

## Different Timeline

Harry Potter woke abruptly. Even with his sudden return to consciousness, he still forced himself not to betray the fact. He kept his breathing slow and steady and forced his arms not to twitch. Entirely too many fights against Vernon Dursley, Death Eaters, and assorted other evil types had taught Harry caution when waking suddenly.

He was lying on his back with his head propped slightly up. In a bed, with a pillow behind his head, sheets tucked neatly around him. These facts plus the slightly antiseptic smell all pointed toward another stay in the hospital wing. He heard a slight rustling sound and the scratch of a quill on parchment next to his bed. Based on prior experience, it would be one of three people: Hermione, Ron, or Dumbledore.

Instead of turning his head toward his visitor, whoever it might be, Harry first tried to determine what was wrong with him. After a quick internal check, he could determine only one thing even remotely wrong with him: he had a mild headache, but that could be from absolutely anything.

Not getting any answers from that direction, Harry next searched his memory for why he might need to be hospitalized this time. Nothing immediately came to mind. He remembered the welcoming feast at the beginning of his seventh year, losing a game of wizard chess to Ron (again), talking with him and Hermione for a few minutes afterwards, and then going to bed.

Only to wake up here.

Had he had another Voldemort-induced vision and been taken to Madam Pomfrey? Had he snuck out of bed under cover of his invisibility cloak and gotten hurt? Had there been an attack on Hogwarts? Had he simply been sleepwalking only to end up here?

He couldn't remember.

The fact that he couldn't remember how he ended up here bothered him more than actually ending up here did.

Figuring that he couldn't do anything further without more information, Harry cautiously opened his eyes and looked around as much as he could without benefit of glasses or turning his head.

Yup, hospital wing. Based on the angle of sunlight through the windows, he concluded that it must be mid morning. Harry turned his head slowly toward his guest. A slim, feminine figure was sitting at a guest chair, scribbling on parchment that was itself sitting on a book resting the girl's knees. Harry studied her blurry form as best he could. It wasn't Hermione's short, bushy, brown hair nor Ginny's vibrant, red hair. The girl's long, dark hair curtained her face entirely, preventing him from recognizing her. The hair first made Harry think it was Cho Chang sitting beside him, but that made no sense at all. Firstly, she'd graduated last year, and secondarily they hadn't parted on the best of terms after their short (and admittedly disastrous) romance the year before that.

The girl in question suddenly looked up and chirped, "Oh, Harry! You're awake!"

As Harry tried to place the voice, she picked his glasses off the bedside table and expertly slipped them onto his face. Vision thus restored, Harry looked up into the face of Parvati Patil. Completely confused as to why Parvati would be sitting at his bedside, Harry croaked out, "Pa -" before a hacking cough interrupted him.

"Here," the young woman said, holding a glass of water out for him.

Gratefully sipping the drink, Harry calmed his throat. "Thanks," he sighed out, leaning back on the pillows again.

"You're welcome," she responded with a blinding smile. She stood and placed the book and letter onto her chair. "I promised Madam Pomfrey to tell her when you awoke. Back in a sec."

She then did something that confused Harry beyond words.

She leaned down and kissed him full on the mouth.

Not noticing the effect her unexpected kiss had had on the recumbent wizard, she turned and walked toward the nurse's office.

Harry lay on the bed in a daze. Why in Merlin's name had Parvati kissed him? After the ass he'd made of himself toward her during the Yule Ball their fourth year, they'd been polite but not truly friendly toward each other. That kiss and the utter familiarity she'd displayed toward him by putting his glasses on his face spoke of a long and very close history that they simply didn't share.

She came back to his bedside and scooped her book up. "I've gotta run. I'll stop by later if you're not released soon. Bye," she headed toward the doors, pausing only to blow him a kiss with a sweet smile on her face.

Harry summoned up a smile for her before she turned and headed out.

"Mister Potter," Madam Pomfrey greeted him as she bustled up and started waving her wand in diagnostic charms he well remembered from his frequent trips to this very room.

"Madam Pomfrey, what is going on?" the confused teenager asked.

"We were hoping you could tell us. It seems you could not be awoken this morning by your dorm-mates. Mistrs Thomas and Finnegan brought you to me before breakfast. Do you remember what happened?"

He mutely shook his head. His memories ended well before waking up this morning.

"Well, you seem physically well enough except . . . Are you dizzy?"

Now that she mentioned it, the room did seem to be performing acrobatics that were most unlikely. He couldn't tell if it was the result of physical dizziness or too many unexpected Patil-induced sensations. He settled for nodding, feeling that was the safest response.

"Very well. I would prefer you stay here until after lunch at any rate. I'll ask again how you feel at that point. Mister Lupin and Miss Granger have expressed concern as well as Miss Patil. Do you feel up to seeing them?"

Remus was here? Harry smiled, thinking of his unofficial godfather. "Sure," he answered.

Madam Pomfrey nodded and went to the doors, opening them and allowing Hermione and, of all people, Neville to enter. Hermione immediately took the recently vacated seat and smiled at Harry. Neville said, "Harry, mate. Good to see you feeling better. Look, I've got to run to Herbology. I've checked your schedule, and you have the morning off, lucky dog. I'll catch you up at lunch?"

Harry numbly nodded, shocked at the taller, confident Neville that he hardly recognized.

Neville smiled, leaned over to give Hermione a quick peck on the cheek, and left the room with a bag over his shoulder, whistling cheerfully.

Harry turned to Hermione in shock. "Hermione? What in the name of Merlin is going on? Where's Remus? What happened to Neville? Since when does he kiss you? And why did Parvati kiss me earlier?" His voice never rose, but the desperation in his questions was impossible to miss.

His fellow Gryffindor looked at him strangely. "I expect Professor Lupin is in his classroom, nothing is wrong with Neville, he's been kissing me for three years, and for your sake I hope it WASN'T Parvati who kissed you."

Harry was now only more confused. "Hermione, when we went to bed last night you weren't dating anyone, let alone Neville Longbottom, let alone for THREE YEARS."

She blinked. "Neville Lo -" she stopped herself abruptly, her eyes betraying a mind suddenly running at full speed. "Harry, what is the date?"

"Huh? September 2nd, 1997."

"Okay, you're not time traveling then," she muttered to herself. "What did we all do last night?"

"Hermione, you were there."

"Humor me, Harry. I'm testing a theory."

He grinned at her. No matter what else was going on, she was always willing to learn and theorize. "After the Welcoming Feast, you, Ron, and I went back to the Common Room. Ron and I played chess, and of course he beat me. You spent that time talking with Ginny, I think. After that, you and I talked a little about the DA this year. We all went to bed around eleven or so."

She nodded, a little sadly. "That's what I was afraid of." She took a breath. "Okay, Harry, I need to get the Headmaster. He'll want to talk with you. Please, PLEASE don't leave the hospital wing. I know you hate it in here, but trust me when I say that you don't want to go anywhere for the moment."

"Hermione, what's wrong?" Harry was in the early stages of panic.

"What you just told me about last night? That isn't what happened. Your surprise at seeing Neville, your shock at Padma's kiss, these all mean one of two things. Either someone's altered your memories, or you're from a different timeline."

Harry's jaw had dropped at learning that it was Padma Patil who'd kissed him. A moment later his mind started running in circles and gibbering when he heard the part about being from a different timeline.

"Harry? Harry!"

"Huh?"

"Just promise you won't go anywhere until I bring the Headmaster back."

He nodded dumbly, still trying to wrestle his confusion and panic into a manageable state.

Neville had been dating Hermione for three years. Padma Patil was dating him. Remus Lupin was a professor. Neville looked somehow taller and definitely more self-assured.

A different timeline!?

"Mister Potter."

Harry's mind snapped back to alertness, and his head swiveled to look at the aged Headmaster of Hogwarts settle down in the chair next to his bed. "Albus, thank Merlin. What in the name of Magic is going on? Hermione said something about a different timeline?"

With a quirked eyebrow, Dumbledore raised a hand. "Please calm yourself, Mister Potter. Your confusion about the present circumstances could be either the result of an extensive Memory Charm or the timeline theory of Miss Granger's. Will you consent to my checking for the Memory Charm?"

"Of course, Albus."

Again raising an eyebrow, Dumbledore continued, "I will first check for the magical results of a memory spell. Then I will be using a technique called Legilimency. It is something of a mind reading spell and skill -"

He stopped his explanation as Harry waved him off. "I'm a Master Occlumens, Albus. You ended up teaching me yourself, remember?"

Dumbledore's face settled into a deep frown. "No, Mister Potter, I do not. This plus the fact that you are calling me by my given name proves to me that your perceived history is significantly different than mine. As a side issue, the fact that you would need Occlumency training at your age concerns me greatly."

"Tom was using our scar connection to influence my actions and garner information about the Order," Harry explained distractedly, trying to keep up with everything.

By this point, Dumbledore's eyes were grave, no sparkle at all evident. "May I presume that you are referring to Tom Riddle?"

"Tom Marvolo Riddle, otherwise known as Voldemort, yes."

Dumbledore sighed. "Either you have been extraordinarily well informed of things not spoken about for years, or you are from another timeline, Mister Potter. With your permission, I shall first check for the residue of Memory Charms. After that point, I shall use Legilimency to search for damage to your memories. Is this acceptable?"

Harry merely nodded, mind still whirling.

Dumbledore waved his wand all along Harry's body and spoke a complex incantation. He studied Harry's supine form for long minutes, occasionally waving his wand again.

Harry spent this time using his Occlumency skills to check his own mind's integrity. He was searching for disjointed memories, missing chunks of time, or inconsistencies. Essentially, he was looking for evidence of anyone tampering with his mind.

After five minutes of work, Dumbledore spoke, "I can find nothing unexpected in your magical aura, Mister Potter. All the spells you have cast or have had cast upon you are not unexpected from my knowledge of your history. I have also searched for evidence of Legilimens having been cast and it is not present. In short, I can find no magical evidence that your version of history is reflected upon your body."

"Did you detect the Unforgivables?" Harry asked in curiosity. He'd never heard of a spell that gave results of other spells upon the wizard's body. A variation on *Prior Incantato* perhaps?

"Yes. I can see the Killing Curse residue from when you were a child."

Harry raised an eyebrow. "Not Cruciatius nor Imperius?"

Dumbledore stilled. "You have been subjected to them?"

"More times than I like to recall, though I can throw Imperius off almost instantly."

The Headmaster controlled his surprise after a moment. "To answer your question, I can find no trace that either of those two have ever been cast upon or by you."

Harry frowned. "If it happened, but you can find no proof of it, what does that mean?"

"We have still not ruled out the possibility of altered memories, Mister Potter."

"Would you call me Harry, please? All this Mister Potter stuff makes me think I'm in trouble."

Dumbledore's twinkle flared for a moment. "From my point of view, Mister Potter, we have hardly spoken at all since you survived a fight with Professor Quirrel. Do you recall this event in your history?"

"Voldemort trying to get the Philosopher's Stone in my first year? Yes, Ron, Hermione, and I made it through all the protections, and I barely stopped Quirrel from getting it for his master."

"Ronald Weasley?"

Harry paused for a moment at the question. "Yes. He's the one who helped Hermione and I past Professor McGonagall's chess board."

Dumbledore nodded. "That event happened, however there are some differences even that far back. May I cast Legilimens upon you? I shall be trying to determine two things. First, whether you are indeed a Master Occlumens. Second, if you could show me your memory, I shall try to determine whether there is any evidence of tampering with your memories and where your history diverges from mine."

"That makes sense. I've already searched my own memories and can't find anything unexpected."

"As would be expected from the 'inside' so to speak. Let us first test your Occlumency. If you would, simply block me from gaining any information at all. After I get beyond your shield or concede defeat, then please begin feeding me the high points of your memories in reverse order starting from yesterday. Are you prepared?"

Harry nodded, bringing his mental shields up.

"*Legilimens*," intoned Dumbledore staring directly into Harry's eyes.

Harry first felt a tentative probe. When that failed, the probe gained strength rapidly until it was the rough equivalent of a battering ram trying to get through a wall. Neither wizard had so much as blinked.

The battering stopped for a moment. Harry's mouth quirked into a smile. Dumbledore nodded, accepting that Harry's shields were better than he could pierce. With that, Harry released his shielding and started feeding his memories to Dumbledore.

Harry started going backwards through his memories. He skimmed his sixth year. DA meetings; private defensive and offensive charm tutoring with Dumbledore, McGonagall, Flitwick, Moody, and Lupin; Order of the Phoenix meetings at which Voldemort's atrocities were discussed; Sirius's wake; O.W.L. results; summer at Grimmauld Place. Harry's fifth year came and went: Sirius's death during the battle at the Department of Mysteries; Dumbledore being forced into hiding; disastrous Occlumency training from Snape; founding the DA; Umbridge. Harry's life continued running past his mind's eye in reverse, some moments more painful than others. Voldemort's resurrection. The three tasks. His name coming out of the Goblet of Fire. Producing a corporeal Patronus. The confrontation between Sirius, Remus, and Wormtail in the Shrieking Shack. Dementors on the Hogwarts Express. Blowing up Aunt Marge. The Chamber of Secrets. Aragog. Flying a car into the Whomping Willow. Gripping Quirrel's face in his hands. Fighting a troll on Halloween Night. His flying catch of Neville's Remembrall. His first view of Hogwarts and his Sorting. Meeting Ron on the Hogwarts Express. His first view of Diagon Alley. Hagrid telling him he was a wizard. Miserable treatment at the Dursley home. The memories started to become fragmentary as Harry became a child. By the time the information session was back to Godric's Hollow, it was made up of information imparted by others rather than his own memories.

Both Harry and Dumbledore took a deep breath as the spell ended. Harry closed his eyes and reconstructed his mental shields.

"I apologize for asking that of you, Mister Potter. As I said, I was trying to find where our timelines diverged." He paused for a moment. "My best guess is that they diverged the evening of November 1st, 1981."

"The night after my parents' murders?" Harry asked, realizing just how re-arranged his life might suddenly become.

"Minerva and I were about to deliver you to the Dursley household when Hagrid mentioned that he had seen Sirius Black in Godric's Hollow. Seeing as how I believed him to be your parents' Secret Keeper, I immediately pursued. I caught up to him just before he found Peter Pettigrew." Dumbledore paused and looked Harry straight in the eye. "Sirius explained about switching Keepers, and he and I captured Peter. This is the first major change in the timelines. All others flow from this point."

Harry's mind was moving quickly. "If Wormtail were caught at that point, then he could have been given Veritaserum and then . . . Sirius was never sent to Azkaban?"

Dumbledore shook his head with a smile.

"I grew up living with Sirius?" Harry asked next, hope expanding quickly.

Dumbledore nodded, smiling even more.

The doors to the Hospital Wing suddenly banged open. Survival instincts honed by years fighting Death Eaters, Harry was on his feet instantly, wand pointing at the noise.

He saw Sirius Black pointing a wand back at him. When Sirius identified the wizard unexpectedly pointing a wand at him, he holstered his own wand. "Merlin, Harry. Don't pull your wand on me. You know how an Auror's reflexes react to that kind of thing."

"Sirius!" Neither older wizard quite knew how Harry went from bedside to bear-hugging Sirius so quickly. "Sirius, you're alive! How . . . why . . ." Harry couldn't finish a question around his tears. Dumbledore telling him he'd been raised by Sirius was a far cry from actually seeing the man in front of him.

"Uh, yes, I'm alive, Harry," answered Sirius, hugging his godson back. He shot a hopelessly confused look at the Headmaster.

"Harry, Sirius, please take seats. I will explain enough to the both of you such that you can continue your conversation at your leisure." When Harry finally released his godfather enough to let the older man sit down, Dumbledore continued, "As I was saying, Harry, you have grown up living with Sirius. He was not killed, as is obvious. To my knowledge, you have never met Petunia Dursley nor her family." He turned to the extremely confused Black, "Harry here is from a different timeline. From his point of view, you were imprisoned after supposedly killing Peter after James and Lily were killed. You escaped after twelve years in Azkaban. Voldemort was not completely destroyed in Godric's Hollow and was resurrected by

Peter just over two years ago. You were killed a year later in a fight against Death Eaters."

Sirius frowned. "That explains why Harry was so happy to see me. What happened to the Harry who was here?"

"This is indeed the same Harry who was here." Dumbledore frowned a moment in thought. "The Harry who was here was not swapped with a different Harry. If that were the case, then his body would show his history, not ours."

"This isn't my body?" Harry asked.

"It IS your body, it merely has a different history," Dumbledore assured him.

"So the Harry who was here didn't go somewhere else, he became THIS Harry?"

Harry frowned at his godfather's question.

"Essentially correct, Sirius."

Sirius saw the expression on Harry's face. "I'm not upset, Harry. I'm just trying to figure out what happened." He turned to the Headmaster again. "How did this happen?"

Dumbledore was still frowning in thought. "Harry, how would you characterize the state of the fight at the time you left?"

"A bloody mess. The Order of the Phoenix wasn't winning, but we weren't losing, either. For the time being, we were in a stalemate with the body count slowly rising."

"Was it perhaps an election year?"

Harry blinked at the non-sequitor. "Yes." His eyes widened. "I see what you're saying, I think. Fudge was worse than useless in the fight. He was about to get voted out. All the leading candidates were definitely NOT Death Eaters and all were vowing to fight the recent resurgence of dark activity that Fudge was trying so hard to ignore. Voldemort knew he was about to get into a fight against the Ministry as well as the ongoing fight against the Order. In his desperation, you think he did something that backfired?"

Dumbledore nodded. "Time travel spells are exceedingly difficult to work with. The most minor of actions can create far-reaching and unpredictable effects."

"The Butterfly Effect," Harry nodded. At the other wizards' blank looks, he said, "A butterfly flaps its wings in China and it causes rain instead of sunshine in Hyde Park." They both continued to stare at him. He waved it off. "Chaos theory. High level Muggle mathematics. Basically, the smallest of actions can have unpredictable and huge effects even over long distances."

"Precisely what I was saying, though I would not have used those terms."

Harry grinned wryly. "Comes from having such a mixed upbringing. You think Voldemort cast a time travel spell but it went wrong? That's how the world changed so completely around me?"

"Correct."

"You'd make one helluva investigator, kid," Sirius said in wonder.

Harry snorted. "After all the mysteries I've helped uncover since coming to Hogwarts? Maybe I would, but I'm aiming to be an Auror. After all the fights with Voldemort and Death Eaters that I've survived, it seems only appropriate."

Sirius raised an eyebrow but didn't comment. He turned to Dumbledore. "This is permanent? His memory won't spontaneously change again?"

"I would think not. Voldemort is not active in this world to try such a spell again. Though it is within the power of a handful of wizards, we know better than to attempt doing so." He turned to Harry. "Mister Potter, it seems that we may need to re-evaluate a few items with regards to your Hogwarts education. I assume you were entering your seventh year here. Were you a prefect?"

"No, but I was going to be Head Boy."

"I am afraid someone else already has that position. You are, however, a Gryffindor prefect. Was this your house?"

"Yes." Sirius looked relieved at Harry's answer.

"What NEWT level classes were you taking?"

"Charms, Transfiguration, Defense, Potions, and Creatures."

"Those are, fortunately, the courses you are taking here. Based on what I saw of your history, it appears that Miss Granger is the one least changed from your history to ours. I believe it would be prudent for you to spend some time speaking with her to know the current environment."

"Yes," Harry said dryly. "She can start by explaining Neville and Padma to me."

Sirius's eyes widened and a grin appeared. "Uh, oh. You weren't dating Padma?"

Harry shook his head. "I'd dated Hermione and Ginny for a bit last year, but neither worked out all that well. Cho in fifth year was even more of a mistake. Finding Padma sitting here when I woke up was quite a shock. I thought she was Parvati, to be honest."

"Please tell me you didn't tell her that."

"Nope. She was still smiling when she left, so she doesn't know. This is definitely going to take some explaining to her, though."

"Definitely."

"Mister Potter, unless you have further questions for me?" Dumbledore smoothly interrupted.

"Yes, I think I'll need a few days to figure out who's who. Could I have the rest of this week excused from class? I'm sure I can get the coursework from Hermione."

"Miss Granger is taking neither Defense Against the Dark Arts nor Care of Magical Creatures. She's instead taking Ancient Runes, Arithmancy, and Magical Theory. She will know whom you can get your coursework from, however. I shall inform the professors that you will not be joining classes for the remainder of the week. Is there anything further?"

"Is the DA active here?" At Sirius's blank look, Harry elaborated, "Defense Association. Kind of like a dueling club I started when the Defense instructor was an incompetent idiot."

Sirius grinned. "Better not let Remus hear you say that. He's been teaching Defense here since your third year."

Harry brightened. "Good. He was my favorite professor."

"No, Mister Potter, there is no such group at Hogwarts," Dumbledore answered the question. "With a more than competent professor and generally low level of dark activity, there has been no call for such a club. Would you care to create one?"

"Perhaps. I'll talk it over with Remus and see what he thinks."

"Very well. I shall send Professor Lupin and Miss Granger to see you when they have free periods. In the meantime, I feel confident that you and Sirius can find something to discuss."

Harry grinned, eyes shining as he looked at the godfather he'd lost more than a year previously. "I'm sure we can, Albus."

Dumbledore nodded agreeably and left.

Sirius raised an eyebrow. "You call him Albus?"

Harry nodded and explained that during their Occlumency training and generally close relationship since Harry had started at Hogwarts, Albus had given him permission to do so except in an official setting. This triggered several questions from Sirius, which he answered, causing even more questions. Finally tired of answering questions himself, Harry asked for the short version of their history together.

Since Sirius was never sent to Azkaban, he became Harry's guardian and later adopted him officially. Both, however, insisted that Harry retain the Potter name. They had lived in one of the smaller Black homes outside London and used the Potter Manor for occasional summer vacations. Sirius had been working as an Auror since before adopting Harry.

"How's Remus?"

"Good. He's been a professor here for over four years now. He seems to be enjoying it."

"And personally? When I left, he and Tonks were starting to date."

"Nymphadora Tonks?" Sirius asked with a smile. "No, she's dating some dragon handler on the continent. Remus has been married for years. I'm not going to tell you his story, though. He'll have to tell you that himself."

Harry frowned in annoyance. He didn't like that answer but admitted it really was Remus's story to tell. "Who's your Auror partner? Aurors always have partners, right?"

"Usually. I'll answer that one later. It's tied to Moony's story." He paused. "You know who Moony is, right?"

"I solemnly swear that I am up to no good," Harry answered with a grin.

Padfoot grinned back. "Good. I'm glad to hear that I don't have to explain all of that to you."

"Where's the map?"

"You had it, last I knew. You and Neville have been using it for years."

"Neville Longbottom and I are the pranksters of Hogwarts?" Harry asked incredulously. "You've got to be joking."

Sirius's smile grew wider. "That story you'll have to get from him. It's a good one, I promise you that." His face fell. "What happened to his parents?"

Harry's face became a mask of old pain. Harry's promise to Dumbledore five years previously flitted through Harry's mind, but since his history was clearly different, he decided to answer his godfather's question. "Bellatrix Cruciated them into insanity. He was raised by his grandmother."

Sirius sighed. "His story is somewhat happier now. Alice and Frank were leading the Death Eater cleanup operation. I had just been assigned to their team and apparated to their home one evening. Walked in on my dear cousin using the Cruciatus on Alice. I stopped her and damn near killed her on the spot. Everyone tells me that I saved Alice, but Frank was gone by then."

A idea coalesced in Harry's mind. "Was Neville there?"

Black's face twisted in rage. "Yeah. Bellatrix had Neville sitting right there, watching the whole thing."

Harry nodded, not the least bit surprised at the cruelty shown by a loyal Death Eater. "Under normal circumstances, if a fifteen month old had watched his parents tortured like that, what would the Ministry have done?"

"*Obliviate* d him, probably."

"Then I'm sure that's what happened," Harry nodded, confirming it to himself. At Sirius's questioning look, Harry explained, "Despite coming from a strongly magical background, Neville's power is very erratic. In the DA, I've tried to get him settled down, and he's pulled off some very powerful spells, so I know the ability is there. But if he was subjected to Memory Charms as an infant . . ." Harry trailed off.

"It would have long term effects on his control," Sirius concluded with a nod. "Well, here he wasn't given the Memory Charms. His mother is still alive, and they're in a very happy and stable family environment. He's one of the two most powerful spell casters in the school, according to Remus. He also happens to be one of the two top students academically."

"Hermione is the other," Harry stated with certainty.

Sirius nodded. "That she is. Probably why they're dating."

Harry blinked, having forgotten that. "That will take some getting used to."

"I'm sure it will," Sirius said with a small grin. "Then we have your dating Miss Patil of Ravenclaw . . ."

Harry sighed. "You're going to enjoy this entirely too much, Padfoot."

"Oh, definitely. For instance I could tell you that you're engaged, and you have no way of knowing if I'm joking or not."

Harry stared at him, wide-eyed. "Please don't joke about these things, Sirius. I honestly don't know WHAT my life is like. Telling me things like that as a joke won't do either of us any good."

"Hmm. Good point. I apologize for teasing you. You'll be interested to know that you are NOT engaged to the best of my knowledge."

"That was a very mature apology, Sirius, thank you," Harry thanked and teased all in one shot.

"Mature? Him?" asked a new voice in sarcastic amusement.

Sirius pulled his wand and spun to the door, only to realize that his godson had beaten him to the draw. Both wizards relaxed when they recognized Remus.

The werewolf's eyes widened a little when he noticed that Harry's reflexes were on par with a veteran Auror's. "Harry, Albus told me some of what happened. I just didn't realize what it meant to your reactions."

"Hi, Moony," Harry answered with a smile. He frowned a bit as something about Remus was just a little different than what he remembered. It took until Remus had crossed the room and settled at the other side of his bed before Harry had pinpointed it. "You're looking well. Healthy, I mean."

"Yes . . ." Remus answered with a questioning frown.

"Sorry, but your lack of a job has left you a little gaunt. Even worse than him," Harry glanced at Sirius, only to do a double take. Harry's memory was supplying him with how Sirius looked instead of paying attention to the man actually sitting beside him. Both men were clearly healthy, not at all like the on-the-run escaped convict and only sometimes employed werewolf from Harry's memories.

"Sorry," Harry said as the two men exchanged worried glances. "Your history is different. Of course you would both be healthier than I remember." Changing the subject, Harry asked, "You've been a professor here since my third year?"

Remus nodded cheerfully.

"What were you doing before that?"

Forgoing learning about Harry's history in favor of letting the young man ask the questions, he answered, "I was a house-wizard. My daughter is four years behind you. I became a professor when Lily was old enough to go to the school in Hogsmeade."

Harry blinked. "You're married? You have a daughter? Please don't take this the wrong way, but I didn't think you were allowed to have children."

Remus nodded to Sirius. "Thank you father. He lobbied for better rights for lycanthropes. Since lycanthropy isn't hereditary, there's no reason for us to NOT have kids if we want. Alice and I have a daughter in addition to her son."

Harry's jaw dropped as the pieces fell into place. Madam Pomfrey saying earlier that MISTER Lupin (not Professor) wanted to see him. Hermione's surprise at calling Neville a Longbottom. "Neville is your stepson?"

"Yes. Adopted, actually. I wish he'd become a Gryffindor, but becoming a Ravenclaw like his mother is the next best thing."

Harry groaned, fell back onto the pillow, and ran a hand over his face. "I'm definitely going to have to get to know him. Sirius implied he's my best friend, and if you two are still close, I guess that makes sense. But now I learn that almost everything I know about him is incorrect. He's a Ravenclaw instead of a Gryffindor. He's a Lupin, not a Longbottom. His mother is alive, and he has a father. He's the most powerful spell caster in the school. I suppose you're going to tell me that he loves Potions and is the Head Boy, too?"

When silence greeted his flippant comment, he looked at Remus in surprise. Remus grinned with pride. "He doesn't like Severus any more than you do, but he IS the Head Boy."

Harry groaned and dropped back to the pillow.

"I didn't say he was the most powerful spell caster in the school, Harry. I said he was one of the two."

"You're the most powerful," Lupin finished Sirius's thought.

Harry nodded, not really surprised at his own standing, but still reeling from knowing that Neville was number two in academics and power. "Just out of curiosity, what's his Patronus?"

Both men blinked. "Patronus?" Remus asked. "You know how to cast a Patronus?"

"Yeah, you taught me, actually, when the dementors were at the school, looking for the escaped mass-murderer Sirius Black," Harry grinned evilly, knowing he was hopelessly confusing Lupin.

Remus looked blankly at Sirius. Getting an, "I'll tell you later," expression in return, he nodded and said, "The Patronus Spell hasn't been taught to anyone but Aurors in years. What's yours?"

Instead of answering, he merely pointed his wand down the length of the hospital wing. Concentrating on the feeling he had when he recognized his godfather a couple hours earlier, he intoned, "*Expecto Patronum* ."

A silvery stag formed, cantered around the room a few times, and dissolved.

"Prongs," both former Marauders whispered.

"That was an incredibly advanced spell, Harry," Remus said, shaking himself from his daze. "Have you ever had to use it?"

"Yep. Saved Sirius's life with it right after we all caught Wormtail. Also when I was attacked by dementors in Little Whinging."

Remus shook his head. "There's a lot of history there that I'm not following, but based on that spell and some of what you're saying, I'm convinced that you're not the same Harry Potter that I saw at the welcoming feast last night."

Harry's face fell. "You two aren't . . . upset by that, are you? I'm not that Harry, and frankly I don't seem to know a whole lot about him."

"Upset?" Remus asked back. "No, not really. I don't know what to make of it, honestly. What I know of magical theory says that you cannot be a different Harry than the one from yesterday, so it isn't like the one that was here went somewhere else. You just have a different history than you used to. It'll take some getting used to, that's all."

"Harry, your history may be different, but you're still my son. Nothing is wrong that we can't fix together," Sirius asserted firmly.

Harry had tears in his eyes after two of his three father figures gave such heartfelt reassurances.

Sirius grinned. "Now Padma might be a bit upset by losing what she considers her boyfriend, but that's something you two will have to work out."

"Are you kidding? She's not only one of the smartest witches in my class, but she's one of the prettiest as well. This solves so many problems for me. I'm really shy when it comes to girls, so her thinking we're already a couple helps a lot."

"You WILL tell her the truth," Sirius stated immediately, eyeing Harry sternly.

"Oh, definitely. It's just that I've suddenly been handed a great relationship that's already been jump-started for me."

"Jump-started?" Sirius asked blankly.

Remus waved it off. "Muggle term."

Everyone looked over at the door as they heard it open. Hermione walked in with a bag over her shoulder. "Oh, I see you already have company, Harry. Shall I just come back later?"

Harry looked at the two men before coming to a quick decision. "No, come on in. Guys, do you mind if I talk with Hermione for a while? I'm sure you have more questions for me, and I know I have questions for you, but I need to get the major facts about my life straight for the moment." When the two former Marauders shared a look, Harry sighed. "I'm not trying to get away from you or get out of anything. I just need to hit the high points as quickly as possible. Hermione probably knows more about my life right now unless I'm in the habit of talking about my dating habits with you two?" he finished with a grin.

Sirius looked mildly panicked.

Remus grinned back at Harry. "No problem, Harry. You're welcome to my office or apartment at anytime. Neville and Hermione know where the apartments are if you don't." Remus stood and nodded a goodbye.

Sirius also stood. "I know how much you hate me hovering, so I'll go, too. Send Cassiopeia if you have any questions. I'm sure I'll be sending Orion to you in the next day or so with a list of them." Sirius leaned down for a quick hug after Remus moved away a step to give the two some room.

The two men left after a polite word to Hermione.

"Sirius, Professor," she absently greeted them as she took Sirius's former seat. She was studying Harry as intently as Harry was studying her. She didn't look any different to his eyes. "The Headmaster told me that my different timeline theory was correct?" she opened after several seconds of mutual silence.

Harry nodded. "It appears so. This is the same body that was here yesterday, I just have a completely new set of memories."

She nodded back but didn't say anything for a moment. She finally gave a soft laugh. "I have so many questions I don't even know where to start."

"I know the feeling," Harry returned with a grin. "Trade questions?"

She smiled back. It was a game they'd played before. "Sure. You may go first, Mister Potter."

He laughed at her overt formality. "From your point of view, how close are we?"

"You're my best friend since starting Hogwarts. We study together. We're the two prefects of our class. We've never dated, but rather more like we're brother and sister. My turn. From YOUR point of view, how close are we?"

"You're one of my two best friends. You, me, and Ron are a team. We've done nearly everything together. You and I DID date some last year, and you've also dated Ron on and off, but we all decided that being best friends was better. How did you and Neville get together?"

Hermione smiled in remembrance. "You introduced us in our first year. You'd practically grown up with him, so you knew each other very well before Hogwarts. You've stayed very close even though he's a Ravenclaw and we're Gryffindor. Anyway, Neville and I started dating after the Yule Ball our fourth year. What's Neville like from your point of view?"

Harry frowned a little. "His parents were tortured into insanity in front of him. He was probably given Memory Charms because of that and it's had long term effects on his magic. He's powerful but not confident in himself, so his magic suffers for it. We've been trying to help him in the DA, and it's helped some. He's still easily flustered, especially by Snape." He paused a moment and asked hesitantly, "What can you tell me about me and Padma?"

"Neville set you up for the Yule Ball. You started dating seriously at the beginning of fifth year. You seem very happy together. For quite some time, I was worried that she was after you just for your money and fame, but it's clear now that she's with you for your own sake. You've met her parents and they apparently approve. Parvati doesn't like you much, but she's so unlike her sister that it's amazing they're even related, let alone twins. Since I know you would want to know but won't ask: I know you're VERY close, though I honestly don't know exactly how close that goes. That is something you'll have to talk with her about. I don't pry into your relationship, and you don't pry into mine." She smiled sweetly, "Brother and sister, right?"

Harry grinned and nodded back, desperately fighting the blush, all the while knowing it was futile.

Hermione asked her question, "Tell me about Ron Weasley. You mentioned him earlier."

"The third part of our triad. Temperamental, wears his heart on his sleeve, but you couldn't find a more loyal friend on this Earth. Officially a grandmaster at Wizard Chess, also Gryffindor Keeper. What's he like here?"

Hermione frowned. "Much quieter. He comes from a big family, I think, so that's not a total surprise. Good at Creatures, but kind of average otherwise. I hardly know him at all, honestly."

"Without you and me to pull him along, he must have retreated into a shell," Harry mused sadly.

She shrugged. "You mentioned the DA earlier?"

"Defense Association. We had a horrible Defense professor our fifth year, so you talked me into forming this thing. Kind of a Defense study group and dueling club wrapped into one. It was an illegal club that first year, but last year we were open. Nearly a third of the school attends. What's Remus been like in class?"

"Wait, wait. It was an ILLEGAL club?"

Harry's face grew dark. "That hag Umbridge refused to teach us any defense. We did nothing but read defensive theories in class. No practice or

practical demonstrations. She and Fudge had it in for me from the beginning. When they found out I was leading the group, they outlawed it."

"Why did I ask YOU to form the DA?"

"I was the best in the school at Defense after the Tournament."

"You were in the Tri-Wizard Tournament?" she asked in shock.

Harry launched into the story of how Barty Crouch Junior, disguised as Alastor Moody, entered him in the tournament and how Harry not only survived it, but actually tied for the win. She quietly cried with him as he told about watching Cedric die and Voldemort being reborn. He went on to explain that the Ministry refused to acknowledge Voldemort, causing no end to the headaches for Harry and the Order of the Phoenix.

"You've led one very exciting life, Harry."

He shrugged modestly. "Sorcerer's Stone, Chamber of Secrets, dementors coming after Sirius, the Tournament, DA and then the raid on the Ministry. Only my sixth year was anything close to normal for me. Well, if you don't count me trying to date you and then Ginny," he teased.

Hermione's eyes were wide. "You, me, and Neville went after the Sorcerer's Stone, so I think I know most of that story. The Tournament happened, but you weren't part of it. The Chamber of Secrets is a Hogwarts myth. Lastly, what's that about dementors and raiding the Ministry?"

Harry's face drained of color. "The Chamber of Secrets wasn't opened in our second year?"

"No . . ."

He frowned in thought. "Well, it should be safe so long as there's not another Parselmouth running around. I need to get that opened and kill the basilisk. I should start making a list of things to talk with the Headmaster about." He noticed that Hermione was staring with her mouth open. "Hermione? What's wrong?"

"Y . . . You're a Parselmouth?"

He grinned. This hadn't come up? "Yep. Voldemort himself gave me the ability when he tried to kill me the first time. Could I borrow some parchment and a quill? I need to start writing things down."

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Madam Pomfrey interrupted Harry and Hermione's discussion an hour later. "Mister Potter? The Headmaster would like you to attend the meeting that he's calling."

Harry looked over at her in surprise.

"If you think about it, it does make sense, Harry," Hermione commented. "After all, the professors need to know what happened to you. Otherwise, when you do something unexpected, they'll not know how to react."

Harry smiled. "Ever the voice of reason, Hermione. Don't ever change."

The bushy haired girl smiled back and collected all the notes she'd been making. Harry found it highly amusing that she was making notes on things to ask him about later.

After changing back into school robes behind a handy divider, Harry started following Hermione out of the hospital wing. Something in a mirror caught his eye as he passed, however.

He stopped and stared at his reflection. He slowly shook his head and watched as his image did the same thing. This was not the body he had yesterday.

"Whatever is wrong, dear? You look as if you don't recognize yourself," the mirror commented.

He chuckled nervously. "Actually, I almost don't," he admitted.

He had gained a few inches in height and enough muscle mass that he wasn't the scrawny little kid who'd been compared to a house-elf any longer. The worry-lines around his eyes had disappeared. His glasses weren't the ugly black (and cheap) frames around an outdated prescription, but rather were stylish, sleek, and rimless. In all the basic features he was still himself, only now he was better.

Smiling about his new look, he left with the bemused Hermione.

She was still chattering away about alternate timeline theories (the most he could understand was that it was a very dangerous and unpredictable field to play around with) when she gave the password to the Headmaster's office, "Ton-Tongue Toffee."

Harry grinned. "I see that Weasley Wizard Wheezes is alive and well."

Hermione gave him a strange look. "I don't know where the Headmaster came up with that password."

"Indeed, Mister Potter," Dumbledore called from within his office. "Misters Weasley have some fascinating sweets available by owl-order. I believe they have yet to open a storefront anywhere, however. Perhaps another difference between your history and ours?"

"Yes, sir," Harry replied with a grin. He looked around the room and recognized everyone. Professors Dumbledore, McGonagall, Flitwick, Hagrid, Snape, and Lupin plus Neville were already arranged around the room. Harry smiled at each, earning a hesitant smile back from everyone except Dumbledore, who twinkled merrily, and Snape, who glowered. Harry's gaze stopped at the magnificent phoenix on his perch beside Dumbledore's desk. "Fawkes! How've you been?"

Everyone, including Dumbledore and Fawkes himself, blinked in surprise. Harry walked over, gave his wrist a peculiar twist, and offered a greenish brown item to Fawkes. The phoenix gave a short trill and immediately ate the offering. After stroking Fawkes's chest feathers for a moment, Harry took the remaining seat, facing Dumbledore's desk squarely.

"I see that you have met Fawkes," Dumbledore finally broke the resulting silence.

"Yes, sir. I met him my second year on one of his burning days. He saved my life later that year and then healed my acromantula bite at the end of the Tri-Wizard Tournament."

"Why, pray tell, did you have an acromantula bite, Potter?" Snape asked, drawing out the question.

"I had to get past one to reach the Tri-Wizard Cup," Harry patiently answered.

"You were the Hogwarts representative at the Tournament?" McGonagall asked in surprise.

Harry shook his head and launched into the story of the Tri-Wizard Tournament and Barty Crouch Junior for the second time that day.

"A fascinating tale, Potter, but you've no proof that you aren't fabricating all of this, including some fanciful tale of alternate timelines, in a sad attempt to gain even more notoriety," Snape spat, lacing more sarcasm and disdain into his words than Harry thought possible.

Harry sighed in resignation, surprising the Potions Master. "Professor, you and I haven't gotten along since the moment we met. Apparently you've held a grudge against my father for saving your life in your fifth year." Lupin shifted slightly. "My having grown up with my godfather has apparently only made it worse. I can provide you with all the proof you need, but I would prefer not to do it in front of too many witnesses."

"Afraid I'll publicly expose you for the lying little sneak you are?" Snape immediately pounced, looking sadistically happy.

Dumbledore's twinkle disappeared. Everyone else in the room tensed. Harry grinned. This actually made Snape nervous, though he didn't let it show.

"You asked for it, Snivellus," Harry said in a perfectly calm tone, intentionally using the nickname the Marauders gave him. "You're a Death Eater. You let Lucius Malfoy take you to get Marked after you graduated, wanting the ingredient access and knowledge that Voldemort," everyone except Dumbledore shivered, "could bring you. After Lily Potter was betrayed and killed, you came to Headmaster Dumbledore and confessed all. He offered you immunity in exchange for information. You took it. The Order of the Phoenix and the Aurors used that information to track down and imprison numerous Death Eaters. Most tried to use the *Imperio* us as a legal defense. Many were successful from my point of view, but I don't know about here. I'll be giving Sirius a full list of Death Eaters later, so we'll see about that. At any rate, Headmaster Dumbledore later taught you Occlumency as a mental defense on the off chance that you ever needed it."

Everyone except Dumbledore and Hermione were staring at Harry in shock. "How do you know all of this, Potter?" Snape asked incredulously.

"Either I'm a lying little sneak with incredibly accurate guesses, or I've actually been telling the truth, incomprehensible as that may seem to you. Pick one," Harry growled back.

"Mister Potter!" McGonagall snapped.

She was interrupted by Snape who snarled and raised his wand, "*Legilimens!*"

Harry had expected this. Snape mentally hit a brick wall and stopped dead in his tracks. Severus Snape suddenly found himself subjected to a series of images: the scene Harry had found in Snape's pensieve; Snape's intentionally painful, humiliating, and useless Occlumency lessons to Harry; Dumbledore explaining Snape's vendetta against Harry; Snape reporting to Dumbledore and the rest of the Order many times over the previous two years. Harry finally released Snape's mind, allowing the older wizard to slump back in his seat and stare at Harry wordlessly.

"Blimey, Harry," Hagrid whispered.

"Now that my biggest detractor in the room is convinced that my history is indeed different, could we please move on?" Harry was tired of Snape's attitude. He just hoped that things would change, or at least become bearable.

Most of the professors looked to Dumbledore for his reaction. When Dumbledore did not reprimand Harry for his actions, they settled back down. Neville and Hermione were staring at Harry in astonishment.

Harry smiled at the two of them. "I'll explain later," he quietly offered. The shaken Head Boy and Head Girl nodded.

"You are apparently a Master Occlumens," Flitwick stated unnecessarily. "What else do you know now?"

"I'm an expert in Defense. I've actually been teaching it for two years."

"You're a professor?" Neville's wasn't the only shocked face in the room.

Snape opened his mouth but thought better of it and left the biting comment unuttered.

"Not really, no." Harry gave a short history of the DA, including some of the charms he was teaching.

Flitwick was excited. "You TAUGHT the Patronus?"

"Yes. Remus had taught me in my third year, and I taught it to the DA members. Albus and I felt the Dementors would eventually side with Voldemort. It was only a matter of time. We were right, incidentally."

"Mister Potter, you should treat the Headmaster with more respect." McGonagall, always a stickler for rules, wouldn't let the familiarity slide by.

"We've been friends for a year, Professor. It was hard not to be friends when he was teaching me Occlumency." He shot a glare at Snape and amended himself, "Honestly and legitimately teaching me Occlumency." He turned back to McGonagall and softened his tone, "However, I understand that things have changed, so I will attempt to remember not to use such familiarity."

"Not at all, dear boy," Dumbledore waved him off. "I am at least as interested to know what you just fed to Fawkes."

Harry grinned at the non-sequitor, knowing it was his way to add some levity to the somewhat tense atmosphere. "I summoned the treat from your second drawer on the left, back right corner," Harry answered easily.

Dumbledore laughed. "Proof positive that he does indeed know Fawkes and myself."

"Indeed," remarked the visibly subdued Snape.

"What can I teach you that you don't already know?" Lupin asked, getting back to Harry's knowledge base.

Harry shrugged. "My extra training was mostly in offensive and defensive charms. I don't know what else is taught in Defense class seventh year."

"Then what can I teach you, Mister Potter?" Flitwick asked.

"Non-combat charms," Harry smiled at the diminutive professor. "I can stop a dementor, but I can't bake a scone to save my life." Everyone grinned to varying degrees except Snape who glowered and Hagrid who was chuckling. "Seriously, I'm still learning from all of you all of the time. I'll still be attending normal classes unless you have objections."

All of the professors shook their heads, some more enthusiastically than others.

"Now that you all know what happened to Mister Potter and what to expect from him, do any of you have any issues that we need to discuss?"

Everyone but Harry shook their head.

"Mister Potter?" Dumbledore invited him.

"I'll be speaking with Remus about DA or maybe a Dueling Club, but we can do that separately. Professor Flitwick, I'm aware that two students of yours and I are quite close."

Flitwick nodded, his eyes sliding to Neville for a moment.

"In that case, could Neville be excused from curfew tonight and Padma from classes tomorrow? I think I need to speak with the two of them at length."

Flitwick cheerfully agreed.

The Headmaster's office slowly cleared, eventually leaving only Harry, Dumbledore, and a pensive Neville.

"Headmaster, for the sake of limiting confusion and with your permission, I think I'll be sleeping elsewhere for a few days. I know of a safe place within Hogwarts, so I will be nearby. The house-elves can find me if you need to get in touch for some reason, otherwise I will be exceedingly hard to find. This is intentional, since I need to figure out my place again. I need to talk with several people, yourself included, but mostly students. Please understand that I'm not trying to break away from the school, but I need to sort several things out before diving back into the general population and regular studies."

Dumbledore studied Harry for a moment. "Everything I know or have heard about you, Harry, leads me to believe that you would not ask such a thing lightly. Very well, you have free run of the castle until Monday. Other than Mister Lupin here and Miss Patil, please refrain from interfering with any other students' classes. You are of course free to speak with them, but please limit it to non-class times. In addition feel free to come and speak with me at any time. I have more than a few questions for you as well."

Harry nodded. "Thank you, Headmaster."

Harry turned and left after a farewell to Fawkes, trailed by a slightly apprehensive but impressed Neville.

Harry headed up to the seventh floor and found the portrait of Barnabas the Barmy. In front of Neville's bewildered stare, Harry paced back and forth three times before the door to the Room of Requirement appeared.

Neville started and then stared at the newly revealed door. "Ya know, Harry, we've explored this castle as well as our fathers did, but this is new. What in the name of the Marauders is this?"

Harry opened the door and waved him in. "Welcome to the Room of Requirement. It provides whatever the person needs. In this case, I asked for a furnished apartment for a few days."

Neville cautiously entered to find a comfortable sitting room done in Gryffindor colors. Harry walked to the overstuffed chair in front of the fireplace and settled himself comfortably. Without looking, he knew the two doors led to a small bedroom and a loo. The house-elves knew about the room, so he could get meals delivered without any problem or simply go to the kitchen when the mood struck him. He'd used the room in this way before when he wanted to get away from it all for a few days.

"Nice place," Neville finally decided after poking around, "though the color scheme could use some work."

Harry grinned. "A house-elf showed it to me early fifth year for the DA. As far as the colors . . . From my point of view, you're a Gryffindor, not a Ravenclaw."

Neville raised an eyebrow and took the other chair. "Tell me about myself."

For the next few minutes, Harry gave him the history of Neville Longbottom.

Neville Lupin nodded at the end. "It doesn't sound like you knew him all that well."

Harry frowned. "Reasonably, but we weren't best mates. He was a bit of a loner. With his history, I guess that doesn't surprise me, though." Neville nodded. "On the other hand, he and I could be good friends. The fact that YOU were raised by Remus and your mother and I was raised by Sirius means that we are good friends, correct?"

"Best mates," Neville agreed. Nev then told him about how they were raised as the next generation Marauders. He then revealed that Sirius, without Remus's knowledge, had trained them both as Animagi.

Harry's jaw dropped.

Grinning, Neville stood and transformed into an owl. A few seconds later, he had transformed back and retaken his seat.

"I'm an Animagus, too?" Harry asked excitedly.

Neville chewed on a lip. "You were, but I don't know if you are anymore. You obviously don't think you are, so your mind probably isn't set up to do it. You'll probably have to talk with Uncle Sirius and go through training again."

Harry slumped in defeat. So close . . .

Nev smiled in sympathy. "Sounds like you've lost some things but gained others. The Harry I knew was good at Defense, but nowhere near a Patronus level in knowledge." He cocked his head. "What is . . . or was, whatever, my Patronus?"

Harry chuckled. "A treant. You always did have a thing for herbology." Nev smiled and nodded. Harry hesitantly went on, "What you just said. 'The Harry I knew' -" He paused, not sure how to proceed.

Neville nodded. "Yeah, I know what you mean. To be honest, I don't know what to make of it." He sighed. "Just something else we'll have to get through if you're up for it."

Harry smiled. "Definitely, Nev. Definitely. Remind me to tell you the story about the Department of Mysteries sometime. Meanwhile, I know I'm tired, and I expect you are, too, so I'll let you get some sleep. Do me a favor, though. At breakfast, tell Padma that I'd like to talk with her. I'll be here."

Nev nodded in agreement. "Will do. I'll tell her a bit about what happened, too."

Harry shook his head a little. "Not too much. I don't want to scare her off. If she thinks I don't know her, she won't even show."

Neville smirked. "You DON'T know her, Pronglet."

"Pronglet?" Harry asked in a low voice.

Neville shrugged, clearly unconcerned with Harry's ire. "Your father was Prongs, you're Prongs Junior or Pronglet." He completely ignored Harry's soft growl. "Don't worry about Padma, though. She loves you entirely too much to let you go without a fight."

Harry relaxed and smiled with a bit of uncertainty. Such unconditional love was still an almost unknown concept to him. Sirius and the Weasleys were the only ones to show him such affection in his memory, but to receive it from a seventeen year old young lady was a new experience.

Nev stood and headed toward the door. "I'll deliver your messages tomorrow morning, then. I'll probably even show up after classes if you don't mind. Until then, don't get up to anything I wouldn't do."

"And does that really restrict me from much?" Harry fired back, enjoying the teasing with this new version of an old friend.

"Not really, no," was the cocky answer as Neville closed the door behind him.

Harry blushed and pulled out the list of things to discover or talk about that he'd started earlier in the day. To it, he added, "Learn exactly how far Nev and Hermione's relationship goes and if I should do anything about it."

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The next morning, Harry was writing down a list of Death Eaters he knew by name when there was a knock on the door.

Placing the quill down, he took a steadying breath before opening the door. He figured this conversation was going to be tricky but potentially very rewarding.

He was right. Padma was smiling uncertainly at him from outside the room.

"Hi," Harry half-smiled. He stood aside and waved her in. "Please."

She entered and looked around as Harry sat on one side of the loveseat. Her inspection finished, she said, "Nice place you found, here. Colors could use some work, though," she joked as she sat next to him.

"That's the same thing Neville said. Must be a Ravenclaw thing," Harry responded with a nervous chuckle. She merely smiled. Harry ran a distracted hand through his hair, making it more unruly than usual. "Did Neville tell you anything about what happened?"

"Some," she admitted. "Basically he said that you're a different Harry but still the same."

Harry blew out a breath. "Yeah, I guess I am. I'm not the same Harry from two days ago, but I'm still Harry Potter. Just a new history stored in my brain. Does that make sense?"

"It does. I read up on time travel spells and theory -"

"Typical Ravenclaw," Harry teased.

She ignored his interruption, "- after Hermione told me about her theory yesterday morning. By all magical theory, you ARE the same Harry from two days ago. Why your perceived history is different is just one of those magical mysteries, I guess. The fact that you DO have a different history, though, might cause problems."

Harry nodded slowly. "Yes, it could." He grinned suddenly, "You don't know how surprised I was when you kissed me yesterday morning."

She flinched. "Proving that you and I aren't a couple from your point of view."

"True," he admitted.

She flinched harder, looking down at her hands.

He reached over and hooked a finger under her chin, forcing her to look up at him. "Hey, just because our histories are different doesn't mean that we can't move forward from here." He sighed and leaned back onto the arm of the loveseat, throwing one arm over the back of the small sofa. "Personally, I think the idea's great. I've thought you're one of the prettiest, smartest witches in our class since first year. I've just never had the nerve to ask you out. I'm terribly shy, you see."

Her mouth quirked. "So much for the famed Gryffindor courage." She leaned forward until her nose was a bare inch from his, staring deeply into his eyes. When he refused to blink or look away, a slow smile formed on her face. "The good news is that I think I can see my Harry in there somewhere." She gave him a quick peck on the lips and leaned back to mirror his pose. "So tell me about us."

Recovering his composure, he hesitantly admitted how little he knew about her. He related his double date with her, her twin, and Ron to the Yule Ball but her and her sister's leaving when the boys basically ignored them.

"Why did you ignore Parvati?" she asked calmly. "She was, after all, your date and pretty. Though she is a bit . . ." Padma waved a hand vaguely.

"Flighty?" Harry suggested with a grin. At her matching grin and nod, he shrugged. "I had a massive crush on Cho Chang at the time. I know I was behaving like an arse, but that's what happened. I regret treating her like that, but I don't know how to go back in time and change what I did." He waved vaguely around, "All evidence of time travel notwithstanding."

"Why did . . . Ron Weasley, wasn't it? Yes, why did Ron ignore me?"

"He was crushing Hermione at least as bad, though he wasn't about to admit it."

Padma blinked. "Ron having a crush on Hermione? That's surprising."

He raised an eyebrow. "Why?"

"Well, in addition to Neville and Hermione dating since the beginning of forever, Ron's a notorious wallflower. Except when the topic is Quidditch, I suppose. Though being shy doesn't stop him from having a crush, does it?"

He smothered a laugh, remembering Ginny's crush on him since she was ten. And her terrified squeaks and rapid retreats anytime he entered a room for years afterwards.

"Hmm. The Great Harry Potter has had his share of receiving crushes, I see."

He blushed brilliantly but refused to say a word.

"Okay, THERE is the Harry I know," she pronounced with a satisfied smile.

He raised an eyebrow. "Really? Easily embarrassed? I'd think having been raised by Sirius Black, he'd be immune."

"Embarrassed by his fame and easily embarrassed by women," she explained.

"Okay, you've got me there," he admitted with a self-deprecating grin. "Tell me about us?"

"Neville set us up for the Yule Ball. I was also very shy, unlike my sister, so Neville setting up the date for me actually sounded pretty good. The fact that it was with a Gryffindor Quidditch player, heir to both Potter and Black names, and the Boy-Who-Lived was just a bonus." She smiled at his flaming face and leaned forward, laying one hand to the side of his face. "Don't be embarrassed. It's the truth, after all. So two embarrassed, shy people were helped along by the scheming of Neville Lupin and Hermione Granger. We started dating the following summer and have stayed together since. My parents like you. I like Sirius and the Lupins." She quirked a smile and said, "Our only problem is Parvati's constant predictions of gloom and doom upon us."

Harry laughed. "She's spent too much time around Trewloney. That crazy bat was always predicting horrible deaths for me. That got really annoying in class, though it made homework easy to make up."

"Really? You didn't take Divination. You took Muggle Studies and Creatures. What's this about making up your divination homework?"

"Yep," he grinned, already comfortable with her leaning into his personal space. "Have you ever looked at Tarot Card spreads? Now imagine doing an entire month's worth of readings in one evening. Ron and I made up horrible fates for ourselves, and she just lapped it up. Got great grades until we took the OWLs."

She giggled softly. "Poor baby. How badly were you two hurt in these predictions?"

"Oh, betrayed, maimed, mutilated, you name it. I think garden gnomes got Ron once or twice. I distinctly remember including the giant squid and flobberworms in my own dire predictions."

She attempted a stern look. "You really shouldn't be making fun of a subject like that."

He raised a sardonic eyebrow. "This is Trewloney we're discussing here."

She gave it some thought. "True," she agreed, finally settling herself fully on his chest. His arms wrapped themselves around her, seemingly of their own accord. "So, who was I dating?"

"I know you dated a few Ravenclaws on and off. Terry and Kevin that I know for sure. Nobody for long, though."

"Parvati?"

Harry snorted in humor. "In order to preserve the honor of the Patil name, I'll refrain from answering that question."

"That bad?" she asked in trepidation.

"Well, she didn't really have a reputation of being . . . uh . . . promiscuous, but she didn't seem to believe in staying with one guy, either. I think she'd had at least one date with every Gryffindor bloke one year older through one year younger than us. Myself included if you count the Yule Ball. Most of the Ravenclaws and a few Hufflepuffs, too."

"Huh. Seems she hasn't changed much, though you're not listed on her date sheet. At least as far as I know," she gave him a deadly stare which lost much of its venom as she was also playing with the buttons on the front of his robe.

He raised one hand in a warding gesture. "Hey, don't look at me. I can honestly say that I have no knowledge of what you're asking."

She grinned and laid her head down on his chest. "As it so happens, I believe you. Just don't expect to hide behind that excuse forever."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Stop it."

"Yes, ma'am."

She poked his chest. "I mean it. Stop it."

"Yes, ma - hmph." Harry's grinning reply was interrupted by Padma's lunging upward to capture his lips with her own.

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After classes were finished for the day, Neville Lupin knocked on the door and then opened it at the shouted invitation to enter, Hermione Granger following immediately behind. They found the remains of a lunch spread on the floor near the loveseat and Padma curled up on the long couch, head pillowed on Harry's thigh.

Hermione smiled slightly at the cute domestic scene. "Comfy?"

Very," the couple chorused and then laughed.

Nev and Hermione each took one of the facing chairs. Neville studied Harry for a moment. "So, did you follow my request?"

It took a moment for Harry to remember Neville's admonition not to do anything he wouldn't.

"That depends. Precisely how far along have you gone with Hermione?"

Neville raised an eyebrow but didn't blush. "She's never objected to anything we've done." Hermione, on the other hand, was turning pink.

"Good to know, but it doesn't answer the question," Harry pointed out.

"You're right, it doesn't. I do not kiss and tell."

"You two," Padma said with a sigh, drawing all eyes to her. "We've each been in a stable, monogamous relationship for at least two years. All four of us are of age. You're smart enough to figure out the rest."

Neville did blush slightly at this but maintained eye contact with Padma. Hermione was nearly glowing red, suddenly staring at her hands.

Harry's eyes widened as the implications sunk in. He grinned at the girl whose head rested comfortably on his lap and asked, "Something you'd like to share about our relationship?"

A mischievous grin appeared. "Share? No, not really. Show, perhaps. Maybe even teach if my guess is right."

Neville's eyebrow skyrocketed when Harry blushed spectacularly. Hermione's sudden smile threatened to split her face in half.

"Oh, ho. Yet another thing to add to the list of differences." Nev grinned slyly, "Though this one I'm sure will prove more . . . entertaining to resolve than some of the others."

"No comment," Harry mumbled.

Nev laughed.

"Did you come in here to abuse me?" Harry asked.

"No, but it's one of the perks," Hermione retorted.

"Oh, har-de-har-har."

"Leave Pronglet alone," Padma chided the pair.

"Pronglet?" Harry asked. He didn't look nearly as upset at her use of the nickname as he was at Nev's. "You call me Pronglet, too?"

"Of course. I know you're a stag Animagus, just like your father was."

"I was a stag?"

Nev nodded while Padma and Hermione looked confused. "With this switch, I don't think he's an Animagus anymore," Neville explained to the girls.

"Oh," Hermione frowned in thought. "Do we know if your magic is different?"

Harry nodded. "I can cast a Patronus now where I apparently couldn't before. So my guess is that my magic is what I'm used to, not necessarily what you're used to."

"You can cast a Patronus?" Padma asked in surprise, sitting up.

Neville and Hermione also leaned forward as Harry took out his wand. Summoning up a happy memory didn't prove much of a chore for him this evening, considering how he's spent most of the day. "*Expecto Patronum* ."

The silvery stag cantered around for a few moments before dissipating.

"Prongs?" Neville asked.

"THAT is your Animagus form," Padma informed Harry at the same time.

"My father's Animagus form, yes," he answered Nev's question. "You're saying I look identical to him?" he asked Padma.

"Apparently," she said, settling back down on his lap with a thoughtful frown.

"Since I've never seen my Animagus form, what does it mean that my father and I are identical?"

"How do you know that that looked like Prongs senior?" Hermione asked reasonably.

"Remus, both before and after yesterday, identified him. Sirius, too."

"They would know," Neville acknowledged. "I wonder why Uncle Sirius never mentioned Prongs and Pronglet looked identical."

"Please, oh please, tell me I objected to Pronglet," Harry moaned.

Nev chuckled. "Oh, you did, but when you had a stag as an Animagus, you were stuck with it. Sirius and I refused to let it go until you accepted it."

"HA!" Harry shouted triumphantly. "Now that I'm no longer a stag Animagus, I don't have to live with that nickname."

Neville shrugged. "Padfoot and I will just find another name once your new form is known."

Harry rolled his eyes. "THERE'S something to look forward to," he said sarcastically. "Hey, Nev, you could train me, couldn't you?"

Neville frowned. "I suppose I could take over the training, yes."

"Huh?"

Neville nodded to Padma and Hermione. "You've been training the girls. I suppose you could go through training again, and I could teach the three of you." He didn't sound very excited about the possibility, though.

"You and I are leading the Head Girl and the seventh year Ravenclaw Prefect astray? Training them to be unregistered Animagi? Quite the troublemakers, aren't we?"

Neville grinned back. "We do not make trouble. We're pranksters. There's a difference."

"Sure," Padma waved him off. "You've been trying to convince us of that for years, Hoot."

"Ah, HA! I knew you had a nickname."

"Hey, it's better than 'Pronglet'," Hermione defended her boyfriend and teased her best friend all at once.

"Hmmp," Harry pouted. He brightened as the other three snickered. "Like I said, though, that name no longer applies."

"But what if your form takes a stag again?" Padma asked innocently.

Harry glowered. "And what is YOUR form, Miss Ravenclaw Prefect?"

She shrugged easily. "Dunno. We just started training a couple weeks ago at your place."

"At least I won't be far behind," Harry said in relief.

"If I can teach," Neville pointed out with more than a bit of nervousness.

"You can," Harry stated with certainty. "You're a lot more self-assured now than you were before. You were also one of my assistants in the DA. You were especially good with the younger students. Now, you're teaching three people you're very good friends with, and you're much more confident and capable than I remember you being. You can do this."

Neville nodded, still looking unsure.

"If it makes you feel any better, Professor Sprout was talking about recommending you for her post when she retires."

Neville blinked and smiled softly in surprise. Hermione beamed.

Padma smiled. "Good idea. Hey, that reminds me, what were you planning on doing with yourself after graduation?"

"Auror. That's the only reason I'm still in Potions."

Neville shook off the shocking comment about teaching Herbology and commented, "After your little performance in Dumbledore's office, he's going to be worse than ever. I hope you know that."

Harry made a sour face. "Don't remind me. Hey, what are your plans?"

"Wait," Padma interrupted, "what performance?"

Harry's face twisted into a satisfied smirk. "He tried to use Legilimency on me. He didn't know I'm a Master Occlumens. I captured his mind and force-fed him enough images to make it clear that I knew more about him than he realized. The only way I could know all of that is if my story were the truth. He wasn't all that happy."

"What was that you called him just before that happened?" Hermione asked. She left out the rest of Harry's tirade against the Potions Master, determined to get some complete answers out of him in private.

"Snivellus," Neville supplied with a smirk nearly matching Harry's. "It's a nickname for Snape that Sirius came up with during their school days."

Harry merely nodded, impressed that none of the three asked the meaning of the terms Legilimency or Occlumency. Switching back to the previous topic of conversation, he asked, "Now, what were your plans after graduation?"

"Taking over my Uncle Algie's herbology gardens, greenhouses, and apothecary," Neville answered, "but Herbology professor deserves some thought."

"Professor Vector is going to be retiring soon," Hermione mentioned. "I was going to apply for that position."

"Experimental Charms at the Ministry for me," Padma mentioned.

Harry looked over at Nev. "Does it strike you that we're definitely overmatched in the brains department by these two?"

The girls blushed.

Neville smiled. "Yeah, I've noticed that, too, on occasion. Usually right after a prank blows up in our faces that one or the other told us was a bad idea."

"Give me some examples," Harry requested, smiling broadly.

The rest of the afternoon was spent in idle conversation between three best friends and their fourth friend coming back into the fold.

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"Master Potter, sir?" asked a squeaky voice the next morning.

Harry looked up from his breakfast to find an unfamiliar house-elf looking at him nervously. "Yes?" he asked, smiling in an attempt to calm the excitable little creature.

"Master Black is in the Entrance Hall. He is asking for you, sir."

"Thank you."

The elf nodded.

"Wait!" Harry suddenly called, nearly startling the elf into falling over. "Sorry, but I have a question. Are there elves working here at Hogwarts who go by the names of Dobby or Winky?"

She looked at him strangely. "No, sir. No house-elf working at Hogwarts goes by those names, sir."

Harry sighed. "Thank you."

Harry strode into the Entrance Hall a few minutes later, waving cheerfully at several students he recognized. Most of them gave him peculiar looks in return.

"Sirius!" he called to the man standing beside Professor Lupin and an unrecognized woman near the front doors. Sirius's partner, probably. He embraced the taller man for a moment. "I see you got my owl."

"Yes we did, Harry," the woman said with a smile.

Harry studied her for a second, finding a clear resemblance to Neville in her facial features.

Remus confirmed it when he introduced her, "Harry, meet Alice Longbottom-Lupin."

She gave Remus a confused look for a moment before her face cleared. She turned to Harry and extended a hand. "Forgive me. I had forgotten that you've never met me. Auror Alice Lupin, at your service."

Harry shook her hand before gently pulling her into an embrace. "Though I don't remember you, I feel as if I know you after talking with Sirius, Remus, and Neville. You were also my godmother, correct?"

All three adults blinked. "Er, yes," Alice belatedly answered.

"How could you have known that?" Sirius asked.

"Remus mentioned it last year at your wake," Harry answered in a pained voice.

Alice quickly caught on to the discomfort and tried to divert the conversation "We're here in an official capacity, Harry. It has to do with the letter Cassy carried to Sirius last night."

Harry nodded. He'd outlined the Death Eater ranks as he knew them, plus various other items of interest to an Auror. He had been pleasantly surprised to learn that his owl was none other than Hedwig, though she went by the name "Cassiopeia" now.

"Mom, Dad?" a young, female voice asked from the direction of the Great Hall.

Harry looked over to see a young girl in Gryffindor colors approach.

"Lily, we're here on official business, I'm afraid," Sirius jumped in after seeing the look of confusion in Harry's eyes. "Harry found out something that we need to talk with him about."

The young girl shrugged and turned to Harry. "Where've you been, Harry? The Tower has all sorts of rumors floating around about you. Hermione, Nev, and Padma won't tell us anything except that you're safe, and McGonagall won't tell us anything at all. She just gets a weird look on her face when we ask."

"You could have asked your father to bring you to see me," Harry said, trying to maintain his composure in front of what was clearly Remus and Alice's daughter.

She huffed. "I tried. He said he didn't know where you were."

Harry grinned. "I've got a secret room in the castle. I'll show it to you sometime."

"Great. But what's been going on?"

Harry chewed on a lip for a moment. How to explain to this girl that from his point of view she didn't even exist?

"That's kind of complex," Remus answered. The girl screwed up her face in anger. Remus hastened to add, "We'll tell you all about it, but five minutes before the first class isn't the time." He turned to Harry, "Tonight, do you want to join us in the staff apartments?"

Harry nodded. "Sure. Neville knows where I'm staying. Have him come and get me in time?" He turned to the girl whom he was sure was his mother's namesake, "Be prepared for a crazy story, Lily. Nobody believes it the first time around."

She frowned in disbelief. "After hearing all the stories of the original Marauders, Ginny's stories of the Weasley Twins, and what you and Nev have been up to, there's nothing I won't believe."

Alice sighed. "What's Neville done this time?"

Lily smiled angelically. "Nothing at all, Mother."

Remus snorted in disbelief. "At the Welcoming Feast, Peeves was unwillingly dressed in a white sheet in what the Muggles would call an ghost style Halloween costume."

Harry fought desperately to keep a straight face. He didn't dare look toward his godfather.

"He was understandably upset," Remus continued dryly, carefully keeping his attention on his wife, "but won't tell us who did it or how it happened."

"It's the third day of classes," Alice bemoaned. She turned to her daughter. "Off with you. Classes are about to start."

Lily waved to everyone and joined the group of Gryffindor girls who'd patiently been waiting for her.

Harry led the two Aurors off toward his temporary quarters without a word. Finally arriving, he took a chair and waved the two Aurors to seats. After briefly examining the room, they seated themselves to find Harry grinning widely. At Sirius's inquiring look, Harry explained, "I'm imagining Peeves the Poltergeist dressed as a ghost."

Sirius grinned back. Alice rolled her eyes and sighed the sigh of the long suffering.

Sirius turned to her. "Hey, you're the one who chose to stay with the last two Marauders and is helping to raise three more."

She was looking down, shuffling some parchments she'd produced from her robe, and pointedly ignoring Sirius's comment. "Harry, I've read this list of suspected Death Eaters you sent to Sirius. Can you provide proof of their activities?"

Harry sighed. "No, I can't. Remember that my memory is different than this world. Anything I know is suspect. On the other hand, the world was apparently the same before November 1, 1981, therefore anything happening before that point that I have knowledge of should still be true. For instance, Lucius Malfoy was Marked before then, so he's Marked here. Proof, on the other hand, is going to be harder to come by for most of them."

"What makes you think he's one?" Sirius asked, folding his arms across his chest and leaning back in his chair.

"He's one of the Death Eaters who responded that night in the graveyard." He gave Alice the short version of what he was talking about. "Everyone who was there should be Death Eaters, plus Igor Karkaroff and Barty Crouch Junior," Harry concluded.

Sirius and Alice shared a look. "Most of this list is already in Azkaban, Kissed, or dead" Alice informed Harry. "Karkaroff is a known Death Eater but gave us names to get a reduced sentence. Barty Crouch Junior died in Azkaban."

Harry shook his head. To the two Aurors, he explained what he knew about Crouch's father smuggling him out.

They frowned as his story ended. "So Crouch Junior might be in his father's house?" Sirius asked in a low voice.

Harry nodded. He turned to Alice, "I know he, along with the Lestranges, were the ones Sirius saved you from. If you go after him, here's some information that I know from before. Their house-elf is named Winky. She's been taking care of Barty Junior since his breakout. She's occasionally convinced Senior to let him out of the house. If you ask the Weasleys, they'll tell you a house-elf was in the top box at the Quidditch World Cup three years ago. The house-elf was holding a seat for Senior, but he didn't show up. In actuality, that seat was occupied by Junior under an invisibility cloak." He paused, "This of course occurred well after the timeline changed. However, I can't see why any of it would have been

different just because Sirius is free and I lived with him."

Alice was writing rapidly. "On the surface, neither can I. However, there are other very large changes from what you know. Lucius Malfoy, for instance, has been in Azkaban for fifteen years."

Harry perked up immediately. "Really? How'd you catch him?" He frowned. "Wait. Sirius, just a moment ago you mentioned him as if he were still at large." He gave his godfather an accusing look.

Sirius looked only slightly ashamed. "I had to. I can't appear to be leading your testimony toward anything. This IS questioning about criminal activities, after all."

Harry nodded, immediately absolving Sirius of any guilt. "My reactions have to be untainted and unbiased. That makes sense. Back to Malfoy, though: he claimed *Imperio* us as a defense the first time around."

Sirius nodded. "Yep. However, I was part of the task force that searched Malfoy Manor several months later."

It all clicked for Harry. "With your proven ability to find hidden rooms and secret passages, I'll bet you found the Dark Arts storage space under their drawing room."

Sirius visibly deflated. "Er, right." He was clearly put out that he couldn't explain to Harry how Malfoy was caught.

Alice was smiling at the two. "You, Harry, have all sorts of interesting information in your head. Tell us about Barty Crouch Junior."

Harry gave them every detail he could remember about Junior impersonating Alastor Moody and later after the Polyjuice wore off and he was given Veratiserum.

As Alice was writing, Harry turned to Sirius. "Hypothetically, if a house-elf's family is imprisoned, what happens to the elf?"

Sirius blinked at the change in subject. "They find another member of that family, usually. They're tied to the family, not to the location."

Harry nodded. "Junior and Senior are the last remaining of the family, I believe. Dumbledore said something to that effect later. If the Crouch family disappears, then Winky will be cut adrift. I'd recommend you take her in and place her at Grimmauld Place. Kreacher is worse than worthless. You need someone there looking after the house."

Sirius stared at him in astonishment before shaking his head. "Now I know that you're really from somewhere else. I know I've never mentioned that awful place to you, and I can't imagine Remus did, either. Just so you know, Narcissa bought it from me when Malfoy Manor was impounded. Kreacher stayed there because she's also a member of the Black family."

Harry nodded, relieved. "I'm sure your mother's portrait is happier now."

Sirius continued to gape. Alice looked very interested but did not ask.

"Anyway," Harry waved it off, "Winky is actually a very good, devoted, loyal house-elf. If you remove her support structure, she'll try to drink herself to death in shame. Someone needs to give her a home immediately, otherwise she'll die within a couple of years."

"If you can vouch for her, then Potter Manor could use another elf. Especially if you're going to be moving there after graduation like you've been talking about."

"Not a bad idea. What happened to Dobby?"

"Who?" Sirius asked, trying to keep up with the conversation.

"Malfoy's elf."

Sirius shrugged. "Probably still with Narcissa."

Harry grimaced. "Draco and especially Lucius were very abusive toward him. I managed to free him at the end of my second year, and he came to work at Hogwarts. I just hope that without Lucius's presence, Draco and Narcissa are nicer. There's no way we can rescue him, is there?"

Both Alice and Sirius were staring at Harry. "You've never been -" Sirius cut himself off with a wave of his hand. He needed to remember that this is not quite the same Harry he'd been raising for sixteen years. "Legally, all we could do would be to offer to buy him. House-elves aren't protected from their masters, so even if he was being abused, there's nothing we could do about it. How'd you get Dobby free?"

Harry chuckled as the import of the conversation finally registered. To Alice, he commented, "Better not let your future daughter-in-law hear us talking about house-elves like this. She has, well had anyway, a soft spot about house-elf freedom." He turned his head, "To answer your question, Sirius: I tricked Lucius Malfoy into giving him a sock."

Alice and Sirius looked shocked. "How'd Dobby take that?"

Harry grinned, surprising the Aurors. "Great. He'd been abused so badly that he actually wanted freedom. I know how unusual that is, but it's the truth."

"Well, from what I've heard, they're not all that bad for stuck-up purebloods. Narcissa is active in fundraising for St Mungo's. I've not heard anything

about Draco other than that he's a Slytherin who's good at potions."

It took Harry a bit of effort to suppress his immediate urge to make disparaging remarks about Draco Malfoy. He had to remind himself that without his father's influence, he could very well have turned out dramatically different than the boy he knew. "Good," he finally managed. "Hopefully, they can salvage the Malfoy name."

The two aurors shrugged. Alice again looked at the letter Harry had sent to Sirius. "Harry, you made a note at the bottom: 'Diary'. Could you tell me what you meant?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah. From Malfoy's stash, did you recover what looks like a diary? It's small, black cover, 1943 on the front cover, T.M. Riddle on the first page? It's actually been enchanted with the spirit of the then sixteen year old Voldemort. In my timeline, a student got it and wrote in it. Riddle possessed her from within the diary. I'll be speaking with Headmaster Dumbledore about what else occurred around that point as it's all within Hogwarts. I'm just curious if that diary's been found."

Sirius nodded. "Yeah, we found a diary. There was strong but subtle magic detected on it, as well as the somewhat obvious name, so the Department of Mysteries took possession of it. I'll forward your information to them and they can figure out what to do with it. I'm sure one of the Unspeakables will want to interview you once that report perks through to the appropriate person."

"No problem. One last thing. I don't know if you're the right ones to mention this to, or if Dumbledore is. Voldemort's been hiding out in the forests of Albania since 1981 and again since I fought Quirrel."

Both aurors again blinked in surprise. "Okay, why would Headmaster Dumbledore be a better person to tell than Aurors?" Alice asked slowly.

"He's head of the Order of the Phoenix," Harry answered as if it were common knowledge.

Alice gaped.

Harry grinned. "I've been in the midst of fighting Voldemort for six years. You think Albus hasn't mentioned the Order or that you two were prominent members the first time around?"

"Er . . ."

Harry waved it off. "Don't worry about it. Until it becomes relevant, I won't mention it to anyone. Albus knows that I know, though."

"We'll pass the news along to the appropriate people," Sirius finally managed.

"Good. Well, unless there's something else official you two need to speak with me about?" Harry asked, looking back and forth.

Alice took her cue and gathered up her papers. "No, I don't think so. I'm sure more questions will come up. Do you mind us being your contacts?"

"My godfather and godmother? No, I think I prefer you two to just about any others. Tonks and Kingsley would be okay, but I don't know if they know me."

Sirius shook his head. "Nope. Everyone knows of the Boy-Who-Lived, of course," he grinned at Harry's sour look and continued, "but they don't know you personally."

"Sirius, one last question. How much money do I have access to without you hassling me about it?"

Sirius looked wary. "I'm sure I'm going to regret asking this, but I'm going to try to be a decent parent anyway. Why do you need to know, Harry?"

Harry attempted an innocent look. "There's a company that's struggling that I'd like to invest in. I know they'll be worth my time."

Sirius sighed. "How wonderfully vague. As for money, you're seventeen and legally an adult. You've access to the entire Potter estate. Ask Gringotts for an exact number, but it's in the multi-million galleon range. Does that answer your question?"

Harry grinned. "Yep. Thanks. I knew I was old enough, but I didn't know what arrangements we'd made."

"Just don't do anything underhanded," Alice requested.

Harry looked affronted. "Of course not. Legitimate investment in a legitimate business." Switching moods, he asked, "You two going to stay for dinner? You heard Remus's offer to me, so I think I'm going to get to explain everything to Lily tonight and then get to know this Remus and Neville a little better."

The Auror partners looked at each other for a moment. Alice turned to Harry and nodded. "If you're comfortable with it, sure. Bring Padma and Hermione along if you want and we'll make it a family affair. We definitely need to distribute some of the information you gave us and start some balls rolling, but then we can come back."

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"Ton-Tongue Toffee."

The gargoyle leapt aside for Harry and he made his way into Dumbledore's office at the invitation to his knock. "Good afternoon, Headmaster."

"Mister Potter. What brings you to me this fine day?"

"Several pieces of information I have for you, sir. First, I gave Sirius and Missus Lupin the probable location of Voldemort's specter or whatever he is right now. I didn't know if giving it to them or you was the proper course of action, so I'm offering both."

Dumbledore shook his head. "The Aurors and the Department of Mysteries are perfectly capable of dealing with him in his current form, so long as they are forewarned."

Harry nodded and continued, "I'm sure you noticed my fight with the basilisk in my memories?" At the Headmaster's nod, he continued, "Then please let me give you the complete story." He proceeded to tell Dumbledore about Tom Riddle framing Rubeus Hagrid in 1942. It was not the Monster of Slytherin but rather the then-juvenile acromantula Aragog that Hagrid was hiding. The real monster was under Riddle's control, having killed Moaning Myrtle, and was still in the castle to this day.

Dumbledore looked grim. "Do you know where this basilisk is located?"

"Yes, sir. I don't know what the easiest method is of destroying it, however. Fawkes, the Sorting Hat, and the Sword of Gryffindor," he waved at each item in turn, "helped me tremendously the last time."

Dumbledore ran one finger over his lower lip pensively. "An ancient basilisk is a dangerous foe. I will give the matter some thought. Are you certain nobody else can set it loose?"

Harry frowned slightly. "So long as I'm the only Parselmouth with the knowledge of where the entrance is, then I think it's contained for the time being, sir."

Dumbledore settled back into his chair. "I see that this will be a most enlightening afternoon."

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"So you see, I'm the same Harry Potter, yet I'm not really the same," Harry finished the explanation to Lily that evening.

The third year Gryffindor digested the story for a few seconds before asking, "So from your point of view I don't exist, right?"

"Well, no, you don't. Or didn't. Whatever. You know what I mean." Padma snickered at Harry's flustered answer.

Lily was still focused. "Uncle Sirius is dead, Mum's in Saint Mungo's, Dad's working for Headmaster Dumbledore without pay, and Neville was raised by his Gran?"

Harry nodded, looking concerned at Lily's reaction.

She shrugged. "Weird. But then, there's a whole lot that's weird about magical accidents, isn't there?"

"Yes there is," Sirius agreed, twirling his goblet in his fingers. The little family gathering was being held in the small dining room off of the Great Hall instead of the too cramped Lupin staff quarters.

"From your point of view, Harry, what else is different?"

"You mean aside from everyone in the room?" Harry asked dryly.

Lily grinned and nodded.

"Voldemort's not running around, terrorizing everyone, or so I understand?" Everyone shook their heads after flinching. "Other than that, not much else is different on the large scale except the imprisoned Death Eaters. Hogwarts is still Hogwarts. All the professors are the same except Remus here. On the smaller scale, my relationships with students is different. Through DA, I knew a lot more people than I do now. When I said, 'Hi,' to Ernie and Hannah, they just gave me a blank look."

Lily, Neville, and Padma looked at him strangely.

"Two Hufflepuffs in our year," Harry explained with a sigh.

"I know who they are," Padma said with a touch of impatience. "I just didn't realize you might know them. I thought you said this DA of yours was a Defense and Dueling club?"

Harry nodded. "Plenty of Hufflepuffs in it. A few Slytherins, too."

Lily and Neville frowned in disbelief.

"Oh, come on. Not all of them learn the Unforgivable Curses at home."

"If you say so," Padma muttered, spearing a defenseless potato.

Harry gave her a concerned look before resolving to ask her about it later. "Remus, do you have a problem with my starting a DA or a Dueling Club?"

Remus shook his head. "Not in theory, no. I'd appreciate a tentative curriculum before you started. Albus, Minerva, or I will likely attend a few meetings until we're certain you have them under control."

Harry nodded. "No problem."

Hermione frowned. "He's poaching on your territory, isn't he, Professor Lupin?"

Remus raised an eyebrow and cocked his head at her. "Now what have I asked you to call me outside of class, Hermione?"

"Wolfie-poo?" Sirius guessed with an expression of innocence.

Harry nearly choked on his laughter.

Remus gave Sirius a withering glare and ignored his wife's snicker.

Hermione managed to keep a straight face. "Remus," she answered.

Remus nodded. "No, he isn't poaching. Defense Against the Dark Arts does teach basic offensive and defensive charms, but it's also Dark creature identification and how to deal with them, Dark potions and their effects, and so on. I'd assume that a Dueling Club would cover some of what's in my class, just more focused on wizard to wizard duels."

Harry confirmed it. "Right. Though it isn't just one on one fights I've trained them for. Group tactics and counter-tactics is something else I studied and then tried to pass on. Death Eaters don't believe in attacking one at a time, so I tried to train the DA to survive even a group attack." Harry sighed and shook his head minutely.

"You lost someone," Padma stated softly.

Harry looked at her, surprised that she'd identified his reaction faster than Hermione or Sirius had. Or not so surprised, he realized upon reflection She WAS dating him, after all. Answering her question, he said, "Yes. Several someones, actually. Many of the DA went on to work as Aurors after graduation. The past three years have been . . . kinda rough on the Auror ranks," Harry understated.

Sirius and Alice winced. Everyone else nodded, understanding what hadn't been said.

"Well," Remus said, trying to bring the light mood back, "just provide a curriculum and the Dueling Club can be reborn."

"What happened to the Dueling Club here, anyway?" Harry asked.

The older students winced. "Lockhart," Neville growled.

Harry waited for someone to expand on that answer. "Yes . . ." he prompted when it appeared that nobody would do so.

Hermione answered, "Professor Lockhart pulled Neville and Marcus Flint up for the first demonstration."

Harry's eyebrow went up, but he didn't interrupt.

"Professor Snape whispered something to Flint, and he conjured this huge snake, even though Professor Lockhart told them to use only the Disarming Jinx."

"It went after Neville," Padma took up the tale. "It managed to bite him once before Lockhart could distract it."

"Where was I?" Harry asked.

"Detention with Filch," Neville answered briefly, though with a trace of a smile.

"After that kind of a start, Headmaster Dumbledore disbanded the club," Hermione finished the short history lesson. "How about from your point of view?"

"Me and Malfoy," Harry growled. "Snape did the same thing, telling Malfoy about the *Serpensortia* spell. That's when I learned about being a Parselmouth. I stopped the snake, but I scared Justin near to death in the process."

Only Hermione nodded. Everyone else was staring at Harry.

"Parselmouth?" Padma asked faintly, wide-eyed.

"Yeah. Seems that Voldemort," everyone shivered, "transferred at least one useful skill to me when he gave me this scar," Harry answered tightly, gesturing vaguely toward his forehead.

"Draco Malfoy?" Hermione asked.

"I've been given to understand that his father isn't in a position of influence anymore," Harry began dryly, "but from my point of view, the Malfoy name is the brightest star in the anti-Muggle, pureblood-over-all-others constellation. He was incredibly influential at the Ministry, keeping Fudge in his pocket, and bought Draco's place onto the Slytherin team as their Seeker just because I was Gryffindor's Seeker."

"You were a Seeker?" Remus asked.

Harry turned to him in surprise. "Yeah. Padma already told me I was on Gryffindor's team. If I'm not the Seeker, what position do I play, and who's

the captain?"

"Chaser and you," Lily answered.

Harry sighed again. "I definitely need to talk to Ron and get him to take the Captaincy," he muttered to himself. Shaking that thought out of his head, he turned to Lily. "You said this morning that Gryffindor Tower has a bunch of rumors flying around about me?"

Lily nodded, her eyes alight with amusement. "Oh, yeah. Some are ridiculous. Some are just funny."

"Dare we ask?" Remus wondered aloud.

"Hmm, where to start? Parvati will tell anyone who'll ask that you've died," Lily began.

Harry rolled his eyes, not the least bit surprised at that rumor from one of Trewloney's young protégés.

"Another rumor that I eventually tracked back to her said that Padma was pregnant and you're off somewhere trying to find a 'cure'." The young witch used her hands to put quotes around the last word, a look of high amusement on her face.

Padma herself looked ready to hex her sister into the hospital wing.

Lily continued, "Then there's the rumor that you're in Azkaban after attempting to kill Snape."

"He wasn't even successful? How disappointing," Neville drawled to the amusement of everyone except Hermione and Remus.

Lily continued, "One of the rumors says that you left school to run away and live a life of sin with a goblin."

Undignified snorting sounds came from Neville's and Sirius's directions before becoming quickly stifled.

"You wandered into some room in the castle and are now stuck there."

"Not far from the truth, that, considering how much time you spend in that room that nobody else knew about," Nev mused.

"Madam Pomfrey has you as a prisoner somewhere in the castle aside from the hospital wing. Depending on the version, it's to perform magical medical experiments or as a . . . um . . . young love slave," the thirteen year old had a nauseated look on her face.

Sirius gave a sharp bark of laughter. Even Hermione's lip twitched at that mental image.

Looking faintly green, Harry waved a hand. "I think I've got the idea, thanks."

"Oh, but I haven't even gotten to the ones involving the Slytherins kidnapping you," Lily protested.

Harry groaned and let his head fall forward onto the table with a thump. "I don't want to know."

"Ooh, poor baby," Padma cooed, running her hand through his hair. "Don't want to hear about how the Slytherin girls have been using you?"

"Oh, did the same rumors make it to Ravenclaw? There's one version that involves a very creative use of an Engorgement Charm –"

Lily, Alice, and Sirius broke into a fresh round of laughter, interrupting a widely grinning Hermione. Neville was busy making gagging noises.

Harry turned his head enough that he could see Hermione with one eye. Giving her a wounded look, he asked, "Et tu, Hermione?" The following sigh was so theatrical that everyone knew he was just joking along with them.

Neville jumped to his girlfriend's defense. "She most certainly does NOT want to kidnap you and perform any Engorgement Charms upon you." He paused and looked over at her, "You don't, do you?"

She looked thoughtful. "Well, Harry said that we DID date last year . . ."

Neville was making an outraged noise while Padma leaned over and breathed into Harry's ear, "Personally, I don't think you need one."

Harry's head shot up so fast he nearly clipped her chin. He stared at Padma with wide eyes.

She looked innocently back, a smile tugging at one corner of her mouth.

Sirius looked back and forth from Harry's gob smacked expression to Padma's look of polite inquiry for a few seconds. He then clapped his hands over his ears and started muttering repeatedly, "I don't want to know."

Remus reached over and pulled one hand away from Sirius's head. "Come off it, Padfoot. Merlin knows you were worse in school. Besides, they all ARE of age."

Sirius groaned and pulled his hand back to the side of his head.

Alice poked her husband in the ribs. "If it was Lily or Neville, would you still be so blasé about it?"

Remus opened his mouth to retort but then closed it again. After a further moment of thought, he nodded a little reluctantly. "Good point."

Lily was incensed. Neville looked mildly scared.

Shaking himself back into the conversation, but still shooting thoughtful looks to Padma, Harry said, "Come on, guys. We should stop trying to scare or embarrass the old-timers."

The students grinned. The aforementioned "old-timers" looked highly affronted, even Sirius, though he still had his hands over his ears.

"Good look, Padfoot. Very mature," Neville quipped.

Sirius let loose a growl, bringing his hands down to the tabletop.

Alice said, "Down, boy. Are you sure you've had your shots?"

Everyone else snickered.

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"Hey, Ron," Harry said as he slid into the seat across the end of the Gryffindor table from the red-head. He also smiled a greeting at Ginny, sitting beside her brother.

"Hi, Harry," Ginny said. Ron looked up and nodded, his mouth too full to speak.

Harry grinned. At least some things never changed. Ron was still eating enough to satisfy three people. "Have you two heard about what happened to me?" After the previous night's family dinner, he'd asked Lily to spread the truth.

Both Weasleys nodded cautiously.

"I've been told I'm the Quidditch Captain and a Chaser?"

Now looking concerned, the Weasley siblings again nodded.

Harry turned to Ginny. "You're our Seeker?"

"Yes."

"But you'd rather be a Chaser?"

She paused in surprise for a moment at the question. "Yes."

Ron turned to her with a raised eyebrow. After hastily swallowing, he commented, "You never told us that."

She shrugged a little uneasily. "We needed a Seeker, and I was the only one that did decently at it."

"From my point of view, you're a pretty good one, too," Harry agreed. "However last year you were a Chaser. A VERY good one."

"So who was our Seeker?" Ron asked.

"Me," Harry answered.

After a moment, Ginny started to smile.

Ron frowned. "You're a damn good Chaser, Harry. Are you sure you want to swap the two of you?"

Ginny turned a frown onto her brother.

Harry nodded. "From my point of view, I don't know HOW to be a Chaser. I do, however, have an undefeated record as a Seeker. Well, for those games I saw the end of, anyway." He paused and continued to Ron, "I think you should be Captain." Ron's eyes widened, and he shrunk back a little. Harry plowed on, "I know you'd be good at it. Hell, you've forgotten more about Quidditch than I ever knew."

"How can you say that? You've been a great Captain for two -" he broke off and shook his head. "I keep forgetting. Different history, right?"

"Yep," Harry said cheerfully. "How's your family here, anyway?"

"Er . . ."

"Percy still a ponce, Bill working in Egypt for Gringott's, your dad in the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office, Charlie wrestling dragons off in Romania, Twins opening a shop, and your mum staying in the Burrow, knitting you maroon sweaters, and refusing to admit that Ginny here is growing up?" He rattled off before frowning at a sudden thought. "Hey, I bet that Charlie's the one that Tonks is dating, isn't she?"

Ron merely stared, jaw hanging slightly open.

Ginny had a calculating look in her eye. "How close were you to our family, Harry?"

His sense of mischief surging forward full force, Harry rounded the table and leaned over to whisper into the ear away from her brother. "I happen to

know that you give FANTASTIC kisses."

He pulled back and sat back down on the far side of Ron. "So, what about that Captaincy?"

Ron attempted to divide his attention between his brilliantly blushing sister and Harry sitting on his other side.

"Think about it," Harry offered, not getting a quick response. "Either you take it or someone else in the team will. I'm stepping down either way right before I suggest Ginny and I trade positions." He stood back up and smiled down at Ron. "Tell the family 'Hi' from me the next time you send Pigwidgeon to them." He snapped his fingers, suddenly remembering something. "Oh, please let Gred and Forge know what happened to me, would ya? I need to talk with them, and they'll believe you before they believe me telling them what happened to me."

Giving them a cheerful wave, he left the totally confused Weasley siblings.

Ron turned a frown onto his sister. "Who the bloody blue hell is Pigwidgeon?"

Harry chuckled and shook his head as he walked away. He made a mental list to himself of things to do. Contact Fred and George to see if they wanted an investor. Throw the Gryffindor Quidditch team into upheaval. Spend as much time as possible with Padma Patil. Learn to become an unregistered Animagus. Oh, yes, and go to classes and take his NEWTs.

Heading out of the Great Hall, Harry Potter headed forward into his new world with a wide grin, greatly looking forward to the coming year.

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End