actually happened?" Sirius asked soberly.

"Harry wouldn't eat and barely slept. She would pace her bedroom floor for hours, or just lie in bed and cry. She was in shock and we didn't realize it at the time. We thought she had accepted your death and was simply grieving at first. Moody and I got suspicious when she sent letters to her friends telling them not to write any more. She also sent one to Albus stating she would not be returning to Hogwarts in September. She thanked him for all he had done and hoped he would always remember her fondly. That letter set off more alarm bells than anything else did. We all immediately contacted Arabella Figg. She told us Harry had been staying in the house, but had gone out earlier that morning and had not yet returned."

"What did you do?" Sirius asked, his brown eyes reflecting his pain at what she had been through after the altercation at the Ministry.

"Albus, Moody, and I all apparated to the Dursley's kitchen, it was quite a scene. Mr. Dursley had gone to work, but Petunia Dursley was mopping the kitchen floor. She almost had a heart attack when we showed up. She let out one hell of a scream. Albus handled it with his usual aplomb."

"Did she know where Harry had gone?"

"No, she told us Harry had just left a short time ago. She said that we should try the park where all the teenagers hung out. Albus glared at her, and she was terrified. He questioned her and found out what had been going on. He then asked for and got permission to check Harry's room, although I daresay he would have done so anyway. Hedwig was not in her cage and it was obvious that Harry had packed some things in a hurry, to run away. Moody got his team into action immediately. With the exception of Severus, we were all searching."

"Figures he stayed behind," Harry snorted. The painful memories continued to assault her.

"Harry, Severus stayed behind as per my instructions," Dumbledore informed her softly. "I had a good reason for asking him to do so."

"Who finally found her?"

"The one person in the world I never wanted to see again. I was furious that he was alive and you were dead," Harry, answered somberly. "It wasn't fair that he was walking around, able to do all the things in life that he enjoyed, secure in the knowledge that Dumbledore would protect his spy at all costs. Severus Snape, spy for the Order, former Death Eater, and the man



who had taken such pleasure to humiliate me in front of my peers for the past five years. He had no business living when my parents and godfather were dead. I planned on seeing that he didn't."

"I seem to recall you once told us you didn't know if you could kill anyone," Snape sneered.

"Severus, I still don't know, but on that day I only knew I wanted you dead. I didn't know I would come face to face with you. I just wanted to find some comfort and hide in a safe place where I could feel Sirius presence. He was gone, and I felt alone."

"Harry, how did you run into Severus? Where was he?" Sirius questioned her with interest. "I didn't see any of this in the pensive."

"That is because you, Remus, and Severus were already out of the pensive at that point. I stayed with Harry while she remembered this," Dumbledore said quietly. "Remus and Severus did not need to remember this, since they knew what happened. You were not there, and I wanted Harry to tell you what transpired herself."

"I thought that is exactly what I was doing Professor."

"Pray, continue, Child. I know we would all like to hear this story again from your point of view, and Sirius only knows some of it."

"Well, I just wanted Sirius back, or at least some part of him that I could hang onto. Therefore, I decided to run away. I didn't give a shit if Voldemort was trying to kill me. I actually hoped he would. I felt like I was dead inside. It wasn't healthy to be near me, and I was determined I wasn't going to lose anyone else I cared about. I set Hedwig free, or at least I thought I did, took my wand and my cloak along with some clothes stuffed into my backpack and went out the door. I knew Aunt Petunia wouldn't care; she never did when I went out. I even waved to Arabella Figg, and walked up the street."

"Honey, where were you planning on going?"

"I had no idea. I just knew that before I went I had one stop to make. I wanted to find any trace of you that I could take with me. I headed to Grimmauld Place."

"Did you use your broom?"

"Sirius, don't be silly. The ministry had already tried to expel me once, and I didn't want to alert the authorities that I was on the move. No, I had to find other means of transportation."

"How did she travel, on the Knight bus?" he asked looking from one to the other of them.

"Go ahead and tell him, Child," Dumbledore's blue eyes were twinkling as he remembered her ingenuity in attempting to evade them.

"Living in a Muggle household had some advantages. I had some money, so I quite simply took the underground. It wasn't very hard. I took the local bus to the station and then checked the train schedule and asked the clerk for directions on which train to take. I knew the house should be empty, but I was also careful about getting inside in case it was being guarded. I used my cloak, and rang the bell."

"Who answered the door?"

"The one person in the whole world I wanted to see dead, Severus Snape."

"He wasn't suspicious when no one was there?"

"I knew it was Harry that had rung the bell. I knew she was missing, and I had spoken to Moody not five minutes before. I made sure there was plenty of room for her to get past me. She didn't know Moody was now upstairs and watching with his magical eye. He had seen her come up the street, and could see through her invisibility cloak."

"Ah, but my dear Potions Master, you didn't expect me to try and attack you," Harry gloated with an evil smile. "Once I was safely inside, or so I thought, I went in search of something...anything...that would make me feel better. I headed directly upstairs, but Mad Eye could see everything I was doing. Snape could sense my presence, and knew Mad Eye had seen me coming, but I was unaware of this. I could however, determine that he was keeping some kind of secret and he was headed upstairs behind me."

"Did he stop you then?"

"No, he wanted to see what I was up to. I headed to your room, and tried the door. It was locked. I just stood there confused for a minute, and then I got angry. How dare they lock your door and keep me from your things. I looked towards my room, where Severus had gone, only to find he was standing in the doorway looking up the hall. I could sense his amusement, and was even madder. He had no business being amused when everybody I cared about was gone."

"Is that when you attacked him?"

"I forgot all about trying to hide beneath my cloak and pulled out my wand. I'll never forget his voice that day, 'Potter, it's a wonder you have survived against the Dark Lord for so long. Subterfuge is not your best skill,' Harry imitated him, and Snape arched his brow amused. "I cursed at him and started screaming that he had no business being alive. I think I told him he was no better than pond scum and that it was his fault my parents died and then you. I went berserk and yelled at him that Ron was probably right to believe that he hadn't changed sides at all, that he was actually spying for Voldemort. Then I attacked him. I threw out a *Cruciatius* curse which he was more than prepared for."

"He blocked the spell?"

"Easily, and I told him I was going to kill him."

"What did he do?" Sirius grinned, touched by her loyalty. He knew she had to have been in a state of turmoil.

"I dared her to try and duel with me."

"I accepted. I think he rather enjoyed it too."

"Severus, you didn't duel with her?" Sirius asked shocked.

"I merely gave her a lesson in behavior. I felt if Potter was that arrogant as to try and take me on, then I should accommodate the challenge."

"What happened? He didn't hurt you did he?"

"He knocked me halfway up the hallway, and I landed on my ass."

"Which only made her madder," Snape replied pretending to sound bored with the story, but his thin smile belied his statement.

"Well, I got up and I was livid, I screamed that I was going to kill him and almost got out the first part of the curse, but he stopped me cold. I was too pissed and blinded by grief to consider he would disarm me, but that is exactly what happened. He then put an *imperious* curse on me, which I fought tooth and nail."

"She was quite good too," Snape acknowledged.

"Yeah, he tried to make me come over to him, but he only got a few steps out of me. That's when the door to your room opened and Moody came out. I was also able to see inside...." Harry's voice trailed off at the memory, her amusement at recalling her duel with Snape gone. Her eyes had gone wide with the memory of what she had seen, and she was trembling. "They had all said you were dead; yet there you were. White as a ghost and delirious on your bed, I was stunned, and confused. Why did they lie to me? Even Sir Nicholas said you were dead. He said you wouldn't be back, even as a ghost. That's when I heard Dumbledore's voice..." She looked at him in shock, "you stunned me."

"I had to, Child. Sirius was still in serious condition. We didn't even know how he had gotten there. Severus had found him half-conscious in the hallway the morning after the battle with Voldemort in the Department of Mysteries. At first, we weren't even sure it was really him. He had fallen through the veil that separated the living and the dead. It could have been an impersonator using the Polyjuice Potion. Once we determined it was indeed Sirius, we needed to find a place for him to recover in safety. He was to be moved that very morning back to Lupin's. Once he was sufficiently recovered, he would go back into hiding in the cave he had used previously until a new headquarters for the Order could be set up. When you saw him, he was actually under the influence of a mild sleeping potion, but was having a nightmare.

It was then I decided it would be best if we made you forget what had happened. I saved your memories in the Pensive since I felt that you should be able to retrieve them when I believed you to be ready to handle all that had happened. You were so angry and hurt, that I blamed myself. It had been my mistakes that had led up to the entire incident, so I felt you should be able to blame no one but me, when I gave you back the memories of that terrible year. We all agreed your friends should have their memories altered too, that way you would never know until I decided you were ready. It all went well until this past Christmas. Something triggered you to start fighting the memory charms unconsciously...."

"The cemetery...It had to have been on Christmas Eve. I started asking Sirius about whether he thought there was something after death. I wanted to know if he believed my parents were at peace. He reminded me we lived in a haunted castle. Then Severus showed up and we talked about facing my fear of being alone. A part of me remembered. That's when I became aware..."

"That while you were in love with Sirius your other protector was actually your soul mate?"

"One is my heart which gives me strength, one my soul from which my courage springs, and the other my conscience to help me endure all that I have seen and what is yet to come. You are the hope which gives me the faith to trust in the good of others." Harry told him looking into his blue eyes. "Why didn't you just tell me the truth? All I needed to hear was that Sirius was alive."

Dumbledore hesitated, "I wanted you to forget the pain you were feeling. You also knew so much about the Order that while I allowed you to retain the knowledge that it existed, I made sure you didn't remember all the members. I found that the Dark Lord had learned about Severus spying for me again when he had touched your mind, so it was best if you didn't remember. I also felt that since Sirius was so vulnerable in his weakened state that he should recover in privacy. I knew you wouldn't stay away, and this could jeopardize his freedom. He needed to be able to cope with the trauma he had been through, to adjust and come to terms with all he had seen and heard after passing through the veil. You needed to go back to being a normal teen, not one with a death threat hanging over her head; at least for a little while. I knew your female cycles had started, your aunt had told me, and so it wouldn't be long before you started asking questions. That's why you got your own room. I used your nightmares for a plausible excuse, and once your gender was out in the open I let you keep it on the pretext that the girls' dorm was full, even though it could have been enlarged magically. So you see I and I alone was responsible."

Harry sat mulling over what Dumbledore had just told her, absently taking one of the cakes off the tray and refilling her drink.

"I need to hear what happened after Sirius disappeared behind the veil. I will reserve judgment until then."

"Then we should begin with Sirius," Dumbledore nodded. "His story is most unusual."

Sirius shifted uncomfortably in his seat. His eyes again reflecting the haunted look of a man who has seen and endured things no one ever should.

"I suppose I should begin during the battle. I know you saw me laughing at Bellatrix just before her wand stream hit me. I was being too confident, and showing off. It was the first time that I actually felt useful. I was no longer sitting around guarding the house and looking after Buckbeak. My arrogance almost cost you your life, and should have cost me mine. I was not hit with a killing spell, but a stunning one. I don't know if you have ever realized this, but the energy emitted from our wands is different colors for different spells. Curses that do not kill are usually red. The *Avadra Kedavra* curse is always green. It also depends on the wizard or witch and the purpose of the spell," he saw Harry nod with understanding, and then continued, "Well, she hit me with a hell of a stunner. I was shocked, and did my best to fight..."

"That's why it took you so long to fall. It was like everything was in slow motion," she interrupted.

Nodding affirmatively, he continued, "I felt myself going down, and as I fell I went backwards through the arch. The veil closed in on me and I could no longer see you, but heard you calling to me. I could hear Remus telling you it was too late, and I knew I had fallen into

the realm that separates the living from the dead. I could feel the peace of the place engulfing me and I was being drawn towards another arched door. I wasn't afraid, but I regretted that I could no longer be there to help you. It seemed to take a long time, and I could hear other people. People I had known who had died. Family members, members of the Order, old friends..." His voice caught in his throat, and Harry could sense his distress.

"Old friends...what old friends?" she asked somberly, knowing the answer he would give, her heart skipping a beat.

"Lily...I heard Lily."

"My mother, not my father?" Harry asked surprised.

"Yes...at first anyway...she was crying...I couldn't understand how someone could cry when I could feel so much love coming towards me. She kept sobbing...saying I had to fight...Harry needs you to be there... She called to James...I opened my eyes and they were there...both of them."

"You saw...them...both?"

"Yes...Your dad was scowling at me...he started to yell...he...he said it wasn't my time...that I hadn't yet separated from my body...he...told me...he said to apparate home...now...you needed me. He told me that...if I passed through...through the arch, it would be...too late. I realized I was holding my wand. My mother...she was there...too. She told me to stay. James told me not to listen. She said the Dark Lord ...he was right. I looked at James, and Lily. I wanted to stay with them. Your father...he yelled...Sirius think! I smiled at him...he nodded...I raised my wand just as I reached the arch...I disappeared. I woke up confused and shivering with shock the next day, Severus gaping at me, his wand drawn. I was in the front hall of Grimmauld Place, and my mother's portrait was yelling at me, calling me a traitor."

"What did you do?"

"Nothing...I could barely move. Snape called for Moody, and he was stunned when he saw me. I kept mumbling about James and Lily, and felt like my insides had been turned inside out. My wand was on the floor next to me."

"What did you and Moody do with him?" Harry looked at Snape.

"We immediately sent for Dumbledore. I had a supply of Veritaserum and when he got there, he sent me for it. He also summoned Lupin."

"I damn near had a heart attack when I saw him. I couldn't believe it," Remus told her calmly. "A few hours ago I had seen him fall through the veil in the Hall of Mysteries, and now he was lying on the floor of his parents house half out of his mind ranting about James and Lily."

"I suppose you gave him the Veritaserum?" she pursed her lips at Dumbledore.

"We had to, Child, even I found it hard to believe it was really him. We questioned him at length, and Professor Lupin purposely asked him questions that only he or James would know the answer to. Severus also asked him questions about when they were here at school

together. I also asked him some very specific questions when we were alone in the room together. The one thing in the world only he and I knew."

"You asked him about me, and the Matthias Prophecy. You were the only two people that knew I was really a girl."

Dumbledore smiled, "Yes. He knew all the details of your birth. I was convinced. Sirius had come back through the veil to the land of the living. Later, when you started asking questions I did inquire if he had ever told anyone else since then, but he had not. I thought he may have told Remus during his convalescence but he maintained his promise to your parents, and kept quiet."

"Afterwards, Albus decided to alter your memory. You had seen me asleep and alive. I wasn't happy about it, but I was weak and we needed to abandon the house since it had been compromised. Remus hid me out and took care of me. I was not back to myself until mid August, and then I went back to the cave near his home. That's where Dumbledore's owl found me when it was time to tell you the story of your birth."

Harry was looking at Sirius with a big smile. "You came back from the dead for me. I'm happy."

"Me too," Sirius hugged her.

"Does that mean I'm forgiven for altering your memory?"

"No, Headmaster. It just means that this time I won't smash all your pretty toys," she replied playfully, remembering how she had ransacked his office that night after the battle with Voldemort. "I do have some other questions though."

"Indeed? I thought we covered the whole episode rather well," Snape remarked coolly.

"You're just jealous because he got a hug," Harry teased him smugly. "I suppose I will forgive you for the duel. You were just trying to keep me away from him."

"What about me Princess?"

"You stayed with him till he was better. You're forgiven."

"What else did you want to know, Harry?" Remus looked at her curiously.

"The Deathaters who went to Azkaban, like Lucius Malfoy. How did they get out?"

"Lucius is wealthy and powerful," Snape answered. "You have to remember that Fudge was on Voldemort's team although at that time we did not know. He was able to escape the charges. Some of the others did too. That is why Moody now takes them elsewhere."

"What about the Dementors? Have they all left the prison?"

"Some returned. They found it more convenient to get their fill of emotions without having to go out hunting for it. They rest are loyal to the Dark Lord."

"What ever happened to Umbridge?"

"She is now in retirement, Child. She never completely recovered from her ordeal with the centaurs."

"Good, it served the old toad faced bitch right," Harry snorted not caring if Dumbledore reprimanded her or not.

He merely cleared his throat and looked at her over his half moon glasses, "Is there anything else?"

"You will restore my friends' memories of the events tomorrow?"

"I said I would. I expect you will want to be present?"

"Naturally, I also feel we should both apologize to them. You for the memory alteration and me for being jealous. I assume that is why they were not Prefects last year?"

"You are quite correct. It was a grievous error on my part to think you had more than enough to deal with and deny you being a Prefect. I never considered your feelings and desires to succeed and be accepted," Dumbledore said regretfully. "Because of that and Professor Umbridge the student body was put under a blanket memory charm, which will also be removed tomorrow."

"That's why everyone thought I was daft when I started asking about Umbridge," Harry said shaking her head with relief. "Sirius," she directed her attention back to her godfather, "who was Draco Malfoy living with over the summer? His mother was murdered, and somehow I don't think he was sent to live with Bellatrix."

"He was sent to live with Andromeda, my favorite cousin and the one who was named after my grandmother. Hopefully she will help him to see the error of his ways, although I think his father's murdering Narcissa taught him the best lesson it could have."

"Isn't Andromeda Tonks mother, the one who married the Muggle?"

"Your memory is coming back quite well," he grinned, "that is exactly right. Do you have any other questions?"

"There is one other thing. Headmaster," she turned back to Dumbledore, "I want your word that you aren't keeping anything else from me, nor will you from now on. Prior to the Protectorship, you said you weren't keeping anything else from me. You lied, and I could feel you were holding something back. If you are worried about my thoughts being invaded by Voldemort just be honest and tell me. I can manipulate what is in my mind to distort it just as well as he can," Harry studied Dumbledore intently, her green eyes boring into his blue ones.

"If I refuse?"

"Consider it a last request. This is the middle of February. We both know that if the Mathias Prophecy holds true, and I think this is likely, sometime between now and the end of June I will be locked in a life or death battle with Lord Voldemort. All we know for certain is that he

will probably be defeated. As his equal, I may die with him. We will know for certain within the next four and a half months."

"Very well, I do have some things which I am withholding but they do not all directly pertain to you. For the safety of others, I can't reveal them. You will have to be content with that for the time being."

"What of the ones that do pertain to me?"

"Child I did not want to reveal it at this time. I don't know if you can handle the information."

"Do they know what it is?"

"Yes, just as they know you are descended from Gryffindor on your father's side and Salazar's sister on your mother's."

"Okay, then let me guess. I'm related to Salazar too, only on the Potter side."

The wizards all shifted uncomfortably, and then Dumbledore looked at her and nodded, "How did you figure it out?"

"Sirius told me the pure blood families are interrelated by either blood or marriage. Now, I know I'm not directly related to Sirius, since I saw his family tree, and you are all reluctant to tell me anything about my family other than my parents. So if you will all kindly tell me, I would rather hear what is so awful from you guys rather than find out some other way."

"Very well, Potter, I think you have the right to know," Snape's eyes were glittering as he looked over towards Dumbledore for his approval. It was not forthcoming.

"Well, Professor, spit it out. I know Dumbledore would rather I didn't know, and you don't like having to go against his judgment, but this has gone beyond that. It's my life and my future we are talking about. I'm walking a tightrope between life and death, and any information that will help me no matter how trivial may aid in this battle," Harry replied tiredly. Leaning back on the couch, she snuggled up to Sirius, and closed her eyes.

"Harry, I didn't come back from the dead to watch you die," Sirius nudged her worriedly.

"I hope you won't have to either," she sighed opening her eyes to look at him. "I don't want to die."

"Princess, I refuse to accept the idea that you're going to die along with Lord Voldemort. I don't want to hear you talk like that."

"Remus, the one prophecy says I will win, but is unclear if I survive. The other quite simply says one of us must die. It says I have the power to defeat him, but I don't feel powerful at all. That's why I find it so important to know what ever it is you all aren't telling me."

"Perhaps, Child it would be better if you did know. You need to realize though, that this information was kept from you to protect you from hurt and ridicule. I never wanted you to know the truth, not now anyway."



"Headmaster, unless you're going to tell me the Dark Lord is my father, which I know he isn't just by looking in the mirror, what could be so bad?"

"Princess, this is hard for all of us, but you are right, he isn't your parent."

"Okay..." Harry said slowly looking at them all with trepidation. "Obviously I have relatives I don't know about, and he must be one of them," she guessed aloud.

"Yes, Child, your paternal grandmother was Diana Malvolo, the younger sister of Media Malvolo, Tom Riddle's mother. He is your second cousin. He despised your father's family because they were descended from Gryffindor and his aunt, who was much younger than his mother was, married into them. Their father had disowned Riddle's mother because she married a Muggle. He too was a purist. Fortunately your grandmother was not."

"Miss Potter...Harry...you have more power than you realize. You have the blood of some of the greatest wizards of all time in your veins. If you keep thinking you will lose, then keep remembering what you said on Christmas Eve. The Dark Lord was afraid when he saw you transform into the Phoenix."

"Harry, do you know why Voldemort was afraid of you?" Dumbledore asked kindly, his blue eyes bright.

"No, I haven't been able to figure it out."

"Think about your lessons on the Phoenix. What is it capable of doing?"

"It can regenerate, but I don't think I can, nor can I disappear and reappear at will, although I remember seeing Fawkes do it," she smiled remembering how Fawkes would suddenly vanish during the year she had been made to forget. "I can heal, and so can he," Harry said getting up to go over to where the bird sat watching her intently on his perch. "Yes, I see it now...Phoenix song...I wonder...?"

"Yes, Child, you are pure of heart. You love with your entire being, and will protect those you care about without question. Isn't that why you went to the Department of Mysteries at the Ministry?"

"I went to save Sirius, and nearly got us all killed."

"But you went," Dumbledore smiled, "you put him above yourself because you loved him. That is something Voldemort would never do. It is what your mother did when she sacrificed herself for you, and your father, when he sacrificed himself to give your mother the time to protect you."

Fawkes was trilling contentedly as Harry gently pet him.

"I can stop him. All along, I have been saying he is a sociopath and couldn't love. I thought he had some feelings for his dead mother, but it was simply his idea of what might have been. I see that now. The answer has been in front of me all the time. How could I have been so stupid. He can't exist when confronted with genuine affection and love. It intimidates him. He's threatened by it. That's why he killed Professor Snape's wife and set the Dementors on the baby," Harry turned to Severus, "he wanted to punish you by taking away the one thing he

could never have. That's why he demands unconditional obedience, but in your case it backfired!" she paced excitedly. She stopped abruptly, and spun to look at Snape, becoming aware of his pain and anger with her.

"Who told you what happened to Camilla and Marcus?" he asked icily, his face the color of chalk.

"Circe told me several months ago. She didn't want to see you hurt again," Harry responded quietly, keeping her voice calm and steady.

"Severus, Harry meant no harm. She is also quite right in her assessment of the situation," Dumbledore interceded. "she has always known Voldemort was responsible in some way for the loss of your family. You knew that. It was merely a matter of time until she learned the truth."

"Professor, please don't be mad at your sister. She was only looking out for your interests. I wish I had a sibling who had done the same for me."

"My sister still seems to think I am a little boy."

"No, Professor, she just doesn't want you to make the same mistake twice. You have never entirely let go of your grief."

"Would you have? I saw you at Grimmauld Place, after Black's supposed death."

"Then thank what ever powers that be that you found me, or I would be either dead or in Azkaban right now. I only told you part of what was on my mind that day."

"Princess, what are you saying?" Remus questioned apprehensively.

"I was planning on stealing one of our Headmaster's time turners and going back to stop Sirius. I could have you know...I did it once before. It didn't matter if the Aurors caught me, or even Voldemort for that matter. I really had no desire to go on living. So don't tell me I don't understand Severus grief. If Dumbledore hadn't stopped me..."

"Albus did you have any idea of what she was up to?"

"It wasn't hard to figure out. She had saved him before, and this time she was beside herself. I knew it would only be a matter of time before she would try to do it again, only this time she would have totally altered time. She had no idea he was actually alive. The only one affected last time was Buckbeak, since Sirius had not yet received the Dememtor's kiss, and she had prevented an innocent man from suffering a horrible fate."

"Harry," Sirius looked at her sternly, "I want you to promise all of us that if anything ever happens like that again that you will under no circumstances try to alter the time line."

She looked at Sirius sadly, tracing the outline of his jaw with her finger.

"All I can promise is that I will try not to. You all have to understand I do not feel emotions the same way that you do. I feel and assimilate what is going on around me. That's why the Dementors always come after me."

"In other words you are a veritable smorgasbord for them," Snape remarked sardonically.

"Yech, Professor, you needn't be so graphic about it," she curled her lip in disgust.

"Child, loss is a part of life too," Dumbledore, chided gently, "you have to learn to deal with it."

"Yeah, I know..." Harry stared at him balefully.

"Honey, you said you thought you knew how to fight the Dark Lord. What do you have in mind?" Sirius asked steering the subject away from her pain.

"Powerful emotions will distract him long enough that he may be stopped. What we need to worry about is if he separates from his body again and does not fully die. Professor Snape, get out your books and help me to find something, anything to contain him should that happen again."

Snape looked at Dumbledore, who nodded with a smile, "I believe Harry may be on to something, Severus. We shall begin looking for answers tomorrow, for now though, Harry needs to get some rest."

"Can I smash something first? It is really quite satisfying when one is angry," she managed to smile at him.

"How about smashing this?" he handed her a picture off his desk.

"Headmaster, that's the picture I gave you of me Christmas before last!"

"I knew you couldn't stay mad at me," his blue eyes were twinkling.

"That's not fair."

"Life often isn't fair, Child. Now how about you go on down to bed, and tomorrow we will restore the memories of the others."

"I'll walk you down, honey. I think you could use a little extra TLC," Sirius hugged her.

"Hmm...That sounds really nice, but unless the terms of this Protectorship have changed, there are four of you. You can all tuck me in while you tell me about the rest of my family tree. I have a suspicion I have more relatives than I could have imagined," Harry looked at the four men furtively.

They all rose and crowded around her, letting her enjoy their affection before escorting her to her room. Harry learned that she was related to Remus and Snape through her great-grandfather Potter. One of his sisters was in fact Snape's grandmother, making him her third cousin. His grandmother had died young, and Severus could barely remember her. She was also related to Remus, by marriage. He was in fact, her fifth cousin. She was exhausted from the stress of these revelations, and was happy that they elected to stay while she fell asleep. She felt like the pieces of a difficult puzzle were finally beginning to fall into place. Tomorrow would be another difficult day, and she hoped her friends would not be too mad at having had their memories altered, and the loss of their Prefect badges the previous year.

## ***A Time to Keep Silent and a Time to Speak***

"Harry honestly, we must have been through every book on dark magic in the library by now, not to mention the books Professor Snape is using," Ron groaned, "there is just nothing here. Let's just give it a rest for awhile, okay?"

"Ron, Harry has to keep looking. She is running out of time. Did you see the Daily Prophet this morning? Two more families have been attacked and an Auror was found tortured to death," Hermione moaned worriedly. "It's only a matter of time until he tries to take on Harry again, and maybe even attack Hogwarts!"

"Hermione, You Know Who won't attack the school so long as Dumbledore is here," Ron reminded her sternly.

"Listen you two; Ron is right, maybe we need a break. We should be getting ready for the dance tonight, anyway. I happen to know Hermione bought her dress just for you, and I know she needs time to do her hair and nails."

"Well so do you!" Hermione admonished her. "You need to spoil yourself more often, Harry. You are a very pretty girl."

"Thanks, Hermione, but right now I have more important things to worry about," Harry smiled at her two friends. "You both go on ahead; I'll be along in a little while. I want to go on down and see Professor Snape first. Maybe he and Professor Lupin have found something in his books."

"Harry, we don't want to leave you. Ever since we found out what happened at the Ministry two years ago, I realized how much you have really been facing. I just want to know what you don't tell us," Ron looked at her gravely. "I know you are keeping some kind of secret."

"Am I?" she asked feigning innocence. .

Harry did not have the heart to tell them about Sybil Trelawney's prophecy, that either she or Voldemort must die. They also did not know she was a cousin of Lord Voldemort. In truth, she had been afraid to tell them. She could just picture the looks of disgust on their faces, and could not bear the thought that they might not want to associate with her any longer.

"Harry, whatever you're keeping from us," Hermione said calmly, "it will come out eventually. You're our best friend. What could be so bad that you would keep it from us?"

"Listen, I need to get down to the dungeon and see Snape," Harry dismissed her friends. "I will see you both in the common room before the dance tonight," she said gathering her things with a wink, walking out of the library.

"Bloody hell, Hermione, you know what a private person she is. What did you have to pry for? Harry will tell us in her own good time what is eating her. I just wanted to let her know that whatever it is we will stand by her."

"I know that you dolt. I was hoping she was ready to talk. I overheard her telling Professor Lupin that she has been dreaming almost every night. I know the Protectors have been taking

turns sitting up with her. Dumbledore is worried, and so are the others. Harry is putting on a brave front, but whatever is going on, she is afraid."

"You don't have to tell me she's scared, I can see it for myself. Her scar has been hurting too. I caught her rubbing it a few times, and it is getting more pronounced."

"I know, it looks like a new scar, not one that happened sixteen years ago," Hermione replied gathering her books. "Are you coming with me? I have to go and get ready."

"No, I'll stay for a little longer. Maybe I will find something," Ron replied doubtfully. "You go and get ready. I bet you'll be the prettiest girl there," he grinned giving her a quick peck on the lips. "Who is Harry going with, anyway? She didn't tell me."

"She doesn't have a date. Most of the boys are afraid to ask her because she has gotten so powerful, and then there is the worry about Voldemort."

"You mean to tell me none of our other friends would escort her either?" Ron asked growing angry.

"Ron, they all have girl friends. What were they supposed to do?"

"Then I will take you both. You don't mind, do you Hermione?"

"Actually..." Hermione frowned looking away from him, "I thought we could at least go down as a couple. Sometimes three really is a crowd." She quickly picked up her backpack, and fled the library, Ron gaping after her. She was falling in love with Ron, and did not want to have a fight over their friend. She hoped Harry would understand her feelings....

Harry made her way down to the dungeon, and knocked on Professor Snape's door. She knew he had been working round the clock to help her find something with which to stop Voldemort should he be left alive again without his body. It seemed to be an insurmountable task.

"Enter," his familiar voice came from within. "I am quite busy, Stevenson, so just leave your paper on my desk. I will grade it later," Snape instructed without looking up. He was sitting on his sofa pouring over a large tome.

"I would be happy to do so, Professor, except I'm not Stevenson," Harry grinned as he looked up at the sound of her voice.

"Potter, I was expecting one of my fourth years. He has a paper overdue. I gave him until tonight to complete it or fail."

"Gee, and here I thought you were getting soft."

"What can I do for you?"

"I just came down to see if you were having any luck," she replied glancing at the book he had been studying.

"There were a few things, but nothing that the Dark Lord can't counter easily."

"Figures, well thanks for trying, anyway," Harry answered disheartened.

"Potter, I did not say I was giving up," Snape admonished her sternly.

"I know, I just feel like I'm losing a race against time," Harry answered as another knock sounded on Snapes' office door.

"That will be Stevenson," he said getting up to answer the door. A nervous looking boy with a narrow face and huge hazel eyes was standing there. He reminded Harry of an owl and his robes indicated he was in Hufflepuff.

"Excuse me Professor Snape; I have brought my paper on the uses of dragon's heart."

"Very well, you may go. I will inform you of your grade," Snape glared down at the young man.

"Yes, Sir," he turned to go, and then spotted Harry standing off to the side. He took a deep breath, and froze staring at her.

"Is there a problem, Stevenson?" Snape sneered looking down his nose.

"Uh...no...I...you are Harry Potter, aren't you?" the youth asked mustering up his courage.

"I am, but if I were you I would get out while the Professor is in a relatively good mood," she smiled warmly.

He looked at Snape askance before he replied, "I...ah...just wanted to say thanks. Cedric Diggory was my cousin. It meant a lot to my family that you..."

"I understand," Harry responded. She did not want to be reminded of the night Cedric had died, and she had retrieved his body for burial.

"Mr. Stevenson, I suggest you go on about your business. I am having a conference with Miss Potter at the moment."

"Yes, Professor, I apologize," he turned to go.

"Stevenson," Harry stopped him, "your cousin was a nice guy. I liked him. We all did."

"Thanks," he smiled, and left the office, Snape closing the door behind him.

"I believe you made his day."

"I'm glad someone is having a good day then," Harry sighed. "Look I've got to go."

"Ah yes...you'll want to get ready for the Spring Dance. I will be looking forward to our dance together," he sneered, giving her a thin smile.

"I hate to disappoint you, Professor, but I plan on going to bed early. You know I haven't been sleeping well."

"You aren't going to the dance? The Headmaster will not be happy."

"I doubt he will even notice, and even if he does, I will be sound asleep by then," Harry smiled opening the door to his office. "Oh, and Professor...don't go and tell him. He will only worry," she told him sternly letting herself out the door.

Harry just wanted to be alone. She was not in the mood to party, and she didn't want to go alone. It was no fun not having a date. Harry knew Ron would escort her with Hermione, but she also sensed that Hermione wanted to have some time alone with Ron. Harry was just a third wheel. As much as she cared for her Protectors, she didn't want to have to rely on them for a date. She was wishing George Weasley were still at Hogwarts. Making her way upstairs, she found herself in the entrance hall, and decided to go outside. She wanted some time to think.

Once outside, she looked over at Hagrid's cottage, but noted he did not seem to be home. In any event as a faculty member, he too would be at this evenings dance. Walking down towards the lake, she passed several students who had been taking advantage of the spring weather and were sitting outside. Most were chattering about the dance, and she knew most of the girls would be going in soon to get ready. Walking part way around the lake, she came to one of the secluded benches, and sat down.

Harry didn't want to admit that she felt a failure, but could not find anything that would help her in her battle with Voldemort. She also felt alone. Everyone wanted to know Harry Potter whenever she had survived or prevented some kind of altercation with Voldemort, but on a regular day, they just turned their heads, and pretended they did not see her. 'How am I ever going to kill the evil bastard? I wonder if he even can die as we know it,' she thought to herself as she stared into the murky water. 'I can't do it. Maybe the prophecies are wrong, and it isn't me. Maybe it is Neville Longbottom. I'm so afraid. I don't want to die, but worse than that, I don't want anybody else to die in my place. Mum, Dad, I don't know what to do.'

"Feeling sorry for yourself Harry?" A strange voice came from behind her, as another reflection appeared in the water.

Whirling around in her seat, Harry saw an old woman, her head lowered to conceal her face, standing behind her. She knew she was old by her silver hair and her long gnarled fingers. She instinctively went to draw her wand.

"Who are you and what are you doing on Hogwarts property?"

"You don't need that wand. Put it away before someone gets hurt. I'm...a friend. You need to stop being so impulsive, and think before you act. You are so like Sirius used to be. Listen to what your protectors have told you. You have the skill and the knowledge to stop Lord Voldemort."

"Who are you, and why are you hiding your face? If you are truly a friend you would make yourself known to me."

"I can't. I am taking a great risk by just being here, although I believe I am supposed to be."

"What does that mean? You're talking in riddles." Harry was becoming annoyed, and was not sure what to do. Was this some kind of trap by the Dark Lord to lure her to him? The old woman appeared to know what she was thinking.

"Use your empathy and you will see that I have only your interests and happiness at heart. I am not a spy for Voldemort and this is no trap."

"All right I will. How do you know so much about me, yet I have never seen you?" she asked scanning the old woman. She sensed kindness, and warmth. The woman was also keeping something a secret. "I sense no danger, but you are keeping something from me. I demand to know what it is."

"That I can't say. I will tell you this, and that is that you have the power and will win. The prophecy is correct, both of them. I want you to remember Ron will be there for you and that Neville is an excellent gardener. Think about what your mother told you...remember *Abra Kadabra*. I have to go now, before Dumbledore sees me too closely. He is coming down the path looking for you. It isn't time for him to know..."

Harry grabbed onto the old woman, thinking to stop her from going. She knew she couldn't apparate on school grounds. Even Harry had to go to the apparition point for her lessons with Dumbledore. As her fingers closed over the old woman's wrist, she saw something in her hand that startled her. Pulling herself free, the old woman's hood fell back from her cloak, revealing her face. Harry dropped her hand in shock. The woman had aged gracefully, but Harry was still able to recognize her before she disappeared...

Dumbledore had seen her talking to a stranger as he came down the path. He was concerned, and his expression was one of kindly worry when he reached her.

"Harry, who were you speaking with?"

"It's okay, Headmaster, she was a friend. I'm fine and everything is going to work out."

"How did she leave? It is impossible for anyone to apparate from the grounds."

"I can't tell you that right now. Please believe me though. She has given me the confidence I needed to do what has to be done. I promise to explain later. She said you were not to know just yet, and I understand her reasons."

"Child, this could be some kind of trick on the part of Voldemort," he chided her gently; "you know he can be very persuasive and is able to manipulate others."

"It isn't, I know that for a fact. You see, I know that old woman. Please don't ask me to reveal a confidence just yet."

"Very well, but I will tell the Protectors so they will be on guard."

"I understand, but I promise there really is nothing for them to worry about. In fact, I dreamed about that old woman about a few months back. That night I dreamed Voldemort was defeated and my parent's spirits were there along with that old woman. She told me my mother had been right and I would lead a wonderful and charmed life.



"All the more reason to worry; you know Voldemort has put images into your head to lure you away. It was why you went to rescue Sirius in the Ministry. He could be attempting it again."

"No, my scar would hurt and it doesn't. She also had me scan her emotions. Trust me on this, please," she begged.

"Oh, Little Phoenix, whatever shall I do with you?" Dumbledore shook his head with a sigh. "You're aging me rapidly."

"Gee, I thought I was keeping you young," she quipped, "without me, life would be very dull. Now sit down with me. I know you didn't come looking for me without a reason."

"You're quite right," he said taking the seat next to her. "I understand you have decided not to come to the dance tonight."

"I told Snape not to say anything."

"Professor Snape," he corrected her gently, "and Severus did not tell me. Professor Lupin did."

"I should have figured. He opened his mouth to Remus, and he came and told you."

"Professor Lupin is understandably upset. He went out of his way to give you that gift certificate last Christmas. He wants to see you all dressed up and having some fun."

"Professor Dumbledore, please don't make me feel guilty. I know it was quite an expense for Remus. I even bought a dress and a set of new formal robes to match the jewelry Sirius gave me just like I told them I would."

"Then why aren't you going?"

Harry shifted uncomfortably, "I'm just not feeling up to it. You know I haven't been sleeping well. Professor Snape actually gave me a sleeping potion the other night because the nightmares have been so bad. He also said I have been trying to walk in my sleep."

"I know, Harry. He told me you have been tossing and crying out as well. Then you wake up screaming."

"My scar hurts a lot now too, but I can't remember all the dreams. Just one..." she stared out across the lake.

"Do you want to tell me about it?"

"It is the same one I have had since the night my parents died. My father is yelling to my mother that he would try to hold off Voldemort. My mother is frantic yelling at the Dark Lord telling him not to kill me. Then she throws herself on top of me. I can see the green flash of Voldemort's wand and she falls to the floor. I think it's ironic that green is my favorite color."

"Is that how it always ends?"

"No, you know darn well it ends with me looking up into Voldemort's red eyes. Then there is another flash. That's when I scream and wake up crying and holding my head."

"Yet after your experience of going back in time I would think the dreams would have stopped. You remembered what happened to deflect the curse."

"They did for awhile. I don't think it's a coincidence they've started again."

"Neither do I Child. You and Voldemort will be locked in a life and death struggle soon. I think your unconscious mind is trying to tell you that you will need to repeat your actions of that night. As an empath with the heart of the Phoenix you are repulsed by this."

"Killing is against my nature. Even a distant cousin who deserves to die for all the crimes he has committed."

"I know," Dumbledore gave her a quick encouraging hug. "Now how about telling me the real reason you aren't going to the dance."

"I guess I should have known better than to try and fool you?"

"Um hum..." He beamed looking at her over his half moon spectacles.

"I don't have a date," she replied hanging her head sadly.

"You mean to tell me that of all the sixth and seventh year young men in this school none of them has had the good sense to ask you to the dance?"

"I carry the stigmata of being more powerful than they are. I'm also associated with Voldemort. People haven't forgotten what happened to Cedric. It's like poison ivy, innocent looking but the consequences can be quite unpleasant."

"I see," he studied her intently, "I happen to know of three young wizards who would gladly escort you."

"No! It doesn't look right for a teacher to be escorting a student. Tongues will wag even if they are my Protectors."

"Oh Harry, there you go again trying to protect the people you care about."

"It's what a Phoenix does. I saw Fawkes block you from the *Avadra Kedavra* curse Voldemort shot at you that time in the Department of Mysteries. He just burnt up and came back as a chick..." Harry frowned at the memory. "Professor Dumbledore...is it possible...could I have deflected Voldemort's curse...was the Phoenix a part of me even as a baby?"

"What are you driving at, Child?"

"The night my parents died. I know I said I picked up my mother's wand. Is it possible that when I uttered the words *Abra Kadabra* wrong and they sounded like the unforgivable killing curse...well...could my animagus form have already been present helping to deflect the curse Voldemort sent at me?"

Dumbledore looked thoughtful, studying her closely. "I have never heard of such a thing, but I can't say it's impossible either."

"Maybe that's why he survived. I wasn't old enough to fully execute the magic properly," she told him excitedly. "The old woman said I should remember *Abra Kadabra*. There must be a reason."

"Only time will give us the answer."

"Headmaster, you have no idea how right you actually are," she laughed, giving his beard an affectionate tweak.

"It's good to see you smile. Now tell me you will go to the dance tonight, and make an old man happy."

Harry looked away. She knew he had her well-being at heart but just couldn't bear to hear the whispers when she walked in alone.

"I can't."

"Very well, I shan't force you, but I think you should swallow your pride and go."

"Professor Dumbledore, I have had to swallow my pride more often than most people do in their entire lifetimes. I just can't bear being made fun of or whispered about behind my back. I do have feelings, you know," Harry remarked with a lump in her throat. "I'll apologize to Remus. Maybe I can wear the dress somewhere else for him."

"Harry, don't cry. It isn't the end of the world," Dumbledore soothed her. "I do know someone that can escort you and all heads will turn. He just happens to be available too."

"I already told you I can't go with any of them. I care for them too much to see their names dragged through the mud. You know someone will blab to their parents, and it could be quite messy."

"I wasn't speaking about the protectors. I was referring to the Keeper of the Trust. Miss Potter, may I have the pleasure of escorting you to the Spring Dance?"

"Oh, Professor Dumbledore, you of all people don't need to be the subject of malicious gossip," Harry responded as a lone tear slid down her cheek. "I'll be fine, just send me up something to eat."

"I could order you to go to the dance."

"At this point I would rather do detention."

"You are feeling bad. Why isn't young Weasley escorting you?"

"He's taking Hermione. You know they are going out together. I would just be a third wheel."

"How about your other friends?"

"They all have dates. To them I'm just one of the guys."

"If you don't go Minerva McGonagall will be very upset. I happen to know she has been teaching you how to dance. She was looking forward to seeing Severus face when you danced with him," Dumbledore wheedled trying to coax a smile.

Harry just gave him a baleful look, got up from the bench, and walked back towards the school without a word. He just didn't understand how she felt. A year from now, it would be different. She would be delighted to go to any formal function with her protectors, but for now, she was still their underling. She was just a very lonely seventeen-year-old girl, with no date because she was Harry Potter. The person who had defied all Voldemort had thrown at her for the past sixteen years, with more yet to come.

As Harry entered the castle, she walked headlong into Sirius and Remus.

"Whoa, Miss Wings, watch where you're going," Sirius cheerful voice chuckled as she bumped into him.

"Sorry," she mumbled pushing past them and heading on up the stairs.

"Harry, wait," Remus called after her, "what's the matter? You look like you just lost the house cup to Slytherin."

Harry ignored them and ran up the stairs. She just wanted to be alone. 'It's just a stupid dance,' she told herself. 'What does it matter to you if you have no date?' Nevertheless, it did. Harry desperately wanted to go, but not alone. Even Draco Malfoy had a date, and people were still suspicious of him. His father was a wanted man, and a known supporter of Voldemort.

Entering her room, she lay down on her bed, staring up at the ceiling. 'I can take on the greatest evil wizard of the time, but I can't get a date for the dance.' It was almost humorous. 'Why can't people like me for myself? They only want to know me because of who I am. Even Hermione doesn't want me to go with her and Ron. I could sense it in her.' Harry was stirred from her reverie by a persistent knocking at her door. Getting up she opened the door to see all four of the Protectors. She tried to slam the door, but Sirius grabbed it and forced his way inside. The others followed.

"All right, Miss Wings. What is this nonsense about not having a date for the dance?"

"I don't think it is any of your business."

"Oh, really? You seem to have forgotten that I am also your godfather. Anything that is troubling you is my business."

"Just leave me alone, Sirius, okay. I don't want to talk about it. I already went through it with Dumbledore."

"So I heard. So what if the boys who go to school here are too stupid to recognize a good thing. We all do. You are good, and kind, and funny, not to mention pretty..."

"And I'm dangerous to be near. Keep away from Potter or you might be killed. You think I don't hear the whispers. You think I don't hear Cedric Diggory's name spoken when people

don't think I can hear them?" Harry screamed angrily, tears running down her face. She was tired and just wanted to have some peace of mind. "I go to bed at night hoping Voldemort will do something so that this nightmare will finally end one way or another. Today was the first day I knew I would probably win."

"Albus, what is she talking about?"

"I found her talking with an old woman. She vanished before I could question her. I don't know how, but apparently, Harry does know something. She believed what the woman told her."

"Honey, I want you to tell me right now exactly what happened. You can't just trust this stranger."

"She wasn't a stranger, I knew her. Please believe me. I can't tell you who she is, not yet. I promised. I have to let everything play out the way it's supposed to."

Sirius took Harry into his arms, and hugged her tightly, as the other two gathered around. "Listen, Harry, we all care about you. This could be a trap set by Voldemort. I need you to tell us exactly what happened."

"I have already told the Headmaster. My encounter was brief and to the point. I will defeat the Dark Lord. The old woman merely gave me some clues and confidence."

"Albus is this true?"

"That is basically what she said to me. What I don't know is how the woman disappeared in a place where she was unable to apparate."

"Harry, do you know how she was able to leave the grounds?"

"Yes, but I can't tell you. Please trust me on this. Don't make me tell you something that you shouldn't even know. I will tell you one thing though; she said I was just like you, too impulsive," Harry smiled slightly wiping the tears from her eyes.

"This woman knows me?" Sirius asked worriedly.

"A past love interest, Black?"

"No, Severus, she was not one of my adorable godfather's conquests," Harry blushed.

"Miss Potter, you know better than to use my first name during school hours."

"You know better than to burst into my room unannounced, and to tell Remus something I told you in confidence. Besides, I will call you anything I like in my room, so knock it off..."

"Harry..." Dumbledore warned, "apologize to Professor Snape now."

"I will not! He had no business violating a confidence."

"Harry I was simply looking out for your interests. You should not have to forgo the dance simply because some pimple faced youth failed to ask you to accompany him. You are acting quite childish," Snape responded patiently.

"Princess, I really want to see you all dressed up and pretty. The last time you went to a Hogwarts event it was the Halloween costume party over a year ago. We didn't get to dance with you then," he grinned at Sirius. "I think it would be nice if you went with me. After all I let you bring me in my wolf form last time."

"Remus is right, honey. You owe it to him. He would never have done it for anyone else."

"You are all just trying to make me feel guilty."

"Child, you shouldn't worry about what other people think. I never do. If they believe you are upset or angered by their attitudes they will persist in their actions. Look at what happened with Professor Umbridge."

"Please don't remind me," she shuddered.

"Then will you allow one of us to escort you to the dance?" Sirius asked giving her his best smile.

"No, you can all take me. I don't play favorites. Besides, tongues may wag, but half the girls in this school have a crush on at least one of you."

"I can't believe anyone would want Severus?" Sirius baited his old rival with a sneer.

"Actually, I like the beard and mustache he's growing. I'm glad I suggested it," Harry smiled looking at the facial hair Snape had grown. "He doesn't look so pale and gaunt. I think it's sexy."

"Then maybe I should grow one. Remus has a goatee of sorts."

"Actually I wish Remus would lose the facial hair. I think he would be cuter without it. As for you my lovable doggie, I like you clean shaven," she teased Sirius.

"What about the Headmaster? Should he keep his beard?"

"Absolutely. He needs to look like a wise old mage. Of course we all know better, but no one else does," she smiled, beginning to feel more like herself. "Now all of you go away and let me get ready. I suppose I will have to primp and make myself pretty," she curled her lip. "It was a lot easier when I was disguised as a boy." The four wizards all laughed.

"Harry we shall pick you up promptly at seven," Dumbledore said pleased that she had changed her mind.

"Then meet me in the Gryffindor Common Room. I told Ron and Hermione I would see them before they went downstairs. I have already given the Prefects their formal instructions."

"What did you tell them?" Sirius asked curiously.

"I put them all on duty in the rose garden, rotating shifts throughout the evening."

"Excellent, Potter," Snape was pleased with her answer, "this will keep the attempts at indiscreet intimacy at a minimum. Now if you will excuse me I will see you at seven in your common room with the others."

"I will see you later," Harry smirked, turning aside as he left. Remus saw the glint in her eyes.

"Princess, I know that look. Your father used to get the same expression when he and Sirius were up to no good."

"Now, Remus, do you really believe I am up to something?"

"I know you are. Now out with it. What are you planning?"

"I am not doing anything, honestly," she attempted to keep a straight face, but was unsuccessful.

"Honey, Remus is right. I would not mind a little joke myself. Now what are you going to do?"

"Headmaster, my godfather is trying to get me into trouble. Maybe I am just smiling because I made Professor Snape happy."

"Child, I believe that about as much as I would Sirius telling me he took a vow of celibacy."

"All right," Harry laughed looking sideways at Sirius, who was red faced and grinning at Dumbledore. "I do have something in mind, but I promise no one will be hurt and Professor Snape will be very happy, as will the student body."

"I suppose you wouldn't be willing to let an old man in on the joke?" Dumbledore's eyes were twinkling.

"Not when that old man just happens to be the Headmaster," Harry's green eyes sparkled.

"Shall I start planning your detention now? Or wait and see what develops?"

"I would wait. You may be quite amused. On the other hand I may end up expelled," she said batting her eyelashes at Dumbledore.

"Then I shall see you at seven. I need to get ready myself."

"Professor, you look quite handsome just as you are," Harry flirted playfully.

"Hmm...I think you are just trying to butter me up so that I will go easy on your detention."

"Professor Dumbledore! How could you ever think such a thing?"

"Because my Little Phoenix, you are your parent's daughter and Sirius goddaughter," Dumbledore chuckled looking at her over his spectacles. "Mischief is in your blood."

"That's how we keep you young at heart," Harry winked giving him a playful peck on the cheek. "Besides, you wouldn't have it any other way."

"Remus, see if you can teach this child some manners, I know better than to ask Sirius," Dumbledore sighed letting himself out of the door.

"I'll try Headmaster, but I think she's already too far gone," Remus answered jovially closing the door behind him.

"If you will both excuse me I need to make myself pretty, and that takes a while," Harry said looking from Remus to Sirius.

"Will you tell us what you are up to?" Sirius grinned, sitting himself down on her bed.

"I am not doing anything, honestly," Harry smiled, but her cheeks were beet red.

"Honey, I am the master of mischief," Sirius beamed good-naturedly. "I know you are going to try something, so you may as well tell me. Maybe I can help."

"I don't think so," she pretended to look innocent. "Now if you don't get off my bed and give me some privacy to get dressed I will not be going to the dance."

"Oh, Remus, Miss Wings thinks she can get one over on me. Do you want to help me make her talk?"

"What do you have in mind?"

"What is the one thing she can't withstand?"

Remus gave a deep throaty laugh, "Do you want me to hold her down while you tickle her?"

"You wouldn't dare!"

"Try us," Sirius smiled wickedly, as Remus grabbed her.

"Stop it! Let me go!" she laughed trying to escape from Remus grasp as Sirius grabbed her feet and pulled off her shoes.

"No! No! No! I'll talk just let me go. Stop tickling me!" Harry begged laughing hysterically.

"Okay, Miss Wings, spit it out. Tell us what you are up to."

"Not till Remus lets me go."

"Sorry, Princess, as the Protector who is your conscience and common sense I can't do that. You will just have to endure Sirius tickling," Remus gloated as Sirius started to tickle her again. "Had enough yet?"

"Okay, okay, I give up," she was unable to contain herself, laughing so hard she was crying, "please stop, I can't catch my breath."



"Well, Princess," Remus said sitting her on the bed between them, "what is your plan?"

"It's simple actually. The Prefects will patrol the Rose garden just like I told Snape. The only thing is they're actually watching for him. He loves to come along and check for any body who's snogging. If he shows up, the Prefects will tell him that all is well. We have the garden staked out so that the students will use certain areas at a given time. The Prefects will check the empty ones with Snape. The sites will rotate every hour as soon as the feast is completed and the dancing starts until the dance ends at midnight."

Sirius looked at Remus and then they both looked at Harry before Sirius threw back his head laughing and Remus grinned broadly.

"Miss Wings, that is brilliant. I wonder why we never thought of it when we were in school here."

"Yeah, as I recall we were always trying to evade old Kettleburn. He was the Care of Magical Creatures teacher before Hagrid," Remus reminded Harry.

"Now my question is...are you going to act like responsible Professors and rat me out or lovable allies who can be trusted not to open their mouths?" Harry queried eyeing them both suspiciously.

"What do you think, Remus? Should we do what our job requires of us, or pretend Miss Wings never said anything?" Sirius smirked.

"Hmm...I am her sensible side you know. Endurance, conscience, discretion," Remus pursed his lips pretending to frown.

"Ah...but her heart is in the right place. It's her greatest strength," Sirius pretended to look stern and thoughtful; "she is only trying to make everyone happy."

"Well old friend," Remus smiled knowingly at Sirius, "why don't we just think on it for awhile."

"We could do that. You know, peruse the situation and see what develops," Sirius agreed rising. "In the meantime Harry needs time to get ready, not that she isn't pretty already, but I can't wait to see her all dressed up."

"I totally agree," Remus replied moving with Sirius towards the door.

"Hold it you two!" Harry called after them sharply.

"Yes, honey?"

"Don't you honey me, you Casanova hound dog. You can't just leave me hanging like this. What are you going to do?"

"Now Harry, if we told you that where would all the fun be?" Sirius gloated, his brown eyes dancing.

"Sirius is right, Princess. After all he is the master of mayhem," both men laughed like a couple of schoolboys. "We'll see you at seven," Remus snickered, as Sirius winked as they exited the room.

Harry just stood there gaping at the door. 'I think I'm in big trouble,' she smiled to herself heading towards the shower.

An hour later, she stood in front of her mirror, perusing her reflection. Her gown was a strapless white taffeta, accentuating each curve of her slender figure and showing just a discreet amount of cleavage for a young woman of seventeen. Her dress robes were also white, with a fine red and gold threads running through the material, giving the impression of firelight with each movement. A simple pair of white pumps completed the ensemble.

With a little bit of magic she had managed an elaborate hairstyle, pulling her dark hair up and off her forehead, letting it fall down in thick waves down her back. Her lightning bolt scar was plainly visible. She had then put on the ruby and diamond heart pendant along with the matching earrings Sirius had given her for Christmas. The ruby dragon ring on her right hand that the Snapes had given her for her birthday glistened in the firelight. She could feel its strength tonight and noted it had grown darker, a portent of danger. A knot formed in her stomach. She had put in her contact lenses and her green eyes, unobscured by her glasses, had the mystical look of fine iridescent jade. The effect had been highlighted with the careful application of cosmetics.

She nodded, pleased with the effect, as the first faint twinge of pain raced through her lightning bolt scar. Harry had somehow known it was to be tonight. That's why she had tried to forego the dance. That was why the old woman had come to warn her. Going over to her dresser, she secured her wand deep into her robes. Then, almost on impulse, she reached into her top drawer and took out one other object, placing it on the opposite side from her wand, before uttering a silent prayer. 'Please God, give me just this one night. Let it happen after the dance. Just one night of happiness with the people I love before I have to face what I know must happen. One night for me to let them know how much I really love them; a night to remember, so they will get through their pain and loss, in case I don't make it.' Turning towards the door, she glanced around the room for what she knew might be the last time, and passed through the door and out into the hallway. Holding her head proudly, she headed towards Gryffindor Tower, and what she knew was her ultimate destiny...

## ***A Time to Kill and a Time to Heal***

When Harry entered the Common Room she found the older Gryffindor's had all gone down to the dance except for Ron and Hermione. The younger students were in their dorms on the Headmaster's instructions to prevent anyone below fourth year from going to the dance unless invited, as per school policy.

"Harry?" Ron questioned shaking his head looking at her as if she were a stranger.

"Oh, Harry," Hermione breathed, "you look beautiful."

"Thanks guys," she beamed, "I hope my escorts like it."

"I thought you were going with us?" Ron swallowed hard glancing at Hermione.

"I think you and Hermione need some time alone," she hugged them affectionately. "Just watch out in the rose garden. Remus and Sirius tickled me into confessing our plans."

"Will they keep quiet? I know Sirius would enjoy pulling one over on Snape, but what about Professor Lupin?" Ron remarked worriedly.

"I think they will, but keep a sharp watch and inform the others."

"Will do!" Ron saluted.

"Who is taking you down?" Hermione asked.

"All three of my Protectors and my Trust Keeper. They refused to let me back out for lack of a date."

"I'm glad. You need to have some fun!" Hermione bobbed her head with a smile.

"I'm trying, but this fancy outfit just isn't me. Give me jeans, a t-shirt and sneakers any time," Harry laughed. "By the way, you look lovely Hermione. Turquoise becomes you," she said admiring her friend's matching gown and robes.

"Thanks," Hermione blushed with pleasure.

"Hey, what about your best mate?"

"Well, if he would fix his collar," Harry grinned straightening it out, "I'd say he looked quite handsome." Ron had donned a dark brown dress robe with cream-colored braided trim. "Now why don't you two go on ahead? I will meet you both in the Great Hall in a few minutes."

"I think she wants to surprise her escorts," Hermione grinned at Ron as he took her arm.

"Surprise? They're going to go into shock," he replied winking at Harry as they exited through the portrait of the Fat Lady.

Harry turned back towards the hearth once they had left, taking the time to look about the now empty Common Room. She stood staring into the fire, remembering all the times she had spent there with her Gryffindor family over the past seven years. How many times had they all laughed, cried, and fought with one another; reveled in their successes and mourned their failures? Where had those seven years gone? It seemed like she had just started here at Hogwarts, a frightened and unsure child that everyone was led to believe was a boy. Yes, the boy who lived, only to be revealed two years ago as the girl in the Prophecy; the one person who could stand against Lord Voldemort. The hope of the Wizarding world to rid itself of the Greatest Dark Wizard of the time. The tingling persisted in her scar...

"Excuse me, would you please tell Miss Potter her Protectors are here to escort her to the dance?" Snape's familiar sardonic voice interrupted her reverie, as she had continued to stare into the fire, her back to the door.

"Welcome to Gryffindor Tower, Professor Snape. It is good to know you don't spend all your time in the dungeon," Harry responded, turning slowly to greet them.

Sirius, Snape and Remus were all standing just inside the portrait door with Professor Dumbledore. All were in their formal dress robes. Sirius had on charcoal gray, Severus was in his usual black, but with a white brocade trim, and Remus had on navy blue. Professor Dumbledore was resplendent in fiery crimson, with silver trim. Fawkes was perched on his shoulder.

Sirius blinked twice as she had turned around and was smiling at her like a child in a candy store. Remus jaw had gone slack and his features were frozen in stunned surprise. Severus dark eyes glittered with silent admiration and his lips were drawn into a fine smile. Fawkes trilled happily, as Dumbledore approached her beaming with delight.

"I see before me the butterfly that has emerged from its cocoon."

"Headmaster, flattery will get you everywhere."

"Harry...honey...You look absolutely beautiful," Sirius smiled disarmingly, his brown eyes warm and hungry. "I wish James could see you now."

"Sirius, if my father were here he would douse you with a bucket of ice water and lock me in my room," Harry told him fondly pecking him on the cheek. They all laughed, knowing it was the truth. "In fact, judging by all your reactions he would probably have something to say to all of you."

"What do you believe he would say, Child?"

"Well..."she studied them closely, "Remus he would take one look at you and say, Moony get that beast inside of you under control now! That's my daughter you're salivating after!" Remus grinned blushing profusely. "I told you he was a wolf in sheep's clothing," she chuckled looking at Sirius.

"What would he say to Severus?" Professor Dumbledore asked amused.

"Hmm...Professor, please do not take offense, but knowing how you and my dad were not exactly the best of friends he would not have been too nice."

"What do you believe he would say to me Miss Potter?" Snape asked inclining his head.

"He would scowl coldly and say, Snivellus you lay one hand on my daughter and you will wish you had stayed with the Death eaters. Nothing Voldemort could do to you will compare with the way I'll curse you, soul mates or not!"

Sirius and Remus exchanged worried glances, but to their surprise, Snape threw his head back giving one of his rare laughs.

"Miss Potter...Harry...you have captured James' right down to the facial expressions. However, he would have been a little less polite." Snape did not elaborate further.

"Thank you, Severus," Harry smiled as Snape leaned down and kissed her gently on the forehead.

"Would he have anything to say to me, Child?"

Harry studied Professor Dumbledore for a few moments, her face red hot with embarrassment.

"He would look at you and calmly tell you that due to your age he believed you should be capable of conducting yourself with the proper decorum, and that he would expect you to see that I stayed out of trouble."

"In that case my dear," he offered her his arm, "may I have the pleasure of escorting such a lovely young lady down to the dance?"

"I told you flattery would get you everywhere," Harry beamed as Dumbledore guided her out through the portrait. He escorted her downstairs to the Great Hall, the others following, unable to take their eyes off her.

The doors to the Great Hall had been swung open and round tables set up through out the room. The staff was seated on the floor with the students, and people were allowed to sit with their friends, and dates. As a result, all of the different houses were intermingling. As Harry entered the Great Hall on the Headmaster's arm, heads turned, and she could hear the boys whispering among themselves. She sensed some jealousy from a few of the girls, and found this rather amusing since she did not think she was very pretty.

Dumbledore walked her over to the table where Ron and Hermione had taken seats, but by passed it when he noted that there was no longer any room. Neville, Sean, Dean, and Ginny were all sitting with them along with their dates. Harry noted how Ron shifted under the Headmaster's scrutiny. She wanted to just leave; her friends had chosen not to sit with her. However, that was not to be. Dumbledore merely seated her with the staff. As Head Girl, she was entitled to the privilege.

Harry found herself sitting beside her Godfather and the Headmaster. Professor Snape was sitting to the right of McGonagall with Professor Lupin on her left. Professor Flitwick and Sprout were also seated with them. The other staff, including Hagrid and Filch, was at an adjoining table. Once they were all seated, Dumbledore took out his wand, and gently tapped his glass for attention.

"Welcome, students to what I hope will be the first annual Hogwart's Spring Dance," the students went wild with applause and cheers. "I wish to remind those of you who wish to avail yourselves of the quiet in the rose garden to be on your best behavior." Many of the older students snickered and laughed, knowing that it was the favorite place in Hogwarts for young lovers. "It is my pleasure to inform you that the music will again be provided by the Weird Sisters, along with a classical quartet known as the Dancing Strings. So without further ado, let the feast and dancing begin." The food appeared on the tables and everyone began to help themselves. The string quartet had begun to play a slow waltz

"Harry, would you like to dance with me?" Sirius asked his brown eyes begging for her attention.

"I would love to," she replied smiling warmly, "but I think I should dance with the Headmaster first."

"Oh, my broken heart," Sirius quipped, "thrown over for an older man, what does he have that I don't?"

"Do you want a list, Sirius?" Professor McGonagall asked with a smile. Harry couldn't hide her giggle.

"I promise to dance with you next."

"I shall be delighted to dance with you, Harry," Dumbledore rose helping her from her chair. Leading her out onto the dance floor, she could feel the other students and teachers watching them. He began to glide her gently around the floor amid the other dancers.

Harry found the sight of Madam Hooch dancing with Hagrid rather incongruous, but refrained from comment. Instead, she just said, "You know Headmaster you really should try and secure a position for Madame Maxime. It would make him very happy. Lord knows we will need some happiness around here."

"I sense you want to talk to me, Harry."

"I do. We have a major problem. My scar has been tingling all evening."

"Do you believe Voldemort is up to something?"

"I know he is. How long before you can get help here?"

"Here?" Dumbledore asked incredulous.

"Yes, you see I have gotten as good at getting to know what he is feeling as he is at getting into my head. I have taught myself to try to think like he would. Headmaster, I believe he plans to attack the school. I don't know how I know this, but you have to trust me."

"Do you believe it will be tonight?"

"Yes, the staff is busy with the dance, and no one would expect him to try anything, especially attacking the school. He is still afraid of you and worried about me. We are the two persons

he needs to overcome. I believe he is feeling the pressure of his followers. They are beginning to doubt his powers."

"Did the old woman tell you this?"

"No, she told me I should remember all the things my Protectors had taught me. She said to think before I act. Therefore, I'm trying to do what she said. I know she spoke the truth. She said I had the power and the will to defeat the Dark Lord."

"You still believe it was not a plot on the part of Voldemort. That she was not a spy."

"She was no spy. I told you I knew her. She can be trusted. Please believe me, Headmaster. All these people's lives may depend on both of our actions."

Dumbledore smiled down at her, but his blue eyes were scrutinizing her shrewdly. He had seen enough of Voldemort's trickery to be suspicious.

"If I ask you to identify the woman for me before I act, will you do so?"

"She has trusted me with a confidence. When she saw you coming down the path, she stated it was not time yet for you to know she was here. I understood her reasons, but yes, if you truly wish me to tell you who she is I will. Maybe now is the time for you to know. Maybe that is what she meant."

"I will not ask you to violate a trust, Child. I will accept your word that you believe what you have just told me is the truth. If what you say is accurate, we need to make plans. All the students are at risk, our Muggle borns are the most vulnerable."

"Headmaster, I have a plan to get them out of the building, but I will need you to be a bit forgiving when I tell it to you. You could legitimately expel me for doing what I have done," Harry lowered her eyes under his stare. "I got my army back together, and got all the Prefects involved just in case something should happen here at school. I planned a way to get all the students with any kind of Muggle blood out safely. Moaning Myrtle will help us," Harry explained as the music stopped and Dumbledore escorted her back to the table.

"Harry can I have the next dance?" Sirius asked as she sat down.

"Can I eat something first? I'm hungry."

"Of course, honey. How was your dance with the Headmaster?"

"We had a good deal to discuss. I needed to speak with him quickly and privately," Harry remarked casually, but all of her tablemates were listening attentively.

"Harry is quite right," Dumbledore smiled, but his blue eyes were serious. Harry noted he had conjured a quill and parchment and penned a fast letter to Moody. "Fawkes, I will need your help," Dumbledore spoke to the bird perched on the back of his chair. "Get this to Alastor immediately." Fawkes made a sharp sound deep in his throat, and taking the letter disappeared.

"Headmaster, I need to speak with the Prefects," she looked to Dumbledore seeking his approval.

"Not just yet, Harry. I should have a reply from Alastor shortly. Depending on what he tells me, then I will listen to your plan."

"Harry what is going on?" Sirius asked worriedly.

She ignored him for a minute, and looked over at Snape. "Excuse me Professor Snape, but how is your left arm feeling tonight?"

Snape was visibly startled. His Dark Mark had begun to burn on an off earlier in the evening, which wasn't unusual these days. What disturbed him is that Harry was aware of it, which could only mean her scar was also hurting.

"I believe you already know the answer to that question."

"Sirius would you please pass me the platter of roast beef, I'm starving," Harry looked at him with her most endearing smile. He studied her as passed over the platter. She merely helped herself to a healthy portion, and handed it back to him. She then busied herself with getting the rest of her meal, which consisted of mashed potatoes, carrots, and broccoli. 'I feel like the condemned man having his last meal,' she thought to herself. I can't let Sirius know how worried and afraid I really am. I think Dumbledore knows though. Snape knows my scar must be hurting or I would not have asked him about the mark on his arm. I can feel Remus and Professor McGonagall watching me. They know something is going to happen too. They just aren't pressing the issue.'

"You had better hurry up and eat that; I really am dying to have that dance," Sirius interrupted her thoughts.

"Don't worry; you'll get your dance," Harry snapped a bit sharply. She wanted to hold him and never let go, but knew she had to keep her distance, especially tonight. Any show of emotion could swing the tide into Voldemort's favor and she would never forgive herself. "Sorry Sirius, I didn't mean to be so abrupt. My mind is elsewhere."

"Then I will ask you again, what is going on? I know you well enough to see that you are trying to conceal something from me."

Harry looked over at Dumbledore for support, but he was staring at the ceiling, watching the night stars. She knew he had heard every word, but was not inclined to intervene. She then looked over at Remus, who was still watching the situation unfold along with Professor McGonagall.

"Sirius, I think Harry and Dumbledore will tell us in their own good time what is happening. Suffice it to say that it probably has to do with the Dark Lord," Remus told his friend quietly, and McGonagall, shifted uncomfortably in her seat.

"I have already surmised that," Sirius replied curtly.

"Don't argue, not tonight," Harry had lost her appetite. "Sirius lets go for a walk instead of that dance. I could use some fresh air."



"Of course," he rose and helped pull out her chair, offering her his arm. They skirted the dance floor, and quietly went out through the French doors into the gardens beyond. He steered her up the path to a secluded bench, where they sat down. Glancing around Harry realized it was the same bench Hagrid and Madame Maxime had used the night of the Yule Ball three years earlier. "What are you keeping from me?" he asked turning her cheek so she would face him.

"It will be tonight," she said simply, watching his expression closely.

His brown eyes filled with understanding. "You can't know that for certain."

"Yes, I can," she said softly fighting to keep her voice steady. 'Whatever you do don't start crying. Don't let him know how scared you really are,' she told herself firmly. "He is going to attack the school. He can't let his followers doubt his power any longer."

"That's just plain silly, honey," Sirius looked at her with disbelief, "you know he would never take on Albus."

"He has no choice. I am his main quarry, and he has to get to me before my next birthday in two months. Now is the best time. He fears Dumbledore, but he can't let that stand in his way. If Dumbledore has to choose between the several hundred other students and me, he will protect Hogwarts. You know that, and so do I."

"You aren't ready yet. We still have things you need to learn," he argued angrily, not wanting to face the truth.

"Ready or not, he's coming. I can either run and hide under a rock or stand tall and make my parents and protectors proud of me. I choose the latter," the tears she had been dreading fell from her eyes.

Sirius took her in his arms protectively. "I love you Harry James Potter," he whispered so that anyone nearby couldn't hear, "I won't let anything happen to you." Their eyes were locked and he leaned over to kiss her...

"Ahem, I hate to interrupt this little tete -a-tete but Albus wants the two of you back immediately. Fawkes has returned with a response from Moody," Snape's sarcastic voice interrupted from behind them.

Sirius glared at his rival, but didn't say anything. Helping Harry to her feet, they followed Severus back into the building. The students were enjoying the dance and seemed thoroughly oblivious to the absence of the table full of teachers. Harry did note that the other group of instructors was still present, but she had the feeling that Dumbledore had told them what was happening. Maneuvering through the crowded hall, Snape took them to the same room she had been in after her name had come out of the Goblet of Fire for the Triwizard Tournament.

"Sit down, Harry," Dumbledore said as they entered, "I need to tell you something and I want you to be strong."

"What's happened?"

"Our headquarters for the Order has been breached, and there are a number of casualties. Charlie and Bill Weasley have been taken to St. Mungo's. They are seriously injured. Molly is there with them now. Elphias Doge, Dedalus Diggle, and Sturgis Podmore have been killed. Moody, Arthur Weasley, and Kingsley Shacklebolt are on their way here. The rest of the Order have been notified and will help to defend Hogsmeade, they will meet at the Magic Shop."

"I see...Has anyone told Ron and Ginny about their brothers yet?"

"No, Child, but there is more, Voldemort had another spy who went undetected in the Ministry. It was Percy Weasley. He has been killed."

Harry stood up, her face pale, her jaw set. "Excuse me, Headmaster, but I need to call the Prefects together and tell my best friend what has happened. I will be back shortly to tell you about my plan," she informed Dumbledore resolutely. The prickling in her scar now felt as if she were being stabbed with a million little pins and was growing steadily worse.

"Harry would you like me to accompany you to see Ron and Ginny?" Remus Lupin's soft voice asked from where he had been sitting by the fireplace.

She studied him quietly, as if seeing him for the first time. His hair had gotten grayer since she had saved his life, and he looked so tired. 'God let this be over soon, it is really telling on him. Hasn't he suffered enough being a werewolf? If anyone deserves to be happy and relaxed, it's him. I chose wisely, when I selected Remus as my endurance. They weren't just hollow words.' Harry smiled at her protector, "I'll be okay, Remus, but you may want to come with me anyway. I don't know how Ginny will take this news, but I do know Ron will be upset and angry."

Remus nodded and followed Harry from the room. They found Ron dancing with Hermione, and Ginny was sitting at the table with her date, a boy from Ravenclaw. Harry took them outside to tell them what had happened. Hermione accompanied Ron.

"What's up, mate? You look like you did just before you had that hearing at the Ministry when they wanted to expel you?" Ron grinned, but his eyes were worried.

"Ron I will need you to call all the Prefects together. Voldemort is on the move. Do you remember our worst case scenario?"

"Yeah, we all thought about what to do if he ever attempted to come here to Hogwarts...."  
Ron's voice trailed off.

"Harry, he wouldn't...He's too afraid of Dumbledore," Hermione protested, but Harry's look stopped her cold.

"He will be here sometime tonight. The school is at risk. The teachers and a few of the Order will have to defend it. The students most at risk are the Muggle borns. We will need to get them to safety."

"I won't leave you and Ron," Hermione protested.

"Hermione, I'm counting on you to get them out. They will need your courage and ability with charms and spells. I am going to ask you to do something very dangerous."

"Harry's right, Hermione, you are a very powerful witch in your own right. She also knows you will be one of Voldemort's first targets," Professor Lupin told her calmly.

"Hermione, please listen to Harry. You Know Who will kill you. I don't want you to die, I love you," Ron took Hermione in his arms, and held her tightly.

"I want you to take Ginny too. She should be with her mother right now," Harry said quietly.

"No way Harry, I'm not the same little girl who was stupid enough to be taken in by Tom Riddle's diary. I'm staying to help."

"Ginny, that isn't why I want you to go to your mother. I have something else to tell you and Ron," Harry shifted uneasily, and Remus put his hand on her shoulder. "Dumbledore would have told you this himself, but I told him I should."

"Harry what are you talking about? Out with it mate, you know we all think of you as one of the family. Has something happened?" Ron questioned, as Harry looked away, unable to meet his eyes.

"The headquarters for the Order has been attacked. Bill and Charlie have been taken to St. Mungo's. Your mum is there with them."

"What about Dad?" Ron questioned his eyes wide, as Hermione and Lupin moved to comfort Ginny, who had turned ashen.

"He's fine, and is on his way here with Moody and Shacklebolt. The rest of the surviving members of the Order are heading towards Hogsmeade and will meet at the Magic Shop."

"Have Fred and George been notified?" Ron asked stiffly. Harry could see he was fighting off tears and could feel his anger burning from deep inside.

"Remus, do you know?"

"They are aware of the situation. They have chosen to stay and fight with the Order."

"Then you're right, Harry. We need to get Ginny to mum. She shouldn't be alone. My place is here with you, defending the school and acting as the Keeper of the Goblet. The Protectors may need me to tell them what is happening. I know you will be You Know Who's ultimate prize. I can't let that happen."

"Thanks, Ron, but there is something else you need to know. Something not very pleasant, it's Percy."

"What has my pompous ass of a brother done now?" Ron demanded angrily.

"He was spying for Voldemort. He was a Death eater. He helped to attack the headquarters of the Order."

"What!" Ginny sobbed, as Ron grew beet red.

"Harry are you sure?"

"We're sure, Ron," Lupin told him soberly. "Your father was there when it all happened."

"What have they done with the bastard? He never would listen to anything other than his own ideas. He always believed he was right, no matter what. Mum must be beside herself."

"Ron, Percy was killed in the battle," Harry's voice sounded as if she were a long way off. There was total silence; even Ginny had stopped crying.

"Maybe it's better this way...it would have torn Mum up to watch his trial, let alone visit him in Azkaban...or worse..."

Harry knew Ron was thinking that the judges would not have gone easy on him. Percy would have been sentenced to the Dememtor's kiss. She could feel all their emotions, and pulled the three of them into a hug. It was all she could do. No words would be able to still their pain, only time would help. Remus looked on proudly.

"I'll go and get the other Prefects and Neville. I know as Head Boy he has something planned that he has talked over with you," Hermione said wiping her eyes.

"Professor Lupin, would you go and tell the Headmaster I will be back in a few minutes. I don't know if he wants to stop the dance now, or wait, but I will need him to know that we will be moving all the Muggle borns to a safer location."

"Harry there is no time. The train isn't even here in Hogsmeade."

"They won't be taking the train. I will explain in a few minutes. Please trust me, Professor."

"I'll go and tell him," Remus shook his head in disbelief. 'What the hell does she have in mind? How could she move all those students?' He considered this idea as he headed back into the Great Hall...

Harry's meeting with the Prefects was brief and to the point. Dumbledore's Army went into action. Any student who did not have Muggle blood and wished to leave with them would be allowed to do so. She knew Voldemort would be angry and would try to kill them too, just to punish their families for going against him. It would be decided by the students as soon as they returned to their common rooms. Likewise, any Muggle born who wished to stay and defend the school would be allowed to do so. This would only apply to sixth and seventh years. The exception to this was Hermione. Harry needed her to get the others out safely. As they all re-entered the Great Hall, Professor McGonagall had just called an end to the dance, and ordered the students into their Common Rooms for an emergency meeting with their Prefects.

"Ron, you and Hermione go to the Common Room and tell the others what is going on. As soon as you do that, I will need you both to meet me in the Headmaster's Office. There is something I have to tell you and Hermione."

"I'll be back in a few minutes. I will bring the list of who is leaving, too."

"Neville, you come with me now. We need to explain your plans and you will need someone to help you get them going. If two of you are out there your protection will start sooner," Harry told him with a smile. She knew he was more than capable of doing what he had told her. Harry smiled inwardly as she remembered the old woman's words, 'Neville is an excellent gardener.'

Harry and Neville hurried up to Dumbledore's office and were met by Professor Snape at the entrance. Neville refused to be intimidated by his glare, and Harry grinned.

"Chocolate Snaps," Snape, uttered the password, and they followed him up.

Professor Dumbledore was sitting at his desk in his high back chair. Harry noted the while his expression was calm, his blue eyes glinted like steel. Most of the staff was either present or preparing to leave, and mounted the stairs as soon as Harry, Neville, and Snape entered. They all looked grim. Ron's father, Moody, and Shackbolt had arrived and were waiting for them.

"Harry I need to hear your plan," Dumbledore spoke tersely. "I'm sorry we have no time for the social graces."

"No problem, Ron will be along shortly with the number of students who wish to leave. All students below the sixth year will be required to go. Anyone over the sixth year will be given the choice. If they choose to stay and defend Hogwarts, it is their right. The only exception is Hermione. She has the task of getting them out safely," Harry explained looking steadfastly at Dumbledore. She knew as Headmaster, this should have been his decision. Moody's lip twitched at her audacity. "Mr. Weasley, Ginny is going to be with your wife at St. Mungo's. She and Hermione will stay with her. She shouldn't be alone."

"Thank you, Harry, for thinking of Molly at this time," Arthur Weasley said sadly, and she could sense he had been crying. "She has had to face her worst nightmare tonight, and it isn't over yet."

"She is a strong woman. She can overcome what has happened. It was not her fault. Percy was very ambitious, and Voldemort can be very persuasive."

Arthur Weasley did not answer, and Harry knew he was more than a little worried about his remaining family.

"Harry, you said you had a plan to get the students out, what is it?" Remus asked puzzled.

"I'm coming to that. First, though, I will need Neville to explain what he has been doing. Dumbledore's Army has been quietly getting ready since the last warning from the sorting hat," Harry could not help but give the Headmaster a thin smile.

Neville had been standing nervously beside Harry, but his voice was steady.

"Harry gave me the task of keeping the Deathaters from gaining easy access to the building. So I began taking cuttings of the Devils Snare, and seedlings from the Whomping Willow. I then planted the Devils Snare up against the castle walls, and surrounded the building with twelve of the willow seedlings. They are cleverly planted at various entrances, and I put a *Reses Latens* spell on them until they would be needed. All I need to do is reverse the spell and water the plants with a hearty dose of Insta-Grow fertilizer mix and presto. The Devils

Snare will protect the inner areas should anyone get past all the Whomping Willows. The willows will also help to shade the Devils Snare from the sunlight come morning."

"Brilliant," Professor Sprout beamed. "What about the battlements?"

"I potted some of the Acid Sprayer plants along with a group of young Mandrakes just for that purpose. The acid plants will spray anyone who tried to get in the doors from the towers, and the young Mandrakes will knock them out. I have them hidden in Greenhouse Four, and cared for them between classes when I assisted Professor Sprout. Harry told me the charms are still in place on all the tower doors so I figure we can either levitate them onto the roof or fly them up with brooms."

"Mr. Longbottom, whatever skill you lack with Potions, you make up for with your knowledge of Herbology and your loyalty to your friends and this school," Snape looked at Neville with something akin to respect for the first time in seven years.

"Thank you Professor Snape," Neville responded wide-eyed.

Harry knew that the compliment Snape had given to Neville had just done more to bolster his confidence than anything else had.

"Professor Sprout, if you and the Prefects from your house could assist Neville with the watering and getting the plants out onto the roofs it will go that much faster."

"I do have one question," Professor Sprout looked at Neville, 'once the Devils Snare and the willows are no longer needed..."

"Instant sun and Greenthumb's Plant Reducer," Neville interrupted her. "I have some spray cans already made and hidden in an unused classroom in the dungeon. "I snuck them in after Potions," he smiled proudly at Professor Snape, who arched his brow amused. Longbottom had a spine after all.

"Professor, if you would get started with Mr. Longbottom," Dumbledore spoke with approval.

"Albus," Moody growled looking down with his magical eye. "Young Weasley and Miss Granger are here."

"I will let them in," Professor Sprout nodded, motioning Neville to follow her out. A minute later Ron and Hermione appeared. Mr. Weasley went directly over to his son, grasping him tightly.

"I know Harry has told you what has happened. Are you sure you want to do this?"

"I'm sure."

"Then I will let Harry tell you what needs to be said."

"Ron, Hermione, sit down. I was not able to tell you this before...No...I avoided telling you...There were two prophecies."

"What do you mean two prophecies?" Ron demanded.

"The one in the Department of Mysteries at the Ministry wasn't the Mathias Prophecy, was it?" Hermione spoke bluntly.

"No, it was given to Professor Dumbledore by Chandra Mathias great great granddaughter, Sibyll Trelawney." Ron jerked around to look at the Divinations Professor who had remained in the room. Trelawney lowered her eyes as Hermione grunted giving her an expression of disgust. "Hermione, occasionally Professor Trelawney does come up with a genuine vision."

"Like when she predicted Wormtail would find You-know-Who!" Ron gasped.

"Yes, the prediction she gave to Dumbledore was another one of those times. It is a simple prediction really, but you need to hear it," Harry indicated the Pensive Dumbledore had placed on his desk.

"Ron, Hermione, come here. I will show you what only the people present here know," Dumbledore's expression was somber as the two friends came over to his desk, staring down into the Pensive.

Harry went over to the window. She knew how they would react. The end of the Prophecy ringing in her ears, *and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives...*

"Harry..." Ron's voice was barely a whisper. "Does that mean..."

"One of us must kill the other. One or both of us will be dead by morning."

"But the Mathias Prophecy..." Hermione sobbed, tears streaming down her face.

"Says I will win, it does not say if I will survive." Harry continued to stare out the window into the darkness. The pain in her scar was growing worse. Remus came over and put his hand on her shoulder.

"How can you all just sit there," Ron screamed looking at her three protectors. You're supposed to protect her from him," he was near the breaking point, and Harry could feel his pain.

"Ron, there is nothing we can do to stop the prophecy. Believe me if I could I would. She is bound to Remus as well as Severus and me. When the time comes we will do as much as is humanly possible. If need be I would die in her place. We all would."

"NO!" Harry yelled, "I went through that once, and I won't do it again, Sirius Black. I will not be left alone." Fawkes sensed all their distress and began to sing quietly. Harry turned away from the window. "Hermione, stop crying. It will do no good and I need you to stay focused. What happens here tonight may just determine whether I am sitting celebrating with you both tomorrow night or if you are telling everyone, I sacrificed myself to stop Voldemort. I would like to be here with you chugging butter beers in the Three Broomsticks. Now sit down and pull yourselves together while I tell everybody how to get the students out of the building. Ron, do you have the numbers?"

"Right here, all the seventh years have elected to stay and fight, and most of the sixth years," he handed the list to Dumbledore... "Too many of them have lost family members and friends to...to...Lord Voldemort." Ron forced himself to say the name.

Harry smiled, "It's just a name, Ron. A name cannot hurt you." Harry turned to the portraits on the wall, "Headmaster Dippet, would you please go and alert the other portraits to let the house ghosts know I need Moaning Myrtle?"

"Why Myrtle?" The former headmaster asked.

"She is detrimental to my plan and has agreed to help us. I need to know if she is ready."

"Albus, this is most irregular." Dippet looked at Dumbledore.

"Just do it Armando, time is of the essence. Sibyll if you would go use your crystal ball, I would appreciate your help."

"Certainly, Albus. Anything I can do to help."

"You've done enough all ready," Hermione muttered under her breath.

"Leave her alone, Hermione, she feels guilty enough all ready," Harry admonished. "Now, if you will bear with me, I will tell you how we will evacuate the students. Professor Snape, do you remember when I was helping you to order supplies for detention?"

"I do, you made a grievous error and ordered too much gillyweed."

"It was no error, I did it deliberately. That is why I made sure we could not return it and paid for it myself. Do you still have it in your stores?"

"Naturally. What do you plan on doing with it?"

"I will explain in a moment, although I believe the portrait of Salazar Slytherin knows." Harry looked up at the portraits of the Hogwarts founders.

"You are very clever, Miss Potter. You would have done well in Slytherin. I may be a purist and believed in teaching the dark arts, but I never believed in using them against Muggles. I simply believed we should remain separate. My other descendent is quite mad you know."

"No, really?" Harry remarked sarcastically. Turning back to Dumbledore, she continued, "I told you earlier I have done something for which I can be expelled. If I survive the night, I won't care if you do or not."

"Child, what ever you have done, if you survive I will be most happy. It will not matter what you have done. I love you as one of my own."

"You're all my witnesses that he said that. I'll believe it in the morning," Harry pursed her lips. "What I know, that only our friends in the portraits also know, and I'm referring to both of my illustrious ancestors up there, is that there is a second entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. You only sealed the one in Myrtle's bathroom," Harry looked directly at Dumbledore.



"What!" Ron gasped. "Harry how did you find it?"

"It bothered me that a man like Slytherin would not have another means of both entering the chamber and an escape route should the chamber be penetrated. The entrance we used last time for meant for the Basilisk. I went searching. It seemed to me there were an awful lot of serpents in this building. So I would sneak out with my cloak at night, and talk to them in Parsel tongue. I finally found the right one. I was ecstatic, but decided to keep the information to myself. I knew Dumbledore would seal it too. Headmaster, I apologize for the deception, but I needed to find another exit from this building in case something happened."

"I will reserve my judgment on your behavior for the time being," Dumbledore responded. "However I am not pleased that you withheld the information."

"Headmaster, it was not done to harm anyone. I needed to be able to think like Tom Riddle. The best way to stop him will be to anticipate his moves. I feel it is rather like playing my way through Professor McGonagall's giant chessboard. I believe he does not know about the second way out nor does he know about the other entrance. I intend to use it to get the students out of the building without his knowing. That is why I need the gillyweed."

The portrait of Slytherin erupted into gales of laughter, "It will work if you do it correctly. Is the tunnel intact?"

"Yes, it's intact. I use it all the time," Moaning Myrtle's sharp voice echoed from the bathroom where she emerged from the toilet.

"Good evening, Myrtle. You say you use the exit, but you are a ghost. Are you certain it is safe for the students to use? The passage is devoid of obstacles?" Dumbledore inquired of the young ghost to make certain she was not going through solid obstacles.

"Of course I'm certain! I may be dead but I am not stupid! They can swim out. I will show them how to go. The tunnel comes out at the far end of the lake, closest to the forest."

"I take it the passage lies underwater?" Dumbledore addressed Harry.

"Yes, most of it anyway. The chamber is made to flood. Slytherin could flood the main room and swim out undetected."

"Is this true, Salazar?"

"Yes, it's true. Even Gryffindor didn't know about it," the portrait gloated.

"I do now, and I might remind you she is more my blood line than yours," the portrait of Godric Gryffindor said moving into his neighbor's and threatening him with his sword.

"Bloody hell, you would think after a thousand years they would finally be getting along," Ron frowned, throwing up his hands in disgust.

"Enough," Dumbledore said annoyed. "Harry, finish telling us what you want to do."

"It's simple really; the students will use the gillyweed to swim to the far end of the lake. Then Hagrid can escort them with Hermione through the forest to the quarry on the far side. Then

they will simply fly away with their brooms. The first years are all able to fly now, so we can use the training brooms for them. If we are short on brooms we will use some of the thestrals and they can ride on them. They can carry the brooms out with them through the tunnel strapped to their backs. I would use a summoning spell but it might arouse attention."

"Will Hagrid be able to fit through the tunnels too?"

"The escape tunnel is actually an underwater cave and is quite wide. Hagrid will have no problems," Slytherin said looking down his nose from above them.

"Hermione can use her skill with charms to help protect them en route, since I know there is no one available from the Order. They will head for where ever you say they will be safe."

"MacDougal is at the manor house in Inverness," Moody informed Dumbledore. "If they travel north, it would be best. They would have less chance of running into Voldemort. Once there Arthur's daughter and Miss Granger can use the floo network to get to St. Mungo's."

"No, I'll authorize a Portkey instead," Mr. Weasley told them.

Dumbledore sat back in his chair and studied Harry. He then addressed Hermione.

"Hermione do you believe you can make it to Inverness with the students safely?"

"Yes, Sir, I plan on putting them in groups with the younger students in the middle. The older ones will lead and bring up the rear. All I need is directions to our destination."

"Should I get the gillyweed, Headmaster?" Snape inquired looking from Dumbledore to Harry.

"Yes, but not just yet."

"Harry where is the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets?"

"That's the beauty of it. The serpent sits right opposite the door to the Slytherin Common room. Everyone always overlooks the obvious," Harry grinned at their shocked expressions, and the portrait of Slytherin again erupted into hysterical waves of laughter.

"Severus go and get the gillyweed. Miss Granger I want all the students to file down to the dungeon in an orderly fashion. Ron help her to notify the Prefects. Hagrid, once they are all airborne make your way back to Hogsmeade but for Merlin's sake be careful. Harry, I will consider expelling you in the morning," Dumbledore looked at her sternly, but she saw the twinkle in his eye, and sensed his admiration. "Now you can show me the chamber."

"I guess we're going swimming together," Myrtle giggled at Hermione as she swooped through the floors and headed for the dungeon.

They all exited the office and hurried to their assigned tasks. Once they reached the Dungeon, Snape went and got out the gillyweed. There was at least three boxes full, and he knew they would need to use most of it. He would distribute it to the students as they entered the water. Dumbledore decided to put a blanket charm on the students so they would not panic, and enlisted the aid of Professor Flitwick. All the head of houses were present and Professor

Sprout supplied an iridescent underwater plant known as *Herbalucerna*. It would help to light their way even though their eyes would adjust to the natural environment. Once the teachers had all gathered, Harry turned to the serpent, and spoke a few words of Parcel tongue.

"Open the chamber," she told the snake, and the statue immediately appeared to spring to life. It twisted into a circle, and a huge round door swung open. "If anyone is interested I merely said to open the door," she told the staff in English.

"I'll be damned," Sirius, breathed in amazement. The chamber was lined with torches that lit automatically as they moved into it.

"You can say that again, old friend," Remus whispered awed. "What the hell is that thing?" He pointed up ahead.

"I think it's some kind of skeleton."

"I agree with you," Snape interrupted, "I believe it is all that is left of the Basilisk."

The staff just stood looking at the bones of the giant snake. The shadows created by the statues of the Slytherin serpents flickering eerily on the walls as if they were alive.

"Harry," Professor McGonagall eyed her from where she was standing looking at the skeleton, "are you okay, dear?"

"You should have seen him when he was alive," she winked at her Head of House. "I really am fine. It was a long time ago. I would watch the fang, though. It might still have some poison in it."

"Albus, how much pain has this child been through, and now she must again face the man responsible, knowing she may die tonight," Minerva McGonagall whispered to Dumbledore.

"Minerva, I have helped her in every way I can. I will do my best to protect both her and the remaining students," he said as Snape gave Hermione and the first group of students the Gillyweed.

Harry winked at Hermione as she and Hagrid entered the water, "Good luck and Godspeed. I'll see you both tomorrow," she tried to reassure her friends, but her voice echoed hollowly off the walls, as the serpents watched in silence.

Once the last of the students had entered the water, the small group of teachers left with Harry, and she closed the chamber. Dumbledore then sealed the entrance, and removed the serpent. Only he could reverse the spell and reopen the chamber. It would be listed in the great book in his office for future Hogwarts Headmaster's.

The teachers then went to wait in the Great Hall, along with the remaining students, with the exception of Harry. She went back up to the Headmaster's office with him, and stood watching from the tower. She could barely discern the dark figures on the far side of the lake, but recognized Hagrid's huge bulky form as he disappeared into the forest. There was nothing to do now but wait. Her scar told her it would not be for long....

## ***A Time of War and a Time of Peace***

"Child, we should go down to the Great Hall," Dumbledore spoke quietly. Harry had not moved from the window for at least twenty minutes.

"Hagrid just entered his cottage. Hermione and the others have gotten off safely," Harry told him quietly, without moving. "He has just left with his umbrella and his crossbow. He must have had them within easy reach. I hope he is safe."

"Hagrid can take care of himself, Child. He will be fine."

"Professor Dumbledore...will you...promise me...something?"

"What is it Harry?"

"Promise me...that if...if I die...see that I'm...buried with my parents," the final words came out in a rush.

"You're being maudlin," Dumbledore replied sternly.

"No, I'm being honest," she turned from the window to look at him, her green eyes burning into his blue ones. "Promise me."

"Very well, I promise."

"Thank you," she smiled sadly and went over to kiss him gently on the cheek. "It's time to go. They will be here in a few minutes. Hagrid should just make Hogsmeade in time."

"How do you know this, Child?"

"I can feel what he feels. Right now, he is laughing and pleased. The Death Eaters are all with him. So are the Dementors."

"What about the Giants?"

"No, they were too busy fighting against themselves."

"Thank Merlin for small favors."

"At this point I'll take anything we can get." Harry remarked following her out of the office and into the hallway. She did not know why, but she suddenly felt excited and energetic. Maybe it was just an adrenalin rush, or the feeling of relief that all the anxiety and worry would soon be over.

Dumbledore moved quickly and with purpose, and Harry had a hard time keeping up with him. When they entered the Great Hall, Fawkes flew in with them. The sixth year students had formed a circle in the center of the room, and were sitting cross-legged on the floor. In a show of school unity, they had seated themselves in a pattern of one student from each house, Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff, and Slytherin. They had all joined hands, chanting a spell of protection, made even more powerful by the number of persons. The seventh year students

all stood ready, wands drawn, waiting for the onslaught to begin. Draco Malfoy came up to them as they entered.

"I want first dibs on my father, Potter," Draco told her angrily.

"No, Draco, you don't. Whatever else he has done, he is still your father. You don't want the guilt of his blood on your hands. It would lower you to his level. Leave him to Professor Snape. He has a personal score to settle with him too, and doesn't have the family ties."

"What score is that, Potter?" Snape had come over from the other side of the room. He had moved as silently as ever.

"Severus...I really wish you would teach me to move like that."

"It is a skill I have perfected since childhood," he responded, ignoring the use of his given name. "Now explain what personal score you seem to think I have with Lucius Malfoy."

Dumbledore was watching her closely. Harry sensed he had an idea of what she was about to tell Professor Snape.

"All those times when the Dark Lord got into my head, I did get some rather interesting information. Most of it I have shared with you and the others, but not this. This I saved for just such a special occasion, as my nemesis would say. Draco, I need to speak with the Headmaster and Professor Snape alone for one minute. I will meet you by the others.

"What ever you say, Potter. It's your head on the block," Draco shrugged and moved back towards the rest of the seventh years.

Harry waited until he was out of earshot and then turned to Snape.

"Severus, it was Malfoy who tortured Camilla to death," Harry told him bluntly. She felt his instant rush of pain and anger. "While you were out torturing the Muggle family Voldemort sent Malfoy and Crabbe to your house along with the one Dementor. He joined them shortly there after. Malfoy did the job while Voldemort laughed."

"Are you certain this was a genuine memory on the part of the Dark Lord?"

"Yes, I learned to differentiate by the emotions he was feeling when he tried to make me believe the lies. When he was unaware of my presence, I could feel what he did. Severus, I'm sorry for telling you so cruelly, but I am detached as much as possible right now. I need to feel Voldemort, to sense his moves, and when possible his actions or plans."

"I understand, Harry," Snape looked at her. His expression was unreadable, but she could feel his affection for her. His desire to protect her was strong, both as her protector and to fulfill his debt to her father. His desire to kill Lucius Malfoy was even stronger.

"Take care of him, Headmaster. I know what he is feeling. It isn't very nice. I'm glad he switched sides," she gave him a thin smile and moved over towards where the others were waiting. "Ron, Draco, spread the word that the others got off safely. It will help to bolster everyone's courage. The Deathaters will be here shortly."

Ron and Draco each started at opposite ends of the room and the students started to spread the word. Cheers went up as the news gave them all a feeling of confidence. It was none too soon. A moment later, the first sounds erupted from the Whomping Willows, and everyone could see the Devil's Snare begin to move as it grabbed a hooded figure by the throat. Harry nodded to the Prefects, as did Neville. The Head Boy and Girl had decided on a battle cry. The leaders all called it out at once.

"Remember Cedric Diggory!"

"Anyone who can do a Patronus watch for the Dementors," Harry yelled. The glass in the French doors smashed with the weight of the vines thrashing another Death eater. The teachers had moved over to guard all the doors, and the ghosts were flying in and out of the building, oblivious to the traps and telling Dumbledore what was happening outside.

Some of the Death eaters had tried to gain access from the roof and were seen falling after the Mandrakes yells had knocked them out. Another, who tried to escape on his broom, was screaming in agony from the acid plants. His face was badly burned. The students kept chanting.

Harry could feel the Death eaters falling back, and knew Voldemort was just regrouping. "Keep up the protection chants," she yelled as loud as she could, "he means to get inside with the wind."

The winds had begun to blow hard, and while normal wizards did not try to control the weather, all were able to create a temporary maelstrom. Dumbledore immediately countered, and Harry could feel his power. The walls appeared to buckle under the weight of the two wizards trying to counter each other. They bulged in and out, but the wind in the willows had caused one of the long mullioned windows to shatter. A group of Dementors slithered in, and Harry could feel the room turn dark and cold.

"*Expecto Patronus, Expecto Patronus,*" she shrieked, and she could hear Remus, Snape, Dumbledore, and Ron doing the same. The room was suddenly filled with all manner of strange animals. Harry grinned for a split second. Snape's Patronus was a teddy bear. 'Well, why not, they make people happy,' she considered winking at him. He pretended not to notice. She was just in time to see her stag chase a Dementor from Sirius, who had gone to help Draco. 'Blood really is thicker than water.' Harry knew Draco was his second cousin.

The room seemed to be alive with action all around her, some of the Death eaters had gained access, and the wand flashes had begun. The students continued to chant, even though their defenses were being breached.

"Keep up the fight," the Bloody Baron screamed. The people of Hogsmeade and the Order are coming to help. Voldemort only sent a small group there, and they have been defeated!" He flew over Dumbledore and Snape, his sword waving wildly.

Peeves began throwing dung bombs and water balloons at the Dementors, and the Death eaters alike.

"Harry look out" Ron screamed, "Duck!"

She did as he said, and not a moment too soon. Bellatrix had been coming up behind her, wand drawn. She had just shot a stunning spell at her, which Ron intercepted. Harry knew then, that the Death Eaters had been told not to kill her. That honor would go to Voldemort.

Standing up straight, she called out over the din of the fighting, "Come on scumbag. Let's see what you're really made of. Are you afraid to die? I'm not."

"Potter, No!" Severus screamed.

"Harry don't force him into the open," Remus yelled. "You aren't ready."

"Well, ready or not, here I come. It seems the greatest evil wizard of all time is nothing more than a scared schoolboy. What's the matter Tom, mummy died and daddy didn't want you? What did you do, hide in the closet? Did it feel good to kill your Muggle father and grandparents Tom? Or did mummy's spirit haunt your dreams?" Harry taunted Voldemort. "You like to sneak up on people don't you Tom? What's wrong with fighting them face to face? Did you sneak up on my dad? Maybe you shot him in the back? That's about all I can expect from a sociopath murdering coward." Harry was screaming now, and walking the length of the Great Hall as the battle raged around her.

Suddenly there was a flash of light from outside, and the smell of sulfur as one of the willow trees was set on fire. The Devil's Snare had been breached. The remains of the shattered French Doors flew open and Voldemort stood in the doorway. Everyone in the room froze. Voldemort was tall, over six feet, and thin. His pale face and slits for nostrils made Harry think he resembled a snake more than a human being. His hands were like those of a skeleton or Dementor. He was dressed in black robes, which accentuated his haughty bearing. There was no sign of the handsome aloof young man he had been when a student at Hogwarts.

"Professor Dumbledore, and Harry Potter, how good of you both to save me the trouble of having to kill you separately. The old fool and the belligerent little bitch," he glowered, red eyes burning like acid.

"Now Tom, you know it isn't polite to insult the Headmaster. It isn't his fault you're such an asshole."

"I would watch my mouth if I were you, Potter. I may yet be lenient and merciful when I kill you. I am not without a heart."

Harry laughed boldly. "You never had a heart. You are a cold ruthless creature, and if your mum had lived, she would have hung her head in shame that her son was the killer of innocents. Whatever part of you that was human died a long time ago."

Harry knew she had touched a nerve. Tom Riddle did not like hearing things about his mother. She knew what she was about to say would shock her friends, but it was time.

"I don't blame Dumbledore for keeping my family tree such a secret. My grandmother must be rolling over in her grave. Of course, you never got to know her, being so much younger than your mum. Is that why you killed her, Tom, because you went to Hogwarts together? Yes, Tom, I know that my grandmother was your aunt, but neither of you ever knew until she was grown and you had disappeared. Even your grandfather didn't want you, you were the bastard son of the daughter he doted on, weren't you cousin?"

Voldemort smiled coldly, the room was as silent as a tomb. "I killed her you know. She died screaming for mercy and so will you," Voldemort rasped, "but first you will watch all those you love die. That will be worse than dying for you. Isn't your greatest fear to be alone?"

Harry forced herself to remain calm and say the words she needed to say. "I won't be alone, Tom. I have never been alone. They may be dead, but they will still be close. You see, I have them stored in my heart. Just like my mum and dad. On the other hand, your greatest fear is death. The cold darkness of the tomb, where nothing moves and no sounds penetrate. You cannot cheat death, Tom Riddle. It has been waiting for you for the past seventeen years. You merely delayed and evaded death, but it is time to pay your dues. The Grim Reaper is stalking you tonight."

"Lord Voldemort is immortal. I cannot be killed!"

"You're wrong," Harry's voice echoed through the silence of the Great Hall.

Students, Death eaters, teachers, and Dementors, were all mesmerized by the two enemies just standing there challenging each other with words. They were all poised for the onslaught to begin again. They didn't have long to wait. From outside the castle the reinforcements had arrived from Hogsmeade, and were using whatever spells they could think of to stop the willow trees, and provide enough light to make the Devil's Snare withdraw.

"It won't be I who sees the Reaper tonight, Potter. It will be you and your friends," Voldemort hissed, and with a flick of his wrist, a green light shot out from his wand, not at Harry, but Dumbledore. The old man deflected it easily, and the room erupted into shouts and mayhem as the battle began in earnest. Dumbledore moved to block Harry from Voldemort.

"Don't worry about me, help the sixth years! The Dementors are going for them!" Harry yelled to Dumbledore, and he immediately sent out his Patronus. Lupin was also sending them help, and Snape was moving stealthily across the crowded room towards Lucius Malfoy, who was stalking his son, Draco.

Harry saw Bellatrix go down, and saw Sirius laughing. Then she saw something she hadn't expected. It was Peter Pettigrew in the form of his rat. Apparently, they had broken him out of where ever the Order had been holding him! He was heading straight for Remus. She knew when he transformed back to a human his arm was made of silver. Remus would be killed!

Even as these thoughts went through her head, she was dodging Voldemort, weaving in and out of the crowd. She saw one of the teachers go down, and then another, along with one of the citizens of Hogsmeade. She could hear Hagrid bellowing as he gained access to the Great Hall. She was trying to get to Remus but there were too many people and obstacles. Ron looked at what she was watching, and realized she was after the rat. He had lived with "Scabbers," long enough to recognize him, and fired his wand, but it missed. Suddenly, a huge black dog tore through the crowd and leaped on top of Peter just as he transformed back to his human self. Harry averted her eyes as Pettigrew screamed.

"Professor Dumbledore," Neville yelled, "look out! Lord Voldemort is behind you!"

Harry turned just in time to see a jet of green light from Voldemort's wand headed for Dumbledore. He had been helping the students on the floor.



"Noooo..." she shrieked, but Fawkes came to the rescue, and took the hit just as he had in the Ministry. He burned up and then Dumbledore scooped up the baby bird and put him safely in his robe pocket along with a nest of ashes. "Voldemort, what's the matter," she yelled at him. "You're too afraid to face me so you go after an old man. I was right you are too cowardly to face him in a proper duel. You like shooting people in the back so you don't have to see their faces when they die!"

"You can't protect him forever, you little bitch. He's already lost his bird, and you'll be next!"

She knew she had to get Voldemort out of the Great Hall. As long as he was there, the Death Eaters would keep fighting. The Dementors were now very few, and Harry sent another Patronus over towards the last of them. As she did so, she saw Snape squaring off in a formal duel with Lucius Malfoy. The two men stood straight and tall, each glowering at the other. Lucius fired the *Avadra Kedavra* first, and the green jet flew with deadly accuracy towards Severus, but he side-stepped it with all the grace of a ballet dancer and fired back. Lucius' eyes grew wide as his mouth formed a silent scream. He fell to the floor with a thud. Severus glanced at Harry and saluted her with his wand, his lips drawn into a smile as he put his family to rest in his heart.

"Harry, Voldemort has transformed!" Sirius yelled to her from where he was laughing and throwing out curses at the remaining Death Eaters. His mouth was covered in blood, and Pettigrew lay lifeless on the floor. Padfoot had torn out his throat.

"Hey, Tom, want to play?" Harry sneered as she looked back at the Dark Lord. She knew he could transform into a snake, but was unprepared for what she saw. He was the Slytherin Serpent, a giant King Cobra. He had to be almost twenty feet in length, and he had raised himself up, hood extended, and spit venom in her direction. She dodged it just in time. "What's the matter Tom? You can't get it up so you have to turn into a snake to prove your manhood?" Harry taunted him, her heart racing. The snake stood weaving, looking down at the figures on the floor. His eyes were still bright red, not the dark black you would expect, and were like hot coals against his dark scales. Suddenly he dove towards the doors to the hallway, where Hagrid had been fighting off the senior Crabbe and Goyle.

Harry immediately transformed, and dove for the back of the snake. Digging in her talons, he was distracted, and twisted angrily.

"Thanks, Harry," Hagrid yelled as Goyle went down, and Crabbe started to back off.

The huge snake and the beautiful red phoenix were locked in combat, and Harry was deliberately flying just out of his reach, edging closer to what remained of the French Doors. Three times, she had to dodge his fangs, and he also tried to spit some venom at her eyes in an attempt to blind her, but she just flew up higher. As she flew up by the windows she could see the battle that was still going on outside. She was amazed to see the Watcher Elves and the House Elves fighting alongside the townspeople. She was also sickened by the carnage. Many people and elves were injured or dying and she could feel their physical and emotional pain. It was as if it were her own.

Swooping out the door over the giant snake, she narrowly missed his fangs again, and landed on his head, ripping the flesh with her strong talons. Voldemort slithered rapidly away from the battle, and Harry followed. Once he reached the path to Hogsmeade, he transformed

again. His forehead was bleeding profusely, and Harry had put a giant gash over one eye. It had formed a lightning bolt!

"I'll have you screaming for mercy until you die, Potter!" He pointed his wand at her, "*Crucio!*" He hit her squarely in the chest with a *Cruciatus* curse just as she transformed. She could see the Protectors running from the building in her direction, but knew they would not make it in time as she fell to her knees. She had to let Voldemort believe she was weakening. "You're coming with me, Potter. I may have lost the battle, but I can still have the pleasure of watching you die," Voldemort grabbed her in his arms, and disappeared...

"Headmaster, the Dark Lord has disappeared!" Snape yelled stopping short.

"Quickly, go and get Ron Weasley. He should have the goblet. If it flames we may be able to locate them," Dumbledore instructed with authority.

"Albus," Sirius cried in desperation, the smile wiped from his face, "we have to follow them!"

"Sirius is right. She will be at his mercy. Albus we have to try," Remus lamented.

"We will do what we can as soon as we are able," Dumbledore looked at Sirius over his spectacles, his face lined with concern. "For the time being she is in Merlin's hands. She is facing the destiny she was born for." He put his arms around the two younger wizards as they headed back up the hill towards the school, Snape hurrying ahead of them to search for Ron. "While Ron waits for any hint from the goblet, we will tend to our dead and wounded. They have fought valiantly, and died bravely. They too, deserve our attention..."

As soon as Voldemort appeared in his headquarters, he threw Harry to the floor "Now you little bitch, you will feel what it is like to be impudent to your master, *Crucio!*" He cursed her again at point blank range.

"You'll never be my master," she replied through clenched teeth. "I will never succumb to your will."

"You think not? Perhaps it's not my will you will need to bend to, but my desire to possess such a fresh young woman. Pure and unspoiled, the Phoenix will be broken!"

"Fuck you!" she screamed drawing her wand, despite the pain in her chest and belly from the *Cruciatus* curses.

Voldemort laughed coldly, stepping on her wrist to take her wand, "I thought that is what I just said."

"Only in your wildest dreams," she spat at him, trying to get a sense of where she was. The room was dark, and the only light came from the embers of a dying fire in the grate. Yet, she knew she had been in this place before...

"Ron, keep trying, we have to find her. If she's in distress the goblet will fire," Sirius fretted as he helped to levitate an injured house elf onto a stretcher.

"Professor Black...Sirius...I am trying. There is just no flame. I don't know where he has taken her!" Ron moaned desperately. "Please Merlin, don't let her be dead."

"She's not dead," Snape's dark eyes glittered anxiously, "he only used a *Cruciatus* curse before he disappeared."

"What if he killed her as soon as he got where he was going?" Ron argued voicing his worst nightmare.

"The Dark Lord would not do that, Ron. He would want to torture her first and bend her to his will. It would give him much more pleasure than her death," Snape told him flatly. 'Merlin let her be as strong as I suspect she can be. Give us the time we need to help her,' Snape worried to himself.

"Sirius, I need your help," Remus called from across the room. "Hagrid has a broken leg, and won't stay still long enough to let Poppy mend it. We need to hold him down; I don't want to use a stunning spell."

Hagrid was muttering and yelling, tears running down his ruddy cheeks into his beard. He had always been afraid of medical treatments and was carrying on like a child.

Sirius went to help Remus, and transformed into Padfoot. Climbing up onto Hagrid, he knew of his fondness for animals and let him hold onto him for comfort. Despite his fear and worry about Harry, the big dog's tongue was lolling out the side of his mouth, and Remus knew he was laughing at the gentle giant's fear of medical doctors.

"It ain't funny, ya big dog! I don't like when they 'ave ta use needles an' such." Hagrid protested, groaning with the treatment.

"Hush, Hagrid," Dumbledore told him as he gently stroked his head, muttering a sleeping charm. "You get some rest. You'll be good as new in a day or two."

"But the pups..." he managed as he drifted off.

"We'll see to all the animals," Dumbledore smiled at the sleeping figure.

"Albus how many did we lose?" Remus asked quietly.

"Two of our professors, Flitwick and Trelawney, were killed. Minerva is seriously injured and so are Professor Vector and Madam Hooch. Amazingly enough none of the students was killed. Neville broke his arm tripping over a broken table leg, and Malfoy was hit with a falling acid plant when he was fighting by the broken doorway. Fortunately, his face won't scar. Four of the sixth years are being treated by Madam Pomfrey for exposure to the Dementors, but no one lost his or her soul. There were a number of injuries and four fatalities among the people of Hogsmeade. Some of the elves have been killed, and I found Kreacher among them. He must have been with Bellatrix. Most of the watcher elves have been carried off by their own healers to be treated in the woods and caverns where they live. The majority of the Death-eaters have been either killed or captured. Moody and Arthur are arranging for their imprisonment.

"That just leaves Harry," Sirius said glumly as he transformed back from his animagus form. "Albus, we have to find them! If Voldemort harms so much as one hair on her head..."

"Headmaster...the goblet has flamed!" Ron screamed from across the room, and they all hurried over. "Harry is in trouble...she's...on the floor...looking up at Voldemort. Oh, shit! He has his foot on her wrist...He has her wand!"

"Ron, can you see where they are?" Sirius demanded.

"I can't...tell...she is looking ...around..." Ron knew he was seeing what she was looking at. "The room...it's dark...a drape on the wall..." He was concentrating hard, staring into the flames. "Oh my gosh...that's no drape...Sirius, it's your family tree! They're at Grimmauld Place!" he yelled triumphantly. He continued to stare into the flames as Sirius, Snape, and Remus dashed from the room, followed by Dumbledore. What Ron saw made his skin crawl...

Harry studied the drape on the wall..."We're in Sirius family home!" She glared at Voldemort, "how dare you use this place!" Harry had to stall; she needed time for the protectors to find her.

"It was given to me by my faithful servant, Bellatrix. It was her home too, and Dumbledore no longer needed it. The old fool never thought we would use his former headquarters. However, that no longer matters, my dear. You now belong to me!" His red eyes slid over her lithe body, accentuated by her evening dress. Pointing his wand at Harry, his hot eyes hungrily reflecting the lust she could feel in his heart. "*Imperio!*"

He smiled with evil anticipation. Her degradation would be his salvation.

"You'll never have me," she fought the curse as he removed his foot from her wrist taking off his outer robe. Using all her strength, she rolled away.

"Come here, my little prize. It won't do to have the mother of my heir acting like she doesn't like his father," Voldemort's laughter rang through the empty house as he grabbed her, pulling her over to him. "Now, I promise not to be gentle."

Harry spit in his face, and he slapped her hard across the cheek. "I will see you in Hell before I ever let you touch me! I know how to stop you...I did it before!"

"Indeed?" he questioned cockily, throwing his body on top of hers, pulling at her robes. "Now how would you do that? I have you securely pinned down."

"Want to bet?" she fought the curse successfully, and a well-placed knee sent him off her howling in pain. She rolled over to try to reach her wand, where he had thrown it on the floor, and jumping up, almost made it.

"*Crucio, Crucio!*" He screamed furiously, the red stream from his wand hitting her squarely in the back. Harry toppled like a ton of bricks. She was lying face down on the rug. Voldemort roughly turned her over to face him. "Now you will tell me what it was that you did as a baby that stopped me. Then you will be allowed to live just long enough to birth my heir!"

"I made my mother smile..." Harry grinned up at him.

"Bitch, "he split her dress up the middle, exposing her under things."

Harry's hands were at her sides, under her robe. The torn dress, hanging in shreds, provided her more cover. Slowly she wrapped her fingers around her mother's wand.

"I'm serious, I said *Abra Kadabra*," Harry said as he knelt down and ran his hand over her inner thigh. Her skin crawled at his touch, but she kept her voice steady.

"You little fool, *Abra Kadabra* doesn't do anything," Voldemort gloated

"No, Tom, it doesn't," Harry agreed as he leaned down and ran his tongue over her throat, "but *Avadra Kedavra* does."

Too late, he had seen the flick of the wand as she uttered the curse. Fighting the *Cruciatus* curse, she raised her hand stabbing him in the chest, piercing his heart at the same time. The scar on Harry's head seared with agonizing pain as Voldemort screamed and writhed on the floor beside her. Harry could feel him dying, burning up from the inside out, and screamed in agony. His pain and hers were the same as she heard a loud crashing sound and glass breaking before the darkness overcame her...

The Protectors apparated down the street from Grimmauld Place. They needed to move swiftly and stealthily to rescue Harry, aided by the cover of darkness. They were unaware that Ron was watching Harry's pain and torment in the flames and they had just gone out. The four men were almost to the house, when the quiet block was rocked by a loud explosion knocking them to the ground. An unearthly scream that sounded like all the demons from Hell were writhing in agony assailed their ears. All the windows of Sirius family home had been blown out, and the house was in ruins. The four men sat frozen on the ground; momentarily stunned...It was Godric's Hollow all over again.

"Nooooo," Sirius screamed, "we have to get to Harry!" He got up and broke into a run as the street was filling with Muggles and wizards alike.

Arthur apparated and ran over to Dumbledore. "Albus, what is going on? Is it Voldemort?" he asked helping him to his feet as Remus and Snape sped after Sirius.

"One or both of them is dead. We need to search the rubble. Have your people begin modifying the memories of the Muggles," Dumbledore replied grimly, his brow furrowed with worry.

Following Sirius into the house, they had to move beams and broken furniture out of the hallway. The house looked like it had been hit with a tornado. If they moved the wrong thing, the ceiling would come down on all of them.

"Black, quiet, I hear someone..." Snape looked at them all, straining his ears.

A low moan came from the drawing room. Then the soft sound of someone crying...It was Harry. She was somehow alive! Sirius went to call out to her, but Dumbledore immediately silenced him with a wave of his wand.

"We can't be certain it's not a trap," he whispered removing the charm he had put on Sirius voice. "We must proceed with caution," Dumbledore warned, motioning them to return to work.

They worked feverishly, for what seemed like hours, but it was really only about thirty minutes, when they came to the entrance to the drawing room. The door was hanging wildly half off its hinges, and the room was in semi darkness. The sky outside had begun to quicken with the dawn, and the remains of the furniture looked like grotesque gnomes littering the room. Harry was just sitting in the middle of the room, her knees drawn up to her chest, as she rocked back and forth sobbing like a small child, her wand in her hand. Blood was running down her face where the scar she had received sixteen years ago had split open. Her clothes were torn and filthy, but they could tell the damage to her clothes had not been from the explosion. The dust that had settled in the carpet was marked with a single trail that led away from the figure of a man lying on the floor. His mouth was open in a silent scream, and his eyes were glazed over in fear. A wand had been sunk deep into his chest, piercing his heart. They recognized it as the one from Lily Potter's trunk. Lord Voldemort was dead. His wand on the floor beside him.

"Princess," Remus voice soothed as Sirius and Snape worked furiously to remove the last of the obstacles keeping them away from her. "Look at me, Harry. It's Remus. Sirius and Severus are coming to get you out. Albus is here too." Harry didn't budge. She just sat staring at the figure of Lord Voldemort.

"She's in shock," Dumbledore said quietly from beside him.

"I'll arrange to get her to St. Mungo's." Moody's gruff voice announced as he entered the room, and once satisfied that Voldemort was truly dead, he left to tell Arthur and make a formal announcement.

"No, I don't want to go to the hospital. I want to go home," Harry looked up at Dumbledore, her green eyes terrified. "You have to break the wand. You know that, don't you? You have to break his wand. It will free them. I heard them screaming. Mum, Dad, Cedric, and all the others, I heard them when I killed him..." Her voice trailed off, as Sirius, removed the last obstacle from his path.

"Honey, what are you saying?" he wrapped his arms around her.

"The Headmaster knows...he had to do it before...you have to free them."

Dumbledore picked up Voldemort's wand from off the floor.

"You have to be the one to do it, Harry. You have to be the one to free them."

"Headmaster, is Harry speaking the truth? Is she trying to tell us that the souls of his victims are trapped in that wand?" Snape asked incredulous.

"The shadows she saw before are. I don't know if they are the true soul or just a part them that has been left behind, especially after the experience Sirius had."

"What did she mean; you had to do it before?" Sirius asked.

"When an evil wizard is destroyed his wand must be broken by the witch or wizard who has killed him. It will ensure his victims peace and that the evil power that held sway will be broken," Dumbledore explained bringing the wand over to Harry. "I can't...", she sobbed into Sirius robes.

"Princess, it's all right. We'll all stay with you," Remus comforted her as Sirius used his robe to wipe some of the blood from her face.

"Miss Potter...Harry...You are a strong and powerful young woman. You have nothing to fear. It took a lot of courage to do what you have done this past night. Go ahead and finish it. Then I promise you we will take you back to Hogwarts, and once Madam Pomfrey and Dr. McBride have checked you over, I will give you some of my Dreamless Sleeping Potion. We will sit with you while you sleep to make sure you are comfortable and secure."

"Listen to Severus, Harry. He wouldn't tell you that if he didn't mean it. We're all here now, and will help you to finally end this nightmare," Remus looked at her with intensity, his hazel eyes warm and comforting.

"Harry we all care for you, and would never ask you to do anything we didn't think you couldn't handle. Let me see some of that strength you so often say I have given you." Sirius smiled gently stroking her head.

"My scar hurts, and it's bleeding," Harry said nestling herself closer to Sirius.

"I know, Child. Once you break the wand, your scar will never hurt again," Dumbledore handed her the wand, and a little chirp came from inside his pocket. He smiled, and reached in taking out the baby Fawkes that he had placed there during the battle.

"Fawkes," Harry smiled wanly as Dumbledore knelt down beside her so she could pet the little bird. Fawkes began to trill with a high-pitched Phoenix song as she scratched his little head with her index finger. "You have to hurry up and get big again so I can have someone to go flying with. My animagus is no longer a secret so we can have some fun." The little bird cheeped and blinked at her wide-eyed. Dumbledore put him back in his pocket.

Grasping the wand in both hands, Harry snapped it in half. There was a loud crack as the wand broke and the room was filled with a brilliant light as the shades emerged from the wand. Each one thanked her as they exited and disappeared.

"I knew you could do it, Harry," Cedric Diggory smiled as his shade drifted off. "Now I can be a whole spirit again and stay in the realm of the light."

"I suppose you are wondering what he meant, Harry?" Her father's soft voice said as he came from out of the wand, accompanied by her mother. We were souls divided, and could not stay in peace while Voldemort lived. We were bound to his wand, even though we were in the afterlife. It caused us to exist just beyond the veil, and not pass through the second arch where we could be happy with our loved ones. That was why I was able to send Sirius back. He was still alive in his body. Had he passed through the other arch, he would have truly died."

"James..." Sirius voice cracked.

"Hello old friend. It's good to know you made it back," James Potter grinned. "You always did have a knack for getting in and out of trouble. Try to get him to behave once in a while will you, Little Girl?"

"Albus," Lily looked at the Headmaster with tears in her eyes, "you kept her safe, just like you promised."

"We had a few near misses, and she has your stubborn streak, but she'll be just fine, now."

"Severus Snape," James Potter looked at his old rival sternly, and then threw back his head and laughed. "If you had told me before I died that my daughter would be your soul mate, I would have put a hex on you then and there. Thank you for going beyond paying your life debt to me. There are some things worth dying for, and I think you'll agree she is one of them. Take good care of her or Padfoot may take a bite out of you yet, not to mention a certain werewolf!" James teased him, but he reached out his hand in friendship, even though he was no longer able to give a true handshake.

Snape inclined his head, too stunned to speak, as he extended his own hand. He had been accepted into James Potter's little group.

"Don't think we forgot you, Remus," Lily drifted over to him. "If it weren't for you, she would have fallen prey to the Dementors. You came when she needed you. It didn't matter that we had thought it was you that had links with Voldemort. You didn't get angry with us. You were as true a friend as ever lived. I will always remind myself that we were the one's who misjudged a good and loving man, but he stayed true to his family."

"Thank you Lily. I have missed you both. We all have."

"Lily, we have to go." James Potter's shade said to his wife. "Harry, just because you can't see us doesn't mean we aren't there. You have grown into a lovely young woman, and I am more proud of you than I ever could have imagined. You stood up to an evil that almost shattered the wizarding world. Your mother was right when she said you would have a charmed and wonderful life. You're very special. You'll take good care of these four for me, won't you? Please don't forget to put on a pink dress every now and again. I know it will make her happy," he told her laughing as he stuck his thumb in Lily's direction.

"Never forget, *Abra Kadabra*," her mother smiled. Then a wondrous thing happened. James Potter transformed into a large stag, and Lily climbed onto his back. He then took a long leap across the room, and they vanished. They all remained quiet for a few minutes, trying to digest what had just happened. Dumbledore finally broke the spell.

"Come, Harry, it's time we got you home, you're hurt and tired," Dumbledore gently eased her from Sirius arms.

"You'll take me home? Not to St. Mungo's?" Harry questioned anxiously.

"Yes, we'll go back to Hogwart's just as we promised. Hold onto me, and we will apparate. You're too weak to try it alone."

Harry nodded and looked at her protectors with trepidation. She knew they would question her, and she was not prepared to tell them what had happened. Even though Voldemort was dead, they would be livid when they heard what he had attempted. She dreaded having to tell them how close she had to let him come to violating her in order to kill him. She began to cry again, trembling as she realized how different things would be right now if she had failed. She closed her eyes and clung to Dumbledore. When she opened them again, she was being carried towards the castle. Dumbledore had wrapped her securely in his cloak. His agility had never failed to surprise her as he moved swiftly up the hill.



As the little group entered the castle, she could see house elves and wizards, all cleaning up in the Great Hall. She could hear them all whispering as they entered, and knew they were talking about her. She could feel their excitement and relief the Dark Lord was dead. When they reached the infirmary, they were met at the door by Madam Pomfrey and Dr. McBride, the local healer. Most of the beds were full, and she could see Hagrid, trying to stand up, and realized his leg was broken.

"Don' ye be gettin' out o' bed yer big fool! " McBride yelled as he followed Harry's line of vision. "The leg'll be good as new in a few hours if ya stay off it!" Harry giggled, as Hagrid tried to pull the too small nightshirt around himself and blushed. "Ah, lassie, tis good ta see yer alive an' ken still smile. I 'ad ta give young Weasley a sleeping potion, 'e was so beside his self. Saw all the Dark Lord tried as 'e watched in the goblet. When the flame went out 'e feared ye 'ad been killed along with 'im. The lad was in a right bad way."

"Can you wake him up?" Harry asked as Dumbledore gently laid her on one of the beds and Poppy pulled the screen for privacy.

"I'll wake 'im just as soon as I make sure yer not badly injured. I ken see yer in shock, but I expected that. Now, you three young bucks, wait outside while I check 'er out!" He pointed to the other side of the privacy screen. "Dumbledore ken stay."

"I happen to be Harry's godfather and legal guardian. I should be allowed to stay!" Sirius protested.

"Aye, an' like 'er other two protectors yer quite fond o' the lass. Now wait outside laddie, or ya will need a bed o' yer own 'ere," McBride informed Sirius boldly as the younger wizard glared.

"Black, let Dr. McBride examine Harry. I will get some of the Awakening Potion to wake Mr. Weasley if Dr. McBride will allow us. He will want to know that Harry is alive and safe."

"Snape, we should be here with her. You saw how she was when we found her. She's still upset."

"Sirius, he didn't do what you're thinking," Harry said quietly. "Wake up Ron, and then I will tell you what happened."

"Lassie, I see yer worried about the lad, so I'll let Professor Snape see to 'im. Now I want ya to lay back an' let me check ya over. Then Poppy will help ya ta clean up."

"It will be all right Princess. Albus will call us if you need us," Remus reassured her.

"Headmaster?" Harry looked at Dumbledore, the fear and anxiety back in her eyes.

"Lay back, Child. I promise to call them if you need them. Remus can sit on the other side of the screen while Angus checks your injuries."

"Lassie, I promise that ya shouldno' 'ave discomfort like the last time I 'ad ta heal ya. I ken see ya managed to hold yer own with the Dark Lord. Now let me check ya over so we ken give this bed to someone who needs it."

Harry did as she was told. Remus took a chair right outside the screen while Sirius and Snape woke Ron. Harry could hear Ron talking to them, and noted the relief in his voice that she was safe and alive. They then questioned Ron about what he had seen, and Ron's concern was obvious. He related his story, and Harry could sense the anger of the Protectors.

Dr. McBride was his usual thorough self, and healed her injuries from the *Cruciatus* curses as he did a brief pelvic exam. She was aware that even though she had told them Voldemort had not raped her, they had wanted to be certain. Harry knew Dumbledore was relieved that she had not been "touched," as Dr. McBride had put it, trying to be subtle, as Poppy cleaned up her wounds and bandaged her scar.

"Lassie, I may be able to remove that curse scar now that the Dark Lord is dead. Would ya like me ta try?" Dr. McBride inquired as Dumbledore watched her closely.

She looked from one to the other and smiled. "No, I wouldn't. Let the scar stay there to remind everyone how close we all came to letting one evil wizard gain control of our world. The prophecies both said I would be marked for life, so let it be so. It will help people to remember that there really is such a thing as good and evil; and evil will always hold sway when good people pretend it does not exist or turn a blind eye to its actions. It will let them remember that this time one seventeen year old girl found the courage, strength, endurance, and trust in humanity to stand up for them and fight. It may help to remind them that next time there may not be someone there to do what they were too afraid to do for themselves."

"Harry, "Ron's voice came from around the curtain. "Can I come in?"

"Aye, laddie, yer friend's going to be fine. She just needs some rest," McBride answered as Poppy removed the privacy screen and Ron, Sirius, Snape and Remus all gathered around.

"Ye ken all spend some time with her, and then I want her to get some sleep. Lass, I know ye will no' like this, but I want ya up 'ere in the infirmary till mornin'.

Dumbledore immediately saw the distress in her features, and interceded. "Angus, I think Harry has earned the right to rest in the privacy of her room. The protectors will stay with her and can call you or Poppy if you're needed."

"Aye, I suppose it will be a' right, but she's only ta get up for the bathroom. I want her ta sleep. She needs rest and quiet. It's no' just 'er body that needs ta repair itself." Harry smiled weakly at the two older men, and Ron sat down on the bed beside her.

"You really scared the crap out of me, Harry. I thought...well...it looked like he was trying to... Ron could not find the words he wanted to say.

"He was," Harry answered matter of factly, "or so he thought. He wanted me to be the mother of his heir, and then he was going to kill me. What better way to get even with his enemies than to degrade me. I'm sure he planned on regrouping. He just didn't realize I had gotten so good at fighting the unforgivable curses."

"I can't believe you weren't scared," Ron shook his head.

"Ron, I didn't say that. I just kept a cool head. That's what the old woman told me to do. She said to think before I acted, and to remember, "*Abra Kadabra*," Harry winked at Dumbledore.

"Child, I think your protectors and Ron both need an explanation. You also promised to tell me who the old woman was that you spoke with yesterday, down by the lake."

"You're right, Headmaster," Harry collected her thoughts. "First of all, I know you recognized the wand that killed Voldemort was the one from my mother's trunk. I don't know why I hid it in my robes before the dance. Something inside just told me to. It is interesting that the Mathias Prophecy said that I would call on my mother's love to bring Voldemort down. In the end, that is just what happened. I was hurting and it looked like I would ultimately fail. I knew that if he accomplished what he was about to try we would lose. I let him think I was helpless."

Harry swallowed hard, and Remus sat down next to Ron and took her hand. "He really did make my skin crawl when he ran his tongue down the side of my throat. I had to force myself to pretend I couldn't move. I think it was one of the worst moments of my life." Harry shuddered, and Snape and Sirius both came over and hugged her at the same time. Pulling herself together, Harry continued. "I knew I would only get one chance, so I wanted to let him get as close as possible to catch him off guard. I fought just enough to fool him. Then I told him how I had been able to stop him as a baby. I told him all about, *Abra Kadabra*."

"But honey, those words are simply something Muggles made up. They can't do real magic. Your mum used to try to get you to say them when you were a baby," Sirius looked puzzled. "You always like to say they made her smile."

"They did," Dumbledore interjected. "Harry could never say them correctly. What she never told any of you is that the night she was back in time, Lily was playing with her and trying to get her to say, *Abra Kadabra*. When Voldemort killed her, baby Harry had picked up her mother's wand. She didn't know her mother was dead. She just wanted to play. When Voldemort went to curse her she pointed Lily's wand back at him and said what she thought was, *Abra Kadabra*. She never could say it right. The words garbled and came out as, *Avadra Kedavra*."

"I don't know who was watching over me that night, but I did it at exactly the moment Voldemort did. His curse backfired. The protection my mum passed on to me when she sacrificed herself...well..." Harry's voice cracked and she was fighting the tears. "He wasn't killed. I was too little to accomplish that, but he became that thing...and...and disappeared."

"I knew he wasn't dead, and that he would come back. When he did, Harry would be his prime target. The scar on her head and the two Prophecies told me she was the one we had been waiting for," Dumbledore said quietly. "I went into action and arranged for her to go to stay with Lily's sister knowing her blood would act as her mother's had. A part of me will regret that decision to this day. If I hadn't stopped Sirius from taking over as your guardian, since he was your godfather, he would not have gone after Peter and been sent to Azkaban."

"Yet, you're the one who set such store by the Mathias Prophecy. Surely you realized somewhere along the line that the Prophecy said he was wrongfully accused."

"I did not know of the change in secret keepers. That was what was so distressing. I also did not know they were unregistered animagi," Dumbledore explained. "So I decided to wait and see what happened. I knew all would be revealed in time. Sirius, I'm sorry. I don't think I ever told you before."

"I know that, Albus. I should have told you, but I was in such grief, and I knew Harry was safe. I didn't care that I was in prison."

"Okay, so how did you stop him this time?" Ron demanded.

"I told you I let him get close enough so that I could do it again. You have to understand, I knew I had to kill him, but I also knew it was against my nature to harm any human being. I would get only one chance. There could be no time for me to change my mind. If I did, the people I loved were going to die. I made sure he was at point blank range, and said the curse I knew would kill him, pointing my mum's wand at his heart. He didn't know I had the second wand, so he didn't look for it. I let my mum finish what she couldn't do sixteen years ago. As I cursed him, I also physically stabbed him through the heart. He screamed the most inhuman sound I ever heard. I screamed at the same time. My scar burst open, and I could feel him dying. The curse was ripping him apart from the inside out; his whole body felt like it was on fire, and being ripped in half. The pain was unbearable. He was afraid. It actually was only a few seconds, but it felt like forever. Then the building blew up as he died from all the magical energy as the evil inside was vanquished.

It was the last thing I remembered till I woke up in the dark, with him next to me. I was terrified and confused. The room was in shambles. I crawled away from him. The expression on his face..." Harry shuddered, and they all moved to calm her. "I don't know how long I waited till I heard Sirius telling me he was there. I think it took me a few minutes to know I was safe and Voldemort was truly dead. I'm not even sure how I found my own wand in the dark. I think I may have lit it with the illumination spell, but I don't remember. Professor Dumbledore, what happened to his body?"

"It has been disposed of," Moody's voice came from the door. He had been standing where Harry couldn't see him and listening, writing down what she had said. "I saw no need to have you recount what happened for a second time."

"Thanks," Harry replied gratefully. "It's been a long night."

"Wait till I get you in Auror training school, Potter. You'll be better than your father and godfather were."

"Sirius and your dad were Aurors?" Ron asked amazed. "I knew they were in the Order but I didn't realize they were actual Aurors."

"Ron, that's one of the reasons Sirius, was sent to prison without a trial. They suspected him of being an Auror gone bad."

Ron whistled softly, "Are you going to go back to it?"

"I've been thinking about it., but in view of the circumstances Albus has also offered me a full time position here next term. He has to fill the open position."

"What open positions?" Harry looked at Dumbledore anxiously.

"Little Phoenix, we lost two of our Professors in the battle. Professor Trelawney and Professor Flitwick."

Harry started to cry. "Not Flitwick, it's not fair, and Trelawney may have been a lousy seer, but she didn't deserve to die."

"Sh...Princess. We were going to wait to tell you, but it's better if you know now. It could have been much worse."

"Harry, they both knew the score when they went into the battle. We all did. They both fought well, and would not want you to feel they died for nothing. They both helped to buy you the time you needed to confront Lord Voldemort," Snape told her seriously. "Their sacrifice saved countless other lives."

"I talked to my dad earlier about Percy. He realized that in the end he was wrong. He saved my dad and Professor Moody. He told my dad that he loved us all and he was sorry before he died," Ron consoled her. "Harry a lot of good people died yesterday, but they all helped to save many others. You helped to save us all. Hermione, Ginny, and all the others are safe. The Prophecies were right."

"Honey, go to sleep. We'll stay with you. Do you want me to carry you down to your room?" Sirius looked down at her, and their eyes locked.

"I'll stay here. It doesn't really matter so long as you're all with me."

"Then sleep, Child." Dumbledore told her quietly. "*For now you may rest, the deed it is done, your heart it was pure, your goodness has won.*" Were the last words she heard, as Dumbledore gently charmed her to sleep, quoting from the Mathias Prophecy...

The last few weeks of school were busy ones for Harry. While final exams had been cancelled, the O.W.L.'s weren't. She sat for her exams and did quite well. Snape was very pleased with her Potions exam and she garnered another N.E.W.T., which was not easy, since to earn one she had to do perfectly on the practical and exceptionally well on the written with a score of over 90%. She also had to contend with three potions master's watching her, one of whom was Tiberius Snape. She also garnered N.E.W.T'S in Charms, Transfiguration, and Defense Against the Dark Arts. She earned O.W.L.'s in Herbology and Divination. Ron and Hermione also did as well, except Ron received an O.W.L. in Potions, and Hermione got one in Arithmancy when she mixed up her answers. Harry teased her and said it happened because she was thinking about going out to the Three Broomsticks with Ron after the exam. Hermione had blushed profusely, and smiled.

Neville Longbottom also passed everything with O.W.L.'s except for Potions, where he merely passed the class, and he received a N.E.W.T. in Herbology. He was pleased with his grades, though, as he was going on to become a Herbologist and wanted to open a florist. He was also one of Harry's most ardent supporters, and would be forever grateful to her for the rest of his life. Harry would never forget the look on his face two days after Voldemort's fall, when the Owl arrived with the letter from his grandmother.

"Harry! It's a letter from my gran. She says that when the LeStrange's died and you put an end to You Know Who... my parents...Harry they're awake, and know who and where they are! They knew all along but were under a powerful set of spells. They were unable to tell us anything or act normally. My mum and dad knew me all those years. Harry they're coming home! They want to meet you too. They'll be here at Hogwart's tomorrow after exams are

finished," Harry didn't say anything; she merely hugged him and cried. Slipping out after lunch, she transformed and flew over to the cemetery to visit her own parents.

She placed the usual flowers on the grave, and tried unsuccessfully to wipe the tears from her eyes, when she was startled by the sound of a voice behind her.

"Little one, why do you weep? They are freed now, and happy, their spirits are able to run with the wind. You have seen that for yourself."

"Hello, Artemis," Harry smiled at the little elf. "I just came to tell them that some of their old friends are also free, and alive. They will be coming home from the hospital where they have been for the past sixteen years. Their son is the one who protected the school with the willow trees and the Devil's Snare during the battle."

"Ah...the boy you call Neville. We of the wood respect him and he loves the plants. His parent's were tortured and their minds entrapped."

"Artemis, you never fail to amaze me, but yes, it is his parents."

"Then I am sure yours are happy. Did not your father tell you that just because you cannot see them; it does not mean they aren't there?"

"You've been talking to Dumbledore about what happened when Voldemort died."

"I know many things, Little One. I told you before; you have a wonderful Aura, not unlike the Wise one. Now smile, and go back to school. Your parents would want you to look to the future, not the past."

Harry had transformed and gone back up to the castle, but spent the afternoon alone playing with Snuffles. Hagrid had found homes for all her pups, and one had gone to Mr. and Mrs. Weasley. Circe had also taken one for Phaedra, and the little girl was beside herself with delight. They would all be staying together again over the summer, at the little house in Ottery St. Catchpole. Harry would no longer be going to the Dursley's.

Harry had sent her aunt a nice letter, thanking her for taking her in and watching over her, even though she did not have to. She told her that if she ever needed anything she could get word to her through her neighbor, Mrs. Figg, as she would know how to contact her. She did not tell her that Arabella Figg was a Squib. She received no answer. She had not expected one.

Finally, the night came for the leaving feast. The Great Hall was decorated and all the students were in the mood to celebrate, but were acutely aware of the two empty chairs. In an effort to lighten the mood of the students, there had been a memorial for the two teachers the week following Voldemort's death. The students had all decided amongst themselves that there would be no House Cup this year, as there could be no real single winner. Instead, the seventh years had magically made a huge cup, emblazoned with the Hogwart's Crest, and the translation of the school motto, "*Never Wake a Sleeping Dragon.*" The names of the teachers were inscribed on it along with the date of the final battle. It was to be a surprise for the faculty. As Head Girl and Boy Harry and Neville would present it along with all the Prefects. She had managed to arrange a special signal as soon as Dumbledore went to present the cup. She found it difficult to conceal her smile, when he tapped his glass for attention.

"Good evening, students. Another year has ended on both a sad and a happy note. Some of our numbers are no longer with us. Let us not forget them or the sacrifice they made. I want you all to know, that they gave their lives to buy Harry Potter the time to defeat Lord Voldemort. They sacrificed their lives so Harry could save our world from a great and powerful evil," Dumbledore smiled, as Harry pretended to drop something under the table and disappear. "Harry stop trying to hide, we all know how you hate the attention," the room went wild with laughter.

"Ah...I just dropped my wand on the floor is all," she said popping back up, embarrassed.

"It is now my pleasure to announce the House Cup..." He began only to be interrupted by Fawkes flying in with the Sorting Hat, as the stool suddenly appeared. Draco Malfoy had quietly done a summoning charm to bring in the stool, and winked from across the room. "This is most irregular, but it seems my Phoenix and the Sorting Hat have decided to join the celebration," Dumbledore said puzzled as he looked quizzically over at the teachers who were all shrugging. Fawkes put the Sorting Hat on the stool and it began to sing.

*I am the Hogwarts Sorting Hat*

*This year draws to its end*

*Nevertheless, before you go*

*This message I will impart,*

*A thousand years or more ago,*

*When I was newly sewn,*

*There lived four wizards of renown*

*Who built this place of learning,*

*But alas, they did divide*

*Their brightest and their best,*

*By creating competition*

*It split this house in four*

*To put them to the test*

*To Gryffindor the bravest went,*

*While those who were the cleverest*

*To Ravenclaw were sent,*

*For Hufflepuff hard workers lent*

*A name of great renown,  
While those of cunning and ambition  
Were seen as Slytherin bound  
Yet all these groups  
They could not know,  
That there would come a day  
When one so black of heart  
Would try to take control away,  
So reunited they came to be  
As the founders had intended,  
For their instructors had taught them well  
In Potions, Charms, and Spell  
To protect this house of learning  
So evil would not dwell  
For when the Dark Lord he did come  
He forgot to heed the warning  
Written over our great door,  
And upon the school standard  
Never wake a sleeping dragon,  
For you will come to see  
The Griffin and the Serpent,  
The Badger and the Raven.  
All joined to act as one  
As they were meant to be,  
For in this House Cup I do present  
Their thanks, with love and gratitude,*



*To Headmaster, Professors, and staff alike,*

*That gave the opportunity*

*To protect our Dragon's Heart.*

The Prefects then all got up and pointing their wands towards the standards hanging above them changed them all to the Hogwart's Coat of Arms. Harry and Neville made the large House Cup appear on the table in front of Dumbledore. He was moved to tears, as were most of the teachers. Even Severus Snape reacted emotionally, and smiled. Sirius winked and beamed with pleasure, while Remus went over with McGonagall and hugged Harry and Neville, and shook hands with all the Prefects. The students went wild with applause that lasted for ten minutes. Everyone agreed that it was the best Leaving Feast Hogwarts had ever seen, and would be talked about for years to come.

The next morning saw Harry getting ready to leave, and as she prepared to go down to the carriages to take the train, Dumbledore stopped her.

"Harry, I have something for you." He handed her a piece of paper.

"What is it?" She asked curiously.

"Open it and find out, honey," Sirius said coming over to them with Remus.

Tearing open the envelope, she laughed. "It's my license to apparate! Ron will be so jealous!"

"Are you still going to take the train?" Sirius grinned.

"Yeah...I am. It's for the last time. We'll just consider it a right of passage, besides I want to be with my friends for a while. We're all going separate ways."

"I for one am surprised you turned Moody down. I thought you wanted to be an Auror," Snape remarked as he sauntered over.

"Not since I was fifteen. I have had my fill of chasing dark wizards. I told him I would free lance for the Order if there was ever another problem."

"What did he say to that, Princess?"

"Nothing, Remus. He just shook his head and muttered something about losing the chance to train the best Auror he could ever have had."

"What position did you accept?" Snape asked curiously. "I heard you were offered a position as relief Seeker on the Chudley Cannons."

"I turned it down. I love quidditch, but I don't want to play professionally. Besides, I have enough notoriety all ready."

"Then what will you be doing?"

"You know, for a Protector, you really should pay more attention to what I'm up to," Harry laughed. Turning to Dumbledore, she said, "Does Professor Snape know yet?"

"No, I haven't told him. I thought you might enjoy doing so."

"Oh, great, he'll be impossible to live with all summer," Sirius groaned, and Remus grinned.

"What are you talking about?" Snape glared, wondering what was going on.

"The Headmaster offered me a teaching position and I accepted it."

"Indeed, why should that bother me?"

"I'm teaching Potions." Harry replied straight faced as Sirius and Remus snickered.

"But I teach potions!" Snape turned to look at Dumbledore in confusion.

"Now, Severus, Harry did so well on her exams, she is going to study towards her Potions Master Certificate. You, of course, will supervise her, while you perform your new duties."

"New duties?"

"Yes, Sirius will be teaching Astronomy since Professor Sinestra has informed me that she will be leaving due to a family illness. She wishes to be closer to home. I also needed to fill the vacancy left by the death of Professor Flitwick. Remus has graciously agreed to teach Charms since it is one of his other specialties."

"Who will be teaching Defense Against the Dark Arts and why wasn't I allowed to apply? You know all positions are subject to staff discussion even though you must approve them." Snape's pale complexion had a hint of red, as he was growing angry. He was not only out of a job, he wasn't even given the opportunity to apply for one of the openings on staff.

"Gee, I was allowed to vote, and I haven't even started yet," Harry sneered.

"Yes, I believe we discussed it last week while you were on that errand for me in Hogsmeade," Dumbledore's blue eyes were laughing. "It was actually Harry who said our new instructor would be perfect for the job."

"Potter, I have gone out of my way to Protect you and have come to care for you a great deal. While I admit I was not very nice to you for your first five years here at Hogwarts I never expected you to...to..."

"Severus," Harry smiled nonchalantly, "you're the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher. I said the best instructors I ever had were Remus, who makes it one of his specialties since he is a werewolf, Barty Crouch when he posed as Moody, and you during our private tutoring sessions. After all, who would know better how to teach the students how to defend themselves than a former Death eater. Remus had no objection to switching so..." Harry shrugged as Snape just stared, his mouth open.

"Honey, I think you put him into shock."

"Yeah, and I'm not done yet."

"There's more?" Snape whispered.

"Absolutely, give me your left arm. I have a present for you," Harry grinned. "It is something you didn't know I was able to do, but I knew it. You simply had to prove to me that you deserved it. I can't have my soul mate running around with this disgusting tattoo on his arm, now can I?"

"Potter, the Dark Mark is irreversible," Snape told her patiently.

"Not for me. Even our Headmaster can't remove it. I know how to put it on and take it off, just like when I put it into the sky when I was stuck on the roof. No one ever showed me how. It was one of the little talents I got with this scar, along with the Parsel Tongue," Harry explained as she grasped Snape's arm and held onto it. His eyes watered in pain as she used her power to cleanse him of the evil mark. Removing her hand, they all gasped. She had done it.

"Child, how did you know you could do that?"

"Headmaster, I really am Voldemort's equal. I'm sure I will discover all kinds of things I can do or understand as we go along. I'm so glad I'm the good one. All this power can be rather scary. That's why I have the four of you in my life. My dad said to take care of you, and I will. You can all watch out for me at the same time. Now if you'll all excuse me, the carriages are here, and I have a train to catch for the last time. The next time I walk through these doors it will be as a teacher."

"Have a good time on the train, Princess. We will meet you at the station, and will apparate from there. We have already sent your trunk on ahead along with Hedwig and Snuffles."

"Before you leave, Harry, I have one more question. You never did tell me who the old woman was," Dumbledore asked thoughtfully.

She smiled coyly as she looked from one to the other of the four men. They were all waiting for her answer. "Okay, when the hood of her cloak fell back I did recognize her. She had green eyes and a scar on her forehead in the shape of a lightning bolt. There was a time turner in her hand. I knew I wouldn't die if I just did what she told me, since I was looking at myself. I heeded my own advice and remembered what she said to me. To think before I acted, that Neville was an excellent gardener and Ron would be there when I needed him."

"No wonder she did not want me to see her. She knew I would recognize her."

"Yeah, she said she didn't want you to know just yet, so I guess now is when I told you. She did hint that if you knew what she did you would not be happy, so I have the feeling you're going to end up being one of the ancient wizards who come and do the testing for O.W.L.'s."

"Why do you suppose I did not try to stop her from coming?"

"Because you knew she was supposed to come since you know now who she was. You know better than to interfere with the time line, and she didn't really tell me anything about what

would happen. She merely gave me the incentive to succeed. It would still be my actions which determined the outcome."

Dumbledore smiled, and nodded his approval at her theory, then gave her a quick kiss on the cheek, "I will see you later on this evening."

Harry turned, and catching up with Ron and Hermione, climbed into one of the carriages for the short journey to Hogsmeade. When they reached the station, she said good-bye to Hagrid, and they all boarded the train. Settling themselves into one of the compartments, Harry smiled at her two friends. Ron would be going to school to train to be an Auror and Hermione was going to work for the Ministry in Muggle Relations.

"Well, it's over," Hermione sighed with a tear in her eye. "I'm going to miss Hogwart's. You had better keep us posted about all the happenings."

"Don't worry, I will, and we'll still have the summer together. Besides I have a sneaking suspicion we will still be seeing a lot of one another. Especially since we are all going to have to testify at some of the trials."

"Ugh, don't remind me," Hermione frowned. "We still have to worry about the Deathaters that escaped."

"That, my love is why I am going into Auror training my love," Ron grinned giving Hermione a quick peck on her cheek.

"You just make sure you're careful Ronald Weasley. I don't know what I would do if anything happened to you," Hermione scolded with a pout. "Why couldn't you have been sensible like me and Harry and take up a nice safe profession?"

"Because my best buddy has this habit of attracting the bad guys like a magnet," Ron quipped, "and as Keeper of the Goblet I somehow get the idea I am going to be very busy," Ron said turning to Harry. "I still don't believe you chose teaching over Professional Quidditch or being an Auror," Ron shook his head.

"I chose my home, Ron. Hogwart's is where I belong. It is where my heart is and my family, besides you know I am going to free lance for Moody along with my three protectors. After all, someone has to make sure you stay safe for Hermione," Harry smiled sitting back, looking out the window.

"Well, at least we don't have to deal with any more Prophecies," Hermione said with a toss of her head.

"Don't be so sure, Hermione. The way Harry's life is anything is possible," Ron rolled his eyes mischievously. "Of course she may just decide to fool us all and settle down with one of her protectors."

"Now Ron, I promise you and Hermione will be the first to know when I do decide to settle down. Of course, I will have to find Mr. Right before that happens."

"Like you haven't all ready. You just won't admit it, let alone tell us who the lucky guy is. Do you know Fred and George are taking bets that you will marry one of your Protectors?"

"Really, and who is the front runner for my affections?"

"Well, Fred thinks you will end up with Sirius by the way you look at each other but George is going for Snape. He says that he's your soul mate."

"Well, I think they're both wrong," Hermione chimed in. "I think Harry has too much common sense for either of them and will surprise us all by marrying Professor Lupin."

Harry just smiled slyly, her cheeks red, her heart bursting with a new happiness.

She was heading into a new life with a family whom she could call her own, and the adventure was just beginning...