

Kinsfire
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With a Little Help From My Friends

Chapter 1

With a Little Help From My Friends

Chapter 1

I was in my personal study, reading the most recent Journal of American Potions Experts when my husband burst into the room. "Narcissa, we have a mission for you."

"We?" I asked softly, and believed my raised eyebrow spoke eloquently to him of my disdain for his machinations.

"The Dark Lord. We have a patient for you to keep healthy." He utterly ignored me, which has been par for the course for the last seventeen years.

"In other words, some of your ... ahem ... friends got a little over-enthusiastic and almost killed someone that you need information from, and it's my job to make sure that someone doesn't get *Crucio* 'd or *A-K* 'd for thundering incompetence." I watched as his face darkened, and smiled only to myself. I knew he'd been the one to overdo it - he has always enjoyed torture just a bit too much.

"He's weaker than we expected. I'll have him dragged here to your chambers. You'll minister to him in this setting."

I'd learned a long time ago not to argue with Lucius. Were it not for the fact that I would need a protector if I left him and divorced him, exactly that circumstance would have happened years ago. Once, after nursing Draco at my breast, Lucius had the child removed and fed from a bottle, declaring that no child of his would grow to be 'a momma's boy', in his far less eloquent terms. I received a broken jaw for daring to question him.

On a not unrelated tangent, my potions knowledge is surpassed by none in my acquaintance, not even that pompous, overbearing fool that Lucius designated as his son's godfather. My broken jaw did not last for long.

Choosing my chambers as the hospital was one of the few ways that Lucius could 'get back at me', as it were, for imagined slights. He had learned once, years ago, not to cross too far over the line. He was quite certain that I had been the one to poison him in response, but there was never any proof. It was supposedly a slow acting poison that even Severus was almost unable to brew the antidote for, it required so much skill. Amazing that I happened to have some of the antidote on hand for him to check against, wouldn't you say?

They are nothing, if not sexist. The only reason they accept my insane sister is because she frightens everyone else. Were it not for her fanatical devotion to that ugly little codfish, Voldemort would have killed her years ago.

But since the house was legally Lucius', he could decide that a prisoner was to be my chamber-mate for however long it took to heal him, to bring this back to the point I had started from.

The elder Crabbe and Goyle dragged a mess that had the chance to be human again into my room, where he was deposited on my loveseat rather rougher than I would have preferred, what with being required to nurse him to health again. A neatly snapped wand was dropped at his feet by my husband. "In case he needs it, of course," Lucius said mockingly before the three left the room, closing it behind them.

I pulled my own wand to verify a number of things - first, and most important, was to verify that he was in fact still alive, which I was quickly assured was the case, but I would need to work on him soon if I wished to keep him that way. The rest of my wand work was to verify that my husband had not set traps about his victim. Lucius is a master of cruelty and enjoys spreading the wealth, as they say.

Having verified that the person bleeding into my favourite loveseat wasn't going to explode, killing himself and me in the process, I began the process of dealing with the worst of his wounds. It took some time to get him to a point where I felt safe moving him, although broken was certainly a word for him. I couldn't find a single major bone that didn't have at least a chip or crack in it, if not an outright break. That included his skull. Lucius and his band of Neanderthals were quite effective with their wands when it came to pain. If only they were that skilled with their other wands when it came to fathering worthwhile children.

I got the blood flow stopped and lifted him into the air. "Snari!" I called, and a house elf appeared.

"Yes, Mistress?" she asked carefully.

"I need this young man stripped to his skin while I hold him airborne. Salvage what you can for his pride, destroy what is left." Her response was to leave me with a bruised, battered, and utterly nude young man floating in the air before me. As I set him down on the loveseat again, I took in the fact that they had managed to scar him considerably, including ... *My, he's rather pleasantly formed, I must say. Better than Lucius, in fact.*

I ignored the fact that, in an unhurt state, I would certainly contemplate having him perform duties that Lucius has not since Draco was conceived. Instead, I continued with his care, gently but thoroughly cataloguing his scars. It was not until I reached his face (and a rather handsome one it was, I had to admit) that I realised who it was when my eyes catalogued the scar on his forehead. A chill ran through me as I had the oddest feeling run through me. This young man was either to be my death, or my salvation. Old Professor Pythias would have loved this one.

I finished what I could for Mister Potter, including a specialised *Petrificus* spell to keep his jaw from moving, since they had broken it rather impressively. They also had done something to make his system quite sensitive, so there would be no potions given to him for at least two days. Not a good thing.

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I was left alone to tend Potter. When I say alone, I mean completely so. Lucius made no effort to check on him later in the day, or even the next day, to see how his victim was. Potter awoke for a moment roughly twenty-four hours after he had been brought to me, and there was nothing I could do to lessen his obvious pain except stroke his forehead, which seemed to relax him. I thought I heard him murmur something, but realized that he was delusional when all I could recognize was 'my own knee'.

I took very short breaks - to dress, to clean up, and to research a little. I only dozed in short spans, having told Snari to have herself or another elf awaken me if Potter awoke. I was sticking to my dressing gowns, because they were much easier to clean than a full outfit, and were also simply my 'around the manor' clothes. Buying new ones was not a problem, if something happened to them. Plus, in a pinch, I could mirror Potter's mode of dress, since none of his clothing was salvageable.

He awoke a day later, still in pain, but doing far better. I scanned him again, and noted that he was healing at an unusual rate. He was still broken and battered, but he was certainly better off than I had expected. He would be able to tolerate no more than two potions, and I already knew which ones they needed to be - first I needed a bone healing potion in his system, and then something for the considerable pain. I would like to give him a nutrient potion, but his system would simply not handle that for the time being. He went to sleep immediately after drinking the pain reliever.

Eight hours later led to me awakening to find him already awake and sitting up, albeit in some obvious discomfort, with his hands quite solidly ensconced in his lap. I looked at myself and began to understand why - in falling asleep in my chair, my dressing robe had come undone. When I am in my robe, I am the only thing under it. My left breast was exposed, and I quickly covered it. "My apologies, Mister Potter. It was not my intention to titillate."

Through jaws forced to clench by my spell, he replied, "Nor was my intention to be so rude to a married woman. My apologies, Mrs. Malfoy."

My eyebrows rose at his politeness and honesty. He truly felt he had wronged me. I was surprised, considering who my husband and son were to him. I ran my wand across him and smiled, then released the spell sealing his jaw shut. "You need not apologise - it is not as if you can simply tell your body what it will and will not do. As for your wounds, the worst of them are healed. You will ache for at least another day, and I am trying to figure out how to get you nourishment, since solid food is out of the question, and even the mildest of nutrient potions I know are a bit more caustic to *your* stomach than I would like."

"How long before I can eat?" he asked quietly.

"At least two more days, if my readings are correct. If I must, I will give you a nutrient potion tomorrow."

"Don't worry about it," he answered me with a wave of his hand. "I'm used to going without food for a while. I can wait the two days."

His stomach chose to inform us both, rather loudly, that it certainly disagreed with his assessment by releasing a rather loud (and quite impressively varied) display of borborygmi. "Shush, you," he chuckled softly to his midsection.

A thought struck me, and I quickly ran through some possibilities in my head. Both I and his own stomach wanted something nourishing in his system soon, and I realised that I had the means to give him a proper meal at my disposal. "Mister Potter, I have a suggestion that may either horrify you or disgust you, but it would make both your digestive system and my healer sensibilities happy. Have you ever fed from breast milk?"

His only answer was to blink at me for a moment, and then his eyes flickered to my breasts. His hands and arms tightened in his lap in a vain attempt to hide his reaction, and I do not believe that he was aware of licking his lips hungrily. I will admit that it sent a thrill through me that I hadn't felt with a man in seventeen years. "Um, do you have a beaker or flask you can ... what am I asking?" he said, berating himself softly. "She has potions, you moron; of course she has flasks."

I chuckled. "It would save us both some trouble, not to mention some cleaning, if you were to drink straight from the source," I answered him, enjoying his discomfort just a bit. It was nice to feel sexy again, so I was going to enjoy it while I could.

I pulled my wand and murmured the lactation spell, and watched his eyes widen as my breasts began to swell before his eyes. I was wearing silk, as I always do, so the growth made the fabric slide across my nipples, making them stiffen far more than having full breasts could cause, and I sighed slightly. "I *do* so love the feel of silk," I murmured.

"Are you sure about this?" he asked in a strangled voice.

In answer, I simply slid my gown open, exposing both breasts, and gently pulled his head toward me. "You need nourishment, and this is gentle enough for your system. I have no problems with you nursing at my breasts."

He gulped audibly and opened his mouth, but closed it before he could actually encircle one of my nipples. I pulled him closer and brought his lips to the source, his breath making me shiver slightly as it brushed across my right breast. He opened his mouth to say something, and I pulled him the rest of the way. Nature took its course at that point as he unconsciously applied some suction to the hard point of my breast, and after the moment's normal pain, I felt complete again for the first time in seventeen years. I was performing a function that my body had been built for.

I was amused, I will admit, when he settled into his work - apparently his stomach had informed him that morals were all well and good, but food was far better. I was even more amused to note both his hands rising to my breasts - his left to hold the side of the one he was so diligently suckling at, and his right rose to cup my left breast.

Somewhere in the middle of his nursing, it took an erotic turn as he began to absently tease my left nipple, gently pulling and tweaking it. I felt milk flow gently from that breast as well, but I was not about to say a word to the young man, since I hadn't been aroused by a man in those seventeen years I've previously mentioned. He finally disengaged from my right teat to take a deep breath, and I said shakily, "Why not switch sides? You're still hungry, and I would look a little lopsided otherwise."

It was then that he noticed that he was still playing with my left nipple, and gasped in shock. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Malfoy!" he squeaked. "I didn't ..."

"Don't worry about it," I replied. "Had I wished you to stop, I would have removed your hand. Since I was rather enjoying it, you may assume that I wished it to happen. I now wish you to continue nursing until your stomach tells you that it has had enough."

He gently leaned forward and captured my left nipple in his mouth. As he began to nurse, I carefully placed his left hand on my right breast. "I will not say no to doing something pleasurable, Mister Potter." I kissed the top of his head.

He stopped for a moment, but then ... well, I could almost feel his eyes twinkle, even though we were not looking at each other. He continued suckling, but now his tongue came into the motions. It was clumsy, as one would expect from someone's first time, but for all that, he was skilled enough to have me gasping and actually whimpering my pleasure within two minutes.

He finally disengaged from my breast, releasing a small belch. I was quite worked up by this point, and before I could stop myself I had opened my robe completely and gasped out, "Please finish what you started. Either fingers or tongue, but don't leave me like this."

He was beyond shocked, I could see that, and unmoving, so I once again took matters to myself. I disengaged his hand from my right breast and guided it downward. He took control himself quickly, and his fingers slid gently across my stomach, which I am proud to say is rather firm, although not muscular. He stopped when he touched the precisely trimmed triangle of hair he was aiming for, but a small whisper of "Please" convinced him, and he gently ran his fingers through that hair before his middle finger found ... well, I simply lost control, I must say. The accidental feather soft touch of his finger across my clitoris was more than my system could handle, and I orgasmed, which had been my hope.

I came to myself to see a wide-eyed young man staring at me in rather obviously aroused shock. "I thank you, Mister Potter. I believe that they say 'turnabout is foreplay'?" I pushed him onto the loveseat properly, and then knelt before him, taking him into my mouth before he could move to stop me. He gasped, and before I could get more than a few strokes of my tongue around the member gently pulsing against my jaw, he was exploding and I was swallowing, rather greedily, I must admit.

When I had released his rapidly softening organ, I look up at his face, and found myself uncertain as to how to proceed. He was quite honestly uncertain as to the reaction he should be having. It was obvious that a certain part of him was terribly pleased to have done this, but there was something else, something that was bothering him a great deal. He scowled suddenly and painfully hoisted himself from the couch.

"Mrs. Malfoy, I apologise for my ... I was ... I can not find a way to say what I wish to that does not sound like I am either an imbecile or insulting you. You are a married woman. I should not have permitted it to go so far. Please forgive my ... my lack of experience is the only reason I can give for ... I never wanted to be the cause for someone's marriage vows to be broken." He closed his eyes tightly and clenched his fists. I could see tears forming at the corners of his eyes.

To say that I was stunned would be an understatement. Here I am, the wife of someone whom he *knows* wants him dead at the feet of his accursed master, the mother of one of his tormentors, and he apologizes to me for causing me to break my marriage vows. I felt the stirring of something I had not felt since my school days, aimed at a certain young Gryffindor of frighteningly similar appearance.

"Harry - may I call you Harry? After so intimate an experience as breastfeeding, I think that you, at least, should call me Narcissa. As I was going to say, however - my vows were never more than convenience to my husband. He needed a male heir, and I was from an excellent family. No more, no less." I walked over to him, closing my robe, and put my hand gently under his chin, lifting it. He opened his eyes. "I do not tell you anything I wish to be kept secret from anyone except Lucius when I say that you gave me something no man has given me since Hogwarts - an orgasm. I enjoyed feeding you, and if you are willing, I would be a willing teacher for some of the erotic arts you would desire for your girlfriends at school."

His face darkened suddenly. "You forget, *Narcissa*," he said mockingly, "I will not be leaving this manor alive - that's what your husband and his master informed me. So -" His eyes glazed, and then a dark and angry look replaced the look of hurt. "Very good, Mrs. Malfoy. Your husband tortures me and leaves me in your care, and then you minister to me, doing what is necessary to get me to trust you. Then I spill to you the secrets that Moldie wants ... or maybe he thinks if he offers me pussy that I'll roll over and join your little band of sycophants?"

Damn me for doing what I did next - I slapped him hard on the cheek, feeling his jaw creak as I did so. Breathing hard, I stalked away from him. "How dare you?" I railed. "I have literally saved your worthless life, and now you ... *you* use *me*, and blame it on me! How dare you?" The last was quiet and dangerous.

"Easily," he replied. "I dare a lot when I know that I have no hope of escape. No one knows where I am, and I know the wards around here are strong enough that even if the Ministry wasn't owned by Lucky Lucy and his band of ass-lickers, I'd be gone from here at the first sign of a raid." He stalked over to me, getting in my face. "Give me a good reason to believe why I should trust you, Mrs. Malfoy. Before this point, I've only ever seen you on the arm of your delightful Death Eater husband, looking as if something foul were under your nose. You are a known associate of people directly connected with Voldemort, and even if the old half-blood weren't both insane and stupid, he does have one or two people working with him who have at least the pretence of a brain." He stepped back. "So after an hour or so awake, during which the situation got surprisingly sexual rather quickly, I'm supposed to trust you. "I know we Gryffindors are supposed to be braver than we are smart, but do you really think I'm *that* stupid?"

I was too angry to listen to him at the moment, so I simply turned and stalked from the room, returning to my own bedroom to pace, furious at the audacity of the young man. *Howdare he! I saved his life, and this is the thanks I get!*

I stomped around my room and generally threw a childish tantrum for quite some time before I had calmed down enough to not be a hazard to life and limb of our house elves.

Are you ready to listen to reason, or are you going to try more hissy fits?

Why do I continue to argue with myself? I asked in some annoyed amusement.

Especially when you lose so often.

So now I get to realize how badly I wronged the Potter child, right? This is where I suddenly realise how wrong I was and go running back in to beg for his forgiveness?

Only if you want it to continue in such a bad state. Get your head out of your arse and actually think, Narse.

I hated that nickname.

I don't go back to Cissy until it's earned.

I stopped and thought about what he had said. I had to admit that he was right on the timing - he hadn't been awake that long before I had shoved a teat in his face, which had led inexorably to trying to seduce him.

And as far as history was concerned, I had to admit that he was right there as well. I was married - by this point against my will, but Potter didn't know that - to someone who had been caught as a Death Eater before, and was caught again. His associates had been torturing the young man, and then dropped him on me. Logically speaking, I had to be part of this attempt to break him. From his point of view, there was no other explanation.

Time for apologies, I thought to myself. I dressed in another dressing gown and walked back into my sitting room, this time with my wand in my hand.

I was stunned to find him kneeling against the wall, facing away from me, a twin tiny pools of blood on the floor. "Couldn't give her the benefit of the doubt, hmm?" he snarled, and a wet smack sounded against the wall as he punched it. "Of course she's a Death Eater," he said, the air filled with sarcasm. "Being married to one makes her one, right? That must mean that Aunt Petunia is a wonderful woman, since she's related to my mother! Same. Fucking. Logic," he snarled, punctuating each sentence with further wet smacks.

He deflated at that point, his hands falling limply to his sides. "The Dursleys are right. I am a freak. The fate of the wizarding world on the shoulders of a worthless freak who can't do anything right. I'm sorry, Hermione," he finished in a whisper. "I know you're counting on me, but your faith was misplaced. I can't do it, and ..." He seemed to be trying to say something more, but he gave up and hung his head.

My decision had been made. I knew the answer. He would be my death, but I would not be the only Black to have died with a clear conscience. "Mister Potter?" I asked.

He turned his head numbly and looked at me, and then looked at his hands. Standing carefully, he turned his body to me fully and said, "My apologies for my unforgivable words, Mrs. Malfoy, and for undoing so much of your excellent handiwork. Once my hands have healed, I will set to work repairing the wall that I damaged." I looked past him to the wall that he had been striking, and gasped as I saw that he had managed to actually damage stone. With his fists. He continued to speak. "I incorrectly assumed that you knew of my lack of a dating record at Hogwarts, since I can't imagine your son not crowing about my failures in that area. I assumed that you were taunting me with that knowledge."

I looked at him carefully. He was defeated. My husband and his cronies were very good at their planning, at least when it came to torture, I will grant them that. They had not been able to break his spirit with weapons, but with my unwitting help ... I held up my wand and spoke. "I will help you safely escape and survive Voldemort, returning you to your friends, at the cost of my own soul, if necessary. This I vow." The Oath was powerful, enough so that it ruffled our hair, and it Connected us. I couldn't read his mind or his thoughts or emotions, but I Knew this man before me. And Morganna help me, the Oath had accelerated a process that I now knew *would* have happened over a longer amount of time. I was in love with someone young enough to be my son.

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"Why?" he asked as I finished repairing his hands. "Why make that Oath?"

"I loved Sirius when we were children, and I miss my sister Andromeda. Bellatrix is insane - she took after our aunt just a little *too* much. I'm tired of being thought of as evil because of my husband. Choose one." I sighed. "Honestly? I want to look up from Hell at my cousin and know that just once I did the right thing by him, even if it was too late for Sirius himself." I fought valiantly not to let any tears escape, but it was a losing battle.

I was rather surprised, however, to feel his rough thumb brush the tears away. "It's all right, Mrs. Malfoy. I'll fight to stay alive now. I'll not kill another person through stupidity or inactivity. I'll not let my childish tantrums kill someone else. I'll not willingly kill another member of the Black family." He paused. "Well, maybe Bellatrix, but no one else."

I sighed. This was going to be a long conversation. For later, though. "I need some information. Who is this Hermione you spoke of? Would she be happy to know that you are still alive?"

"Hermione Granger." He looked up. "She's the 'Mudblood' that your son keeps railing about. I doubt he even knows her first name, so I'm not surprised you didn't recognize the name."

"Would she be worrying about you?" I intentionally loaded the question emotionally.

He missed it completely. "Probably, whether or not anyone has admitted that Lucky Lucy has kidnapped me. Hermione worries about me. Almost killed me last summer when I finally saw her - she threw herself at me in a hug, she was so worried."

"Does she love you?"

He snorted. "Not if she has half a brain in her head, she doesn't. And she's the smartest girl in school."

Interesting answer. "Do you love her?"

The silence was profound - and almost painful. "Does it matter?" he finally asked. "One way loves are painful - just ask Ginny Weasley. Hermione's too smart to love me, so even if I had any idea what love was, it would be sort of futile."

"Yes, they are," I said quietly. "I was in love with a man at Hogwarts. He was madly in love with another. I married for contract, not for love." I smiled as I saw his mouth open, undoubtedly to ask who I'd wanted, but scowled and shut it again. "James Potter," I said quickly. "Your father. I never stood a chance next to the most beautiful woman at Hogwarts."

As he stared at me, unbelieving, I continued. "That's another reason for the Oath. Not only do I want Sirius to be able to look down into Hell and know I did at least one thing right, I also want James to know that I was willing to die to save his son."

"Was he really worth those kinds of feelings?" he asked with scorn, but I could hear the undercurrent - he really wanted to hear something good about his father.

"Who told you he was a worthless man?" I asked in shock. Before I had finished the question, I knew the answer. "Severus," I growled. "Foul drippings from a demented man's ... ahem ..." I brought myself back under control, and was pleased to hear him snorting, trying very hard not to laugh.

"No, tell me what you *really* think of him," he finally choked out, and that was all I could stand. We both fell to laughing. I found myself with my arms around him as we laughed, and as the laughter stopped, we found our faces inches apart, suddenly becoming part of a badly written wizarding romance.

Damn it, is my heart really pounding that hard? I asked myself. *Do I really want to kiss him that badly?* I ended up answering my own question by opening my lips and closing my eyes, pressing myself to him.

A few minutes later, I found myself on the floor, a very enthusiastic young man kissing me thoroughly. I fought with myself, successfully I might add, to keep from simply tearing open my robe and convincing him to fill me completely. He was certainly equipped to, at least. But despite the Oath I had taken, we really had only known each other for a few hours.

The kiss finally broke, and I spoke first. "I am married in name only, so do not think that you have caused me to stray from my vows. It was a marriage of contract, remember? He has certainly broken it often enough to sate *his* desires. At least I had the taste to wait until someone worthwhile came along."

He blinked. "What are you talking about?"

"The kiss. You were bothered earlier by how far things had gone, so I had hoped to prevent another occurrence of my going off half-cocked." After a moment, I added, "You have some issues I want to work through with you at some point, after I get you free."

"I'm naked, ma'am. I don't think simply walking out of here is going to be all that easy." He snorted. "I can see the headlines if I showed up in Diagon Alley dressed as I currently am *not* -"

"Boy Who Lived Walks With Pride," I quipped. "You'd certainly cause quite a stir, and I can imagine you'd need a Quidditch bat to keep the girls - and a few of the boys - away."

"Please," he said, scoffing.

I pressed upward against his erect member. "I may not have taken a man to my bed in seventeen years, but that doesn't mean that I'm dead, or that I haven't looked. You are certainly well formed, and whomever you take to bed will be well pleased with how caring you seem to be, if your kisses and your other ministrations are any hint of the type lover you will be."

He shook his head. "I'll take your word for it. You can call me Harry, by the way, if you're tired of saying 'Mister Potter'."

"Only if you call me Narcissa or Cissy."

He brought his hand up to shake, and then realised how silly that would be, and began to chuckle. He carefully climbed off me, both to my chagrin and secret pleasure. Our intimacy levels were too great already, so his willingness to place a wall between us actually boded well for our perhaps managing something more.

"Would you get in trouble if I got some sort of clothing somehow? I really feel embarrassed advertising what you do to me every time you walk into the room." I smiled and transfigured him some clothing.

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That set the tone for the next weeks. I would nurse Harry to health, and then he would be taken off and tortured. He came back steadily worse, little by little. It was taking me longer to heal him, and I was unable to completely heal him before the next session.

It was late in August - nearly September - when Lucius and Severus came back with Harry already unconscious. "Ah, Narcissa," Severus said. "I see that you have been involved in keeping the Golden Boy healthy. Excellent work - almost as good as my own."

Smarmy fool. You and I both know who the better is at Potions. "I appreciate the compliment, Severus. I do what I can."

Lucius stepped back into the conversation. With a terribly amused tone he asked, "So how goes the search for the missing Mister Potter?"

"Oh, the Order is searching high and low for him. They have no idea that the boy's guardians were paid twenty-five thousand pounds for him."

"So stunning you with Potter's wand was definitely the right direction to take, obviously," Lucius laughed.

"Oh yes. They had no problem believing that their darling Harry had figured out how to escape detection for underage magic and had then chosen to leave his protection in a fit of pique. Without his wand to test, they swallowed my story hook, line, and sinker, as they say." He chuckled. "I am enjoying watching Dumbledore going spare trying to find this annoying child."

I stored this information for later, since I knew that it needed to reach the right people. I was part of the conversation for a time, and left to care for Harry as they headed elsewhere to do whatever those two got up to. I have my suspicions, but I can't imagine *anyone* finding Severus sexually appealing.

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I ministered to Harry in my usual way, getting what potions down him in whatever way I could manage. It appeared to me that they were slowly poisoning him, because his stomach was getting more and more sensitive. It was reaching a point where the only nourishment I could get down him was breast milk. Not that either of us were truly complaining, to be honest, since I used nature's delivery method. I got him to sleep and lay down beside him.

Harry had been asleep for about six hours when he suddenly sat up, shrieking in horror for a few moments. Before I could ask him what had happened, I saw his demeanour change, and he suddenly began to laugh. "Merlin, now that I'm awake and can think about it, I have no idea why that dream scared me," he gasped out through his bouts of painful laughter.

"What was it about?" I asked, now thoroughly interested in what could have caused such widely disparate reactions.

"It started in Hogsmeade. It was a nice normal day, when suddenly *they* appeared. Dementors. They flowed into town, forming a line. I tried casting my Patronus, but it wasn't working. Suddenly, they ..." He shuddered, and I began to worry. "Music started, and they started to dance, Narcissa! First they started off with the Electric Slide, and then the music changed, and they started doing the can-can! That's when I woke up

screaming.”

I shuddered, amused and pleased to see him trying not to watch my bare chest. “Do I want to know the kind of knickers that Dementors wear?” I asked with a small grin, which he rewarded with a snort.

“Please. I do not want to think of knickers and Dementors in the same thought,” he chuckled.

“How about Hermione and knickers in the same thought?” I asked. He stiffened, in multiple meanings of the phrasing. “I take it that it’s a pleasant thought?”

He scowled. “Please, Cissy,” he finally said. “I was an idiot and developed feelings for my best friend. She doesn’t return the feelings, and all that I get from thinking about her that way is tired arms.”

“How will you know if you never talk to her about it?”

He shook his head violently. “No. Not even if I thought she returned the feeling. She’s in more than enough danger from being a Muggle-born, and being smarter than your son. To make her target number one by letting anyone know that she’s ... no.”

“So you’ll go through life not knowing what could have been?”

“I’m used to it,” he shrugged. “I have no memories of a loving home life. I’ve gone through life wondering what it would be like to have family that loves you. Instead, I received a family that sold me to my enemies as soon as they were offered money. And the good guys will let them off with a slap on the wrist, you know. ‘If we allow ourselves to stoop to revenge, Harry, we are as bad as those we fight.’”

“That’s a rather frighteningly good imitation of Albus Dumbledore,” I said.

“I’ve certainly heard him enough over my first four years at school.”

“What about last year?”

He snorted eloquently. “Ever since Tommy actually came back, Dumbledore has been a little wary of me, since this scar gives Tom a channel into my tiny little brain. Four years of being a grandfather, then showing me how he really feels.” He shrugged. “Can’t say I’m not used to it.”

I scowled and pulled him into a hug. Damn Dumbledore! Damn him for being worse than Voldemort in his own way. I needed to talk to the man, and I needed it to be soon.

“So last year was exceptionally bad for you?” I asked softly.

“Let’s see, almost ending up in Azkaban for doing underage magic protecting my cousin from Dementors, having a teacher give detentions that drew blood, discovering that ... I’m sorry. I’m just whinging. I learned better in the last few months.”

“You had a teacher who drew blood?” My voice was cold.

“Umbridge and that damned quill of hers.” He held up his right hand. “If you look carefully, you can see where I carved ‘I will not tell lies’ into my hand. I has become quite evident that the lesson that I am being taught is to be self-sufficient. An adult in power can’t or won’t help you. In fact, even before I knew that I was going to be writing lines into my own hand, I was told by my own Head of House that it is far better to let someone in a position of power lie, rather than to bring attention to yourself by insisting on the truth.”

I shook my head. I needed to talk to Dumbledore more than ever, if only to let him know what he had thrown away. But how to do it such that Lucius ... “Harry, were you the only one the Blood Quill was ever used on?”

He shook his head. “No, there were others. There was ...”

“I don’t need to know who. Thank you.” I stood and kissed his cheek. “You may well have helped me more than you know.” I didn’t want him to get his hopes up too high by telling him that I might get him free.

I headed to my rooms and dressed to go out, carefully hiding Harry’s wand in my handbag, and then found Lucius, who it turns out had been looking for me.

“Narcissa, I need to have you talk to our solicitor. From some of our contacts within the Ministry, I have reason to believe that they will attempt to lay claim to everything Malfoy - the money, the property, and the vaults at Gringott’s. We need to find a way to keep the money out of Ministry hands.”

I have always been a quick thinker - the Hat wanted to put me in Ravenclaw, but I was a little too devious to fully qualify for that House. “I may have a solution. I still have a vault in my maiden name, with some small amount of money still in it, just to keep the vault. If I were to go to Gringott’s and transfer all money and property to that vault, or at least to that name, then we would have a possible method of preventing Ministry seizure, since officially it would be Narcissa Black’s money and property.”

“Excellent thinking. I shall have our solicitor draft a power of attorney for you, granting you full power while I am ... indisposed.”

“I will be taking some time returning, Lucius. I learned from talking to Potter that the Umbridge woman was apparently using a Blood Quill indiscriminately. I am going to talk to that headmaster. I had noticed scars on the back of his right hand, and asked him where they had come from. What if she had gotten angry at Draco and chosen to scar him as well? I want to ensure that she will not be returning to the school this year.”

Lucius nodded at me. "Contact him and set up a meeting, and go talk to the arrogant Mudblood loving fool. Maybe we can get enough information to get him finally ousted from that school, and put in proper teachers and rules."

"I was thinking something similar, darling," I murmured, pasting my usual 'Aren't you brilliant?' smile on lightly. I took my leave of him and headed to the fireplace. "Albus Dumbledore!" A moment later, I saw the old man's head in the flames. "Mrs. Malfoy! What a surprise! What might I do for you?"

"I need to speak with you, headmaster. I have learned some rather disturbing things about Dolores Umbridge, and wish to talk." I put on my most imperious look.

"Very well. How soon can you be here at Hogwarts?"

"Very shortly. I have business that needs to be taken care of in Diagon Alley, so I am on something of a schedule, sir."

"I shall have a carriage waiting for you in Hogsmeade, milady," he said simply.

"I thank you, headmaster." The fire returned to its normal colour, and I left the house.

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With a Little Help From My Friends

Chapter 3

With a Little Help From My Friends

Chapter 3

Dumbledore was as good as his word. As soon as I Apparated into Hogsmeade, a carriage with the Hogwarts crest stood before me, thestrals harnessed to it. I climbed in and soon found myself before the great doors to the castle, where I was met by the headmaster.

"Mrs. Malfoy, it is good to see you," he said pleasantly, lying as well as he always could.

"We don't have time for niceties," I said quietly. "There is information you need to know, and I need to give it in a secure location."

"Let us go to my office then, dear lady," he said, and escorted me to the infamous gargoyle, which was already aside. In his office, he set several wards before turning to me and saying, "What do you know that is so important?"

In answer, I pulled Harry's wand out of my handbag and placed it on his desk. "Do not trust Severus Snape under any circumstance. He was directly involved in the seizure of Harry Potter from the Dursley residence."

"Have you any proof of this?" He picked up Harry's wand with a broken look in his eyes.

"Severus was found stunned, with Harry missing. He informed you that Harry had somehow found a way around the monitoring charms on his wand. He had decided to run away from the Dursley household, and upon finding Severus there, stunned him unconscious. Severus could only assume that the Death Eaters found him then." I paused. "If you check the finances of the Dursley family, I believe that you will discover that they suddenly came into a windfall of roughly twenty-five thousand pounds right about the time that Harry disappeared."

"Why have you become involved?" he asked me bluntly.

I sighed. "Because I seem to have become something of a pervert, Headmaster. I somehow fell in love with a man young enough to be my son. I have even sworn an oath to see him to safety, even at the cost of my own soul. I will verify this under Veritaserum, if you have a trustworthy batch."

Dumbledore stared at me for a long time. "The fact that you have Harry's wand in your keeping is proof that you have been near him." My mind slid momentarily to some of our activities, and I could not prevent myself from blushing at his unintentional double entendre. "Indeed? Quite interesting. What do you suggest we do?"

"The thought that comes to mind is to wait until I have had a chance to travel to Diagon Alley today. My husband has decided to protect the Malfoy money by giving me power of attorney. My intention, which he knows, is to transfer all Malfoy holdings, and I mean *all*, into the name of Narcissa Black. What he doesn't know is that I fully intend to file divorce papers immediately after this. Voldemort will go from well funded to non-funded."

"Why?"

I took a deep breath. "I have spent two months ministering to a young man whom we now know is destined to kill or be killed. Harry faces each torture session with a sense of resignation. He knows that one day he won't return, and that Voldemort will have won. He holds on for the simple fact that he knows that it will sentence Miss Granger to a living hell if Voldemort is still alive when he dies."

"Headmaster, there are things I would like to say to you that I am holding my tongue on, because they will serve no purpose. What I will talk about however ... I wish to have a long conversation with the Gryffindor Head of Household, to be honest. The Head of House for the House known for courage informed one of her students that cowardice was a far better thing to have when faced with opposition from those in power."

I was warming to my subject. "The man lived with relatives that mentally tortured him, and he faced tortures here at Hogwarts. Is there anyone on the staff who has ever given him the feeling that he is worth something? You treated him like a grandson until last year, when you couldn't be bothered to give Harry the time of day, for fear that Voldemort might read your mind. Can I assume that this forcing him to endure the Dursleys and the last year's events are a method of mentally toughening him for fighting Voldemort? If so, you may be succeeding beyond your wildest fantasies, because as of this point, the only ones he seems to worry about at all are Miss Granger and myself. He certainly has no sense of *self* worth, Dumbledore, and it is squarely upon your shoulders that this rests." I was actually on my feet and pointing into the elderly old goat's face.

I gathered my wits about me and sat back down as he spoke. "Your fervour on the subject of Harry lends far greater credence to the truth of your statements than you believe." He sat back to think a little. "Are the wards likely to drop as soon as the property can no longer be considered Malfoy property?"

"The wards should come crashing down the moment that I put my signature on the divorce papers. We'll need to put Harry somewhere safe before I can sign them, to be honest."

"We may be unable. We might well require a team of Aurors waiting just outside the wards, ready to stun and capture anyone involved."

"The sooner the better. Harry isn't scheduled to be tortured this soon, but they aren't big on keeping to a schedule, to be honest. I want him safe."

The headmaster looked past me for a long moment before saying, "If I gave you a portkey, could you get it to Harry easily, without being detected?" I nodded. "Excellent." He reached into his desk and pulled out a wrist band. "Put this on him and tell him to activate it the way that his father might

end a prank. He will understand. It will bring him to the Hospital Wing."

I nodded. "Will you contact the Aurors for me? They are far more likely to believe you. Besides, I still need to give Lucius his surprise."

"Will you return here before going back to the Malfoy home?"

"No, that would be suspicious. If you have someone you trust to tell the Aurors when to attack, that would be good. Please make sure that they are aware that I ... well, I am attached to my own skin, and would rather appreciate remaining within it, relatively unharmed."

His eyes twinkled. "I shall pass that sentiment along. I look forward to seeing you soon, Miss Black."

I smiled at him. "I find that I look forward to seeing you again as well. We still need to converse about Harry's upbringing."

He lost the twinkle for a moment. "It seems that I have trusted some of the wrong people. I will see if there is anything I can do to make up to the young man. First we need to get him to where I have the chance, however. Good luck."

I stood and nodded at him. "Thank you. I have the feeling that I will need it, sir." He activated his Floo connection and put his head through for a moment.

"If you need to travel to Diagon Alley, you may do it from here." I nodded with a smile, and quickly was in Diagon Alley, walking purposefully to Jonathan Auberthwaite's business suite.

I was greeted by Mr. Auberthwaite himself. "Narcissa! Good to see you! Did you tear a few strips off the headmaster?"

"He's still a charming old bastard, but I believe that I made my point quite well. As I was walking here, Jon, I had a thought. You know what is intended, correct?" He nodded. "Are you specifically hired by the Malfoy's or do you ... well, do you transfer with the money, if you know what I mean? It may be offensive, but I can't think of a better way to ask it."

He looked at me for a long moment. "I am on retainer to the Malfoy's. I suppose that in one way of looking at it, once the money is no longer officially Malfoy money, I no longer am employed by the family."

I cast some fairly thick wards against being overheard. "What is your opinion on Voldemort?"

He shuddered. "Bad for business. I'm neither Dark nor Light, Narcissa. If you want to hire me for Voldemort, though, I'm afraid that I'd need to decline. He's known for excessive punishments if someone displeases him."

He was obviously pleased by my smile. "Excellent. Could you get a goblin here so that we may conclude our business with them once the power of attorney is in effect?"

"Certainly. I expected as much, and I have one waiting in the other office." The transfer of all Malfoy assets went without a hitch, and the goblin was quickly on his way. Jonathan looked at me. "So, what other business do you have for me that you don't want Lucius to know?" he asked with a smile.

"Betray me on this and you will not live to regret it," I said quietly.

"You're the one with the money, Miss Black." He looked warily at me for a moment, and then his eyes widened. "That's what you want, isn't it? Clean out old Lucius after all his years of ..." He sat back and laughed harder than I'd ever seen. "I told him he'd regret the way he treated you! Give me a moment ..." He rolled his chair toward a cabinet and pulled out a small sheaf of papers. "I love these finding charms. Are you on a schedule, or can we get this divorce out of the way now? It'll take about ten minutes."

"By all means, Jonathan," I replied with a smile. Fifteen minutes later I was signing a stack of papers ordering my divorce from Lucius Malfoy, since he was a known Death Eater and escaped criminal. I was now both a free woman, and on a terribly important timetable. "Forgive my haste, Jonathon, but I must be leaving to deal with some things."

"I'll see you later, Narcissa," he smiled at me. "Client confidentiality rules here, in case you are curious." I nodded and headed downstairs to Apparate back, but not before nodding to the crowd, hoping beyond hope that the person would understand.

I arrived to a house in chaos. The house elves were running around trying to figure out what to do now that the wards were in shambles. "Snari!" I shouted, and she arrived. "Where's Harry?"

"In the dungeons, Mistress. Lucius decided to torture Master Harry after you left."

I was intrigued that Lucius was no longer her master, but she considered Harry to be a Master now. "I need you to find Harry and place this on his wrist and tell him to activate it the way his father and Sirius would end a prank. He should understand." She disappeared with the wrist band just as Aurors burst into the home. I turned to face a dark haired man who fired the Cutting Curse at me. I wasn't able to get a full shield up in time, and the world went black on me in extreme pain.

#####

I awoke in a hospital room with curtains surrounding me. I wondered where I was until I heard a familiar voice rasping, "I want to know the name of the Auror who tried to kill Cissy. I want his badge. Hell, I want his fucking head."

"Harry, language please. You need to understand that he was appearing in a believed combat zone," Dumbledore replied.

"*Stupefy, Petrificus Totalis, Stupefy, Incarcerus* . If he caught her off guard or without a wand, that's all he needed to fire. The Cutting Curse is intended to kill, pure and simple. I saw Dolohov cast it on Hermione."

"Please try to understand - " Dumbledore responded, but Harry cut him off.

"Please leave, Professor. Right now I'm too angry and worried to think straight. Perhaps after I know whether or not she'll survive the attack ... " I heard him breath deeply, a ragged sound that promised tears. "May I see Hermione when she eventually gets here, Professor?"

"Yes, Harry." Dumbledore sounded profoundly unhappy at the moment. I heard a chair scrape, and then someone shuffled past my bed. A moment later, I heard other movement, and closed my eyes. I was curious as to what he might say if he thought I happened to still be unconscious.

I heard the curtains move slightly, followed by a chair close to me scraping. "Cissy, please wake up. You saved my life by coming to Dumbledore, and if you die because of this rescue, I don't think I could forgive myself. Everyone I love gets killed or badly hurt. My parents are dead, Sirius is dead, Hermione almost died, and now you seem to be at Death's door. Please come back." He I heard him move, and then his lips brushed mine.

I couldn't resist the slight humour of the situation, so I smiled slightly and put my arms around him. "Thank you, my prince, for waking me with a kiss."

His relief was physical. "Oh thank God!" he breathed, relaxing against me. "I was so worried."

"So, what do we do now?" I asked quietly. "You want to speak to Miss Granger, and so do I, to be honest."

"What do we do now? We heal from our extensive wounds. You'll likely be up and around before I am, thanks to your husband's 'loving' ministrations."

"Ex-husband, thank you very much," I replied with a smile. "That was how the Aurors were able to get in to try to capture people. I divorced that unrepentant Death Eater." After a moment's silence, I said, "I heard what you said, Harry. Do you really love me?"

"Yes, and that's what really bothers me right now, because you know how I feel about Hermione. In a perfect world, I could marry you both, and both of you would be happy with the situation. We both know that won't happen."

My heart skipped a beat. I wasn't about to mention to him that he had just talked about marrying me, for fear that it might chase him away. I heard someone outside the curtains, and then a female sigh. "Mister Potter, what is it going to take to keep you in bed? Every time I come to check on you, you're out of bed and looking in on Mrs. Malfoy," Poppy Pomfrey said with more than a little asperity in her voice.

"Miss Black, please," I replied. "I divorced that good-for-nothing maniac and took all the Malfoy property in the process. A large portion of his usefulness to Voldemort went away." I paused for a moment. "What day is this, by the way? How long have I been out?"

"Sunday, September 1st," she replied. "The students are on their way here on the Hogwarts Express."

"Not that I'm complaining," I asked her, "but why aren't I in St. Mungo's?"

Harry blushed furiously. "Apparently I threw a hissy fit. I don't remember doing so, but that's what they tell me. I wanted my Cissy near me," he finished in a put-on petulant voice. Madam Pomfrey was fighting to hide a smile.

"How long am I to be bed bound?" I asked her. "I still hurt, I admit, but since I seem to have been out for several days, I am hoping that I might be able to at least get up and walk around a bit."

"If you're careful, Miss Black, then you should be able to move around some." I smiled and sat up carefully, wincing a little at some small pain. Once upright, though, I carefully stood and walked over to Harry's bed and sat in the chair next to him, after he had returned to prone position.

She looked at him for a moment, and then relaxed. "Miss Black, I just might ask you to sleep there, if you're willing. That's the most relaxed that I have seen Mister Potter since you two came in." In fact, he responded with a light snore. Much more quietly she continued. "If I ever get my hands on the people who did this to him, I'd be sorely tempted to forget my healer's oath."

"Two things, Madam Pomfrey. Call me Narcissa. Second, one of them is a teacher here, or at least used to be."

"Unfortunately, he still is," came a soft voice. "At the time, he could not face his accuser, so I was unable to simply let him go. I have not even mentioned that he is under suspicion. If possible, I would like to have Mister Potter eat in the Great Hall, just so that I may see Severus' reaction to his survival."

"Snape is still working here?" Harry asked coldly, surprising me, since I'd thought he fallen asleep.

"Yes, Harry," Dumbledore responded. "With both you *and* Miss Black to accuse him , however, I believe that should change imminently." He looked at us with the most open look I have ever seen on the man, and I could feel Harry relax. It was then that I realised that I had taken hold of his hand at some point.

Rapid footsteps pounded into the room, and I felt Harry tense up again. A head of bushy hair came into view, and the girl it belonged to squealed, "Harry! You're okay!" and fell to her knees beside the bed on the side opposite me. I released his hand, and his arms went around her as she hugged him. I could hear her crying softly.

"It's okay, Hermione. I'm all right. Don't cry. Please don't cry." He was suddenly out of his depth. He could fight dark wizards and deal with torture,

but a crying woman flummoxed him. He patted her back gently, if with confusion.

I decided to cut through a lot of the grief that allowing them to dance around each other might cause. "When she's done crying, I think that Miss Granger and I need to speak for a few minutes."

The girl looked up, blinking away tears. "About what?"

"Cissy," Harry warned me. More precisely, with one word, he pleaded for me not to bring his world crashing down around him.

"About things that need saying, Miss Granger. And before we go any further, please call me either Miss Black, or Narcissa. Lucius is no longer my husband."

I had made the girl blink again. "Why not?"

"Multiple reasons, one of them involving why I need to speak with you, even if it means that Harry decides never to speak to me again."

"You're that set on this conversation?" Harry asked. "Even if it ... even if it destroys my friendships?"

"From her reaction, I'd say it would only improve things, Harry."

She was looking between the two of us, and I found it interesting to actually see someone thinking. Her brow furrowed (prettily I might add), and suddenly her eyes widened, her gaze snapping to Harry. She bit her lower lip for just a moment before saying, "I love you too, Harry."

His jaw dropped, making her laugh softly. "How did you ... how could you possibly - "

"Simple, silly. I've known you for five years. You take the world on your shoulders. Plus, those Dursleys have never made you feel loved. Therefore, you'd feel that any girl that fell in love with you would have to be stupid. Unfortunately for you, you have a thing for smart women, evidenced by that crush on Cho Chang last year. You trust me with things I know you've never told Ron. We are the best of friends, and I noticed over the summer that it seemed to have slipped slightly across a line, as far as I was concerned. Mom referred to you as my boyfriend, and I didn't exactly correct her. In fact, I told her I might have to strip naked to get you to notice me as a girl."

I couldn't help but laugh as Harry's eyes bugged slightly, and he choked out, "No, trust me, I knew it already." He cleared his throat before continuing, "Hermione? I won't ask why, because you probably have as much understanding of it as I do. I have a problem, though."

I knew where he was going, and stood carefully. "No you don't, Harry. Don't ruin a good thing by too much honesty."

"But ..."

"They call it Florence Nightingale Syndrome. That, and a bit of Stockholm Syndrome. You were in a hostage situation, and you identified with a captor, who nursed you back to health."

"Is that all I was - a patient?" he asked, looking hurt.

I stared him in the eyes and thanked the deities for being Slytherin and able to lie with a straight face. "Yes, Harry. I was your nurse - that's all. Now if you don't mind, I think I need to lie down again. That Cutting Curse was a bit painful." I carefully walked back to my bed behind the curtains. When I saw my wand there, I chose to carefully cast silencing spells and locked my curtains together as best I could. As I lay down on the bed, the tears were already starting.

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With a Little Help From My Friends

Chapter 4

With a Little Help From My Friends

Chapter 4

"He has that effect on us, doesn't he?" Miss Granger asked some time later. I jumped, not having noticed her enter my 'private room'.

"I don't understand what you mean," I blustered, wiping my eyes.

"Bullocks," she replied. "You're just as much in love with that man as I am. And he's so lost right now, because he fell for you over the summer as well, I think."

"Society does not smile on one man loving two women," I said, trying to keep the bitterness out of my voice. "I won't have him ridiculed for it."

"Fuck society!" she barked, and I heard a male gasp from outside the curtains. "I love him and you love him. You put your life on the line for him, the same way I did at the Department of Mysteries. You made him as happy as possible since he disappeared. I trust him. If he loves you, I can give you the benefit of the doubt." She blushed. "Besides, I admitted something to him that worried me most, and all he did was ... well, it was a distinctly male reaction."

"And an impressive one as well, isn't it?" I asked with a small smile.

"Very – it made me a little weak in the knees, to be honest."

"What was this revelation of yours?" I asked her finally.

She blushed furiously, an even darker red than before. "That I think I'd like to see you nude as much as he would, and for the exact same reason."

I smiled. "You're bisexual as well?" I asked softly. "I may not have taken a man to my bed, but I was damned if I was going to go without for seventeen years." I grinned. "Pansy may look like she's been chasing parked carriages all her life, but wait until you meet her mother. Pansy took after her father in the looks department, but her mother is quite beautiful, and she doesn't even need spells."

"I don't care," came a soft voice from outside. "She can't hold a candle to either of you two."

"Wait until you meet her," I replied.

"I don't need to," he said firmly. "I just wish I could follow through on what I let slip earlier."

I laughed. "Oh, so you *did* realize what you'd said." At Miss Granger's questioning look, I said, "He let slip that in a perfect world, he'd marry us both and everyone would be deliriously happy."

Her eyes widened. "You do know that there are no laws forbidding it, don't you, Harry?" She had a slight smirk on her face, as if she was calling his bluff.

The curtain slid back suddenly. "Seriously?" he asked, suddenly happier than I'd ever seen him. "You're not saying that just to shock me?"

"Nope," she said smugly. "Came across that titbit looking for something else. Muggleborn writer musing about what political pressures did and didn't exist that caused that problem *not* to exist. You could ask every girl in the school to marry you, and you could legally do it, too."

He winced and whimpered quietly just once as he dropped to one knee, quite carefully I might add. "I don't want to marry every girl in school. I just want to marry Hermione Granger and Narcissa Black, if they'll have me." He held out a hand to the two of us, and her hand went to her chest.

"Are you serious, Harry James Potter? If you get my hopes up just to dash them down, I will never forgive you."

"I have never been more serious in my life, Hermione. I know I'm only sixteen, but damn it, I want to live, and I want to live with the ones I love more than my own life."

She knelt before him and kissed him gently. "Then my answer is yes, Mister Potter. I will become your wife."

"As will I," I said thickly. "I am honoured, Harry."

"I have the two most beautiful witches in existence agreeing to marry me, and *you're* the one honoured?" There were tears in his eyes, but it was obvious that he was incredibly happy.

"Felicitations, Harry," said Albus Dumbledore from behind the curtain. "May I enter?" After my nod, Hermione moved the curtains. "You might wish to rise from the floor, Harry. That looks quite uncomfortable."

"Actually, it is," he grunted. "Um, Hermione, could I prevail upon you to ..."

"I don't know, Harry," she replied with a laugh. "I think I like you on your knees in front of me." She put on an imperious air and added, "Which is as

it should be."

His eyes sparkled with mirth, and looked directly toward her stomach and environs. "Hmm, you have a point there. Professor, if you'll excuse me -" he said with a grin.

"Harry!" she squeaked. The resulting blush could probably have set parchment on fire.

"Hey, when I have a chance to win a battle of wits with the smartest woman in Hogwarts, even if it is only for a moment or two, then I fully intend to enjoy it." He tried to rise to his feet and discovered that he was simply unable to. Hermione took pity on him and helped him to his feet.

Once he had finished chuckling, Dumbledore said, "It appears that there will be some last minute work done to get you ready for school. You were unable to receive your O.W.L.s or choose your classes for the year. Normally this would be unacceptable, but I believe that you have some extenuating circumstances."

"You think?" Harry asked sarcastically. Returning to a more pleasant tone he added, "May I have my scores?" Dumbledore pulled out an envelope and handed it to Harry.

#####

Ordinary Wizarding Levels for Harry J. Potter

	Written	Practical	Overall
Ancient Runes	N/A	N/A	N/A
Arithmancy	N/A	N/A	N/A
Astronomy	A*	A*	A*
Care of Magical Creatures	E	E	E
Charms	E	O	E
Defense Against the Dark Arts	O	O***	O
Divination	A	A	A
Herbology	E	E	E
History of Magic	D**	N/A	D**
Muggle Studies	N/A	N/A	N/A
Potions	O	O	O
Transfigurations	E	O	E
		Total	8

* Due to an incident during the examination, all results were set to Acceptable. A retest will be available to all who wish to attempt to better this result.

** A retest will be offered, since there has never before been a student attacked during an exam.

*** The proctor stated that if there were a grade above Outstanding, this student would have been granted such a grade.

#####

"Wonderful," he grumbled. "I get N.E.W.T. Potions with a man who literally has tried to kill me."

"Ah, that brings me to another bit of information I have for you. It appears that Sirius' will was considered legal. It had been written when you were roughly six months old, with a codicil he added after escaping. Also considering the simple fact that he never had a trial, he can't be considered to have legally been incarcerated. Eradicating the legal wording, he emancipated you, and gave the majority of the Black estate to you." He turned to me. "It appears that you also will be receiving a substantial sum of money and property, Miss Black, since you are no longer a Malfoy."

"What does this have to do with N.E.W.T. Potions?" Harry asked.

"Well, since you happen to be considered a legal adult with the emancipation, I was wondering if you might be willing to swear out a complaint with the Aurors against your torturers?"

"No trying to convince me that we need him?" came the somewhat bitter response.

"I admit to being too willing to believe the best of people, and I do not intend to stop, for the world would be a much darker place that way. But I will agree that I was wrong about Severus. You state that you saw him torturing you, whereas he continually told me that he knew nothing of your

whereabouts." He paused. "My problem now is figuring out who to replace him with if you two swear out complaints against him, which I would definitely recommend."

Before I could open my mouth, Harry said, "Sir? One of the future Mrs. Potters will need some level of protection. She's also quite able to at least brew potions, and I understand the field more now that she's been talking to me this summer. Why not give her a chance to teach it? And you can work with her when necessary, since you are, after all, an alchemist."

"Ah, a student who remembers my Chocolate Frog card information!" Dumbledore smiled.

I couldn't help but laugh. "Professor Dumbledore, I think that, if you give me a chance to prove myself, you will actually find me *more* skilled than Severus."

"Yes, I remember your skills when you were a student. I believe that such a solution would be more than satisfactory."

"You know, Professor," Harry said slowly, I think that ... I think that I'd like to figure out something else to do with my life, sir. I think I'd like to get away from fighting for a while. I know that it's a case of Tom or me, but after that - hell, if I could sing, I'd be tempted to try for a career on the Wizarding Wireless. Or maybe I could just sit at home and be a house husband while my extremely talented wives do what they want with their lives. Maybe Hermione can be Minister for Magic while Cissy becomes a world renowned Potions Mistress." He laughed. "I look forward to the possibility of someday being referred to as the husband of one of them, with it being an afterthought that I was once known as The Boy Who Lived. But I really want to do *something* with my life."

"Well, our children will need to be conceived," I said with a grin that I hoped was seductive in nature. "If done right, that will take up quite a lot of time."

Dumbledore's eyes were twinkling madly. "A word to the wise, Harry: if a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing right."

Harry couldn't help but laugh. Blushing furiously, he said gamely, "I wouldn't call them 'things', but they're certainly worth doing right." He pulled Hermione into an embrace and planted a kiss upon her flaming cheek.

When the laughter had died down, Harry said, "When I can finally get out of here, I need to get to Diagon Alley to replace my wand. My old one is a little useless right now."

"When Madam Pomfrey certifies you to walk around with minimal aid, then we shall arrange such a trip. In the meantime, should I ask Minerva to speak with you when she has a moment, for a *proper* career counselling?" Harry nodded, and the headmaster turned to leave. "You may wish to join the feast, Miss Granger, if only to pass along the good news to the rest of Gryffindor."

"Sir?" Harry asked. "Are there Aurors around? If so, Cissy and I can swear out the complaints in front of the school. Even if I don't eat anything, seeing me alive is going to make the students feel a lot better. You can tell them, but seeing it with their own eyes - well, you understand."

Madam Pomfrey walked over. "Normally I would complain about such talk, but Mister Potter makes a valid point. We can bring you a chair, but please, don't eat anything while you are down there. The damage it could do to your stomach is beyond description."

"I understand," he said, blushing. I could tell he was thinking about his 'favourite meal', as he'd called it once during our pillow talks. Dumbledore walked over to Pomfrey's fireplace, and a few moments later was pulling his head back from the fire. "They will be here in just a few minutes. We can take our time and meet them at the doors." A chair was brought from Madam Pomfrey's storeroom, and a few minutes later, we were heading toward the doors to meet the Aurors.

#####

A short time later, we were entering the Great Hall for dinner just as the last student had been sorted. Silence reigned, but only for a moment, as Harry was suddenly holding Hermione's wand, and Severus was blasted back against the wall as Harry's *Stupefy* hit him.

"I wasn't aware that you could be thrown by a *Stupefy*," Albus said quietly after a moment of stunned silence.

"Sorry," Harry said quietly. "I let too much anger get involved in the casting." He turned to the Aurors. "Gentlemen, I'd appreciate your taking the good professor into custody as a Death Eater and torturer. I was his victim."

"And I was his nurse, and therefore a witness to the damage done by the accused," I said to them. I had remained silent about something since meeting the gentlemen at the door, but no longer. Facing one of the three, I added, "And perhaps you can avoid your 'fire a deadly spell first, ask the corpse questions later' mentality this time, sir."

I could almost hear Harry's head snap around, especially when he whimpered in pain. "You're the one who tried to slice her in half?" he hissed, ignoring the pain. "You almost killed the woman who saved my life, simply because she was in the Malfoy Manor - a place she had every right to be?" He stood up from the chair and walked toward the Auror in question, but not before handing Hermione's wand back to her. "You're just as bad as the Death Eaters - you know who the enemy is, never mind logic." He back-handed the man and stared at him, daring him to respond in kind.

"You're defending a Death Eater," the man hissed.

"She has no Dark Mark anywhere on her, you ass," Harry barked. There were gasps and snickers around the Hall. "Oh, grow up!" he said dangerously as he turned to look at the rest of the Great Hall. "I was in no condition to do anything about it, you idiots." He sighed in exasperation. "Rather than get my blood all over her clothes, since there *was* quite a bit of it flowing after Lucy and company were through with me," he explained

as if to a student who simply could not grasp a concept, "she did the smart thing and worked on me nude. Trust me, when you're three inches from death and looking at your broken bones sticking out of your body, I don't care how beautiful a woman is - you just don't care what she's wearing."

"Good way to tell when you were healthy enough, though - when you *did* notice, you were healthy enough to worry about other things," I quipped, getting a blush from him and much healthier sounding laughter from the crowd. I looked and noted Severus getting to his feet. "Gentlemen, if it wouldn't be too much trouble, could you possibly arrest that man?" They jumped and quickly took Severus into custody.

In short order, Harry was seated at the Gryffindor table with Hermione and I flanking him, and Severus was on his way to a holding cell in the Ministry. Our preliminary statements had been taken, and we would be at the Ministry within two days to swear out more formal complaints. Mister Weasley looked a bit shocked at first, but then said, admittedly in a somewhat strained voice, "Thank you, ma'am. Thank you for saving my best mate's life." It became obvious almost immediately that he had *not* been pushed to say that, based purely on the rather shocked expressions that most people around him wore.

"Mister Weasley, I can honestly say that saving his life was my pleasure." I turned to look at Harry, my eyes twinkling as badly as Dumbledore's can. He looked at me for a moment, smiling, and then obviously came to a decision. I was stunned as his lips met mine in this very public venue.

As we broke, he said, "I proposed, and you accepted. I am not going to hide it. If you brought yourself to Tom's attention by doing what you did, then you can't really go any higher on his 'to kill' list by marrying me."

Conversation in the Great Hall came to a sudden halt, and a moment later, I heard the voice I expected to. "He's *what?*" screamed my son. Draco shot to his feet and stormed over to the table I was seated at. He'd definitely spent too much time with his father. What the two of them called threatening, I called a mince masquerading as a towering snit. "Mother, did I hear him right? Did he refer to marrying you?"

"Yes, Draco, he did. We have yet to set a date, but it will happen."

"I forbid it!" my son shouted.

I opened my mouth to give a blistering response, but Harry spoke first. "Good for you, son! It's about time you learn to stand up for yourself, rather than hiding behind Dumb and Dumber all the time! It's all right if I call you son, isn't it? After all, I'm going to be your stepfather." My fiancé had the most delightfully evil smile on his face, and my son proved that purple really does not go well with our hair colour. The Great Hall was filled with sniggering.

Draco pulled his wand and pointed it at Harry. "You'll pay, Potter. I don't care what you do to me, but you'll not get your hands on the Malfoy money. That's what you want, after all. Marry Mum, kill Dad, as if you could, and then with me as the sole heir, try to take it from me. I won't let it happen."

I smiled. "Your father is penniless, Draco. All the Malfoy properties, and I do mean *all*, are the possession of Narcissa Black. I am no longer married to your father. He now has no usefulness to Voldemort, and may well be dead."

The wand spun to me, and I could see his mouth start to move, and feel the magic build. Before anything could happen, however, teeth and blood went flying as Harry shot to his feet to punch Draco. "You will not touch her, Malfoy. If I find that *anything* has happened to her during this school year, I will assume that it was you, and make your life hell. The same goes for Hermione - anything happens to her, and the punishment doubles." He walked carefully to my son. "I am sick of rolling over and accepting everything that is given by you and yours. I am going to start returning your crap with interest. You cast a *Rictusempra*, I Banish with force. You Banish, I fire a Blasting Curse. You try to cast the Killing Curse, there won't be enough of you left to scrape into a tiny matchbox, and I won't even need to use an Unforgivable. You got that, Malfoy?" My son looked sullenly at him. Harry grabbed him and pulled him to his feet. "I asked you if you understood. I expect an answer."

All anyone could hear, even those of us closest to him, was an indistinct mumble coming from Draco. "What was that, Draco?" Harry asked, his voice cold.

"I said that I understand, you fucking bastard!" Draco finally screamed at Harry.

The crowd inhaled sharply, expecting Harry to explode at Draco, but instead, he dropped him. "Good. As long as you know that trying to hurt the people I care for could very well end up with you occupying a mausoleum somewhere, I have no problems with what you call me. My parents were married, however, when I was conceived. Just to clear the air on that matter."

"Don't see how," Draco sneered. "I thought there were laws against bestiality."

"If there were, then your mother would never have been able to marry your father then, would she?" Harry asked, voice dripping honey. I could hear the vinegar behind it, however.

So could my son. His wand whipped back up, but Hermione had launched herself from the table and had struck him in the groin with her knee, full force and with a great deal of momentum behind it, before Draco could do a thing. The wet sound I heard before my son's anguished *PEEP* burst from his body led me to believe that Draco was now, in fact, the last of the Malfoy line. In fact, if something wasn't done soon, he might not survive the day. I cast a quick stasis upon him, and she turned to look at me, horror in her eyes. "I'm sor ..."

"Don't apologise. He got what he deserved. I believe there is a phrase that recommends that one should not do something unless one is willing to have it done to them?"

"Don't do the crime if you can't do the time," Hermione said softly.

I nodded. "He called one of Harry's parents an animal, and I believe I know which one. He couldn't have been farther from the truth, mind you. All that Harry did was return fire by referring to Lucius as a beast, which is actually far more accurate than he knows." I looked her carefully in the eyes.

"I do not blame you."

By this point, Madam Pomfrey was examining Draco. "Well, unless I'm quite lucky, Miss Granger has ended his chances to continue the Malfoy name." She pursed her lips as if to speak sharply to the girl.

I interrupted. "He was going to attack either myself or Harry. Perhaps she could have struck him elsewhere. Perhaps he could have avoided pulling his wand. She acted to protect a fellow student and had only a split second to respond, and I for one will not blame her for what happened in the heat of the moment."

Dumbledore spoke up, having approached in the interim. "She was also potentially protecting our new Potions professor, so I also will not complain, and will instead award her twenty-five points for her quick thinking. Unfortunately, for the attack, I must also give her a detention." He twinkled at her. "Tomorrow night at seven PM, Miss Granger, in my office."

She blinked for a moment and then smiled. "Yes sir."

He turned to me. "Would you be willing to step to the head table, Madam, and join your new colleagues?"

I looked at Harry, who smiled and nodded, and then turned to walk to the Head Table. "Cor!" came a muttered comment from the Gryffindor table. "What a magnificent ... oh, sorry Harry."

"Why? I agree with you, Seamus. She has one of the two best bodies I've ever seen."

"Who has the other one?"

"Hermione," Harry said simply, as if it were the most obvious thing in the world. I'd gotten a glimpse of the figure under those robes, and thought that he was perhaps overstating his case, but then again, he *was* in love. For that matter, I could hear her saying something similar.

"Harry, I'm not a model. I'm not beautiful. I'm ... oh my ..." That last was said with a small gasp, and I turned to see the reason.

Harry's heart was in his eyes, and anyone looking at them could see that he loved her. I felt tears enter my own eyes as I realised he had looked at me the same way. You could tell that, no matter what anyone else in the school might think, he saw Hermione as the most beautiful student attending.

He went to one knee again before the assembled students. "I asked you before, Hermione, but I do it again with an audience. Will you agree to grace this meaningless life of mine with undeserved beauty? Will you do as Narcissa has agreed and marry me?"

She helped him to his feet and threw her arms around him. "Yes, Harry Potter, I will marry you. I'd do it today if I could."

"Perhaps we should talk about this later," the Headmaster said with a bright twinkle in his eyes. "I believe that our students are becoming hungry." Mr. Weasley's stomach punctuated the comment with a loud growl, and he blushed furiously.

At the head table, I looked down to see Harry happily amongst his fellow Gryffindor, and once again envied them. Slytherin children rarely seem to develop the deep abiding friendships that the other Houses have. We develop connections. We learn how to use people.

I heard Ronald Weasley make a comment about Harry not eating, and smiled slightly as Harry informed him that he'd obtain his nourishment later. I was successful in not blushing, but I was not successful in not becoming aroused by the thought of him suckling. *If I have any say in the matter, I will finally get him to break my seventeen year drought.*

When the meal was over, Albus asked me to accompany him to his office. Harry and Hermione were politely requested to come as well. Once there, he quickly got to the point. "I find that the idea of a wedding is an excellent one. No matter how you may choose to look at the situation, it will be forever unsafe for you to return to the Dursley home, Harry."

I was surprised to find myself thinking a purely Muggle phrase - *No shit, Sherlock*. I looked at him with puzzlement. That was not my thought; it couldn't be.

"Ms. Black?" Albus asked.

"Odd circumstance. I just had a thought that simply does not make sense for me to have in regards to the Dursley family. I found myself thinking, verbatim, 'No shit, Sherlock'. I have no idea whom this Sherlock person is or what connection he would have with you."

Harry's eyes were wide. "I was thinking it, but I'd never have said it out loud. How did you ... why am I asking? I doubt you'd know."

"I do not know how I received your thought, unless it connects with how intimately we have come to know each other, and your acceptance of your feelings for me." Harry blushed. "My apologies if I have embarrassed you, Harry."

"No," he said. "We will have a problem, however. I have publicly proposed to Hermione, and stated that you accepted my proposal. By not correcting me, we have announced that engagement. How are we going to work this situation? I've discovered that I sleep quite well with a beautiful woman in the bed with me, but I think school rules say something about teachers and students sleeping together, and I really doubt that you'll let Hermione sleep in my bed, either." He looked at the both of us for a moment.

"Perhaps I should worry about the governors, Harry," Albus said with a smile, while you three decide how you wish to work this. Moving in with Miss Black for the short time it will take to prepare for a wedding is no difficulty, and I apply that statement to you as well, Miss Granger."

"Are there quarters for such?" Harry asked. "For a teacher and two others?"

"This is an ancient castle, Harry, and as such has quarters from the era when such instances as you invoked today were far more commonplace. I'm certain that Dobby could locate such."

A quiet pop announced the arrival of the old Malfoy house elf. He blinked his large eyes at me for a moment and then smiled. "Dobby is pleased to see Mistress Narcissa again." He turned. "How many Dobby serve the Headmaster?"

"Dobby, we need quarters where these three may love comfortably for the school year." He looked for a moment before adding. "They will need but one bedroom." I was amused to see the blush lighting Hermione's face, and astonished to see that her reaction was visible through her robes. Harry and I might be needing to ... calm her in a short while.

Dobby looked into space for a moment before focusing again and saying, "Dobby knows just the place. Give Dobby thirty minutes to get it clean."

"Did any of my house elves survive?" I asked. "Specifically, I wish to speak to Snari." A quiet pop later and a smile lit my face. Snari had been a constant companion for some time, and her loss would hurt me. "Snari, please help Dobby clean the quarters that Master Harry and Mistress Hermione will be moving into with me." Snari's eyes widened as she recognised Dobby, and we were all surprised to see her launch herself at him and hug him.

"Snari missed Dobby!" she cried, and I remembered that the two of them had been as close as it was possible for elves in the Malfoy home to be.

"Would Dobby like to remain free, or join a household where he can look after Master Harry?" I asked. "You would never again deal with Lucius or Draco."

"Mistress Narcissa would allow Dobby to rejoin her household?" Dobby asked me with eyes so wide that I was afraid that they would simply exit his skull.

"I never owned you, Dobby - Lucius was the head of household. He now is penniless, and likely to be dead soon, unless he has other skills of use to that insane creature he serves. I would not complain about accepting you into my household. Would you have a problem, my husband?" I asked that last with a twinkle in my eyes, trying on the phrase for size.

His heart came into his eyes, and he smiled. "As long as he knows that Hermione and I are going to treat him and Snari as friends and not as servants. You both have been that to me in the past, you know. Snari, you helped Cissy save my life multiple times, and Dobby - well, we've had some interesting times together, especially with your misguided attempts to save my life by doing everything you did."

He paused for a moment. "I you were specifically given something as a uniform of the household, would that be considered giving you clothes, or simply a requirement of service? I've never liked the tea towel as prevention of nudity -"

"Especially since I doubt it would cover, in your case," Hermione quipped, blushing as she realised she had said that in front of her Headmaster.

"Trust me - it wouldn't come close," I responded with a grin.

"- tea towels," Harry bulled on, blushing furiously at the interplay which was making even the house elves grin. "Would a uniform be permissible?"

Snari looked at him for a long moment. "You would not be forcing us to take them - it would be a choice?"

"Correct. If wearing a uniform made you truly uneasy, then you could wear what you wanted."

"If choice is permitted, then Snari will choose to wear the uniform of the Potter household."

My eyes sparkled. "Does that include me, Master Harry?" I asked in a voice that I could see was causing his blood to flow below his waist. Snari and Dobby popped out as Harry imitated a fish for a moment.

"What are you trying to do to me?" he strangled out.

"Whatever are you thinking, Harry?" I asked innocently, causing Albus to release a chuckle involuntarily.

"Nothing," Harry finally said. "Nothing at all." He shook his head.

"I was thinking that I would wear my nurse's uniform from this summer." Miss Granger looked at me and I mouthed, "Nudity" at her.

"That sounds like an excellent idea," she added suddenly. "After all, you're still healing."

Harry sat down and put his head into his hands. "At least I'll die with a smile on my face," he finally said with a laugh.

We sat and talked with the Headmaster for a short time more before Dobby and Snari reappeared to report that our rooms were done, and our things moved into them. "Perhaps now would be a good time to go to your new quarters," he said, and led us there.

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With a Little Help From My Friends

Chapter 5

The rooms were quite nice. We had a very large main living area which combined three separate study areas. One of the doors led to a decent sized bedroom with a single bed, and I was amused to note that Harry's trousers fit him a good bit tighter at the realisation that he was actually going to be permitted to sleep with both Hermione and me during the school year. Another door led to a large combination bath room/shower/water closet room, and a third led to the Potions classroom. "I'm going to need to do something about the colour in here," I murmured. "Too dark. Too Severus." I heard two snickers behind me.

The headmaster took his leave of us, wishing us a good night, and I set the mood by immediately removing my clothing. Hermione let loose with a sound that somehow combined a gasp and a moan, and I walked over to her and undid the clasp on her robes, leaving her in her blouse and skirt. Before she could react, I had begun the process of undoing her blouse as well, making her breathing go just a tad ragged. Smiling, I leaned in and placed a gentle kiss just above and between her breasts, and was rewarded by her legs giving out, which gave Harry and I an excuse to sandwich her between us, although that had not been my original intention.

Hermione gasped as Harry came up behind her. "Harry, did I cause ... no, it would have to be Narcissa ..."

"Hermione, Cissy is doing what I've wanted to for a while. Of course I'm hard. She's sexy, and so are you. I am going to have a great deal of trouble sleeping tonight, if we're all sharing a bed."

I looked at the two of them and smiled. "Harry, you still need your meal. If she's agreeable, would you care for some variety in your diet?"

Hermione gasped again. "Harry?" His answer was to blush furiously. She looked at me and said, "When you suggested that, he pulsed against me."

"Well, Harry, help me get her naked, and I'll cast the spell on her." I watched with amusement as he fumbled behind her before finally getting the last clasp of her bra undone, and then he let it slide forward, giving his own gasp as her pretty nipples came into sight.

"Oh ..." he whispered. "How can two women have such different breasts, and yet perfect is the only word to describe both?"

Hermione turned in our grasp. "They're too small."

"Not to me, Hermione; not to me. They look perfect to me." He slid his arms around her and kissed her deeply. She relaxed into his arms and returned the kiss with fervour.

They finally separated, and I cast two spells in rapid succession, the first being the contraception spell I suspected that they would need shortly, and then the lactation spell. Harry watched in rapt attention as Hermione's breasts swelled, and finally a small drop of milk forced its way from her left nipple. He licked his lips hungrily, and I was amused to see how intensely his erection seemed to be throbbing.

He slowly moved forward, looking at her the entire time, giving her plenty of time to stop him. Instead, her response was to say, "Stop teasing me, Harry!" and grab his head, pulling it to her left nipple. "Please?" she whispered. He surrounded it with his lips, and she sighed happily.

I finally saw what I had felt from him, and was fairly certain had been on my own face. While her arousal from his ministrations was obvious, she had such a look of contentment and ... the only word that comes to mind is completion. This is what she was meant to do - nurse someone she loves to health. It just so happened that the nursing was literal in this case.

His own look was actually more than I expected. He was with the woman he truly loved, and she was allowing him such intimate access. There was a look of wonderment on his face, even as he hungrily (and that is quite literal) enjoyed his meal.

I was trying to decide how to give the two some privacy when Hermione looked up at me and but her lower lip for a moment. She met my eyes, and then looked at the breast that he was not nursing from. I raised an eyebrow and she nodded, so I lay next to her and proceeded to mirror Harry's actions.

She was unable to stop the erotic purr that the both of us suckling at her breasts apparently was causing in her. This caused Harry to groan and double his efforts, as it were, making Hermione moan even louder. As I suspected, her moans and her writhing were making him bold, and given his size, locally speaking, he changed position atop her and began to slide inside her. The fact that I was helping to guide him to his destination had nothing to do with it, of course.

It was when he moved and lost his connection with her nipple that he suddenly realised what had happened, and stopped moving. "Please don't stop," she moaned at him. "I've waited for this for a long time, Harry." I moved to let her wrap her legs around him, and released her other nipple, and watched the two as he began to respond to her verbal and non-verbal urgings.

I was surprised at the stamina that my future husband showed while making love to his first love. From our conversations, I knew that he was giving his virginity to my future wife, and everything I had ever read (and experienced, to be honest) led me to believe that he would spend quite quickly. He actually stopped at one point, panting, "Too close. Need to calm down," although it was not as coherent as my writing might make it seem. He apparently wanted to see just how many times he could make her orgasm before allowing himself to go over the edge. The look of utter joy on her face bode well for when he had the stamina to make love to me as well.

As he gently collapsed onto her as he was finally spent inside her, I heard him whisper, "Always and forever, Hermione. You have my heart forever." I felt honoured to have been a witness to such an intimate connecting of souls, and for once was happy that things had happened such to place him

In my care, for I might never have found real love otherwise.

He slid out of her eventually, and looked at me, and I tossed a silent prayer of thanks to whomever designed the body of a teenaged human male, since he was already responding to the stimulus of two naked women in his room. "Milady?" he asked me. "I have been permitted to pleasure one of the two loves of my life. May I attempt to please you as well?"

My heart hasn't pounded like that since I had my first stirring in my loins. Well, that's not true, but the last time that it pounded like that, it had been caused by Harry as well. Hermione and I performed an odd little (and astonishingly erotic) *en passant* as we switch positions, and I knew that I would not be able to get to sleep tonight unless I had made love to this young woman. Without trying, she simply oozed sex appeal from her pores. Or perhaps I simply saw her through Harry's eyes.

This time, I insisted that he lay on his back while I straddled him. His eyes locked on my breasts as I lowered myself onto his delightful member, and I found myself blushing like a thirteen year old, because his look told me that he felt he was making love to a living goddess. His caresses as I settled against him back up that opinion, and the lovemaking ...

I lost track of time as we made love. Make no mistake, it was not mere fucking, it was making love. He was apparently physically recovered enough to do to me what he did to Hermione, as I felt wave after wave of hot pleasure tear through me again and again before I felt him swell inside me and finally release. I know that I've been overly poetic in this, but the only way that I can describe his orgasm was that I could *feel* his love with every magical pulse inside me.

When I came to my senses, he and Hermione were stroking my hair and my back, and I realised that I had been crying. "I'm sorry, Harry. I shouldn't have cried on you."

"You're my wife," he said without thinking. "If you can't cry around me and tell me what's wrong, then how can I fix it?"

I sighed happily. "If what you were doing was wrong, then please, never be right. I won't survive it." I kissed him deeply and felt his pulse inside me. "I do not lie when I say that I have never been loved by a man so completely, Harry. In all ways, I am yours, and gladly. As you said to Hermione - always and forever, my love."

He looked at the two of us for a long moment before finally saying, "What did I do right? Getting the love of one of you is more than I deserve, so how did I get both of you?"

Hermione suddenly laughed. "Harry, this family will be the ultimate slap in the face to every pure-blooded bigot in existence! The half-blood marrying the pure-blood and the mud -"

"Don't you *ever* use that word around me, Hermione, not even to make a point," he interrupted hotly. "It's a foul, filthy word, and I don't want to hear it."

She blinked at him for several moments, but I found it interesting to note that her nipples were as tight as was humanly possible. She had a slight look of discomfort on her face, probably because having nipples that tight was mildly painful, as Harry taught me during the summer. I licked one of them quickly, but quickly changed position to place my face immediately adjacent to the neatly shaved triangle of hair where her legs met.

I taught her quickly that I am rather skilled when it comes to those talents - Angelique and I did have many years to practice, after all - and discovered that she was either a very fast learner, or had considerable practice of her own.

When we had recovered from our mutually satisfying experience, I took pity on Harry and beckoned him to the bed. Moments later, his painfully erect member was delightfully ensconced in what would become one of its permanent homes, if I had my way. (Either that or an oft-visited vacation spot, since our co-wife had some claim on that delightful piece of flesh.)

—

I awoke the next morning quite early to an rather insistent pulsing sensation against my bum. I smiled widely as I realised that it was indeed my soon-to-be husband with another morning reminder that he was rather soundly interested in women. I rolled carefully and repositioned myself before waking him.

"Narcissa!" he exclaimed in worry when he found me squeezing him. "I -!"

"- happen to be exactly where I just placed you, my love. I woke feeling it against me and thought that it would be so much better *inside* me. Don't you agree?" As I finished, I began to move against him, and he simply grinned and rolled his head back. Hermione woke and looked at us, smiling, and in a very short time, I was kissing and fondling the young woman while Harry proved that he had apparently learned precisely what a tongue is *really* for.

"Now *that* is how to wake up!" Hermione panted later as we disengaged and set about our morning ablutions. They took longer than normal, but I was in no mood to complain, because all the delays were done with love.

Before we headed to breakfast, I looked into the Potions laboratory once more and shook my head. Harry began to chuckle, and before I could say anything, the room was suddenly a pale pink. A few more wand flicks later and it was rather pleasant in the room, although I was sure that I would get rid of the windows during the first class. But as a method of telling the first class that there was a new teacher in charge? It may have started with mischief, but it was actually quite an excellent idea.

We entered the Great Hall together, and I was given a chaste but passionate kiss as we separated - me to the Head Table, Harry to the Gryffindor table. I could hear Mr Finnegan commenting on my posterior once more.

"Admit it, Seamus, you're just jealous that Harry and I know what she looks like naked," Hermione purred.

The girls around her looked at her in stunned disbelief, and most of the boys at the table found a reason to readjust the manner in which they were seated at the table. I almost laughed when I heard Miss Weasley (with that hair, who else could she be) say, "And now the boys are jealous that Harry knows what you look like naked, I'll bet." I knew what was coming when I saw her eyes sparkle before she added, "They should be jealous, too," in a voice that made almost everyone at the table readjust once more.

The one that surprised me was her brother, who began to snort in laughter. "Don't take this wrong, Gin," he boomed in his laughter, "but I love you!"

"Why thank you, brother dear!" she said brightly, which made Harry and Hermione fall forward onto the table in their own laughter. I was not privy to the full humour of the moment, but I was betting that it had something to do with the size of the Weasley household.

The rest of the breakfast went well, Harry drinking only milk and blushing as he looked at Hermione and myself. I noted that her shirt was tight, and realised that I had neglected to remove the lactation spell last night. As Harry, Hermione and Ronald stood to head to their first class, which happened to be Potions, I joined them. "Miss Granger?" I asked.

She stopped and looked at me. "I forgot to remove a certain spell last night," I said softly, "and do not recall you wearing a brassiere this morning. Your shirt might develop a certain transparent tendency if I don't remove the spell."

She thought for a moment. "You probably should remove it. My nipples are getting quite hard in preparation for nursing, and that makes me think back to last night, which is making them even harder. If we don't, I'm likely to throw him on a table and shag him silly."

"As nice an idea as that is ..." I said softly as I cancelled the spell. "Now I have to teach a class with wet knickers, damn you," although I smiled as I said it.

"It's only fair, since you aren't the only one damp for that reason," she riposted before rejoining the two young men.

I was behind them when they entered the room, and Ronald's response made what we had done worthwhile. "Wicked! This proves it - no more tall, dark and gruesome!"

Harry's made me melt, though - "Yeah! Instead, we get tall, blonde and sexy!" It had been said quite softly, but I still heard it. I was finding it interesting that I could only detect softly spoken conversations that he was present for, and only when we were in the same room. Apparently some form of bond had formed, perhaps caused by my Oath.

The students sat, excluding my son who was still recuperating in the hospital wing, and I walked to the front of the room. "Hello. I doubt any of you managed to miss who I am, but for the sake of precision, I shall ensure that you know. I am Professor Narcissa Black, and yes, soon I will change my surname to Potter." I paused, and looked harshly around the room. "However, this classroom is no place for anything but Potions work. All rivalries will be left outside the classroom."

"There will be no favouritism in this class, either. You are in Advanced Potions, training for your NEWTs. There is no time for foolishness, because foolishness can *kill* you or your classmates." I paused and looked at the students. "Miss Parkinson? What would you get if I were to add powdered cobra venom to the Dreamless Sleep Potion?"

Pansy blinked in confusion, while I noted Hermione and Mr Thomas both turning pale and Ronald scowling as if trying to remember something. "Mr Thomas?" I asked.

"Well, Professor, if I understood the texts properly, it would explode violently."

Ronald Weasley suddenly perked up. "That's putting it mildly! They'd be lucky to find enough of you to scrape from the walls!" He winced. "Sorry, ma'am."

"Quite all right, Mr Weasley. Ten points for Gryffindor for a correct description of the power of the explosion, and another ten points for Gryffindor, Mr Thomas, for a correct answer. I would request that outbursts such as that are reserved for emergencies in the classroom from now on, and will remove points if such outbursts happen without cause." I turned to the Slytherins. "I would have expected that students from my old House would be better suited to Potions, given that the last Head of Slytherin House was the Potions professor."

I was given dark looks by the Slytherins in class, and knew that Severus had pulled some strings to get the younger Crabbe and Goyle into this class. I knew the children, and knew that their knowledge of potions was best suited to using them, not brewing. Sure enough, before the class was out, I was extinguishing Vincent Crabbe, since he had placed his crushed hedgehog quills in his potion too early - a simple mistake that someone who had *earned* their place in the class would not have made. (My apologies - I realise that I did not mention the potion they were making. It was a simple short duration skin toughening potion.) I am certain that Severus would have found a way to blame the incident on my fiancé or his friends.

The day went quite well. Harry treated me as a professor in front of all of his students, and stayed behind to talk to me, for just a moment. "I'm thinking that I might do something in the next Potions class, Cissy," he said softly. "People will think that you're going to be soft on me because you'll be my wife, and I want them to realise that *you're* a professional."

"But if I give you a detention, won't that just make them think that you're doing it for some time alone with me?"

He grinned. "Not if you give me a detention with any of the *other* professors, or perhaps Mr Filch," he said. "That derails them right there."

"Are you sure you're wearing the right colours?" I laughed.

He grinned wryly. "If not for your son, I might have been in Slytherin. But I wanted to be as far away from him as possible." He gave me a quick hug, which I noted involved a gentle squeeze of my rear, then said, "Well, more classes. See you tonight!" He was out of my classroom in a moment, leaving me amused at his planning.

—

In the teacher's study later that week, the teachers talked about the students. I smiled as they spoke of their surprise at Harry and Hermione's actions - they apparently were *not* being standard students in love and making cow eyes at each other.

"I can't say that I'm surprised," I interjected. "After my first class with him, I was informed by Harry that he was going to earn a detention from me, for the purpose of having me give the detention to a different professor."

"Why would he do that?" Pomona Sprout asked.

"He apparently wants to head off complaints that I am likely to give him favourable treatment because we are betrothed." I shook my head. "I would think that my attitude toward my own son's injury would make that point, but I will allow that Harry knows his fellow students better than I."

"He's certainly been the recipient of their attitudes often enough," Professor Flitwick said. Adding a smile, he said, "We are colleagues now, Narcissa, so I expect to be called Filius."

"I will try, Pr ... Filius," I replied with my own smile. "But you must admit that it is somewhat difficult to face the same people who were once my instructors and call them something other than 'Professor'."

"I do understand. Imagine how long it took me to begin calling the Headmaster Albus," he answered. "Send Harry to me when he earns his detention. I'll find something for him to do."

I also gave him many private detentions, but he always enjoyed those, as did Hermione and I. His 'punishment' would often involve scrubbing our backs, holding us gently, or sex that left me walking tenderly the next day.

—

The month of September was pleasant, except for the short period in the middle when we both had to report to the Ministry for trials. Severus's was first, and the testimony that both Harry and I were able to give put him in Azkaban for many years. Given the competence of the Ministry, however, it is anyone's guess how long he will remain there.

The other trial was to verify that I was not a Death Eater. We were giving no warning of the trial, and had no chance for preparations of any sort. When we noted that Cornelius Fudge was in charge of the trial, many things fell into place for Harry. "Fudge has had a hate on for me since I first said that Voldemort was back. I think he's hoping either of us will do something stupid that will let him throw either or both of us in Azkaban."

"Silence from the accused!" Fudge called out from the bench. "This trial is to examine the culpability of Narcissa Malfoy in her husband's dealings as a Death Eater."

"The defendant is legally Narcissa Black," Harry said, standing. "The divorce is final and legally binding."

"Shut up, Potter!" Cornelius yelled. "You have no part in this." There was murmuring from the others on the bench with him.

"I claim right of advocacy for her," he said. "Since I know you well enough by now to know that you are going to do your best to railroad her into prison, I'm going to at least put up a fight to keep her out."

"Denied!" Cornelius bellowed.

"Under what grounds?" asked the monocled woman that I recognised as Amelia Bones. "He has not been convicted of a crime, despite your best efforts last year. You have no grounds that I know of that are viable reasons why he can not be permitted to be her advocate."

Cornelius grumbled softly before motioning that Harry would be permitted to be my advocate. "The court has been gathered to show that Narcissa Black is an unmarked Death Eater."

"Quite sneaky," Harry said. "By declaring her an *unmarked* Death Eater, you remove our ability to show that she has no Dark Mark. Might it really be because you're afraid that she'll explain just how close you and Lucius were?"

"That has no bearing on this case!" was the yelled response, although Cornelius was now sweating slightly.

"I disagree," Harry said softly. "It has everything to do with this case. Until June of this year, you were always careful to proclaim that you were friends with Lucius Malfoy. I remember the year that you came to arrest Mr Rubeus Hagrid at Hogwarts - not for any crime, mind you, but because you had 'to be seen doing something' -"

"This does appear to have nothing to do with the case, Mr Potter," Madam Bones warned.

"Apologies, Madam Bones, but just another moment will show why I believe that it does." She nodded and he continued. "I recall that Lucius Malfoy showed up while you were there. Odd that he would just happen to show up and greet you warmly at exactly that moment. From the friendliness of the greeting, it was likely that you two had set the Hogwarts meeting up."

"You're making that up. The only ones there were Mr Hagrid, Dumbledore and myself!"

"And two second year students who had been talking to Hagrid and who were hiding beneath an Invisibility Cloak. Remember the odd comment about following the spiders that Mr Hagrid made? He was speaking to Ronald Weasley and myself. In other words, I am a witness to the event in question."

Harry smiled. "I might also deign to mention that just prior to my hearing last year, which Madam Bones can attest to being somewhat ... irregular, both Arthur Weasley and myself saw you and Lucius Malfoy talking in a rather friendly manner. Is it not possible that there may be an ulterior motive behind your desire to have my fiancée convicted? Perhaps you wish to find out whether or not Lucius Malfoy kept certain ledgers?"

"How dare you-!" bellowed the Minister.

"How dare *you!*:" answered Harry in a quieter voice. "At your underling's suggestion, you tried to get my wand snapped and me expelled from Hogwarts, when the reason I was brought before you was because *she* had set the Dementors on me. You are a known friendly associate of Lucius Malfoy's, and now are attempting to distance yourself by attacking his ex-wife. Can you bring forward any evidence other than that she was married to a Death Eater that shows her leanings? Will you even listen if I tell you that without her aid, I would not be alive today? That she literally risked her own life to see me to safety?" I looked to the rest of the Wizengamot as he spoke, and they all seemed to be narrowing their eyes at Cornelius, although one or two seemed to be narrowing their eyes at Harry. Unsurprisingly, they were associates of Lucius.

"Hearsay!" was the blustering response. "Nothing to prove it!"

"Is there a spell to verify if an Oath has been pronounced, and may or may not be in effect?" he asked softly.

"Yes," Madam Bones replied. "Are you claiming that one was made?"

"Yes. She swore to see me to safety, at the cost of her own soul."

Madam Bones visibly started. Given what little knowledge she had of me, I can't say that I was entirely surprised by her reaction. She stepped down to face me and cast a spell that I did not catch. In response, a brilliant silver aura surrounded me and shot to Harry, who also glowed. "Hmm, it appears that the Oath is still in effect." She looked to me. "Do you remember your exact phrasing?"

I closed my eyes and thought back. It was only slightly difficult, as that was the day that my life forever changed for the better. "I believe that I said 'I will help you safely escape and survive Voldemort, returning you to your friends, at the cost of my own soul, if necessary. This I vow.' The phrasing might be slightly off, but the sentiment is the one intended." I smiled slightly. "It was the Oath that hastened the process that surprised us both, by hastening my falling for this man."

Madam Bones smiled widely. "Narcissa Black, I look forward to getting to know you. The Oath is still in effect, since You Know Who is still active. It also appears that your memory was perfect regarding the wording. By your Oath, you were directly involved in saving Mr Potter's life. Since the evidence at Severus Snape's trial shows that he was in fact a Death Eater, as is your ex-husband, it strikes me that you made that Oath at extreme risk to yourself. That tells me everything I need to know, especially since the Oath refers to helping him survive You Know Who."

Harry drew his wand and pointed it at the ceiling. "I swear that, to the best of my knowledge, I would not be alive today if not for the ministrations of Narcissa Black, named Narcissa Malfoy prior to my release from her husband's tortures. I owe my life to her, and if I knowingly lie in this matter, may my magic be stripped from me immediately. I so swear." There was a bright flare of silver, and everyone's robes flared from an unfelt wind. I blushed slightly, since he had put quite a bit of emotion into the Oath, and it gave me a tingle deep to my core.

He smiled and said, "*Lumos* ." When the tip of his wand lit, he continued. "So, we have shown, with the greatly appreciated help of Wizengamot member Madam Bones, that Narcissa was risking her own life to help me, and my own Oath shows that she was in all likelihood saving my life. Not at all the sort of things that a loyal Death Eater would be doing if one wished to remain alive when faced with the snaked-faced little psycho." There were deep inhalations at Harry's audacity, although I will admit that his forcefulness in the phrasing meant that there was a far different reason for my own gasp. I suspected that I would be walking tenderly the next day if I was permitted to act upon what he had done so far.

"In other words, the only things that Cornelius Fudge could hope to use as means to convict her are proven to be false. She does not bear the Dark Mark upon her body, which I can attest to as she worked upon me in the nude, since Lucius was so kind as to simply throw me in with her giving no consideration to her or any of her possessions. Rather than destroy good silk clothing, she worked on me in the clothes she was born in. Trust me on this when I tell you that I was in no condition to appreciate the sight until much healing had happened. When I began to react, it meant that I was healed enough, and she would dress. While I was not in a position to *appreciate* the sight at the times she worked on me, I was able to *notice* that her arms are bare of any markings." He paused. "And when I asked her why she was helping me, she told me that she wanted to be able to look up from Hell and see her cousin Sirius, knowing that she had tried. She felt destined for Hell and did it anyway." He met the eyes of each member on the bench. "I'll not have anyone drag through the mud the name of a woman who has sacrificed so very much in her life, and even now threatens the very existence of her soul if she fails to help me survive Voldemort."

The group on the bench shuddered. "Oh, grow up," he growled. "It's a made up name, meaning 'Flight of Death', and comes from his real name Tom Marvolo Riddle - Head Boy at Hogwarts in the 1944-1945 school year." He did an amazing little illusion in the air with flaming letters, spelling the name, and then rearranging it to read 'I Am Lord Voldemort'. "You're all terrified of the Head Boy of Hogwarts, a spoiled, nasty little child who framed Rubeus Hagrid for the death of a student, Miss Myrtle Mardling."

"And how do you know this bit of information?" Cornelius asked. I smirked to myself because I was certain that it would connect back to Lucius.

"I'm hesitant to say, because it is only hearsay, and I quite doubt that a house elf would be able to give testimony that the Wizengamot could accept."

"A house elf?" Madam Bones asked curiously.

"Yes. The year that there were messages around Hogwarts about the Chamber of Secrets, a house elf named Dobby -"

"Master Harry calls for Dobby?" said a voice as the green-skinned little fellow appeared in the chamber, much to everyone's surprise.

"Well, yes and no. I mentioned your name in regards to the diary incident several years ago."

"The evil diary ex-Master Lucius gave to the littlest Wheezy?"

"That one. The diary that *he* gave to an eleven year old girl, knowing that she had no way of protecting herself from what lay within." He turned back to the Wizengamot. "As you can hear, this diary was knowingly given to a girl with no defence against what was inside. It sucked her life force, trying to reform the old Tom Riddle, but when a basilisk fang was thrust through the diary, it destroyed Riddle and let Ginny return."

"Where, pray tell, did you get a basilisk fang from?" Fudge asked.

"From the basilisk I killed," he said simply. "Riddle had been controlling it. It was the monster in the school, and now it's dead." He shrugged. "But my point was that Riddle himself told me that he had framed my friend Hagrid. It was the ghost known as Moaning Myrtle, also known as Myrtle Mardling, who gave us the information we needed to find the entrance to the Chamber."

He took a deep breath. "We are getting away from the important point here. Is my fiancée free to go, or will Minister Fudge have succeeded with his railroad attempt?"

"Were it not for your past history with him, and today's information, I would be reprimanding you," Madam Bones stated. "Since I do not believe that there is any evidence to show that she is a Death Eater, I say she is free to go." The others nodded their agreement, and I stood, now a free woman.

Once free of the Ministry, I insisted that we go to Gringott's. We headed immediately for my vault, and I found exactly what I had expected - the ledger that Lucius had kept. As I thumbed through it, I was completely unsurprised to find that all the members who had been glaring at Harry were listed within, as was Cornelius Fudge.

I *was* surprised to discover that my husband to be was apparently in a similar mood to the one he had put me into, because I felt a familiar and quite welcome hard pressure against my buttocks as his hands came around me and proceeded to undo my robes. I quickly closed the ledger and turned to face him, casting a Silencing spell as I did.

"I have felt this intense arousal from you for some time, Cissy, and I'm just a guy. I can't hold it in as well as you ladies can. I wanted to ... to *fuck* you in the Wizengamot chambers, but figured that would be rude at the very best." His eyes sparkling with delight when he realised that I was wearing only what I was born in beneath my robes. Expensive robes can have many charms in them, and mine had them all, including a spell that mimics a brassiere. I am pleased to say that in very short order I was pressed against the wall with my legs around him while he, quite simply, fucked me silly.

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We eventually made it back to the Ministry, where we requested a meeting with Madam Bones. To my very great surprise, we were ushered right in. "Something tells me you're here about today's hearing?" she asked, slightly amused.

I placed the ledger on her desk. "This book lists every bribe paid by Lucius to various members of the government and other places. He was a big believer in taking down others when he fell, or using the threat of such to prevent the fall. That is why Cornelius wished me in prison. If he could gather my money as his own, then he would also be able to get his hands on the ledger." I turned it toward her and pushed it in her direction. "You may be impressed with how far back it goes, Madam Bones."

She opened it and began to read, her eyes widening for a moment before she began to grin. The grin would have terrified me if I had known that I were to be the recipient of what it presaged. She used her Floo, and a few moments later a large black man and my niece stepped into the office. Nymphadora started at my presence, but turned to Madam Bones.

"I need a list of the most trusted Aurors you know. We have several arrests that need to be made, roughly simultaneously."

"If I may, Director - what charge?" rumbled the large black man.

"Bribery, Auror Shackbolt," was the response. "Miss Black here has given us a very damning ledger kept by her ex-husband."

"I wasn't even certain that it existed until today, but I know Lucius' mindset. I knew it had to exist."

Harry looked up suddenly. "Hey Cissy?" he asked.

"Yes love?" I loved the look of shock on Nymphadora's face when she heard the interplay.

"When we get married, I want as much of the family there as possible. What's it take to get Andromeda considered a Black again?"

I grinned. "Given how she was kicked out, it is as simple as stating that she is a member of the Black family once more. Given that there is one current Black in the room right now, this would be an excellent time."

"Very well," he said with a smile. "Before witnesses, I state that Andromeda Tonks is once again an accepted member of the Black family." He grinned at my niece. "Welcome back, Tonks."

"All well and good, and I will attest to the family business, but we need to work on getting these bribed officials out of office," Madam Bones said. Her tone stated annoyance, but her face showed pleasure at having been a witness.

"Simple," Harry said. "Call a meeting of the Wizengamot, calling only those who are listed in the ledger. Maybe you can even use Percy Weasley to get Fudge there, having someone tell him that they have evidence that will see me in Azkaban for years." He looked at Tonks. "That will also rather clearly show his real loyalties - if he runs to Dumbledore, then we know that he's really on our side; otherwise, he's a sympathiser, a brown-noser, or a Death Eater, since he'd run to Fudge."

Auror Shacklebolt and my niece were looking at him in shock. "Where'd you learn to plot like that?" she finally asked.

"From the best. First, the Headmaster taught me a lot in manipulating people, and then I spent a summer being tortured by Death Eaters. I learned more than most will ever understand about manipulation."

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With a Little Help From My Friends

Chapter 6

The Raid on the Wizengamot, as Harry took to calling it, went off without a single hitch. (Percival Weasley was apparently Dumbledore's man – it was *he* who young Weasley came to.) A total of twenty Wizengamot officials were arrested, along with Cornelius. This led to an interesting turn of affairs – it left a large number of seats to be filled. After the Daily Prophet's Ministry shills were fired or arrested, the list of seats needing to be filled was released to the public.

"I can't believe this!" Hermione was saying at the Gryffindor table. "Each of the Founders had a seat, the Potters, the Blacks, the ... Harry, why are you grinning?"

"I'll explain tonight, and I think that you'll enjoy it quite a bit." I saw him look at her chest and laugh. "Well, we can do that too, but I was referring to what I need to tell you."

We had a Potions class that day, and it would be the first that Draco would be in. Through a medical miracle, they had managed to salvage part of a testicle, so the Malfoy line was not yet ended, although his chances were now severely diminished.

I truly attempted fairness with him in the classroom, but by the end of the class he had lost the House fifty points and had earned a detention with me, at which time I finally discovered why he seemed so disliked.

"I was humiliated, Mother!" he whined. "I'm your son, and -"

"-and I am now a professor at this school, attempting to not resemble the last Head of Slytherin House, who is currently sitting in Azkaban. He showed blatant favouritism to Slytherin, to the point that people automatically assume that we are evil because we were placed in that House. We are all seen as followers of that silly half-blood who was Head Boy here in the forties."

He started at the comment. "What do you mean 'silly half blood'? Our lord is pure-blood!"

"He is *your* lord, and *your* choice is to follow him, and *your* lord is Tom Marvolo Riddle, Hogwarts Head Boy, 1944 to 1945 school year." I did that absolutely wonderful illusion that Harry did (which he admitted that he learned from the young Riddle), and my son's skin went even whiter than its usual shade. He was actually so white that his hair was now noticeably yellow in comparison. "Check carefully, Draco. Do your research. Do you wish to follow someone who hates everything that you believe you stand for?"

I sighed. "You are my son, and I *do* love you. But I have found in the one you consider your nemesis something that your father could never give me. Love. You are the one bright spot in my life these past seventeen years that I was with your father. But I can not save you if you choose to serve Voldemort. And I will not give up a man who loves me as deeply as Harry does."

Draco started. "You call the Dark Lord's name?"

"It is a made up title, son. You saw that." After a slight pause I said, "Despite his usual oddities, the Headmaster occasionally has wise things to say. One of them is 'Fear of the name increases the fear of the thing itself.' If you are too afraid to speak even his chosen name - Voledmort - then how can you hope to serve him properly?"

I smiled at him. "I am a Black before all else, Draco. The Black motto is 'Toujours Pur'. They meant primarily blood, but it also means clarity of purpose and a refusal to bow." I stopped for a moment and snorted softly. "Almost Gryffindor of us," I laughed before looking at him again. "Your father always remarked that a Malfoy answers to no one, yet he bows and scrapes to that half-blooded monstrosity that can no longer even be called human."

I looked him in the eyes. "There will come a time when you must make a choice, Draco. I do not ask you to become friends with my betrothed. I do not think that possible. But I ask you to think if bowing and kneeling to a thing that is no longer even human is properly living up to both the Black and Malfoy names."

For the first time in some time, I saw a thoughtful look on my son's face. "Go back to your dormitory. Speak to whomever you trust, if such exists in Slytherin, and act as you need to in front of the others, such as she who chases brick walls."

He echoed my snort of laughter before looking almost hopeful. "If Father is a criminal now, and the entire Malfoy fortune belongs to you, what does that do to the marriage contract between the Malfoys and the Parkinsons?"

"I suppose that I should find out, shouldn't I?" I asked him with a small smile. "Go now, and think about what I've said." He left the laboratory and I headed through the other door, into the suite we three share.

"That may well be one of the most productive detentions he has ever experienced," I said, shrugging off my robes and reaching for my silk dressing gown. I was mildly surprised to find Hermione already holding it for me, and I relaxed into her embrace, since she didn't seem inclined to release me as she stood behind me. I can't say that I was all that ready to be released, either.

"What happened?" she asked softly as she nuzzled my hair.

"I made him think, I believe. I told him of Riddle and Voldemort and some truths about the man. He is hopefully deciding whether or not he wishes to

follow a hypocrite."

"Well, we can but hope," she said, her hands sliding under the bottom of my short robe and coming to rest just below my navel. She inhaled deeply, and it sounded as if she were close to tears.

"What's wrong?" I asked, somewhat alarmed.

"I can't believe how much I have fallen in love with you," she breathed into my hair. "At first it was just lust at a really beautiful and sexy woman, but now ... now I don't think I could live if either of you left me." She shuddered slightly.

I turned in her grasp and pulled her close, quite aware that my robe was open completely now. "Then I guess that Harry and I will simply have to promise to spend the rest of our lives with you, won't we?" I placed a finger under her chin and lifted her face to me, then kissed her softly on the lips.

When Harry finally entered the suite we were still kissing, but our clothing seemed to have pooled at our feet. The kisses were still very sweet and romantic, I will say. "Don't let me interrupt you," he said with a smile.

Hermione disengaged from me, much to my dismay, but kissed my nose. "Later. Harry promised to tell me something later, and it's later. We're even alone."

"And delightfully nude," he said with a smile. "Doesn't exactly put me in a mood to *talk*, you know."

She knelt and picked up our robes, holding mine open for me again. "You think that *improves* my ability to think?" he asked with a smile. She crossed her arms under her breasts (a very nice sight, I will say), and he laughed. "Okay, the reason I was grinning this morning was realising the statement I could make. I was thinking about the Wizengamot seats, and I thing I can make a few statements with them."

"Them?" I asked.

"Well, I happen to be related to Godric Gryffindor - he's my multiple great grandfather. It turns out that my mother was not completely Muggle, but her family line had been Squibs for something like five generations. She was related to Helga Hufflepuff. Through the Blacks I have the Ravenclaw vote, although Narcissa or Andromeda could likely claim that one just as easily."

"No, it would be you. They prefer males in the role. It would be yours. And since your grandmother was Dorea Black, who was my great-aunt, it is more direct to you. I know that my grandmother was also related, but as I say, the male aspect comes in. It would be yours."

"But the nice thing is, I can choose proxies, can't I?" I nodded to him, and suddenly saw where he might be going with this and smiled. "You see my thought process. Especially since I have a wonderful surprise for the Wizengamot when next they meet."

He proceeded to explain to me what he was thinking, and our laughter was heard in the hallways.

—

Harry had talked to the Headmaster about his plans, not sharing his surprise, but making it clear that everyone who qualified for the Wizengamot should be there for the October meeting. This led to an interesting array of people leaving the school early one morning in the middle of October. The Headmaster, Minerva McGonagall, Harry, Hermione, myself, and a very small number of seventh year students, all whose parents were familiar to me as associates of my ex-husband.

To make Harry's plans unassailable, Albus had performed a small but legally binding ceremony in his office, with Minerva and Filius as witnesses. Both Hermione and I could now legally use the name Potter to sign important documents. He, of course, swore that we would have the wedding that we deserved as soon as possible.

We arrived in the Wizengamot chambers with time to spare, and Harry joined several people in the spectators' seats. "Harry!" Arthur Weasley exclaimed. "Miss Black," he added with less enthusiasm. I couldn't exactly blame the man.

"Mrs Potter if you please," Harry said softly. "She is now Narcissa Black Potter, and Hermione is Hermione Jane Granger Potter. It was done quietly this morning for the same reason that I asked you to be here." He turned to my sister. "Mrs Tonks. I'm pleased to meet you finally, and can see where your daughter gets her beauty from."

"Charmer," she replied with a laugh. "Are you pulling a rather Slytherin move today?"

"More than anyone could ever suspect," he replied. "All of it legal, too."

"I look forward to seeing it. Is that why you asked me to be here to watch?"

"You'll see. I doubt you'll have *too* big a problem with it. If you do, you'll only have the problem for about eight months."

"Enough, I'll learn what you're doing in a short while," she laughed once more. We then met and hugged as we once had, and sat to talk for a time, until the Wizengamot was called to order by Dumbledore.

The meeting had the usual boring information that is of value only to the self-important governing body itself (usually), and then Dumbledore opened the floor to the crowd, in the usual manner. "Are there any petitions from the public that need to be dealt with?"

I stood. "Yes, if it please the Wizengamot."

"Step forward and explain," he said, fulfilling the formula as protocol demanded.

"While I am no longer married to Lucius Malfoy, I still bore him a son. Since Lucius has lost his seat by conviction as a Death Eater and my son is not yet of age to claim his seat amongst this august body, I petition to be granted regent status and therefore his Malfoy vote until such time as he reaches adulthood and can claim the seat for himself."

I could see several of the dark-aligned families rearing back in shock. Angelique Parkinson simply smiled at me widely, giving me a subtle thumbs-up gesture.

There was much talk amongst the members, but none rose to speak against my petition. "Are there any legal challenges to the petition?" Albus asked. After a moment of silence, he nodded and said, "The petition is granted. If you choose to take the seat now, you may." I nodded and climbed into the voting area.

"Are there any further petitions from the public?" he asked once I was seated. My husband stood. (Husband. My heart filled with the thought that he was now mine, and I smiled.)

"If it please this body," Harry said, "I wish to claim my seats on the Wizengamot. I have a legal right to the seats for the Houses Black, Potter, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff and Gryffindor." He walked to the podium where Dumbledore stood and handed a stack of parchment. "Those are my proofs of claim for those Houses." The paperwork was examined and Dumbledore looked up.

"All seems in order. Do you wish to claim those seats now?"

"Yes. I also wish to claim one final seat by right of conquest," he said, and I was unable to help myself. Merlin save me - I giggled. "By right of conquest, I claim the seat of House Slytherin."

The Wizengamot exploded. Angelique's husband shot to his feet. "How dare you!" he bellowed.

"How dare I?" Harry asked quietly in response. "I dare because it is the truth. Tom Marvolo Riddle was the last heir to Salazar Slytherin, through his mother, Merope Gaunt. The Gaunt family is completely gone now. I have defeated Riddle in combat. By rights, that allows me to claim his hereditary seat."

"Just who is this Riddle?" Parkinson sneered at Harry.

Harry pulled his wand and drew that wonderful illusion in the air. When he was finished rearranging the letters, the chamber was deathly quiet. "Yes. Tom Marvolo Riddle, the last heir of Salazar Slytherin, Head Boy at Hogwarts, child of a Muggle father and pureblood mother, is Lord Voldemort. We all know what happened to him when I was fifteen months old. That counts as the *first* time that I have defeated him. The second time was when he rode Quirrinus Quirrell during my first year, when he was chased away yet again because he could not bear my touch. The third was when I faced his sixteen year old shade *and* a basilisk, both of which I killed. In fourth year I faced him again and survived and the same in my fifth year, just five months ago, in fact." He smiled. "In fact, the time I faced him in fourth year gives further proof that he no longer deserves the Slytherin seat. He no longer has Slytherin blood in his veins."

The shock at this caused a very loud murmuring that quickly died to uncomfortable silence. Harry continued. "The ritual that returned him to a body involved the bone of his *Muggle* father unknowingly taken; the flesh of his servant willingly given - that was Peter Pettigrew, by the way - a Gryffindor; and my blood, forcefully taken. Nowhere in my past do I have Slytherin blood, nor does Pettigrew, to my knowledge. The body that the so-called 'Lord Voldemort' uses has *no* connection to his prior claim on the seat." He smiled smugly. "So, either I am legally permitted to take the seat by right of successful conquest, having defeated him three times and walked away alive two more times, or the seat itself should be abolished, because the family is now extinct."

There was heated debate throughout the chambers, but the final decision came down simply to the fact that no one was willing to abolish the Wizengamot seat of one of the Founders of Hogwarts. Harry was granted the seat, though much grumbling could be heard from other parties.

"I thank the Wizengamot for their consideration," he said. "May it please the Wizengamot, I will now place my proxies in these seats. For the House of Black, I ask Andromeda Black Tonks to take that seat." Andy grinned at him and climbed into the voting area. "For the House of Hufflepuff, I ask Molly Weasley." The woman's eyes widened, but she accepted the job. "For Gryffindor, I ask Arthur Weasley to vote my proxy. Before I forget, I am stating that I will vote the Potter vote." He grinned that delightful disarming grin of his. "For the House of Ravenclaw, I ask that Percy Weasley be given my proxy vote." The vibrant-haired young man walked to Harry and questioned him with his eyes, and Harry simply nodded with a smile. Young Mr Weasley stood straighter than he had moments before and took a seat in the voting arena. "Finally for the House of Slytherin, I ask my wife Hermione Jane Granger Potter to sit proxy for me."

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With a Little Help From My Friends

Chapter 7

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The explosion was immediate and intense. Parkinson (I have never called that creature by his first name unless it was unavoidable) shot to his feet and screamed "Outrage!"

Before he could get any further, Harry said in a tone that would have scared me had it been aimed at me, "Show me a rule that states that a seat must be taken by someone other than the one that a seat holder chooses. There are laws against current criminals sitting on the Wizengamot; curtailed rights for those who have been convicted of a major crime but have served their time; and there are laws about the legal age at which a person may take their seat, hence my wife Narcissa taking the Malfoy seat for her son Draco Ananias Malfoy until such point as he is old enough to sit on the Wizengamot himself, which I believe is June of this upcoming year, some eight months away."

"So you now control one in every seven votes of this council," Parkinson said testily.

"Two points. One, I *control* only my own vote. I chose people whom I am certain that I can trust to vote my other seats. At least this way, they can vote their own consciences on an issue, which might well disagree with my own views. I would hope that they would talk to me first, so that I can understand their views, and they understand mine, but if they truly vote their consciences, they can vote against me with those proxies. If I wanted a block that voted together on all issues, I'd either have kept them all myself, or done like Voldemort did and form his own party. I'd imagine that Riddle doesn't take well to people voting differently than he'd like." My darling stared at Parkinson for a long moment before adding, "Oh, and my second point? Thank you for dropping your complaint about my wife taking the Slytherin seat. By stating that I control one in seven votes, you allowed that it was my right to place whomever I wish in my Wizengamot seats."

Parkinson was vibrating, and others were laughing - at him, much to his annoyance. Angelique's husband was not a Death Eater, to the best of my knowledge, but that did not mean that he did not sympathise with their aims.

"If there is no further business?" Albus Dumbledore asked into the room once the laughter had died. With a bang of amazing finality, the October meeting was closed.

- - -

"He'll not like what happened today," Harry said. "He's going to go after quite a few of his followers before he decides that it's time to come after me." We were in our quarters back at Hogwarts.

"Have you any idea when he might try this?" the Headmaster asked.

"I suspect November, at the next Wizengamot meeting. He'll wish to make a point."

"And you knew this?" Minerva asked, slightly hysterically.

"Actually, yes," Harry said. "I didn't say anything, because the Headmaster likely would have found a reason to prevent my manoeuvring in that arena." He looked to the man. "Do you deny it?"

Albus Dumbledore looked thoughtful for a moment before saying, "In all honesty, I likely would have attempted to convince you to try another course. The recent past shows me, however, that I have made mistakes in judgement where you are concerned. I think that I both mourn and admire that you are taking the fight into your own obviously quite capable hands."

"You support this madness?" McGonagall asked.

"Is it madness?" the Headmaster asked. "After all, he has now created a situation where we have every reason to believe that Voldemort will be at a specific point on a specific day. That gives us a month in which to plan for the battle that will undoubtedly ensue."

"It will be the last one," Harry said. "I don't want to have to kill him, but the reverse is just right out."

"I should think so!" Hermione said hotly. "You have two years of schooling left!"

"I have something far more important than that to keep me alive," he replied with an indulgent smile as he gently brushed a thumb down her cheek, making her blush deeply. He turned to me, and the look in his eyes made me breathless. "I will no longer allow that madman to control my life. It ends now. It ends so that I can enjoy being married to two wonderful women."

We all had rather blurry vision at that point, and the Headmaster was not ashamed to admit it to be so.

The next month was busy for my husband. (I'm sorry, but that is just such a wonderful comment to say for me. Husband. I am finally in a love match after all these years. No matter that he is literally young enough to be my son. If I am a pervert, then so be it.) On top of his school work, he was now training to face Riddle.

A note before I go further. From this point on, I will call him by his name, not the self chosen title. My husband has more of a claim on the title of 'Lord' than Riddle ever did. I may be a pure-blood, but more than anything else, I am a proper Slytherin. I respect ability and ambition above all else in a person, and Riddle is not a person deserving of respect. Fear perhaps, but not respect.

We realised that Riddle had somehow developed a method of loosing his soul from his body. What we needed to do was rebind his soul to his physical body, so that when the body died, the soul would remain housed long enough that it would end up going where it belonged – either to whatever exists after death, or into nothingness. Perhaps he had finally begun the process that would allow for the successful creation of the Horcrux. If so, the knowledge needed to be destroyed.

Let me talk about that for a moment.

The myth of the soul jar known as the Horcrux is just that – a myth. I have studied tomes so ancient that the mere statement of their existence had Hermione teetering on the brink of orgasm. (I believe I stated that I would have been Ravenclaw if not for my ambitions.) If any such research as that required to create a Horcrux had come to fruition, then I would have come across it at some point in my readings.

Harry and Hermione both heard the term and began to giggle uncontrollably, and it took a while before they could explain it to me. They stated that it sounded like the sort of name that a physician in the Muggle world would have come up with. This man wrote books for children, apparently, and that was what set them off. All I could understand of Hermione's comments was a giggled "Horton hears a Horcrux!" which would set her into greater paroxysms of laughter.

Did you know that laughter can be an aphrodisiac for some people? Thankfully, it is for both my mates.

It was in the middle of October that I realised something, and went to speak to Poppy Pomfrey. (I had thought once that Poppy was a nickname, but discovered that it was her given name at birth. Perhaps her parents knew something.)

She ran her wand across me in a standard diagnostic and her eyebrows rose. "I think I am correct in my assumption," I said with a smile.

"So it will be a happy visitor?"

"For me, at least. I suspect that you will know the moment that Harry is made aware as well. We will see about keeping Hermione ... 'inconceivable' ... until she's ready to leave the school." I was smiling as I finished my statement.

Poppy winced at my awful pun, but she was also smiling. "I would imagine that Mr Potter might well get jealous of your child when feeding time arrives, given the meals he was forced to eat during the summertime."

My eyes sparkled. "It did not take much forcing, Poppy. He's male, a teenager, and delightfully heterosexual." I paused. "I'm having a child by a man slightly *younger* than my own son. And I find that I couldn't be happier."

"Well, it's a child of love, that much is obvious." she sighed. "I would normally be as so many others, and tsk'ing at the fact that a teacher is pregnant by a student. But this is a special and unusual situation." She shook herself and became all business again. With a wave of her wand, a series of pamphlets flew toward us, and she handed them to me. "I rarely need these with the students, but the staff are not subject to the same charms that all the students are." She paused and muttered, "Thank God that Weasley girl chose to remain a virgin until she leaves school. I can already see the beginnings of the Weasley Fertility Curse kicking in, just in the way her figure is forming. She's affecting girls, for Merlin's sake!" She shook her head and smiled at me. "Be careful, and I want to see you at least once a month." I thanked her and rather surprisingly received a hug of congratulations from her. "Take good care of our boy," she said with something suspiciously like tears in her voice.

I left the infirmary and headed for lunch, since it was approaching that time, and I was ravenous. As I entered the hall, I was approached by my son. "May I speak with you tonight, Mother?" he asked.

I nodded. "Our quarters at seven."

That night at seven, there was a knock, and Hermione opened the door. "Hello, Draco," she said softly.

He looked at her for a moment and I could see him fighting his father's training. "Good evening, Miss Granger."

She smiled brightly at his response, and I could see that he was struck by what a pretty girl she is when she smiles. He certainly had never been in a position to see that smile before. She stepped aside and led him into the room, and I smiled to myself as he finally let himself look at her as a female, and not through the blood filter his father had installed. He seemed to enjoy the view he was getting.

"You wished to speak to me?" I asked, somewhat amused, forcing him from his contemplation of my wife's absolutely luscious *derrière*.

Shaking his head, he said, "Um, yes." He bit his lower lip for only a second. "I was ... I thought about what you said to me, and I read the transcripts of the last Wizengamot meeting. I ... I'm loath to admit that I don't know what to think anymore. Even if I ignored everything else, Po ... Har ..." He paused before saying, "I need to get used to it – my *stepfather* has faced the Dark Lord multiple times and escaped alive. My father was involved in his capture this summer and Potter escaped from the clutches of the Dark Lord yet again. No matter how I look at it, someone that ... Lucius ... states is inferior based purely on the blood running through his system has defeated the Dark Lord on multiple occasions. Har ... my stepfather has every right to the Slytherin seat on the Wizengamot, by combat."

He began to pace. "And if I've been wrong about that sort of thing, what else have I been wrong about?" He turned to Hermione. "I don't ever expect you to forgive the treatment I've given you these years, nor should you with just my word. But I do wish to tender an apology to you, Miss Granger. I was ... I was wrong about many things."

Harry entered the room. I knew he'd been listening. "Well, Draco," he said, "you'll need to live up to your new attitudes, you know. No more calling my wife a mudblood. No terrorising the younger years. No going after Ron unless he starts it."

"Harry!" Hermione admonished.

"Be honest, love. You know he's the brother I never had, but damn me if he's not a bit hard headed when it comes to Slytherin and Gryffindor." She nodded with a frown, and he turned back to Draco. "I'm willing to give you a second chance, with no threats to ensure behaviour or whatnot. But please don't think that I'm going to try to be your father in any way, Draco. You're older than I am by at least a month, and I think that we both would find it more than a little weird."

Draco nodded at Harry and then chuckled a moment later. "I'm sorry," he said. "I was just imagining the looks on people's faces if they saw me asking you for a raise in my allowance." Harry looked startled for a moment, and then began to laugh himself.

"That would freak out a few, wouldn't it? If we do it, I can even promise to give you double what I'm giving you now," he finally said through the end of his laughter. "The Headmaster would, of course, twinkle madly and say something pithy about school unity."

"Well, we'll thimply have to admonish him not to take it out on uth if he'th feeling pithy," Hermione lisped with a straight face, although her eyes held the mirth she was fighting so hard to keep internal.

My son stared at her for a long moment before he fell to the floor – literally – as he laughed uproariously. Hermione was looking quite smug, and Harry looked intrigued. Draco finally started to climb to his feet, and looked for another long moment as he saw Harry's hand out to help him to his feet. Finally, my son grasped the hand firmly and accepted the help.

"You know, things went badly a few years ago when some jerk told you to watch out and to hang out with the right kind of people. You were right – you can make your own friends. I just wish that we could start over again." That statement looked as if it cost Draco more than even he would admit.

Harry looked at him, and I was fairly certain that he saw it as well. "Hi, I'm Harry Potter. I'm pleased to meet you."

"Draco Mal -" He stopped in mid-word and looked to me.

"He is your biological father, Draco," I said. "Keep the name. If nothing else, make it something to be *proud* of."

He nodded and looked back at Harry. "Draco Malfoy. I hope we can be friends."

"We'll see, but we're off to a good start."

Draco looked slightly startled, as if he'd expected something nasty to happen at the last second, and then smiled. "I suppose that I should get back to my dormitory," he said.

"Wait a moment," I said. "I have something I need to tell Harry, and you should hear it too." Harry looked at me, quite puzzled, and unknowingly mimicked Draco exactly.

I found myself actually a little nervous about what I had to say once it was time to tell them. Amusingly, I was also getting mildly horny, but that would have to wait until Draco was out of the room to deal with. Finally, I spoke.

"I went to see Poppy today. I had noticed something, and wanted her to verify what I suspected."

"You're all right, aren't you?" Harry asked, worry obvious. He stepped closer and took my hands, and I could see the fear in his eyes that I was going to tell him something horrible.

"Yes, we're quite healthy," I replied with a smile. He looked blankly at me. "I noticed that my monthly visitor hadn't visited," I said. "So I went to Poppy, and she verified that you are going to be a father, Harry."

His jaw dropped and his eyes went wide, and a few seconds later he dropped to his knees and hugged my midsection. "Hello, little one," he said, even though we both knew that it was nothing more than a collection of cells at the moment. "It won't be that long before you're out here saying hello to your big brother. I love you already." He kissed my stomach lovingly, which sent a tingle through me that made me decide that Harry was certainly going to be getting further practice on fathering children as soon as Draco was safely out of the room.

I looked to my son and saw wistful tears in his eyes. I developed a suspicion that if his mental sea change continued, there would be a day when Harry would be referred to as a father to more than the baby growing in my womb.

"I'll go and let family celebrate," Draco said softly.

"Then I should be the one to leave," Hermione said. "It's Harry's baby, and it's your mother. I'm just a hanger-on in this."

"You have more of a right to be here than I do," he replied after a moment of indecision.

"She's your mother," Harry said. "She's Hermione's wife. Neither is leaving right now. I think we should have a proper celebration, to be honest."

Draco surprised us all with the next statement. "Isn't that what got her *into* that condition in the first place?" He managed to keep an utterly straight face as he said it.

Harry blinked at my son for a moment before a particularly undignified snort erupted from him. After some cleansing laughter, we spent an hour just

enjoying ourselves before Draco headed on his way.

As we heard him walking down the hallway, I looked to Harry and said, "For some reason, my fear of telling you of my pregnancy affected me in ... other ways as well." I let my robes fall from my shoulders, giving him evidence of my arousal. His contrapuntal response was well appreciated. "Would my husband care to help me deal with this problem?"

He grinned at me, a grin I had grown used to that tended to make me tingle deep within. It was the look of a man who could likely get any woman he wanted. And it was aimed at me. "Got any vital potions being worked on?" he asked.

"None whatsoever. Why?"

"Well, last year, before ... well, all that crap, I found myself fantasising about using the Potion Master's desk as a surface for making love."

"With who?" Hermione asked in a quiet voice.

"Um, for part of it, it was Cho, but a little later on it got to be a certain other female student," he said.

"Who?" she asked, and we were both surprised to see that she was actually serious.

He smiled. "You have three guesses and one clue. The clue is that she's in the room right now."

Hermione looked at him for a moment, and then blushed. "I know that you love me, but ... I still can't believe that you've fantasised about me."

Something tickled my memories, and I thought for a moment. Suddenly, it came to me. "Actually, Hermione, I find that I'm surprised that I was added to the mixture. If he truly had been forced to choose, he would have chosen you. When he was first dropped on me to heal, I heard him murmuring something, and thought he was hallucinating. I thought he had said something about his knee, but he was calling for you." At her confused look, I smiled and said, "He kept saying 'my own knee', dear girl. He was calling your name."

He was now blushing. "I kept thinking that if I could just get in touch with you, you'd help me make everything right. You always have before."

I don't know whether it was the sentiment or my hormones, but such a heartfelt declaration of love toward her caused me to become even more aroused, perhaps because I knew that he meant it, and could just as easily find something equally as heartfelt and beautiful to say to me. I suspect it was the sentiment that drove my sex drive because she was also rather pointedly stating her own arousal without a word being spoken.

I grinned and opened the door to the Potions laboratory, and the three of us entered, completely unashamed of our nudity. Of course we had no worries, considering that I had placed my own locking charms on the door, keyed only to us, when classes were done for the day. My husband was not the only one who had fantasised about sex on the Potions tables.

"I'll bet you never fantasised about having sex with your Potions professor before," I said with a wicked grin.

"Not until this year started," he replied, pulling me into a searing kiss. My skin was aflame, and he only made the situation delightfully worse as he began to rain kisses down my body. Hermione joined his tortuous onslaught, and I faded sweetly into a delirious fog of happiness.

It was quite some time later before I was sated, and once again I was pleased that my husband had the stamina of a teenager, and Hermione was equally as pleased by the fact. I would not honestly have believed that any male could experience four orgasms in decently rapid succession and still be able to satisfy his partners, but he certainly did. I expected that he'd be in pain the next day, however.

I was correct, but he was still grinning madly at the reason for the pain. He continued to learn fighting tactics while Hermione and I took over the library once the students were gone for the night. Harry often joined us, and Hermione had one of her fantasies fulfilled as well. She stressed the limits of the Silencing Charm I cast, which impressed me to no end.

We were getting perilously close to the time for the next Wizengamot meeting when Hermione located a spell that we realised was exactly what we needed. It was designed to prevent Astral scrying, which is done simply by loosing your astral form from your physical body and going to the target and watching. The charm prevented the scrying by preventing the recipient of the spell (whom I shall hereafter refer to as 'victim') from loosing his astral form from his body. Since astral projection is effectively loosing your soul from your body while remaining tethered to it, the spell was perfect.

Hermione had no complaints about how she found it, either. She had been standing at one of the posiums, reading, while Harry played one of his usual games of seeing just what it took to distract her. He'd been fondling her breast with his left hand while his right hand made her squirm delightfully when she found it. She'd said that she likely would have ignored it, but the distraction he provided let her mind run with the spell, and she had realised that it was perfect. She celebrated by wrapping her legs around his waist. He was more than happy to help her celebrate.

The amusing thing was that the charm was ridiculously easy to cast. The infuriating thing was that it was ridiculously easy to deflect. We'd all have to be at the meeting and get him distracted before any of us could cast the spell at him.

And one thing I had learned from Lucius was that distracting Riddle was one of the most difficult things possible.

We would have to, however, if I wanted my baby to grow up in a safe world.

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With a Little Help From My Friends

Chapter 8

With a Little Help From My Friends

Chapter 8

Draco and Harry decided to pull their little prank on Halloween during lunch. I had to admit that it was quite a brilliant manoeuvre, when truly thought about. Draco entered the Great Hall and walked over to Harry. "How can I help you?" Harry asked him.

"I have a question for you," Draco replied. I knew my son well enough to recognise the tone of amusement in his voice.

"I have an answer. Let's see if they match," Harry responded.

Draco paused for a moment before saying with a grin (I could hear the grin in his voice), "Well, since you're my stepfather now, I was wondering about a raise in my allowance."

Harry looked at him for a moment, and I could see his eyes sparkling with mirth. "Tell you what, Draco. I'll give you double what I'm paying you now."

"You're not paying me anything right now," Draco replied.

"Well, that's not *my* problem, is it?" Harry asked with a grin, and that was it for the both of them. Draco began to chuckle softly, while Harry began to laugh loudly. Hermione and Ginevra Weasley both began to giggle, but Ron and a few of the male Gryffindors were confused to say the least.

The room filled with talk a moment later as Harry made a space at the end of the table for Draco, who took the offered seat, much to the surprise of everyone at the Gryffindor table. I could *feel* Harry's pride a moment later when Ginevra looked at Draco and then held out her hand. "Hi. Ginny Weasley. Nice to meet you, Mr Malfoy."

My son lit up at the instant acceptance, but asked anyway. "Why?"

"Harry and Hermione trust you enough to let you sit here. You worked with Harry to play a prank on the rest of the school – one that harmed no one. That means you're worth talking to. We're not friends, given the history between the Malfoys and the Weasleys, but you've got a chance now."

"Not that it means anything, given that the Malfoys are now penniless, but I will do everything in my power to end the enmity between the Weasleys and the Malfoys."

"Why?" Ronald Weasley asked.

"Simple," Draco responded. "I've had it drilled into me that pretty much everything my father has taught me is wrong. Hermione is stronger magically than I can ever expect to be, but according to my father's beliefs, that shouldn't be. We're purebloods, so we *have* to be better. It's automatic. His great and powerful lord has been defeated by someone else that the blood purists say shouldn't have been able to do it. And all these purists are bowing and scraping to someone who is himself a half-blood, or at least was before he stopped being human at all. A Malfoy bows to no one. So why is Lucius bowing and kissing the hem of an inhuman monster's robes?" He met the male Weasley's eyes. "Let me put it to you in a manner that I'm sure you'll actually accept from me. I want to survive this war, and that won't happen if I support the madman that I used to. So I'm throwing my support behind my mother's new husband publicly."

Weasley looked at him for a long moment, and then did something that forced me to reassess the Weasleys. "You're on probation, Malfoy. Ginny's right. Hermione and Harry are giving the benefit of the doubt to you. They're not often wrong about this sort of thing."

"*coughcoughLockheartcough*," Harry 'said' in response.

"Lockheart and Harry not getting any tonight aside," Ron Weasley continued with a small laugh, "I trust their choices. If they're giving you a chance, then I will too. And maybe this damned feud can *really* end." He stood and walked over to my son, holding out his hand. "To a new beginning. Ron Weasley."

Draco lit up as if the morning sun were on his face. "Draco Malfoy. I've got a lot of history to live down, but I'm willing to try." The two shook hands, and the look on Harry's face was indescribable.

We continued to work on the spell and trying to improve our stamina – his stamina for *that* activity was just fine, thank you very much – while the school continued around us.

I awoke Halloween morning with a sense of disquiet. I couldn't put my finger on it. It didn't seem to be Harry, because he was currently snuggled up against my backside, and I was looking forward to helping him with his usual morning visitor, which was currently pressing gently against my bum. Hermione was on her back and smiling slightly, the sheet down to her waist, leaving her pretty breasts bare and somewhat hard-tipped in the slight cool of the morning.

I shrugged in my inability to pin down the problem, and rolled over to face my husband. I marvelled that I had somehow fallen in love with a man who was physically younger than the child of my own body. His soul was – pardon the trite saying please – an old soul, however. He had moments of extreme teenager, one might say – one of which I intended to take advantage of in just a few minutes – but most of the time he was remarkably

adult. Even more so than my ex-husband Lucius.

Shaking my head, I leaned forward and kissed his lips softly, which pressed my breasts against his chest. This always seemed to wake him, and I had even used it one night to wake him when he had one of his 'Voldemort dreams' as he calls them. Apparently the three of us caused Riddle some pain that night, I add with some pride.

Without getting entirely to graphic about what happened next, let me just say that if I hadn't been pregnant already, I certainly would have had the ammunition to become so afterwards. He was inspired enough that Hermione thanked Merlin for contraceptive spells as well.

We headed down to breakfast after a quick shower (of course we conserved water!) and sat in our accustomed seats, slightly tenderly for Hermione and I – he was a tad inspired, as he said. Albus's eyes twinkled madly, as they so often do, and I found myself wondering if he somehow knew *exactly* what we'd been doing. Perhaps the castle or the house elves were spying on us? Well, if so, I hope that my Harry made the old goat jealous.

Breakfast was completed and we rose to our feet to leave, but I was suddenly wracked with pains in my abdomen. Harry was on his feet in a moment and beside me faster than I could have imagined. The pains were not subsiding – in fact, they seemed to be getting worse – so he simply lifted me and carried me to the hospital wing.

Poppy began to scan me when Harry yelled, "What the -!" I looked over to see my son, quite worried, carrying Hermione into the room. She looked a distinctly unnatural colour and was semi-conscious.

A moment later, Poppy was flipping her wand toward the potions cabinet, and several bottles came floating toward me. She poured a dose of a lurid pink one that I knew to be an all-purpose counter-poison, albeit an imperfect one. "I've been poisoned?" I asked as she handed the noxious glass to me.

"Yes, and it's going to take me a while to figure out which one it is," she replied. "That will at least slow it long enough to check out Miss ... my apologies ... the other Mrs Potter." She ran her wand across Hermione and frowned before pouring another dose of the pink concoction. Her colour improved almost immediately.

"Did anyone else get sick?" Harry asked suddenly.

"No," the Headmaster said as he entered the room, frowning. "The only victims were your wives."

He spun to Draco. "Who are the marked students in Slytherin?"

"I know Parkinson is. She's got it somewhere other than her arm, however." He blushed as he said it. "It's really the only nice looking part of her." When Harry continued to look puzzled, my son lightly smacked his own left buttock.

"Ah. Well, I want her in custody now. I want to find all the other Death Eaters in the school, and I'm going to need a Dark Mark for that – I'm pretty sure that we can find them if we use one of them as a guide for what they feel like."

"You are not feeling any other girl's bum, Harry," Hermione said with a weak laugh, coughing once to punctuate her statement.

"There is no other girl in the school who can compare to either you or Cissy," he said simply. I found tears in my eyes because it was said in such a manner that anyone listening knew that he felt that to be a fact, not a method of making us feel better. He truly felt that no other woman could be as attractive!

With what that man does to my hormones without even trying, I have little doubt that we will end up with a family to rival that of Arthur and Molly Weasley, much may they laugh.

With the counterpoison working well enough, I examined Poppy's results and smiled. The idiot (or plural, as the case might be) had chosen simple poisons, perhaps hoping that neither of us would figure out what had been done in time.

Once we had properly been dosed with the proper antidotes, we were told that we would be staying in the wing for the rest of the day. Lunch would be brought to us, and we likely would be released for dinner, but we were going to be where Poppy could keep an eye on us. My suspicion was that she was worried about the baby. I was as well, considering the pain had been in my abdomen.

Pansy Parkinson was brought into the hospital wing a short time later, nursing a broken arm and a broken leg. A moment later, Harry came in with Draco leaning heavily on him, my son bleeding from the head and leg. "You're all right, Draco," Harry said with a voice that showed that he was impressed with something.

"If I'd done it right, I wouldn't be bleeding," Draco grouched. "She got a chance to shoot back at me."

"Yeah, and what she shot at you gave me the excuse to break her arm. Her leg was a bonus."

"Excuse me?" Poppy said with a slightly incredulous look. "You consider extra wounding ... please explain."

Draco spoke. "Strip her behind a curtain with someone like Mother or Gra ... Hermione holding a wand on her. Look at the left bum cheek."

"And how would you know what is there?" she asked with amusement.

"You're the school's Healer," Draco replied with a sparkle to his eyes. "Do I really need to give *you* The Talk?" Poppy laughed at his response.

She pulled a curtain around herself and Pansy and said, "Now, am I checking out these wounds and this thing they wish me to find with your help, or must I stun you?"

None of us could understand the mumbling that Pansy did, but a moment later Poppy said, "The Dark Mark. On your arse, no less."

"It was forced on me!" Pansy suddenly exclaimed. It might have worked had Draco not snorted.

"Then why were so proud of it that you couldn't wait to show it to me?" he asked. "Admittedly, that was when I was looking forward to taking my own. Luckily I learned better before it got that far."

"You may have them fooled, Draco, but I remember how hot you were when you saw it on my bum," the girl snarled. "I couldn't sit down the next day, you were so forceful! So don't give me this high-and-mighty attitude of yours. You're just as eager to take the Mark as I was!"

"I was eager," Draco replied. "Then I learned about a few things, like that thing you call your master. Did you know that he's not even really human anymore? He's no longer the Heir of Slytherin, because when Harry killed him, the body was destroyed. When he came back, he used his *Muggle* father's bone, and *Harry's* blood. Nothing connecting back to his mother's side, which would have to be the Slytherin side. So you're worshipping the ground that a half-blooded monster walks. What's he really done for you? Has he promised to bang that backside of yours like you want him to? I doubt he's got the equipment to!"

"Unless he's grown some later, he didn't when he reformed in the graveyard," Harry said simply.

"He's conquered death!" she said.

"He's scared of dying," Harry countered. "He doesn't like it when someone has the power to stand up to him. He ran like the coward he is when Dumbledore showed up at the Ministry. They traded shots for a while, but when the situation arose where he could leave, he did. Poof! He was gone faster than your knickers when someone asks if you want to have sex."

"Damn, that's fast!" Draco said, seemingly to himself, but it was calculated to be heard by everyone in the room.

"The question," I interjected into the room in a tone to break up any potential arguments, "is to decide what we're doing with the child."

"I was thinking that we give her to the Aurors to try for being a Death Eater," Harry said. "After we take scans of her Dark Mark, of course. We need to get some readings so that we can tell who's a Death Eater and who isn't." He paused. "Well, who's *marked* and who isn't. Parky probably isn't, but he's sure a sympathiser."

"You will not talk about my father that way!" Pansy shrieked.

"Or else what, little girl?" Harry asked, pulling the curtain away and exposing the girl's shame. "You'll threaten me? Lucius Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle's fathers, and Riddle himself couldn't break me this summer when they had me in their grasp. What do you think *you* could threaten me with?" He paused. "Madam Pomfrey, could you cover her? I'm getting nauseous." He turned to face Hermione and me, his face a mask of rage, but it flowed away as he saw us. "You or your ilk here in the school tried to poison my wives, Parkinson. What do you think I should do to those who poisoned my wives, since I have the right to challenge them to a duel?"

"You're too goody-two-shoes to do anything to me, Potter!" she exclaimed triumphantly. She screamed a moment later as he was suddenly next to her bed. He grabbed her arm and a moment later the scream turned to pain as he brought his elbow down on hers, causing her arm to bend the wrong way suddenly.

"Don't try me, Parkinson," he growled. "If I think it will keep you from doing irreparable damage to my wives and child, then I will kill you if I have to. I don't want to, but I will. *Don't* mistake a desire to stay out of prison for weakness, bitch."

(I think that his growl was supposed to be scary – it certainly terrified most people in the room – but both Hermione and I found it rather sexy. I chuckled to myself as I watched Hermione smoothing her robes over her breasts, trying to hide the reaction our husband had caused.)

What truly impressed me was Poppy's response to this. She winced at Harry's attack on Pansy, and started to move to stop him, but paused. She looked worried at Harry for a moment, but softened when she met his eyes. I saw why when I looked at him. He was giving her a look that said that he was sure that he'd lost her respect for him. She moved the curtain closed again and set about healing Pansy's injuries. I joined her behind the curtain and began to scan the misguided girl's arse. (I must admit that my son was right – it is attractive, especially compared to the rest of the girl. (I believe that I once referred to her as 'she who chases parked carriages?') But I'm quite happy with the way that Hermione's skirts flow across her posterior, so I didn't give the Parkinson girl another thought.) I recorded certain energies radiating from the Mark on her arse, so I took the most complete scans that I could before leaving Poppy to finish her job.

I took my leave of the two and headed to the small gathering which now included the headmaster. "If I know Poppy, and I have worked with her for many a year now, she understands perfectly why you did what you did. She might be a Healer, but she understands that certain things are necessary in times of war. You made a point to Miss Parkinson in a place where she could get treatment immediately. I doubt that this was missed by Poppy."

"Indeed it was not, Headmaster. Don't worry yourself about my reaction to your ... instructing Miss Parkinson, shall we say? She was involved with poisoning your wives, since there is still some slight residue on her hands of the ingredients necessary for the potions in question." To make sure that Harry understood her, she quickly hugged him, and my darling husband relaxed finally. "We do things that we don't like to in war, Harry. I've had to let people die before."

"And I've got to kill in a few days." He shook his head. "Thank you, Madam Pomfrey. I needed that kick in the arse."

"Any time, Harry," she answered with a laugh. "And when we're not amongst the rest of the student population, I give you permission to call me Poppy."

He smiled broadly at that.

We spent the next day developing a detection spell to find the Dark Mark. (It's not like it was that difficult. Most of the detection spells are quite similar. You simply input the variables that you are searching for into the spell. If there is anyone suited for such a task, it was Hermione. Assisted by the headmaster, the work was done quite quickly.)

A general assembly of the school was called as soon as we were able to contact Amelia Bones, and the spell netted us another six marked students, who were quietly 'marked', but not arrested. We knew that there were likely more who had not yet taken the Mark, but such is life. We were fairly certain that we could get enough information to know who some of the unmarked students were.

We were now as prepared for the next Wizengamot meeting as we were ever going to be.

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With a Little Help From My Friends

Chapter 9

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The day of the Wizengamot meeting was finally upon us and we were all rather nervous. After all, we would soon be fighting for our lives against a particularly unpleasant foe who had some especially skilled psychopaths on his side. I wanted our babies to grow up in a Dark Lord-free world – I had every intention of giving Molly Weasley a run for her money, now that I had a worthwhile husband – and that meant that the fighting that was to happen today had to be perfect. I needed to be sure that the baby inside me – who had somehow remained completely untouched by Pansy's ineptitude with poisons – stayed safe, but I also knew that I needed to be there for today's meeting.

I was happy that all scans showed our baby to be unharmed. Ecstatic would likely be a better word, to be honest. I honestly do believe that there would not have been enough left of Pansy Parkinson for me to pour into a single serving vial had the poisoning caused me to miscarry. It is actually rather likely that Hermione would have pushed Harry out of the way to administer her punishment, and let Harry have what was left – if anything. That woman loves so deeply and powerfully that it is almost scary, and it takes my breath away when I realise that it is somehow aimed at me as well as our Harry. There is nearly a level of psychosis when it comes to her devotion to us, and we shall need to be careful, I believe.

On a whim, I kissed her forcefully to thank her for her love, and she murmured, "You know that you'll need to follow through on that once we're back from the Wizengamot."

"Gladly," I responded, letting my fingers brush lightly across her breasts. I found myself pleasantly surprised that she wore no brassiere. "I think both Harry and I may wish some nourishment later," I whispered, feeling the nipple under my fingers tighten just before I gave it a very soft pinch.

"We have a Wizengamot meeting, we have a Wizengamot meeting ..." I heard her begin to murmur, and I chuckled.

"Wait until you're carrying his child beneath your heart – you'll be as horny as I've been." I kissed her quickly; it was all we had time for before we met the others at the front gates.

"If I'm going to be worse than I am right now, I'll *need* both of you around, if only to keep Harry around for more children. I'd kill him otherwise."

"Yeah, but think of the smile on the corpse," Harry added *sotto voce*, a soft chuckle behind it that weakened my knees. I began Hermione's chant in my head. *We have a Wizengamot meeting, we have a Wizengamot meeting ...*

I was surprised when Draco arrived. "If I will be taking the seat in seven months, mother, I should learn how to do my job properly." He smiled softly. "Besides, I have a future brother or sister to protect."

"You do know that there will be fighting today?" Harry asked softly.

"I have people to protect. Mother, my brother or sister, Gra ... Hermione, and even you." At Harry's raised eyebrows he added, "Until she met you, I never saw my mother dance somewhere in the process of just doing a simple task. It was as if fun wasn't allowed at Malfoy Manor. You make her happy. Even if we can never get past the stage of being able to tolerate each other's presence, you've done something for her that I never knew possible – you've made her happy. I'll avoid comments about her glowing, since she's pregnant. So yeah, I'm going to protect you."

Harry nodded his acceptance and thanks, instinctively knowing that Draco would not accept anything more as real.

At first I reacted poorly when Harry next asked that I stay back during the fight to protect our unborn child. I felt as the representative of the House of Black I needed to proclaim that 'we do not back down from a fight.' Harry seemed at a loss for words at my defiance, but then our Hermione stepped in and ruthlessly destroyed every logical reason I'd raise for not being cautious, and demolished several other reasons I might have used if I'd thought of them. In the end, her logical blackmail won her case and gave me even more insight into my husband and how much more I needed, and wanted, to know about his life so I too could join Hermione in healing his many old emotional wounds.

Her final words, the ones that reduced me to near tears as I agreed to stay back from the heart of the conflict, were, "Think of how it will hurt Harry if this baby is harmed." I hate it when someone else is right. I'm usually the coolly logical and rational one.

Arrival at the chambers was business as usual – slow – since a certain level of pomposity seemed to be required by the simple act of entering the chambers. As we entered, Harry whispered in my ear, "Make a note of who isn't here. Likely Riddle won't want them hurt in the cross-fire, or will have them on his side."

I simply nodded and waited until we were in the Malfoy seat before invoking privacy and explaining to Draco, who began to literally make notes on it. I will admit that even this short exposure to my husband seemed to be improving Draco's Slytherin skills – if I hadn't known the code that he was using, I'd have sworn that it was shorthand for things he needed to know about the Malfoy seat. Seeing what he was writing, I kept up a slow and steady stream of various things about the Malfoy seat. He smiled in thanks at me – another thing to thank Harry for.

I could see for myself that Lady Parkinson was in the Parkinson seat, but her husband was 'mysteriously' missing. Nott, Goyle, and a handful of others seemed to be amongst the missing. (Nott and Goyle are living proof that intelligence is *not* a requirement for a Wizengamot seat. Let me put it this way – Gregory Goyle is a genius compared to his father, and I am aware that Draco does not lie when he talks about Gregory's lack of intelligence. The Goyle family fortunes will *improve* when the son takes over the family. I do not use hyperbole when I say that Greg Junior could not

possibly do any worse.)

We met Dumbledore's eyes and he nodded ever-so-slightly – he also had noticed the preponderance of missing Dark-aligned members. There was nothing that could be done about it, however, except to take note of it and ensure that they didn't come to power after Harry had defeated the criminal Riddle.

Finally, the Wizengamot session began, with its usual pomp. ('Pomp and circumcison', Harry quipped one day when he was particularly annoyed at some of the stupid laws. I'm quite certain he was willing to perform the surgery – without anaesthesia, of course.)

By thirty minutes into the session, I could see everyone beginning to relax. I think everyone knew that Voldemort was not likely to take the Slytherin seat being taken from him easily (lying down, I think the phrase is), and had expected that he would blaze into the meeting as soon as it began. At half an hour in, it was pretty well accepted by most that he would not be making an appearance that day.

That was their mistake. My husband and wife remained on high alert, and forty-three minutes and twenty-seven seconds after the meeting started, the reason was made manifest as the doors to the chambers exploded inward – actually most of that whole wall blew inward.

I'd never fought in a battle, or what Harry said this would be, a fire-fight. It's a Muggle expression apparently, and it means a smaller and quicker battle. I asked why they just didn't say so, but I never got an explanation. Harry and Dumbledore both stated this fight would probably not last long, and in truth, it will probably take longer to tell about it than it took to perform, start to bloody finish. I'd never fought in a battle before, but I did duel quite often in school in our duelling club, and I had several conflicts with witches at Hogwarts of a more serious and undisclosed nature than club match-ups. Nothing prepared me for this scene after the fact, but fortunately I reacted on instinct during the engagement. I carried my burden as Harry assured me I would. He had confidence in me that I didn't really feel until he gazed into my eyes and told me, "You'll do quite well. I expect, being a Black, you will maintain your family honour well, and now as a Potter you have a heritage to set for our child, and the other children to come."

Those words ran through my mind and my heart the entire time we waited for the fight to begin, and they resounded throughout my very being for the duration of the conflict.

I happened to look at the clock just seconds before the explosion – that's why I knew the exact time. It seemed like a long half hour or more before the unnatural silence punctuated the end of all fighting, and the moans and other cries of pain elicited the beginning of the recovery from the battle. I looked again at the clock as if it was the logical thing to do amidst the carnage and destruction. Five minutes and fifty seconds had passed since I had last gazed in that direction. It was an eternity in three-hundred and fifty seconds.

Most of the entire east wall where the doors were was gone after the explosion. The chamber was designed back in the days when duelling was common, and for some reason it was considered appropriate to duel in the Wizengamot chamber itself. That practice had ceased over five hundred years ago, but the large room's defences had never been changed. In this case said defences contained most of the explosion from badly hurting or killing most of us in the assembly, but the three Aurors standing with their backs to that wall were not so lucky. They were the first deaths this day, but not the last.

Most of us, even those who were expecting it, were stunned into inaction the first few moments after the blast, but not Dumbledore, and not Harry. Both of them sprang to their feet and began proving their reputations in a fight. Harry started sending *Reducto* rs and Cutting curses out as fast as he could say the incantations. His words were barely spaced as to be recognizable. Intent in spell casting is of prime importance, and his slurred-together words produced a blur of spell fire. The headmaster started off more defensively in his magical display. He proved himself the battle tactician of great skill and foresight in doing so. He animated the rubble from the exploded wall to form into barriers and reform into passageways through the rubble. The first six Death Eaters bobbed around several hastily erected segments of wall debris and made their way into the paths allowed. Those six were then crushed into unconscious or worse by the paths slamming in on them. Their screams were actually more like bloody gurgles.

And then my ex-husband made his presence known. Lucius stuck his head around a corner and transfigured the rubble into a flying hail of debris he attempted to fling our way. Dumbledore, the strongest wizard in Transfiguration in two centuries, and Minerva McGonagall, the best witch in this century in that skill, easily negated his efforts. Albus sent about two-thirds of the flying detritus of as blue birds and canaries. Min turned the rest of it to straw, which fell useless to the ground.

Lucius was one of the first of Riddle's key Death Eaters to enter the chamber, and he was faced with a hail of Stunners as soon as the Aurors recovered enough to join the fray. After his quick attempt to repurpose Dumbledore's original defences, Lucius popped up his Shield spell and retreated. From the other side of the hole in the wall, a number of suicidal Death Eaters ran in, concentrating on the Aurors still firing at Lucius. Eleven more Aurors went down, thinning out the defenders, at the cost of six bound Death Eaters and six more down, unconscious, and bleeding. I heard a number of Summoning Charms cast and all of the downed toadies of that assault wave were recalled. We could hear the *Ennervates* being cast outside.

Harry called out, "Either hurt them or kill them. If you Stun them they'll just be back at us in seconds."

Sure enough, my dear one was right. Another wave of Death Eaters ran in, casting a variety of hurtful curses. This time they spread out, so that they did not present a concentrated target, and used their Shield spells.

The few Wizengamot members who attended this day fell into two categories: basically prepared and unprepared. The bulk of these parliamentarians were older than typical. It had apparently never occurred to them that they might have to fight. A number of them stood and were struck down while expressing their outrage at the events of the moment. Many more of these ancients wisely fell to the floor, seeking what cover they could.

There were others who stood besides Dumbledore and McGonagall, and Harry's appointees, my sister Andromeda, Molly, Arthur, and Percy,

Harry, Hermione and myself. Few others from the Wizengamot offered more than a token *Stupefy* before crawling under a desk. However four were effective.

Griselda Marchbanks and Tiberius Ogden made a formidable team, sending a combination of curses and hexes towards the crowd, and shooting conjured rocks the size of skulls towards the Death Eaters from a variety of different angles. They knew they could not dodge and spin out of the way of return spell fire, so they holed up in the back of the chamber behind several summoned desks and tables and proved themselves a formidable nuisance. A number of the vermin were knocked unconscious, and more were dazed by the duo's stinging counterstrikes. Ultimately two of the attackers had to spend most of their time shielding the others from the rocks.

Augusta Longbottom had a particularly wicked old Bone Cracker hex her family was famous for. Their grimoire was said to be full of arcane magic few alive today had ever heard of. None who survived the fight will ever forget the results of the Bone Cracker – it was a well-feared spell for very good reason. The usual bone breaking hexes do just that – break bones. The Longbottom Bone Cracker causes immediate compound fractures. Trust me when I say that the people hit by this hex do not willingly rise to their feet quickly. Unfortunately, she was hit with a nasty Cutting curse on her wand hand, and it had to be wrapped in a Wound-binding spell shortly after the fight began. She sat behind an overturned desk and did shoot left-handed *Reducto*rs at the attackers, but her efforts were now weak and easy to shield. But any distraction of the attackers opened the way for someone else's spell to slip through.

My friend, Angelique Parkinson, stood by my side, actually just ahead of me, trying to draw attention to herself and away from me. I decided to be angry at her later. She was only trying to protect her pregnant friend, after all. Hermione was near enough to defend me but a few steps away to draw fire as well. Draco stood right in front of me also. I knew Angelique had a particularly fine Reflecting spell that sent back curses towards the original caster. She was better than most at aiming the returning spells, and I fired off my favourite Blasting hex either just before or just after her returned spells. We made a good team.

Molly Weasley, for someone known even among the pure-blood purist as a kindly, motherly soul, showed an amazing lack of concern for hurting people. Her Bone Shattering curses, gruesomely painful spells that could generally cause a person to faint dead away from pain, caught a number of Death Eaters by surprise as they smiled at the matronly woman. One man even called her a blood traitor, but he never said another word after her spell of choice crushed his skull like a ripe tomato. Molly fired off offensive spells rarely after Augusta was hit. Molly tended her wounds and those of any others hurt on our side after that, ignoring the Cutting curse that nicked her forehead and the blood that ran into her eyes sporadically.

My husband, Harry, was the primary target. The third wave of Death Eaters came in as a group and went straight at him, wands blazing. Harry put forth an astounding array of shielding to protect him, and from across the room Dumbledore conjured a stone slab that took three simultaneous Killing Curses sent his way. But one curse slipped through. Percy Weasley jumped in the way and took the violent Cutting curse on his right side. I could hear several ribs crack loudly; thankfully Molly was on him in moments, binding his wound and helping him to shelter behind an overturned table.

Arthur Weasley has always been considered wishy-washy and hen-pecked, an odd duck even in the magical world, where being odd is a cherished character trait. Many of the wealthy pure-bloods hold him up as an example of weak magic in the poorer pure-blood families, as if wealth presupposed magical power or ability.

The Death Eater who hit Percy dissolved in hideous screams as an acid shower jetted from Arthur's wand. The two attackers near him went down seconds later, their internal organs turning to mush and destroying all life functions from within. Arthur could be heard humming a tuneless ditty of unknown origins as he went back to casting what now seemed like low impact Cutting curses and *Reducto*r fire. Today was the day for ruthlessness to come forth to hopefully spare future generations the impact of a Dark Lord.

My sister Andromeda, Andi, made her way to her daughter's side. The Aurors remained a prime target for the vermin assaulting us. Dawlish went down in a hail of spell fire and I wondered if he could live through it. He didn't. A bald-headed black Auror at Nymphy's side went down also, but I saw him moving afterwards, so his wounds were not immediately fatal. No other magical law enforcement officers were left standing. Few were even alive. Andi and Nymphy made quite the team – either they had practiced fighting together, or there is some truth to the idea that mothers and daughters can think alike – *VERY* alike. But theirs was a lost position.

Proving his near omniscience in battle once again, Albus Dumbledore looked across the room from where he was duelling five talented Death Eaters. He instantly saw the plight of the two Tonkses. A table jumped up and danced for a second before the two women who now took the brunt of the last wave of Death Eater cannon fodder. The table wouldn't hold for long, so Dumbledore actually summoned Andi and Nymphy across the room and shielded them while they flew to him. Several boulders dropped in and around those sent in to kill my two kinswomen, and many of those Dark minions' screams were cut short when they were crushed.

Never assume that Dumbledore's reputation as a warrior is anything but understated.

The next group into the room came in as they owned the world: twelve Death Eaters who stood there as though they held their places on the field of battle by divine right. Minerva McGonagall called out, "*Accio* masks!" and these twelve's faces were revealed to all. The ten Death Eaters who had been captured by my husband and wife and their friends at the Department of Mysteries stood before us: Walden Macnair, Rodolphus Lestrangle, Rastaban Lestrangle, Augustus Rookwood, William Avery, Anton Dolohov, Frederick Nott, Terrence Mulciber, Vincent Crabbe, and Stephen Jugson. Joining them were Severus Snape, no surprise there, and Bruce Parkinson – there, now I remember his name.

A hush fell as the Death Eaters who we'd dealt with, but who were still conscious, tried to disengage from the combat. In turn, we used the brief respite to reinforce our own positions. The new arrivals seemed to think that a little taunting and flaunting was in order, as if this was nothing more than a schoolyard spat.

Bruce looked over at Angelique and me and smirked. She hissed, "I wondered why he's not asked for marital privileges for three weeks now. He took the Mark."

Dolohov said, "Mudblood Granger, I'll not miss cleaving you in two this time around."

Macnair held his axe in one hand, his wand in the other, and grinned a broken-toothed grin that made him seem like one of the Beasts he was tasked with executing.

Severus Snape said, "I knew Potter would lead you all to your doom. My master--" His words were cut short when a silently cast Cutting curse took his wand arm off just above the elbow. As he stared at it another silent spell removed his left hand.

"I am tired of your diatribes, Snivellus," Harry said. My dear husband joined both hands onto his wand, the manner he developed to cast wordlessly. Snape fell to his right as that side's leg shattered at the kneecap. His screams of agony ended the pause in the fighting.

It took three spells before Hermione was cleansed forever from the dream that still awoke her from time to time, in spite of our tender loving embraces at night. She sent a Cutting curse at Dolohov who easily flicked it away. He sent back a similar curse and she seemed to barely dodge it. He laughed again as she sent a *Reducto* r of medium strength his way. I wondered what she was playing at. Once again the Ukrainian madman flicked it away and raised his head up to the ceiling laughing at her pitiful efforts. He lowered his eyes just in time to see the same purple spell he'd sent her way in the Department of Mysteries coming straight at his chest.

The spell that had been fired at her a few months ago has been thought of as a cutting curse, but it is not. If anything, it is a bludgeoning style curse. It is designed to cut the skin open and pulp the insides so that they can flow back out the hole the spell creates. A very nasty spell. That is what Dolohov inexpertly cast at Hermione those months ago. That is also what Hermione expertly cast at Dolohov, whose eyes widened in terror in his last seconds, when he realised what was happening. I don't believe that he appreciated the irony, but I didn't care about that. My wife's mental healing could begin in earnest now.

Bruce Parkinson called his wife a dyke and a whore. She removed his head from his torso and both body parts fell behind several other Death Eater corpses. So much for wizard supremacy in a fight.

Suddenly, above all of this we could hear the cackle of a mad woman. My other sister had arrived. With her was my ex-husband, and behind them, hanging back near the entry to the shattered wall, was Voldemort.

Harry wasted no time taunting Bellatrix. "Trixie, you bitch, thanks for coming so I can kill you and not have to hunt you down after I kill Riddle."

"DON'T YOU DARE CALL HIM THAT!" They don't call her a psycho-bitch for nothing. They also don't consider her a skilled fighter, second only to the Dark Lump, for no just cause. Harry almost went down under her barrage of curses, but was able to stay up with the aid of a distracting animated chair sent by Dumbledore. Bella destroyed the chair and easily cast aside Harry's return cannonade of spells. Nymphadora and Andi moved to his aid, probably feeling like they needed to uphold the family honour by at least aiding him, if not taking out Bella themselves. My bitch-sister didn't even look their way as she sent out a *Reducto* r, shattering Andi's shoulder and sending her flying back into Nymphy's path, taking her down as well. I moved toward them but stopped when I saw Harry cave in Bella's chest with a powerful *Reducto* r. In hindsight, I realized Bella never used anything as benign as a *Reducto* r, and the one she used on Andi wasn't all that powerful. I'll always believe that in her perverse way she was showing mercy to her sister - but I'll never tell Harry. He killed the slayer of my cousin Sirius and the torturer and murderer of countless others. In spite of all of that, I know that for my sake he regrets having to kill my sister, even though I truly rejoice that she no longer lives to torture, maim, and destroy.

I'd been holding my own all along. I'd personally stopped cold five Death Eaters in the first three waves all by myself, and helped Angelique and Hermione fight several more. Vincent Crabbe lay at our feet bound and unconscious, with several broken bones. Augustus Rookwood had retreated from fighting us. My mistake was that in my concern for my sister, I left the safety I had, grouped with Angelique, Draco and Hermione. Lucius saw his opportunity and struck. I was petrified and bound in a second.

After Lucius disabled me I found myself positioned to view the rest of the battle. Hermione came to my aid and Lucius placed her under the Cruciatus. Angelique moved to help her and in a flurry of spells, Lucius released Hermione, bludgeoned Angelique, and returned to torturing my young wife. However, Draco now stood in his way.

"Come son, join me in her torture, you know you want to." Draco sent a Stunner at his father. I can only believe he did so not wanting to kill him - an emotion I can readily understand despite his feelings from Lucy's obsequious toadying to a half-blood pretender to pure-blood nobility. Lucius blocked the spell from his son and returned a strike from his Lashing curse. Draco manfully cut short a cry of pain as the flesh ripped on his left shoulder, embedding pieces of his robe in his flesh. The fight was on.

I must say I was proud of Draco. He fought using many but not all of the semi-dark spells my ex-husband taught him. Lucius is a sadist, but I do believe he held back a bit. Draco was cut. His left arm hung loosely, and Lucius drove him to the ground mercilessly, but mercifully he did not kill his own flesh and blood. Lucius turned to me. "Now the torture you so richly deserve, my dear."

Harry was unable to reach me. Dumbledore wasn't looking my way. I knew the Cruciatus would abort my baby as sure as any curettage. But it never came.

I heard a weak "*Reducto* !" The spell entered Lucius' cranium from under his jaw, bypassing his tongue, and entering the roof of his mouth and into his brain. Draco had committed patricide with a very concentrated and well-aimed spell. He vomited on the spot, and I did not blame him.

Hermione crawled to me and released me from my bindings. We both somehow made it to Draco and held him. He was hurt, badly, but not fatally. I Summoned Hermione's wand, lest it be broken by someone stepping on it. To my surprise, Hermione summoned the magical power from some deep reservoir to perform a few needed healing spells. I looked at Angelique. Her breathing was ragged, and I prayed help would arrive in time to save her.

It was at this moment that the crusty old Auror, Alastor Moody, arrived and set off several large hugely loud explosions behind the remaining Death

Eaters, and sent violent Cutting curses at Frederick Nott and Terrence Mulciber. They both bled to death in the minutes to come.

The jumped-up self-proclaimed Lord Voldemort turned his back to us and used the Killing Curse on Moody. The Auror jerkily dodged the first one, but Riddle's second one hit him in the face. The others with Moody – the Weasley twins, Remus Lupin, and several that I simply did not recognise – created shielding and confusion as they entered the fray.

"Now," cried Hermione weakly. I'd just come to my head and remembered our ultimate assignment for the day. She cast the soul-binding charm and I did a moment afterwards. It's a spell that takes little power to cast, which is good, because we were both as weak as kneazle kittens. The spell is also easy to block, but no one did, and we both hit the monster.

Our Harry was watching for this. He pulled from his pocket an enhanced Strengthening Potion that I had brewed for a 'just in case' scenario and downed it. Voldemort turned to kill all of us, calling "Potter!" to draw my husband's attention.

Dumbledore once again proved his magnificence in battle. While fighting Stephen Jugson and both Lestrangle brothers, he'd maintained the presence of mind to monitor our progress against Riddle. Albus sent a simple Cutting curse at Riddle, who had to stop and block it. He laughed at the small insult from the headmaster, and that provided all the time needed.

The Strengthening Potion kicked in. Harry jumped over several remaining Death Eaters, going over thirty feet, and landed almost right behind Tom Riddle. Dumbledore fired another spell, forcing Riddle to choose which one of them he'd face – and he made the wrong choice. Harry had landed facing the wrong way, but used the moment of Riddle's hesitation to spin and attack him from the rear. Using the power he'd imbibed, Harry forgot all about magic and grabbed Riddle's head. It took less than a moment, a fraction of a second – literally. In one superhuman exertion Harry twisted the master of torture's skull to the right. He not only broke Riddle's neck, but his overwhelming strength caused my young love to rip Riddle's head completely off his shoulders.

Vile green blood torrented out, and toxic-smelling fumes filled the air in seconds. Harry was hit full in the face with blood and the polluted vapours, and proceeded to empty his gullet of every meal he'd ever eaten. I'm not sure if there was anyone who didn't do the same, stopping the fight almost immediately.

The last Death Eaters just deflated from the fight as if they were wine sacks pricked by knives. They dropped their wands and fell to the floor, shivering as if the hand of death had given them an icicle enema.

Dumbledore made his way around binding the Death Eaters, just in case. My niece Nymphy joined him. Harry finally staggered to his feet. He didn't come our way, but he looked to Hermione and me. We were fine, and I felt the dear one by my side visually return her love to him as I did.

On his way to us, Harry paused when he reached Severus Snape, who was stubbornly and miraculously still clinging to life. "Come to rub in your victory, Potter?" This time he not only figuratively spat out the words, he actually spat blood as he spoke.

"I take no pleasure in the killing," Harry stated calmly. "I do take pleasure in knowing all of you torturers and murderers will harm and kill no more."

"Such pious platitudes. Saint Potter, here to--"

"*Silencio.*" The headmaster silenced his former potions master.

"I suppose you'll try to heal him now, Professor? Reform him maybe?" There was no accusatory tone to Harry's words. He spoke in a flat, matter of fact timbre, as if asking about the weather in Senegal.

"No, Harry. I think letting him end here is enough. I take mercy on him by not requiring him to face a trial or the dementor's kiss." He turned to Severus and I watched Harry look at the dying man also. Dumbledore continued, "But I condemn him to these last thoughts. The knowledge that the son of his archenemy, James Potter, defeated him and his Lord Voldemort. Severus, both James and Sirius know now your true loyalties, and will spit on you in Hell to relieve your thirst."

Snape's eyes went wide. Silently he tried to rail against these words. But his efforts opened fresh blood flows from his dismemberment wounds, and in seconds he was dead.

Harry said nothing. Dumbledore said nothing. The headmaster turned to minister to the living, and Harry turned and, half-ran, half-staggered, to Hermione and me.

He moved to hug me, but realised that he was covered in gore. He stripped off his robes, leaving him in trousers and a simple white shirt. (The trousers were leather – they allowed greater freedom of movement and an absolutely magnificent view of how well formed my husband is, to the great joy of my wife and myself.) He used the robes to clean his face as best he could, and then took me in his arms. He was far gentler than I expected him to be, and I believe that he understood my thoughts, because he said, unbidden, "I may still be super-strong, love. If I hug you the way I want to, I'd likely shoot body parts into orbit."

I giggled at the imagery – somehow the way he said it did not draw to mind the carnage we had just experienced – and nestled against his chest, revelling in the sound of his strong heartbeat. A moment later, Hermione snuggled in against us both.

"Are you two all right?" he asked. "I know that Lucius hit you both, but I was too busy to hear what you were hit with."

"She may hate me, but I think that you should know that your younger wife was struck by the Cruciatus Curse," Draco stated. Hermione scowled at my son, but Harry simply pulled her closer. "I'm sorry I couldn't protect you from that," he whispered.

I was suddenly struck by something, and said, "We shall talk when we return to our quarters at Hogwarts, my husband. But for now, we need to

restore order to the Wizengamot.”

Harry looked at me, somewhat puzzled, but turned to face what was left of the Wizengamot. “Ladies and Gentlemen! Lords and Ladies! May I have your attention!”

His loud voice overrode all the small conversations that had cropped up and were beginning to get painfully loud. The chamber was suddenly silent. “Thank you,” he said. “Now, we need to deal with the aftermath in an orderly manner. If no one has done so yet, please have someone contact St. Mungo’s and have them send every Healer that they can spare. Those of us capable should Vanish the rubble, or if perhaps Headmaster Dumbledore knows a particularly powerful Reparo?” He asked that with a slight smile, but was rather startled to find that the elderly man had already undertaken something quite like that.

“It helps to be the one involved in recasting the spells every few decades,” Dumbledore said with a tired smile as the room reconstituted itself. The dead were still dead, but the room was once again pristine. He sagged against a desk. “While a pity that duels were once common enough to require those spells, it is good to know that they do occasionally have their uses.”

“I’m almost sad that they exist,” Harry said. “It would do us well to remember that magic can’t fix everything. Who tells the families of those brave Aurors that their father or mother or sister won’t be returning home tonight – or ever again? I don’t blame you, sir – never will I, especially since I suggested the Repairing Charm – but I wish that there were a permanent record of the violence that occurred here. Perhaps it would help us here in the Wizengamot to do what we can to stop the next Grindelwald or the next Riddle. But we need to start that process in school, and before.”

Draco stood to address the surviving Wizengamot. “You know me, and you knew my father. I stand here beside Lord Potter to state that we need to stop this pureblood nonsense. A woman that I spent the last five years berating for her greater intelligence and her blood purity – or lack thereof, to be precise – stood to protect me. A woman that I admit that I called by the derogatory term ‘Mudblood’ showed her true measure by trying to protect others who would look down their noses at her as I once did.”

My son walked to the Weasleys. “We purebloods need to become more like this family. Strong wizards and witches – if you don’t believe me, ask anyone on the receiving end of Ginny’s Bat Bogey Hex,” he paused for the soft laughter that moved around the room, “and the Weasleys make no secret of where they stand in this fight.”

“Make no mistake,” Harry said, “this fight is not over. Until the day that someone utters the term ‘Mudblood’ and is properly shunned as they should be for bigotry, this fight is not over.”

“How do we stop it?” Augusta Longbottom asked. As my eyes met hers, she winked, and I realised what she was doing.

“By changing the laws that hold down others,” Harry answered her. “Dolores Umbridge was forced on Hogwarts last year, and she made no secret of her dislike of anyone not a Pureblood. She hated other species because they weren’t human. She and her ilk are the reason that we are treated the way we are by the centaurs. We have Cornelius Fudge, who spent a year trying to discredit me, rather than try to deal with the problem, and knowingly taking bribes from Death Eaters the whole time. Note that we *still* need to elect someone to take his place – we’ve only an interim Minister at the moment.”

My husband began to pace. “We treat anyone not a pureblood as something vile that we’ve stepped in. Despite the attitudes of a handful of centaurs, they strike me as decent people. Yes, people. So they have hooves – big deal. They’re more intelligent than some of the people we just fought.” I heard more than one person in the chambers doing some variation on “*cough*Goyle*cough*” and fought down a laugh.

“Look at our laws about underage magic use. It is an openly discriminatory law. We can’t detect who is doing the magic, only where. If magic was detected in Ottery St. Catchpole, then in all likelihood the Ministry would ignore it, because there are three wizarding families known to be living in that town. Even half-bloods living with a wizarding parent are in the clear. But if it’s an area where there are only Muggleborns, we send an owl and tell the offender that they might be expelled from Hogwarts. As a result they arrive at school each year weak and out of practice, and take longer to catch up. We need to change that law to allow students to practice – with the presence of a qualified witch or wizard around. ‘Oh look – we’ve registered magic in Little Whinging. Our team went out and found nothing, so we gave the offender a warning. Oh look, it happened again. Ah, it seems that he convinced Auror Tonks to oversee his practice on her day off. No problem then.’ If we do it that way, we end up with a more skilled population in every way.”

He shook his head in disgust at himself. “Listen to me. We’ve just had a battle and I’m standing here politicking for changes in the laws. Please forgive me. We have dead to bury. You don’t need to listen to me complain.”

“But it is good to hear from a man who cares so deeply for this world he lives in, Mr Potter,” Albus stated. “I think that we should reschedule the meeting for two weeks from today, and then we can listen to Mr Potter tell us his ideas.” The man’s eyes were sparkling madly, and I think that he was of a mind to do what Augusta appeared to be thinking – get my husband in on the ground floor of rebuilding the world in a much more reasonable way.

“I’ll second the reconvening,” Harry said. With a wry smile, he added, “May it please the Wizengamot, I think the loudmouth in the Potter seat should be silenced for the duration of the next meeting.”

The motion to adjourn was passed by those still alive and conscious, and the second motion was roundly ignored.

Back at Hogwarts, the news had already spread, and a party had begun. It was quite raucous by the time we arrived, and Harry was almost immediately hoisted on shoulders and paraded around the room. He took it for a while, but when he noticed us on the ground smiling at him, he asked the crowd to place him near the head table. (It was not easy, by any means. It required a powerful *Sonorus* to get their attention.)

"Thank you," he said when he was on the ground again. "Could I please get Draco Malfoy, Hermione Potter, Narcissa Potter up here too?" I was astonished to find an exuberant crowd delivering us to him in exactly the same manner that he had been carried there, and I was laughing happily by the time we reached him and were lowered gently to the ground.

He was smiling as well. "I can see that you've all heard that the Dark Dweeb is defeated. These people can verify it, as can Professor Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall. But I want you to know that while I did the ..." He paused and frowned for a moment before continuing, "While I did the killing blow, so to speak, I would not have gotten that far if not for these people. Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall did their bit to take out the Death Eaters, and I will publicly say to you all that I owe Draco Malfoy a debt that I doubt can ever be repaid."

The room was silent, and even my son had an astonished look on his face. "This man stood before a Death Eater who had used the Cruciatus on one of my wives, and was preparing to do the same to the other – which would have caused a miscarriage without doubt – he stood before this Death Eater and interposed himself between the Death Eater and his prey. I'm sorry to say that this Death Eater was his own father, and that Draco was required to –" He turned to Draco. "I'm sorry that you had to do that."

"To save my mother and Hermione, I'd do it again," my son said with a shrug. "It's not as if I was doing anything in that room that anyone else wasn't."

"But you faced down your own father and saved the two women who mean more to me than my own life. I can never repay you for that," Harry finished, his voice thick with emotion.

"What happened there, mate?" Ronald Weasley asked from the front. "And don't think I'm ignoring that Mal ... Draco saved the life of one of my best friends."

My son started slightly at that, but stood a little straighter. Harry explained the battle from his point of view, including the method of killing Riddle. None listening missed the fact that he was almost literally green.

Not even that description could quell the celebratory mood, and the party picked up once more. Somewhere along the line, I noted that Draco had either peeled away from the group, or had been peeled away. He was speaking to Miss Weasley, who was showing all the signs of attraction. Once I might have sneered on the idea, but I now realise that my son would be hard pressed to do better than a Weasley.

When we could make an exit from the festivities, Hermione and I, dragged Harry back to our quarters, where a much needed conversation took place. "You do know that we still love you," I stated.

"I knew this day would come, Harry," Hermione said. "I pledged myself to you through good and bad. The bad is knowing that you, and only you, could put an end to that madman."

"I ripped his head off like an animal!" he exclaimed, his loathing for the action obvious.

"Are you going to do it again?" she asked.

His answer was to turn green and run into the water closet-cum-bath room we shared. His stomach had nothing in it, so he tried to return meals from prior lifetimes. We merely rubbed his back while he retched.

When he was done, he looked up at Hermione, who simply said, "Exactly. The thought disgusts you. Riddle would have enjoyed it as a way to generate horror. You are a sweet, gentle man who I am still proud to call my husband." She smiled a smile I knew all too well, having seen it in the mirror whenever I thought about our husband. "Even with everything that has happened, you have no idea how much that word fills me with an ineffable feeling of joy," she said. "Harry Potter, the man I gave my heart to, noticed me and thinks I'm worthy of being his wife."

"Worthy?" he croaked. He cleared his throat and drank a little of the water I offered him after using the first mouthful to clear his mouth. Voice still raw, he continued. "*You* worthy of *me*? You have it backwards, beloved. I am astonished that not one, but *two* goddesses entered my life and chose to grace me with their presence for as long as they deem me worthy of them. No mere mortal is deserving of the love of even *one* of you."

"Then you must not be a mere mortal," I said as I pulled him into a kiss. "I can think of no man *more* worthy than you. You defeat the worst Dark Lord of our time, and rather than use it for power and privilege, you come back here and feel disgusted with yourself because of the manner in which you defeated him."

"We're going to do something to you that you're going to hate for a while, Harry," Hermione said. "We're going to love you all the more."

She bit her lower lip then, and said, "I've read that this is the case, but I've discovered that it's true."

I couldn't help but laugh. "Post-fight arousal?"

She blushed and nodded. "If he hadn't been in such a bad mood because of what had happened, Harry probably would have known exactly how I felt back in June. I don't care how badly I was hurt, I wanted him – right then, right in that bed, even if the whole school was looking on."

I dropped my robes from my shoulders. "Would our husband care to help his wives with the problem that appears to have surfaced?" I took one of the oldest erotic poses in existence. Even under those circumstances it did its work and soon the three of us were no longer mourning death, but celebrating life.

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With a Little Help From My Friends

Chapter 10

With a Little Help From My Friends

Epilogue

That was twenty years ago.

I once thought that I would be lucky to survive until some stupid action of my old husband managed to get him killed. My greatest hope was to prevent my son from dying alongside his idiot father.

Instead, I was presented – by that same idiot husband, mind you – with the chance to change my life forever, for the good. All because he and his associates had captured one Harry James Potter in hopes of torturing and then killing him.

Little did he know that he would be handing the means of his downfall to me.

My love for my second husband has only grown these past twenty years, and I understand the level of devotion that Hermione has for him. I may have been greatly unkind in referring to it as a psychosis, but in what small defence is permissible, even today I find things that surprise me about her, and this is after being married to her for twenty years. I myself have the same level of devotion to them both, now that I permit myself to believe that they will not abandon me.

Yes. I had thought that I had given myself completely to them, but Lucius had scarred me far worse than ever I could have thought. It was Andi who made me realise that when we were approaching the third anniversary of our marriage.

I do not remember the wording of her comments, for I was too stunned to journal them at the time that it happened, and then I was spending far too much time enjoying simply loving with all that I had.

My husband is brilliant, and in his way far more intelligent than Hermione or I will ever be. He looked at the wording of the Ancient and Noble House of Black's bylaws and saw that it was impossible to change several of the oldest (and also most bigoted) bylaws. He took the case to both Gringott's and the Wizengamot, pointing out that certain clauses were antithetical to the continued existence of the Black family. This led to rulings permitting ancient family bylaws to be changed. Harry worked them for all that they were worth. He brought in like-minded lawyers, and they went through the Potter, Black, Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff, and Slytherin family bylaws and modernised them all. Draco, upon hearing of this, asked for a loan from Harry so that he could do the same for the Malfoy bylaws. Harry told him to borrow it from me, instead, and both of them laughed at the fact that the money that Draco's father had bilked from so many was being used to turn the family into something that would make his head explode, were he still alive.

This led to a rather amusing series of incidents that were the final blow for the Dark aligned families. They felt that Draco had softened, and would therefore be easy to target in their attempts to wrest control of various things from him.

They could not have been further from the truth. Draco nearly literally flayed them, with the oh-so-Slytherin machinations he performed to humiliate and expose these people. When he was done with them, ridicule followed them in the streets. I leave it for his memoirs to describe the actions he took.

With the death of Lucius by his hands, Draco realised that he was the sole remaining Malfoy, and threw himself into studying what was required to properly run a family. Not what most people think of in regards to money for groceries and transportation and housing, but thinking of the fortunes of those to follow. He knew that his chances were slim to continue the line, but he wanted to have the chance. He lost that overweening pride of his and asked for advice from many sources – one of them being the Weasley patriarch and matriarch. The advice he was given made him aware of things he had never known (and I somehow suspect that Lucius might not have known either, since his own father died under ... suspicious circumstances).

He asked to borrow from me (again) that he might begin to invest in a burgeoning business. With both himself and Harry buying actual shares in the Weasley twins' business, the two managed to make the shop become more than successful. They are apparently now *the* worldwide word in humorous materials. While the amount that he earned on his investment was still not the old Malfoy fortune, it was respectable.

That done – showing that he could properly support a family – he proceeded to approach the Weasley family for permission to court their daughter Ginevra, to see if she might be interested in him at all. Permission was granted, and he asked for permission from her to walk with her. It was an old pureblood custom that he found, and he was determined to prove to her that he was not after her merely for her quite pleasant figure. (I am married and happy, but I am not yet dead. As Hermione has said, "Where's the harm in looking at the menu?")

While not a whirlwind romance, theirs was a beautiful one, and he actually called me one day, dazed. When we pried from him the reason, Harry patted him on the back. Ginevra had kissed him. Not a 'my-goodness-you-have-tonsils-isn't-it-warm-and-aren't-we-overdressed' type of kiss, but a simple one that said that she loves him. He was actually singing.

I actually cried when I overheard Harry say, "Now you know how I feel when I look at your mother."

I cried harder when Draco answered, "Yes I do, Dad."

On the day of their wedding – a beautiful day in August – I gave the new family a wedding present that truly startled them, and drove my son to

happy tears for the only time I can ever remember. (Other than the birth of his children, I mean.) It wasn't much, to be honest. He hadn't been the only one investing, and I had done quite well for myself as well. My present was to give to the new couple a sum of money (and property) equal to what the Malfoy fortune had been at the time that Lucius had me transfer all the property and money to my own name. Since my own investing had been rather lucrative, I only gave them about a third of the money I had available. Their eight children have not wanted for anything, but neither have they been as spoiled as Draco was.

(In regards to children – I think that the rumours of Weasley fertility magic are not, in fact, rumours. Ginevra is currently pregnant with their ninth child, which prompted Draco to say happily, "Not bad for a guy with only half a ball, eh?" I responded by laughing and hugging him tightly. Hermione tried to apologise (again) for being the reason for his state, and he waved it off, saying, "I had to get kicked in the brains I was using at the time to wake up. You did me a favour, Hermione.")

Ronald Weasley, whom I did not know well during my brief tenure as a teacher, having had to leave Potions due to my 'condition', turned out to be just behind Hermione and me in his devotion to Harry. He was seen as something of a buffoon, and while he might have been one during part of his school career, he changed, although permitting the appearance to remain. He went on to become an Auror, and ended up on Harry's personal bodyguard team – the team that guarded Harry, Hermione, and myself.

Given the fortunes available to myself and to Harry (and Hermione, once she started playing with some of her own money), Ron (as I finally learned to call him) was a very well paid man. No one got in to see us unless he or one of the people he trusted to guard us vetted that person. (I have long heard that phrasing, and always wondered what precisely it means. Where it came from, more precisely.) He ended up starting his own bodyguard company, and soon had international status. He also became wealthy in his own right, and was finally out from beneath the shadows of his older brothers and Harry.

The startling thing was who he ended up marrying. My old lover Angelique visited us quite often, and Harry grew to understand why I felt that she was beautiful (once giving her the compliment of an erection due to the particular style of swimwear she had on), but has never stopped saying that both Hermione and I have her 'beat all hollow', in his words. Angelique told me to live with the fact that my husband felt such about me.

Apparently, however, there were times when we were unavailable and she wished to get away from the stuffy old Parkinson Manor. With a dead husband and a disowned daughter, she was the only Parkinson. And she was lonely. Somewhere in their talks, where they both bared their souls, they found that they had fallen in love. Ron said nothing to her, knowing that she could not find him attractive, but he spoke to Harry. She spoke to me of her feelings, knowing that he could never truly love a woman old enough to be his mother. Needless to say, we openly broke the oaths we swore to them never to tell. Thank Merlin they hadn't been magical oaths.

The man I seem to be avoiding in all this is my husband. The next meeting of the Wizengamot led to an interesting situation. He spoke once more, his fervour for the subject of the wizarding world coming through. He wanted the end of favouritism, an end to legalised bigotry, and a few other things. He spoke on the issue, and then we began to discuss who would become our next Minister for Magic.

I think he was the only one startled when his name was mentioned for the position.

By Amelia Bones, no less.

Percival quickly seconded the motion, and I asked for a moment's recess to speak with him. I convinced him that his fervour had shown these people the way, and who better at the wheel than the one with the vision?

He spent his time in office working hard at making the dreams a reality and at making a good try for his school testing. He suffered a bit on the N.E.W.T. for Potions, but considering the fact that he had only two hours of sleep that morning after dealing with an international crisis, his O was considered quite an achievement.

Personally, my thought as to his greatest achievement is involved with turning me from a cold, repressed thing to a vibrant and happy woman. Draco was correct – even today I will find myself humming or dancing for no reason other than I am happy. I've even gone dancing in the rain with him and Hermione. Since we were both 1) sans brassieres, 2) in white blouses, and 3) at our most fertile time of the month, I think that it is no surprise that said dancing had delightful repercussions that I named Angelique and Hermione named Undine.

We have had a large family, and a beautiful one. Perhaps those rumours of Veela in the Black ancestry are true, for all of my children save Draco have been female and blonde. (Or some variation thereof.) All in all, that has been my best accomplishment, I believe. To give the man I love what he so wanted – a life and a family that he can adore.

Perhaps, just perhaps, Sirius, James and Lily will smile down upon me, knowing that I did my best.

My darling wife left this journal out, and when I read the last line so far, I couldn't let it rest. She has failed to mention so many of her own achievements. That fortune she referred to – the one that she gave a third of to Draco – she used one half of the pre-Draco amount to begin a series of orphanages and schools. She, the one-time proponent of Pureblood philosophy, became the administrator of a series of schools designed to bring magic to the children earlier in life. These facilities were placed such that they were about as easy as possible for a Muggleborn student to reach, so that they could practise in safety during the summers.

She fought hard to become the ambassador between the magical and non-magical worlds. She became a Dame on her own merits due to her efforts to destroy bigotry.

She was there the day that a witch finally was able to publicly announce that she had won the James Randi Educational Foundation's one million

dollar prize for proving that not all magic was parlour tricks. (It was Hermione, by the way. Randi loved her methodical scientific mind, and immediately hired her on to help solve the problem of where these magical abilities might come from. When she proved that commuting from England was a minimal hassle, he was overjoyed.)

My wife Narcissa also fails to mention that she was instrumental in getting most of my proposals passed. She fought hard to change the very prejudices that she once espoused, and while we're not finished with our mission by any means, we've already begun to see the changes in the students entering Hogwarts.

Yes, another thing she failed to say. She was rehired as the Potions Professor for a short time after the birth of our first child, until a permanent teacher could be found. Rather than let her go, she was asked if she might take Transfiguration when Professor McGonagall stepped into the position that Professor Dumbledore was vacating. Yeah, the Headmaster finally retired. To her surprise, she was offered the job of Deputy Headmistress. It would normally go to one of the more senior people at the school, but it was decided (and agreed upon) that new blood needed to come into the school's administration. She and Minerva had some amazing fights over things, until Narcissa finally managed to get Minerva to think about the real reasons for fighting a change. If it came down to 'But we've always done it the other way', then it was likely time for a change. (I will admit, as an aside, that it does my heart good to see the male students sit down suddenly when the new Headmistress enters a room. I just use Hermione or Narcissa herself to hide my reaction.)

Narcissa has been a force to be reckoned with in the two worlds. That's another thing she's fought to change. Muggle sounds cute and quaint and more than a little backward and condescending. We're working on finding a better term. We thought about Normals, but that runs the risk of wizards being thought of as something to fear or avoid, which doesn't work well for combining the worlds. We've settled on Mundanes at the moment, but I know that I don't personally like it, because it smacks of boring and meaningless to me. Maybe I'm just thinking too hard about the concept.

The important thing is that Narcissa knows that I wrote in her journal to point out that on that dark day when her soul no longer graces this beautiful blue marble we call Earth, Sirius and Mum and Dad will not be looking down on her and smiling. They will be welcoming her with open arms, and praising her for her life of wonder and accomplishment.

And if by some circumstance she does end up in Hell anyway, she can rest assured that it won't be for long, because Hermione and I will storm the very gates of Hell to be with her. And I promise you that Sirius and Mum and Dad will be with us on that mission.

I am in awe that a woman so ... a woman who turned out to be one of two angels in disguise ... that either one of them could love me.

I can do no more than to return whatever meagre portion of that love to them.

Oh, my darling husband. He charmed the previous entry so that I can't remove it. If I am worth loving – if I am an angel, as he claims, it is because a very sweet man loved me, despite so many reasons he should not. If I have, in fact, earned a place with Sirius and his parents, then it is due to his love, and that of Hermione.

They are my soul mates, my help-meets, my raisons-d'être. (I don't care if that's good French or not.) But most importantly, in all this, they are my friends.

And when the day is done, that is the very best thing of all.