

## Somewhere Safe

1.

Harry stalked down the corridors. The school had turned against him. Again. He had no idea how his name came out of the goblet. No one wanted to listen though. Everyone thought he was a cheater. Ron thought he had managed to put his name in and just wouldn't tell him. The entire house of Gryffindor was glaring at him, blaming him for something he didn't do.

Only Hermione believed him. As glad as he was for that, he was pretty sure she only did because she hadn't figured out how to cross the age-line. If she couldn't figure it out, how was he supposed to be able to?"

He couldn't sleep. For the first time coming to Hogwarts, he didn't feel welcome.

Harry found himself pacing back and forth in a dead-end corridor on the seventh floor. He just wanted somewhere safe. Somewhere people weren't trying to kill him. Somewhere that he wasn't The Boy Who Lived. Was that too much to ask?

He stopped in his tracks. There was a door that hadn't been there before. Harry slowly approached it. His hand hovered over the knob. He drew his wand, flung open the door, and rushed inside at the ready.

It was an empty classroom. There was something familiar about it, but he couldn't place it at the moment. Lifting his wand, he summoned some light. Harry tilted his head to the side in confusion. Before him stood the Mirror of Erised. Now that he looked around, this was the room he had first seen. Except, it hadn't been on the seventh floor.

Harry shrugged. Looking at a life that never was could be interesting enough to distract him for a while. The room brightened as he walked in front of the mirror. He stopped and stared into the glass. There was nothing there. Not even his reflection. It just showed the door behind him.

He took a step closer just in case he was too far away to trigger the magic. His nose was almost touching the glass when he realized that there wasn't actually any glass to touch. Harry looked over his shoulder. The doors didn't match.

Harry held his wand out, trying to tap the mirror. It moved through open air. There truly was no glass. He paused. Even for Hogwarts, this was strange. He sighed. With a shrug he stepped into the mirror.

He had expected a shimmer, or something, when he passed through the frame. It didn't feel like anything. Just taking a step in a room. He looked back over his shoulder to see that the mirror was gone. Now, he was in an empty old room.

Harry shook his head. He left the room and closed the door behind him. It didn't surprise him that it vanished as well.

"That was pointless." He grumbled.

"Meow." Mrs. Norris agreed.

"Shit." Harry grumbled.

He was at the end of an empty hallway. The door was gone. It was just him and Mrs. Norris. He could hear Filch stomping closer.

"That tracks." Harry sat down, holding his hand out to the cat.

She came over, sniffed his fingers, and then accepted his pets. Harry was cooing and telling her how pretty she was when Filch finally appeared.

"What are you doing?" The caretaker growled.

"Petting Mrs. Norris." Harry replied. "She is pretty lady."

"Yes, she is." Filch nodded once. "Doesn't mean you can just wander the halls. You're supposed to be at the feast. What house are you in?"

Harry paused. "Gryffindor."

"I'll have to let McGonagall know." Filch dropped back to his usual tone. "Follow me back. You try to run, and you'll get even more detention."

Harry stood up and dusted himself off. Mrs. Norris fell into step with Filch. She spared a single look back at him. Almost like she was saying 'come along'.

He jogged to catch up. The feast had been over for almost two hours now. Filch should be taking him to McGonagall's office. He didn't try to speak to the old caretaker. At best, Filch would complain about not being able to use chains anymore. Conversation beyond that was pushing it.

Harry could hear the gathered students as they got closer. The details were lost, but he could tell there were a lot of people nearby. Filch pushed open the side door and motioned for him to step through.

He came to a complete stop once he entered the room. This wasn't the Halloween Feast. This was the Welcome Feast. The Sorting Hat was resting on the stool, just waiting for first years to step up.

The room turned to look at his unexpected entry. Harry blushed and hurried over to the Gryffindor table. There were hushed whispers and strange looks as he passed. He could feel their eyes. Still, no one called out to him. Harry found a spot at the Gryffindor table and took a seat. He was with a group of second years that he didn't know. Everyone else had already taken a seat. There was still room for the firsties to sit.

There was something weird going on. Somehow, he was back at the Welcome Feast. He recognized his classmates, so it wasn't like he had somehow traveled in time. In fact, it looked exactly like the feast they had earlier this year. Maybe he had been given a second chance this year? He could get ahead of the tournament fiasco.

Still, there was something else that was bothering him. He hadn't spent much time with Filch, but he was pretty sure the old man knew who he was. As much as he'd hate to admit it, pretty much everyone knew who he was.

It was strange that no one had called him when he entered the hall. Ron didn't yell for him to come over. Malfoy didn't mock him. Even Snape refrained from making some comments about his behavior. There was something else he was missing.

Harry was lost in thought; it wasn't until the first new student joined the house that he realized how out of it he had been.

"Welcome to Gryffindor." Harry smiled at the first year.

The kid looked at him excitedly. Harry was relieved that the kid didn't gawk at him. He didn't pay much attention to the sorting, though it did seem to go on for longer than he expected.

"I have a few announcements before we begin the feast." The Headmaster stood at his spot at the table.

Harry stared at the man. He sounded like Dumbledore, but he didn't look like him. The man had a neatly trimmed beard and was dressed in a muggle three-piece suit. Even his eyes were different. Still blue but lacking that constant sparkle.

The students around him started to eat. Harry studied the other professors at the table. McGonagall looked the same, further supporting whatever had happened wasn't time travel. Hagrid was there as well, looking rather well groomed for once. Most of the staff were the same, except for two he didn't recognize. One was an older, dignified man and the other was an attractive woman with black hair.

Harry looked over the table again. Snape was missing. He took his time looking around the room. It wasn't the most overt difference, but now that he was paying attention, he could see there were a lot more students. He could pick out people that he knew, but for each one he recognized there were another two that he didn't.

"Excuse me." McGonagall spoke in a quiet, yet firm tone. "Mr. Filch informed me you were found wondering the Seventh Floor."

Harry looked up at her. He nodded. She silently studied him for a moment. Her forehead scrunched up for a flash.

"Follow me." She ordered.

Harry slid out of his spot and followed close behind. McGonagall took him out to the hallway. She stopped sharply and turned to face him.

"Who are you?" She stared intensely at him.

He gulped. "Professor, I didn't take you for a prankster."

"I know each and every one of my house." McGonagall maintained her stoic visage. "I do not know you."

"I was afraid you were going to say that." Harry was starting to feel dizzy. "I think... I think I need to sit do-"

The world went sideways.

2.

Harry woke up in the hospital wing of Hogwarts. It was comforting, as much as he hated to admit it. For a moment he wanted to believe everything was fine. He knew it wasn't, but he really wanted to pretend. Madam Pomphrey hurried over to him. She looked the same. There was something missing though. That look she would give him when he eventually found himself in her care. Worry mixed with exasperation. He never told anyone, but he liked to imagine she was his grandmother.

"You're awake." She gave her best calming smile. "I need to ask you some questions to make sure you don't have a concussion."

"Ok." Harry nodded.

"Who is the headmaster?" Madam Pomphrey asked.

"Albus Dumbledore." Harry answered.

"What is the date?" She asked.

"October thirty-first, unless it's passed midnight now." Harry replied.

"And your name?" She asked.

"Harry Potter." He nodded.

"Alright, Harry." Her eyes didn't have any recognition in them. "What year are you in?"

"Fourth year." He continued. It hurt how she looked at him. He gathered his courage, trying to ignore ache in his heart. "You don't know me, do you?"

"I'd say that's a good thing." Madam Pomphrey chuckled. "I only get to know the students who get themselves hurt."

"Where am I?" Harry asked.

"I'm supposed to ask you that." She smiled warmly at him.

"I know I'm in Hogwarts." Harry shook his head. "But this is all wrong."

"What do you mean?" Madam Pomphrey asked, her smile had vanished.

"You once told me that I've been in here so often I should have a bed reserved." Harry pushed himself into a sitting position. "Dumbledore doesn't look right, no one knows who I am, and Snape is missing, which I'm fine with, but still."

"Who is Snape?" She asked.

"Severus Snape." Harry sighed. "He 'teaches' potions."

"Hm." Madam Pomphrey studied him for a moment. "How does Dumbledore look wrong?"

"How he's dressed." Harry shrugged. "His beard too. He's not wearing his hat either. I don't think I've ever seen him without it."

"What does he usually look like?" She continued.

"Old. Grandfatherly." Harry chuckled. "Long white beard." He motioned to the middle of his chest. "Robes, usually weird looking ones, and a big hat. Like how a muggle would describe a wizard if asked."

"One last question." Madam Pomphrey placed a gentle hand on his shoulder. "What are your parents' names?"

"Lily and James Potter." He replied.

"That will be all, Poppy." Dumbledore cleared his throat.

Dumbledore, but not the one he knew, stepped into view. His hair still had a bit of color to it, the white hair outnumbered the remaining copper, but it was there. It was undoubtedly Dumbledore. He had the same face, the posture, walk, and the same voice.

"Mister Potter." Dumbledore came to a stop at the edge of the hospital bed. "You are a mystery."

"I knew you were going to say something like that." Harry groaned.

"Lily and James Potter have two sons, Charles and Gerald." Dumbledore spoke steadily, but gently. "They are set to receive their letters next year."

Harry leaned back and closed his eyes. "They're alive?"

"Yes." Dumbledore sounded surprised. "Why wouldn't they be?"

"The war with Voldemort?" Harry kept his eyes closed.

"Who?" Dumbledore asked.

Harry opened his eyes. He studied this new Dumbledore intently. The man looked genuinely confused.

"You've never heard of Voldemort?" Harry asked. "Dark Wizard, leader of the Death Eaters."

"No." Dumbledore shook his head. "It sounds like I'm lucky to not."

"What about Tom Riddle?" Harry asked.

"Pardon?" Dumbledore flinched.

"Tom Marvolo Riddle." Harry said clearly. "Do you know him?"

"Yes." Dumbledore nodded. "Professor Riddle has taught Defense Against the Dark Arts for nearly twenty years now. Why is that important?"

"No reason." Harry shook his head.

He could feel a bubble of mad laughter trying to escape. This made no sense.

"Can you tell me what brought you here?" Dumbledore asked.

"No." Harry shrugged.

The laughter escaped. He couldn't hold it in. Harry laughed until his sides hurt. He laughed until he had trails of tears down his cheek. It made no sense. This was madness.

"Drink this." Madam Pomphrey ordered.

Harry took whatever she was holding and knocked it back. The taste was awful, but it chased the laughter away.

"Better?" She asked.

"Yes, thank you." His voice came out steady if a bit flat.

"It happens." Madam Pomphrey patted his shoulder.

"Can you walk me through the last couple of hours before you found yourself here?" Dumbledore asked.

"Maybe there is a clue."

"I was taking a walk to clear my head." Harry said flatly. "I found myself on the seventh floor at a dead end. There was nowhere to go, so I started pacing. A door appeared. It was not there when I first arrived. The Mirror of Erised was inside."

"The Mirror of Erised?" Dumbledore asked. "Are you sure?"

"Yes." Harry nodded. "It was the same as the one from first year. Only the glass was missing. I walked through it. The mirror vanished. After that Filch found me."

"You stepped through the mirror." Dumbledore repeated. "This room on the seventh floor, was there anything else you remember about it?"

"It was just there." Harry shrugged. "It was an empty classroom with the mirror in it."

"How do you know it was the Mirror of Erised?" Dumbledore asked.

"Dumbledore, you I guess, brought it to Hogwarts during my first year." Harry explained. "He, you, whatever, used it to hide the Philosophers Stone."

"Why would I do that?" Dumbledore asked.

"Voldemort was trying to steal it to regain physical form." Harry stated. "He was able to break into the vault holding it in Gringotts."

"This Voldemort fellow seems like trouble." Dumbledore said.

"He killed my parents." Harry added.

"I'm sorry to hear that. Thank you, Harry." Dumbledore patted him on the shoulder. "Tomorrow, if you're feeling up for it, I'd like to take you to Gringotts. We can have you take an Inheritance Test and see if there are any potions or compulsions that need to be removed."

"That's fine." Harry settled into bed. "I have a question."

"Go ahead." Dumbledore nodded.

"Have the champions for the Tri-Wizard Tournament been chosen?" Harry asked.

"The..." Dumbledore sighed. "There hasn't been a tournament in fifty years. It was deemed too dangerous."

"Good to know." Harry yawned.

"Did you need dinner?" Dumbledore asked.

"I already ate." Harry muttered before drifting off to sleep.

3.

Harry wasn't sure how long he was asleep until he snapped awake. He rolled out the bed, kicked over the nearby table, his glasses were on, and his wand at the ready. His eyes scanned the room for threats. Instead of anything waiting to attack he saw a trio of girls in Gryffindor colors standing nearby. They were peaking out from an Invisibility Cloak that he knew all too well. They also had a bottle of something in their hands that held a bright red liquid.

He recognized Parvati and Katie, but the third girl was a mystery. She had shoulder length black hair and her vibrant green eyes looked back at him from behind a pair of glasses. The unknown girl was a little taller than him, which seemed to be a running theme in his life.

"Merlin's Saggy Balls he looks like your dad." Katie gasped.

Harry was suddenly very aware that he was only wearing his uniform pants. At least he wasn't in his underwear. Thank Merlin that he'd managed to pick up a fresh set with his uniform. Wearing the second-hand briefs made him feel dirty.

"What's in the bottle?" Harry asked.

"Hair dye." Parvati spoke quickly. "Pansy Parkinson picks up a weekly dose of hair shine potion."

"And you're going to turn her hair red?" Harry asked.

"Of course not." The other girl said. "It will turn her hair Gryffindor colors."

Harry sighed. "You're the second-generation Marauders?"

The girl narrowed her eyes. "How do you know about them?"

"I'll answer your question if you answer one of mine." Harry countered.

"Go for it." She nodded.

"What's your name?" Harry asked.

"Rose." She answered.

Harry stared at her, waiting for more.

"Rose Potter." She added.

Harry picked up the bed-side table he had kicked over. He placed his wand on the bed beside him as he sat and cradled his head in his hands.

"Birthday July thirty-first and your wand is eleven inches, holly with a phoenix feather core." He stated.

All three girls had their wands out once and pointed at him.

"How do you know that?" Rose asked.

Harry twirled his wand along his fingers before holding it out toward her.

"Harry Potter." He met her gaze. "Nice to meet you."

She took the wand. The familiar rush of magic coursed through her. Rose held his wand next to his.

"My father, James Potter." Harry continued. "Prongs. One of the original Marauders. Together with Moody, Padfoot, and Wormtail. Do you have the map?"

Rose nodded.

"What does it show me as?" He asked.

Rose turned away for him. She whispered the phrase to activate the map.

"Holy shit." Rose gasped as she tapped Parvati on the shoulder.

"Holy shit." Parvati agreed.

"Come on." Katie rolled her eyes. "You're just being dramat- HOLY SHIT."

Rose stepped closer to him. After a moment she returned his wand.

"Can you explain what in Morgana's Perky Nipples is going on?" She asked.

"I have no clue." Harry shook his head. "Can I ask you some more questions?"

"If I can ask you some." Rose hopped up on the bed from across from him.

Katie and Parvati joined her.

"Has anything strange happened since you've been in school?" He asked.

"Not really." Rose shook her head. "What year are you in?"

"Fourth." Harry answered. "You?"

"Fourth." Rose shrugged.

"Me too." Parvati offered.

"Fifth for me." Katie added.

"I know." Harry gave them a weak smile.

"How?" Rose snapped.

"Parvati Patil." He pointed at her. "Katie Bell." He looked at the girl. "Are you a chaser?"

"That's just freaky." Parvati whispered.

Rose bumped her.

"Sorry." Parvati added sheepishly.

"No problem." Harry chuckled. "It is. Do you know Hermione Granger?"

"She's in our house." Rose nodded. "We're in the same dorm, but we're not close."

"She's a bit..." Parvati scrunched up her face. "What's a nice way to say bitchy?"

Harry laughed. "Driven."

"That works." Parvati snapped her fingers. "Thanks."

"Do you play Quidditch?" Katie asked.

"Seeker." Harry nodded. "Have there been any wars lately?"

"No." Rose said slowly. "Why?"

"Long story." Harry felt the weight of everything settle on him. "Who teachers potions?"

"Andromeda Tonks." Rose replied. "Why do you have a Rune on your forehead?"

"A rune?" Harry looked up, trying to see his own forehead. "Always thought it looked like a lightning bolt."

"I can see that." Parvati said.

"It's a scar." Harry continued. "Part of the long story. Do you know Ron Weasley?"

Rose rolled his eyes. "Yes."

"That bad, eh?" Harry smiled.

"He's loud and has the table manners of a starved pig." Rose crossed her arms. "His brothers are wicked talented."

"She has a crush." Katie piped in.

"Shut it." Rose snapped. Her cheeks were bright red.

"I'm guessing Draco Malfoy is here too?" Harry grumbled.

"He's a git." Katie said with a nod.

"It's your turn." Harry prompted.

"Are you me?" Rose spoke softly.

"I don't know." Harry shrugged. "How many siblings do you have?"

"Three." Rose smiled brightly at him. "Iris is a third year in Hufflepuff. Charlie and Gerry are ten. They're cute, but evil. Do you have any siblings?"

"No." Harry shook his head.

The conversation stalled for a moment. Harry didn't want to say anymore. Explaining why he didn't have siblings would lead to larger, more complex topics. He wasn't ready for that yet.

"Do you have a girlfriend?" Katie asked.

Parvati giggled. Rose hid her face in her hands.

"No." Harry replied. "I need some sleep. Talk to you tomorrow?"

"Sure." Rose nodded. "Goodnight, Harry. It was nice to meet you."

"It was nice to mee you too, Rose." Harry gave her a gentle smile. "You too, Parvati, Katie."

The waved at him as they hurried away.

"Don't forget the hair potion." Harry said as he stretched out on the bed.

Harry let his mind drift as sleep approached. Maybe he'd wake up in his dorm. He wasn't sure if that was what he wanted. His parents were alive, and they had four kids. Would they want to meet him? This was a nice dream so far. He hoped it didn't turn into a nightmare; he'd had enough of those.

4.

Harry woke up to the smell of breakfast. He had enough experience with the feel of the sheets and pillows to know he was still in the hospital ward before he opened his eyes. This wasn't his dorm. He sat up to see a tray of food waiting on the table beside the bed.

"Thank you." Harry swung his legs over the side of the bed.

The food was amazing, and he ate ravenously. Once he was finished with breakfast, he heard footsteps approaching. Harry busied himself getting dressed. His shirt was freshly laundered. It looked like his glasses had been repaired as well.

"Thank you again." Harry said as he put on his clothes.

"Good morning, Harry." Professor Dumbledore called.

"Good morning, professor." Harry returned. "Are we heading to Gringotts already?"

"The sooner the better." Dumbledore nodded. "I heard you had some visitors last night."

Harry nodded. Dumbledore waited a moment to see if he would offer more.

"Let's go." Dumbledore motioned for him to follow.

Harry took in the school around him as they walked. He ignored the stares as he followed. That was something he had plenty of experience in. It looked like Hogwarts. The paintings were the same, Dumbledore's office was in the same spot, and even the gargoyle was the same.

The office, however, was different. It was the same room, but the décor was much more refined. Not to mention it was actually organized. Harry wondered what had caused this Dumbledore to be so different than the one he knew.

"Word travels fast." Dumbledore chuckled.

Harry nodded. They came to a stop before the broad fireplace in Dumbledore's office.

"Gringotts." Dumbledore tossed a pinch of power and stepped through.

Harry did the same. He managed to stay on his feet for about two seconds before tumbling to the side. Somehow his glasses had stayed on. They didn't have any scratches either. Now that he had a moment, he could tell his vision was sharper as well. The elves had done something to them.

He stood, brushing himself off, just in time to see Dumbledore bow to a goblin. They spoke but the distance was just far enough to turn their words into a jumble of sounds. Harry waited until their conversation was complete before joining Dumbledore.

"Hogwarts will be paying for the service." Dumbledore turned to him. "They will need a few drops of blood."

Harry nodded. He was having a hard time finding the motivation to speak. Dumbledore and the goblin led him to a side room. It was empty aside from an onyx orb on a pedestal rested in the center. The walls were made up of shelves filled with sealed scrolls.

"Place your hand on the orb, wizard." The goblin ordered.

He stepped before the pedestal and placed his hand on the orb. It began to grow warmer against his skin. Just when it was approaching the edge between unpleasant and painful, the feeling stopped. The goblin took a sealed scroll from the wall then tapped it to the orb. A single strand of crimson began to swirl among the onyx. It started where his hand was, circling lower until it reached the spot where the scroll rested. The crimson line steadily slid onto the scroll.

Harry waited as the last of the crimson thread faded away.

"Remove your hand, wizard." The goblin waved a hand at him dismissively.

Another goblin entered the room. They took the scroll without a word before leaving. Dumbledore followed after the goblin and Harry followed him. For some reason they were led to another section of the bank. The door to the room was ornate and wide enough for Fluffy to get through comfortably. It swung open without a command.

A thick stone table rested in the center of the room. The ceiling had a strip of glass that appeared to be the same size directly above it. Harry froze at the doorway. A group of people waited near the table. He had only seen them in pictures, but he recognized Lily and James Potter. There were two raven-haired boys looking that looked bored out of their minds with them. As was a much healthier Sirius Black.

James saw Dumbledore, giving him a nod. The man gawked as he saw Harry. Lily noticed her husband's sudden silence. She turned to see what had captured his attention. Her face went blank as she laid eyes on Harry.

"What are they doing here?" Harry whispered.

"This is House Potter business." Dumbledore explained as he moved deeper into the room.

The old man didn't bother to check if he was following. Harry was startled out of his fugue when the goblin cleared their throat.

"If you're ready to proceed." The goblin spoke in a long-suffering tone.

The scroll rolled out along the stone table. Motes of light drifted down. The squiggles of crimson began to take the form of words.

"Harry James Potter." The goblin read the results. "Child of Lily and James Potter, displaced. Heir of Gryffindor through Deeds, displaced. Heir of Slytherin through Conquest, displaced. Heir Potter through blood, displaced. Purged Horcrux via displacement. Potter Family Curse, vision. Underdeveloped Magical Core. No potions or compulsion detected. Malnourished. Four fractures along his ribs that require attention. Three fractures along the right leg require attention. Six fractures along his left leg that require attention."

"What does that mean?" Harry asked.

"You have multiple fractures to your bones that healed incorrectly." The goblin stated flatly.

"I got that part." Harry snapped. "What does Displaced mean?"

"You're not from this world." Dumbledore answered. "Thank you for your time, master goblin."

The goblin didn't acknowledge Dumbledore, or the others, as it stalked out of the room.

"Mom." One of the boys called.

"Is he our brother?" The other asked.

"Is he me, but I got lost time traveling?" The first one asked.

"That would be so wicked." The other said.

Harry blinked slowly. The world began to blur. Gray crept in on the edges of his vision. Someone was talking. Maybe. There was noise that could have been words. Harry swayed on his feet. The world went black.

5.

Harry felt consciousness returning. It was slow going. Part of him wasn't sure what he was going to find when he opened his eyes.

"What happened?" A warm female voice asked from nearby.

"He was overwhelmed." Dumbledore replied.

"Displaced." Another man spoke nearby. "He's really not from this world."

"We could pass him off as my kid." Sirius, he knew that voice. "It wouldn't be all that shocking for me to suddenly have a son."

"He is our son." The woman spoke, her voice was caring, but firm.

Harry's eyes burst open. Lily and James Potter stood nearby talking in low tones with Dumbledore and Sirius. He studied them. They looked almost exactly like they did in the pictures. Sure, they were a little older, but magic had a way of slowing down the aging process. Seeing his very much alive parents was making him doubt his sanity. For some reason, Sirius being happy and healthy was even more disconcerting.

"He appears to be awake." Dumbledore motioned to him.

"Hello." Lily was the first to reach him.

Her smile sent a dull ache through his chest.

"My name is Lily." She spoke softly, trying not to spook him. "Your name is Harry?"

He nodded. "Harry Potter."

"My grandfather was named Harrison." Lily said looking over to James. "That was the name we were thinking of it we had a boy."

"I don't think anyone has ever called me Harrison." Harry tried to force a smile. "Charles and Gerry? Where did those names come from?"

"Charles is named after James' grandfather." Lily answered. "And Gerry is named for my father."

"Rose and Iris follow the flower trend." Harry added.

"We have so many questions." Lily whispered.

"I do too." Harry nodded.

"Perhaps we could take this somewhere more private?" Dumbledore offered.

Harry took in his surroundings for the first time. They were gathered off to the side of lobby to Gringotts. He noticed that the two boys weren't running around anymore. That sent an unexpected jolt of panic through him.

"Where are the boys?" Harry jumped to his feet.

He didn't see the mixture of pride and worry that flashed across James' face.

"Mips took them back to the house." Lily soothed.

"Mips." He said the name to himself. "House elf?"

Lily nodded. Harry visibly relaxed.

"My office is open." Dumbledore said. "Somewhere familiar to young Harry."

"That works." James stepped up. "Thank you, Albus."

Dumbledore briskly approached the Floo. "Lemon Drop."

He disappeared into a rush of flames. The others followed behind shortly with Harry bringing up the rear. He tumbled out, landing on his side on a thankfully soft carpet.

"That seals it." Sirius chuckled. "He's definitely your son, Prongs."

"Shut it." James glared at his friend.

Harry stood, dusting himself off. Everyone else looked pretty clean, except for James. There was a streak of dust along his right leg. He caught Harry looking. James rolled his eyes and dusted off his legs.

Now that he wasn't about to faint, Harry had some time to look over the group. James and Sirius were wearing high-quality robes that fit them expertly. Lily, on the other hand, was dressed in muggle attire of a skirt and blouse.

"Now." Dumbledore conjured up group of comfy chairs in a circle. "Let's have a chat."

Harry took a seat. Lily sat to his left. That dull ache flared up for another moment.

"What year are you in?" Lily asked.

"Fourth." Harry tried to look at her, but it was hard to maintain. "It was Halloween."

"Gryffindor, right?" Sirius asked.

Harry nodded. "I met Rose last night."

"Oh?" James sat forward. "How?"

"She was in the hospital wing with some friends." Harry replied.

James and Sirius shared a sly look.

"You mentioned the Tri Wizard Tournament." Dumbledore cut in. "Why?"

"The names of the champions were announced on Halloween." Harry found it easier to look at Dumbledore.

"Interesting." Dumbledore mumbled.

"Can you tell us about where you come from?" Lily spoke up before Dumbledore could say more.

"What do you want to know?" Harry asked.

"Everything." Lily placed her hand on his.

Harry flinched. He hated that look of hurt in her eyes.

"It's a long story." Harry sighed.

"We've got time." James said warmly. "Knowing the boys, they've convinced Mips to let them to fly their brooms in the house."

Harry took a deep breath. It was all going to come out eventually. He figured it was better to just get it over with. He leaned back, looking at the ceiling. There was no way he was going to be able to get through everything if he had to see their faces.

He told them everything, starting with Voldemort, the death of Lily and James Potter, Sirius' false imprisonment, Dumbledore placing him with the Dursleys, and the years before he got the Hogwarts letter.

Harry continued on into his first year, the sorting, meeting Hermione and Ron, the troll, breaking the record for the youngest seeker, and the end of the year adventure. He skipped over summer, but made sure to tell them about the flying car and the rescue. The Heir of Slytherin, the basilisk attacks, and finding the Chamber didn't take up near as much time as he thought it would. He mentioned the diary, Ginny, and Tom Riddle as well. Third was still fresh in his mind. It was another part of the story that went a lot faster once he skipped over the boring bits. He finished up telling them about his name coming out of the Goblet which led to him finding the Mirror again.

He looked back at the group to find his vision was blurry. Unshed tears streaked down his cheeks. He wiped them away, trying to figure out when they had started. Once his vision was clear he gathered all the courage he could, then looked at Lily and James.

Their expressions had elements of pain, shock, and anger. There was something else there too, but he didn't know what it was. Lily stood, she took a step closer to him. She froze when Harry tensed. That dull ache flared up when he saw the worry flash in her eyes. He forced himself to relax. If this was a trap, they had plenty of other opportunities to kill him.

Lily took another slow step closer. When she saw he wasn't about to bolt she held out her arms. Something in him broke. All the pain, rage, and loneliness burst from the little places in his soul that he had stuffed them. His vision blurred out as his eyes filled with tears.

Harry launched himself from the chair. He wrapped his arms around Lily and began to sob. She held him. James joined a moment later.

"Don't leave me again. Please." His voice came out ragged and raw.

"We're here, Harry." James whispered. "We're here, son."

"Let me stay." Harry begged. He wasn't sure who he was begging. "I don't want to go back there."

"You're with us now, Harry." Lily kissed him on the cheek.

"Your uncles are here too." Sirius spoke from somewhere nearby. "Moony, me, Wormtail, and Flapper are all here for you."

That cut through the fog. Harry slipped out of the combined hug of his parents.

"Who?" Harry asked. He held up his hand. "Remus Lupin is Moony. Peter Pettigrew is Wormtail, he was the one who betrayed you in my world. But who is Flapper?"

"Severus Snape." Lily answered. "Flapper. He's a bat animagus."

Harry stared at her, waiting for the punchline. He shook his head.

"There were five Marauders here?" Harry asked.

"Six." Lily smiled proudly.

"You're a Marauder too?" He asked.

"Moony, Padfoot, Flapper, Wormtail, Prongs, and Ginger." James answered.

"Ginger?" Harry arced an eyebrow.

"Fox animagus." Lily rolled her eyes. "They thought it was clever. How was it in your world?"

"Moony, Padfoot, Prongs, and Wormtail." Harry had to force out the last name. "Snape hated me, and my dad. You. James Potter."

"It will take some time to adjust." Dumbledore said kindly. "The first day of term is on Monday. I suggest you spend the rest of today and Sunday getting to know each other. Harry can start with the rest of the students on Monday."

"Are you sure?" Harry turned to look at the professor.

"Please avoid the seventh floor until we can investigate." Dumbledore added. "Also, avoid the Mirror of Erised. Come find me, or Professor McGonagall immediately if you do see it."

"Yes, sir." Harry nodded.

"Would you like to see Potter Manor?" James asked softly.

"I'd love to." Harry wiped the tears from his eyes and smiled brightly.

6.

Harry stumbled out of the fireplace, he skidded to a stop just before faceplanting. He looked around to see that Lily was smiling warmly at him. When he straightened up, he noticed there was a pile of pillows near where he had stopped.

Sirius hadn't joined them this time. He had business he had to handle elsewhere but made a promise to visit again soon.

"I don't understand." Lily shook her head. "You and the girls practically dance with the wind on brooms."

"Lily is the only one in the family that can use the floo without falling." James smiled at her. "It's witchcraft I tell you."

Harry felt a mixture of warmth and ache settle in his chest.

"Come on." Lily held out a hand to him. "Let's show you around."

They gave him a quick tour of the ground level. There was a large kitchen, an even bigger dining room, and a ballroom that was easily the size of the Great Hall at Hogwarts. All of the décor was very fancy. It didn't fit them at all.

"And now." James motioned to the stairs. "We'll take you to the part we actually use."

"The ground floor is for official gatherings." Lily explained.

"Purebloods love their gatherings." James rolled his eyes.

"You are a Pureblood, love." Lily reminded him.

"I know." James grumbled.

They led him down a hallway, showing them where the bedrooms were. The opposite side had a much more welcoming kitchen and dining room. There was also a library that had two levels, Harry could almost see Hermione drooling.

He wondered how much this Hermione was like her. They were bound to meet eventually.

"Now." James paused at the foot of another staircase. "This is where the fun starts."

He led Harry up to the next level. The entire area was one big open level. There was a greenhouse, a quidditch pitch, a pond, and what looked to be an obstacle course. The boys were zooming around an open part on brooms that were about three feet off the ground.

"Wow." Harry whispered.

"This took a lot of work." Lily beamed at him.

"The weather is horrid." James explained. "We can't exactly move the Ancestral Potter Manor, so we adapted."

"What about winter?" Harry asked.

"For that we have to go outside." Lily sighed. "Couldn't get the weather to work without ruining everything else. The ceiling is charmed like Hogwarts, I always loved that part."

Charles and Gerry zipped over on their brooms.

"Boys." Lily stepped forward. "Did you go flying in the house?"

"No mum." They answered as one.

"Mips didn't let us." One of the said.

"We even did the pout!" The other sounded very offended.

Lily shook her head. She looked over at James and Harry. The boy drifted closer, their eyes overtly studying Harry.

"I told you he's a time traveler." One of the boys said.

"No." The other said. "You said he was you."

"Boys." Lily cleared her throat. "This is Harry. He is not a time traveler."

"Then what is he?" The boys asked in unison.

"I'm a traveler." Harry said sagely, drawing their full attention. "I've come from another world."

"You're an alien?" One of the boys asked.

"No." Harry shook his head. "Another place like this."

"Are you staying?" The other boy asked.

"I'd like to." Harry replied with a nod.

"You can be our brother!" They yelled in unison.

"We outnumber the girls." One of them said.

"Four to three." The other said.

"Boys win!" They both crowed.

They zoomed around in circles. Harry smiled. Yeah, he could stay here. James stepped over to a garden shed. He opened it and pulled out a broom.

"This is a Nimbus Ninety." James held it out to Harry. "It was the model before the two-thousand. This one isn't as fast, but it's got better control and stability."

"Nice." Harry took it from him, feeling the balance.

"You can take it to school with you." James continued. "Even if you don't want to play quidditch, you can take some time to fly."

"Thank you." Harry cleared his throat, trying to fight the tightness.

"Well, now that we've got everyone together." Lily cut in, saving him. "Let's take a trip to Diagon to get you supplied for school."

"You don't have to do that." Harry said.

"Do you have a uniform?" Lily asked.

Harry looked down at the clothes he was wearing.

"Do you have robe?" She pressed.

He shook his head.

"Formal wear? Quill, ink, cauldron?" She continued.

Harry turned to James.

"Don't look at me." James chuckled.

"You do not want to go shopping with dad." One of the twins said.

"He's worse." The other nodded.

"I can't help it that I'm the only one in this family with fashion sense." James crossed his arms.

"Sure, you are, darling." Lily patted her husband on the shoulder. "We can get lunch along the way."

"Can we see Moony?" One of the boys asked.

"Not today." James shook his head. "He and Flapper are busy."

"How are they busy?" Harry asked.

"They're working on opening a storefront in Hogsmeade." James replied.

"What type of shop do they have?" Harry asked.

"We craft and sell enchanted items." James answered proudly.

"The Marauders came together after school to form a business and research company." Lily explained.

"We're one of the leading forces of magical advancement. It started out with pranks then moved to reverse engineer some muggle technology. Along the way we just kind of created a shop."

"Wow." Harry blinked. "I didn't expect that."

"Did you think I'd just be a lazy pureblood lord?" James scoffed.

"You are." Lily said.

"I'm not lazy." James pouted.

"Ok, you're not lazy. Most of the time. Your father-" Lily faltered for a moment. "James has a Mastery in transfiguration and he is pretty handy at charms. We all work together when developing projects."

"Where do we want to go for lunch?" James asked the boys, saving the awkward moment.

"Muggle Nibbles." The boys practically yelled in unison.

"Muggle Nibbles? Harry asked.

"It's a place that serves muggle dishes." Lily sighed. "You can have them prepared mundane or magically."

"There's toys too." One of the boys said.

"And soda pop." The other nodded.

"And pizza!" James added.

Lily chuckled. "And pizza."

7.

Muggle Nibbles didn't look anything different from the other buildings in Diagon Alley. At least until they stepped inside. Harry had only seen fast food places in passing. It looked like a mixture of ones he had seen. True to what the twins and James had said, they had pizza.

The shopping trip was surprisingly pleasant. He got a fresh set of clothes, a few variations on the uniform he already wore and a nice selection of casual clothing, a pair of new glasses that actually fit him, as well as his school supplies. There was an extra one that caught him by surprise: Introduction to Muggle and Magical Traditions. He got an expandable trunk, a new potions kit with three different knives, and two-way notebook. Harry thought they were done, but then Lily led him to another clothing store. The place was fancier than Madam Malkin's. She helped him pick out a set of dress robes that were closer to a muggle tux with a cape than actual robes.

James and the boys were waiting in Quidditch Supply when they were finished.

"You got lucky." One of the boys, Gerry he knew now. "We'd be here for hours if Iris was here."

Both boys had black hair and glasses. The easiest way to tell them apart was the style of eyewear. Harry was pretty sure they swapped them out every now and then. Even with the switch he was starting to get a handle on which one was which. Gerry had a small scar along the tip of his left eyebrow. It was hardly noticeable, but there.

"Iris and dad are the worst." Charles groaned.

"Except on birthdays." Gerry countered.

"They give the best presents." Charles nodded.

Harry smiled at them.

"Boys, that was painless." Lily smiled at the trio.

The group settled into a comfortable silence. James 'subtly' led them to the ice cream shop. Harry watched them, the ache in his chest slowly being overtaken by warmth. He would cherish this time with them, even if he had to go back.

Harry was enjoying their company when an owl swooped down onto the edge of the table. It held out its leg and shook it. Lily took the letter, giving the owl a cherry as payment.

"It's from Hogwarts." Lily said as she read. "They would like you to go back tomorrow for some tests."

"Tests?" Harry tensed.

"Placement tests." Lily clarified. "They want to make sure you're in the proper classes. From what you said about the other school, I'm interested as well."

Harry tilted his head to the side.

"Your academic experiences were focused on survival." Lily sighed. "It makes me wonder how that impacted your education."

Harry nodded slowly.

"Survival?" Gerry stared at Harry with a new rush of interest.

"Did you have to fight monsters?" Charles asked.

"Did you ever fight a mummy?" Gerry asked.

"Mummies aren't real." Charles rolled his eyes.

"Yes they are." Gerry snapped. "Dad, tell him mummies are real."

"Boys." James said in a gentle, yet firm voice. "That's enough."

"I only fought a couple of monsters." Harry gave them a conspiratory smile.

The twins stared at him with wide eyes.

"You did?!" They said in unison.

"A basilisk, some dementors, acromantula, a boggart, a gaggle of pixies, and there was a run in with a werewolf, but that was mostly a mistake." He thought for a moment. "I think that's it."

"Pixies?" Charles asked.

"Boggart?" Gerry said at the same time.

"Those aren't monsters." They huffed at the same time.

"A boggart takes on the shape of your fears." Harry explained. "They are trouble if they catch you unaware. Luckily, they just try to scare people away rather than attack." He paused. "And pixies are no joke. They won't hurt you on purpose. That doesn't mean they won't drop a chandelier to watch it shatter regardless of if there are people under it."

"Woah." The twins spoke as one.

"I don't think you'll have a problem with DADA." James chuckled.

"Or Care of Magical Creatures." Lily nodded.

"Does Hagrid teach that?" Harry asked.

"Professor Hagrid." James gave a solid nod. "Good bloke. He knows his stuff. Just be careful, his definition of cute and cuddly is... different."

Harry smiled. It was nice to see some things were the same. The focus returned to the excellent ice cream on the table.

"Did you want to meet everyone?" James asked they were finished. "Moony and Flapper should be done by now. We can invite the gang over for dinner."

Lily drummed her fingers on the table. The expression on her face was one of worry rather than anger.

"It's fine if you want to wait." James said quickly.

"I would like that." Harry smiled at him. "Thank you."

Gerry leaned over. The boy tried to whisper and failed horribly. "I can show you how to get Moony and Padfoot to play fetch."

Harry smiled down at him. He gave the boy a sly wink.

They finished up their ice cream and headed back home. Lily apparated with him, which was even worse than the Floo Network, and James took the boys.

"That was horrible." Harry felt his stomach lurch.

"It's not as bad once you learn how to do it on your own." Lily rubbed his back. "For the first dozen or so times it's not comfortable, but not as disorienting."

"Are there any types of magical travel that aren't horrible?" Harry asked.

"We're working on it." Lily sighed. "Saying it's complicated is an understatement. A port key, have you used those?"

Harry nodded.

"Those use a connection to travel from one point to another." Lily explained as she resized his trunk. "The longer the distance requires more spell work. Floo Travel requires a connected network and cannot cross large bodies of water. It's better for localized stops, even if there are issues. Apparating relies on personal magic and visualization, which creates a near endless string of variables to consider."

"That does sound complicated." Harry said.

"We're thinking about trying to reverse engineer muggle transportation." Lily continued. "There are already modified automobiles."

"Wizards behind the wheel is a scary thought." Harry chuckled.

Lily joined him. "We've been working on it for a while now. Communications as well. I love owls, but they are so inefficient when compared to a muggle telephone."

"I had an owl." Harry whispered. "She was beautiful." He took a breath. "She's smart. Hermione will take care of her. I know it."

"What was her name?" Lily asked.

"Hedwig." Harry smiled at her.

"She was a snowy owl?" She asked. "Scarily smart and regal?"

"Yes." Harry said slowly.

Lily smiled brightly at him. She hurried out of the room. Harry wasn't sure if he was supposed to follow. Instead, he began to pack his new supplies into his trunk. He set a change of clothes and the notebook to the side. Now that he had a moment, he saw that they had appeared in a bedroom.

The décor was nice, if a bit sparse, similar to a muggle bedroom with some magical elements. A four-post bed that looked like it was straight out of the Gryffindor dorms rested against the far wall. There was also a desk and dresser made from some type of light-colored wood. Across from the bed was a closet.

Realization struck him, causing his head to spin a bit. This was his room. It lacked a personal touch because he hadn't decorated it yet. Harry plopped down on the bed, his legs hung off the edge, just barely touching the floor.

Harry wondered if he would be here long enough to get to decorating it. Would he still be here in the morning? Was it possible for him to go back? After the trip out, he knew that he absolutely wanted to stay with his family.

His family. That felt nice.

Was he getting too comfortable? What if this was a trick? Voldemort had found a way to bypass the protections of Hogwarts before. This could be some sort of trap.

Harry shook the negative thoughts from his head. What purpose would a trap like this even be? Beware! This trap will make you happy! If it was, he wasn't going to fight it. Let whatever it was do its thing.

He tried to refocus on the present. Harry took a deep breath. He closed the door and stripped out of his clothes. He had been wearing them for almost two days straight. The clothes he had set out were a muggle style but made through magical means. Jeans that would mend themselves as well as adjust a for a few inches of growth, same as the t-shirt and socks. The really cool thing were the expanded pockets. It was like having a small bag on each leg.

The door opened a moment after he had his pants on. Harry spun around, fumbling for his wand, which he had dumbly put on the bedside table out of reach. He froze when he saw it was Lily. She stared back at him, also still.

"No." Lily whispered.

She repeated the word as she hurried over to him. Harry was confused until her hand touched his chest. He watched as she examined the numerous scars across his torso. She turned him around and gasped at the sight of his back.

"Harry." Her voice was thick with worry.

"They're old." Harry shrugged.

"How did you get them?" She asked.

He turned around to look at her. There was a desperate understanding in her eyes. She recognized the signs but hoped against hope that she was wrong.

"This is from a basilisk." Harry showed her the ragged circle on his forearm. "It was healed with phoenix tears, so I'm fine now." He moved on to his collar bone. "This is from two years ago, an enchanted bludger knocked me off my broom and someone helpfully 'fixed' my broken arm by banishing the bones. Madam Pomphrey gave me potions to regrow them. I had a couple of broken ribs too, so I needed another dose. They had to shave off the extra growth." He pointed to a gathering of short scars along his left side. "Flying keys don't sound like much, but they were sharp."

"And those?" Lily asked, motioning to his back. Her voice came out as a whisper.

"Just a belt buckle." Harry shrugged. "No good story there."

Lily pulled him into a tight hug. Tears streamed down her face. Harry tensed, standing there for a moment, trying to process what was going on. Slowly, the tension eased from his body. He returned the hug.

"Hey, Lil." James called from the hallway.

The man stopped in the doorway. He gave Harry a warm smile. Lily eventually let him go, she wiped her eyes as she turned to face her husband. James stared at Harry's exposed chest. Lily cleared her throat.

"Right, sorry. Padfoot said he'll be over shortly." James continued. "Moony will be a bit late. Flapper and Wormtail should be here by dinner."

"The whole bunch or just the boys?" Lily asked.

"Just the boys for now." James replied. "I didn't want it to be too overwhelming."

"The whole bunch?" Harry asked.

"Wives, husbands, and sprogs." James explained.

"Who's married?" Harry asked, using the distraction to slip on his shirt.

"Pads and Flap have wives, each with a couple of kids the twins age. Moony has a husband, of sorts. The wolf thing is hard to understand. Wormtail has sworn off getting married or having kids. He's happy to be an uncle." James thought for a moment. "That's it."

Wormtail. The name cut through the cloud of happy feelings that had gathered from the trip today. Peter Pettigrew, the man who betrayed his parents. The vermin responsible for Sirius being locked up for years.

Harry had to forcefully stop the train of thought. Everyone he had met so far, even the people he knew, weren't the same. This Peter Pettigrew hadn't betrayed Lily and James Potter. If nothing else, the man deserved a chance. The fact that it would put Harry in a room within casting distance of the bastard may have helped ease his anger too.

8.

Harry heard Sirius and his parents. No, that didn't feel right just yet. James and Lily. He could hear them talking in the other room. Harry had stayed in his room under the pretense of settling in. They didn't press. He wasn't going to unpack since he was going back to Hogwarts on Monday. There wasn't anything he could do to decorate either.

He just sat on his bed, staring at the closed door. The words were jumbled. Only the sound of their voices made it through. He kept telling himself that this shouldn't be so scary. Fighting a basilisk, that had been scary. Facing dementors, that had been scary. Meeting some people in a casual gathering should be normal.

The sound of the Floo jumped him from his thoughts. More voices joined in. They sounded familiar. He couldn't place them. Harry took a couple of deep breaths. It was better to just get it over with.

Harry exited his room. The living room, lounge, whatever, was set in the center of the level. Couches, a couple of desks, and a large table were set around the space for casual gatherings. It looked well used. A book or two were resting in various spots, a muggle chess set was in the middle of a game, and there was a shelf of boardgames he didn't recognize.

He came to a sudden halt as he saw the people gathered before him. If there was one thing that Harry had not expected to encounter, it was Severus Snape laughing with James Potter. The man looked completely different. His shiny black hair was slicked back, similar to Draco, but with a bit of tussle to it that made it look more natural. The usual black robes were replaced by a two-piece muggle suit, still black, and he was smiling.

Harry had to forcefully shift his attention from Snape to the other men in the group. Remus Lupin was healthy, a bit on the brawny side actually, but had the same haircut which made him look like a dashing homeless man. Finally, there was Peter Pettigrew. Like Snape, the man was hardly recognizable. He had a gentle smile on his face and was talking to Lily. The man was still on the chubby side, but he lacked the rat-like appearance of his counterpart.

The group went silent as they saw him.

"Sweet Morgana." Snape whispered.

Lily slapped him on the shoulder.

"Hello." Harry managed to force the word out.

"Sorry about that." Snape blushed and cleared his throat.

Snape. Blushed.

"It's strange for me too." Harry rolled his eyes.

"This." James stepped away from the group to stand beside him. "Is Harry."

"Hello. Again." Harry gave a small wave.

"None of that." Sirius shook his head. "We'll take it slow so everyone can get to know you. Do you play cards?"

"Exploding snap?" Harry offered.

"Poker." Sirius gave him an almost feral smile.

"I've never played." Harry shrugged.

"Pads." Lily warned him. "You are not fleecing my son." She paused, looking over at Harry.

He gave her a small smile.

"I'll teach him with chips." Sirius replied. He either purposefully ignored the awkwardness or was just really excited to teach him. "Come along you lot. A game of cards is the perfect way to get to know each other."

Sirius produced a deck of cards from somewhere on his person.

"No." Peter scoffed. "We are not playing with one of your decks."

"Fresh box." Lupin nodded in agreement.

"I happen to have a deck of cards." Snape offered.

"Provided by Lily." Peter added.

"Not me?" Snape asked.

"Vegas." Lily said it like this was a familiar argument.

Snape and Sirius muttered. James was smiling broadly.

"Vegas?" Harry asked.

"Summer of sixth year." Sirius began. "We decided to take a muggle tour across the pond."

"None of that." James cut in.

They all settled in at a spot at the table. It was something they did was ease that came from actions repeated too many times to count.

"I'll tell you when you're older." Sirius whispered as he passed by Harry.

"And then I'll tell you what really happened." James chuckled.

"We'll start with the basics." Sirius sat across from Harry at the table. "There is usually a buy-in for a game. This sets the base amount for each player to start with for betting. Since we're just playing for fun, we'll do chips."

James handed out a stack of chips to each person. There were a few different colors.

"Red is one-hundred. Blue is twenty. White is ten. Green is five." Sirius explained. "We usually go with a five-hundred buy-in. Two red, five blue, ten white, and twenty green. This is important for family gatherings."

Lily scoffed.

"This." Sirius held up a coaster sized wooden chip. "Marks the dealer. We don't usually have a dedicated dealer, so this marks who will be giving players the cards. Cards are handed out clockwise. The two players directly left of the dealer have to put in a Blind. This is a small bet before the cards are dealt so that each hand has a pot to win. Other games have a big and small blind, but we just go with a five for player."

Lily opened two decks of cards and began to shuffle.

"We'll start with Five Card Stud. Dealer gives each player five cards, shocking I know. The first three are face up so everyone can see, the last two are only for you. There is a round of betting after each card is dealt. You can either check, raise, call, or fold. You can only call Check if you're the first to play, this means you're abstaining from betting. If the player before you call check, you can continue, raise, or fold. Continuing the check doesn't add anything to the pot and serves to move the game along. With me so far?" Sirius paused.

"I think so." Harry nodded.

"Raise, means you place or increase the pot." Sirius continued. "You cannot check if the player before you choose to raise. You can call, which meets the amount, or fold, meaning you give up on that hand."

Harry nodded again.

"Now, once all the cards are dealt the round of betting begins." Sirius explained. "Only you know the two cards you're holding. You have to decide if you're going to stay in the game, raise, or fold. This is where the game really starts. It's just as much about reading the other players as it is actually playing your cards."

"We discovered this is an amazing way to learn Occlumency." Peter added.

Harry looked at him, raising his eyebrows. It was a lot easier to see this Peter as a different person. They looked almost nothing alike.

"It's a mental magic that works in defending your mind from influence and intrusion." Peter clarified.

"Learning how to play poker helps build the pathways. Controlling your emotions, bluffing, and reading the other players if a wonderful foundation."

"It also means that your opponents can't cheat by reading your mind." James scowled at Sirius.

"It was Flappers idea." Sirius shrugged.

"It was not." Snape snapped but it lacked any anger.

"Vegas?" Harry looked at James.

Lily and James nodded.

"That's part of it." Lily sighed. "Back to the game."

"That's the basics." Sirius said. "We'll play the first few hands with all the cards face up. That way we can show you how things work."

With that the game started. The first few hands were focused on Harry learning the game. They explained the combinations of cards, did a few mock-showdowns, and shared their personal strategies. Harry was distracted enough learning the game that he found conversation flowing naturally.

"One day, I was walking, and I found this big log." Snape said as he placed down a bet. "Then, I rolled the log over and there was this tiny stick. I was like 'that log had a child'."

Harry stared at the man, trying to figure out what the hell that meant.

"That." Snape scooped the chips in the center of the table to his spot. "Is a technique where you draw attention away from the game. It's meant to interrupt focus."

"I would say that worked." Harry shook his head.

"It works especially well if you time it right." Snape continued with a smile.

"Let's get the chips set again." Lily said. "Then we can try a few hands for real."

A wave of her hand reset the chips in front of each player. They settled into another game. The night continued on with the Marauders teaching him a few other versions of poker. They also made sure to explain the differences between the house rules and standard rules. It wasn't until Harry was getting ready for bed that he realized they hadn't asked about his world, or he about this one, but he felt like he had known each of them for years.

Harry drifted off to sleep with a smile on his face. Those questions would come another time. Today was about connecting. It had worked wonders. They were indeed clever.

9.

"It's ok to be nervous." James walked beside Harry.

"You're going to do fine." Lily said from his other side.

"Thanks." Harry gave them a shaky smile.

Today was the day. He would be meeting with the staff for assessment. It was going to be an all-day event as well. They were going to test him on all of the available subjects. He was excited but overwhelmed. More than a few classes he either hadn't taken, or wasn't confident in.

"There will be a break for lunch and dinner." James added gently. "Would you like us to be here? We can bring Rose and Iris to introduce you too."

"That..." Harry thought for a moment. "Yeah, that would be nice."

Lily and James exchanged smiles. Harry was relieved that the tests weren't going to be in the Great Hall. He wasn't sure why, but he had thought they were at first. They led him down a side hallway that Harry didn't recognize. There had been a dedicated Floo for parents, which was a nice surprise. The two of them seemed to know where they were headed.

"Good morning." Dumbledore called from a short distance away.

Harry still had a hard time connecting this Dumbledore to one he knew. The man was impeccably dressed in a dark green pin-stripe suit and vest combo. His sleeves were rolled up just a bit giving him a relaxed air about him.

"Have you had breakfast?" The Headmaster asked.

"Yes." Lily answered.

"Good." Dumbledore smiled. "We can get started."

Harry turned to Lily and James. He shuffled awkwardly for a moment before offering them a handshake. James gave him a small smile and shook it. Lily did as well, adding a gentle squeeze on his upper arm. He wasn't ready for hugging just yet.

Dumbledore led him into a cleared-out classroom. It was well maintained and had a few different workstations set around the room.

"This is a study hall." Dumbledore said as he shut the door. "It's open to students who need it. There is usually a member of staff on duty to provide assistance. It will serve nicely for today, as it has more of the workstations we will need."

Harry nodded, not sure what he was supposed to say to that.

"First." Dumbledore shifted his voice to a more official tone. "We need to discuss your house placement."

"I am, or was, in Gryffindor." Harry answered.

"Yes." Dumbledore nodded. "I recall you mentioning that. Do you wish to be sorted once more or remain in Gryffindor?"

"That's an option?" Harry asked.

"Usually, no." The headmaster shook his head. "This is not a usual situation."

"Welcome to my life." Harry muttered.

Dumbledore gave him a warm smile but didn't say anything.

"I want to stay in Gryffindor." Harry spoke after a moment. "It just feels right."

"That's settled." Dumbledore patted Harry on the shoulder. "The first professor will be here shortly. Make yourself comfortable."

Harry watched the Headmaster leave. He turned his attention to the room. There was a potion station, what looked to be a carving table, and a sloped desk that looked similar to an easel but had a raised chair in front of it. A line of standard desks ran parallel to the wall where the door was located. There was also a hexagonal table set off to the far side of the room, he had no idea what its purpose was.

Someone knocked twice before entering the room. A dignified woman with black hair came in. Her expression was schooled to be regal yet somehow welcoming. She had a picnic basket held in the crook of her arm. There was something about her that looked familiar. He couldn't place it and it was maddening.

"Good morning." The woman stopped before him. "I am Andromeda Tonks, Potions Mistress and Professor."

"Good morning, professor." Harry replied.

That earned him a warm smile. She headed over to the potion station. A steady wave of her wand summoned a fresh set of tools from hidden compartments inset on the table. She set the basket on the open stretch of the station.

"I'm going to have you show me what you know about potions." Professor Tonks waved him over as she pulled a list from the basket.

Harry haltingly joined her.

"I didn't have the best experience with my previous potions professor." Harry sighed. "He wrote the instructions on the board and then yelled at anyone who made a mistake."

Professor Tonks patted him on the shoulder.

"Give it your best." She offered. "Today is about finding where you stand. There are student groups as well as tutors if you need them."

"Oh good." Harry sighed. "I was worried I would have to go to class with firsties."

Professor Tonks smiled kindly at him.

"Let's get started." She stepped away from the station. "Remember, this isn't about you getting everything perfect. You're showing me your skills. I am here for any questions you have. First, I want you to go down the list and tell me which potions you have learned. We'll talk through the process for each verbally before we move on."

Harry took a deep breath. He stepped up to the station and scanned the list. There were a few that he remembered brewing and a couple that he knew of but had no real experience with. It was clear that the potions became more complex the lower they were on the list.

The next hour or so flew by. Harry would tell Professor Tonks which potion he recognized, then he would explain how it was brewed. Every now and then she would ask him the alternate names for components, the difference between preparation techniques, and correct him as needed.

He didn't physically brew any potions. The basket contained components that she had him prepare. Professor Tonks had him dice, chop, slice, and mince a number of things. She had him crush, grind, and shave others. All the while she questioned him on why the same ingredients were prepared differently across separate potions.

Much to his surprise, he actually knew quite a bit. He put that more to Hermione than Snape. That and he found that his experience in the kitchen carried over.

"Well done." Professor Tonks smiled brightly at him. "You are on track to start Fourth Year potions."

"Thank you." Harry returned her smile.

"You can take a small break before your next assessment." A flick of her wand reset the station.

Harry watched her leave. He still couldn't figure out why she looked so familiar. His thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of a professor he did recognize, somewhat.

"Hello." Professor Trelawny gave him a small wave. "Harry, right?"

She crossed the room until she came to the hexangular table. A wave of her wand summoned a couple of chairs from nearby. She took a seat. Harry had to force himself to stop staring at her. It was Professor Trelawny, that he knew, but like Dumbledore, she looked so different. Her glasses didn't magnify her eyes, her hair was braided rather than wild, and her clothes were in better condition. They were the same style but looked like they were the right size.

"I'm Professor Trelawny." She motioned to the open chair. "I teach fortune telling, divination, and the study of oracles and prophecy."

"You're not an oracle?" Harry asked as he took the offered seat.

"I've had two documented visions." Professor Trelawny replied. "Not nearly enough to be considered a seer. My course does cover the implications of prophecy as well as the history of oracles."

"What's the difference between fortune telling and prophecy?" Harry asked.

"Fortune telling and divination is similar to similar to arithmancy as art is to design." Trelawny explained. "One uses calculations while the other uses intuition."

Harry watched as she set out a deck of tarot cards as well as a tea pot and cup. She added a small cloth pouch along with a crystal pendulum.

"While the two are often lumped together, fortune telling, and divination are separate fields as well." Trelawny continued. "Fortune telling is a process of reading the past and present to help prepare for the future. Divination is a method of predicting the future. True divination requires the practitioner be somewhat of an oracle."

Harry blinked a few times. Listening to her explain it was actually interesting.

"Let's get to it." She smiled brightly at him.

Professor Trelawny had him deal a tarot reading, use runes which were in the cloth bag, and read tea leaves. She explained the process of each as step of the way. This assessment didn't take nearly as long as potions.

"I would be happy to have you in my class." Professor Trelawny began to pack up her items. "It is an elective, so the choice is yours. If you do show any signs of being an oracle, even weak ones, I would ask you to come to me."

"Thank you, professor." Harry stood as she did.

Runes, Arithmancy, and Astronomy were the next few tests. He found the first two subjects interesting but had no experience with them. If he wanted to take them as electives, he would need to sign up for beginners' lessons which were offered in the evenings. Once he was caught up, he would be able to join, as long as he had a free period. Astronomy, he tested at current level.

Once those were done, it was time for lunch. He didn't realize how tired he was until he had to drag himself to the Great Hall for the meal. His brain felt like mush. There was still a few more classes, but they weren't as mentally taxing as the first run.

Rose saw him first. She waved him over to the group of Potters. Lily and James sat across from one another, Rose was positioned beside her mother, facing the door. Another girl sat next to James. The group turned to look at him.

Harry froze. A memory of his first year flashed in his eyes. It wasn't exactly like the vision the Mirror of Erised had shown him, but it was incredibly close. Considering he had walked through it, Harry wondered if there was more to the enchanted object than first thought.

Shaking off the thought, he joined the group, sitting beside Rose. Fresh dishes of food appeared on the table once he had picked a spot.

"Hello again." Rose smiled at him.

"Hi." Harry spoke slower than usual.

"You look tired." She studied his posture as she spoke.

"My brain feels like mush." Harry grumbled. "I still have Care of Magical Creatures, History, and Defense to get through." He looked at the girl he hadn't been introduced to yet. "Hello, I'm Harry."

The girl stared back at him with wide eyes. Like the rest of the Potter kids, she had black hair. Her eyes were a rich brown rather than green. Harry realized that was the color of James' eyes. He couldn't recall what color the twins had, but he didn't think they were green.

Her gaze shifted from him to Rose then James. She yelped and glared at Rose.

"Iris." She finally said. "Third year, Hufflepuff."

"Nice to meet you." Harry gave her a small nod. "I kind of expected you to have red hair."

"Red hair is a recessive trait." Lily shook her head.

"I can't convince mom to let me change it." Iris grumped. "It would only take a little spell work to match hers."

"We're not talking about this now." James cut in.

"What house are you in?" Iris turned her attention back to Harry.

"Gryffindor." Harry answered.

"Of course." Iris rolled her eyes. "I'm betting the twins sort there too."

"I was almost in Slytherin." Harry offered.

"Oh?" Rose perked up at that. "What made you refuse?"

"Malfoy was the first Slytherin I met." Harry replied. "Seven years sharing a dorm with him sounded horrid."

The girls each nodded in agreement.

"Do you have a girlfriend?" Iris tried to sound casual, but the blush on her cheeks betrayed her.

She yelped again, glaring once more at Rose. He had seen the Weasley's tossing stinging jinxes under the table enough times to recognize what was going on.

"No." Harry chuckled.

Harry took a drink, finding it was cold apple juice rather than pumpkin. That was a nice surprise. He never understood the fascination with pumpkin juice. There were a lot of differences in this world that he was beginning to pick up on. For one, there were a lot more students. It was Sunday, toward the later part of lunch, and there were still plenty of students around. He guessed not having a war in recent history helped keep the population steady.

"Mister Potter?" A gruff, familiar voice called from the doorway.

Harry turned to see Hagrid.

"I'll be waiting outside for your testing." The half-giant said cordially.

"Thank you." Harry called back. "It looks like my break is over."

"I can walk you out." Iris offered.

"I thought you were meeting some friends out by the lake?" Rose's voice had an edge of tease to it.

Iris glared at her sister.

"Sure." Harry spoke up. "I'm not sure where we're supposed to meet. Care of Magical Creatures is taught near his hut on the edge of the forest where I'm from."

Iris shot Rose a smug look. She stood, motioning him to follow, and began to lead him outside. The girl had opted for casual muggle clothes, wearing a pair of jeans and a blouse. She was just a bit shorter than him. Harry found himself admiring her sleek form. Iris had an athletic build. Her chest was on the small side, but she had a shapely butt.

Harry chided himself for his wondering gaze. It was going to take some time to adjust to this world.

10.

Hagrid waited outside by the corral. His cabin had been replaced by an actual house. Harry smiled seeing Fang lazing in front of the door.

The half-giant, like the others, looked almost completely different than his counterpart. Hagrid's beard was still bushy, but it was expertly woven into thick braids. He wore an outfit that reminded Harry of an old explorer, sans a pith helmet.

"Mister Potter." Hagrid nodded. "Please follow me."

Harry recognized the hippogriff waiting nearby. He stepped up carefully, bowing, and allowing Buckbeak to assess him.

"Well done." Hagrid sounded pleased. "My course relies heavily on practical experience. The school board has marked a list of creatures that are considered dangerous. For those, I will assign reading and provide a lecture before introducing them to the class."

Harry nodded. A small smile crossed his face. Of course, the school board would have to provide the list.

"What sort of creatures have you had contact with?" Hagrid sounded interested but lacked the warmth that usually came with it.

Harry did his best not to look at the half-giant. This Hagrid wasn't his friend. He hadn't given him his first birthday cake or bought Hedwig.

"Sorry professor." Harry realized he had been lost in thought. "Hippogriffs." He nodded to Buckbeak.

"I've met a centaur and an acromantula. I've only seen a unicorn. I have more experience than I would have ever wished for with dementors. Boggarts as well." He thought for a moment. "A basilisk. I'm a Parseltongue. A phoenix, anyone who has been to the headmaster's office has been around one of them. I've wrangled some Cornish Pixies." He paused again. "I think that's it. No, wait. A Cerberus and a werewolf too."

"Hm." Hagrid nodded thoughtfully. "I think you'd be fine to join the fourth-year class if you'd like."

"Thank you, professor." Harry tried to smile, but there was too much of an ache in his chest.

"Are you alright there, Mister Potter?" Hagrid knelt down to get eye level.

"How much did the headmaster tell you about my situation?" Harry asked.

"He has informed the staff that you're a traveler from another world." Hagrid replied simply.

"In my world, you were my friend." Harry couldn't bring himself to look him in the eyes.

"I am sorry to cause you distress, Mister Potter." A solid hand settled gently on his shoulder. "You've met Fluffy then?"

Harry smiled. "And Aragog."

"Ah." Hagrid grunted. "He's in a creature reserve on Borneo. Acromantula are rare these days."

"That's a relief." Harry chuckled. "He lived in the Forbidden Forest in my world."

Hagrid let out a booming laugh. "I tried to convince Albus to let him live there when I was a student. Cried for days when they took him away."

"I need to go." Harry spoke softly. "Do you know where History of Magic is taught?"

"No need for that." Hagrid shook his head. "Dumbledore spoke with the staff this morning. He's setting you up with a private tutor. You have an entire world to learn about."

"Oh." Harry blinked. "Good to know."

"Shouldn't have told you that." Hagrid muttered. "He wanted you to get through the tests first."

Harry laughed. The one good thing about Hagrid having a trimmed beard was that the blush on his cheeks was easier to see.

"Off to Professor Riddle." Hagrid shooed him away. "He's waiting for you in the dueling auditorium. Do you know where that is?"

Harry froze. "Right. Professor Riddle."

He slid his wand into his hand as he walked back to the castle. The dueling auditorium was where the failed class Lockhart had 'taught' in Second Year. In his world it hadn't been used in years. Here, it looked quite active. A raised platform stretched along the middle of the room. The far, curved wall was set up with terraced seating.

Off to one side he saw a distinguished older man speaking with a few students. He had an amused expression on his face while they spoke. The students around him were a mingle of different houses and were talking excitedly.

Harry tightened his grip on his wand when the man looked up at him. Their eyes met.

"Voldemort." Harry growled.

The man flinched.

"How do you know that name?" The man asked.

"Tom Marvolo Riddle." Harry dragged his wand through the air, spelling out the name. "I am Lord Voldemort."

"Who's Lord Voldemort?" One of the students asked.

Harry recognized the boy from the sorting this year. He didn't remember his name though.

"I am." Tom Riddle laughed.

It took every bit of his willpower to keep his wand down. The students were in the way. They would get hurt if spells started to fly. He needed them out of the room before he could attack. Harry gritted his teeth. His catalogue of spells was woefully lacking. He knew a few from hearing Sirius and Remus casting them last year but half-remembered wand motions weren't going to help him right now.

He couldn't count on this Riddle being an unhinged maniac either. The man looked calm and collected. That madness had made Voldemort sloppy.

"When I was a boy." Riddle turned his attention to the students. "Many, many years ago."

The students laughed.

"I am an orphan and grew up in the muggle world." He continued. "It was during World War Two, you'll be covering that in your history course, and muggle London was getting attacked frequently. Lord Voldemort was a powerful wizard I created. He would fight back against the horrors of war. He would conquer death and then the world."

Harry gritted his teeth.

"The Ministry learned its lesson from the recent muggle war." The man chuckled. "Even a blind mouse can find cheese. Hogwarts took in the witches and wizards that lived in the muggle world for the duration of the war." He sighed. "It lasted for years. By the time the war was over, the temporary dormitories had become home to hundreds of families. It was quite an undertaking to move the buildings over to Hogsmeade. Inadvertently, a generation of muggle-born witches and wizards were raised in the magical world, meaning they had a greater understanding for the various traditions. Before then there was a harsh divide between the Pureblood families and the half-bloods. Now, any muggle-born students, and their families, are offered residence in Hogsmeade during school breaks."

"What happened to Voldemort?" One of the students asked.

"He fell to the overpowering drive to impress pretty witches." Tom Riddle chuckled.

"Dad." One of them whined. "You're so embarrassing."

Harry flinched. He zeroed in on the girl who spoke. She had short black, curly hair styled in a grown-out pixie cut. The girl looked to be about his age.

Voldemort had a daughter. Was he married? Who was the mother?

"It is part of my duty as a father." Riddle smiled at the girl. "As such, I take it quite seriously."

The girl groaned and rolled her eyes.

"Now." Riddle clapped his hands. "It's past time for Mister Potter and I to have a private conversation."

The students filed out of the room. Harry studied the girl as she walked away. She wore Ravenclaw colors. Her eyes flicked over to him. A blush colored her cheeks as she looked away.

"Mister Potter." Riddle had moved to the dueling platform. "Let's start with you showing me how much you know."

Harry hopped up to the platform. He didn't wait for Riddle to prepare. Harry shouted his spells, flinging everything he knew at the man. Much to his frustration, Riddle easily swatted them aside, or blocked them. Harry poured everything he had into the spells. He stopped speaking, his voice came out in a raw roar as he tried to bludgeon Riddle with compressed orbs of magic.

Riddle arched an eyebrow at the change. His shield shuddered with each impact. The assault lacked any sort of finesse or direction, but there was considerable power. Especially for a fourth year.

Harry's arm was shaking. His wand felt hot in his hand. He couldn't see straight. The edges of his vision were going gray. He was exhausted. Riddle hadn't cast anything back at him. A fresh burst of burning rage sparked in his chest.

His body locked up. Riddle had his wand pointed at him. Harry pushed against the spell. He focused on the years of pain, anguish, and sorrow all caused from the night Voldemort killed his parents. Harry could feel the magic holding him shatter.

Riddle rocked back on his feet. The broken spell smacking him solidly in the center of his chest. His shield broke.

Harry snarled, raising his wand again.

"Harry." The voice cut through to his very being.

He turned to see his parents. They were alive. Voldemort hadn't killed them. He didn't exist in this world.

Harry dropped to his knees. His entire body felt too heavy. Arms circled him. He could hear Lily and James speaking soft words. A hand wiped moisture from his cheeks. He sunk into their arms. They were alive.

"That was an experience." Riddle stood a distance away from them.

"His parents were killed in his world." James explained as he took the wand from his grasp.

"Voldemort." Riddle's voice was full of sorrow.

"Let's get you to Poppy." Lily helped him stand.

Harry took a step away once he was on his feet. He looked over to Riddle. This wasn't Voldemort. Tom Riddle stood nearby; a few strands of his hair stuck out from the side of his head. The look he gave Harry held no malice or anger. It was an expression he had seen on Mister Weasley's face. Worry that a parent shows to a child not their own. Compassion.

"Mister Potter." Professor Riddle gave him a tired smile. "Let me know if you're interested in the dueling club. You've got the power. A bit of focus with more depth to your spells and you'd be quite impressive."

Lily rolled her eyes.

"I'd say." James laughed. "He knocked you on your ass."

"James." Lily snapped.

"What? He did." James shrugged.

Harry smiled.

"I look forward to having you in my class, Mister Potter." The older man sounded genuine. "It would be a good idea if we weren't alone together. Someone that Mister Potter trusts should be there for the time being. All I ask for is a chance to show you I am not the man you think."

Harry nodded, not trusting his voice. James used a quick charm to clean his face before they left. People were already curious about him. Lily and James led him through the halls toward the hospital ward. At some point Rose and Iris joined them. The girls were beside him. Rose held his hand while Iris hooked his arm with one of hers.

"That was awesome." Rose whispered.

"Gryffindors." Iris muttered.

11.

"This is the Gryffindor common room." Rose said as they stepped out of the passage.

Harry nodded. Lily and James had left as they got closer to the tower. Iris split off a few minutes later to back the Badgers Den.

"But... you already know that." She blushed.

"It's ok." Harry gave her a small smile. "It's been a long day."

He looked around the room. There were quite a few more students than he expected. It was Sunday afternoon, practically evening, and that usually meant the students lounged around the common room. The study tables were currently hosting groups playing games rather than locked in a mad dash to finish homework. Still, there were at least thirty more people than usual. Probably more actually. He could spot a few familiar faces, but there were just as many, if not more, that were completely new.

"I could introduce you to my friends." Rose offered.

"Thanks." Harry motioned for her to lead the way.

Rose led him over to a group of girls. There were a couple of guys hanging around the edge as well.

"Katie and Parvati, you've met." Rose said.

Katie winked at him. Parvati waved.

"This charming lump is Neville." She continued pointing to a guy that was leaning against the wall.

Harry blinked. It was Neville, but completely different. His eyes were bright and steady. The last bits of remaining pudg had melted away. He looked like Neville had an older brother.

"Hey." Neville said.

"This is Lavender." Rose continued.

Lavender looked the same. She was also eyeing him up like a piece of meat.

"The guy humping her leg is Seamus." Rose added.

"Oi." Seamus squawked.

He also was unchanged.

"Lastly." Rose nodded to a girl. "Ciri."

The girl was one he didn't recognize at all. She was a cute, petite girl that had near-white, blonde hair. The girl looked to be about the same age as the rest of the group, fourth or fifth year.

"This is Harry." Rose turned to him.

"Hello." Harry tried to sound natural.

The group sat in awkward silence for a few minutes.

"You said you played quidditch?" Katie spoke up.

"Yeah." Harry smiled thankfully at her. "I was a seeker."

"Nice." Seamus said. "You any good?"

"I'm alright." Harry looked over to Rose. "You don't play?"

"I prefer racing." Rose shrugged. "Iris does. She's the seeker for the Badgers."

"Wicked good too." Seamus grumbled.

"What teams are there?" Harry asked.

"Duelling, house and solo, Quidditch." Rose answered. "Three kinds of racing. Solo, relay, and rally."

"Fencing." Ciri chimed in.

"Fencing?" Harry asked her.

"Sword fighting." She replied with a smile. "Like dueling, but with swords. There are different styles. Just one team though."

"That's wicked." Harry chuckled.

"It is." Ciri nodded enthusiastically.

"Chess." Rose continued. "That's mostly solo."

"Unofficially." Parvati whispered. "There is a poker game as well."

"Shh." Neville hissed. "No offense meant, mate, but we don't know you well enough to give you the details."

Harry smiled. "No harm."

"What's your story?" Lavender leaned in, giving him a nice glimpse of her cleavage.

He forced his eyes up to meet hers. She smiled. The look on her face let him know she had done so on purpose.

"I'm not from here." Harry shrugged. "I am. But I'm not."

The group stared at him for a moment.

"I'm a traveler." Harry said. "The goblins called it Displaced."

"Portals?" Ciri asked. "My dad has some experience with them."

"I guess." Harry shrugged.

"What was your world like?" Neville asked.

"Nev." Rose snapped.

"It's fine." Harry placed a hand on her shoulder.

He let it stay there for a moment. It felt nice to touch her. Rose didn't seem to mind.

"It's a lot like this one." Harry said after some thought. "But not." He shook his head. "It's hard to explain. There are so many little differences that I've seen already. Just when I start to get relaxed, I start to notice things more."

Harry motioned to the room around them.

"There are four other guys and five girls in my year in Gryffindor." He continued. "Neville, Lavender, Parvati, and Seamus were there, or versions of them. Ciri, this is the first time I've met you. I think there were around thirty students total for that year."

The group stared at him.

"Woah." Seamus muttered. "There are twelve other guys in our year. Thirteen with you now."

"Why aren't there more?" Katie asked.

"The only thing I can think of is the war." Harry shrugged. "It didn't happen here."

"That makes sense." Ciri nodded. "My dad and his people don't get involved in wars. We'd gather in Kaer Morhen until it was over."

"His people?" Harry asked.

"It's a long story." Rose replied. "She can tell it to you another time."

"Any other differences that aren't so depressing?" Seamus asked.

Lavender smacked him on the shoulder. Harry laughed at that.

"Dumbledore looks completely different." Harry answered. "In my world, he wears these brightly colored robes and a pointed hat. They don't usually match. His beard is longer too."

"It's going to be dinner soon." Katie said. "Want to join us?"

Harry stopped talking as a familiar flash of color caught his eye. He followed the slight movement to see Hermione sitting off to herself. She settled at the end of a table before getting a little study area arranged. He was halfway across the room before he even realized he was moving.

He came to a stop across the table from her. Hermione didn't look quite the same. Harry couldn't quite place it what was.

"I'm not moving." She said not bothering to look at him.

Harry couldn't help but laugh. Her face scrunched up in frustration. She glared up at him. The expression on her face faded.

"You're that new boy." She said as she studied him.

Harry nodded.

"What do you want?" Hermione asked slowly.

"I wanted to say hello." Harry said with a shrug.

"Why?" She asked.

"I..." Harry didn't know what to say. You are one of my best friends in another world? You were the first person to give me a hug? "Sorry. I'll leave you alone."

Harry walked back to Rose in a daze. She met him part way, wrapping him in a gentle hug.

"I'll show you to your room." She said softly. "There wasn't any space in the dorms so they placed you in the Head Boy rooms."

Harry arched an eyebrow at her.

"The Head Boy and Head Girl have a room off of the common room for their house." Rose explained.

"This year it's a Ravenclaw guy so ours is open. How did it work in yours?"

"I don't know actually." Harry said after a moment.

Rose led him back toward the entry tunnel. There was a short side passage that stopped in a pair of doors. She opened one, stepping aside to let him go first. Harry looked around. This was much better than the shared dorms. They currently stood in a nicely decorated sitting room. Placards documenting the previous Head Boy through the years decorated the walls.

"You've got a private bathroom." Rose pointed to a door to the side.

She led him around. Rose opened a door onto a separate room. There was a comfy looking queen-sized bed against the far wall. The room also had a desk and a wardrobe.

"This is your bedroom." She said waving her hand at the space beyond.

Harry stared at the bed. He trudged over to it and flopped down on his back. Harry stared up at the ceiling. Rose sat nearby.

"She was my best friend." Harry whispered. "But that's not her, is it?"

Rose started to trail a hand through his hair. He felt his eyes growing heavier. Her hand began to slow. The bed shifted as she moved.

"Stay." Harry looked at her pleading. "Please."

Rose nodded. She scooted closer before laying down beside him. Harry drifted off to sleep as she rested her head on his chest.

12.

Harry woke up with something warm against his back. He adjusted his glasses to see a wild head of black hair resting between his shoulders. Rose had her arm draped over his side. She pulled him closer as he shifted in bed.

"Rose." He said softly. "I need to get up."

She grumbled but didn't move.

"We skipped dinner." Harry prodded her. "It's time for breakfast."

Rose snapped to a sitting position.

"Shit, wank." She grumbled.

"What?" Harry chuckled.

"Nothing." Rose waved him off. "I fell asleep."

"We both did." Harry sat up and stretched.

"Everyone saw me come in here with you." Rose continued.

"Oh." Harry said slowly. "Nothing happened."

"We know that." Rose sighed. "Lav and Vati will have told half the school by now."

"Aren't they your friends?" Harry asked.

"Yes, but they are still the worst gossips in school." Rose groaned as she held her face in her hands.

"Everyone is going to think I'm a total slag."

"I've had people talking about me for years." Harry rested a hand on her shoulder. "The best thing to do is act normal. Walk out of here like nothing is wrong. Get dressed and head down for breakfast. If they see you sneaking around, they will talk more. They're going to talk, nothing will stop that, but you can set your friends straight. Tell Lavender and Parvati what really happened. They'll spread it around just as fast."

"Tell them that we slept together?" Rose spoke flatly.

"That we fell asleep talking." Harry got out of bed.

A quick look around the room and he found his trunk. He hit the latch to activate the closet. A row of his clothes slid out before him. Absently, he took off his shirt and tossed it at the laundry bin against the wall. His hands paused when he started to unbutton his pants. He quickly grabbed one of his uniforms before heading to the bathroom.

"I'll see you at breakfast?" Harry asked as he closed the door, hoping she didn't see him blush.

"Sure." Rose stared after him, slightly dazed.

Harry waited until he heard the door open and close before he got in the shower. It was luxurious compared to the stalls in the dorms. Unfortunately, he didn't have time to savor it. He quickly rinsed off

and got dressed. His stomach was not happy that he had skipped dinner, especially after all the magic he had thrown around.

He stepped into the hallway and came to a complete stop, just barely avoiding knocking a girl to the ground. Iris braced her hands on his chest, holding him upright as he nearly fell over.

"What are you doing here?" Harry asked.

"Good morning to you too." Iris said with a wry smile. "I wanted to walk you to breakfast. I didn't get to spend a lot of time with you yet. You weren't around for dinner."

"Thank you. After all that testing I needed sleep." Harry let out a nervous breath. "Sorry. Good morning, Iris. Didn't mean to tackle you, I was worried I was going to miss breakfast."

Iris grabbed his arm, pulling him close, and turned to lead them down to the Great Hall.

"You didn't, so we're fine." She said with a shrug. "That wasn't the common room door."

"No." Harry shook his head. "There wasn't any space in the dorm, so they gave me the Head Boy room for now."

"Fancy." Iris said with an appreciative nod. "And all to yourself."

"Yeah." Harry smiled. "The shower is amazing. It's nice not to have to share it with other guys."

"I'd like to see it sometime." Iris said casually.

"Anytime." Harry replied easily.

He didn't see the devious smile that flashed across her face.

"Do you know your schedule?" Iris asked.

"No." Harry replied after a moment. "I think they'll give it to me this morning. If not, I'll just follow Rose around until they tell me."

"Hmph." Iris muttered something too soft to hear.

They made it down to the Great Hall. Iris stayed with him, taking a spot on his right. Their conversation paused while they started to eat.

"What are you doing here?" Rose asked as she walked over to them.

"I'm having breakfast." Iris replied casually. "Is it so wrong for me to want to visit?"

"You've never eaten here before." Rose countered.

Iris shrugged. Further conversation was interrupted by the unmistakable noise of Ron eating. Harry had no idea how he did it, but the ginger was louder than three people. It wasn't a Weasley thing, no one else in the family was that noisy. Hermione had once told Harry that she thought it was a defense mechanism since he was the youngest brother. Whatever the reason, it wasn't pleasant, even in his home dimension.

"I remember why now." Iris shuddered. "I'll see you at lunch." She paused, glancing at Ron. "Or not."

"Bye." Harry said with a smile.

Rose glared at her little sister. She took the spot Iris had just vacated. He didn't see the younger girl wink at her older sister. Lavender, Parvati, Katie, Ciri, and Neville quickly filled in around them.

"So." Lavender said brightly. "What did you two kids get up to last night?"

Rose groaned.

"I was having a hard time adjusting." Harry replied before they could press further. "Rose stayed with me to help talk through a few things."

"Is that what they call it where you're from?" Parvati said with a giggle.

"I told you." Rose grumbled.

Harry smiled at her. Professor McGonagall rescued them with her approach.

"Mister Potter." She said holding out a card for him. "Your class schedule. You will need to inform me of the electives you wish to take by tomorrow morning. If not, they will be assigned to you. History is when you will have private instruction. You will be meeting with a tutor at that time instead of attending class. Any questions?"

"Thank you, professor." Harry said. "Where do I meet them?"

"Do you recall the location of the room where the testing took place yesterday?" She asked.

Harry nodded. "Thank you."

She gave a small nod before departing. He turned back to the others.

"Who teaches History here?" Harry asked.

"It changes every year." Neville answered tiredly.

"Why?" Harry asked.

"No one wants it." Ciri chuckled. "Binns keeps trying to teach the class. He's a ghost and was the professor when he died."

"They've tried changing the classroom, but he just keeps finding it." Neville added. "No one has the patience to stick around with him constantly interrupting to rant about goblin rebellions."

"There's a pool going around about how long they last." Rose said.

"Shortest was two weeks." Ciri continued. "That ministry lady. I can't remember her name. The one who looked like a toad."

"I think we all preferred Binns to her." Katie said with a shudder.

Harry let out a breath. An annoying ghost was better than a curse. He checked his schedule. The first class was Charms, an elective, then lunch followed by Potions, and ending the day with Defense. Tomorrow, the day started with Herbology, then double Transfiguration, break for lunch, History, and finishing the day with an elective that hadn't been chosen yet.

"What electives are there?" Harry asked. "I know Care of Magical Creatures, and Divination."

"Astronomy, Ancient Runes, Arithmancy, and World Studies." Rose answered.

"What is World Studies?" Harry asked.

"The world, obviously." Katie replied sarcastically.

"It's a brief overview of magical practices from all over the world." Ciri said, flicking Katie on the dangly bit of her earlobe. "I'd skip it if I were you. You've already got a lot of new information to take in."

"Thanks." Harry replied, giving her a small nod.

He liked Care of Magical Creatures, but he didn't think he could stand seeing Hagrid constantly. Divination was interesting, just not for him. The biggest draw for Astronomy was Professor Sinistra. Even the robes she wore couldn't hide her amazing curves. That left Runes and Arithmancy. He was a year behind, but they were the most appealing of the bunch.

Harry flipped the card over. "Does anyone have a quill I could borrow?"

The group stared at him for a moment.

"What?" Harry asked.

"A quill?" Rose answered with her own question.

"To write with." Harry replied with a nod.

"Who told you that you needed a quill?" Rose asked.

"Mom." Harry blinked. "Your mom, I mean."

Rose smiled at his slip of the tongue.

"We don't use quills anymore." Parvati chuckled. "Here." She pulled out a fountain pen. "Use this."

"Thanks." Harry took it and focused on writing.

He hoped they would mistake his blush for getting fooled rather than what he had said. The card folded itself into a little airplane once he had finished writing. It drifted up off the table then glided over to Professor McGonagall, who plucked it from the air.

"What did you chose?" Ciri asked.

"Runes and Arithmancy." Harry replied.

"I'm in those too." She replied with a nod. "We can study together."

"Thanks." Harry said with a genuine smile. "Ready for Charms?"

13.

Harry took a seat beside Rose as they waited for Charms to start. Flitwick was already up at the front of the room. He happily greeted the students as they entered. To his credit, he only gave Harry a couple of seconds of extra study before moving on. Flitwick looked pretty much the same. He had the same tidy mustache and center-parted black hair. The only thing different about him was the shape of his glasses, circles instead of squares. Now that he had thought about it, he hadn't spent much time giving the staff a closer look.

The cursory glance around the room told him two things. One, they were sharing the class with Hufflepuff, and two, there was easily double the amount of students present for each house. The room was bigger, each row was on its own level to allow the one behind a clear view, and Flitwick had an actual podium rather than a stack of books.

"Welcome, welcome." Flitwick called once everyone had settled. "You had better be ready, I'm not taking it easy on you just because it's the first day back."

Judging by the smiles from the other students, the statement didn't sound dire.

"Let's do a quick bit of review to see where everyone stands." Flitwick continued.

Harry was relieved to find that he was able to keep up. In fact, he noticed that his casting was smoother than usual. He was able to recall the motions and words easily. The class moved through the review at a steady clip.

Once that was done the students proceeded to get out notebooks and pens. Harry scowled at the quill and parchment in front of him. Rose chuckled. She offered him a smaller notebook along with one of her spare fountain pens.

"Wonderful." Flitwick beamed at the students. "Now let's press on! We are going to cover a collection of spells over the next few lessons. Summoning, Banishing, Conjunction, and Transference. These all touch on the same mechanic of will and intent directed toward movement." He let the class catch up on notes. "Now, can someone tell me the difference between Conjunction and Transference to Transfiguration?"

Hermione had her hand in the air almost instantly. There were a few others as well, Hannah Abbot being the only one he recognized. The others were students he had never seen before.

"Yes, Miss Granger?" Flitwick said with a wave of his hand.

"Conjunction and Transference is taking a specific target from one location to another. Transfiguration is the practice of changing an existing item into something else." She replied with confidence.

"Five points to Gryffindor." Flitwick said with a happy nod. "Exactly. Now, what is the difference between Summoning and Conjunction?"

Hermione squirmed in her seat but didn't raise her hand. Harry sent a questioning look to Rose.

"The professors don't call on the same student in a row." Rose whispered.

Harry gave her a quick smile before turning his attention back to class.

"Miss Abbot?" Flitwick prompted.

"Summoning is a localized focus intended for one target." Hannah answered quickly. "Conjuration is takes a specific target from elsewhere and brings it to the caster."

"Five points to Hufflepuff." Flitwick said with another nod. "Now, as Miss Abbot said, both of these spells are for certain items, but Conjuration is specialized." He pointed his wand at his podium. "*Accio Book*." The book leapt over to his waiting hand. "Summoning." He flicked his wand up in a sharp movement. "*Ex Libris Vas*." A different book appeared in his hand. "Conjuration."

The students quickly took notes.

"Further differences between the two." Flitwick continued. "This book is my own, from the podium, as you saw. The other." He set it in the air before him where it floated. "Is a random book. The spell takes a book from somewhere and brings it to me. Each conjuring spell has its own incantation and wand movement." He repeated the wand movement, flicking it up before bringing it back down just as sharply. "*Vas Ex Libris*."

The book disappeared.

"Can anyone tell me the difference between what I just did and Banishing?" Flitwick asked. "Mister Hitchcock."

"You put the book back." One of the Gryffindor students that Harry had never seen answered. "Other way would've just tossed it against the wall."

"Five points to Gryffindor." Flitwick chuckled.

The lesson continued on. Flitwick smoothly mingled theory with practical application. To keep things safe, he gave everyone a handful of marshmallows for practice. They started out with a wider approach before progressing until they could target a single one amid a pile.

"Now." Flitwick clapped his hands. "Let's play a game."

A swish of his wand turned the Gryffindor marshmallows red and the Hufflepuff ones yellow. His podium floated out of the way. A row of targets slid up to replace it. They ranged in size and distance. There were even some that were moving. Each one had three different rings with a score on it. There were two chalkboards above the targets. One for each house. A shelf floated in the air about ten feet across from the targets.

Another flick of his wand pulled all of the marshmallows into one big pile in the middle of the room.

"Two at a time." Flitwick said. "One from each house at a time. Summon twenty marshmallows of your house color and banish them at the targets. The winning house doesn't have to write an essay."

The students formed lines. Harry found himself behind Rose with Lavender at his back. Working with Hufflepuff reduced the amount of shoving and insults that would have happened with Slytherin. The trash talk was of the friendly variety. Even though they moved quickly there were five people in front of Rose.

Harry tried to pay attention to what the students before him were doing. He wanted to make sure he didn't make the same mistakes.

"Oops." She accidentally bumped against his back.

"No problem." Harry said with a small smile.

When she did it again, he realized it wasn't an accident. Lavender was trying her best to keep his thoughts elsewhere. She started to rub her chest against his back, pressing herself close. Harry wasn't about to complain. Truth be told, he had a crush on Lavender. She was cute and flirty. The fact that she was one of the bustier girls in the year may have helped as well.

Harry tried not to react and draw attention to what was going on. He was just focused enough to move with the line. Lavender was more than happy to follow. She used the motion to get her hands into the mix. Harry jumped when she squeezed his butt.

The movement pushed him forward, pressing against Rose. She looked back at him with wide eyes. It was then that he realized the raging erection that Lavender had inspired. The one that he had just jammed against Rose's firm ass.

"Sorry." Harry said quickly.

Rose turned back to face forward. He could see her blushing and knew for a fact that he was as well. Harry was just about to relax when she took a step back, pressing her bum against desperate member. All hope of paying attention was lost with Lavender groping him from behind and Rose subtly grinding against his front.

Thankfully, it stopped once Rose stepped up to the firing line. Harry was able to focus enough on what she and the Hufflepuff girl were doing to get his thoughts back on task. Lavender gave his butt one last squeeze before he stepped up to take his turn.

"*Accio Marshmallow.*" Harry focused on the color red.

One red marshmallow zipped over to rest on the shelf in front of him. He looked at it, then at the targets. The Hufflepuff beside him had already summoned and sent a few downrange.

"*Depulso.*" Harry lifted his wand and moved it in a tight sweep.

The marshmallow zipped toward one of the stationary targets. It hit the center, adding some points to the board. Harry summoned two this time, then banished them, aiming at the same target. They stacked behind the first, tripling his score.

He pulled another two from the stack. This time he sent each one at a different target. They all hit the center of the big stationary targets. Another two, this time he aimed for the smaller targets that didn't move. They hit. He pulled one and sent it toward one of the moving targets without waiting for it to reach the shelf in front of him.

Harry didn't have to look at it to know it hit just where he wanted. By his count he had twelve marshmallows left. He summoned all of them. They lifted up from the pile, flying over to him. Harry sliced his wand in a tight sweep, barely a twitch of his wrist. The dozen marshmallows spread out, hitting the moving targets in the center. Some of them stacked together instead of going to the stationary ones.

His magic hadn't been like this before. Sure, he had some power, but it had lacked form. Now it was precise, focused on his intent. It flowed smoothly and easily.

Harry was drawn from his thoughts when he realized everyone had gone quiet. He gave a shy smile and moved out of the way to let Lavender step up to take her turn.

"What was that?" Rose asked in a hurried whisper.

"I have no idea." Harry replied, shaking his head.

"Mister Potter." Professor Flitwick called, waving him over. "A word."

Harry hurried over to where Flitwick waited. The professor stood on his podium to be able to look his students in the eye.

"Have you had experience with these charms before?" The professor asked.

"No, sir." Harry shook his head.

"Are you sure?" Flitwick studied him for a long moment.

"Yes, sir." Harry replied. "I knew the spells in the review, but these were new to me."

"That amount of control when cast silently is impressive." Flitwick said.

"Silently?" Harry asked.

"You weren't aware?" Flitwick answered with his own question.

Harry shook his head.

"Interesting." Flitwick commented. "Professor Riddle said there was something special about you. I do believe he was right."

Harry tensed.

"My apologies." Flitwick said, placing a hand on his shoulder to calm him. "We often discuss students with potential in dueling. It was nothing untoward."

Harry took a breath. He nodded after a moment.

"It would be quite a boon for your house if you decided to join the dueling team." Flitwick continued. "I dare say that by the end of the year you would be fit for ranked competition."

Harry blinked at the thought.

"Are you the dueling instructor?" Harry asked.

"No." Flitwick said with a chuckle. "Similar to Quidditch, a team captain is assigned. They work on training, study, and preparation for the inter-house competition." He dropped his voice low so only the two of them could hear. "If you decided to try for the ranked competition, I would be glad to be your trainer. I have a feeling you would go far."

"Thank you, sir." Harry said.

14.

Harry walked to Arithmancy in a daze. The conversation with Professor Flitwick stacked on top of the encounter with Lavender and Rose didn't make for clear thinking. Lavender getting handsy was understandable, unexpected, but it made sense. The fact that Rose had been grinding her ass back against him was completely out of nowhere. Was she attractive? Yes, but she was also kind of his sister. Sort of. Maybe. Dimensional travel wasn't something he could easily wrap his head around.

The easiest way to think about it was that she was his twin sister. They shared the same birthday and all that, so it made sense. It was a leap considering they hadn't spent their lives together. If he had met her at random, he would be attracted to her. There was no doubt about that.

It was all too much to think about. He had a new class he was under-qualified to attend.

Harry stopped at the back of the classroom. It was laid out in a set of two rows of wide desks, each with four seats. The part that gave him pause was that Hermione was already sitting at one of them. He recognized Padma Patil next to her.

"Mister Potter." Professor Vector said as she approached.

Harry had to look up at her. She stood a good four inches taller than him.

"Professor." Harry replied.

"Correct me if I'm wrong." She said in a way in which she knew she wasn't. "But the plan was to have you attend a tutoring session before you joined the class proper."

"Yes, Professor." Harry answered with a nod. "I had picked out the class this morning. Since it was short notice, I thought it best to show up for today."

Professor Vector gave him a stern, appraising stare. After a long moment, she nodded.

"Join a table." She turned away and returned to the front of the classroom.

Harry followed her departure and caught a flash of movement. Padma waved him over to take one of the empty seats. He couldn't think of a polite way to refuse, so he took the seat.

"Hello." Padma said, her voice came out quietly. Now unsure what to say once he had joined them. "I'm Padma. This is Hermione."

"We've met." Hermione didn't look up from getting her supplies in order.

"Ah, yes." Padma stumbled on her words for a moment. "You're in Gryffindor as well."

"I'm Harry." He replied with a gentle smile. "Thank you for inviting me."

"Do you have any experience with Arithmancy where you are from?" Padma asked, her curiosity overpowering her shyness.

"No." Harry shook his head. "I was always interested though."

"It is very interesting." Padma pressed on. "Through complex equations we are able to interpret the flow of magic. This can be used to develop new spells, identify how existing spells function, and is a

cornerstone of enchanting. When partnered with another school of magic it is only limited by your imagination and ability."

"Wow." A dry voice from behind him spoke up. "The new guy just got here and you're already trying to bore him to death."

Harry turned to see Pansy Parkinson staring down at them. Her arms were crossed, and she had a slight sneer on her face. Even then, she was cuter than he remembered. He hadn't seen much of her aside from hanging around near Draco. His attention was usually on the ferret in case curses started flying.

"Pay no attention to Pansy." Padma rolled her eyes. "She loves the subject just as much as I do."

Pansy huffed as she took the open seat.

"You're the new Potter?" Pansy studied him. "So glad we've got another one."

"Tell me." Harry countered. "Are you desperate for Malfoy's attention in this dimension too?"

Pansy glared daggers at him.

"Class." Professor Vector cut in. "Your assignment is to identify and solve the equation. Each is split in four quadrants. Begin."

A large sheet of paper appeared on the table. Hermione and Padma pulled a quadrant closer. The pieces split smoothly with little effort. Harry grabbed one as well. Looking it over made his head spin for a moment. Then he started to identify the patterns. It was one part math, one part puzzle, and another part code breaking. First, he had to identify any patterns that would help him figure out the right equations to use. Then, he had to carry them out. It wasn't easy, but at least he understood what he was supposed to be doing now. He read through the entire block a couple of times before he got started.

"Why did you talk to me?" Hermione asked, her voice low.

Harry looked at her. Not sure if he had heard her.

"Yesterday." She didn't look up from her work. "Why did you talk to me?"

"I know... knew you where I'm from." Harry replied, turning his focus to the work. "She is my friend."

They settled back to work for a few minutes.

"Do you know me?" Padma asked pausing her calculations.

"Not closely." Harry replied with a shake of his head.

"Do you know my sister?" She asked flatly.

"Not closely." Harry repeated with a smile.

That seemed to mollify her.

"What about Pansy?" Padma asked with a glance at the girl.

"Where I'm from, she hangs off of Draco." Harry answered without looking at the girl in question. "He doesn't like me."

"Mister Potter. Miss Patil." Professor Vector seemed to appear out of thin air. "Conversation regarding your equations should be done quietly as to not disturb your classmate. Flirting should be done elsewhere."

There were a few scattered laughs. They turned to poorly covered coughs when the professor shifted her attention to the guilty parties.

"Sorry, Professor." Harry said before turning his focus back to the work.

Professor Vector looked over his shoulder at his progress. She didn't say anything, but Harry got the vague sense of approval. The rest of the class was spent mostly in silence. Every now and then one of the students would ask a question which Professor Vector answered succinctly. She was stern and expected the best of her students. That required them to focus on their work. Her assistance was efficient as well as delivered in an understandable method.

The bell rang to signal the end of class and the students began to pack up. Harry watched as the quadrants joined back into a single sheet before floating over to the desk in the front of the room.

"The work is only done in the classroom." Padma explained. "That way there isn't any outside help."

"Three inches per equation you identified today." Professor Vector spoke loud and clear.

"Why is she assigning inches when we're using notebook paper?" Harry asked Padma.

"The paper is enchanted to adjust the handwriting to a standardized text size and margins." Padma answered. "And tradition." She added with a shrug.

"Thanks." Harry said with a kind smile.

"Mister Potter, a word." Professor Vector called before he could leave.

Harry felt like a man approaching the gallows as he crossed the room. Professor Vector was an attractive woman, there was no doubt in that, but she had an intensity about her that was no joke. She was steel.

"Professor." Harry said as he stood before her.

"You did well." Professor Vector stated. "I recommend a study group. Your work has shown a tutor will not be necessary."

"Thank you, professor." Harry said as the tension eased from his shoulders.

She turned away without another word. Harry finished packing his supplies and hurried to the Great Hall for lunch. He just made it out of the door when he saw a flicker of movement. Harry ducked, dipped to the opposite side, and had his wand out before turning to face whatever it was.

"Jumpy?" Hermione asked.

The steady way she said it, without any real emotion, hit him hard. Harry lowered his wand but kept it by his side. He didn't say anything. The words he wanted weren't the right ones.

"Tell me about her." Hermione said, crossing her arms.

"Who?" Harry asked.

"The other Hermione." She huffed. "Tell me about her."

"What do you want to know?" Harry scrunched up his brow as he asked. "Her parents are dentists, but she loves sugar quills. She's an only child." He paused waiting for her to clarify her request.

"You're her friend?" She asked. "How did that happen?"

"A troll." Harry replied.

"A troll?" Hermione stared at him. "Explain."

"In first year, at Halloween, someone let a troll in." Harry said. "My Hermione was in the bathroom, she didn't know. I went to find her, but the troll found her first. She said I saved her, I say we worked together to defeat it."

"You killed a troll in your first year?" She asked incredulity.

"No." Harry scoffed. "I knocked out a troll with his own club."

She studied him for a long, silent moment.

"Does she have any other friends?" She asked.

"Ron." He answered.

Hermione snorted.

"The three of us spend most of our time together." Harry continued. "There are a lot more students here. She's gotten closer to Ginny lately."

She didn't look like she believed him.

"Are you going back?" Hermione asked.

"No." The answer came a lot faster than he expected.

"You're just going to leave her alone?" Hermione snapped.

Harry flinched.

"She's not alone." Harry said. "Now that I'm not there she'll probably be safer than ever. Every year someone is trying to kill me. Maybe she could even leave this cursed school and go somewhere she'll be treated with the respect she deserves!"

The two glared at each other.

"I wouldn't abandon my friends." Hermione whispered.

She turned to storm away. Harry caught her wrist before she could take a step.

"No." Harry growled. "You do not get to talk to me like that. I have been alone my entire life. Every summer they abandon me to people who treat me like a slave. They know how what they do. They've seen my scars. The only people who came to help me was Fred and George and they got punished for it."

Now that I'm somewhere I can have a family and no one is trying to KILL me, I'm not going to feel guilty for a chance to be happy. Even if someone tried to kill me, this place is worth fighting for."

His breath came in great gasps by the time he was finished. Hermione stared back at him, frozen. It was then that he realized they weren't alone in the hallway.

"Harry." Rose said softly.

The word seemed to snap Hermione out of her daze. She ran down the hall, away from him. Harry watched her go. The anger bled away only to be replaced by a painful ache.

"She didn't deserve that." Harry whispered.

"You didn't either." Rose placed a hand on his shoulder.

Her touch eased some of the pain. He leaned against her, allowing Rose to pull him into a hug.

"Come on." Rose said. "Let's get some lunch."

15.

Lunch was a quiet affair. Harry tried not to let the encounter with this Hermione get to him. Having Rose and Iris next to him helped. They gave their gentle support. Hermione showed up a bit later than everyone else. She glared at him, but it didn't look like she had been crying.

He caught sight of Ron and realized he hadn't spoken to this version yet. The ginger was with some other students that Harry didn't recognize. What he could hear of the conversation made it clear they were talking about quidditch.

"How are you doing?" Iris asked softly, rubbing his shoulder.

Harry sighed and shrugged. Iris snuggled against him. He kissed her on the top of the head without a second thought. She giggled. Rose rolled her eyes.

"Are you ready for potions?" Rose asked.

"I'm looking forward to it." Harry replied with a laugh. "That's a first for me."

"Why?" Iris asked.

"The potions professor, if you could call him that, was horrible." Harry chuckled dryly. "The strange part. You know him."

"Oh?" Iris asked looking up at him. "Who?"

"Flapper." Harry said with a smile.

"No." Iris smacked him on the shoulder. "Uncle Sev is a sweetheart."

"The Snape in my world isn't." Harry shook his head. "I met Flapper. They don't even look alike."

"Weird." Iris said with a sigh.

"All of this is." Harry whispered.

"In a good way?" Iris asked, leaning closer against his side.

"Yeah." Harry smiled. "I think so."

They got up and made their way to the potions room. Iris stuck close to them for a good portion of the walk. He didn't know what class she had, but he doubted that it was anywhere near the dungeons.

"Oi, Potter." A girl said as she stomped over to them.

The trio looked up as she approached. She wore Ravenclaw colors and looked familiar. Her black hair was cut short, styled spiky. She wore a pair of earrings that were jewels in the shape of an apple with something swirling inside of it. The look was as punk as one could get while still being in uniform. She wore it well.

"You tried to kill my dad?!" She yelled.

Harry cocked his head to the side. "Your dad?"

"Professor Riddle, you twat." The girl growled.

Harry stared at her in shock. He had completely forgot about her. Riddle had a daughter.

"Don't call Harry a twat, cunt!" Iris yelled back.

"Iris!" Rose snapped at her little sister.

"I'm not talking to you, Potter." The Ravenclaw girl pointed a finger at Harry. "I'm talking to him."

"What's your name?" Harry asked, his voice had gone cold.

The girl noticed the change. She shifted to look at him.

"Delphi Riddle." She tried to sound confident.

"Listen carefully. I do not say this to brag." Harry said calmly. "I killed a basilisk in my second year. I walked out of the largest wild acromantula colony a few months before that. In third year, I banished a horde of dementors. I defeated one of the worst Dark Wizards in the last century, twice, before third year. If I wanted your father dead, Dumbledore would be looking for a new professor."

Delphi stared back at him. Her eyes were wide with shock. The confidence from a moment ago seemed far away. There was something else in her eyes that looked eerily similar to how Sirius looked when he first escaped from Azkaban. He wasn't sure if he liked it.

Harry turned away from her and calmly continued on his way. The clear dismissal showed how little he considered her a threat. It wasn't until he made it to the potions lab that he realized that he was alone. He looked around to find only Professor Tonks in the room. She stared back at him.

"Mister Potter." She said with a small wrinkle of her forehead. "You're early."

"Oh." Harry blushed. "Sorry."

Professor Tonks smiled. "Students don't start showing up early until after I assign homework."

Rose joined him a moment later. She was out of breath. Professor Tonks watched her hurry over to Harry with a shake of her head. Harry tried to look normal as he began to unpack his supplies.

"What was that?" Rose hissed.

"Hm?" Harry didn't look at her.

"Don't give me that." Rose grumbled. "You threatened a professor!"

"No, I didn't." Harry shook his head.

*§You said you were going to kill him!§* Rose spoke in a hiss.

Harry paused for a moment to realize she was literally speaking in a hiss. She was a Parselmouth, just like him. A weight that he had carried since second year lifted from his shoulders. It wasn't something Voldemort had left behind.

*§I said that if I wanted to kill him, he would be dead.§* Harry replied. *§There is a difference.§*

"Miss Potter. Mister Potter." Professor Tonks said sharply. "No Parseltongue in class. Miss Potter, you know this."

The two went quiet as the rest of the students filed in. For once, Harry was thankful they shared potions with Slytherin. He didn't think he could keep cool if it had been Ravenclaw. The other students seemed interested in him. They stole looks at him and spoke in whispers. Harry hoped it was because of his sudden arrival, not the encounter in the hallway.

Everything fell away once class started. Professor Tonks was engaging and had a sharp sense of humor. She started off with theory, discussing the development of the potion, the effects, and the technique used for the actual brewing. All the while she peppered in questions, handed out points, and answered the few that arose. By the end of class Harry felt that he had learned more about potions than he had in the last year, or more.

Rose walked close to him as they made their way back up to the castle proper. It seemed like all of the classes were in the same location. The worried looks and silence returned. Her friends had filled in around them, talking among themselves.

*§What?§* Harry asked finally.

*§Are you going to be ok§* Rose pulled him to a stop. *§Professor Riddle has probably heard about what you said already. If not, we're with Ravenclaw next.§*

Harry shrugged. *§People will think it was just talk.§*

*§Was it?§* Rose asked, worry clear on her face.

Harry shook his head. *§I did embellish the acromantula bit. I had help with that one.§*

They continued on toward class.

*§You're a Parselmouth?§* Harry asked.

*§No, why?§* Rose rolled her eyes. *§Iris and the twins are too. We use it when we don't want people to overhear. It's rare enough.§*

*§Riddle speaks it.§* Harry said.

Rose stumbled a step. "He does?"

Harry nodded. "Why?"

Rose shook her head. A bright blush flushed her cheeks. Harry chuckled as they continued on. Unlike potions, the DADA already had students in the room when they arrived. It was a good mix of Gryffindors and Ravenclaw.

"Popular class." Harry commented.

"Mister Potter." Professor Riddle spoke from the front of the room. "A word."

Harry nodded. Rose squeezed his hand before he moved to join the professor.

"I understand you had an encounter with my daughter." Professor Riddle spoke evenly.

"Yes, professor." Harry had to force himself to keep his voice calm.

"Your parents." He paused. "The Potters explained to me your connection to the Tom Riddle from your world. I am not him. This time, I will give you a warning. There will be no point loss or detentions."

Harry nodded.

"Be careful around Delphi, Mister Potter." Professor Riddle added.

Harry looked at him, arcing an eyebrow.

"I say this as her father, not your professor. She has a wild spirit. Takes after her mother that way." The older man chuckled. "She isn't much for subtly and she is an impressive duelist."

"I'll keep that in mind." Harry said with a nod.

"That will be all." Professor Riddle said. "I hope to show you that I am my own man, not this specter that poisoned your world."

Harry gave another sharp nod, not sure what to say to that. He turned around to head back to Rose when he caught Delphi staring at him. That fire in her eyes hadn't dimmed. She watched him intently as he made his way through the class.

"Welcome back." Professor Riddle spoke loud and clear. "I'm sure you're all eager to get started."

There was a wave of excitement in reply. Harry looked at Rose, noting that she was practically bouncing in her seat.

"Let's do a quick review." The professor said with a sly smile. "Miss Granger. What are the three As?"

"Accept, Assess, and Act." Hermione answered quickly.

"What does that mean?" Professor Riddle changed his attention. "Mister Goyle."

Harry turned toward the student. He couldn't remember ever hearing him talk. Goyle being in Ravenclaw was a big change as well.

"Accept that this is happening. Assess the situation. Act, find cover, move to safety, or fight." Goyle spoke in a steady rumble.

"Five points to Gryffindor and Ravenclaw." Professor Riddle pointed to the chalkboard.

The Three As appeared on the board. Each had a line of explanation underneath.

"Miss Red Patil." Professor Riddle pointed to Parvati. "Two shield spells."

"*Resulto* and *Protego*." Parvati answered quickly.

"Miss Riddle." Professor Riddle pointed to Delphi. "The difference?"

"*Resulto* focuses against physical damage while *Protego* can block magical as well." Delphi explained.

"Five points to each." The Professor smiled. "What are the other stages of *Protego*? Miss Potter."

"*Duo, Maxima, Horribilis, Totalum, and Diabolica*." Rose answered.

"What are two other shielding spells?" Riddle asked. "Miss Carrow."

"*Boucle* and *Aegis*." A girl that Harry couldn't see answered.

"Another five for each." Riddle replied. "Now." He clapped his hands. "Who wants to try them out?"

Everyone in the class raised their hands. All of the students stood. Harry did as well, not sure what was going on. Professor Riddle waved his wand. The desks and chairs slid toward the edges of the room. They shifted and stacked nicely out of the way. A moment later chalk lanes were drawn on the floor.

"Form a line." The Professor directed. "When it's your turn, cast at least two of the shields mentioned, baring the *Totalum* and *Diabolica*."

Harry wasn't sure why everyone was so excited. They lined up and went through the class, each casting the shields with minor issues. The chatter really picked up once everyone had gone through.

"Everyone ready for a tournament?" Professor Riddle asked.

The class cheered.

"No spells above Class Two, winner stays on." Professor Riddle instructed as he formed a dueling platform. "I will count officiate. Any volunteers?"

All of the students raised their hands.

"Excuse me, Professor." Harry spoke up.

"Yes, Mister Potter?" Professor Riddle asked.

"I'm not familiar with dueling." He said. "What is a Class Two?"

That earned some snickers.

"Nothing deadly, or grievous bodily harm." The professor explained. "Breaking bones, altering the body to a harmful extent, and transfiguring the environment with intent to maim or kill."

Harry nodded. That was simple enough.

"The duel ends when an opponent is disarmed, concedes, or forced from the dueling area." Professor Riddle continued. "You'll get the hang of it after you've seen a couple."

Ron stepped up on one side of the platform and a Gryffindor that Harry didn't recognize joined him. They bowed to each other, and the professor counted them down. It was over fast. The unnamed Gryffindor had his feet knocked out from under him and was promptly disarmed. Ron preened at the applause.

A few more duels went by with Ron staying on as the victor. That was until a blonde Ravenclaw stepped onto the platform. Harry thought she looked familiar but didn't know her.

She instantly put Ron on the defensive. A quick string of spells ended with her holding his wand. Ron's shoulders slumped. She returned the wand to him with a gentle flick of her wand.

"Who is that?" Harry asked.

"Hestia Carrow." Rose answered. "She has a twin sister in Slytherin."

Harry nodded. That was where he knew her. He was pretty sure both twins were in Slytherin back where he had come from.

A couple of Ravenclaw and Gryffindor students were soundly defeated. Harry didn't recognize any of them. He started to notice something, there seemed to be more witches than wizards in the class. Now that he thought about it, that had been the same case in the other classes as well.

Padma Patil stepped up. The two stared each other down. Everyone around the platform took a step back. The air grew thick with tension. Once the duel started the spells snapped back and forth. Harry could feel the magic.

"Enough." Professor Riddle hopped up onto the center of the platform. "Whatever is between you two will not be settled in my classroom. If you are intent on dueling, there is a platform for that." He looked from one witch to the other. "Step down, both of you."

Harry looked to Rose for an explanation. She shrugged.

"Another two volunteers." Professor Riddle said.

There was a general grumbling as Hermione took one of the spots. She stayed on for quite a while. Her dueling style was rigid. Every spell she cast was precise and by the book. She rarely dodged, sticking to shields, or countering. It wasn't long before she had the longest streak so far. The majority of the crowd had settled to sulk.

"I'm better with a sword." Ciri muttered as she returned to her spot near Rose.

The excited whispers started up again when Delphi took the open spot. Harry noticed the waning attention was now back in force.

It was clear why once the duel started. Where Hermione was controlled and precise, Delphi was focused chaos. None of her wand movements matched the spells she was casting. On top of that, she was chaining spells together that shattered Hermione's shields. Delphi moved so fast that she held two wands for a long moment before Hermione realized she was unarmed.

Hermione waited for Delphi to cross to the dueling platform. The Ravenclaw tossed her the wand without a thought. Hermione caught it, she sent a glare to the girl before stepping off the platform. Instead of gloating,

Delphi stared directly at Harry. The wildfire in her eyes burned bright.

"Scared Potter?" She mocked.

Harry looked at Rose.

"Excuse me for a moment." He said as he stepped onto the platform.

16.

"Come on, Monster Slayer." Delphi mocked. "Let's see what you've got."

When discussing dueling, most witches and wizards bring up hexes, jinxes, and even transfiguration. Unfortunately, the first two were not areas that he was well versed in. The few hexes that Harry knew he had learned from the twins and the jinxes he learned going through the school year. Fred and George were underrated geniuses, but their aim was not to hurt people.

Contrary to popular belief, Harry didn't coast by solely on the pressure from Hermione. He loved magic. While he didn't memorize the books on history, or theory, he spent a lot of time with The Standard Book of Spells for each year. Harry had made sure to study them after seeing what a couple could do during his first year. Unlocking doors, levitating clubs, and fixing his glasses with a few words was just the beginning. On top of all that, his experience in Charms class had shown him that his magic was flowing a lot smoother than before.

"Three. Two. One." Professor Riddle counted them down. "Begin."

Delphi burst into motion, launching spells toward him. Instead of casting a shield, Harry summoned a small flock of birds. They burst into puffs of feathers as the incoming spells hit them. With a twist of his wand, he sent the cloud of feathers racing toward his opponent.

On instinct, Delphi conjured a shield, only to find the feathers burst into dust once they made contact. She swirled her wand, gathering the particles without dropping her protection. They reformed into pebbles before rocketing back toward Harry.

They faded away with a flick of his wand. Having been initially conjured by his magic, the transfigured feathers had a stronger connection to him.

The momentary distraction was enough for Delphi to press her attack. She spun, bringing her wand up high, making the platform roll like a wave toward him. Harry tilted the point of his wand down, forming a raised wedge under his feet. The wave broke against it, splitting off and continuing on.

Harry attacked with his own transfiguration. A line of squared pillars punched up from the platform heading directly for Delphi. She shuffled to the side only for them to follow her. Instead of moving further, she waited.

With a feral smile, she simply stepped on the closest one as it popped up. The expression on her face fell as her foot sank instead of pressing up. She lurched forward, the now-gooey pillar stopped just above her ankle.

Delphi tried to pull her foot out from the platform. She growled. Her wild gaze shifted from her trapped foot to Harry. She raised her wand ready to wipe the floor with him. Only to see him holding her wand. Her eyes snapped to look at her hand to see it was empty.

Harry walked calmly over to her. She felt her foot raise steadily from the platform until it was free once more. Delphi glared as he approached. He held out her wand, with the handle toward her. A wicked smile crossed her face. She snatched the wand from his hand. Her arm snapped back in a blur.

A bright red spell nearly clipped his ear as Harry dodged to the side. Harry hopped back to get some space to work. Even then, the two were just barely out of arms reach of the other. Their wands practically collided as though they were fencing.

The two dipped, parried, and slipped close-quarters spells. What had once been a standard duel was a brawl. Delphi spun and twirled, dancing around the room. Harry moved sharply, dodging under her spells, and turning his shoulders to let them slip by. Their fight flowed around the room. Each adjusted smoothly to the change.

Delphi swatted away a Body Bind spell to find her robe shift around her. The fabric split into strips before wrapping her up like a mummy. Her arms were forced down by her sides as the bindings tightened. Harry stepped forward, quickly plucking the wand from her hand before she could cast another spell.

They both were breathing heavily as the fight finally came to a close. Delphi stared intensely into his eyes. The wildfire in her eyes hadn't faded one bit. In fact, it seemed to burn brighter. Harry's body locked up a moment later. His eyes shifted to see a rather annoyed Professor Riddle standing nearby.

"If you two are finished." He bit out. "Twenty points from Gryffindor and Ravenclaw. Detention for both of you Saturday, starting after lunch." The professor stalked over to them. "I am going to release both of you now. You will each take a spot on the opposite side of the room. I will return your wands after class." He turned his attention solely on his daughter. "No more outbursts. Do I make myself clear?"

Delphi nodded. The professor released both of them with a flick of his wrist. She glared at Harry as the strips of what had been her robe dropped to the floor at her feet. He got a better look at her without the bulky fabric in the way. She had a nice figure, athletic while still having curves. Harry kept it at a cursory glance rather than an extended look. He didn't want to let his guard down around her.

"I'm not done with you, Potter." She said low enough so only he could hear.

Harry shook his head. He walked back to join Rose.

"What was that?" Rose asked once he was near.

"What?" Harry asked.

"Don't 'what' me." Rose jabbed him in the ribs with her finger.

Harry yelped. She had found a ticklish spot without even trying.

"The duel?" Harry asked, taking a step out of her reach.

"Yes, the duel." Rose rolled her eyes. "You didn't say a single word the entire time."

"Really?" Harry raised his eyebrows at the information. "I didn't mean to; I was focused on the fight."

"Be careful around her." Rose said glaring at Delphi. "She's mad."

"I should be angry, not her." Harry scoffed.

"Not angry, mad. Off her rocker, mad." Rose wobbled her head. "I swear, the only sane one on that side of the family is Aunt Andi."

"We're related?" Harry asked.

Rose smiled at that.

"Not really." She said after a moment. "Padfoot is cousins with her mom. You've met Aunt Andi, she teaches potions. Since Padfoot is our godfather, we can technically call her a cousin. Usually just to annoy her."

"Huh." Harry let that sink in. "Professor Tonks isn't her mother?"

"No." Rose scoffed. "Thank goodness. No. Aunt Andi's sister, Bellatrix, is her mother. Did you know Narcissa Malfoy is his cousin too? All three of them are sisters."

"So, technically." Harry sighed. "Draco is our cousin?"

Rose nodded and mirrored her sigh. "Padfoot is worth it."

They fell into an easy silence.

"Aureum isn't nearly as bad." Rose spoke after a moment. "Kind of annoying, but not as bad."

"Who?" Harry asked.

"Aureum Malfoy." Rose looked at him again. "You don't know Rumi?"

Harry shook his head.

"Draco's little sister." Rose clarified. "She's the same age as Iris. Slytherin, like her brother. She's the least evil of the bunch."

Harry settled in a spot to watch the rest of the class duel. Neville did well, staying on for four challengers. A Ravenclaw guy that Harry didn't recognize ended his streak. That student only lasted two rounds before losing to Rose. His sort-of twin did even better with a streak of six.

The most shocking was Lavender. She seemed bored when she stepped on the platform, but flawlessly knocked the defender out of bounds. The same thing happened to the next three students as well.

By the end of class, Hermione still held the longest streak which led to Gryffindor winning a homework free evening. Harry guessed that she would probably still do the essay. He pushed her from his train of thought.

"Remember." Professor Riddle spoke loudly as the room returned to normal. "The Dueling League starts Wednesday Evening. Anyone interested should attend the first meeting. Your aptitude will be measured, and rank assigned." He seemed to direct that to Harry. "There is something special Professor Flitwick and I will announce as well."

"What do you think it is?" Lavender asked as she came up beside Harry.

Harry shrugged. "You did really well up there."

"Thank you, Harry." Lavender preened. "You were impressive too."

"I've never seen Riddle get so worked up." Neville added, the group of friends formed up. "She usually wipes the floor with everyone."

"Hermione did pretty well." Harry remarked.

"That's because she's almost as mental as Riddle." Parvati cut in. "Is it true you were friends in your world?"

Harry nodded; his shoulders slumped. "I'd rather not talk about it."

Rose squeezed his hand.

"Mister Potter." Professor Riddle called.

Harry looked back to see the older man at the front of the room holding his wand. He reached out to it. The class watched as the wand zipped over to his waiting hand.

"Thank you, Professor." Harry said with a stiff nod.

"We've got a couple of hours before dinner." Rose spoke up. "Is there anything you want to do?"

"Thanks." Harry shook his head. "Don't worry about me. What do you usually do?"

"Homework." Parvati groaned. "Lord Longbottom here won't let us do anything fun."

"If we finish it now, we'll have more time later." Neville grumbled.

"We don't have any homework yet." Ciri spoke up.

"Don't say that too loud." Lavender whispered. "They might hear you."

17.

The story of his duel with Delphi had spread around the entire school by the time breakfast the next morning rolled around. Once again, he was the subject of a buzz of rumors. Dueling pamphlets kept finding their way folded in his napkin, under his plate, and one even slipped in his pocket.

Harry brushed them aside. He was already interested in checking out the dueling club. It was a lot more interesting than he had expected. He wasn't sure how it would line up with quidditch, but he would give it a shot.

In truth, he didn't know if he could play for this team. The line-up potentially could be different enough to avoid overlapping between the old world, but he wouldn't find out until Friday. Katie was still a Chaser, as were Angelina and Alicia. The twins were the starting Beaters as well.

"What's your schedule for today?" Rose asked as they ate.

"Runes, Independent Study, that's the history tutoring, then lunch." Harry listed off the top of his head. He had to get his schedule out to find the rest. "Transfiguration and Herbology. You?"

"The same, except my elective is Care of Magical Creatures." Rose explained. "It's not until the sixth year where the schedules really start to split up. Only the electives vary."

"I can show you to the Runes." Ciri spoke up.

"Thanks." Harry replied with a smile.

"You about done?" Ciri asked.

Harry looked at her plate. A moment ago, he swore it had more food than his. Now it was clear. Rose placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Don't ask." Rose said with a chuckle. "No one knows how she does it."

"Hey, Potter!" A familiar voice called from farther up the table.

Rose and Harry looked up. One of the Weasley twins waved at them.

"Fourth year Potter!" They clarified.

Rose and Harry pointed at the other.

"The one that plays quidditch." The other twin said.

"That's me." Harry said.

He slipped off the bench and headed over to them.

"I'm Fred." One said.

"I'm George." The other said.

"Weasley." They finished in unison.

"Are you trying out for Mid?" Fred asked.

"Mid?" Harry asked. "Is that a position here?"

"No." George scoffed. "Mid-Year."

Harry shrugged.

"How do they do it where you're from?" Fred asked.

"Each house has a team." Harry replied.

They waited for a moment.

"That's it." Harry shrugged. "How does it work here?"

"Cubs, Mid, and Top." Fred explained.

"Second and Third are cubs, Fourth and Fifth are Mid, then Sixth and Seventh are Top." George continued.

"Three teams per House." They said.

"Gives each group some time to shine." George finished off.

"That makes sense with how many more you've got here." Harry nodded. "You're sixth year?"

"Got it in one." Fred said.

"Bright one here, Fred." George patted Harry on the shoulder. He used the motion to pull Harry in close.

"We're the kings of getting what you need from out there." Fred whispered.

"Muggle bits cost extra." George added.

"Have to outsource." Fred sighed.

"Keep it hush." George started up again.

"Bit a cards going around too if you're interested." Fred said with a wicked smile.

"Buy in is twenty gals." George continued.

"Let us know." They said.

"Thanks." Harry smiled at them. Even in another world the twins were rascals. "Does playing on Mid clash with dueling?"

"Rather cross wands than chase gold, eh?" George shook his head.

"Might not be that bright then, brother of mine." Fred sighed.

"Such promise too." George wiped away an imaginary tear.

"Can't do both then?" Harry rolled his eyes.

"Casual, dueling is not." Fred shrugged.

"Don't discourage the boy, Forge." George hit his brother on the shoulder. "We could make a vault a gold with him on the circuit."

"True, Ged, true." Fred studied Harry once more. "The Unknown Spellslinger sweeping the competition."

"Word says he solved that Riddle too." George stole a gaze at the Ravenclaw table.

"I get the feeling I'm not needed for this conversation." Harry chuckled.

He returned to his spot to grab his bag. Ciri was kind enough to wait for him. They didn't talk much aside from her pointing out landmarks. Ciri was content with walking without conversation. It was odd, but nice. She wasn't asking about his world, people he knew, or how he was settling in. For a couple of minutes, he was just walking with a housemate to class.

Runes turned out to be incredibly interesting. They were so versatile. The right combinations could power brooms, build wards, and were a major component in the enchanting process. Even a simple runic array could do some wonderful stuff. It didn't hurt that Professor Babbling was a bombshell. She looked like one of those decals' muggles did on World War Two planes.

"I'll see you at lunch." Ciri said as she split off after class.

"See you." Harry called after her.

He headed a couple of hallways back the way they had come before he realized that he had no idea where he was supposed to meet the tutor.

Harry had just turned the corner when he felt something coming his way. He ducked just in time to see a compressed ball of green cloud zip through where his head had been. It wasn't the right color, or shape, for the Killing Curse, but it did not look friendly. His wand was in his hand with a thought. He spun toward the source of the attack.

Delphi Riddle had her wand pointed at him. It was already moving for another spell. Harry flicked his wand up, lifting a thin sheet of compressed air in front of him as a shield. A wicked smile crossed her face as she danced to the side. Instead of dropping the sheet, he twisted his wand, and launched the newly formed orb at her.

She was moving closer. That look in her eye was even stronger than the day before. Harry shifted, sliding to the side, to cut off her approach. Only then did he realize his mistake. This wasn't a part of the castle he was familiar with, and Delphi had prepared. The hallway at his back was a dead end. One of the moving staircases occasionally came to a stop here, but it moved on a slow, hourly patrol.

"What are you playing at, Riddle?" Harry asked as he juked out of the path of another spell.

She was pushing him back to the other wall. There was a chance he could slip by her, but it would take him so close she could touch him.

"You slipped my spell not even knowing I was there." Delphi sprang forward, pushing even closer. "You used elemental magic silently." The dance stopped with Harry pressed against the wall. "And you're still fighting, even when you know there is no escape."

She came to a stop before him. The tips of their wands sparked as the space between them shrunk.

"I know you can escape." She challenged. "You're holding back. Come on, Harry. Show me."

"Harry?" He asked.

Delphi stepped forward, brushing his wand away. She grabbed the collar of his shirt and pulled him in for a searing kiss. Her tongue licked against his lips, begging for entry. She whimpered when he didn't open his mouth.

"Please, my love." She pouted.

The fire in her eyes. That wild edge he couldn't identify. It was hunger. Harry put a hand on her hip, he hooked her leg to pull her close. Delphi cooed as he pressed her body against his. A quick twist reversed their positions. Now her back was against the wall.

"What do you want?" Harry growled. He gripped the wrist that held her wand, keeping it by her side.

"Ooo." Delphi kissed him again. "Go on, lover. Take me." She grinded her crotch along his thigh. "Mum said I'd find a strong wizard. I've been waiting for you for so long."

"You don't know me." Harry moved to disentangle himself from her.

She wrapped a leg around him, trying to keep him close.

"You're strong." She whined as she kissed along his jaw. "Let me stand beside you."

"What the hell was going on?" A young woman snapped from nearby.

Harry looked over his shoulder to see an attractive brunette glaring at them. She had rich blue eyes that held an intensity that didn't match her age. The girl wasn't wearing school robes, in fact, she was wearing a muggle dress. He didn't think she was more than a year or two older than they were.

"This doesn't concern you." Delphi glared over at the girl.

Harry used the distraction to step away.

"Mister Potter?" The girl asked.

Harry nodded.

"You're late for your tutoring session." The girl turned as she spoke. "Come along."

"I'll find you later, lover." Delphi called after him.

"My apologies, Mister Potter." The girl said. Her stride was that of a queen rather than a student. "I did not realize you were not informed where we would be meeting."

"I'm not familiar with this part of the castle." Harry added. "My idea was to backtrack to the Great Hall."

"Only to be ambushed." The girl didn't look over her shoulder.

She came to a stop before an unmarked door. It opened without a noise. Harry followed her in, finding a classroom with a few long tables among bookshelves rather than traditional desks. There were a couple of other students already in the room as well.

"This is one of the study areas." The girl clarified. "There are several rooms like these around the castle dedicated to History. Professor Binns has an innate sense when an actual class gathers and cannot be dissuaded to allow another professor to take over."

She motioned for him to take a seat. He did.

"I'm sure you have questions." She sat across from him. "Specifically, regarding my age."

"It's that obvious?" Harry said with a blush.

"You are far from the first." She gave him a small, polite nod. "Similar to yourself, I travelled to another world. Multiple times, to the same world. Time didn't move the same there as it does here. As a result, I do not move the same through time here."

"How old are you? If you don't mind me asking." Harry couldn't help himself.

"Chronologically, sixty-six." She answered. "In actually, eighty-one."

"Woah." Harry said. "You barely look old enough to be a seventh year."

She laughed.

"I was lucky." She said with a gentle smile. "Physically, I have aged around three years. My little sister, on the other hand, is actually older than me, and still looks thirteen."

"How is she older than you?" Harry asked.

"She went back more than I did." She let out a sigh. "Where are my manners? Professor Susan Pevensie, pleased to meet a fellow traveler, Mister Potter."

"It is nice to meet you too, Professor Pevensie." Harry replied with a smile. "Does your sister work here too?"

"No." She shook her head. "Her skills are in the healing arts."

"Our time runs short today." Susan said with a sharp breath. "Next time, I expect you to be here early."

"I will." Harry said giving her a firm nod. "Thank you for saving me earlier."

"Think nothing of it." She waved the thought away. "We don't have time for a full lesson, but I may be able to answer a few questions. Do you have anything you would like to know more about?"

"I haven't seen you use a wand." Harry said cautiously.

"No." She shook her head. "I am not a witch, nor am I a squib. Due to my travels, my very being has been imbued with magic." Her expression darkened a touch. "My brothers, my sister, and I are considered magical creatures. Anti-Muggle Charms have no effect on us, nor do mental magics."

Harry let the information sink in.

"But." Harry tried to find the words. "You're a person."

"As are goblins." Professor Pevensie said with a nod. "Yet, history has shown time and time again how well the magical world has worked with them."

That, oddly enough, led into a discussion of the most recent Goblin Conflicts, the treaties that followed, and the tensions that still lingered. It looked like things would have continued on if not for the interruption of the muggle World War Two. The magical community in Britain had to borrow quite a lot from the goblins to arrange the protected areas in Hogsmeade for Muggle Born witches and wizards. It didn't make for a pleasant relationship between the two communities.

The goblins were able to use the desperation to place another Gringotts in Hogsmeade. Each location was treated as sovereign ground of the Goblin Nation. Wand restrictions had been removed in trade for the free claim on discovered magical tombs and artifacts.

Harry found himself disappointed when the tutoring session ended.

"Thank you, Professor." Harry said as he stood.

"Mister Potter." She inclined her head. "Harry."

He stopped and looked at her.

"My situation isn't the same, but if you need to talk." Susan offered. "We're both travelers."

"Thank you." Harry repeated. "I'll keep that in mind."

Harry was able to find his way to the Great Hall without an issue. He kept his wand in his grip just in case he was ambushed again. Delphi didn't make an appearance this time. Though she was waiting for him in the Great Hall. She stood by the edge of the Gryffindor table, once he entered the room.

Delphi was the only person in the Great Hall that seemed oblivious to the tension. She practically skipped over to him, wrapping one of his arms in hers and pulling him close.

"Did you miss me, lover?" She whispered; the words tickled his ear.

"What are you doing?" Rose asked as she approached.

"This doesn't concern you, Potter." Delphi snapped. Her voice was full of venom.

"Delphi." Harry warned.

The witch froze. She looked up at him with a slight pout.

"Sorry, Potter." She forced herself to say. "May I call you Rose? You can call me Delphi."

"Why would I do that?" Rose asked slowly.

"We're going to be family." Delphi giggled.

Rose looked at Harry. He scrunched his brow in confusion.

"When did this happen?" Rose asked as she turned her attention back to the witch.

"He won my heart when we dueled." Delphi replied with a pleasant sigh.

"It was a practice duel in class." Rose countered. "There wasn't a prize."

"Every duel has a prize." The edge in Delphi's voice returned.

"Fine." Rose sniffed. "I challenge you."

"For what?" Delphi snarled.

"To see which one of us is truly Harry's girlfriend." Rose crossed her arms.

"Accepted." Delphi replied with a laugh. "Tomorrow evening, we'll be the first duel of the year."

"And you'll stay away from Harry until then." Rose cut in, motioning to the two.

"So will you." Delphi hissed as she took a step away. "I'll see you tomorrow night, lover."

The two Potters watched her leave. Unfortunately, she didn't go far. With only the Hufflepuff table separated the Gryffindor and Ravenclaw students.

"I don't get any say in this?" Harry whispered.

"You can't use sanity while fighting with a crazy person." Rose muttered.

"And you're sure you can beat her?" Harry asked as they headed to take a seat.

Lavender took a spot between them to make sure they weren't next to each other. That would mean that Delphi would be allowed beside him as well.

"Thanks for the vote of confidence." Rose deadpanned.

"It's a valid question." Lavender cut in. "You're good, Rose, but Riddle isn't normal."

"What happened?" Rose ignored their friend.

"She ambushed me outside of Runes." Harry explained. "We dueled to a stand-still. She had be trapped against a wall with no escape. Instead of attacking, she kissed me."

The table around them erupted in noise.

"Fifty Points from Gryffindor." Professor McGonagall yelled. "Quiet down."

They settled back to a grumbling silence.

"Where were you?" Rose asked Ciri.

"I had to go to class." Ciri answered as she shrugged.

"It's not her fault." Harry cut in.

The group drifted into their own conversations.

"So, you're going to be my girlfriend?" Harry asked with a wry smile to Rose.

"Shut it." Rose mumbled.

18.

The latter half of the day was on par with his old world. Transfiguration was currently focusing on animating inanimate objects with an increase in complexity over the next month. Once again, his magic proved to be working on another level that it had previously. He was able to make a teapot walk around on his first attempt. By the end of class, he had it dancing.

Herbology was interesting, but still beyond him. Professor Sprout was working together with Professor Tonks to supply Potion Ingredients. It expanded the topic to include the various ways the growing methods impacted the use. Neville shined in the class, happily adding extra bits of knowledge and trivia along with the lesson. Unlike other Professors, Sprout was delighted with the input.

"Rose." Harry had her stay back after Herbology.

"What's up?" Rose asked as she stole a look around.

Delphi seemed to be lurking nearby throughout the day. She was just waiting for Rose to slip up so she could get closer to Harry. They had to make sure they had plenty of space between each other. Another person with them was also a safe bet. Right now, it was Lavender.

"I need to go to talk to Madam Pomphrey." He said in a low voice.

"Did you lick the Snozeberry Root?" Rose snapped. "Professor Sprout, and Neville, told everyone multiple times not to. I don't care how sweet it smelled; you're going to have explosive-"

"I didn't lick the Snozeberry Root." Harry cut in. "There's something... different about my magic since I got here. Yesterday in Charms, that wasn't normal for me. And In defense? I'm good, but I'm not that good."

"Alright." Rose sighed. "Let's go."

"No." Harry shook his head. "We're practically daring Riddle to make a move."

"You can't go alone." She crossed her arms as she stared hard at him.

"I can take him." Lavender chimed in happily.

Harry motioned to the other girl. Lavender smiled broadly.

"Fine." Rose grumbled. "Let me know once you get back. Otherwise, I'm sending out a rescue party."

"You could do with an adventure." Harry teased.

"Dueling Riddle is adventure enough." Rose rolled her eyes. "I'm serious. Check in once you're back." She turned to Lavender. "Stay with him."

"Yes, ma'am." Lavender saluted her.

Rose sighed. She tossed her hands up as she walked away. Lavender's smile turned wicked when she looked back at Harry.

"Just couldn't wait to get me alone?" Lavender walked her fingers up his chest. "Nice little tease about Charms. Don't think I missed that."

Harry gulped. It took a concentrated effort to step back.

"I enjoyed yesterday." Harry guided her hand away from him. "But I was telling the truth. Something feels different. Knowing my luck, it's going to turn out that I'm about to explode."

Lavender paused, staring at him for a moment. She shrugged.

"Alright." She moved out of the way to let him pass. "To Madam Pomphrey then."

They walked for a couple of minutes in silence.

"So..." Lavender drew the word out. "Is it true you killed a basilisk?"

"Yeah." Harry chuckled. He rolled up his sleeve to show her the scar. "I stabbed it through the mouth. One of its fangs gave me this." He turned his arm to show a slightly smaller scar on the other side. "Phoenix tears healed me up."

"Why did you stab in it through the mouth?" Lavender gawked at him.

"I was twelve, how else what I supposed to kill it?" Harry rolled his eyes.

"You killed a basilisk when you were twelve?" Lavender asked slowly.

"Salazar Slytherin placed a basilisk in the Chamber of Secrets to protect the school." Harry explained as they walked. "Someone took control of it and was using it to attack students. One of my friends had a little sister, she was kidnapped by it, and we went down to rescue her. There was a cave-in so I had to face it alone."

"At twelve." Lavender repeated.

"If you think that's impressive, I should tell you what I did in my first year." Harry chuckled.

"What did you do in your first year?" Lavender grabbed his arm and pulled him close against her.

Harry wasn't sure if she did it on purpose, but his arm ended up squeezed between her ample breasts. He forced his eyes to face forward.

"Escaped a Cerberus, which isn't as hard as it sounds." He added the last part quickly. "Then I fought a possessed professor and killed him."

She stopped. The sudden change practically yanked his arm out of the socket.

"You killed a professor?" The color was quickly draining from his face.

"He was possessed." Harry repeated. "And he attacked me multiple times through the year. It wasn't until the end that I figured out who it was."

"I'm not sure that makes it ok." Lavender said softly as she started to walk beside him again.

Harry shrugged. They fell into an uneasy silence for a few minutes. Only the sound of their footsteps and the occasional passing portrait provided any noise.

"What about last year?" Lavender asked. Her voice was hesitant, bracing for the answer.

"Aside from the Dementors, last year wasn't too bad." Harry replied.

"Now I know you're having me on." Lavender laughed. "Why would you ever get anywhere near a dementor?"

"Is there an Azkaban here?" He asked.

She nodded.

"Don't tell me, you had to go, and singlehandedly stop the dementors from rebelling." Lavender rolled her eyes.

"No." Harry chuckled. "That would have made sense."

"I'm afraid to ask, but you've got me curious now." Lavender watched him from the corner of her eye.

"There was this suspected dark wizard, he was innocent, but we didn't find out until much later, who escaped from Azkaban. He was an unregistered animagus and they didn't have him in a warded cell. All he had to do was starve himself until he was thin enough to slip through the bars." Harry explained.

Lavender was completely hooked on his story. So much so she didn't realize they were standing outside of Healing Ward.

"The Minister, in his infinite wisdom, decided that the best way to protect Hogwarts was to station Dementors here." Harry continued. "As it turns out, I smell wonderful to Dementors, and they attacked me a few times. I had to learn the Patronus charm to keep them away."

"You can cast a Patronus?" She asked. "Come on. Most Aurors can only cast a mist."

A sly smile crossed his face.

"What do you want to bet?" Harry asked.

"Pardon?" Lavender countered.

"You do think I can cast a Patronus. I say I can. What do you want to bet?" Harry wiggled his eyebrows at her, earning a giggle.

"Fine." She crossed her arms under her breasts. The look on her face told him she knew what she was doing. "You'll be my date for the first Hogsmeade weekend. I pick where we go. And if you win?"

Harry thought for a moment. She adjusted her arms and leaned forward, pressing her chest against him. All the blood rushing below his waist was making it hard to think.

"Show me your tits." The words tumbled out of his mouth before his brain could catch up.

"Mister Potter." Lavender purred. "How bold of you."

A tidal wave of embarrassment washed over him. He opened his mouth to apologize. She stopped him from speaking with a finger against his lips.

"Deal."

Harry didn't even have to try to reach for a memory. He already felt amazing.

"*Expecto Patronum*." Harry forced himself to focus on the spell rather than her.

The familiar shape of Prongs appeared in the hallway next to them. Except, it didn't look like normal. Usually, Prongs appeared to be made of mist. Now, he looked solid, as though a real stag had wandered through the halls. Even the coloring was lifelike.

Prong scanned the hall before looking back to Harry. The stag noticed Lavender and gave a little chuff that sounded like a laugh. Prongs did one final look around the hall before he faded away.

"Morgana." Lavender whispered.

Harry stared at the space where his Patronus had been moments ago. This was not normal. He needed to speak with someone, and fast. Harry shifted to head into the Healing Ward, only to find Lavender was blocking his path.

"A deals a deal." She shrugged.

Smoothly, she grabbed the bottom of her shirt and bra, then lifted it up. Harry's jaw dropped. Her large breasts looked firm; they were capped with galleon sized pink nipples. She flipped her bra and shirt back in place far too soon for his liking.

"Too bad you won." She sighed. "You would have gotten a feel on our date." Lavender giggled as Harry continued to stare at her now covered chest. "We're here."

Harry shook his head, trying to get his brain to start working again.

"Right." He said. "Right."

Harry pushed open the door and stepped inside. Madam Pomphrey stood nearby watching as a witch in Hufflepuff robes waved her wand in the air above another student on a stretcher. He didn't recognize either of them.

"Back so soon, Mister Potter?" Madam Pomphrey chuckled as she watched him approach.

"I needed to speak to you about something that's happening to me." Harry got the words out before he lost his nerve.

He knew that anyone he told would tell him to talk to Madam Pomphrey, so he decided to skip the step. Speaking to her on his own was harder than he expected.

"Of course." She patted the Hufflepuff witch on the shoulder. "Bring me the results once you've finished. We'll go over them together."

The Hufflepuff witch nodded. She only spared Harry a quick glance before returning to her work. Madam Pomphrey motioned for him to follow. She led him to another stretcher and closed the curtains for some privacy.

"Take a seat, Mister Potter." Madam Pomphrey patted the stretcher. "Tell me what brings you here."

"Ever since I arrived, my magic has been..." He searched for the word. "Different. It's more powerful and easier to use. In charms the other day I was casting silently and didn't even realize."

"Hm." Madam Pomphrey tapped her chin. "The best course of action is to run a full diagnostic. When you were here previously, I did a quick scan. I didn't find anything out of the ordinary."

She reached in a pocket in her robes. Her arm up to the elbow disappeared in the fabric.

"A robe with expanded pockets." She said when she saw the look on his face. "Every witch should have them." She held up a square block of dark wood. "Hold this."

Harry stared at her for a moment. Slowly, he held out his hand. She placed the block in his palm. He relaxed when it didn't do anything. A sudden jolt of energy zipped through his body.

"Aaugh!" Harry yelled.

"Don't be so dramatic." Madam Pomphrey chuckled as she took the block.

"What was that?" Harry shook the tingles from his hand.

"It inspects and measures your magical core." Madam Pomphrey placed the block on a sheet of parchment. The dark color faded away. A moment later text appeared on the parchment. She read whatever it was before turning back to him. "I'm going to need some of your blood."

"How much?" Harry asked warily.

"Three drops." Madam Pomphrey drew a thin silver blade from her pocket. "Your hand please."

Harry sighed. He held out his hand. There was a blur of movement. He felt a pinch on his palm before he had a chance to react. Impressive, considering he regularly chased snitches. Madam Pomphrey pressed the blade to the same parchment. The small bit of his blood spread out to cover the lower half of it. That should have needed a lot more than three drops. Slowly, the blood faded away leaving a single line of text behind.

"You appear fine." Madam Pomphrey said with a sigh. "Aside from a rather large magical core, there doesn't appear to be anything out of the ordinary."

"There's something else." Harry said blushing.

"Go on, Mister Potter." Madam Pomphrey soothed. "There is little that can surprise me these days."

"Girlsarehittingonme." Harry said quickly.

"A little slower please." She smiled at him.

"Girls." Harry took a gulp of air and let it out. "They are hitting on me. Yesterday, a girl was... groping me in class. I bumped into another girl, and she started to grind against me."

"Was this unwanted contact?" Madam Pomphrey sounded more serious than he had ever heard.

"Surprising, but not unwanted." Harry blushed. "Is there something wrong with me? Maybe my magic is doing something to them? Like with Veela."

Madam Pomphrey gave him a warm smile.

"Mister Potter." She patted him on the shoulder. "You are an attractive young man and also happen to be a powerful wizard."

"This didn't happen where I came from." Harry shrugged.

"I was told some details about your world." Madam Pomphrey said. "From what I understand, you had something more pressing than girls to worry about."

Harry laughed. He nodded.

Madam Pomphrey leaned in close to share a secret. "Think about your world, what would happen if a new student appeared at the beginning of the year? One you've never met before. You may be in your fourth year, but you weren't here for the last three."

"I'm the Nimbus 2001." Harry muttered.

Madam Pomphrey made an amused sound. "Will that be all?"

"Yes. Thank you." Harry sighed. "It's good to know I'm not going to explode or something."

"Do you need someone to show you back to your common room?" Madam Pomphrey asked.

"No." Harry shook his head. "I know the way and I came with a friend."

Lavender was waiting for him near the door. She was turning tongue depressors into stick figures and making them patrol a small table. Judging by the pile misshapen broken pieces, she had been up to it for a while.

"Are you going to explode?" She asked as he approached.

He chuckled. "No."

"We've still got time before dinner." Lavender said as they headed out. "I can think of a few things to pass the time."

"Lav." Harry smiled at her. "Riddle and Rose are already set to duel to be my girlfriend. I don't think you want to get all tangled up in that."

"Or I can challenge to winner." Lavender smirked at him. "I know I wouldn't be the only one."

19.

The next day came all too quickly. Harry decided to just get some sleep instead of worrying about how the duel would go. He wasn't fighting in it and Rose seemed to have a plan. She didn't share what it was, so he just had to trust her.

Breakfast was a light affair. He didn't think he could take eating anything heavy. Some jelly toast and cider were plenty.

Charms continued on the patch of Conjuraton. It was mostly a lecture. Unlike Summoning and Banishing, items required specific incantations and wand movements. They weren't the hardest to figure out, but there were a lot of them. Simply Conjuraton lacked precision but was easier to grasp. Targeting a specific item made the process complicated.

There was a lack of groping this time. Harry wasn't sure if that was a bad thing considering the approaching duel. The practical side of the class was completed in their seats. Lavender and a few other girls were giving him flirty looks. The Hufflepuff side of the room paid more attention to him this time.

Arithmancy was another class he wasn't looking forward to sitting through. He was enjoying the math puzzles more than expected. Things with Hermione were strained, which made the atmosphere at the table strained. The class passed quietly with the scratch of pen on parchment and the occasional hushed conversation. Professor Vector patrolled the room, making herself available to her students. She efficiently answered any questions and did so in a way that wasn't condescending.

Lunch was tense. Rose still had to sit one seat away from him. Ciri was between them this time. Harry wanted to tell Rose to just call the duel off. It wasn't worth all this stress. She seemed to know what he was thinking and glared at him. Harry decided not to try to talk her out of it. He knew how frustrating it was for people to second-guess him. That wasn't something he was going to do to her.

Delphi had positioned herself at the Ravenclaw table to be able to stare directly at him. It was impressive considering the Hufflepuff table was in the way. Either she had prepared beforehand, or her intense study of him was strong enough for people to avoid.

Potions class was surprisingly fun. The lecture portion connected with Herbology, discussing the various alternative preparation methods for the different growing methods Professor Sprout had gone over. Professor Tonks taught them how to dice, grind, and shave Snozeberry Root as well as the different applications for each. They didn't actually make a potion in class, but Harry felt like he had learned a better understanding of the entire process.

Defense was focused once more on a variety of shielding spells and their uses. Aside from the more general ones such as *Protego* or *Aegis*, there were also specialized approaches. They went over base forms to block elemental, physical, and arcane attacks. Similar to *Protego*, the spells had different levels of strength. Rather than another impromptu tournament, Professor Riddle went through the class one at a time to demonstrate. First, he would have them show they could do each shield, then he would zap a weak spell at them. They had to use the appropriate defense to block it. Those that didn't got sprayed with a jet of water, hit with silly string, or found their shoes swapped.

The entire lesson made Harry realize once again how lacking his Defense classes had been. He hated to admit it, but Professor Riddle was really good. Not only was he personable, but he had the knowledge

and skill to keep the class engaging. Harry had always liked the practical side of things rather than theory, but somehow, Professor Riddle made it all interesting.

He had practically forgotten about the upcoming duel.

"The Dueling Club will be meeting in one hour." Professor Riddle announced at the end of class. "The practice schedule for House Teams will be posted at the end of the meeting. There is also a special announcement that Professor Flitwick and I are very excited to share."

"Excuse me, Professor." Delphi said before anyone could leave.

"Yes, Miss Riddle?" The Professor asked with an amused quirk of the lips.

"Rose Potter has challenged me to a duel." Delphi smirked over at the two Potters. "Would you be available to be the judge?"

Professor Riddle looked from his daughter to Rose, who nodded.

"Very well." Professor Riddle agreed. "There go my plans for an afternoon nap."

A few students chuckled.

Delphi's robes twirled as she headed out of the classroom. The majority of the class followed along as well. Lavender came up beside Rose. She whispered something that Harry couldn't quite hear. He started to run through plans. There had to be something he could do. He probably could have come up with a plan last night but Lavender flashing him had kind of halted higher brain function.

Harry carefully shuffled beside Rose once Lavender moved away.

"Hey." He whispered.

"Hey." She replied.

"How are you feeling?" Harry asked.

"What was I thinking?" Rose pulled him to the side. "Riddle is a demon. I can't beat her. All I'm going to do is make a fool out of myself and trap you in a relationship with the wicked witch of Ravenclaw."

Harry scanned the area to make sure no one could see them. He pulled her into a quick hug.

"I have an idea." Harry said.

"Is it a good one?" Rose asked.

"All of my ideas are good ones." Harry scoffed.

"Says the guy who got bit by a basilisk." Rose countered.

Harry smiled. Rose chuckled.

"What did Lavender say?" Harry asked.

"She would be my second." Rose answered shaking her head. "I love her for that, but all it would just make me look like a scared little girl and give Riddle a free pass to hurt Lav." She looked him in the eyes. "I did not think this through."

"Welcome to the club, we've got jackets." Harry gave her a cheesy smile.

"Let's get this over with." Rose sighed.

They made it to the Dueling Room to find Delphi already waiting on the platform. Quite a large crowd had gathered to watch. The stands were about half full, which felt like a lot for something as simple as this. Professor Riddle stood in the center of the platform, he looked annoyed.

Delphi waved coyly as Harry entered.

"Rose Potter." Professor Riddle spoke loud and clear. "Do you wish to abdicate to your Second?"

Rose shook her head. A set of stairs emerged from the floor. She stepped up onto the platform. The steps sunk back into the floor once she was in position.

"The terms of the duel are as follows." Professor Riddle. "This is a Class Two rank duel. Victory will come by disarming, disabling, or surrendering. Any questions?"

"I object." Harry shouted.

Professor Riddle looked at Harry with a scrunched, confused look on his face. "Pardon?"

The eyes of everyone in the room focused on him. Even Delphi looked caught off guard.

"I object." Harry repeated.

"Mister Potter." Professor Riddle said with an amused smile. "You are a third party, you can't object."

"This duel is to decide who is allowed to date me." Harry said clearly. "I object on the grounds that I can defend my own honor."

The humor vanished from his face. He sent an annoyed look over to his daughter. Delphi smiled without a care in the world. Switching his attention to Rose resulted in the girl blushing.

"Your grounds for object hold merit." Professor Riddle said with a sigh. "What are your terms?"

"They duel me to prove they are worthy." Harry said quickly.

"Mister Potter." The professor said. "We've seen that you are a superior duelist, those terms are not balanced."

"Both of them." Harry motioned to the girls. "At the same time. Two against one. Does that work?"

Both girls and Professor Riddle stared at him in silence. The entire room had gone quiet. Steadily, the platform began to morph. The section where Rose stood swung around to rest beside Delphi as another portion emerged to replace it. Now the platform looked more like a tennis court than a dueling lane.

"Your terms are accepted." Professor Riddle inclined his head.

Harry hurried to a marked position. The tennis court visual wasn't all that far off. There was a bright red line that cut the width of the platform instead of a net. Professor Riddle climbed up onto a raised perch. The annoyed look on his face had been replaced by amusement.

Rose and Delphi glared at each other. Instead of facing each other, they now had to work together. Neither of the witches was happy about it. Delphi because she wanted to teach Potter a lesson for getting between her and Harry. Rose was upset with the entire situation.

In truth, Harry would not have minded going on a date with Delphi before she jumped him that was. He didn't want to admit it, but she was attractive. Rose was good looking as well. He couldn't deny that he had checked her out a couple of times. Technically, she was his twin sister. Kind of. Maybe.

"Begin on the count of three." Professor Riddle conjured as comfortable chair.

A giant red square appeared in the air between the witches and Harry. It shifted to form the number three.

"Three."

"Scared, Potter?" Delphi whispered to Rose.

"You wish." Rose grumbled back.

"Two."

"One."

"Begin."

Of the three, only Rose had to call out her spells. She had no illusions that she could win, but she wasn't just going to lay down. Rose called out a stunner, followed by a disarming spell, and muscle relaxer -a variation of the jelly leg jinx that effected the entire body to a lesser degree.

Delphi didn't move. She watched.

Harry stepped out of the way of the stunner, swatted away the disarming spell, and caught the muscle relaxer with his free hand. He looked down at the swirling ball of magic. The wispy spell flowed through his fingers. He held it up for closer inspection. It flickered and faded away.

"What was that?" Harry asked directing the question to Rose.

Rose stared at him. She was frozen in the pose of the last spell. Her mind was trying to comprehend what had just happened.

"Hm?" She shook herself awake. "Oh. Muscle Relaxer. Mom came up with it. Works like a jelly leg, but it radiates through the entire body."

Harry nodded. "That's pretty cool."

He was suddenly aware that the entire room had gone silent.

"You'll have to show me that later." Harry said.

Rose nodded. "Sure."

Harry twisted his wrist with a sharp motion. Her wand zoomed over to him. He felt the familiar rush as he held it. The warmth radiated up his arms, meeting in the center of his chest as the two wands resonated.

"Rose Potter. You are eliminated." Professor Riddle broke the silence. "Please step down."

Rose hurried off the platform, leaving Delphi and Harry to face off.

Delphi was breathing hard. That hunger was blazing in her eyes as she stared at him in awe. She shivered when their gazes locked.

"Do you yield?" Harry asked.

"Never." She purred.

Harry shifted his stance, angling himself to present a smaller target. He lifted his main casting hand over his head with the alternate held low. It just felt right.

"Ladies first." Harry inclined his head.

Delphi rushed forward, her wand moving in a blur. The last time they had dueled her style was an elegant dance. Now, it was brute force packed with pure power. She sacrificed accuracy for speed. Her spells exploded in a near constant rumble that sent chunks of the dueling platform flying. She shifted her approach, cutting to the side as she neared the mid-line. Her casting slowed, forcing more power into each one causing the air to snap as the spells sped to her target. After her first barrage was completed, she backed off. Once more shifting to her elegant swirling style.

The entirety of the other side of the platform was shrouded in dust and debris. A swish of her wand cleared the air. In the spot where he had stood was a human shaped pillar of stone. It crumbled, revealing Harry, untouched.

He brushed a bit of dust off his shoulder. Delphi froze, mid-dance.

"*Accio Wand.*" He said casually.

Her arm jerked as it was ripped from her grip. Delphi stared as he caught it in the same hand that held the other captured wand.

"The duel goes to Harry Potter." Professor Riddle said after a moment.

"My honor is intact, and my own." Harry walked over to Professor Riddle.

He handed over the captured wands before stepping off the platform.

"Well." Professor Riddle cleared his throat. "There are now ninety minutes before the first meeting of the Dueling Club. Anyone interested in joining should return by then. Professor Flitwick and I need to prepare the space."

Harry made it out to the hallway before Rose and Iris ambushed him. They pulled him into a nearby classroom. He slumped into an open seat.

"How did you do catch my spell?" Rose asked. "That was so awesome."

"For once I agree with Rose." Iris nodded like crazy. "And then you just shrugged off Riddle blowing up everything."

"I am really tired." Harry mumbled. "Give me a minute."

The girls calmed down enough to see that his eyes were drooping. They rushed over to him. Rose slipped behind him, propping him up so he didn't fall out of the chair. Iris pressed the back of her hand against his forehead and fussed over his face, fanning him.

"Magical exhaustion." Rose stated. "You'll be fine with some rest."

"Something to drink would be a good idea too." Iris added. "Can we get some apple cider please?"

A small pop and a glass of cider appeared on the desk.

"Thank you." Iris said.

She took the glass and helped him take a sip. Her fingers stole a gentle stroke of his lips. Rose glared at her little sister.

"What?" Iris asked, feigning innocence. "I didn't want it to drip on his shirt."

"Thanks." Harry straightened himself up. "I'm doing better now."

Rose shared a startled look at her sister.

"Are you sure?" Iris asked. "Don't push yourself."

Harry took the glass of cider from her as politely as he could. The cinnamon mingled with the tart apple perfectly.

"Really." His voice sounded stronger already. "I'm ok."

"How did you do that out there?" Rose asked once he was upright under his own power. "You caught my spell with your hand."

"I don't know." Harry shrugged. "I could feel your magic. When I touched your wand, it was like holding my own. Maybe that had something to do with it." He took another sip. "This is the part where Hermione would run to the library for a research expedition." He mused.

The brief smile faded just as quickly.

"And shrugging off her attack?" Iris asked as she felt his forehead once more.

"We studied shields in defense." Harry shrugged. "I kept layering them. Having two wands made it really easy to pack the shields tight. I replaced them as they fell. She would have won if the duel went on any longer. I put a lot of power into summoning her wand. Otherwise, she would have just kept going."

Harry stood up and shook out his muscles. He flexed his fingers, trying to work out the lingering tension.

"Did you get what you want from the professor?" Harry asked.

Rose nodded. "I swear he was drooling."

"Ick." Iris blanched. "Flitwick and Riddle are going to come after you hard."

"Ravenclaw has been dominating the House Tournaments." Rose grumbled.

"Delphi is a demon." Iris grumbled. "Not even the seventh years hold up to her."

"The Wicked Witch of Ravenclaw." Rose chuckled. "She's on the international circuit. You probably just caught the attention of every gym in Britain."

Harry bobbed his head. "Should I do it?"

"You're asking us?" Iris looked at him with a surprised expression.

"You know more about it than I do." Harry shrugged. "We're family. I trust you."

He paused. The words rang true. They were his family. He had to be honest with himself. If he had the chance, he wouldn't go back. He wanted this to be home. A world without Voldemort. A home where Lily and James Potter were alive. The family he always wanted.

This was home.

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### ***The Other Side of the Mirror***

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Hermione was worried when Harry didn't come down for breakfast a couple of days ago. She understood, but she was still worried. Ron didn't help matters. He was as bad as Malfoy. No, he was worse. Ron was supposed to be Harry's best friend. Did he see the danger Harry was in? Of course not. Then he had the audacity to get mad at her for worrying about Harry.

When he didn't show up for class, she tried to tell herself that Harry just needed some space. Hermione gathered his homework and moved on to her next class. Surely, he'd be at lunch.

He wasn't.

Hermione could see she wasn't the only one that noticed his absence. Headmaster Dumbledore was paying more attention to the Gryffindor table. The portraits had started to follow her. Ron as well, to a lesser extent.

She was starting to panic when she found the map in his trunk. He wouldn't go anywhere without it. At least his cloak was gone, that had to be a good sign. Still, she searched for him on the map. Harry was nowhere to be found.

Hermione took the map to Dumbledore that night. She hoped Harry would understand. They needed to find him. He would lose his magic if he didn't compete. She couldn't let that happen.

Dumbledore was impressed by the map. They didn't find Harry. It did lead to the discovery of a supposedly dead Death Eater masquerading as Professor Moody.

That about drove her mad. They had pumped him full of truth serum. He admitted responsibility in entering Harry in the tournament. It also led to Voldemort's plans being exposed. He didn't know where Harry was. The Death Eaters needed him to complete a ritual. Killing him wasn't in their plans.

Rita Skeeter leaked the story that Harry was missing. For once, Hermione was glad for the reporter. The entire country started to search for The Boy Who Lived. Sirius couldn't be stopped trying to find Harry. Capturing Peter Pettigrew straightened that mess out. The homunculus holding Voldemort was tossed in Azkaban sealed in a box with stronger wards than Hogwarts and guarded around the clock by a team of hit wizards. Dumbledore had let them know they had to destroy some sort of soul anchors before dealing with him, otherwise he'd come back as a shade.

Six days had changed the entire world.

Harry would have been so happy if he were here. Dumbledore was able to modify some sort of blood wards around Privet Drive for the search. Supposedly, it would find his exact location, living or dead.

It didn't. It pointed them to Hogwarts. They searched again. Not even Dobby could find him. The poor house elf was distraught. Oddly enough, the strange elf and Sirius formed a kinship.

Then they tried the Goblet of Fire. His magic was tied to it via a binding contract powered by Old Magic. Somehow, it wasn't connected to him anymore. It was like Harry no longer existed.

Every single student, professor, and house elf felt his absence.

Except one.

It took a while for Hermione to notice, but once she did, she couldn't stop. A wispy third year Ravenclaw girl with silver eyes. Luna Lovegood. She skipped through the hallways, seemingly unaffected by all of this. Hermione started to hate that girl.

Hermione followed her. There were times when Luna appeared to be talking to someone that wasn't there. That made her feel a bit better. She wasn't upset because she was mad. Even the magical world had mental illness it appeared. She forgot about the little Ravenclaw.

Which made finding her sitting at the edge of her bed all the more shocking.

"Hello." Luna said with an easy smile.

"What are you doing here?" Hermione pulled the blankets up to cover herself. She was dressed in thick flannel pajamas, but still.

"I'm talking to you." Luna replied. "And sitting on your bed."

"I can see that." Hermione glared at the girl. "Why are you here?"

"To talk to you." Luna replied.

Those silver eyes seemed to stare through her. They would shift every so often, tracking something that wasn't there.

"You're looking for Harry Potter." She stated.

"Everyone is looking for Harry." Hermione huffed.

She got out of bed and gathered up her shower things. Hermione stormed by the strange girl. It wasn't until she was starting to undress that she realized Luna had followed her.

"What are you doing?" Hermione yelled. "This is the shower."

"Oh, right." Luna dropped her robes on the floor, exposing her nude form underneath.

Hermione squeaked, she quickly turned around to avoid looking at the girl. She heard the water turn on. Hermione kept her back to the girl as she undressed. She made sure the water was hot enough for steam to block things.

"Why are you following me?" Hermione said through gritted teeth.

"You don't want to find Harry Potter." Luna repeated. "You're angry at him."

"I am not!" Hermione yelled. "He's my friend and I'm worried about him."

Luna cocked her head to the side. She studied Hermione.

"You want to find him, but she doesn't." Luna pointing to Hermione.

"That doesn't make sense!" Hermione was getting tired of this.

"Hm." Luna scrunched up her face in thought. "No troll. There should be a troll. Ginny didn't need to be rescued." She looked down at her hands, wiggling her fingers. "I'm not pruning." She held her hands up to Hermione. "See."

Her fingers, in fact, were wrinkled. Luna blinked. She scanned the area, her gaze settling on Hermione as though seeing her for the first time.

"The troll was missing. So are the prunes." Luna sighed. "No wonder he doesn't want to come back."

"What?" Hermione stopped. "Why wouldn't he want to come back?" She took a deep breath. "You don't know where he is. Why am I talking to you?"

"You asked me that already." Luna sighed again. "*You asked Luna that.*"

"What does that even mean?" Hermione snapped. "No. I'm not doing this."

She stomped out of the shower, then stomped back to grab her towel. Luna followed, still wet but wearing her robe once again.

"Leave me alone. Talking to crazy people isn't going to find Harry." Hermione screamed at the girl.

"That wouldn't help." Luna agreed as she sat on the edge of her bed.

Hermione ignored her as she got dressed. When she turned around the room. She appeared to be counting the beds.

"What are you doing now?" Hermione groaned.

"Looking for Rose." Luna replied.

"There's no one in this room named Rose." Hermione wanted to leave, but she didn't trust this girl alone.

"That's the problem." Luna turned those silver eyes on Hermione. "Harry is with Rose. Rose isn't here. Harry isn't here. You're here, but no trolls. I'm here and my mum is alive."

"What does that mean?" Hermione stalked over to Luna.

She gripped her shoulders tightly.

"I don't know." Luna said easily. "I'm confused. I don't like being confused."

Hermione gritted her teeth. "Leave."

"Okay." Luna slipped out of her grasp and left.

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Harry watched as the petite blonde girl skipped over to him. She plopped down on the bench across from him. He was currently having a snack before the dueling club.

"The girl with the trolls and prunes is very rude." Luna stated.

Harry blinked, letting that sink in.

"I'd be upset if there were trolls and prunes too." Harry said.

Rose and Iris stared across the table at the blonde girl. The Ravenclaw witch had invited herself over and started a conversation.

"Who are you?" Rose asked slowly.

"Luna Lovegood." She replied just as slowly. "My mother is alive too."

"That's good." Iris shot a glance at her sister, then to Harry.

"Oh, yes." Luna nodded. "She died where there were trolls."

"But you said she's alive." Iris squinted at the new girl.

"Yes." Luna gave her a smile.

"Our mother is alive too." Rose tried to sound casual.

"She was dead where there were trolls too." Luna stated.

The girls bristled at that. Harry stared at her.

"Luna." Harry said slowly. "Who was the girl with the trolls and the prunes?"

"Trolls and prunes?" Luna asked, cocking her head to the side. "Hermione Granger. We took a shower together."

The girl in question was jolted at the sound of her name.

"We most definitely did not." Hermione yelled.

"Clearly." Luna rolled her eyes.

"Hermione." Harry held up a hand to stop the girl nearby from speaking. "The one with the trolls and the prunes. Why did you tell me about her?"

"She's your friend." Luna sighed, she looked at Iris. "Is he paying attention?"

"The troll." Harry muttered. "The troll in the bathroom?"

"Yes." Luna clapped her hands. "Hermione was in the bathroom with a troll, it made her scream a lot. She's the one I showered with."

There weren't many people in the Great Hall as it was between meals. However, those that were, now were quite interested in the conversation.

"I was never in the bathroom with a troll, and we have never EVER taken a shower together!" Hermione screamed. "Stop talking about me."

"We're not." Luna waved a hand at her. "Please stop interrupting, this is important."

"You talked to my friend, Hermione?" Harry felt his pulse starting to thunder in his chest.

"Yes." Luna nodded.

"How?" Harry said before she could say anything more.

"I talk to myself sometimes." Luna replied.

Rose and Iris groaned. Harry was the only one who didn't seem to be annoyed.

"You talk to yourself." Harry mumbled. "You talk to the Luna where there was the troll in the bathroom."

"Exactly." Luna smiled. "At least someone is paying attention."

"Harry." Rose whispered. "What is she talking about?"

"In my first year, someone let a troll loose in the castle. It found its way to the girls' bathroom, where Hermione was. That was how we became friends." He explained. "The Hermione with the trolls. That one is *my* Hermione."

Luna nodded. At some point she had acquired a chocolate bar.

"Can you talk to her?" Harry asked.

"I tried, but she is very rude." Luna replied.

"Is she safe?" Harry asked.

"Oh yes, very safe." Luna said. "They went looking for you, but caught a potato man, a rat, and man with a fake false eye. Stubby Bagman isn't in trouble anymore."

"A fake false eye?" Harry arched an eyebrow at her.

"Strange, isn't it." Luna shrugged.

"What is she talking about?" Iris asked.

"Give me a moment." Harry replied. "The rat. Do you mean Pettigrew?"

Luna nodded.

"Pettigrew was with Voldemort." He muttered, lower than a whisper. "My dream at the start of the year, Voldemort was stuck in a misshapen body. They caught him."

Harry rocked back as the realization hit home. Rose caught him before he fell out of it. He smiled a thanks at her. His throat felt dry.

"Luna." He choked out. "Who is Stubby Bagman?"

"Sirius Black, of course." Luna scoffed. "You should know, he's your godfather."

"Sirius is free?" Harry stared off. "They caught Voldemort and Sirius is free."

He started to laugh. Softly at first, then grew into a loud, echoing sound. Luna smiled and ate her chocolate bar happily. Rose and Iris, on the other hand, were clearly worried. Finally, Harry took a deep gasp of air to settle himself down. It felt as though a long aching muscle finally relaxed.

"Did he go mad?" Hermione asked as she slowly backed away.

"He's just as sane as I am." Luna answered.

"Luna." Harry calmed himself down. "Thank you. Can you talk to yourself to give Hermione a message?"

"Sure." Luna smiled.

"This is important, I need it to be clear, and have you pass it along." Harry tried to sound as serious as he could.

"I know. she has a hard time believing things." Luna leaned forward. "I am ready."

"Please tell yourself to tell her." Harry tried to think of something. "I am not dead, or worse expelled. Please take care of Hedwig. Don't worry about me. I'm safe."

"I will tell myself that tonight." Luna stated. "I will tell you what Hermione and I talked about in a couple of days."

"Thank you, Luna." Harry smiled broadly at her. "I really appreciate this."

"You are welcome, Harry." Luna produced another chocolate bar and happily began to eat it.

Everyone around them was still watching. Though they didn't know quite sure what had just happened. Even Rose and Iris were stumped. The confused silence was shattered as Delphi Riddle took a seat next to Luna.

"Am I there too?" Riddle asked Harry.

He shook his head. Even her invasion didn't darken his mood.

"Why not?" Delphi scoffed.

"Your mom is in prison and your father exploded before they could have sex." Luna said it like she was talking about the weather.

Harry tensed, waiting for Delphi to snap. Instead, she bobbed her head from side to side.

"That makes sense." She sighed. "So, lover." Her sharp eyes locked onto Harry. "Are you going to join the Dueling Club?"

"He's not your lover." Iris snapped.

"Calm yourself, little Potter." Delphi glared daggers at her. "Or I will give you a lesson in manners."

"No." Harry said firmly. "You won't threaten, or harm any of my family."

"And if I do?" She pouted. "Are you going to punish me?"

"You will live every day of your life without me." Harry stated.

Delphi froze. The blaze behind her eyes seemed to falter for a moment. It returned in full force.

"Then I would make you see me." Delphi gave a feral smile.

Harry cocked his head to the side.

"Delphi." He said softly, as though she was a friend.

That really messed up her flow.

"Would I be the person you want if that worked?" Harry spoke gently. "In the hallway, if I tossed you down on the floor and took you like an animal. Would I be the wizard you want?"

Iris blushed. Delphi shuddered. Rose was suddenly very interested in the wood pattern on the table. Luna ate her chocolate bar.

"Would that be the one you have been looking for?" Harry let the words hang in the air.

Delphi stared at him for a moment. She studied him, taking his words to heart.

"The duel." Harry prompted. "Both of them. What do they tell you about me?"

"You are powerful." Delphi swooned.

"And?" He asked.

Her brow scrunched up in thought. After a moment, the tension in her muscles eased. No longer was she coiled to strike.

"You will be mine, Harry. I will find a way." Delphi stood up, glaring at him.

She stormed away with murder in her eyes as she went.

"What was that about?" Iris whispered. "What did you mean the duels? You beat her and Rose. They say that you beat her twice a couple of days ago too. How would that change anything?"

"Honestly." Hermione huffed. "In both encounters Harry showed an overwhelming amount of power and skill. If he had wanted to, he could have humiliated her earlier today. That type of person would have 'taken her like an animal' in the hallway. Clearly, that's not Harry."

"Thank you." Harry said, inclining his head.

"Why are you still here?" Rose asked.

"I was trying to have a nice bowl of fruit until someone started telling people I was having an orgy with trolls in the shower!" Hermione yelled.

She paused. Realizing what she had just declared. Loudly. In the Great Hall. With other students around. People started to chuckle and whisper. A couple of Hufflepuff boys catcalled. Her face turned an impressive shade of red. She turned to face the other students in the room. Her glare made even a few seventh years flinch.

"Shut. It." She commanded.

When Delphi left, she was angry, but focused. Hermione, on the other hand, looked like she would literally murder the next person who laughed at her. Even the paintings moved out of the way as she stormed out of the room.

"I do not envy her dueling partner today." Rose whispered.

"She's a duelist?" Harry asked.

"Yeah." Iris answered. "She's pretty good, but you can tell she's only doing it to put on a reference letter. She's stiff, with no passion, or creativity. All of her spells are by the book."

"Her spell chains are directly from the dueling manual too." Lavender spoke up.

Harry jumped at the sound of her voice.

"When did you get here?" Harry asked.

"Around Luna's third chocolate bar." Lavender answered. "Are you going to the Dueling Club?"

"Yeah." Harry nodded. "I thought I'd try it out. Are you?"

"I might." She shrugged. "It depends on my trainer."

"What do you mean?" Harry asked as he turned to face her.

"I'm a Rank B duelist." Lavender replied.

"I don't know what that means." Harry shrugged.

"Right." Lavender sighed. "Duelists are put in separate leagues by Rank. The top three are B, A, and S. The lower three being C, D, F. To go up a rank you have to have at least ten wins with a three-to-one ratio. Then you have to issue a challenge to move up. Rank B is the lowest for a Professional Duelist. F through C Rank are for amateur leagues, or people just starting out."

"You're a professional duelist?" Harry asked, looking at Lavender in a new light.

"I can't be hot and a duelist?" Lavender teased. "This summer will be my first international tour."

"Isn't Delphi a duelist as well?" Harry asked. "She's part of the club."

"Delphi's trainer is her mother." Lavender hissed. "She loves having her daughter show off. From what I heard, Professor Riddle was the only one to beat her in a duel and that's why they got married. He's like twenty years older than her."

"That makes sense." Harry took off his glasses and pinched his nose. "Beating her three times makes me Prince Charming."

Lavender laughed.

"How do you know Luna?" Harry asked.

The blonde perked up at the mention of her name. Her chocolate bar had been replaced with stretch of pink taffy.

"She is a Rank A." Lavender smiled at the girl.

"Are you in the club?" Harry asked.

Luna nodded as she worked through a bite of taffy.

"Where are you getting all that candy?" Iris was in awe.

"I've got pockets." Luna lifted the side of her robe to show a row of hand-stitched pockets. "Every witch should have a robe with pockets."

Harry smiled at that. Further conversation stopped as Professor Flitwick entered the room.

"This way for any students interested in the Dueling Club." Flitwick called.

The group all began to follow the small professor. Luna had slipped in as part of their group. Harry shot a look at Lavender, who shrugged. Then he turned his attention to Iris.

"They told me you can't play Quidditch and Duel at the same time." Harry whispered to her.

"I'm here for moral support." Iris winked at him.

"Thanks." Harry blushed.

Flitwick led them back to the Dueling Room. The seats had been lowered back to their original position and the platform had been reset. Professor Riddle was in a hushed conversation with Delphi. Hermione stood off to the side, still seething.

"Professor Riddle." Flitwick called as he approached.

"Ah." Riddle nodded to the other professor.

A set of stairs emerged from the floor and the two professors stepped up.

"Witches and Wizards." Flitwick called. "Welcome to the Dueling Club."

"It's good to see so many familiar faces." Professor Riddle charmed.

"And new ones as well." Flitwick added.

The two were working smoothly together.

"We have been teasing a special announcement." Professor Riddle continued. "Professor, if you would."

"Hogwarts will be hosting the inaugural International Academic Tournament." Professor Flitwick explained excitedly. "Inspired by the TriWizard Tournament of old, schools from across the world will gather every four years to compete in Dueling, Quidditch, and Racing."

"To that, there are some changes to how the Dueling Club will work this year." Professor Riddle took over. "These are exhibition matches, as such, they are not ranked. The top twenty duelists from each school will compete in a single elimination bracket. This Saturday and Sunday we will begin the selection process with a tournament of our own."

"The competition events will be held on Saturday and Sunday, barring Hogsmeade weekends, for the remainder of the year." Professor Flitwick added. "Saturday will be for Quidditch, Sunday for Dueling as well as Racing this spring. With that in mind, the Dueling Club meeting time will remain the same. Wednesday evening. However, those twenty chosen to represent the school will have a separate practice scheduled Saturday and Sunday evening."

"This evening we will focus on assigning a Rank to any new members." Riddle nodded toward him. "And addressing gathering names for the tournament this weekend. Anyone already ranked, and not interested in the tournament may leave. We will have a normal club meeting next week. Any questions?"

"How many schools are competing this time?" Hermione asked.

"As it's the first year, three." Flitwick answered. "Durmstrang, Beauxbatons, and ourselves."

"What about Duos?" Someone Harry didn't recognize asked.

"Not this time." Riddle shook his head. "The Planning Committee wanted to make sure there is enough time for the three events before adding more."

"How is Quidditch going to work?" Iris spoke up.

"Cubs, Mid, and Top will all have a team gathered from the best of each house." Flitwick found Iris and smiled. "Best of three games, wins the league."

Iris nodded; her expression turned hard.

"Excuse me, Harry." She whispered. "I need to go talk to my team."

"No goodbye of me?" Rose asked in mock hurt.

Iris rolled her eyes before running out of the room.

"Someone's got a crush." Lavender whispered in a sing-song tone.

Rose giggled.

"Rose too." Luna said, matching the tone.

That silenced Rose. Luna didn't mind the awkward silence. She slipped through the crowd to sign up for the tournament this weekend.

"I..." Lavender scanned the room for something. "Have to talk to my trainer!"

She hurried away, leaving Rose and Harry alone.

"Rose." Harry said.

Rose held up a hand to stop him. Her face was bright red. She raised it when he tried to speak again. Harry shrugged. She watched him closely as she lowered her hand.

"I think you're awesome too." Harry said quickly.

He moved through the crowd, escaping the conversation. Professor Riddle waved him over.

"Mister Potter." Professor Riddle gave him a polite grin. "I'm glad you decided to come. Are you interested in the tournament as well?"

"Yeah." Harry nodded. "I think I will."

"Excellent." Professor Riddle smiled. "Step this way, Professor Flitwick will assess your Rank."

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### ***The Other Side of the Mirror***

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"Hello, Hermione." Luna sat down across from Hermione at the Gryffindor table.

"How do you know Luna?" Ron asked.

"We took a shower together." Luna replied.

Ron stared at Luna. He slowly turned to look at Hermione, then back at the petite blonde.

"I need to go." Ron hopped up from his spot and rushed away.

"What do you want Luna?" Hermione glared at the girl.

"I was talking to myself, and I wanted to tell you something." Luna replied.

"Fine." Hermione bit out. "If it will get you to leave. What is it?"

Luna raised her arm, there was a message written along her forearm in large letters,

"Harry isn't dead, or worse, expelled. Please take care of Hedwig. He is safe." Luna read. "Don't mention that a troll made Hermione scream in the bathroom. That makes her upset." She looked up at the glaring Gryffindor. "The last part is very confusing."

"Who told you that?" Hermione lunged across the table. She gripped Luna's outstretched arm. "Do you know where Harry is?"

"I did." Luna replied, once again sliding easily out of her grip. "Harry is where there weren't any trolls, and my mother is alive."

"Your mother is alive?" Hermione asked. "What does that have to do with anything."

"No." Luna shook her head. "My mother is dead. She's alive where there wasn't a troll."

Hermione stared blankly at the girl. She took a deep calming breath.

"Harry gave you that message?" Hermione asked.

"Harry told me to tell me to tell you." Luna explained. "I told myself that he was worried about you, but then I told him that you were safe and Stubby Bagman was free."

"WHO THE HELL IS STUBBY BAGMAN!" Hermione screamed.

"Harry's godfather." Luna didn't react to the yelling.

"Harry's godfather is Sirius Black." Hermione growled.

"Yes." Luna nodded.

"Miss Granger." Professor McGonagall tried to keep her tone soothing as she approached. "Please, come with me. A calming draught will do you some good."

"I don't need a calming draught!" Hermione yelled. She winced when she realized who she had just raised her voice to. "Sorry, professor. I would be fine if she would just leave me alone."

Professor McGonagall turned a stern eye to Luna.

"Miss Lovegood." McGonagall said. "Please explain yourself."

"It started six days ago when Harry walked in late to the Opening Feast." Luna said.

"The opening feast was more than six days ago." Professor McGonagall scowled.

"Not where Harry is." Luna continued. "Mister Filch took him to see you. Headmaster Dumbledore took him somewhere. He came back on Sunday with his parents."

"His parents are dead." Hermione snapped.

"Yes." Luna nodded. "Rose took him to his room and they slept together."

"Who is Rose?" Professor McGonagall asked.

"Rose is Lily and James Potters oldest daughter." Luna answered. "Then he dueled Voldemort's daughter and she fell in love with him. I talked to Harry after Hermione, and I took a shower together. He wanted me to ask me to deliver a message to her."

"And what was the message?" McGonagall asked.

Luna held up her arm. The writing was smudged now. McGonagall arced an eyebrow.

"Har snit as orwo spel." Luna read. "Plea seta Khewgid. Hari ssaf. Don't mention that a troll made Hermione scream in the bathroom. That makes her upset."

"Of course, you can read that part." Hermione grumbled. "The message was: Harry isn't dead, or worse, expelled. Please take care of Hedwig. Harry is safe. Then the thing about the troll."

"That is an interesting message." McGonagall said.

"I told myself the troll part, not Harry." Luna clarified.

"Thank you, Miss Lovegood." McGonagall tried not to sound as confused as she truly was. "Miss Granger, does that make any sense to you?"

"When we were in first year, when Harry and I accidentally found Fluffy. I told him that we could have died, or worse, expelled." Hermione explained. "He likes to remind me about that."

"So, there is a chance that the message is from Harry." Professor McGonagall stated.

"How can you say that?" Hermione stomped her foot. "This girl sneaks into my shower, ranting about trolls and prunes. Then she comes down here, ruining my dinner saying that she was talking to herself. Now, she's saying something about Harry's parents being alive. That makes no sense."

"Miss Granger." Professor McGonagall was not impressed. "We live in a world full of magic. I can turn into a cat at will. How is Miss Lovegood having a message from Harry that hard to believe?"

"It doesn't make sense." Hermione yelled. "His parents are dead, but they're alive there. There wasn't a troll there, but there was one here..."

Hermione's gaze snapped back to Luna. For her part, the blonde now had a large banana split half-eaten in front of her.

"There wasn't a troll in the bathroom." Hermione whispered. "Luna."

"Yes." She said.

"Tell me. Do you mean in my first year, there wasn't a troll in the bathroom." Hermione asked.

"That's what I said." Luna nodded.

"And the Potters are alive, where there wasn't a troll." Hermione continued.

Luna nodded again; a big scoop of ice cream prevented her from speaking.

"He's in another world." Hermione dropped back onto the bench.

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Harry stared up at the ceiling. He couldn't sleep. The bed was comfortable, the blankets were warm, and he wanted to sleep. He just couldn't.

There wasn't a Tri-Wizard Tournament here, but they were now having Beauxbatons and Durmstrang come for a competition. This world had just enough similarities to throw him off. Idly, he wondered if Fleur Delacour and Victor Krum would be among them. The only interaction he had with them was after the announcement, but he was still curious. Would they allow Krum to play with him being a professional? The only thing he knew about Fleur was that she was French and Veela. He didn't speak French and knew next to nothing about Veela.

Flitwick had set him as a Rank A duelist. Being a former International Champion, and current Judge, it was made official. Technically, Harry could start dueling professionally this summer. He decided to see how things went in this tournament before he jumped in.

Quidditch still tugged on the back of his heart when he saw his teammates together. It was odd seeing them split among the three leagues. Katie wasn't part of the Flying Foxes, Ginny was the seeker for the Cubs, and Ron was the Keeper for Mid. The players had been bouncing with energy with the announcement of the tournament. Tryouts started this weekend starting with the Cubs.

The Dueling Tournament would be held in the morning and the Quidditch Tryouts would be in the afternoon. That was students could watch both.

Playing Quidditch was fun. He loved the freedom of flying more than the game. Plus seeing the faces of his teammates look at him like a stranger hurt. It was one of the reasons he had avoided Care of Magical Creatures. He still loved flying and Rose had mentioned that there was a racing league, that sounded interesting.

Mingled in the emotional quandary of dread and anxiety, he found himself enjoying Professor Riddle. He was engaging, knowledgeable, and definitely the best Defense teacher to date. Seeing him watch his students with such devotion served to hammer home that he wasn't Voldemort. Even when he was stern, it was with a guiding hand.

It felt like he was betraying his old world. He had new friends, a new family, and so far, no one was trying to kill him. This place felt like home. Given the chance, he didn't want to go back. Honestly, it sounded like the other world was better off without him. Sirius was free and Voldemort had been captured.

The attention he was getting from girls was a nice perk as well.

Harry drifted off to sleep with dreams of witches swirling around his head.

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Harry kept an eye out for Luna in the morning. She waved at him from the Ravenclaw table but didn't come over. He was about to wave her over with Delphi was sat beside her.

He couldn't hear the conversation, but it did not look all that smooth. Luna seemed immune to Delphi's intensity. An offer of forkful of syrup drenched waffles put the older witch on the back foot. Harry could

almost hear Delphi's train of thought crash. She carefully accepted the bite. That seemed to break through. Their conversation continued much smoother than before. By the end of breakfast Luna had Delphi smiling. They walked out of the Great Hall side-by-side with a quick glance at Harry as they passed.

"That..." Rose watched them go. "I don't... You saw that, right?"

Harry nodded. He smiled at her.

"I don't think I've ever seen Riddle smile like that." Lavender whispered.

"Like what?" Harry asked.

"A real smile." Lavender kept her voice low, as though the witch in question would suddenly appear.

"Her normal smiles are just... unsettling."

"Like an animal baring its teeth." Hermione chimed in.

"Exactly. Thank you." Lavender nodded. She paused and turned toward Hermione. "Did you just willingly speak to me?"

Hermione rolled her eyes and returned to her breakfast. Lavender looked at the group around her. They seemed just as shocked as her.

Ciri motioned to where Hermione was sitting, then to where she usually sat. Neville shrugged, waving to the food in front of them. Lavender shook her head, tilting it toward Harry. The group gawked at her. She repeated the movement.

"Just stop it." Hermione snapped. "You're embarrassing yourselves."

"Why are you here?" Rose asked as politely as she could.

"I am eating breakfast." Hermione replied tightly. "It is breakfast time. This is my house table."

"Yeah." Neville drew the word out. "But why here? Your seat is by the door."

"I felt like a change." Hermione settled a glare on the boy.

"Come off it!" Ron yelled from down the table. "She's been drooling over the new boy since he got here."

"Mister Weasley." Hermione scowled at him. "I have done no such thing."

She gathered up her supplies and left the Great Hall, leaving a trail of muttering in her wake.

"I think that's the first time they've talked this year." Neville said after a moment.

"Let's get to class." Ciri said to Harry. "I'll walk you to your independent study after this time."

"No need." Harry waved her off. "She knows better."

Ciri shrugged. They walked to Runes in silence. Harry wanted to ask more about her but didn't think they were that close yet. The problem being, he didn't know how to get closer. She had said she liked fencing, which he knew nothing about.

By the time Harry had started to formulate a conversation opener, they were already at the classroom. Any thought of talking to her disappeared once the lesson began. The study of runic arrays was fascinating. Each system of runes required a specific approach which became insanely more complex when trying to integrate with another set. Today, the class focused on the Elder Futhark, discussing the differences between using Bind-Runes, a Runic Cluster, and a Thread. They worked through a simple array to create a small fountain that constantly replenished its water. It was one of the more common ones used in houses, tents, and cases. The students were tasked with using each variation, then noting the differences.

The class flew by. Harry was one of the few students to manage to only soak themselves rather than turn their desk into an impromptu geyser. Luckily, the drying charm was part of the first-year selection of Standard Spells.

Harry made it to the study room without an issue. He had no idea what class Delphi had, or where it was, so it was pointless to worry about it. He had a feeling that avoiding her would entice her to track him down.

"Hello, Harry." Susan smiled as he entered the room. "Any problems today?"

"Nope." Harry returned the smile.

"I am glad to hear that."

She pulled out a small chalkboard from her purse and set it on the table. Susan tapped the upper-right corner with her finger and the black surface shimmered. The board lifted off of the table and hovered nearby within reach.

"I thought you couldn't do magic?" Harry asked as he sat.

"This is an enchanted object." Susan explained. "Anyone, aside from muggles, can use it."

"What does it do?" Harry took a closer look at it.

"Dictation, illustration, and minor transcription." Susan replied. "It will copy down what I'm saying, provide simple illustrations when needed, and can also produce a transcript of the lesson."

Harry let out a low whistle.

"Now." Susan shifted to her instructor voice. "Today, we'll be covering the formation of the British Magical Kingdom. Starting with Merlin, Morgan le Fay, and Avalon."

Harry was enraptured as Susan went through the lesson. Thanks to Binns, he had no clue if the history of this world was the same as his old one. Regardless, it was fascinating. He had always wondered if Merlin was actually a real person considering the story of King Arthur in the muggle world.

As it turned out, he was. Merlin and Morgan le Fay were the founding members of what would become the modern system of magic in Britain. They were allies, using their combined knowledge to create the magical island of Avalon at a nexus of Ley Lines. It was protected by a wall of mist that mundane folk could not navigate. With a safe place to practice and learn, they began to take students and spread their combined knowledge to other magical people.

There was a conflict between Morgan Le Fey and Merlin. It had been vastly blown out of proportion over the years. Merlin wanted to use magic to guide the mundane world into a better age. Morgan Le Fey was focused on keeping Avalon and the people there safe.

It caused a rift between the two and they parted ways. Merlin turned his attention to the mundane while Morgan Le Fey focused on the magical. Eventually, the two repaired their connection. The Hogwarts Founders were among the first students of that reformed partnership.

Harry walked out of the study room with a head full of new knowledge and a freshly transcribed parchment covering the highlights of the lesson. He was in a daze until he found himself at the Gryffindor table.

"Harry." Rose poked him.

He jumped at the touch, looking around, finally seeing where he was.

"Are you ok?" She asked studying him.

"History." Harry let out a breath. "That was a lot."

"There is a lot of world for history." Luna nodded.

Luna and Delphi were sitting across from him. Rose and Iris had taken the spots at his side. The petite Ravenclaw witch was happily nibbling on what looked to be candied slices of fruit. Delphi was alternating staring at him hungrily and glaring at his 'sisters' between bites.

"Did you talk to yourself?" Harry asked as he began to grab some lunch choices.

"Yes." Luna nodded. "Hermione knows you are here. She's upset that she doesn't know where here is, or how to get here. I asked myself to ask you about how you got here and when you were coming back."

Harry could feel the girls around him tense. Aside from Luna, she turned her attention back to the candied fruit salad.

"I'm not going back." Harry said after a moment.

Rose and Iris visibly relaxed, Delphi simply returned to her meal.

"Ok." Luna said with a bright smile. "How did you get here?"

"I'm not sure." Harry shrugged.

"Sweet little lies." Luna sang as she nibbled a slice of sugar soaked apple.

"Hey!" Iris snapped. "Don't call Harry a liar."

"It's fine." Harry sighed. "I am lying."

"Why?" Iris squeaked.

"Hermione's too smart." Harry focused on the plate in front of him, not looking at those nearby. "She wouldn't rest until she found out how I got here. Then she'd try to come find me and bring me back."

*§I won't let her.§* Delphi hissed as she gripped the steak knife in her hand tightly.

Rose and Iris stared at Delphi in shock. Everyone else around her were obviously unsettled.

*§No Parseltongue at mealtimes.§* Harry teased. *§It makes people uncomfortable.§*

Harry didn't think it was possible, but Delphi now looked at him in even more awe.

"Shit." Harry mumbled. "I shouldn't have told you that."

"She'll find a way here on her own." Hermione spoke up.

Harry looked around to find her. She was a few spots over from Luna, on the edge of his view.

"Why do you say that?" Rose asked.

"I would." Hermione replied quickly.

Harry groaned. He pushed away his plate, no longer hungry.

"Thank you, Luna." Harry smiled tiredly at her. "I really appreciate it. I need some time to think."

"Okay." Luna replied with a dreamy smile. "Does that mean I get to join your harem?"

Harry jumped up to his feet, the words slapping him in the face.

"What?" Harry yelled.

"Mister Potter." Professor McGonagall said. "Five points from Gryffindor, lower your voice."

"Yes, Professor." Harry blushed as he sat back down. "What are you talking about?"

"Your harem." Luna replied happily.

"I don't have a harem." Harry whispered.

"Yes, you do." Luna countered. "Rose, Iris, Lavender, Hermione, Delphi, and then me."

None of them spoke. If Harry had been paying more attention, he would have seen that most of the people around them had gone quiet as well.

"Hm." Luna screwed up her face in thought. "You're right, that isn't a harem."

Harry relaxed a little.

"That's a coven." Luna stated.

"What's the difference?" Harry asked.

"A harem is a group of wives, concubines, and slaves subservient to a single man." Hermione recited. "A coven is a gathering of witches that combine their power for protection and the sharing of ideas."

"There's also a lot of sex." Luna added.

"Lead with that next time, Moonbeam." Delphi grumbled.

"You're ok with this?" Rose scoffed. "You were going to duel me to go on a date with him!"

"You didn't want to share." Delphi shrugged. "Of course, I was going to duel you for him."

"And you do?" Iris snapped.

"Gladly." Delphi purred. "Only the best for my lover."

"Yay!" Luna hugged Riddle. "Our daughters can be sisters!"

Delphi tried to hide the blush from the sudden hug. Harry looked at Rose for help. She was staring at a spot on the table. Her cheeks were bright red. He shifted his attention to Iris, hoping for someone to say something that made sense.

"What is going on?" Harry whispered.

"You don't have covens where you're from?" Iris asked.

"No." Harry thought for a moment. "I don't think so."

"Witches outnumber wizards four to one." Iris motioned to the students around them. "Dad has a coven."

"But he's married to Lily." Harry tried to make sense of things.

"That doesn't mean he can't have a coven." Iris explained. "Mom and dad are married. She is Lady Potter. There are two other witches in the coven, they are connected by line-continuation contracts, or by emotional bonds."

"Does that mean we have more siblings?" Harry asked, he was starting to feel a little dizzy.

"Yes." Iris smiled brightly.

Harry scanned the Great Hall, looking for the familiar black hair.

"They aren't old enough to go to school yet." Iris chuckled. "Mom and dad had to have a male heir before they could have any other kids. That makes sure that passing on the Potter Lordship is simple and doesn't cause any blood feuds."

"I'm..." Harry rested his forehead on the table. "I'm going to need a minute."

~§~§~

### ***The Other Side of the Mirror***

~§~§~

Hermione stared at Luna. The blonde Ravenclaw ate her lunch, chocolate fondue with a selection of fruit, contentedly.

"Anything?" Hermione snapped.

"Nope." Luna shook her head. "I told him that covens have a lot of sex. He's resting now."

Hermione groaned. She was going to find Harry. When she did, she was going to make him pay for all of the headaches Luna caused.

"Wait." Hermione yelled. "Luna, you're talking to Harry right now?"

"Yes." Luna nodded.

"Tell yourself and him to wait." Hermione spoke quickly. "Please let me talk to him."

~§~§~

"Hermione wants us to wait." Luna said. "She wants to talk to you."

This Hermione was starting to look rather annoyed.

"Fine." Harry sighed. "What does she want?"

~§~§~

"What do I want?" Hermione scoffed. "I want to know where he is and how he got there."

"He's right there." Luna pointed at the spot across from her. "And he came in through those doors."

~§~§~

"She is rude." Luna huffed.

Harry chuckled.

"I can't imagine why." This Hermione grumbled.

"What did she want?" Harry asked the Ravenclaw.

"She wants to know where you are and how you got here." Luna rolled her eyes.

~§~§~

"Harry says that he is happy and safe where he is. You don't need to worry about him." Luna paused.

"And when you've calmed down after that, I can tell you the rest."

Hermione stifled her scream. She took a couple of deep breaths before she started to speak.

"Please, continue." She said through clenched teeth.

Luna looked off to her right and nodded.

"He went for a walk on the seventh floor and found a door." Luna repeated. "The Mirror of Erised was there, but it didn't have glass. He stepped through and now he's here."

~§~§~

"Hermione says you are a thick-headed, scruffy looking jerk, and you should think before you act." Luna said. "I'm not supposed to say that. I should stop telling myself this, it's not what she wanted to say."

"Who's scruffy looking?" Iris gasped.

"She better watch her mouth." Delphi growled.

"It's too late now." Harry shrugged.

~§~§~

"Why is it too late?" Hermione froze.

"The mirror was gone once he stepped through." Luna pouted when she saw the table was now empty.

The blonde turned to face the right where she had been 'speaking' to Harry. She narrowed her eyes.

"What's wrong?" Hermione leaned across the table, grabbing her hands.

~§~§~

Luna happily took another bite of her strawberry cheesecake.

~§~§~

"Luna." Hermione clapped her hands in front of the other girls' face. "Luna. Focus. What's wrong?"

Luna let out a forlorn sigh. "That's all he knows."

"The Mirror of Erised was on the seventh floor in a room that he's never seen before." Hermione muttered. "We've checked every room in the castle. Even the seventh floor."

Luna shrugged.

"He says not to worry." Luna said after a moment. "For once, he is safe and happy."

"Listen very carefully Luna." Hermione snapped to her feet. "Tell him this exactly."

~§~§~

Luna slammed her hands on the table and jumped to her feet. In a very Hermione like fashion, she crossed her arms, staring daggers at him.

"Harry James Potter." Luna said, biting out each word. "How can you say that? We were worried about you! You just disappeared. The entire country was looking for you."

"Woah." Lavender applauded. "You sound just like her."

"I do not sound like that." Hermione crossed her arms, staring daggers at Lavender.

"I've been here for a week, and no one has tried to kill me." Harry countered. "Do you understand how absolutely insane it is that *THAT* is a metric I measure my life with?"

~§~§~

"It's not every week." Hermione scoffed.

"Every other month. Every year." Luna dropped back into her seat, adjusting her posture. "This isn't even the first year that a loyal follower of Voldemort somehow became a professor!" She took a deep breath and ran a hand through her hair. "Listen to me, Mione. I met my parents. I have a family. The last two wars never happened here. Why would I want to go back?"

~§~§~

Luna slumped onto the bench.

"What about your friends?" Luna asked. She added softly. "What about me?"

"You're better off without me." Harry said.

"How could you say that?" Luna scoffed.

~§~§~

"I've been gone a week and they already captured Voldemort." Luna's voice got louder as she spoke.

"Once they didn't have The Boy Who Lived to solve all their problems, they actually had to do something. Coming here was the best thing to happen to that world."

"I don't care about the world!" Hermione yelled back.

~§~§~

Luna climbed over the table. She grabbed Harry by the shirt collar and pulled him in for a kiss. Her hands ran through his hair.

"You're my best friend, Harry. My only friend." Luna whispered between kisses. "I can't see my life without you. Please, come back."

The sound of a throat being cleared brought Harry back to reality. He looked around to see Delphi glaring at him and Luna. She wasn't the only one that looked upset. He took a step back, helping Luna off of the table.

"Wait." Harry paused. "Does that mean she kissed you?"

"She has soft lips." Luna said with a smile. "Now she's running out of the Great Hall."

Luna rocked a bit to the side. Harry pulled her into a hug to stop her from falling.

"Are you ok?" Harry asked, sitting her down.

"That's the longest I've ever talked to myself." Luna rubbed her forehead.

"Take it easy." Harry held her hand. "Thank you for that. I didn't know it would be so hard on you."

"I understand you are going through a complicated patch of your life." Professor McGonagall spoke from nearby. "While it does allow you some leeway, yelling at each other in the Great Hall and climbing across the tables is pushing it."

"Sorry, Professor." Harry blushed.

"Class started five minutes ago." McGonagall continued. "I will give you a pass for today. Gather yourself in time for your next class."

"Thank you, Professor." Harry gave her a small smile.

She scanned the small group with her stern gaze. A quick nod and then she was gone.

"When did she get here?" Harry asked.

"When Hermione started to yell at you." Luna answered.

"You knew?" Harry asked. "And you kept going?"

"Yes." Luna crawled back to her spot and made quick work of the remains of her cheesecake.

Rose wrapped him in a hug.

"Let's take a walk to the greenhouse." Rose whispered. "We've got time to take the long way."

Delphi stood up. She was gritting her teeth to stop herself from speaking. Instead, she grabbed Luna and pulled her out of the Great Hall. The blonde girl somehow managed to turn herself around to wind up holding Delphi's hand as though she hadn't just been dragged across the room.

"I have to go." Iris kissed him on the cheek. "I'm happy you're here."

Hermione had left at some point, most likely following McGonagall. Lavender hugged Harry before leaving as well. She had Herbology as well, but she could sense that the two needed some time.

Rose led him out the front door into the courtyard. He didn't question her as they turned away from the greenhouse. Harry looked at her, motioning the shorter path.

"The long way." Rose chuckled. "We've got time."

"Are you ok?" Rose asked, moving closer to him.

"I don't know." Harry shrugged. "I don't feel bad for leaving then I feel bad for not feeling bad, which makes my head hurt. She's been with me through all of it. Our lives are just too different for her to understand what this world means to me. When the term is over, she goes home to her parents who love her. They travel on vacation and then we usually meet up at the Burrow before school." He took a deep breath before continuing. "She doesn't sleep in a broken bed on a worn mattress. She doesn't have to cook every meal, clean the house, and keep the garden looking immaculate just to earn a poor imitation of peace. She's never had her arm broken three days in a row because it healed overnight, or her hand smashed by a frying pan for overcooking the bacon."

Rose didn't know what to say. Instead, she slipped her hand in his and gave him a small squeeze. Harry gave her a small, sad smile.

"Do you think I should go back?" Harry asked after a long moment of silence.

"No." Rose answered quickly. "Absolutely not."

Harry laughed.

"I'm serious." Rose poked him in the side, hitting a ticklish spot with pinpoint accuracy. "I get it, she misses you, but after everything you've been through, you deserve to be happy. In your first year, you fought off a possessed professor. Do you know what I did?"

Harry shook his head.

"I begged my parents to let me have the Marauders Map." Rose said. "Second year, while you were fighting a basilisk. I was learning how to make Dorm Hooch from the Weasley Twins."

"In your second year?" Harry asked with a chuckle.

"I had double herbology." She said. "Perfect position to grab the ingredients. Third year, dad sent me the Invisibility Cloak at Christmas while you were protecting the castle from Dementors."

"Not the entire castle." Harry countered.

"That's not the point." Rose rolled her eyes. "A third year shouldn't have to see a Dementor outside of a book. Not even one at a distance."

Harry smiled.

"Then, this year." Rose took a deep breath and let it out. "During the Welcome Feast this gorgeous boy just strolls into the Great Hall and he turns out to be from another world. That's the most exciting thing that's happened to this school in like a hundred years."

"You think I'm gorgeous?" Harry teased.

Rose opened her mouth to speak. She closed it before trying once more, but no words came out. Questions bounced around behind her eyes. She muttered something to herself before she pounced on him. Her lips sought his in a hungry kiss. Instead of a shy peck, it was a deep, lingering connection. Her tongue darted out as she pulled away, touching his lip.

"Please tell me you don't hate me." Rose whispered.

"How could I ever hate you?" Harry whispered back.

He pulled her close. His lips brushed against her, putting his need for her into the kiss. Rose melted against him, their bodies fitting perfectly against one another. Tentatively the tips of their tongues touched. That sparked off another jolt of passion. The tender kiss fell away as their tongues began to dance.

Rose ran her hands through his hair. She gasped as she felt him squeeze her bum. Pulling away, she giggled, before kissing his neck. Taking a cue from him, she shifted her hands from his hair to his chest. Rose pushed, leading him to an alcove that was blocked from view by a statue. She twisted a piece of it to open a passage in the wall. Grabbing his hand, she led him inside. A short detour brought them to a study room that looked like it hadn't been used in quite some time.

The room was furnished with a couple of tables in the center that still had some old homework on them. Along the edges of the room were a mixture of chairs and couches.

Harry picked her up off her feet, grabbing two handfuls of her ass and holding her close. Rose let out a squeak as he carried her over to the nearest couch. He laid her on it, before climbing on top of her. Their rich emerald eyes met. Harry could feel her heartbeat against his chest.

"I've never." Rose blushed.

"Me too." Harry smiled at her.

"Do you want to?" She asked.

"If you do." Harry nodded.

"Start slow?" Rose shivered as his fingers trailed along her collar bone.

Harry nodded. He leaned down, kissing her neck. Rose took advantage of his position. A quick twist and she was suddenly on top of him.

"I've heard this is better for the first time." Rose blushed.

Harry smiled. His face went blank as she pulled off her shirt exposing a cute pink bra. She giggled as his eyes hungrily devoured her. Tentatively, he reached up to cup her breasts. He paused once his hands made contact, waiting for her to say something.

Rose nodded. Harry slipped his hands under her bra, cupping her bare breasts. She unhooked the latch and let it drop onto the couch beside them. He pulled his hands away to get an unobstructed look at her breasts. They filled his hands with a little space to spare. Pink, button sized nipples capped her breasts, just begging to be kissed.

He pulled her closer, giving one of her nipples a slow lick. Rose shuddered as she felt his breath against her skin. Harry repeated the process on the other. She pulled him away from her chest for a passionate kiss.

They scrambled to work together to strip out of their clothes. Harry managed to get his shirt off and his pants below his knees while Rose bunched her skirt above her hips before moving her panties to the side. Her other hand grabbed his desperately hard member to guide him.

Rose paused. She stroked along his length, pausing to run the flat of her thumb along the width of his cock head. The lust filled expression on her face has a tinge of anxiety.

"What's wrong?" Harry asked.

"Nothing." Rose answered quickly. "Just, didn't expect you to be so big."

"Is it?" Harry asked, pride mingled among his hungry expression.

"You don't know?" Rose chuckled. "You said you were played quidditch. Please tell me you shower after the games."

"Yeah." Harry blushed. "It's not like we're taking measurements."

Rose arced an eyebrow at him.

"Well, I'm not." Harry chuckled. "Do you want to stop?"

Rose lifted herself up, guiding the head of his dick to her lips. She slid the tip along her lips, letting him feel how wet she was for him. Their eyes locked as she pressed the tip inside. She rocked a few times, allowing her opening to adjust to the size. Rose eased the head of his cock inside, slowly lowering herself. She moaned as he stretched her.

"So... big." She whimpered.

Rose lowered herself a little at a time before pulling back up. She repeated the process as she worked at pushing his member deeper. Finally, she found herself resting on his lap, his cock fully sheathed inside. Her eyes closed as she relished the wonderful feeling of his cock stretching her hungry pussy.

Harry's mind was lost in a sea of pleasure. Their rich emerald, green eyes were locked as she began to slowly grind down against him.

Her lovely breasts hung down before his face. Harry leaned forward to take one of her nipples between his lips. He licked and sucked on one before moving to the other. Rose groaned under his attention. A shiver ran through along her body as an orgasm surprised her.

The sudden onslaught of her pussy tightening sent him over the edge. His body tensed under her. He gripped her hips tightly, pressing her down against him with he desperately pushed as deep as he could inside of her.

They both moaned as he came hard, filling her. His body jolted with each shot of cum, giving Rose another sneaky orgasm. This one was on the smaller side, but it still sent pleasure racing through her every nerve.

Rose slumped over, resting on top of him. Harry stroked her back, basking in the afterglow.

"Sorry." Harry blushed. "That was really fast."

"We'll get better with practice." Rose giggled.

Harry let out a content breath.

"I wanted to do that since I first saw you." Rose whispered.

"Me too." Harry replied just as low. "Are you ok?"

Rose hummed an agreement. She wrapped her arms around him. He could feel her snuggled closer. Her body relaxing as she began to doze.

"We have Herbology." Harry said, convincing neither of them to make a move.

"MmHm." Rose kissed his chest.

Harry couldn't argue with that.

~§~§~

Hermione grabbed her bookbag. She quickly packed a few changes of clothes, a couple of notebooks along with some pre-sharpened pencils, and the Second Edition Hogwarts a History Sirius had found in the Black Vault.

"The seventh floor." She repeated to herself. "I must have missed something."

21.

Somehow, Harry and Rose made it back to the Gryffindor dorms without getting caught. They had decided in advance that they wouldn't spend the night together. Having Rose stay in his private room once resulted in plenty of whispers, a second time would get people talking even more.

Harry could feel his mind trying to overthink what had happened. Luckily, the afterglow powered through that little voice. He couldn't remember the last time, if ever, he had felt so good. It wasn't just the sex, though that was awesome, it was the feeling attached along with it.

He wondered how the coven thing worked, and if he was actually building one. Did the girls realize it before Luna mentioned it? He was not going to argue if they were interested. There were still questions, of course, but they could wait.

Was there a limit on the size of the coven? Was it a permanent thing? Did covens have more than one wizard? What benefits, aside from copious amounts of sex, were there? How did he bring this up without sounding like a giant pervert?

Slightly connected to that line of thought was another question. What was going on with Hermione? The one here. He knew his Hermione would be scouring the seventh floor trying to find the mirror. She would most likely work herself into exhaustion. One of the elves would have to take her to the medical wing. Harry may have had a bed reserved for his injuries, but Hermione had one of her own for when they found her asleep in the library.

This Hermione had started out wary, then borderline hostile, and now was almost cordial. She kept sitting near the group during meals. Wednesday, there had been around five students between them and her. Yesterday, there were only three.

Harry knew he couldn't judge people here by the way they had been back there. Still, it was hard to see the same faces and not attach memories. That was one of the reasons he hadn't reached out to this Ron. Having his *'best friend'* turn on him made it hard to want to be around this one. The fact that Ron wasn't friends with Rose helped in keeping his distance.

The situation was another headache inducing tangle of thought. He had good memories with Ron, and spending time at the Burrow. It felt like the home he had always wanted. Now, with his family alive, he didn't need it anymore. Here, he would be an intruder in their home. There wasn't a connection.

There was another though that-

~§~§~

Harry woke up as the morning light hit the perfect angle on his window to shine on his face. He tried to block it out with a pillow, but the damage had already been done. A lazy smile crossed his face as the memory of the day before played through his waking mind.

He rolled out of bed. The usual morning fugue was absent as he strolled over to his private bathroom. He sang one of the few songs he knew as he showered. His exposure to music in the magical world was rather limited. The mundane songs he knew were ones he had heard in passing.

The sound of soft applause greeted him as he stepped out of the shower. He pulled his towel tight around his waist as he scanned for whoever it was. Lavender, Rose, Parvati, and Katie stood in his small sitting room clapping politely.

"I didn't peg you as a Spice Girls fan." Katie giggled.

"How did you get in here?" Harry asked as he hurried over to his wardrobe.

"Rose knows the password." Parvati explained as she looked around the room.

His new enchanted glasses were amazing. He had slept with them on without an issue and had completely forgotten about them when he was in the shower. Harry looked over at the group as he set out his clothes for the day. For some reason they weren't in uniform.

"Why aren't you dressed?" Harry asked.

"You're the one not dressed." Rose chuckled.

"No." Harry sighed. "Well, yes, but you're not wearing uniforms."

"It's Friday." Lavender replied.

Harry waited for her to explain further. She didn't.

"And?" Harry prompted.

"There aren't any classes on Friday." Lavender stated.

"Since when?" Harry asked.

"Forever." Lavender chuckled.

"Wait." Rose cut in. "The other Hogwarts has classes on Friday?"

Harry nodded.

"How do you get anything done?" Rose scoffed.

"I was going to ask you the same thing." Harry shrugged.

"Monday to Thursday are for classes. Friday is the start of the weekend." Katie sounded bewildered.

"That gives everyone enough time for homework and activities."

"Huh." Harry shrugged. "Nice. Can you leave so I can get dressed?"

"Do we have to?" Lavender teased.

"Sorry." Harry laughed. "You're not getting a free show."

"What about a paid one?" Lavender wiggled her eyebrows at him. "I'm sure we could discuss your rates."

"Down, girl." Parvati poked her friend in the ribs. "We'll leave."

"We will?" Katie pouted. "Lavender was just starting negotiations."

Rose and Parvati chuckled as they led the other two out.

"We'll see you at breakfast." Rose called over her shoulder.

She looked back at her friends to make sure they couldn't see her, then she winked at him. Harry blew her a kiss as the portrait closed.

"Yet another reason I'm staying." Harry whispered as he set out his clothes for the day.

He went with a comfortable set of dark blue jeans and a snug grey T-Shirt. Though they were muggle in design, they were made in the magical world. That meant they could adjust to fit as he grew, had minor temperature control charms, and were self-mending. He found that he preferred his clothes to be a bit snug after years of oversized castoffs. It also allowed him to move about unhindered by excess fabric.

Harry took a look at himself in the mirror before he left. He wasn't going to spend time fighting against his hair. A few passes through with his hands would accomplish just as much as struggling to style it. Seeing his father and siblings with the same hairstyle made it worth it.

Holding out his hand, his wand leapt across the room to settle in his grip. Harry twirled it idly along his fingers as he walked. Putting it in his pocket didn't seem like a good idea now that his pants weren't hanging off of him. The thought of accidentally snapping his wand when he sat down was mortifying. He would have to ask around.

He made it to the Great Hall to find a spot between Iris and Rose waiting for him. A small smile crossed his face as he sat. Katie, Parvati, Lavender, Luna, Delphi, and Ciri were all grouped together. Hermione was separated by a couple of people off to the left of them today. He put her actions down to curiosity rather than interest. Ciri nodded to him in greeting and went back to the conversation she was having with a student he didn't recognize.

"Good morning, lover." Delphi smiled brightly at him.

Harry stifled a chuckle as Iris bristled beside him.

"Good morning, Delphi." Harry replied. "Ladies."

Luna watched him for a moment. She flashed him a broad smile.

"Yay!" Luna clapped. "When do I get a turn?"

Harry raised an eyebrow as he looked at her.

"What are you talking about?" Iris asked with barely restrained aggravation.

"Rose and Harry had sex." Luna replied wiggling in her seat. "Can I be next?"

"What?" Iris snapped.

"No!" Delphi yelled.

Lavender leaned back in her seat. She waved a hand to get the attention of someone farther up the table. Harry saw a flash of ginger as Fred and George hurried over.

"Rose." Lavender stated.

Fred took out a booklet and made a note. George pulled out a patched money pouch. He pulled out a couple of coins and handed them over to Lavender. Katie and Parvati grumbled as the other girl made a show of putting her winnings away.

"You made a bet?" Harry asked.

"A bet?" George scoffed.

"We've got a spread on you, Mister Potter." Fred replied.

"Number of ladies in your coven." George counted off.

"The members." Fred added a finger of his own.

"And their order." George finished with a wiggle of his eyebrows.

"No!" Iris snapped. "You are not derailing this conversation."

Harry turned to face Iris.

"I agree with little Potter." Delphi cut in. "Clearly, I should have been first."

"No way!" Iris rolled her eyes. "It was obviously going to be me, or Rose. You're like fifth."

"Fifth?" Delphi growled. "You'll be fifty. I'm going to be second, third, and fourth."

Rose was blushing like mad. She hid her face against his shoulder. He put his arm around her, pulling her closer. Fred and George moved along the table stopping to address multiple students along the way. Harry shook his head.

Luna met his eyes. She gave him a happy look before pouring some chocolate milk over a bowl of marshmallow cereal. He took a cue from her and began to eat his own breakfast. The conversations around him were still going as he ate with one hand. Rose did the same. Eventually, the conversation died down. Delphi and Iris were glaring at each other while the rest of the group looked on with amusement.

"Do you have a way to carry your wand around?" Harry asked now that things had calmed down. "I don't want to keep mine in my pocket."

"Wrist holster." Delphi answered rolling up her sleeve to show a long strap of leather. "I've got an extra back in my dorm if you want one."

"Nice try." Lavender snickered.

She tapped the table three times with her wand. A moment later a house elf popped in place beside her.

"Miss Student calls?" The elf asked.

"Could you get the wand holster from my trunk, please." Lavender asked.

The elf popped away. A moment later the holster appeared on the spot before Lavender. It was a simple light brown strip that looked more like a misshapen tie than a holster. She scooped it up and held it out to Harry.

"Here you go." Lavender winked at him. "I've got like ten of them. My aunt and uncle send me one every year for my birthday."

"Thanks." Harry said with a smile. "How do I put it on?"

"Here." Iris leaned over, taking her time lining it up on his forearm before fastening the straps.

She trailed her fingers along his arm, extending the touch for another moment. The holster shifted and stretched to fit his arm perfectly.

"Now." Iris whispered. "Just, slide your wand right in."

"Stop." Parvati groaned. "You're embarrassing yourself."

"At least I'm talking to him." Iris stuck her tongue out at the girl.

"I never said I was interested." Parvati countered.

That stumped her.

Delphi studied Parvati for a moment. The Gryffindor witch looked back at her. There was a silent conversation that Harry didn't understand, but it ended with the two sharing a slight nod. Now that he looked at the group, he could see that while Parvati was with them, she was next to Lavender on the outside of the number. Katie sat on the other side, between Luna and Lavender, placing her among the group rather than orbiting it.

"Today is considered the weekend, right?" Harry asked.

Rose nodded.

"Does that mean the Dueling Tournament and Quidditch try-outs are starting today?" Harry asked.

"Yes." Delphi's eyes flashed as she spoke. "I can't wait to introduce you to my mother."

Rose stiffened against him. Even Iris seemed to tense up.

"Your mother is going to be here?" Harry asked casually.

"She never misses it when I duel." Delphi answered with a feral smile. "She's trained me since I could hold a wand. My father is the only wizard, or witch, to ever best her. She fell in love with him the moment he held her wand." She let out a dreamy sigh.

"That's so romantic." Luna chimed in.

"It's the top twenty for the school." Harry continued after a moment. "Will there be enough people for it to take all three days?"

"Are you kidding?" Lavender asked, shaking her head at him. "Exhibition matches mean everyone will be interested. Gyms from all over the world will be begging to scout out potential duelists. They get a big payday if one of their duelists gets picked up by a team. Not to mention any independent winnings."

"Hm." Harry considered the information.

Delphi and Lavender began to discuss the various gyms that would likely show. The details were lost on him, so he turned his attention to Rose.

"Are you ok?" Harry whispered.

She nodded. "I didn't expect everyone to find out like that."

"Me too." Harry squeezed her hand. He dropped his voice to a whisper. "Are you afraid of her mother?"

"Afraid is a strong word." Rose said after a moment. "Kind of. She won't hurt anyone, but you can feel that she could and there is nothing you can do about it."

Harry wrapped an arm around her and gave her a squeeze.

"It'll be ok." Harry whispered. "I'm here now."

Rose rolled her eyes.

"What are you whispering about?" Iris asked as she leaned over to join the conversation.

Harry pulled her into their hug. It was awkward with the table, leading him to pull her onto his lap.

"I'm just telling Rose that I'll keep you safe." He said.

Delphi cleared her throat. The trio looked over to her.

"You need to learn to share." Iris stuck her tongue out at the older witch.

"Careful, little Potter." Delphi glared at the girl.

"Delphi." Harry warned.

"I can share just fine." She grumbled. "It's time to go to the Dueling Auditorium."

"Thank you for letting me know." Harry replied.

"I get to sit in your lap next." Delphi added quickly.

The group mingled among the crowd as they made their way out of the Great Hall. They split as the duelists entered the locker rooms while the others went to get a seat. Delphi slid into place beside Harry once Rose and Iris stepped away. She snuck her hand in his as she led him through the hallway. He didn't make any more to push her away. The idea of a coven was rather appealing and having her as a part of it was too. She was a little intense, but she was also sexy and devoted to him.

Unlike the Quidditch locker room, the dueling one was broken into multiple rooms as well as a medical section just in case. There had to be expansion charms because the hallway was almost as big as the Great Hall. Students from almost every year were waiting for the tournament to start.

"Next weekend." Delphi whispered; her voice sounded less confident than before. "Will you go to Hogsmeade with me?"

"Next weekend?" Harry asked.

"There's a trip every month." She answered. "Twice in December."

"Yes." Harry said with a gentle smile. "You could have skipped a lot of tension if you asked before ambushing me in the halls."

Delphi blushed, then glared at him and fled.

"Duelists, your attention please." Flitwick called; his voice reached the stretch of the room easily.

He waited a moment for the crowd to calm down.

"The match schedule has been posted." Flitwick announced. "Due to the number of entries, the competition will be arranged into five brackets with sixteen duelists each. Matches will have a ten-minute time limit. The brackets have been assigned letters. Duelists in C, D, and E are free to join the audience. Those in A and B will need to stay in the waiting area, otherwise they will be disqualified."

The match schedule appeared on various framed paintings around the room. A quick look through showed him that he was in Bracket B. His friends were spread out among the others as well. Delphi was in Bracket A, Luna was in C, and Lavender was in E. Harry was glad about that; he didn't want to knock any of them out of the competition. It only took two wins to make it to the top twenty. After that, it was bragging rights.

Harry moved to the side as the other duelists filed out of the waiting area. He saw a few familiar faces among the crowd, but most of them were strangers. Even the ones he did recognize were those he knew in passing. Susan Bones from Hufflepuff was the only one he knew by name. Delphi returned to stand beside him once the crowd had thinned.

"Who is this, Riddle?" A familiar stuck-up voice asked.

Harry turned to see Draco Malfoy approaching them. This version looked exactly the same. Delphi shot a dismissive look at Malfoy before scanning the rest of the remaining crowd.

"Aren't you going to answer me, Riddle?" Malfoy's voice rose as he spoke.

"Didn't you hear, Draco?" A younger witch asked as strode up to them. She had the same blonde hair and slight build, it had to be his younger sister. "This is the fabled wizard from another world that bested our dear cousin twice."

Harry knew he should step in and prevent Delphi from hurting them. Finding the desire to match that knowledge was the hard part. Much to his surprise, she didn't lash out at them. Delphi stared at him with desire so obvious it made the two newcomers fidget uncomfortably.

"Aureum Malfoy." Harry addressed the girl.

She inclined her head in acknowledgement.

"Harry Potter." She said in turn. "This is my ever-so-polite brother, Draco."

Harry spared him a brief glance.

"What bracket are you in?" Harry asked.

"B." She replied as she sized him up.

"Me too." Harry said. He paused to scan the list. "My first opponent is Miranda Abbot. It doesn't look like we'll be dueling unless you make it to the finals."

"And you will?" She asked with a challenge.

Harry nodded. He shifted his attention to Bracket A. Draco was scheduled to duel with someone Harry didn't know. Unfortunately for him, if he won the next match would be facing Delphi.

"What is your rank?" Aureum tried to sound casual.

"A." Harry replied with a smile. "You?"

"B." She grumbled. "I'm three wins away from challenging for Rank A."

"That's great." Harry said with a smile.

The witch studied him for a moment. She looked over at Delphi who was still staring at Harry with an expression that approached worship. Aureum shrugged.

"Thank you." She said carefully. "Do you have plans to continue to compete in ranked matches?"

"I'm interested." Harry answered with a shrug. "This will be my first tournament. We'll see how it goes. What about you? Are you on the international circuit?"

"Next year." She answered with conviction. "Once I'm Rank A, then I can start the international circuit."

Harry spared Draco a small look. The blonde wizard hadn't spoken beyond the first bit. Draco was glaring at him for some reason.

"Delphi Riddle to the platform." Flitwick called.

Harry turned to wish her luck. Instead, she stole a quick kiss. Delphi smiled wickedly at him before scampering off. Harry moved to follow only to be stopped by Aureum.

"You can't watch the matches while in the wings." She motioned to the area around them.

Harry shrugged. Draco was still glaring at him. Delphi returned a minute later.

"Did you forget something?" Harry asked.

"I won." Delphi purred as she snuggled against him.

"Draco Malfoy to the platform." Flitwick called.

Draco stomped away.

"Why was he glaring at me?" Harry asked Aureum.

"He's had his heart set on Delphi for years." She rolled her eyes as she spoke. "Draco is a Rank A duelist. Never could beat her."

Draco didn't return after a few minutes. Flitwick called out another name.

"Where did he go?" Harry asked.

"The losing duelist is escorted from the auditorium until the tournament is completed." Aureum answered. "Too many bloody backstage brawls."

~§~§~

Hermione sat with her back against the wall. She had scoured the seventh floor the entire day and well into the night. It wasn't exactly clear when, but at some point, she passed out. Madam Pomfrey threatened to dose her with a sleeping draught if she didn't take a break. Professor McGonagall told Hermione that there would be a prefect assigned to shadow her if she ended up in the medical wing for exhaustion again.

She knew Harry wasn't lying about this. Would he try to hold back information from her? Yes. But an outright lie? No, he would never. She didn't think that even Luna's acting skills would be able to pull off one of his lies.

It was all too frustrating. The only one who seemed as upset as her was Hedwig. Everyone else had moved on and started mourning. Her and an owl were all that were left trying to find him.

Hermione hopped to her feet.

"Hedwig!" She yelled.

She ran through the halls, something she would never do normally. It didn't matter now, she needed to get to the owlery. Hedwig could always find Harry. If Hermione took her to the seventh floor, there was a chance they could find him by working together.

22.

Delphi stormed back into the waiting area. Rage clearly burned in her eyes.

"What's wrong?" Harry asked.

"The other duelists *abdicated*." Delphi said the last word like it was poison.

"Is that bad?" Harry asked.

"To get on the team you have to win two duels." Delphi explained through gritted teeth. "There are enough duelists to continue for another three duels to determine who is the best among the bracket. Since it's not required, they can call it at the four, as long as there is a majority vote."

"And the other three didn't want to continue." Harry finished.

"Cowards." Delphi growled.

"I take it that means you're on the team?" Harry prompted.

Delphi wasn't giving up on her aggravation just yet. The fire in her eyes was burning like never before. It hadn't been this intense even during their duel. Harry could see how it was impacting those around them. Aureum had subtly taken a couple of steps away as well.

He recognized that anger. It was a feeling that came when he had to return to Privet Drive. That deep inferno when no matter what you did, it just wasn't good enough. It didn't matter if he had slayed a basilisk or caught every snitch, what he wanted wasn't important. There was a reason Delphi placed so much of her life on dueling, one that she might not know herself.

Harry placed a hand on her shoulder. Delphi jumped at the touch. Her eyes went wide as she stared at his hand on her shoulder. Slowly, she followed the length of his arm back toward him. The inferno behind her eyes flickered. She leaned closer to him, practically falling against his chest. Delphi nuzzled her face in the crook of his neck. He could feel her muscles relax as his arms slid around her waist.

"Are you going to watch the next bracket?" Harry asked softly.

"Yes." She purred. "I can't wait to see my love win."

"Why don't you go sit with Luna?" Harry offered.

"I will." Delphi stayed pressed against him.

"Play nice if she's next to Iris." Harry prompted.

She grumbled but didn't argue.

"Duelists from Bracket A, please clear the room." Professor Flitwick called.

"A kiss for luck?" Delphi offered.

Harry gave her a quick peck before sending her off. Delphi walked out of the room with a sway in her walk. He turned to see Aureum gawking at him.

"What?" Harry asked.

She motioned him, then the retreating form of Delphi, then back at him, and then just shrugged.

"Andrea Longbottom and Harry Potter to the platform." Professor Flitwick called.

Harry scrunched his eyebrows at the name. He saw a tall brunette girl in Gryffindor colors heading toward the far door.

"Longbottom?" Harry asked.

"Neville's older sister." Aureum offered.

"He has a sister?" Harry cocked his head to the side as he looked at her.

"He has three." Aureum chuckled. "Hurry up and get out there."

"Right." Harry shook the confusion from his head as he hurried over to where Flitwick stood.

The charms professor smiled as he approached.

"Take the blue stairs, Mister Potter." Flitwick instructed.

"Thank you, professor." Harry replied.

He stepped out into the auditorium proper to find it had transformed. During the Dueling Club and the assessment with Professor Riddle, the platform had been the seating had been compact. There were three rows arranged to allow for the crowd to have a clear view as well as being able to easily hold the audience that had come for the duel between Rose, Delphi, and him.

Now, they were arranged in a terraced stadium seating reminiscent of the Quidditch World Cup. It looked like the entire school had come to watch. Harry took a deep breath, pushing the sudden nerves away as he stepped up onto the platform.

The platform had been raised higher as well. A layer of swirling mist surrounded the edges to catch falling duelists without blocking the view.

"Dueling on red, Andrea Longbottom." Professor Riddle announced.

Andrea waved to the crowd. He paused to let the crowd cheer.

"Dueling on blue, Harry Potter." Professor Riddle continued.

Harry followed suit, waving to the crowd.

"This is a Class Two Duel." Professor Riddle explained. "Victory through disarming, knocking your opponent off the platform, or yielding."

"Bow to your opponent." Professor Riddle instructed.

They did. She had the same nose as Neville. Harry noticed she was left-handed. He relaxed his stance, angled ever so slightly with one foot in front of the other.

"Ready? Begin!" Professor Riddle yelled.

Andrea cast first, sending a short string of stunners of varying power toward him. Harry pulled his shoulder to the side, watching them pass by. He arched an eyebrow at her, almost insulted. She shrugged. The only point in her favor so far was that they were silent.

Her wand snapped high, cut from one side to the other, and dipped low sending a tight chain of shield breakers, stunners, and disarming spells zipping at him. Harry watched as they approached. He wondered if she was still taking it easy on him. Her spells were moving so slow. Flitwick had set him as Rank A, and this was an open exhibition. There was a chance that she was a couple of ranks below.

Harry swatted away the first spell. He brought his wand back down, catching the following swirl of magic on the tip of his wand and directing it off to the side. The final spell he dodged.

He swirled his wand above his head, sending a whip made of compressed air toward her. It connected with the ground in front of her, kicking up a cloud of debris. He yanked his wand back. The cloud of debris shifted in the air, settling into a thin barrier that covered her shoes. He swept his wand to the side, yanking the newly constructed trap out from under her feet. Tossing her off of the platform.

"Winner, Harry Potter." Professor Riddle called.

Harry bowed before stepping off the platform. He returned to the waiting area without looking back. In truth, the crowd was kind of freaking him out. The number was on par with the Quidditch games, but the distance helped him forget about all of the people watching.

"Welcome back, Potter." Aureum said as he entered.

"Thanks, Malfoy." Harry muttered.

"Are you ok?" She asked.

"There are a lot of people out there." Harry said.

"It'll probably be worse once the real competition begins." Aureum sighed.

"You don't sound happy about that." Harry said. "Where did your excitement go?"

"Dealing with the crowds is the worst part." Aureum huffed. "I want to travel and duel to get away from uncomfortable dresses and stuffy Pureblood parties. Out there I don't have to be a perfectly poised princess. If I make the team then my father will want to use it to make business connections. If I don't, my mother will use it as a reason for me to give up dueling to look for a husband."

"That..." Harry shrugged.

"Aureum Malfoy and Ziyi Chang to the platform." Professor Flitwick called.

"Of course, I get Ziyi." Aureum grumbled as she walked away.

Harry watched her go. An Asian girl in Hufflepuff colors followed close behind. He wondered if she was related to Cho but wasn't sure how common Chang was as a surname. Everyone in this world seemed to have a surprise sibling or two. The only thing he really knew about Cho was that she was the Ravenclaw Seeker and rather attractive, so it was possible she had a sister there too.

"Mister Potter." Professor Flitwick waved to get his attention.

Harry hurried over. The duel had just started, there was no way he had missed being called to the platform for his next one.

"Yes, Professor?" He asked.

"That was an interesting bit of spellcasting." Flitwick smiled at him. "Could you explain what it was?"

"Oh." Harry relaxed. "I used an air-whip to kick up dust, then gathered the dust around her feet and tossed them off the side."

"Interesting." Professor Flitwick chuckled. "Where did you get such an idea?"

"Cement shoes." Harry blushed.

"Pardon?" The half-goblin asked.

"In the Muggle world, there are stories about giving people cement shoes." Harry explained sheepishly. "Mobsters in put them on people and toss them in the ocean."

Professor Flitwick stared at him for a moment before breaking out in a shrill cackle. It sent a shiver down Harry's spine. From the reaction of the students in the room, he wasn't the only one. Flitwick cleared his throat, getting himself back under control.

"Sorry about that. Snuck up on me." Professor Flitwick wiped a tear from his eye. "That tickled my goblin side, hasn't happened in years."

"It's fine, sir." Harry smiled at the professor. "Could I ask you a question?"

"Of course." Flitwick beamed at him. "It is something I hope all students do."

"Well, it's not... like that." Harry paused searching for the words. "Is it ok to ask what her rank is?"

"Miss Longbottom, you mean?" Flitwick asked.

Harry nodded.

"It's fine to ask in casual conversation, in dueling such as this, it's usually standard." Flitwick continued. "The exception being after a match has concluded. It is somewhat of an insult."

Harry winced.

"Miss Longbottom is a Rank B." Flitwick said after a moment. "Why do you ask?"

Harry thought things over for a moment.

"I'll let you know after my next duel." Harry said with a nod.

Aureum trudged back in the room. Her brow was covered in sweat and her robe was dusty. Professor Flitwick took his leave returning to his post.

"Rough time?" Harry asked.

"That witch is a beast." Aureum groaned. "She should be Rank A. We've dueled each other on the local circuit. This is only the second time I've beaten her."

"Sounds like it would have been great to watch." Harry offered. "Who do you face next?"

"Let's see." She waved him over to a nearby board. "It's Weasley versus North right now. Only Fred or George has a chance against Glinda, but they're focusing on quidditch. Plus, they don't like to compete since they're going to be running the bets. After that, Elizabeth Swann versus Jamie Norrington. That's going to be a close one. I don't know them personally, but there is a lot of gossip. Elizabeth and Jamie had the same trainer for a few years. Swann swapped over to a smaller gym right before she went up in rank. It's been sore between them ever since."

They paused to watch a redhead seventh year with a bright smile enter the room. She had a Hufflepuff crest on her pink frilly dress.

"Glinda North?" Harry motioned to the witch.

Aureum nodded.

"Elphaba West versus Prudence Night." She continued. "That will be interesting. Next, there is Tracey Davis versus Flora Carrow. Hm. I thought Davis would be going for Quidditch." She muttered. "Sasha East versus Emma Oswald, that's a dull one both of them are Rank D. Finally, Padma Patil versus June Moon. Now that one is going to be interesting."

She tapped her finger on her chin. Aureum mumbled something before turning Harry.

"So far, there is you, me, and Glinda." She said. "Most likely, West has more experience than Night, but they are both powerful. Not sure about that one. I bet my robe that Flora knocks out Tracey. She's great, but she doesn't have it in her to smack someone around. It doesn't matter who wins between East and Oswald, they aren't going to make it beyond next round. Padma and June are another pair that's too hard to call. Padma has got the skill and the drive, but June is a wildcard like Delphi, just not as much."

"I hope we don't have to duel." Harry sighed. "You're nice to talk to and I'd hate to take you out."

"You certainly are a humble one." Aureum stuck her tongue out at him.

Harry shrugged. They found a couple of comfy chairs out of the way and settled in. It was a good spot where they could keep the door to the auditorium in sight without having to constantly check. He didn't see how a duel could go the time limit, but a couple of them did. Professor Flitwick went down the list, calling the duelists as they went.

"When you win." Harry broke their comfortable silence. "Are you going to abdicate?"

"Certainly not." Aureum scoffed. "What about you?"

"Nope." Harry smiled at her. "Do you have any siblings other than Draco?"

"No." She shook her head. "Thankfully. He's more than enough. Two cousins by blood. Delphi and Nym. She graduated a few years ago. I think she's going to be an Auror. We don't talk too much. Things with my mom and aunt Andi are strained."

"Aunt Andi as in Professor Tonks?" Harry asked.

She nodded.

"What about you?" Aureum winced once she realized what she had said. "Never mind."

Harry shrugged. "Don't worry about it."

She stood up as Padma entered the waiting area with a pleased smile on her face.

"And that's the last of them." Aureum said, trying and failing to hide her relief.

They headed over to the duel listing as the names began to appear. Luckily, the opponents were randomized, otherwise they would have faced each other in the next round.

"Aureum Malfoy and Sasha East to the platform." Professor Flitwick called.

Aureum gave him a relieved look before she headed through the door. The witch who followed with slumped shoulders. She already knew she was going to lose. Aureum returned a couple of minutes later. She didn't appear to be happy considering she had just won.

"What's up?" Harry asked as she plopped down in the chair across from him.

"That was a joke." She huffed. "She practically threw herself off the platform to dodge my first stunner."

"At least you'll be fresh for the next round." Harry offered.

She shrugged. They had to wait two more duels before Harry was called.

"Harry Potter and Elizabeth Swann to the platform." Professor Flitwick called.

Harry tried, and failed, not to check out the girl that walked ahead of him. She was taller than him, which was something he was accustomed to now, and thin. Her breasts were small and pert, fitting her body perfectly. On top of all that, she was rather pretty. Her auburn hair had lighter highlights that came from being out in the sunshine.

"Dueling on blue, Harry Potter." Professor Riddle announced.

Harry waved to the crowd. This time he noticed the cheering was much louder.

"Dueling on red, Elizabeth Swann." Riddle continued.

She gave a small wave to the crowd.

"Bow to your opponent." Professor Riddle instructed.

The air was thick with tension.

"Ready? Begin!" Professor Riddle yelled.

Elizabeth was much faster than Andrea. She didn't start off simple either. Her wand movements were quick, controlled, and flowed from one to the next. For the first time since dueling Delphi, Harry had to go on the defensive. Her spells didn't hit as hard, but they were fast.

Harry could feel them rain down on his shield in a rapid rhythm. His silent *Aegis* continued to block her assault. It also kept him locked in one place. He needed something that he could use while moving, but he didn't think *Boucle* would work. It was too small to block her barrage.

An idea popped into his head. He focused on portions of his shield and pushed. A large spider-web of cracks appeared. Elizabeth grinned, thinking she had broken it. Instead, Harry sent a chunk of it rocketing toward her. She tried to banish it, only for her spell to rebound, and knock her flat on her back.

Harry silently summoned her wand.

"Winner, Harry Potter." Professor Riddle announced.

He crossed the platform and returned her wand. A flash of white feathers slapped him in the face. Talons gripped his shoulders. A moment later something hard began to peck at his head. He fumbled back trying to escape the assault.

After a moment he was able to step away. He stared at the incredibly angry owl now perched on his shoulder.

"Hedwig?" He asked.

"Berk." She glared at him.

"What are you doing here?" He asked her.

"Harry!" Hermione called to him.

He looked up to see her rushing onto the platform, straight toward him. She wrapped him in a familiar tight hug. Hedwig flapped her wings, slapping Hermione on the head.

"You had your turn." Hermione snapped at the owl.

"Hermione?" Harry tried to understand what he was seeing.

He glanced at the stands, searching for Rose. She was there along with Iris, Lavender, Katie, and Delphi. A few spots over sat Hermione. They all stared back at him. His jumbled thoughts were interrupted when Hermione hit him on the chest, hard.

23.

"What are you doing here?" Harry asked staring at his friend.

"Finding you, you prat!" Hermione snapped.

"Excuse me, Miss Granger?" Professor Dumbledore asked as he approached.

Hermione turned to face the Headmaster. She stared at him for a moment, not recognizing the man.

"Yes?" She said slowly.

"Please come with me." Dumbledore motioned toward the door. "We need to have Madam Pomphrey look you over. No one knows how traveling to another world can do to the body."

"I'm fine." Hermione snapped. She turned back to Harry. "Who is that?"

"Hermione Granger." Harry smiled wickedly at her. "May I introduce you to Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts."

The confusion on her face quickly morphed into abject embarrassment. She had just yelled at the Headmaster.

"How?" She looked from Dumbledore to Harry. "That's not Dumbledore!"

"I assure you, I am." Professor Dumbledore said with a good-natured chuckle. "Come along."

Hermione nodded. Her brain going too many directions at once.

"We're not done." Hermione shot a dirty look at Harry as she walked away.

Hedwig sighed dramatically.

"She was supposed to look after you." Harry explained.

"Mister Potter." Professor Flitwick called. "If you would please return to the waiting area."

"Right." Harry nodded. "You're coming along?"

Hedwig gave him a flat look.

"It's the middle of the day." Harry explained as he headed out of the auditorium. "You should be sleeping."

She pecked him on the side of the head.

"Ow." Harry whined. "Stop that."

She pecked him again.

"Ok. Ok." Harry groaned. "I'm sorry I left you. I would have taken you if I knew how."

Hedwig gave him a steady stare.

"I'm not going back." Harry said.

She reared back to peck him again.

"We are staying here." Harry added quickly.

That seemed to mollify her. Instead of pecking him, she began to gently groom his hair. He couldn't help but smile as she carefully went about her task. Harry sat in the chair across from Aureum.

"Aureum, Hedwig." Harry introduced. "Hedwig, Aureum."

"Charmed." Aureum said with a smile on her face.

Hedwig paused to give the witch a quick nod before she continued to groom him. The sound of approaching footsteps caught their attention. Harry looked over to see a group of people heading his way. He had expected the group of ladies that he had seen in the stands. Lily, James, and the twins were a surprise.

"Berk?" Hedwig stopped and stared at Rose.

"Hedwig?" Rose asked. "Why aren't you in the owlery?"

"You know her?" Harry asked.

"Of course." Rose nodded. "She's been my owl since first year."

"This is Hedwig." Harry said with a smile. "She's been my owl since first year."

"Berk?" Hedwig looked between the two of them.

"I think we broke her." Rose chuckled as she stroked the owl's chest.

Hedwig hopped off of Harry's shoulder and onto Rose. She examined the girl from a few different angles before letting out a dramatic sigh. Hedwig began to groom Rose, an even more daunting task considering her hair was longer.

Harry shifted his attention to Lily and James.

"Hello." He gave them a bright smile. "I didn't expect you to be here."

"We wouldn't miss it." Lily returned the smile. "This afternoon you're sitting with us while we cheer for Iris."

"Luna was kind enough to explain that you don't know what a coven is." James added. "We can tell you about how that works once you're finished."

The twins were bouncing, ready to get in the conversation.

"That was wicked." Charles cut in.

"The shield broke." Gerry made a shattering sound.

"Then you launched it." Charles made a whooshing sound.

"And she went. BOOSH." Gerry pretended to fall.

"Thanks, guys." Harry chuckled. "Dueling is pretty great."

"You aren't going to abdicate." Delphi stated.

"Aureum and I already planned on seeing it through." Harry motioned to the girl. "How do they decide if it's a split vote?"

"Then the two who wanted to continue have the option to duel while the others sit it out." Lavender explained. "It's rude not to introduce your family to your coven, Harry."

"A coven?" Aureum asked. "You agreed to that, cousin?"

Delphi looked at Harry with a mixture of desire and worship. She nodded.

"What about the other Hermione?" This Hermione spoke up.

The group turned to see she had followed them in. She had hung back a few steps as to stay out of sight.

"I don't know." Harry shrugged. "We can deal with that after the tournament. I have a feeling that Madam Pomphrey is going to keep her there for a while. Not even Hermione can fight that woman."

"Miss Granger." Lily turned her attention to Hermione.

"Yes, ma'am?" Hermione snapped to face the older witch.

"Do you think your parents would welcome another daughter?" Lily asked.

"I don't know." Hermione said slowly. "I would need to talk to them about it, but it shouldn't matter. She's going to go back, right?"

"Are you going to go back too?" Iris whispered.

Delphi let out a pulse of raw power. Everyone around them could feel the panic mingled with rage packed in the energy. Harry held out a hand to her. She hurried over, snuggling against his side. He offered his other hand to Iris. She joined the hug as well. The two girls locked eyes for a moment. Harry braced for an argument. Instead, the two locked hands behind his back to hold him even tighter. He squeezed them.

"No." Harry shook his head. "This is my home now."

Lily and James shared a look. They scanned the small group that had gathered around. Harry could see them studying the girls closely. Lily was the first one to look at Rose, she bumped James with her elbow and motioned to their oldest daughter.

"We'll talk about that later." James whispered.

"Lord and Lady Potter." Professor Flitwick bowed as he approached.

"Filius." Lily sighed. "I was your apprentice; you can call me Lily."

"If this was a social conversation, I would." Flitwick smiled cheekily at her.

"Oh?" Lily asked.

"As proctor, I need to ask you to leave the preparation area while the tournament is being held." Professor Flitwick explained. "Only active duelists are allowed in the back."

Lily stuck her tongue out at Flitwick. The half-goblin giggled and walked away.

"Come along, ladies and Potters." James patted Harry on the shoulder. "We'll get together for lunch. Shame we don't have more time. I'm sure I could sweettalk Minnie into letting us take the kids to Hogsmeade."

Delphi and Iris slowly unwrapped themselves from him. Their hands stayed together as they walked away. Harry shook his head. At least they were arguing now. Hedwig didn't stop her task and stayed with Rose.

"That was a nice distraction." Aureum chuckled. "You've been here for a week, and you already have a coven? That's impressive."

Harry smiled.

"Duelists." Professor Flitwick called. "Please gather around."

Harry and Aureum headed over to where the half-goblin stood. Elphaba West and Padma Patil were already waiting for them.

"Congratulations on becoming one of the duelists that will represent Hogwarts." Professor Flitwick spoke with such positive energy it was hard not to smile around him. "As it stands, the results have been reached and the competition for this bracket is completed. However, if you so wish it, we can continue until the top duelist is crowned."

"I would like to continue." Aureum said quickly.

"I would too." Harry added.

Professor Flitwick nodded happily. He looked at the other two witches.

"I would like to continue as well." Padma gave him a shy smile.

"Sure." Elphaba shrugged. "I'm in."

Harry looked at her, actually paying attention to her for the first time. She was attractive with a darker complexion than his own but lighter than Padma, like her skin was a natural tan. Harry didn't have a lot of knowledge to draw from to figure out what that meant to her heritage. He couldn't rely on her eye or hair color to help him out either. They were both green. Her eyes were dark emerald while her hair was closer to mint. All things considered; it didn't seem odd considering the day he was having.

"Would any of you like to place a challenge?" Flitwick asked.

"I challenge Potter." Aureum said with a sly grin.

"Do you accept?" Flitwick asked.

"And here I thought we were starting to be friends." Harry sighed. "I do."

"We are friends." Aureum flashed him a cheesy smile. "Try to remember that once you lose."

"Ha." Harry scoffed. "Do you want this over quick, or do you want me to make you look good?"

"Please." Aureum rolled her eyes. "Just because you beat Longbottom and Swann doesn't mean you can take me out."

"Quick it is." Harry winked at her.

"Dueling on blue, Harry Potter." Professor Riddle announced.

The crowd cheered. He could hear his family among them.

"Dueling on red, Aureum Malfoy." Professor Riddle continued.

The crowd cheered once more.

"Ready? Begin." Professor Riddle yelled.

Harry cast a stunner. Her eyes went wide at the speed of the spell. Aureum brought up a shield just in time. Even then, it knocked her back a step. She hopped to the side trying to put more space between herself and the edge of the platform. Her feet didn't land. Aureum found herself floating. She looked across to Harry to see him smiling at her. Once their eyes met, he let her go. Her body jolted as she dropped a few inches back onto her feet. The sudden change made her stumble.

"Winner, Harry Potter." Professor Riddle called.

Aureum scrunched her brow in confusion. She was still on the platform, she hadn't surrendered, and her wand was... Aureum stared at her empty hand. Her gaze drifted over to Harry. He had her wand. She muttered a string of curses under her breath that no Pureblood witch should even know.

Harry crossed the platform. He came to a stop before her holding out her wand.

"That was quick." Aureum muttered.

"I like to keep my word." Harry chuckled. "See you later."

Harry hopped off the platform. He let the mist catch him. It lowered him steadily to the floor and returned to the waiting area. He waved to Padma and the other witch as he walked by. The introduction had taken longer than the actual duel.

"Well done, Mister Potter." Professor Flitwick said once the two witches headed out to the platform.

"Thank you, Professor." Harry nodded. "My mother was your apprentice?"

Harry liked the way that sounded.

"Oh, yes." Professor Flitwick replied. "An amazing talent at charms. She would have been a legend on the circuit if she wanted to become a duelist. Lucky for them, her interest was in creation and enchantment. I can't tell you how proud I am of her."

"She didn't like to duel?" Harry asked, glad to hear more about Lily.

"Quite the opposite." Professor Flitwick clarified. "She was quite the adept duelist and enjoyed it, however it wasn't her passion. The dueling world lost out, but the entire magical world has benefited dozens of times over from her enchanting."

Harry felt an easy smile settle on his face. It seemed to be his resting expression these days. He couldn't remember smiling so much in the other world. Hopefully, Hermione would see reason. Professor Flitwick returned to his post by the doorway leaving Harry alone with his thoughts.

It was not a place where he wanted to be. Hermione had found her way here. He knew that she would. If there was anyone that could, it was her. He had no idea why she had brought Hedwig with her. At least she hadn't been left behind for someone else to take care of her. He trusted Hermione with her care. She knew how intelligent Hedwig was and how to handle her. Ron would probably lose a finger or two before just giving up. Maybe the twins could take care of her, but he doubted she would put up with their tomfoolery.

Harry sighed, finding that train of thought not lasting nearly as long as he hoped.

Hermione. She was here and he knew she would want to make him go back. When she got an idea into her head of what was right and wrong, it stuck. He wasn't sure he even missed the other world. That was another thing. Somewhere along the line, it wasn't *his* world anymore.

"Mister Potter." Professor Flitwick called. "You are needed on the platform."

Harry gave a sigh of relief. "Thank you, professor."

He hurried out to the auditorium to see a triumphant Padma Patil waiting for him. She gave him a proud smile, which he returned. Harry bounded up the steps onto the Red portion of the platform. He bowed to her, showing his respect.

That got a cheer from the crowd.

"Congratulations on being the final duelists of Bracket B." Professor Riddle announced. "This is the final match of this stretch. After this we will break for lunch and the Quidditch Cup team will start their tryout. Thank you all for coming and thanks to the duelists for the impressive show of talent."

The crowd clapped in reply.

"Now!" Professor Riddle swapped from his formal tone to an excited announcer. "Duelling on Blue. Padma Patil."

The crowd cheered loudly. A chant of 'Padma' started by a group of Ravenclaw students. She blushed brightly, trying to look anywhere but at the stands. Harry found the loudest cheers were coming from Parvati and what had to be her parents.

"Duelling on Red. Harry Potter." Professor Riddle announced.

His little portion of the crowd erupted in cheers. A few Gryffindor students joined in, but they weren't as enthusiastic about it. Harry felt his cheeks start to hurt from how much he was smiling.

"Bow to your opponent." Professor Riddle had to magically enhance his voice to be heard. "Ready? Begin!"

Unlike the previous duels, neither cast a spell. Instead, they studied the other. Her wand was held by her side, in a tight grip, but her arm was relaxed. She had angled her stance to present a smaller target. Her body was coiled to strike. The air surrounding her crackled with power, lifting a few strands of her hair in an unseen breeze. In short, she had never looked sexier.

Padma began to sway to music only she could hear. She spun and twirled, leading with her wand. A whirlwind formed around her. A moment later spears made from compressed air rocketed toward him. Each one caused the whirlwind to shrink.

Harry dipped and juked from side to side. He could feel the magic in the spears crackle as they flew by. His skin began to tingle as excess energy set his hair on end.

She had him on the defensive. If he summoned a shield, he would be locked in place, making him an easy target. All the while, he felt like he was about to overload from the static building on his skin. Harry feigned a stumble, hoping this theory was correct. The next spear sent a jolt of energy up his leg where it had barely missed.

Harry nodded in appreciation. The spears were a distraction. She was using the air to build a charge on his skin. He made a mental note to study elemental magic. That was later. Now, he needed to figure out how to disperse the building energy. He wasn't sure how to properly gather it without accidentally zapping himself. The best way to deal with it was to ground the charge. Harry didn't have the sophisticated knowledge of elemental magic on his side, but he did know a few things about transfiguration.

A flick of his wand transfigured the ground under his feet to meld with the bottom of his shoes. The charge along his body faded but didn't completely vanish. He summoned a shield, angling it to send the spears upward.

Her whirlwind dropped as she saw her plan foiled.

Harry sprang into motion before she could act. A jagged crack formed on the platform, racing toward her. Dust launched into the air as it shook under their feet and a few pieces along the sides fell away. Padma danced around the split as it neared. The dust between them began to pop in small explosions of color. She summoned a shield only to find it quickly covered in a thin film of multicolored silt.

Padma lurched as she felt something tug on her wand. She gritted her teeth as she tightened her grip. The colors clinging to her shield began to shift and swirl. She ignored them as she continued to wrestle the force trying to wrench her wand from her hand. It wasn't until she felt something cold on her ankle that she realized something was wrong.

She looked down to see the stone beneath her slowly encasing her legs. It had made it beyond the top of her socks and had brushed against a small strip of skin. The break in concentration caused her shield to fail. She flinched as the gooey, colorful muck covered her body from the bottom of her neck down. It solidified a moment later, locking her in place mid-motion.

Padma watched as her wand zipped out of her frozen outstretched hand. The muck dropped away, leaving her thankfully clean and dry.

"Winner, Harry Potter." Professor Riddle announced.

She sighed and began to walk over to him. Harry returned the smile as he held out her wand.

"That was clever." Harry inclined his head to her. "You almost had me."

"You were clever enough yourself." Padma returned the gesture. "How did you do the bursts of color?"

"Color changing charm." Harry replied with a sly smile. "Small focus with a bit of transfiguration to make it flashy."

"A color changing charm." Padma grumbled. "You're joking."

Harry shook his head.

"We're going to have a rematch." Padma stated.

"I look forward to it." Harry replied.

The noise from the crowd washed over them as the protective barrier around the stands fell away. Harry jumped at the sudden wave. They both turned toward the crowd and waved. Harry could see Delphi glaring daggers at Padma while everyone else was celebrating. Luna pulled her into an excited hug, which soothed her building ire. He was happy to see she was sitting next to Iris as well.

Much to his surprise, he saw another set of twins sitting among the group. Both Hermione's had joined them. It was easy to distinguish between the two. His Hermione was wearing her school robes while the other one wore casual muggle style clothing.

Harry stepped off of the platform and headed back to the waiting area. He anticipated a long conversation that required privacy. Plus, he didn't fancy standing the entire time. He hoped they'd be finished in time to have lunch.

24.

"Mister Potter." Professor Flitwick said as Harry entered the room. "There is a private room set aside for you just outside."

"Thank you, Professor." Harry said with a tired smile.

Harry knew that things wouldn't get any better if he tried to delay. He quickly walked through the waiting area. There wasn't enough time to complete the next bracket so it would be held tomorrow. They had finished with some time to spare before lunch. He really hoped it wouldn't interfere with his ability to watch Iris try out for the team.

His family and Hermione waited for him. He accepted another tight hug from his friend.

"How?" She asked as she took a step back. "I've seen you fight. You've never done that before."

"My magic is flowing easier here." Harry shrugged. "I didn't know I was casting silently until someone pointed it out to me."

"We'll talk about that once we get home." Hermione sighed.

"I'm not going." Harry stated firmly. "This is my home now."

"Harry!" She yelled.

"Hermione, stop it!" Rose snapped.

His friend turned to face his sister.

"This doesn't concern you." Hermione glared at her.

"The fuck it doesn't." Iris hissed.

"Language!" Lily said quickly.

"I'll allow it." James muttered.

"FUCK." Both twins yelled.

"Not you." James shot a stern look at the boys. "Miss Granger, you are not taking Harry anywhere."

"He doesn't belong here!" Hermione yelled; the frustration was clear in her voice.

"I belong here more than I do back there." Harry spoke up.

"How could you say that?" Hermione turned back to him. "What about all the people who love you?"

Harry inclined his head to the family gathered with them.

"I mean back home." Hermione groaned.

"This *IS* home." Harry repeated. "The people who love me are here."

"You don't know them!" Desperation was seeping into her voice.

"You're right." Harry nodded. "I never knew my parents, my sisters, or my little brothers."

Hermione tried to argue. She desperately wanted to say something to convince him. There was nothing. She couldn't take his family away from him. It was the one thing that Harry had wanted. He had fought for every little scrap of it he could scrounge. She wasn't oblivious, she could see the signs of what happened during the summer. Hermione had tried to tell her parents. She had tried to get someone to check up on him. Something. Anything. Short of kidnapping him herself, there was nothing she could do. The only thing that stopped that plan were her parents. She didn't have a place to keep Harry and the police would take him back to his relatives. Tears clouded her vision. She couldn't ask him to forget this entire world for her.

Many people referred to her as the Brightest Witch of her age. While it was a little annoying, there was a reason for the title. Her mind began to run the various possibilities through her thoughts. She could see him coming back to their world. There was a wonderful aura around him now. It would be gone. The easy smile she had seen before she approached him, the one that seemed to fit him so well would vanish. In its place would be the familiar hollow mask.

In that moment, there was one undeniable fact that slapped her in the face. She was in love with him. Hermione hadn't wanted to admit it. She could play off the kiss as being caught up in the moment. Plus, they hadn't actually kissed. It was Luna who kissed them both. She couldn't ask him to leave all of this behind to be with her.

She sprang at him once more. Her arms wrapped around him as tightly as she possibly could. She buried her face into the crook of his neck. Harry held her as she sobbed.

"I don't want to lose you." She whispered.

"Stay." Harry said softly. "Stay with me."

"What?" Hermione gasped.

"We can stay here. Both of us." Harry gave her a forced smile. "You'd have a sister too."

"She's... nice." Rose offered.

Hermione gave her a flat stare.

"She's a bit of a jerk." Iris spoke up.

"All this time without friends? I can see that." Hermione sighed. "You know I can't stay here, Harry. I'm not going to make you come with me."

The tension in his shoulders eased, but it felt like it all shifted to his heart.

"At least stay until after dinner." Harry offered. "Iris has Quidditch try-outs and you can join us all."

"I'm sure we could get permission to take you all into Hogsmeade for dinner." James added.

"I haven't seen the one here yet." Harry perked up at that.

"Would it be all that different?" Hermione waved a hand at the room around them. "Hogwarts looks mostly the same. There are more students, but the hospital wing was the same."

"Oh, right." Harry said slowly. "Things deviated around World War One here. The magical community relocated the Muggle-born and First-Generation magical people to Hogsmeade to protect them. They expanded the town for the new residents."

Hermione's mouth dropped open in shock. She slowly turned to look at the others. They nodded.

"That is amazing." Hermione's eyes began to lose focus. "The social and economic variation would be groundbreaking. Taking into account the further development of spell craft, potions, and charms could change our world completely. I need to research this. The library should be in the same place. Are there bookstores in Hogsmeade? A secondhand store would be great. They should have older editions and books that aren't in steady circulation in a mainstream store."

"Hermione." Harry grabbed her shoulders. "Come back to us."

Hermione stared at him for a moment. It took a little time before her eyes focused.

"You could stay for a few days." Lily offered with a smile.

"I'd like that." Hermione said quietly.

"Come on then." Rose held out a hand to Hermione. "There should be enough time for lunch."

Hermione nodded as they led her out of the private room. Delphi, Luna, and the other members of his unofficial coven had gathered in the hall. The other Hermione stared hard at the visitor. She had forgone the slow approach to the group once her double had appeared. Either she was too curious to care about appearances, or she felt threatened.

Harry wasn't oblivious to her slow assimilation to the group. It was weird to be able to spot such things. He found he was a lot more observant to those around him now that he didn't have to constantly avoid attempts on his life.

"My mother would like to meet you." Delphi slide beside him opposite of Hermione.

Rose grumbled something under her breath when she couldn't hold his hand, but she took it well enough. Harry raised an eyebrow at Delphi.

"Why?" Harry asked.

"I told her about you." Delphi said with a dreamy tone that sounded close to Luna.

"Who are you?" Hermione asked.

"Hermione, Delphi Riddle." Harry introduced them. "Delphi Riddle, Hermione."

"Riddle?" Hermione tensed beside him.

"The same, but very much not." Harry chuckled.

Hermione narrowed her eyes at him.

"Go ahead and grab a spot." Harry turned to face his family. "I want to introduce Hermione to someone."

"I'm coming too." Delphi spoke through a forced smile.

"Of course." Harry soothed. "Do you know where your dad is?"

She nodded. The sudden tension in her eased.

"I'll go too." Rose offered.

"Thanks." Harry smiled at her.

Hermione shifted her gaze from one to the other. There was a connection between the two that she couldn't quite figure out.

Yet.

Lily and James led the rest of the group toward the Great Hall. Delphi took them on a small journey through the side passages around the Dueling Auditorium. Soon, they stood before the door of an office that was flanked by two others. One led to the waiting area they had used earlier while the others were for Professor Flitwick and Professor Riddle.

Delphi knocked on the door and waited. Harry gave her a question laced look. She returned it with a wicked smile.

Professor Riddle opened the door a moment later. His hair looked like it had been hastily straightened and his shirt was wrinkled. If that wasn't clear enough, there was a smear of lipstick on neck.

"Father." Delphi said with a poorly suppressed laugh.

"You, Fifi?" Riddle was out of breath when he spoke.

Delphi glared at him. A sly smile on his face told them he knew exactly what he had just done.

"I brought Harry to meet mother." She huffed.

"Delphi, dearest." A sultry voice called from inside the office. "Your love and adoration swirls with other flavors."

A gorgeous woman with wild black hair and a familiar fire in her eyes sauntered over to the doorway. She wrapped her arms around her husband's waist as she rested her chin on his shoulder. The orbs of barely contained wildfire scanned the group of students. Her gaze briefly met his eyes.

"Bellatrix Riddle." She announced directly at Harry. "Harry Potter. The wizard from another world who won my dearest daughter Delphi's heart."

He could see where Delphi got her intensity. The sudden friendship with Luna made more sense as well. This woman, Bellatrix, had the same feel of near madness. It was like being in a room with a wild animal with both of them. Only Luna didn't give the impression that she would eviscerate someone on a whim.

"Harry Potter." He inclined his head while he kept her in sight. "It's a pleasure to meet you."

That seemed to please her. Once that was done, she tilted her side to study Hermione.

"You." Bellatrix stared at her as a wide smile began to appear. "Freshly found flavor of your love for him. Didn't want to know you were his. Will you continue to lie? Stay for your thirst for knowledge when your true desire is him."

Hermione squeaked in shock.

"Hermione." Harry cut in. "This is Professor Tom Riddle. He teaches Defense Against the Dark Arts."

Hermione purposely shifted her attention to the man before her. He looked like a professor that could be found on a muggle university campus. There was an air of controlled power about him.

Professor Riddle studied her as she did him. There was a curious confusion in his expression. After a moment he turned to Harry with an amused smile.

"Interesting." Professor Riddle chuckled. "I can see where this would be jarring."

Harry nodded. "The same, but not."

"You're here to use me as further evidence of the differences in the worlds." Riddle stated, he didn't seem upset. "Miss Granger, feel free to ask me anything during your stay."

"Thank you, professor." Hermione said on instinct.

Riddle gave her a genuine smile.

"If you would like." His voice eased. "I could tell you about the Miss Granger I've had in my class."

"I think..." Hermione paused to think. "She wouldn't like that."

Professor Riddle nodded.

"Dinner." Bellatrix said as her stare returned to Harry. "Tomorrow. Be ready."

Delphi smiled broadly.

"Thank you, mum." Delphi bounced forward and wrapped her mother in a hug.

"Come on." Rose spoke up for the first time since they arrived. "We don't want to miss lunch."

"Spirit of beautiful lightning." Bellatrix addressed Rose. "Beautiful. Powerful. Speak to me if you desire to become an oncoming storm."

"Uh..." Rose looked to Delphi.

Delphi nodded.

"Thank you." Rose said with a small curtsy.

Delphi giggled as she led them back to the Great Hall.

"Shut it." Rose muttered. "It made sense at the time."

They made it back to the Great Hall in time for lunch. It was a quick affair with little conversation. The tryouts were fast approaching, and Iris was starting to get nervous. Rose, Lily, and James, all reassured her, but that didn't help all that much.

"What position do you play?" Hermione asked the younger Potter girl.

"I'm a seeker." Iris poked at her food.

"Harry is too." Hermione said with a smile. "Are you trying out for the same position?"

"I'm not playing Quidditch this year." Harry replied.

"You're not?" Hermione spoke slowly.

She gave him a silent look toward Iris. He shook his head.

"I can't do dueling and Quidditch at the same time." Harry clarified. "We wouldn't have to compete for the spot."

"Why not?" Hermione asked.

"Each house has three teams." Iris explained, that seemed to draw her out of her shell. "Cubs, Mid, and Top. It's split for different years. This year they aren't doing the House League, it's a team to represent the school in the tournament."

"The TriWizard Tournament?" Hermione tensed.

"No." Lily interjected. "That was banned years ago. This is the first International Academic Tournament. Schools from around the world have been invited to compete. This year it was only Beauxbatons and Durmstrang to keep the spirit of the tournament."

"Oh." Hermione relaxed a touch.

"It's voluntary." Harry added. "No mystical artifacts or mysterious entrance rituals. The duels earlier were for a spot on the school team. The top four from each bracket make it."

"Then why did your bracket keep going?" Hermione asked.

"Because they aren't cowards." Delphi grumbled as she glared at a random student.

"It's to show off." Rose interjected.

"And to flirt like a hussy." Delphi shifted her glare to Padma.

"Delphi." Harry soothed.

She muttered something under her breath but seemed to ease up.

"Mrs. and Mr. Potter." Hermione said formally. "What do you do for a living?"

"I have a mind-numbing seat on the Mot like a good little Pureblood lord." James made a face.

Lily rolled her eyes. She slapped her husband lightly on the shoulder.

"We have a business and research company." Lily explained. "It started out with pranks then moved to reverse engineer some muggle technology. Creating a shop to sell it to the public made sense."

"Wow." Hermione spoke in an almost hallowed tone. "Tell me everything."

25.

Harry sat beside his parents with Rose on the other side. Hermione was next to Lily. His friend had latched onto the woman and had begun a stream of questions. James looked amused. Thankfully, Lily appeared to be more than happy to discuss charms, theory, and enchanting.

All around him were the members of his unofficial coven. This Hermione had taken up a spot behind the other. She watched her double with open curiosity mingled with a hint of jealousy. Next to her sat Lavender who observed the interplay between the *twins* with open interest. Parvati and Padma, the actual twins, had joined them as well. Katie sat directly behind him. She would idly twirl his hair as she spoke with Angelina and Alicia. He hadn't know what she was doing at first. It felt wonderful though.

Luna was at her now usual place with Delphi. The duo sat in front of Harry. Luna had the girl thoroughly distracted so much so that Delphi hadn't managed more than a couple quick glares at Padma and Hermione. She had seemed onboard with the idea of a coven, but now her jealousy had started to grow. If he had to guess, she was still worried that Hermione would try to take him away. Her ire toward Padma had to do with the duel.

The conversation stopped once Iris took the field. She was dressed in her Hufflepuff team gear, complete with bracers, gloves, and goggles. A growing curiosity about the differences in Quidditch supplies began to blossom in his mind. The assembled players wore uniforms that looked like the kind he'd seen used for Motocross rather than robes. Excluding the helmets, though that probably wouldn't have been a bad addition. Concussions were no fun even in the magical world. He was sure that someone would be able to construct a helmet that protected the head and didn't obscure vision.

Harry had never seen tryouts for Quidditch before. He didn't think they would scrimmage. When the hopeful Seekers kicked off, he watched with focused interest. Madam Hooch strolled to the center of the pitch holding a trunk not unlike the ones students used. She set it down, undid the latch, and kicked open the lid. At least two dozen snitches erupted from the trunk.

"Catch as many as you can!" She yelled. "You have five minutes."

A scoreboard appeared with a list of the names. There was a total count of snitches in the field, thirty-five, and a spot next to each student to show how many they had caught. The crowd began to cheer as the Seekers zipped through the air.

Harry fought the urge to hunt them and instead focused on Iris. She was a dream on a broom. Her slight build pressed practically flat as she sliced through the sky. It didn't take her long to catch her first one. While it was clear that her broom was amazing, it also showed how skilled she was at flying.

Iris rolled, twirled, spiraled, and dove with ease. There were a few times Harry felt his stomach jump to his throat as he watched her. Hermione heard the muffled yell of shock and gave him a pleased look.

"Oh, Harry, you're just overreacting." Hermione said with a practiced ease. "She is in total control."

"Fine." Harry sighed. "You were right. It is stressful to watch."

"I was never prouder, and terrified, when she got her first real broom." James bumped Harry's shoulder with his own.

"She was eight and you caved." Lily chuckled.

"She gave me the eyes." James muttered.

"We're ten!" The twins yelled at the same time.

"Why don't we have real brooms?" Charles pouted.

"We aren't going to do anything dangerous." Gerry added his pout to the mix as well.

"Iris can be the Seeker." Charles continued. "We want to be Chasers."

"That's much safer." Gerry finished.

"Right." James deadpanned. "Safer."

Harry chuckled. He caught a quick expression that played on Hermione's face. Their time together had given him ample experience in reading her silent cues. The expression had started out lighthearted, then morphed into despair which was quickly schooled to neutral. She knew he wasn't going back, and it was breaking her heart.

It was hard to let it happen. As much as he cared about her, he couldn't sacrifice this chance. She was his best friend, possibly more after that kiss, but that world had few bright spots in a sea of darkness.

"She's in the top three!" Rose cheered.

Harry turned his attention back to the scoreboard. First, second, and third place were each separated by one snitch. Iris would need to catch three to win. There were two minutes left on the clock. The flock of snitches had thinned out as they were enchanted to vanish once they were caught.

"She's doing awesome." Harry smiled as he watched.

Time was counting down. It quickly came down to Iris and another student. The one that had previously been in second had been left in the dust. Most people didn't realize there was a lot of work to ride a broom, especially at how fast they were going. There were more than a few times where Harry felt like his body was made of goo once the adrenaline wore off. Only Iris and the other player appeared to have the stamina to hold on.

In the end, iris came in second. There was a fierce scowl on her face as she landed. She didn't speak with anyone. Instead, she stormed into the locker room. Of all of them, it was Delphi who was on her feet first. The crowd of students parted for her on instinct as she made her way to the locker room.

"Your girlfriend is scary." Charles whispered.

"She's wicked." Gerry said with a wistful sigh.

The assembled group stared at the young Potter boy. Even Charles was confused. Gerry didn't seem to notice.

"Chasers, to the pitch!" Madam Hooch called.

"Did you want to watch?" James asked the group.

Harry didn't answer. He didn't know any of the students that were on the pitch. There were a couple that he kind of recognized in passing, though he didn't know their names.

"Not really." Katie spoke up. "I'll watch the games, but the tryouts aren't as fun."

"I'd thought you'd want to stay all day." Harry leaned back to speak with her.

"Let's go get Iris then." James stood as he spoke.

The group filed out of the stands. They made their way down to the locker room. Luna decided to head right in while everyone else waited outside. She returned a moment later with the other two. Delphi had her arm around Iris' shoulders.

"You did great." Harry said proudly.

Iris snorted.

"You did!" Rose nodded.

"I got second." Iris muttered.

"That should put you on the team." Hermione added. "You looked amazing out there."

"I'm an alternate." Iris sighed heavily.

"Sweet." Katie spoke up.

"How could you say that?" Iris stared at her with a wide-eyed expression. "You know what that means!"

"That you're awesome and they want you on the team." Katie said with a nod.

"That I wasn't good enough to start!" Iris got louder as she spoke.

"Oh, my sweet summer child." Katie shook her head. "Every team has at least one alternate per position. It doesn't mean you're not good enough to start. The coaches will scout the other team to decide which Seeker plays that game. They adjust the lineup depending on a bunch of factors. The weather, style of the other team, and what kind of Seeker they have."

Iris studied Katie for a long moment. She let out a breath and nodded.

"Fine." Iris mumbled.

"You were so awesome." Gerry pushed his way through the group.

"You were like WHOOSH." Charles popped up beside his twin.

"Then like 'nu-uh, that's mine'." Gerry pretended to grab a snitch out of the air.

"Then, ZIP ZOOM WA-OOOM." Charles wiggled like he was on a broom.

"So awesome." The twins said as one.

Iris rolled her eyes. Her façade shattered when she pulled the two into a big hug. She decided to embarrass them by planting loud smooches on their cheeks.

"Did you want to watch the rest of the tryouts?" James asked. "Any friends you want to cheer on?"

"I'd rather spend time with everyone." Iris already sounded more like herself.

"There is still some time before dinner." Lily said. "Could you ladies show Charles and Gerry around the castle? Harry, your father and I need to speak with you."

A strong burst of unrivaled joy was tainted by an undercurrent of dread rushed through him. Hermione looked from his parents then at him, and finally at the other girls. She had enough experience with parents to know that tone of voice.

"I'll be back later." Hermione squeezed his hand.

Harry gave her a nervous chuckle.

The rest of the group peeled off to leave Lily, James, and Harry with their privacy. He couldn't help but smile when he saw the two Hermione walk in the same stride. They fell beside each other and began to talk in a low whisper.

"This way." Lily motioned him towards the lake rather than the castle.

Harry stumbled a step as they arrived at the lake. A string of five gazebos were spaced evenly along the shore. He hadn't had much time outside of the castle yet.

"They didn't have these back there?" James asked with a chuckle.

Harry shook his head.

"These were our Seventh-Year project." Lily said with a happy little sigh. "The first *real* public piece the Marauders showcased. They are temperature controlled, silent, and can switch between two different sets of furniture."

"That's amazing." Harry nodded appreciatively.

"Don't try to distract your mother." James chided with a chuckle.

"Yes, dad." Harry said happily.

He liked the sound of that. James and Lily did too. The gazebo was set to have a collection of seating that faced out toward the lake. Lily motioned for Harry to sit before she took a seat of her own. They didn't look like much, but they were actually rather comfortable. He could see that Lily had to fight the urge to explain how they managed that.

"What do you know about Covens?" James asked before she could get distracted.

Harry blushed. He couldn't make words come out, so he just shook his head.

"A coven is a collection of witches that join together with one wizard." Lily explained. "In the past, this was to provide protection as it harmonized the magic between the group."

"It also helped keep a wizard handy when they wanted to get busy." James wiggled his eyebrows.

Lily sighed. Harry felt the blush that had been receding come back with force.

"What?" James laughed. "Here, in this world, witches outnumber wizards roughly three to one. Or is it four to one? Either way. Muggles are an option, obviously, but wizards from an established line are in higher demand."

"Established line?" Harry asked carefully.

"Second generation wizards." Lily provided. "If you were a muggle-born, any children of yours would be Established. The population is skewed even with relaxed view of mingling with muggles. These days, they have become more like business contracts than emotional connections. Line continuation, alliances, and all that Pureblood nonsense."

"Most include a clause for at least one child. You would not believe how popular we were when twins were born." James shook his head. "Pureblood families were tripping over themselves."

A thought struck him.

"The Weasleys must be very well connected." Harry muttered.

Lily and James winced.

"What?" Harry asked.

"That is a long story that we don't have time to explain." Lily shook her head. "Ask your sisters."

Harry smiled at that.

"Wait." His smile fell. "Rose is in the coven. Iris wants to be too. Is that... acceptable?"

"It's not so common anymore." James bobbed his head from side to side. "I'd say you're a special case though. It's not every day a dimension brother moves in."

"We will need to discuss boundaries over the holidays." Lily added with a firm tone.

"Because of the dimensional travel thing." James directed the conversation back to the topic at hand.

"We didn't have any contracts arranged for you. You're free to form a coven as you wish."

"Huh." Harry let the thought settle in.

"There are some friendly families that have asked about you." James added.

"James." Lily elbowed him in the ribs.

"What?" James gave her a hurt look. "He deserves to know."

"More witches?" Harry spoke carefully.

"Potentially." Lily soothed. "You don't have to agree to anything."

"There were some matches that didn't work out with the twins being so young." James continued. "Now that you're here, it opens the negotiations."

Harry couldn't help but laugh. He had come into this conversation with a lingering sense of dread. Now they were discussing possibly introducing more witches to his newly formed coven.

"Later." Harry shook his head. "Is there anything else I need to know about this?"

"A Naturally Formed Coven, like this one." Lily said. "Can be a bit hard to manage with all the contracts that have been formed. You're going to be popular, but there are going to be people out there who would rather you not be around."

"I'm used to people trying to kill me." Harry sighed.

James and Lily stared at him for a moment with a look of abject horror on their faces.

"That's not what I meant at all." Lily had to take a moment to pull herself together. "Killing a wizard is one of the worst crimes there is."

"But you said people wouldn't want me here." Harry arched an eyebrow.

"They won't invite you to holiday gatherings and give you the cold shoulder in public." James sounded like he was close to panic.

"Oh." Harry shrugged. "That's good to hear."

"We have got to sit down and talk about your life in detail." Lily shook her head.

"Any questions?" James sounded strained.

"Is there a size limit?" Harry asked. "No more than seven, groups of three, that sort of thing."

"Magic decides." Lily stated. "Most of the time, there is only one wizard in a coven. Not all of the members have to be physically intimate. An emotional connection is just as strong."

"Well." James let out a deep breath. "That was easier than expected."

26.

The trio found the girls and the twins in the Great Hall. He couldn't remember ever being in the room when in the room when it wasn't mealtime. Aside from the impromptu camp-out in Third Year. There were only a few other students scattered around the room. The group had taken up a spot at the end of the Hufflepuff table and were currently talking amongst themselves.

Harry paused to observe the scene. Delphi was doing her best not to constantly glare at Hermione. Thankfully, the other girl was too caught up in her conversation with her dimensional double to notice. Parvati, Lavender, Katie, and Rose were in a hushed discussion that occasionally was interrupted by giggles. The rest of the group appeared to be playing some sort of card game that he didn't recognize.

"Boom." Iris yelled as she placed her card on the table. "You just triggered my trap card."

The others in the game groaned.

"What are you playing?" Harry asked as he approached.

"Battleground." Iris replied with a happy smile.

"I have no idea what that is." Harry chuckled.

"Each player has their own character with an assigned deck." Iris explained. "There are the general cards, which are dealt every round, the specialty cards that are chosen at the start of the game, and then the hit-point tracker."

"We can explain later." Padma cut in.

Iris pouted.

"It sounds interesting." Harry offered. "Would you show me how to play later?"

That cheered her up. He gave Padma a thankful smile as Iris started to gather the cards. The Indian witch made a small motion to Delphi. He followed it to see that the witch in question watched the duo of Hermione's like a hawk. Her face was blank, but the fire behind her eyes danced. It wasn't the passion, or the borderline madness from when they had first met, but it was there.

"Delphi." Harry said.

The sound of her name made her jolt. Her body visibly relaxed as her eyes found Harry. He could see the emotion in her eyes at war with itself. She was practically shaking with nervous energy.

"Come on." Harry waved her over.

Delphi hopped out of her spot and rushed to him. She wrapped her arms around him tightly.

"Do you know somewhere we can talk?" Harry asked.

With all the extra students around he didn't trust the few places he knew to be open. That and he wasn't in any hurry to find that room on the seventh floor again. Delphi nodded.

"We'll be back." Harry announced as Delphi pulled him away.

They didn't stick around for anyone to respond. She led him to a side door off from the Great Hall. Harry took a look around the room. It felt familiar, but he couldn't place it. Delphi grabbed him by the hand and led him over to a nearby chair. She pushed him into it before she climbed into his lap with her legs tucked up beside him and her arms wrapped around his shoulders.

He let her settle against him for a moment. Her breath began to slow as they held each other.

"Oh." Harry said to himself. "I know this place."

Delphi looked up at him.

"They brought the champions here after they were announced." Harry explained. "I knew this room looked familiar. Last time I was here there were a lot more people."

She stared at him for a long moment. Her eyes roamed over his face, as though to catalogue every detail. She buried her face in his chest as she began to speak. Harry tried to understand what she was saying but the words were muffled.

"Delphi." Harry cleared his throat.

She paused to look at him. Tears streaked down her cheeks.

"Hey." He soothed. "I couldn't hear what you were saying. Don't cry."

"She can't take you." She whimpered.

"I'm not going anywhere." Harry began to stroke her back.

Delphi buried her face in his chest again to muffle her words. The details were lost which left him to decipher her intent with the pitch and speed. Her grip tightened on him periodically through her tangent. Finally, once she was done, she hopped off of his lap.

"May I kiss you?" Delphi asked softly.

Harry gave her a gentle smile and nodded. She leaned over as her lips found his. The gentle touch quickly became deeper. He pulled her close. Delphi happily straddled him as they took a brief break to breath. Her hands ran through his hair as their lips met again. Harry gripped her hips and pulled her closer. Delphi moaned at the increased contact.

She pulled back. Their eyes met. The fire in her own gaze was met with one that burned just as bright. Her hands trailed down his chest. They stopped at the bottom of his shirt.

"May I touch you?" Her voice came out breathy and full of need.

"Yes." Harry growled back.

Delphi practically tore his shirt off. It was a testament to the quality of the clothing that it remained intact. She gazed at his exposed skin in awe. Her fingers instinctively traced the various scars while her eyes hungrily followed along.

She let out a little whine before she launched herself forward. Her lips, tongue, and teeth joined her fingers in the exploration of his chest and stomach. Delphi grinded herself against his thighs as she worked on tasting every piece of freshly exposed skin.

"Please?" She whimpered as her hands found their way to his waistband.

Harry nodded.

Delphi dropped to her knees before him. She whispered a charm that wandlessly undid his pants button and zipper. With near reverence, she reached inside his boxers and began to stroke him to full hardness. They moaned in unison as the skin of her hand touched his raw shaft.

"So beautiful." She whispered as she pulled his cock out to see.

With lust drunk look on her face, Delphi wrapped her lips around his head. She swirled her tongue along the ridge and drew a groan from his lips. Harry's hips bucked a little on instinct while his hands ran through her short black hair. Delphi hummed happily as she took him a little deeper and sucked harder. She bobbed her head up and down his length many times.

Delphi pulled away. She met his gaze with a bright smile.

Harry tilted his head back and groaned. The sensation of the air hitting his saliva coated cock heightened the sensitivity. Delphi dropped back down. She bobbed her head back and forth, her tongue slithered along his rigid length. Each motion ended with her pulling off his cock with a pop.

She dove deeper. Her plump lips dragged back up along his shaft. She held his throbbing head in her mouth with her hand and stroked him furiously. Harry threw back his head as his legs began to shake.

"Delphi." He managed to moan out as he exploded in her mouth.

Delphi stroked him through his climax. She sucked hard to make sure to draw every last drop out of cock. A happy hum left her through as she pulled off of him. He let out a little yelp as her lips slid across his oversensitive head. She placed a small kiss on the crown as she sat back with a sigh.

"You didn't have to do that." Harry said through deep breaths. "I'm not going anywhere."

"I've been wanting to do that since our duel, love." Delphi giggled. "May we continue?"

"I don't think we have enough time for that." Harry groaned. "Everyone is waiting for us."

"Shame." Delphi pouted. "Tonight?"

"We'll see." Harry chuckled. "Can you get me my pants?"

Delphi watched as his member throbbed as it returned to its relaxed state. She leaned forward, her tongue flicked along his knob. Harry jolted back in the chair.

"I didn't want to spill." Delphi said innocently.

Harry shook his head and let out a tired chuckle. She made no effort to return his pants to him. He felt her eyes on him as he got dressed once more. Even with his clothes on, her eyes devoured him.

"That was amazing." Harry gave her a quick kiss.

She beamed at the praise.

"It made me feel better too." Delphi smiled wickedly at him. "Can I do it again when I get sad?"

"Come on." Harry chuckled.

"One more kiss?" Delphi asked before he got to the door.

Harry turned toward her. He pulled her close and gave her a quick kiss. It was just beyond chaste, but he didn't want to push it for now. Only a slight nudge would send him beyond the limits of his control. He doubted that Delphi would mind if he just mounted her right here, but he didn't want that to be how things went. He knew that it was dangerous if he let hormones lead when it came to dealing with her.

"Would you like to get to know her?" Harry asked. "Maybe you could talk to Padma too? You two both enjoy dueling."

"Sure." Delphi replied with a contented smile.

One blowjob had done her worries wonders. Maybe he should let her do it again when she got worried.

27.

Hermione shot him a question filled look as he approached. She didn't miss the fact the contented smirk that Delphi wore, nor the slightly rumbled clothing. And she wasn't the only one. Professor McGonagall waited near the others for Harry and Delphi to rejoin the group.

He did a quick headcount of the coven so far. There was Hermione, Other Hermione, Rose, Iris, Padma, Lavender, Katie, Delphi, Luna, and Parvati. He wasn't sure if Parvati was a part of things though.

"Due to the circumstances." Professor McGonagall spoke clearly. "You are free to visit Hogsmeade for the evening."

The girls around him perked up. His Hermione looked like she was going to burst. Harry couldn't deny he was just as excited.

Lily and James led them out of the Great Hall. They opted to walk rather than take a carriage. Harry was thankful for that. He didn't feel like answering any questions about the 'talk' he had with Delphi. He smiled as Hermione walked beside Lily. She launched a constant string of questions at her, which his mother answered with ease.

The other Hermione, he really needed to come up with a better way to think of her, had placed herself next to her dimensional twin. As odd as it was, she seemed more content around her than the others. Padma came in a close second. The newly added Ravenclaw was a bit lost among the crowd. Parvati had tagged along with Lavender, Rose, and Katie, but she still managed to try to interact with her sister. Iris swooped in to save the day. The younger girl smoothly slipped in step with the Ravenclaw and drew her into a conversation.

Everyone was spaced out just enough to keep close, but not so much as to overlap conversations. Harry took in the scene. He felt a gentle smile cross his face. It was one he had worn quite a lot since he had arrived in his new home.

Harry had only been to Hogsmeade a couple of times. From what he could remember, it was a small village with maybe three hundred residents, and that was a generous estimate. There had to be some people who lived there year-round to support the various businesses. The joke shop, bookstore, two pubs, and the café couldn't survive solely on the few Hogwarts visits.

Hogsmeade here wasn't a village. It was practically a city. The streets were smooth stone instead of packed dirt. There were three-story apartment buildings made out of brick, and private homes that looked like smaller version of Victorian mansions. It even had a commercial district with strips of tightly packed shops. In the middle of it all was a smaller version of the Gringotts. The entire place was an odd mix of Victorian architecture and 1940s London. It was almost like they had simply transplanted buildings from the city over to the town.

He could spot the familiar stores, but there were at least ten more that he didn't know. There was a haberdashery, cobbler, and three different clothing stores. The Three Broomsticks looked to be a proper pub rather than a medieval tavern. It was larger too. There were a couple of restaurants nearby that he didn't recognize. He spotted a Muggle Nibbles building as well.

Of course, Hermione noticed the row of bookstores first. Her dimensional twin led her into a store that sold used books. They both wore the same smile. Harry chuckled as they pulled Padma along with them. Delphi watched them leave with a slight frown on her face but kept close to him.

"You can join them." Harry whispered.

Delphi jumped at the sound of his voice.

"I don't know what you are talking about." She shrugged.

"You're a Ravenclaw." Harry chuckled. "Skipping a bookstore is like torture to you."

Delphi glared at him. She slowly took a step away. Harry smiled at her. She took another step, then scampered off after the trio. Luna joined her, smoothly syncing up with her strides.

Harry felt, rather than saw, as Rose moved into the free spot beside him.

"She freaked me out at first." Rose slipped her hand in his.

"And now?" Harry asked.

"She won't hurt me. Any of us, I mean. There's a connection." Rose leaned her head on his shoulder.

"You can feel it, right? Like a thread between all of us."

Harry nodded. Katie stepped up and wrapped her arms around his waist.

"You're hogging the Harry." The brunette chaser pouted.

"We need to fix that." Lavender slipped up against his other side. She draped his arm over her shoulders.

"Hermione could make a schedule." Harry chuckled.

"That's not a bad idea." Rose mumbled.

Katie was a little too tall to ride on his back, so she had to walk in-step with him. Not to be left out, Iris wiggled her way in front of him. They were now a walking dog-pile.

"Are you comfortable?" Harry asked Iris.

She 'accidentally' brushed her butt against his crotch.

"Now I am." Iris said as she shot him a wink over her shoulder.

Katie's breath tickled the back of his neck while Lavender squeezed his arm against her chest. Harry had to focus to keep himself upright. He could only hope that Iris didn't notice the hardness pressed against her tight butt. She would have to be numb from the neck down, but he could hope.

"Do you think she'll stay?" Rose dropped her voice low.

"I don't know." Harry sighed. "I don't know if it's possible."

"What do you mean?" Rose kept her voice low. "The Room brought her here; it should be able to get her back. Right?"

"I stepped through the Mirror of Erised." Harry explained. "I think that's a pretty big part of it. Has the mirror even been in Hogwarts?"

"No." Iris spoke up. "Magical Artifacts of a C-Rating or higher are kept under guard in the Department of Mysteries."

Harry gave her a nod of appreciation.

"How do you know that?" Katie asked.

"The world's first broom is kept there." Iris replied. "There are all sorts of enchantments on it that are illegal these days."

"She wanted to steal it." Rose smiled at her sister.

"Borrow." Iris blushed. "Borrow it. For a while. Without asking. Or give it back."

"That's stealing." Lavender laughed.

Hermione and the others moved from one bookstore to the next. She had to get an expandable bag to carry all of the books she had bought. It was dinner time by the time they were finished. James and Lily were happy to cover the cost. Hermione gave them each a bone-crushing hug in thanks.

The girls attached to Harry took the time to show him the other shops in the area. There were a couple of brooms he had never heard of in the Quidditch shop. He didn't look around in there too much. It brought up a tangle of emotions when he thought about the sport.

Lavender picked up on his dip in energy first. She took him to one of the shops that specialized in dueling. One wall was dedicated to posters that displayed famous duelists. They were silent, but still moved. There were quite a few rude gestures thrown from one poster to another. The oddest bit was a duelist who had multiple posters that spanned a four-year period. Each version of her looked rather confused when faced with their clone.

"What would happen if the posters were linked?" Harry asked as he watched the poor duelist.

Lavender thought about it for a moment. She opened her mouth to speak, then closed it. The process repeated a couple of times.

"I don't know." She said slowly. "It would either be amazing, or terrible."

"How so?" Harry asked.

"Well, they could possibly duel to see who's better." She dropped her voice so only he could hear. "Or they could try to kill each other."

"Why would they do that?" Harry cocked his head to the side.

"Professional Duelists are highly competitive." Lavender replied with a nod.

"Can a portrait die?" Harry whispered.

"I don't think so." Lavender shrugged.

Thankfully, further conversation was interrupted by dinner. He tried not to think about it while watching Hermione and her double. Who would win in a duel between the two? He didn't think they would try to kill each other. Well, not yet anyway. They were different enough to be their own person rather than the same just copied over.

They settled on The Portkey. It was a restaurant that didn't exist in the other world. The place had a decent crowd even though it was the middle of the week.

"That was wonder, Mrs. Potter." Hermione smiled brightly.

"None of that." Lily waved the words away. "Call me Lily."

"Thank you, Lily." Hermione smiled again.

"We should get back to the castle." James said with a sigh. "It's getting late."

There were carriages outside when they finished. He was too tired to care about the details. His stomach was full, it was warm, and the ride back to the castle almost put him to sleep. He gave his parents each a hug before they left. Harry had worried that it would be awkward, but it felt as natural as anything.

It wasn't until the group of Gryffindors reached the tower that they realized Hermione didn't have a place to sleep. There wasn't an open bed in the dorms. Even though the two got along, the Hermione's didn't feel comfortable sharing a bed.

"There's enough space in my room." Harry offered.

The lionesses stared at Harry like he had grown another head.

"Right." Lavender leered at him.

"There is." Harry shook his head. "I can sleep on the couch. Tomorrow, we can ask Professor McGonagall to get something arranged."

Hermione, his Hermione, stared at him for a moment. A slow blush brightened her cheeks.

"I don't have any nightclothes." She whispered.

"And there's only one bed." Lavender added.

"Stop it." The Other Hermione rolled her eyes. "Come on, I'll give you one of mine."

"Thank you." Hermione followed after her double.

Harry joined the others as they made their way into the Common Room. There was a private entry there as well. He could see the perks of being Head Boy. A couple of minutes later, Hermione hurried back downstairs with a bundle of clothes in her arms.

She didn't say anything to the others. Instead, she headed straight to the door and waited.

"Goodnight." Harry said to the others.

"You have a good night too." Lavender teased. "Treat her right."

"Stop it." Katie slapped Lavender on the shoulder.

Harry opened the door and let Hermione go in first. She looked around the room with an appraising eye.

"There's a private bathroom through there." He motioned to another door. "You can get changed in there. I need to grab a pillow and a blanket then I'll move to the couch."

He turned to grab something from the bed. A tug on his sleeve stopped him. He looked back at Hermione and found her much closer than he expected.

"I gave myself some advice." Hermione whispered. "Great, now I sound crazy."

"What?" Harry asked.

"The other me." She said. "She gave me advice when I was up there."

"Ok." Harry waited.

She didn't say anything.

"What was it?" He asked finally.

"Don't be a coward." Hermione whispered.

Harry glared at the door they had just come through.

"You are not a coward." He growled. "I don't care if she has your face, she does not get-"

Hermione pulled him into a kiss. A bolt of energy rushed along his body.

"I am when it comes to you." Hermione whispered. "I love you, Harry."

Harry kissed her again. A soft, slow kiss full of emotion. Her borrowed clothes hit the ground as she wrapped her arms around him. Harry rested his hands on her hips as the kiss deepened. He reached lower and grabbed a handful of her firm ass.

"Harry." Hermione squeaked.

"I have wanted to do that for years." Harry chuckled.

"Really?" Hermione blushed at him.

He nodded. She pulled him back towards the bed. They stopped at the edge. With a small, shy smile she began to undress. Harry's eyes widened, he had expected a kiss, maybe some groping. Not this. His brain short-circuited as Hermione stripped completely nude.

His hands stopped moving as he admired her. He could feel his mouth water as he took in the sight of her. Her breasts were maybe a handful, but they were perfect for her, and her nipples were a wonderful shade of pink. He stared at her, trying to commit every inch of her to memory. She had a trimmed patch of dark brown pubic hair.

Hermione interrupted his appreciation as she dropped to her knees before him. With a giggle, she had his pants down and out of the way in a matter of moments. Her dexterous fingers began to caress his shaft and sack. She wrapped a hand around his hardening member to speed it along.

"How are you so big?" She whispered as she stroked him. "You're so skinny."

He couldn't think enough to form words.

Hermione kissed the tip of his cock. His jaw dropped as he watched her swirl her tongue along the ridge of his cockhead. She looked up at him and waited for their eyes to meet before she took him into her mouth.

Harry moaned as she started to bob slowly. Each time she went a little deeper. It didn't take long for his crown to tap the back of her throat. She backed off to take a break and breath. Her hands kept busy. She stroked him as she stared up at him. The lust drunk glaze on her eyes sent a thrill through his body.

Hermione giggled as she stood. She pushed him on his back onto the bed. Hermione straddled him. She rubbed her already wet slit along his shaft. Harry moaned as she rocked back and forth. She cooed and ground into him each time the head of his cock brushed her clit.

"How are you so good at this?" Harry muttered.

"Books." She replied with a hungry look.

Hermione reached between them to angle his member as she rocked forward. They both moaned as his cock slipped into her. The two of them stilled for a moment to savor the feeling.

"So big." She moaned as she started to grind against him.

His brain refused to supply him with words. He reached up to take her breasts in his hands. They did fit nicely with a bit of room to spare. He caressed her nipple with the pad of his thumb, before rolling it between his fingers. She moaned and leaned into his hand.

"You are so damn sexy." Harry finally managed to conjure words.

In response, she picked up speed. She rocked back and forth as she rode him. Harry pulled her down into a kiss. The new angle allowed more room to thrust, which he took full advantage of. She moaned into his mouth. Their bodies started to clap as she moved to meet each thrust.

Hermione placed a series of quick kisses along his jaw. She continued on down his neck. Harry groaned as he felt her teeth against his skin. Her pace somehow increased. She pounded down into him, her hips moving as fast as she could.

"Harry, fuck. I'm cumming!" She screamed.

It was too much. Harry groaned. His hands shifted to her hips. He lifted her up a few inches and held her there as he slammed into her as fast and as hard as he could. Harry tightened his grip on her hips. He pulled her down, not content to let gravity determine how deep he could reach. Harry pulled her down into a kiss. The extra sensation sent him over the edge. He released rope after rope of hot cum inside of her. She shook with each pulse.

"Wow." Hermione drew the word out.

"Agreed." Harry nodded.

She cooed as she rested atop him. A contented smile played on her face as she enjoyed the feeling of being filled with his cum. Harry felt his eyes drift closed as the afterglow settled on them. Hermione snuggled against his chest.

Neither of them had enough energy, or desire to move. He began to absently stroke a hand along her back as they drifted off to sleep together.

28.

Harry woke up with something warm and soft pressed against his chest. At some point he had turned on his side through the night and had started to spoon his partner. His eyes didn't want to open just yet. He was comfortable. The memories from last night started to surface. A wide smile crossed his face as he realized that it was Hermione pressed against him.

He ran his hands along her side. The soft moan she let out made his morning wood reach full mast. He pulled her tighter against him. Hermione gasped as his teeth gently brushed against the back of her neck.

Hermione let out a sleepy moan. She wiggled back against him. He felt the moment when she actually woke up.

"Harry." Hermione whispered.

"Yes? Hermione." Harry whispered back.

"That feels wonderful, but you need to stop." Hermione pushed her ass back against his member in contrast to her words.

Harry slid his hands up to her breasts. He teased her hips to hardness with his fingers.

"Oh?" Harry asked. "Why is that?"

"I really need to use the facilities." Hermione giggled.

"I'll accept that for now." Harry released her from his grasp.

She sprang from the bed then hurried to the attached bathroom. Harry laughed as the door slammed shut. He rolled onto his back, then let out a sigh. Last night hadn't been a dream. He hoped things wouldn't get weird between them. A kiss or two was one thing, sex was an entirely different league.

He started to doze. Thoughts began to float to the forefront of his mind before they faded away. Would they assign her a room? Would they let her stay in his? How would Delphi take the news? Would Rose be mad? Did covens have a schedule system? If the owl always crunched the lollipop, then did they ever learn how many licks it would take?

"Harry." Hermione's lovely, soft voice called.

He grunted in reply but didn't stir. The bed dipped as someone joined him. He let out a happy low sound as deft fingers stroked his bare chest.

"You need to wake up." Her voice was just above a whisper.

The bed shifted again as she moved closer. Her breath teased her ear.

"I guess I'll just have to take a shower alone." She nipped at the edge of his earlobe.

His eyes snapped open. She wore one of his shirts. It was too big for her. The shirt hung ever so wonderfully with just a tease at her nude form. Hermione let out a loud giggle when he pulled her

closer. She climbed on top of him. The brush of her bare flesh sent a thrill through his body as she slid across to the other side of the bed.

"Shower." Her voice trailed after her as she fled to the bathroom.

She stopped at the door. With a look over her shoulder she flipped the back of the shirt up just enough to flash her tantalizing ass at him.

Harry leaped out of bed. He made it two strides before he heard the door to his room open. In that moment two facts became crystal clear. One, he was painfully aroused and completely naked in the middle of the room. Two, he hadn't set a password on his door yet.

His reaction speed had always been good. Years as a Seeker had helped to sharpen it further. Unfortunately, he didn't have the practical experience to switch from horny caveman brain to critical thinking brain. As such, he was completely exposed as Rose entered the room.

"Har-EEEEK" Her voice cut out in a squeak when she noticed his current state.

Her cheeks flushed red, but she didn't look away. The sound of the shower broke the moment of awkwardness. She laughed. He joined in a moment later.

"Hermione is in the shower?" Rose asked.

Harry nodded.

"And it went well last night?" Rose teased.

"A gentleman doesn't kiss and tell." Harry shot her a mock-glare.

"Harry." Hermione called from the bathroom. "Where are you?"

She stepped into view and lounged against the doorframe. Her eyes hungrily ran over his nude form.

"Morning." Rose said with a bright smile.

"Rose!" Hermione jumped back into the bathroom. "Uh... morning."

"I'll see you at breakfast." Rose shook her head.

She chuckled before she left the room.

"Um." Hermione looked at him. She was still mostly hidden behind the bathroom door. Her face was bright red. "Save the sexy shower for another time?"

Harry nodded. She furrowed her brow as he entered the bathroom.

"I still need a shower." He explained.

Harry moved to stand under the water. He started to soap up. Hermione watched him for a moment. She enjoyed the way his naked body moved under the water. A small bit of imagination had him in a waterfall rather than a shower. She desperately strode over to him with a coy smile.

"Wash my back?" She asked with a small pout.

Harry didn't trust himself to have enough brain power to form cohesive words. He nodded. Harry had completed quite a few 'impossible' tasks in his young life. Here, in the shower with Hermione, was a true test of his will. The hunger in her eyes made it all the more difficult.

Somehow, they managed to get through the shower with an acceptable amount of groping.

The girls had provided Hermione with a selection of clothes from their varied wardrobes. A collection of sporty, sexy, and practical articles of clothing waited on the desk when they got out of the shower. Harry completed another test of willpower as he watched Hermione get dressed. The nearly sheer bra and pants set she picked looked amazing on her. It was a wonderful sight to see. They were magical and were able to adjust to her size.

"Ready?" Hermione asked once she was fully dressed.

She had settled on a simple set of jeans and a t-shirt. The weather hadn't turned cold like it had in the other Hogwarts. She planned on enjoying it while she could. Hermione found him dressed in only a towel around his waist with a noticeable bulge in the front.

"Harry." She giggled. "Really."

Harry blushed.

"Tonight." Hermione pressed a gentle kiss on his cheek.

He blushed at the brief contact. It sent a shiver down his spine. He forced himself to get dressed. There wasn't any time to waste if he wanted to get to tonight.

~§~§~

They arrived at breakfast to see the rest of the coven that had waited for them. The group sat separately from the rest of the students, but not far enough to be rude. He felt a subtle connection with each of them. A phantom sensation of their touch.

Lavender laughed and held her hand out to Katie. The older girl grumbled as she gave her a couple of coins. A moment later, the other Hermione added a couple as well.

He really needed to come up with another way to address her.

"You bet on us?" Harry shook his head.

"It wasn't much of a bet." Lavender beamed at him.

Harry turned his attention to Delphi. She didn't look enthusiastic about the development, but she also didn't look like she was about to attack Hermione. Her expression was a slight frown that he had come to know as her resting face. As usual, Luna sat beside her. She had a plate of pancakes covered in whipped cream and syrup. Padma sat between the other Hermione and Delphi.

"Are you ok?" Harry asked her.

"She's in the coven." Delphi nodded. "If she wasn't, then there would be a problem."

Harry shrugged. The change in her attitude gave him whiplash. She had been willing to fight to date him, now she was content to share.

Harry gathered his breakfast as the coven settled into casual conversation. The trio had started to discuss dueling, Katie and Iris were focused on Quidditch, and Lavender whispered something to Rose.

"Luna." Hermione said after a moment.

"Yes." Luna replied.

"Can I speak to you alone?" Hermione asked the bright-eyed girl.

"Yes." Luna replied in the same tone.

Harry watched as the two left the room. He turned back to the group.

"What's on the schedule for today?" He asked.

"I'm in the first bracket to duel." Lavender spoke up. "Luna and Hermione are in the one after."

"And this afternoon is quidditch try-outs for Mid." Katie added.

"Then dinner with mother." Delphi purred. She stared at him like a puma looking at a rabbit.

"It looks like we've got a busy day." Harry gulped.

29.

Harry tried not to tense up when Luna and Hermione joined them in the stands for the duels. Delphi had taken a spot right next to him while Katie sat on the other side. Luna diffused the situation when she plopped down next to her fellow Ravenclaw. Hermione sat next to the Other Hermione and the two quickly fell into a conversation about magical theory. The main topic focused on dueling styles.

Their academic discussion soon the duo had drawn in Padma and Delphi. The tension melted away before the first duel was announced.

The first up was one of Neville's sisters, she was a third year Gryffindor. Her opponent was a Hufflepuff girl that Harry didn't recognize. He wasn't sure if that meant he was someone from this world or not. Even after the basilisk was defeated, he didn't have much contact with the members of the badgers. He knew Cedric in passing. No one had a bad word to say about him. Then there was the loudmouth Justin Finch-Fletchley. If there was ever a Hufflepuff in the wrong house, it was him. He should have been in Slytherin with Crabbe and Goyle. The wizard didn't even rate high enough to be compared to Malfoy.

Every guy from second year up knew Susan Bones and Hannah Abbot. There were certain girls who were so hot that they transcended House rivalries. The pair were bombshells on legs. Even the frumpy school robes couldn't hide their curves.

His attention was pulled away from his thoughts as the duel started.

"Is elemental magic a requirement?" Hermione asked as two streams of fire crossed the platform.

"Each person has their own preferred element to work with." Padma explained. "But you can use any of them. Fire is hard to control, but flashy so most duelists use it for distraction rather than attacks."

The jets of fire faded as they spoke.

"It's an amateur move." Delphi sighed. "A flame whip can be devastating instead of just a light show."

"And if you don't cast it right you can set yourself on fire." The other Hermione countered.

"Conjuration, transfiguration, and charms are the most common after elemental magic." Padma continued. "Control and creativity are the most important tools for a duelist."

"Which is why Granger never makes it to the finals." Delphi shot a smug look at Hermione.

The other Hermione bristled. A hand on her shoulder from her twin calmed her down.

"Why do you say that?" Hermione asked.

"Her chains are all from a book." Delphi said with a shrug. "Books that a good dueling coach would have and know how to counter."

"She's fast." Padma offered. "Good power too, but she's not wrong." She leaned over to look at the other Hermione. "Dresden's Compendium, right?"

The other Hermione nodded.

"That's a good one." Padma offered a small smile. "And Rincewind's Charter for defense."

Hermione nodded again.

"I've never heard of either." Hermione shrugged.

"Dresden is an American wizard." The other Hermione explained. "Rincewind is a wizard from the Unseen University."

"What is that?" Hermione asked.

"It's a University for witches and wizards to further the study of magic." The other Hermione said. "You have to get an invitation."

"That sounds amazing." Hermione spoke in a tone that almost sounded like Luna.

"It is." The other Hermione smiled at her.

"That's it." Harry shook his head. "This is too much."

The four of them turned to face him.

"What?" Padma asked.

"Hermione and Hermione, we need to find a way to tell you two apart." Harry motioned to the twins.

"I guess I could go by Jean." His Hermione offered. "You were here first."

"No." The other Hermione shook her head. "You can call me Miranda."

Both of them blushed.

"Miranda?" Harry asked.

"It was the name of my favorite teacher." The newly named girl explained. "She was beautiful, and she liked my hair."

Hermione nodded with a shy smile.

"Ok." Harry smiled back. "Hermione and Miranda."

"Anyway." Padma gave Harry an annoyed look. "The two books are common enough for most duelists Rank C or higher have studied."

"Those are the two you use?" Delphi gawked at the newly named Miranda.

She nodded.

"No wonder you lose." Delphi rolled her eyes. "The two are complete opposites. Rincewind is a full defense, there are at most three shield spells that are suitable for dueling. Every spell was made with the sole intent on survival through escape. Dresden is a style of all-out attack for when you're backed into a corner and want to go down fighting. You can retreat and charge at the same time."

Miranda had a look on her face that Harry had seen many times. It was one echoed by Hermione as well. They both hung on every word.

"Rincewind's Defensive spells are incredibly powerful. Just like Dresden's offensive spells. Your magic is going to have to work twice as hard." Delphi continued. "Every time you duel, you have opened with a Dresden Chain, then switched over to a Rincewind Barrier. Your magic surges out only for you to yank it back in the opposite direction."

"What would you suggest?" Miranda asked with actual interest.

"Start with the Barrier." Delphi suggested. "With enough power you can block anything short of the Unforgiveable and the sneakier charms. Most duelists try an all-out attack from the beginning." She motioned to the duel, it was a different one now, but the first move was similar, just without the fire. "The barrier would block their opening volley. Follow it with a chain and you'll have a better chance, even with a textbook grouping."

"Wow." Hermione whispered. "I need to find those books."

"There are others I can point out too." Padma offered.

"Wait." Hermione paused. "Why wouldn't the barrier block other charms?"

"There are other spells than just the Unforgivables that can't be blocked." Padma chimed in.

"How?" Hermione scrunched her brow.

"They are either too precise to counter, or not threatening enough to warrant a response." Padma continued. "You could probably counter it if I tried to summon your shirt. That's too overt. However, if I were to summon the buttons, that's something else."

"Subconsciously your magic categorizes incoming spells as dangerous or benign." Delphi clarified. "It takes a long time to change that thought process."

"A breath freshening charm, for example." Padma twirled her wand.

Hermione squeaked in shock as a minty gust of wind swirled around her mouth.

"Instinctively, your magic didn't find it threatening." Padma said. "Partially due to the surprise, but also the intent needed to cast the spell. It can be countered with a simple *Finite*, but you have to recognize it in time. Your shield won't block it because the spell isn't one you would consider a threat."

"Shhh." Luna spoke up. "It's Lavender's turn."

"This isn't finished." Hermione whispered.

The group cheered as Lavender stepped up to the platform. She flashed them a smile before a mask of indifference slid into place. The group watched intently as the duel started. Unlike the others, Lavender didn't use much in the way of Elemental magic. Instead, she set up chains that intensified the previous volley in a complex multi-stage trap. She whispered her spells instead of shouting like her opponent. The other witch made a small misstep that became her downfall. Lavender won a moment later by disarming her opponent.

"She's good." Miranda nodded.

Lavender turned to the stands and blew a kiss at Harry. He winked at her in reply. The group settled back into a quiet conversation of dueling tactics. Soon the topic had swapped to spell-craft. Harry listened with half an ear. Katie had been drawn into a conversation with another witch nearby. He didn't want to interrupt her, so he just enjoyed the feeling of being there with them.

Unfortunately, Lavender didn't win her next duel. She put up a good fight, but her opponent, Daphne Greengrass, a witch he was pretty sure existed in the other world, was better. Padma let them know that the witch had her International Debut the previous season.

Delphi didn't say anything. Instead, she watched the victorious witch with a borderline glare.

Padma caught his eyes before he could speak. She shook her head. Harry decided to listen.

The first round of duels held little interest once Lavender joined them. He managed to congratulate her before she was assimilated into the discussion. Harry watched the matches with a bored detachment. It was easy to spot the students that studied together, either independently or with coaches. He picked up on the patterns of their spell choice and tactics.

This round continued on after the qualifying round as well. Luna and Miranda slipped away once the final duel had been concluded. He didn't know either of the witches, so he was more interested in the latest sweets that Luna had revealed. It was a lollipop with a swirl of color that shifted with each lick. She saw him watching and popped it in his mouth as she passed by.

He smiled at her as she made her way to the staging area. Harry turned back to the others just in time to see Hermione shake her head in bewilderment. He flashed her a bright smile then turned back to watch the duels.

Luna was up first. She danced while her opponent threw spells at her. Somehow, the petite blonde could cast her own without a pause in her flow. Her spells conjured bursts of flower petals that became a swarm of bees that exploded in small puffs of color when they were struck. She finished the duel with an air-whip aimed in mid-pirouette that knocked the other duelist from the platform. Neither Padma nor Delphi could explain how she had done half of her spells let alone worked out her tactics.

Miranda was up next, they even introduced her as Miranda Granger. She started the duel with a barrier spell and followed it up with a hard-hitting spell chain that knocked her opponent from the platform. Miranda looked up to the stands with a wide-eyed shock clear on her face. She gave a small wave before she returned to the staging area in a daze.

"I don't think she thought that would work." Lavender laughed.

She wasn't as lucky in her next showing. Her opponent knew how to slip through the barrier and counter the chain that followed. Miranda was frustrated, but the initial victory softened the blow.

Luna didn't win her second match either. She hopped off the platform in the middle of the duel for some reason. It took a moment for everyone to figure it out since her opponent had launched another spell-chain out of habit.

She skipped up to the stands a moment later.

"What happened?" Harry asked as she approached.

Luna gave him a dreamy smile but didn't answer. All too soon, it was lunch. He only had a few more hours to prepare for dinner with Bellatrix and Professor Riddle.

It was really too bad he didn't have his cloak.

30.

Harry adjusted the collar of his shirt again. He had decided to go with muggle attire rather than formal wizard robes. A nice dress shirt, some slacks, and dragon-hide oxfords were respectable without being over the top or too casual. He had seen Professor Riddle wear muggle suits more often than robes.

It was still weird to think of him as Professor Riddle. Though it did help separate him from Voldemort. The fact that he was a flesh and blood person rather than some strange homunculus in a dream was another big factor.

Delphi and the others watched him from nearby. They had all convinced the portrait guarding the room that they should be allowed access as part of his coven. The poor guardian had no chance once Hermione and Miranda teamed up against it. Not to mention the times Luna chimed in.

"What do you think?" Harry turned to face his witches.

The shirt was a subdued Gryffindor red, while the pants and shoes were black. His wand holster was charmed to fit under his sleeve for easy access. He didn't think there would be trouble, but it was better to be prepared. A torn sleeve would be a worthy sacrifice.

"You look wonderful, lover." Delphi strutted over to him and wrapped an arm around his waist

Delphi turned him to face the mirror. She wore a sleeveless deep emerald dress that was snug to her chest down to her waist, but then loosened out to allow it to swish when she walked. The color was a nod to her Slytherin bloodline. It also went nicely with his eyes. Her short hair had a bit of extra curliness and looked like a shorter version of her mother's style.

She caught his wandering eyes. A predatory smile crossed her face as she returned the favor. The fact that she wasn't his first had irked her. She knew that being in his coven meant she had to share, but she didn't want to wait. Finally, she had found her wizard and she wanted him desperately. He was so powerful that it only made sense that he needed more than one witch. It wasn't common, but strong witches, and wizards, could effectively overload their lovers magic if the imbalance was too much. The fact that her father and her mother were both incredibly powerful was the only reason she hadn't been turned into a walking husk with so much exposure.

Delphi might have carried a little of the Black Madness, but she wasn't stupid. She knew that Harry was a bonfire in a world of torches. With the proper training and focus he could potentially be stronger than her father and Dumbledore. She would need help to handle him for a long-term relationship.

"You both look good." Rose offered.

"Thank you." Delphi inclined her head.

Rose had more of a connection to Harry. In time, she hoped to be on the same level. She appreciated the fact that the girl had accepted her into the coven. Rose and Hermione were the two that could easily remove any of the others. She wasn't quite sure yet who had a higher rank between the two. The arrival of Hermione had unsettled the forming coven. It was still early enough to make adjustments, but she was an unknown.

"You need to hurry." Hermione said. A magical display of the time floated in the air beside her.

Harry winced. How had it taken so long to get dressed? Delphi chuckled at his expression. They exited the room with the other girls sending their best wishes after them.

Delphi giggled as they hurried down the halls. She sped ahead of Harry, so he had to chase after her. His eyes seemed to glow with happiness as he pursued her. Iris and Lavender had tried to convince her to wear high heels. There was no way she would subject herself to such a thing. Instead, she went for knee-high boots with a roper heel that was on par with the school uniform mary janes.

Her giggle shifted to a cackle as she got closer to the stairs. They weren't aligned with the floor she wanted. Her pace didn't slow. In fact, she sped up. She leaped up onto the handrail and kicked off into the open space. Without a second thought, Harry dove over after her a moment later. He didn't have a plan to save her, but he would come up with something before they hit the ground.

Delphi held out a hand to him. Her expression was playful rather than full of terror as he had expected. She also wasn't in freefall, and neither was he. It felt like he was in an elevator.

His speed increased ever so slightly to catch up to her as he took her outstretched hand. There was a solid platform made of air under their feet. He tapped it a couple of times with the tip of his shoe. It didn't give.

"How did you know?" Harry asked her.

"Every year there are at a dozen or so firsties that take a tumble on the stairs." Delphi smiled at him with a wild edge. "There are so many towers that they had to come up with some sort of safety measure."

Harry shook his head. He had never heard of something like that where he had come from. Did it even exist in that Hogwarts? She leaned over and placed a gentle kiss on his cheek.

"Thank you for saving me." Delphi snuggled against his side.

"As long as I breath." Harry squeezed her hand.

Delphi hid her face against his chest to hide her blush. She had mellowed out considerably since the coven formed. Her outbursts settled once she figured out that she wouldn't lose him.

Harry smiled. His world had changed so much in such a little time, literally. How many days had it been? Seven? A week? He counted them off. There was the initial arrival, the day after he met his parents and stayed the night at their place. On Sunday he returned to Hogwarts for placement testing. He had four days of classes. Yesterday had been the duels and when Hermione had arrived. Now, it was Sunday again.

Just over a week.

The realization made his head spin. He felt Delphi squeeze his arm. They had landed without him noticing. She looked at him with a concerned expression on her face. He smiled back to ease her worry.

"Lost in thought." He shrugged. "Do you know where we're meeting them?"

"In my father's private rooms." Delphi answered. "He has a sitting room and a dining area for family gatherings. My mother likes to have private meals when she visits."

"That's nice." Harry said. "Does she visit often?"

"It depends on her touring schedule." Delphi replied. "She's in the top ten rank of International Duelists. A lot of her time is dedicated to training and study. Most of the time, she's able to visit once a month. There isn't an 'off season' for dueling. She's at the level where it's challenge based rather than tourneys."

"Can you explain that a little more?" Harry asked with a shrug.

"Tourneys, tournaments, are the standard type of dueling competition." Delphi explained. "It's what the school is doing, and how things will go when the others arrive."

Harry nodded.

"After you make a name for yourself on the International Circuit, you don't do tournaments anymore." Delphi continued. "Or, if you do, the tournament is a contest to determine who will duel you. My mother is in the top ten, meaning that only duelists from rank one to twenty can challenge her. It has to be issued through formal channels, they meet to discuss terms, and then schedule the actual duel at a later date. That is the only way to move up once you've hit the top twenty. If you challenge and win against a higher opponent, then you climb the ranks. You only drop in the lists if you lose to a lower ranked duelist. They also have to find a fitting venue. High profile duels can sell out an arena in minutes."

"How do they determine your rank?" Harry asked.

"The dueling records." Delphi directed him down a set of stairs. "Wins, losses, and draws. Every duelist starts out unranked. You have to compete in a tournament to be added to the lists. International and domestic ranks are kept separately. The domestic circuit is split into two portions, local and national, but the ranking carries over."

"That is a lot more complex than I expected." Harry chuckled.

"No, it isn't." Delphi flashed him a smile with that edge of hers. "Win. Simple as that. Everything else will take care of itself."

Harry shook his head.

They arrived much faster than he had expected. This was the first time he had ever met a girl's parents. Now that he thought about it, he hadn't ever met Hermione's parents. He had seen them at a distance, but they had never been introduced. Off the top of his head, he couldn't remember their names.

Now, here he was about to have dinner with a girl who was one of many witches in his coven. He hoped that things didn't go sideways. Her mother was a professional duelist, and her father was the longest running Defense teacher Hogwarts had ever had. If her mother didn't kill him her father could make his remaining time at Hogwarts a living nightmare.

Another thought struck him. Aside from Rose and Iris he would have to do this each time.

Delphi knocked on the door. The sound snapped him back to the present.

Professor Riddle answered the door. He wore a simple suit with a vest instead of a jacket. The older wizard gave them both a warm smile. He stepped aside to allow them access.

"Delphi, Mister Potter." Riddle inclined his head. "Welcome to my home away from home."

"Professor." Harry returned the nod.

"Father." Delphi curtsied.

They stepped inside to see Bellatrix standing in the middle of the room. Harry tried not to check her out. It was a losing battle. Her long, dark hair hung down to the middle of her back in a natural curl. The dress she wore was a black with emerald laces that highlighted her form nicely. A bodice held her breasts up with a slight pressure while the skirt portion was loose around her legs.

Harry gulped. He stole a glance at Delphi. She smiled at him with a smoldering heat that didn't clear anything up.

"The rights afforded to you as our guest allows you to choose." Bellatrix inclined her head.

"Choose what?" He asked.

"Duel before or after dinner?" Bellatrix smiled at him that more akin to a predator baring its teeth.

"Words are twists of air. Fancy little flutters of the tongue. They tempt my heart, but I need proof."

Harry realized that she wasn't just standing in the middle of the room. Bellatrix was in the center of a private dueling platform. He hadn't noticed at first. It was too big to fit in. Of course, the room would have expansion charms. Delphi and Professor Riddle took a seat nearby. Seemingly unphased by the turn of events.

"Before." Harry took a step away from Delphi and rolled up his sleeves. "Terms?"

Harry really should have seen something like this coming.

"Goodie." Bellatrix clapped her hands excitedly. "Standard dueling. No spells above Class Two. Duel to disarm, surrender, or force out."

Harry flicked his wrist to draw his wand from the holster. Bellatrix waited for him on her chosen side.

"Professor." Harry stepped onto the platform. "Would you count it down please?"

"Gladly." Riddle didn't bother to stand. "Duelists ready?"

They nodded. Harry rolled his shoulders to loosen up his muscles.

"Three. Two. One. Begin!" Riddle sounded amused.

He had never seen Bellatrix duel. She trained Delphi and he hoped that would give him a small hint at her style. He couldn't discount the impact Professor Riddle had as well. If Harry was married to a Defense Master, he would be sure to treat their input with respect.

The safe move would be to begin with a shield to intercept her opening chain. His life had a distinct lack of safety. The feeling of impending doom was as familiar as hunger or thirst. Survival, now that he was

good at. Charging into the unknown was a plan he was all too familiar with. The trick to doing something stupid was to move fast, cause chaos, and avoid getting backed into a corner.

Harry conjured a wall of flame. He propelled it toward the opposite end of the platform with a wave of air. A wave stone rose in front of him to form a physical barrier. He created two more with a small gap between each for extra protection.

The wall of flame was doused out by a jet of water and quickly became steam. It mingled with the cushion of air that followed directly behind.

Bellatrix smiled as she swept the steam away. A quick jab of her wand shattered the first two layers of his stone shield.

"Ooo." Bellatrix cooed. "Fire, earth, air. No affinity to water?"

Harry sent a burst of air at the platform under his feet. He launched himself over the barriers. A swipe of his wand collected the steam. He spun as he reformed it into a whip made of water. It snapped out toward Bellatrix as he landed.

Bellatrix shifted a step to the side out of the path of the whip. The water splashed to the ground as Harry released control. She snapped her wand from the puddle near her feet, then toward him. A tight cluster of icicle shrapnel launched at him.

Harry swatted them away backhand. The icicles arced toward the ceiling. He pointed up at them. They transformed into blanket of thick snow. The heavy flakes drifted down toward her.

She held out her free hand. The snow collected into a melon sized ball. It began to shift into the shape of a classic snowman. She clenched her fist, destroying the creation.

Bellatrix waited to see what he would do next.

Harry was more than halfway across the platform. He turned away and returned to his initial position. This wasn't truly a duel. It was an assessment to see if he was worthy of the attention. He wasn't deluded enough to think he was on her level even with his newfound increased magical aptitude. Right now, at his best he was a talented amateur while she was a decorated pro.

He summoned a flock of birds. They were larger than the standard spell. Each bird had a multi-colored pattern that did not exist in the natural world.

Bellatrix arched an eyebrow at him. She banished the flock as it neared. Each bird exploded into a cluster of brightly colored dragonflies. They zipped toward her with a slight pause. The dragonflies burst into clouds of chalk as they got closer. A moment later she was covered from head to toe in splotches of multi-colored dust. She felt the chalk around her forearm and hand that held her wand solidify.

She held her arm up for inspection. The shell covered from the tip of her wand to just before her elbow. It appeared to be made out of stone.

Harry pressed his momentary advantage. He flung a string of quick bludgeoning spells of various size to different parts of her body. They were meant to annoy and distract rather than cause any real impact.

She moved her stone arm to block the first string. The shell cracked. She rolled her wrist to discard the stubborn chunks. Her wand shot out and smacked the last one back at him.

Harry shifted to the side to let it pass.

Bellatrix took a step forward. Rather, she tried to take a step. She looked down to see one of her feet encased in a block of multi-colored stone.

"Mrs Riddle." Harry spoke up. "Should we continue?"

"Why ever should we stop?" Bellatrix replied.

"I've been holding off my next step." Harry answered.

"Do tell." Bellatrix yanked her foot free of the block of stone.

"A slipped a few dragonflies by you." He explained. "Then I transfigured them into needles and thread. My next step would be to subtly stitch your skirt into your stockings. After that, I would make you move. You're too skilled to trip. Instead, you would have to shift your balance."

Bellatrix stole a quick look over her shoulder to see a few spools of thread that hovered near her ankle.

"Creative. Inconvenient at best." She motioned for him to continue.

"The remaining water on the platform would be transformed into ice in the shape of a wedge." Harry motioned at the platform. "One misstep would sent you off the platform."

"And I would let that happen?" Bellatrix smiled at him.

"Yes." Harry nodded. "You haven't attacked me this entire time. The only volley you started was to test my shield. Everything else has been counters."

Bellatrix looked at Delphi who beamed back at her.

"And I'm hungry." Harry added.

Bellatrix cackled. It made him shiver. The jolt of arousal mixed in kept it in check. Her laughter made her chest bounce in an enticing manner.

"I accept your surrender." She said after a moment. "I'm getting hungry myself."

31.

A nicely set turkey dinner with four seats. He pulled the chair out for Delphi. She flashed him a small smile as she took a seat. Harry sat beside her.

"Mister Potter." Professor Riddle said. "How are you adjusting?"

"I'm doing well, professor." Harry replied with a nod.

"Did being intimate with my dearest daughter Delphi help?" Bella asked.

Harry blushed.

"Mother." Delphi sighed.

"it is a fair question." Bellatrix replied.

"Bella." Riddle warned.

She huffed but didn't press the issue. They served themselves and kept the conversation to a minimum during the meal.

"You are rather adept at dueling." Bellatrix stated once the table was cleared.

"Thank you." Harry said.

"Ferocious Fifi tells quite a tale about you." Bellatrix shot a sly glance at her daughter.

"Fifi?" Harry asked.

"A pet name." Bellatrix giggled.

"I called myself Fifi when I was a child." Delphi glared at her mother. "They never let me forget that."

Harry squeezed her hand. The small motion made Delphi blush brightly.

"What tales?" Harry asked before Bellatrix could say more.

"You claim to be a monster slayer and dark lord bane." Bellatrix leaned forward.

Harry tried to ignore the way the movement pressed her breasts against the table. Her cleavage was accentuated for a wonderful view. He forced himself to look her in the eyes. There was a soft caress of mist along his scalp as their gaze met. Instinctively, he slammed down on the touch and wrenched it from his mind.

Bellatrix rocked back in her chair. A wild smile played on her face as she settled into a normal sitting position.

"Ooo." Bellatrix cackled. She gave Delphi a feral smile. "He's a fighter."

"Bella." Professor Riddle rubbed the bridge of his nose.

"Bella will behave." She placed her hands in her lap, the picture of a proper lady.

"I don't know about monster slayer." Harry chose to ignore the crazed witch. "I defeated a troll in my first year by dropping its own club on its head. Later that year I had a run in with a Cerberus, but that was more of a misunderstanding. In my second year I had to escape an acromantula nest and killed a basilisk. Not at the same time, of course." He paused. "Third year I discovered that Dementors like the way I taste. They attacked me three or four times, I think, before I learned how to cast a Patronus. That kept them away. Nothing has attacked me this year, so far. Someone did put my name in the Goblet of Fire to sign me up for the Tri-Wizard Tournament, but the events hadn't started yet."

Professor Riddle and Bellatrix stared at him for a long moment. Both studied him in their own way to see if he was lying.

"Impressive." Professor Riddle broke the silence. "You say you learned to cast a Patronus in your third year as well?"

"Yes." Harry nodded. "It takes the shape of a stag."

"A full corporeal Patronus?" Professor Riddle blinked a few times. "Would you be kind enough to demonstrate?"

"Sure." Harry stood from the table and returned to the dueling platform. "*Expecto Patronum.*"

His arm kicked back as Prongs shot out of his wand faster than ever. A wash of love, happiness, and contentment enveloped him. The feelings were no longer ghosts of a memory. They were fresh, alive, and vibrant. Prongs strode around the room in an efficient patrol. He came to a stop in front of Harry, then ran a ghostly tongue through his hair.

"Quit it." Harry laughed. "Thanks, Prongs. You can rest."

Prongs snorted and faded away. The cool burst of air tousled his hair even more. Harry tried not to blush as he turned to face the others. All three stared at him in awe. There was no hiding it now, his face was bright red.

"Amazing." Professor Riddle whispered.

Bellatrix stared at him like he was treasure. He didn't know how to take that. Delphi was much easier to read. She wanted to jump him right there. He gave her a kiss on the cheek before he sat once more.

"As for the dark lord bane." He shrugged. "He tried to kill me more than once. I lived."

"And this dark lord was Voldemort?" Professor Riddle asked.

The details of the situation smacked him upside the head. His blood ran cold. Here he sat at a dinner table with a borderline mad witch that was a world renown duelist, her slightly less borderline mad daughter, and a healthy Tom Riddle. If this was a trap, he had walked into it blindly.

Time seemed to freeze. He took in the entirety of the room, his position within it, and possible ways to escape. The door was behind Riddle and Bellatrix, he would have to go through them to get to it. Not possible. The windows were his best option.

A plan formed in an instant.

Blast the table to block their line of sight, freeze Delphi to her chair, silence her, sprint to the window, and jump. He couldn't remember how high the room was off the ground. They weren't in a tower, but that could mean anywhere between two and seven floors. He would deal with that once he was through the glass.

Delphi gave his hand a soft squeeze. He looked down to it, then slowly trailed his eyes up along her arm to rest on her face. The honest look of concern and care banished the flash of panic. He raised her hand to his lips and placed a kiss on her knuckles. Delphi shivered at the contact.

"Yes." Harry turned his attention back at Professor Riddle. "That's something I don't want to talk about."

"Understood." Professor Riddle inclined his head. "My apologies. I'm afraid my curiosity got the better of my common sense."

Harry cleared his throat. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

"Thank you for dinner." He stood. "It was nice to meet you, Mrs Riddle."

"Bellatrix." She countered.

"Bellatrix." Harry gave a polite smile. "Professor, enjoy the rest of your night. I need some air."

Harry stood. He tried not to be tense when they stood as well. It was polite behavior, not hostile. He forced himself to relax as he strode over to the door. The sound of shuffling feet behind him pushed him out into the hallway even faster. He slipped to the side and pressed himself against the wall. His wand was already in his hand when the door opened again.

Delphi hurried out into the hallway. She didn't notice him as she continued on for a short distance. The door slowly drifted closed. It didn't seem like anyone else was coming.

"Harry?" Delphi called.

The sorrow and worry in her voice lanced through his heart. His shoulders slumped.

"Here." He spoke barely above a whisper.

She spun to face him. A myriad of emotions played across her face. Worry, confusion, assessment, approval, arousal, love, and back to worry. She approached him slowly, as one does as to not startle an animal. Her hands were out in front of her, palms up to show she was unarmed.

"You're safe." She soothed. "I won't let anyone hurt you."

Harry smiled at that. He suppressed a laugh that threatened to escape. It was one born of madness, not levity, and would ravage his emotions. This he knew from experience.

Slowly, she got within reach. She placed a hand on his outstretched arm. He hadn't even realized he had raised his wand. She guided it down to his side, then gently pulled him into a hug. The tenderness of the moment clashed against what he had seen from her before.

"My family has experience dealing with moments of madness." Delphi whispered.

Harry rested his head on her shoulder. His hands shook. It took a couple of tries to get his wand back in the holster. Delphi held him until his breathing returned to normal and the tension in his muscles eased.

She took his hand and began to lead him back to Gryffindor tower. It was a long, quiet walk, and just what he needed. She stayed by his side with her hand in his. At some point she shifted closer to slide an arm around his waist. It brought the two of them closer.

"You know." Delphi smiled at him. "I had plans for this evening."

Harry looked at her. The question went unspoken, but it was clear. He didn't have the energy to speak. The emotional whiplash had done a number on him.

"I was going to take you back to your room and make love to you." She kissed him on the cheek.

Harry arched an eyebrow at her.

"You were expecting me to ravage you?" Delphi laughed. "Or demand you ravage me?"

Harry nodded.

"No." She rested her head on his shoulder. "I wanted to make love to you. To fall asleep in your arms and wake next to you."

"I..." Harry cleared his throat. "I need some time."

Delphi nodded.

"But." He continued. "I would like to sleep with you in my arms."

Delphi kissed him on the cheek again.

32.

Delphi, it turned out, was a pleasant bedmate. She didn't steal the covers, hog the bed, or sleep with bony parts of her body lodged in his softer portions. Instead, she curled up against his chest with his arm hugged between her breasts. Her tight bum would rub against his crotch on occasion, but not so much as to warrant a full erection. She held to the 'sleep' part of sleeping together as though her honor depended on it.

For her, maybe it did.

"Good morning, Delphi." Harry nuzzled the back of her neck.

"Mmm." Delphi pulled his arm closer as she replied.

"I need to get up." Harry brushed his lips against her skin.

"No." Delphi whined. "Comfy."

"I guess you can't join me in the shower then." Harry sighed.

Delphi scrambled out of bed. She pulled the covers with her as she fell to the floor. Her short hair stuck up at odd angles. She wrestled with the blanket for a moment before she got to her feet. Her body wiggled nicely as she stepped out of the improvised binding. He caught a flash of movement as she tossed her shirt away.

"Come on then." She waved him to follow as she vanished into the bathroom.

Harry laughed as he got out of bed. He was only dressed in his boxers. It made her restraint through the night even more impressive. He was about to follow her when there was a soft knock at the door. Harry opened it to find Katie. A coy smile played on her lips.

"Good morning." She said. "Can I come in?"

"I was about to take a shower." Harry replied.

"Want some company?" Katie countered.

"I have some already." Harry said with a small, strained smile.

"I'm game if you are." Katie purred.

Katie slipped inside the room. She stripped off her shirt and shorts as she headed toward the bathroom. This was either going to be a great idea or a horrible disaster. The sound of the shower was loud enough to hear since the door was cracked open a little as an unspoken invitation.

She shot him a sly smile as she disappeared into the other room. He braced himself for chaos. Harry started to inch forward when the door wasn't blown off its hinges. His mouth dropped open as he saw the scene that awaited him. They were both turned away from him and Katie worked soap in Delphi's hair. They both were stark naked, as one is in the shower, without a care in the world.

"Close the door." Delphi called without turning to look at him. "You're letting in a draft."

Harry dropped his boxers and stepped into the room.

"You're both alright with this?" He asked as he carefully approached.

"We're in a coven." Katie winked at him. "Of course, we can share."

"Now get over here so we can soap you up." Delphi giggled.

Harry thanked whoever came up with the idea of enchanted floors as he bounded over to join the girls. On normal tile he would have easily slipped and knocked himself out or broken a bone. Here the floor had plenty of traction even with a layer of water.

He didn't know exactly how long the next period of time lasted. The two witches worked magically together. One would wash his chest while the other worked his shoulders. They joined forces to soap up his hair. His body was alive with pleasure. He was only aware that the shower was over when he found himself back in the bedroom and wrapped in a towel.

Harry had planned to start the day with a quick romp in the shower with Delphi. Instead, the pair teamed up to turn him into mush. Katie and Delphi led him over to the bed. They sandwiched him in bed, one cuddled against his chest with the other against his back. Sleep welcomed him with open arms even though he had just woken up.

He really hoped it was the weekend.

~§~§~

It was Sunday.

Harry woke up to find the bed was empty, but he didn't mind. It hadn't been in his plan to fall asleep. Voices from the next room over let him know that the ladies were still close. He got dressed in casual muggle style clothes. They were probably the best quality clothing he had ever owned.

He opened the door to the attached sitting room and paused. Another couch and desk had been brought in at some point. Every available seat was taken by one of his coven. They chatted and laughed amongst themselves. Even the ones from other Houses were present. He wasn't sure how that worked, but he wasn't going to argue. It was practically noon now.

Padma, Hermione, and Miranda -the other Hermione- were in a little group with a few different books open between them. Iris was teaching Delphi, Luna, and Katie how to play poker. Lavender sat on Rose's lap reading a magazine while the other girl had a resigned look on her face.

Harry smiled as he watched them. He had no idea how this coven thing would work in the long term, but right now it felt like they had come together to form their own family.

"He's awake." Lavender called.

She hopped off of Rose and rushed over to him. Harry braced himself as she nearly tackled him. He was pleasantly surprised by her soft breasts pressed against his chest. She wrapped her arms around him in a loose hug.

"You didn't invite me to the shower." She pouted.

"I didn't know that was an option." Harry chuckled.

"You're ours." Delphi spoke up from the card game. "Of course, it's an option."

"We could make a schedule." Miranda offered.

He bounced from witch to witch as the conversation progressed. Hermione nodded at the suggestion, which made sense. The fact that Padma also agreed struck him as funny.

"Who sleeps with Harry." Miranda continued. "Shower and other things."

"What other things?" Iris asked in her most innocent voice.

Miranda blushed.

"Sex." Luna chimed in without a pause.

Miranda blushed even brighter.

"Luna." Hermione called over to the blonde. "Has she talked to you yet?"

"Yes." Luna nodded. "They want me to talk to myself with you and Harry there."

"They?" Harry arched an eyebrow.

"My parents." Hermione said softly.

Harry nodded. He hadn't given the other world much thought at all. That world felt less and less real as the days went on. The mood in the room dimmed a little.

"When?" He asked.

"After dinner." Luna replied. "Muggles need a special potion to be able to come to Hogwarts. It takes all day to brew. Tastes like pickled ham."

"Yuck." Harry shivered.

"How do you know that?" Miranda asked.

"You can pickle just about anything." Luna replied as she turned her attention back to the cards. "Is this a good hand?"

She set out her cards to display three aces and a pair of queens.

"Yes." Iris sighed. "That is a very good hand."

"Note to self." Rose shook her head. "Don't play cards with Luna."

"I would love to see her play Flapper and Padfoot." Iris cackled.

Rose moved over to stand beside him. Her hand slipped into his and their fingers intertwined. She leaned close so she could whisper softly in his ear.

"How was dinner?" She asked so low only he could hear.

"It was ok for the most part." He matched her volume. "I had to leave early. Memories from that other world made things complicated."

"Other world." Rose smiled softly as she gave him a hug. "I like that."

Harry raised his eyebrows in question.

"It's not home." She kissed him on the cheek. "This is."

Harry nodded. "What did I miss?"

"The coven is settling in." Rose replied. "We're going to be spending a lot of time together so it's best that we can get along. I think we're doing good."

"It looks like it." Harry smiled at her. "How is Hermione?"

"I am doing fine." Hermione said as she joined them. "Can I talk to you?"

"Sure." Harry led her back into the room. "Is this just between us?"

"No." She shook her head. "I already spoke with everyone else."

Harry waited. She took a deep breath and gathered her courage.

"I'm staying here." Hermione said.

Harry's mind stuttered. His brain slowly processed the words. Hermione was going to stay with him.

"Are you sure?" His voice came out as a whisper. Almost like he was afraid to spook her.

"I've talked the girls." Hermione pulled him into a hug. "Miranda is going to talk to her parents. Our parents, technically. It gives me a headache if I think too much about it."

"I know the feeling." Harry chuckled.

"I'm going to spend the holiday with them to settle in." She continued. "Tonight, Luna is going to help me talk to my parents to let them know."

"Do you want me there?" Harry asked.

She gave him a bright smile. "That's sweet. I need to do this on my own."

Harry shook his head. He took a deep breath and let it out.

"I'm here if you change your mind." He pulled her close.