

Kinsfire
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My Father's Image

Chapter 1

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The home at Number four Privet Drive was normal. The lawn was perfectly normally normal, the back garden was perfectly normal, the fence was perfectly normal, the house was perfectly normal. The people who lived there were perfectly normal. All of them were normal except one. In an upstairs bedroom sat a fifteen year old young man with unruly black hair, piercing green eyes, and hand-me-down clothing. He was anything but normal, as far as the owners of the house were concerned. Harry Potter was a wizard.

Harry was spending this summer much as he spent every summer - working himself until deeply tired, eating the small amount of food grudgingly given him by his guardians, and sleeping. Vernon and Petunia Dursley hated anything that wasn't perfectly normal, and Harry definitely fit within that category.

He was in mourning. It had been less than a month since he had been present at the death of his godfather Sirius Black, having been tricked into believing that Sirius had been kidnapped by Voldemort and was being tortured in the Department of Mysteries at the Ministry. Harry and his friends had headed off to save him, finding instead that they had led Voldemort into the place, and Sirius had arrived to save Harry instead. He had fallen through the Veil in the Department, and it had only been Remus Lupin physically restraining Harry that kept Harry from following him. Now Harry sat in the dark and mourned, knowing that Sirius would still be alive if not for him.

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It was finally dark, and he was surprised to find an owl flying toward his window. It was an eagle owl - not one he was familiar with - and when it arrived and dropped his letters, it took off again. He flipped the letters over to see who the sender was, and found the Gringott's seal holding both closed.

Why would they need to contact me once, let alone twice? he asked himself, relieving the birds of their burdens. Picking up one of them, he opened the seal.

Mr. Potter,

I am writing to inform you that, by the terms of the trust set up for you by your parents, you will gain access to the ancestral vaults beginning July 1, 1996. It would likely be in your best interest to take advantage of this as soon as possible.

I may not explain why, as per the terms of the trust, but I believe that your parents felt that there are things stored there that you may wish to see before your birthday on the thirty-first of the month.

Mablung

Goblin Trustee, Potter Trust

July first? That's in two days. Maybe I should write to Dumbledore to see if we can set something up. He tore open the second.

Mr. Potter,

I write to you on behalf of the Estate of Sirius Black. Enclosed please find a letter from the late Mr. Black, as well as legal paperwork he wished to leave in your hands. If you wish not to avail yourself of what it offers, simply destroy only the legal forms, and we will register that here at Gringott's.

I recommend reading the letter from Mr. Black before taking further actions.

Damrod

Goblin Executor, Black Estate

Tears pricked in Harry's eyes. *A letter from Sirius. Wonderful.*

Hey, Pronglet!

I now pause for you to growl at the paper for a moment.

Harry obligingly growled at the letter for a moment, not really annoyed, but knowing that magic had a tendency to insist on things like that.

Okay, that should be enough. Now, this letter was written in June, just before your O.W.L.s started. If you're reading this (which you obviously are), then I ended up proving Dumbledore wrong the hard way. I told him that having Snape teach you so ... well, the only word that really fits is intimate ... so intimate a skill as Occlumency was probably opening your mind up to Ol' Snake Lips. (Do snakes even have lips?)

This means that Voldemort managed to throw something at you that convinced you to go running off to save someone's life. Maybe even mine. Well, since you're reading this, then it means that you're probably blaming yourself for my death.

DONT.

Look at it from my point of view. You're the only connection I really have back to your folks. If Snake-face follows form, he'll try something. Do you really think I could forgive myself if I didn't try to do something about it, and you died? I'd be kicking myself to the afterlife for not coming to your aid. Instead, I'm betting I went running off, and hopefully died heroically, going down in a hail of spells that allowed you to escape with your life.

Maybe I tripped on a loose stone and broke my fool neck.

Either way, you're alive, Harry. That is the most important thing to me, and is worth my life, son.

That brings me to the other paperwork in this packet. You need to get out from underneath Dumbledore's thumb. That paperwork will allow that, and do something that I only wish I could have seen while alive. Harry, if you accept, that paperwork will make you legally my son, which would have happened if Hagrid had given you to me when I asked him.

If you accept, stick your right thumb in the box on the sheet and simply say your full name and "I accept." There will be a painful prick (good description for Snape, no?), and then the paperwork will make you officially a member of the Black family, allowing you to refer to yourself as Harry Black, or Harry Potter-Black.

No matter what, Pronglet, know that I loved you while I walked this earth, and I still do in the hereafter. (Does that make where you are the therebefore?)

Hopefully your adopted father,

Sirius

Harry chuckled slightly as he flipped to the second page, and found a sheet with very little writing and a box large enough for his thumbprint to fit in it. "Harry James Potter. I accept," he said after pressing his thumb onto the sheet. A small stabbing pain happened in his thumb, and then he felt fine.

It was as he was folding the letters up to place somewhere safe that he heard several loud cracks; the sound of cars backfiring out on Privet Drive. *Or Apparation*, he corrected himself. He grabbed the cricket bat he had liberated from Dudley's belongings and stood behind the door.

He could hear the trick step creak and he prepared for the inevitable onslaught. The locks on his door clicked quietly, and the door began to open. Pausing for only he moment, he suddenly threw himself at the door and rolled to the other side of the door frame, since they now would know that someone had been behind the door.

After some muffled cursing, the door flew open with a grumbled curse, and a leg started to enter the room. Harry swung as hard as he could, the edge of the bat catching the leg at knee level and giving a satisfying crack as the bat met the patella. Before the person could react, Harry shot to his feet and brought the flat of that bat to where the person's face should be. It was only as it connected that he realized that he might have just killed Kingsley Shacklebolt, who was falling to the floor with blood flowing from his nose and mouth. He looked up in time to see Tonks firing a spell in his direction, and without thinking, he swung the bat at it, catching what he now recognised to be a *Stupefy* and sending it caroming into the wall.

"Harry!" she hissed. "We're here to get you out of here! Stop fighting!" She cycled her hair through several colours as she spoke, and he relaxed. "Good, you were paying attention. Now get your stuff and we're getting out of here."

"I need to pack first," he said. "What happened? Why wasn't I notified first?"

"The wards just went away a minute ago. We were sent to collect you."

"Just let me finish packing my things up, then. Same place as last year?"

"Yes. How much do you have to pack?"

"Not much. I tend to leave it in my trunk so that my nosy aunt won't find things all over the place for Vernon to bitch about." While he finished shoving things in his trunk, she knelt by Kingsley and laughed a moment later. "He'll be fine, if talking a bit funny for a while. Broke his nose again and took out a couple teeth. Good reflexes, Harry."

"I just hope he forgives me."

"He will. He understands the situation. Besides, we get to tease him mercilessly now."

"Still, I feel bad about it."

She stopped him, spun him around and grabbed his shoulders. "Harry, if he'd been a Death Eater, you'd be fighting another one now. Given the way you deflected that *Stupefy*, I'd say that you'd do pretty good against them. He'll make a complete recovery and have learned not to underestimate you again."

"If you say so," Harry murmured. He finished his packing, including clearing out the space under the loose board and turned back to Tonks. "Well, I'm as ready as I'll ever be. Shall we?" She nodded and pulled out a sheet of crumpled parchment. They walked to Kingsley and placed his hand on the portkey as Tonks activated it.

One nauseating navel-pulling sensation later, Harry found himself in the entryway of Number 12 Grimmauld Place. Most of the Order members were there awaiting their arrival, and Molly immediately flew into a tizzy as she saw Kingsley on the floor. "Oh my! We were right, there was a Death Eater attack, wasn't there?"

Tonks' braying laugh split the air. "We Order members were the only ones there at the time we left. Shack's injuries are courtesy a quick thinking Harry Potter."

Poppy Pomfrey looked up. "Broken nose, broken teeth, and he's going to be unhappy with that knee for a while. What did you do to him?" came the sharp question.

"Cricket bat," Harry said, hanging his head. "I hit him on the knee with the edge of the bat, and used the flat to strike his face."

"And parry a *Stupefy*, I might add," Tonks said with some pride in her voice.

Poppy set to carrying Kingsley upstairs. "Just cast a bone-breaking curse next time," she muttered, obviously unaware that Harry could hear her. "You'll do less damage to him." She disappeared from sight.

"Wonderful," Harry said. "Now I've got the nurse who works on me at school thinking I'm a violent psychotic." He turned to face Albus Dumbledore. "Sir, what happened?"

"That is what we would like to ascertain," the Headmaster said. "We had just finished today's Order meeting when I registered that the protective wards around your aunt's house had faltered."

"How much time before you sent people had the wards gone down?" Harry asked.

"No more than two minutes."

"I received some mail from Gringott's tonight. First was something I need to talk to you about in a little while, but the other was from Sirius. One of the things in that letter was a form for adoption. He would have adopted me as his own, so I decided to go with his last wish. I would have liked a father, and he wanted to be mine. I put my right thumb in the box on the sheet, said my full name and said that I accepted. There was a pinprick, and then nothing. A couple minutes later, they started to appear," he said, pointing his thumb at Tonks. "That's when I tried to kill one of my protectors." He scowled deeply. "I have a habit of doing that, don't I?"

Tonks described the situation that had happened from her point of view. "Harry was doing everything right," she said. "If it had been me in the lead, then I'd be upstairs getting healed and planning to kiss Harry when my nose and mouth were back in working order."

"For trying to kill you?" he asked incredulously.

"For learning your lessons properly. You were protecting yourself, Harry, and I'll bet you ten Galleons that Kingsley will tell you the same thing when he wakes up."

"Maybe after he hexes me unconscious," Harry said dubiously.

"It's a bet, then?" she asked, sticking her hand out.

He clasped it and said, "Sure. Why not?"

Dumbledore cleared his throat. "It appears that this was a far better destination than we first had thought, given what you have just told us. You have the protections of the Black household covering you now. What was it about the first letter that you wished to talk with me about?"

"My parents gave me access to the Potter family vaults one month before my sixteenth birthday. It was suggested by the Goblin Trustee of the Potter Trust that I should probably take advantage of it as soon as possible."

Dumbledore winced. "That is perhaps a bad idea. Ever since the Department of Mysteries situation, both the Death Eaters and our own side are on high alert, as it were. Anyone with leanings toward Voldemort's side would jump at the chance to do damage to you. We simply can not afford the drain on our forces to guard you during your trip."

"My parents felt that there were things in that vault that I might wish to know about *before* my birthday, sir. I'd imagine that I would be the only one allowed access. How do I get at those things?"

Dumbledore developed a full frown. "If my suspicions are correct, Harry, then there are things that you would do well not to have access to until after you have defeated Voldemort. I cannot help but think that they would do damage, or at least disturb you."

Harry scowled deeply. "So keeping me ignorant is far better? Shouldn't it be my decision as to whether or not I should be disturbed? I stand a chance to know my family far better than ever before."

"I am sorry, Harry. We simply cannot afford to split our forces to guard you on your trip to Diagon Alley. I must forbid it at this time."

"Very well, sir," Harry capitulated. As he turned to take his trunk upstairs, he said, "I knew I should have gotten a time limit on that full disclosure promise from him. He'll probably hold it over me until Voldemort is dead, and then possibly allow me access." It was said in a voice that he knew would carry to the headmaster, although it sounded as if he was speaking to himself.

Up in the room he knew he would be sharing with Ron when the Weasleys arrived to take over the house, he sat heavily on the bed. *Okay, he's*

He looked at her quite seriously. "What if I want you to be Tonks?"

Her eyes widened for a moment before she broke out in a large grin. Before she could say anything, however, she scowled. "Dammit, they're calling me into the office for some reason, and I'm the only one to keep an eye on you today, Harry. No one else is scheduled to be here until 8 o'clock. Can I get you to promise me that you won't leave the house?"

"For you, Tonks, I'll agree. No leaving the house. I may explore the place, but I won't go anywhere this house's corridors don't lead."

"Weird phrasing," she said, quirked an eyebrow.

"Old house. Might find a secret passage between rooms, unless you tell me there are none." She shrugged. "I want to be able to explore them. Carefully," he added quickly as she opened her mouth to speak.

She blushed. "Okay. I'll see you on the third or fourth I expect. Not on the schedule again for a few days, and I do have a life, you know," she finished, flipping her hair at the end of her statement.

He chuckled. "Enjoy your dates."

"I wish," she replied simply.

"Well, their loss," he replied with a shrug. She looked at his face and realised that he truly felt that way. She kissed his cheek again and grinned before flouncing out of the room, making sure that the short skirt she wore flipped dangerously, as if promising a view of her knickers. A moment later he heard a crack and realised that he was alone in the house.

He went back to the candelabra and moved it, causing the armoire to shift again, and he realised that his first impression was wrong. It was closer to two feet that the armoire slid, and he stepped into the space behind it. A torch immediately burst to life, and as he pulled it from the sconce, the armoire slid back to its original position. He was curious, so he replaced the torch, and the armoire moved outward. Grinning, he pulled the torch again and began to walk down the exposed corridor. A very short distance away, there was a short stairway leading up on his right side, and a scrawled note carved into the wall - 'bedroom'. He took the stairs and found himself in the master bedroom, coming out from behind a tapestry. Nodding, he turned around and headed back down to the corridor he had found.

He hadn't walked very far when he felt an odd disconnect and saw the corridor come to an end. He put the torch into the empty sconce and the wall moved slightly. He found himself in the London Underground, at the stop closest to Diagon Alley.

"Oh, this will be *perfect!*" he murmured to himself. "I know how to escape tomorrow. And I'll deal with the resulting guilt trip from Dumbledore later on." He turned around and saw an old style wall torch out of place. Suspecting he had found the trigger on this end, he righted the torch, and the wall closed. Nodding after proving himself right, he set it askew once more and headed back to 12 Grimmauld Place the way he had come.

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The next morning came quietly, and Harry rose early, as he always did. He dressed and headed downstairs to find Bill Weasley sitting at the kitchen table sharing a cup of coffee with Alastor Moody. "Morning, Potter," the gruff old ex-Auror said.

"Mornin' sir," Harry mumbled, still feeling a bit tired. "Any more of that coffee available?"

"Didn't know you drank it, Harry," Bill chuckled.

"Need to wake up, and it's safer than fighting a Hungarian Horntail, and I'm in a position to know, as far as the dragon is concerned."

"Never had a cup of Weasley's coffee then, have you?" Moody laughed as he stood. "Well, my replacement is here, and I need to get some sleep sometime this month, so I'm off. See you later, Weasley, Potter." With that the grizzled Auror left the room, and a crack sounded a few seconds later.

Bill looked at Harry for a moment before saying, "So, what's the story we're going to use today when you head out to Gringott's?" He had waited for Harry to have a mouthful of coffee before he asked the question, and Harry responded with a fine spray of the rich black fluid. "Gotcha!" the eldest Weasley laughed.

"I take it denying would be useless?" Harry asked, coughing.

"Except as practice," Bill responded. "Seriously, I know something about what's happening today, since I work for Gringott's, and I really think you should be there. There are things you need to know, and some things you should have been told long ago."

"Typical," Harry grumbled.

"I'd tell you, but I'd stand an excellent chance of no longer having a job if I did. I rather enjoy my job, so ..."

"Say no more," Harry said. "Why are you helping me, not that I'm complaining about the help?"

"Because we're developing three factions - well, four - in this war. Voldemort's side, Dumbledore and the Order's side, and your side. The fourth is those who support the Ministry's take on this, like that great prat of a brother of mine."

"He Who REALLY Should Not Be Named?" Harry asked with a laugh.

Precisely. Well, in answer to your question, all the Weasley children are in your camp. I think Dad would be too, push come to shove, but with Mum in Dumbledore's camp, it's easier to keep things quiet and support her. I don't think I have to tell you where Percy's loyalties lie."

"He is rather obvious about it, isn't he?" Harry said with a scowl.

"Exactly. We do have a few people in the Order who support you, such as Moody. He knows full well that I'm going to try to cover for you today while you visit the goblins. We don't know what you'll find there, but I'm pretty sure you need to know it. I do know why the wards dropped, but if you walk into Gringott's knowing that, I'm out of a job. I'm just surprised that Dumbledore hasn't figured it out yet."

Bill scowled. "A warning for you, Harry. When you find out what you're going to today, word will eventually get to Dumbledore. He won't be happy, and you'd best be prepared for a guilt trip of epic proportions."

"Because I didn't wait for him to decide it was time to tell me, right?"

"In the long run, yes. That won't be his excuse, however. What kind of disguise were you going to use?"

"Completely Muggle. Figured I'd buy a hat on the way there - baseball cap or some such to over my forehead. They'll look at me sideways in the Alley, but I'm used to that by now. But since everyone looks for the scar, if they can't see it, then they'll not pay much attention, will they?"

"I assume you have a plan for getting there?"

"Yes, but I won't tell you, because Dumbledore can't rip out of your mind what you don't know."

"I'd like to tell you he wouldn't do that, but ..." Bill shrugged. "Well, the faster you get moving, the faster you'll be back here, and the less likely that you'll be caught."

"Good idea. I'll grab a muffin or something and take off."

"Anywhere I should stay away from?"

"Hmm, stay away from the master bedroom, I'd say. No real reason, mind you, what with that window and all -" Harry grinned at him.

"Gotcha. How about I finish up what you were working on yesterday, up where our hippogriff friend roomed? He's back at Hogwarts, by the way." At Harry's nod, they both stood and left the table, Harry grabbing the muffin that he said he would.

A short time later he entered the master bedroom and stepped behind the tapestry. He placed his hand against the wall in the pitch blackness and began to carefully descend until he reached the bottom of those stairs. *Wonder why there's no way of lighting the place from there?* He made the left and walked until he reached the armoire, and then felt for the torch. The moment he pulled it from the sconce, it burst to life.

He was soon leaving the station, and had discovered that he'd have to pay if he chose to take a train from the station; the exit from the corridor was on the street side of the station - he'd have a turnstile to pass through to catch a train.

He stopped for a moment as he reached the street, checking his money and finding he should have enough for a simple hat. He had more than enough Galleons, but he doubted that many Muggle shopkeepers would accept them. He purchased a simple floppy hat that one might wear to the beach and then headed for Diagon Alley.

He was remarkably unrecognised as he walked the street, although he was rather interested by the looks of disgust he got from some people - it was obvious where their sentiments were on the pureblood issue. He was quickly at the bank and looked for help from a goblin. "Excuse me, sir, but I need to speak with Mablung and Damrod? I received letters from them?"

The goblin looked at him for a long moment before saying, "Ah yes. Mister Potter. Come with me, please." He was led to a large board room and told to take a seat, and the goblin left immediately after he had seated himself. A few moments later, two other goblins entered the room, each carrying stacks of papers.

"Mister Potter, I am Damrod, and my companion is Mablung. We appreciate the speed with which you responded to your letters. Now, let us get down to business. Since my business with you is short for the time being, I will go first?" he said, looking to Mablung, who gave a curt nod. He set the stack of papers before Harry and said, "These are forms that must be signed to properly take control of the Black family, being that you are the sole heir to the prior Lord Black."

"Lord Black? Who was that?"

"Ah, he did not choose to exercise it. It was Sirius Black. He was, in fact, a Baron by rights in the Muggle realm, but it has easily been three to four hundred years since a wizard Baron has taken up his rightful seat within the Muggle world. Be that as it may be, you will not be receiving the entirety of his bequests until your sixteenth birthday, when he believed that you would be emancipated. What he was unaware of is the fact that the moment you accepted his adoption, you by law became an adult in order to perform the necessary duties of a Head of a noble Household. This happens to any child age fourteen or older when they are the sole remaining heir to a family."

Harry blinked at Damrod for a moment before looking to the papers before him. He scanned them quickly, finding most of them to be housekeeping details for the transfer of power. He quickly signed them and slid them to Damrod, who nodded and said, "I look forward to completing my business with you on the thirty-first, Lord Black," before leaving the room.

"Such should have happened prior to the Tri-Wizard Tournament, but your wizarding guardian saw fit to not inform you of your status with regards to the Potter Trust," the remaining goblin said. "Otherwise, you would have legally become an adult at age fourteen, in order to properly run the Potter

family line, being the oldest of the direct line."

"Let me guess - my wizarding guardian is Albus Dumbledore?" At the goblin's nod, he added simply, "Figures."

"Given that you are now an adult, the entirety of the Trust goes to you. The letter that I wrote to you did not take into account the actions in regards to your status with the Black accounts. If you would sign these, I will turn the entirety of the Potter Trust over to you, and will take you to your family's vault. I will remain with you, since I am aware of one thing that I am Oath-bound not to tell a human soul, but that regards you."

"More secrets," Harry grumbled. "Another Dumbledore-ism?"

"Actually, no. This is a stricture placed upon me by the nature of the information. You are not the only wizard or witch that this affects, but the information is quite similar. You will understand once we have the chance to go to your family vault."

"Very well." Harry quickly read and signed the stack before him and then stood. "Shall we?"

In short order they were far deeper into the caverns below London than Harry had ever been before. They stopped before a vault numbered 37. "Yours is one of the oldest wizarding families in the world, Mister Potter. An unbroken line can be traced back to before the time of Merlin. In fact, I believe that you will find a tapestry in the vault that details the trail." The goblin climbed from the cart and walked to the door. "Place your hand within the circle, please."

Harry looked and saw a fairly obvious silver circle on the door and placed his hand within it. A light flared for a very long moment before a clicking noise could be heard, and the door developed a seam. He heard the goblin murmur, "Odd," but thought nothing of it as the doors started to swing open. For something so large, the doors moved surprisingly quietly and easily. As they opened, Harry gasped.

Inside was more than Harry ever expected to see. Other than piles of Galleons, Sickles and Knuts that dwarfed his imagination, there were a huge number of other things stored within. One area seemed to have enough furniture to comfortably equip all four Houses at Hogwarts from top to bottom, while another seemed to have armor and weapons. Books, crates of papers, and other things filled the room. As he looked about the room, he felt a tap on his shoulder, and turned to face a woman the spitting image of his dead mother. She looked odd however, as if carved out of stone. As he faced her, she gasped. "James?"

"No, I'm Harry. Who are you? How did you get down here?"

"I'm a statue. I've been here for years now. I'm a copy, if you will, of Lily Potter, your mother." 'Lily' stopped. "I have no idea how I should react around you. I was made before you were even conceived, so it's difficult to think of you as my son, even though I know you are. Especially since you look just like James." She held up an envelope to him. "The real Lily wrote this letter for you while she was pregnant with you. I've read it, as I've read a number of other things in this vault. Please pay attention to what she said, Harry."

Harry,

If you're reading this, then what we all feared happened - we didn't survive until you were an adult. I'm hoping we had at least a few years together to know you. If it has just recently happened and you're at least fourteen years old, then be prepared to be the head of the Potter line, of which you are now the last one. If you're under fourteen, you'll be living with Sirius until you turn fourteen, and he'll be teaching you how to be a Lord of a family, especially since he's already made you his heir as well. (He hates his family for reasons you'll someday learn, if you don't know already.)

There are a lot of things I want to say to you, and luckily I can, in a way. The statue that handed you this letter is me at age seventeen, just after I graduated and before I became Mrs. James Potter. In a process that the sculptor may well take to his grave, he figured out how to copy more than the echo that a portrait has, so that statue is, for all intents and purposes, me - for good or ill.

In this vault you will find weapons that have been in the family for years, books to help you learn, and journals that your father and I wrote. My journals run from the point of my entering Hogwarts until just after your conception. There were interesting problems involved in your birth, and I ask that you please keep an open mind when you read the journals. I do not as of this letter know what caused things to be that way - if I did, I would say now. (I'm sorry for being cryptic, but it's necessary.)

I have never read your father's journals, so he may have interesting things to say to you as well. We love you Harry - never doubt that - and it is imperative that you remember that always.

When you finish this letter, ask her to show you the jewelry box. There are two rings there that you simply must have. One of them is the Potter ring. The other is your passage to another vault in Gringott's. The goblins know which one. As for how that ring came to be in my possession? Let's just say that the rules for what constitutes a Muggleborn are a bit easy to activate. My great-great-grandmother was a witch and her husband a wizard, but the three generations that followed were Squibs. (Wouldn't that drive my sister batty?) As far as the purebloods are concerned, the second straight generation of Squibs are Muggles.

Be that as it may be, if you so desire, the statue can be with you, since it is able to walk under its own power. As you also have undoubtedly learned, it can also speak. In all ways that count, she's me at seventeen. See her as a big sister, if you will. Or not - it depends on how she reacts to you.

There is so much I want to tell you, my beloved son, but I simply can't for so many reasons - either I don't know the information, or I simply cannot find the words, and for that I weep. I know that you've lost us and mourn for us, but don't forget to live your own life. We will meet again in the next great adventure, as Albus calls it. (Of course there's existence after death - Sir Nicholas proves that!)

With more love than I could ever put into a simple letter, even with all the charms in the world,

Lily Potter

He blinked at the letter, realising that there were tears in his eyes. He gently folded it and placed it in a pocket before looking up at the statue. "What should I call you? Lily? Or did you have a middle name that would work better? Or should I call you Mum?"

"I think I'd prefer Lily. Physically and mentally I'm about your age." She paused. "May I come with you? I haven't been awake all the time I've been in here, but now that I *am* awake, I'd prefer to wait a while before going back to sleep."

"I can agree to that. It would be nice to get to know at least one of you, since you are my mother in a way." He stopped for a moment. "Can I use any more weasel words in that sentence?" he finished with a chuckle.

"Only if you intend to go into politics," she replied with a laugh of her own. "Now let's get you what you're going to take out of here and get out of this vault. I'm bored."

"What would you recommend I take out with me?"

"Other than me?" she asked. "The journals, the family rings, and a few of the more interesting items in here." She grabbed a chest and hoisted it easily. He watched the faux muscles ripple as she did so, marvelling at the work that the sculptor had put into this statue. He also finally realised that the statue was completely and utterly unclothed. He peeled off the sweatshirt he'd put on and threw it at her.

"Put this on," he said in a strangled voice. She looked at him, shrugged (which distracted him further) and put the clothing on. This only worsened his blood flow problems, since it fell to slightly above the curve of her shapely derriere. "Oh dear lord," he breathed. "This is my mother I'm reacting to. Oh God ..."

She nodded. "Ah. Just a moment." She walked to a cabinet and pulled out a robe, stripped back out of the sweatshirt and put on the robe. "Thank you for the compliment, by the way." She turned back to the chest she had lifted and opened it. "Hmm, gems. No good. Need another one." She opened a few more before she smiled. "Ah, books! I can empty this and we can place everything in here." She emptied the books from the chest and began to put the journals within, followed by a small chest. "Men's jewelry," she said to his questioning look. She walked to the wall and pulled down a chain mail shirt and a dark silvery robe, paused, and pulled down another silvery robe. She quickly replaced the one she was wearing with the second robe she'd grabbed. "Armor," she said simply. She grabbed a few more things, including two swords, and slipped them into the chest. "That should do for now. Oh, forgot. Boots. Come here Harry."

He came over to where she was and goggled at what had to be fifty pairs of boots. "Dragon-hide," she said. "Comfortable and auto-fitting. Grab a pair you like and put them on. While you're at it, open the chest back up and put on that armor I grabbed for you. That stuff will stop even a medium calibre bullet from point-blank range. The chain mail alone will stop a low calibre bullet, same range."

As he took off his shirt again, he found himself being looked at by Lily, and a little disconcerted by her look of hunger. The chain mail shirt was surprisingly light, and glowed oddly in the light within the vault. He slipped the robe on over everything and grinned. "Pity I'll have to take this off when we leave the Alley."

"Got your wand with you?" He nodded. "Tap my robe and think of appropriate Muggle clothing." He did so, and found himself looking at a very beautiful woman in a pleasantly form-fitting summer-weight sun dress. "They still protect from head to toe, but look proper for the area."

"Shall we?" he choked out.

"Not before you claim the two rings, Harry. First is the Potter ring, which you should wear at all times." He picked up the ring she pointed at and slid it onto his index finger on his right hand. It was a bit loose, and he realised he'd probably have to resize it. Suddenly there was a flare, and it fit perfectly. "Now the other ring. You need to decide if you wish to wear it publicly, Harry, because there are a lot of things that it says, and things that might be expected of you." He picked it up and stared at the insignia. It was very familiar - his girlfriend from last year wore it on her robes.

"I'm a descendent of Rowena Ravenclaw?" he asked incredulously.

"Yes. It only passes to the males in that family, so you're the first in five hundred years to be able to open Vault number 2. My great-great-grandfather, whom it passes through, simply didn't know until it was too late to claim it - he was too close to death at that point, I understand. I would have liked to have seen what's in there, but I'm missing certain equipment."

He snorted. "For which Dad was eternally grateful, I'm sure."

"He certainly seemed to appreciate the assets I did have," she replied cheekily, thrusting out her chest.

Harry swallowed noisily. "Shall we check out Vault 2?" he asked in a blatant attempt to change the subject.

"Let's," she replied with a laugh. She grabbed the now-full chest, walked to the door of the vault and said, "You might want to put the ring on, even if you don't publicly claim the title. That ring will be the entry into the vault." He nodded and slid it onto his right ring finger, where it immediately resized itself.

At the edge of the cart, Harry held out his hand to help Lily into the cart, when she took his hand, he was surprised to feel not marble, but warm flesh. Noticing Harry's stunned expression, she said, "My sculptor was a genius. Let's leave it at that." He nodded numbly, lowered her into the cart, noting that her weight seemed that of a normal human and not that of a being of solid marble, and then climbed in himself. He didn't even notice the short ride to the first four vaults.

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My Father's Image

Chapter 2

Chapter 2

Lily had to nudge Harry to make him realise that they had reached the first four vaults. "Harry? We're there."

He shook his head and looked up. "Sorry. Wool-gathering."

"S'okay," she smiled. "Let's get you a look at the vault, shall we?" She climbed from the cart, making Harry uncomfortable again as he watched the sun dress follow the curve of her shapely rear end. Once out, she turned around and pulled Harry from the car easily, setting him down next to her. "It's okay to look, Harry," she said softly. "After all, I'm *not* your mother, and never will be. I'm just a statue that can walk and talk."

"I know, but it's also a statue of my mother at my age, roughly. To be blunt," he said, face blazing, "you're hot ... uh, you're extremely attractive."

She laughed. "Thank you. Now, I think it's time you claim your inheritance." He nodded and turned to the vaults. There were small doors, roughly the size of a door into a house, each with the symbol of the Hogwarts House named for a Founder. On a whim, he looked at the Slytherin vault and said "*Hello*" in Parseltongue.

The door clicked, and a circle much like the one on his family vault began to glow. "By the teeth of Torak the Terrible!" Mablung exclaimed. "Mister Potter, would you place your hand on the circle? I will ensure that it does not cause undue damage, but I have never seen such a thing in my lifetime!"

"What is it?"

"You should not have been able to get that door to even respond, because Tom Marvolo Riddle was the last heir of the House of Slytherin."

"What do you mean that you won't allow undue harm to come to me?"

"Molesting these vaults often carries a death penalty, carried out by the vault itself."

Unbidden, an image came to Harry's mind that had nothing to do with opening the vault, brought on by the use of the word 'molesting'. He snorted his held back laughter, and Lily followed him a moment later with a giggle. "Eww?" she asked. Harry simply nodded with a grin.

Shaking his head, he walked to the door and placed his hand on the circle, where it drew flat as if magnetised there.

Who are you? came a voice in Parseltongue.

"Harry James Potter," he responded in English, his name not translating.

How come you to this Vault?

I was sent here for another Vault, and spoke Parseltongue to this door on a whim. No disrespect was intended, nor was theft.

You both are and are not the Heir to Salazar Slytherin. Explain.

I was touched by the last Heir to Slytherin fifteen years ago. He passed things along to me he never intended, such as my Parseltongue.

That gift is yours, not a transference. Does the last Heir still exist?

Not in the form he once was. He has returned to a body through vile dark magic.

"He worships the Dark?" the door asked, suddenly in English.

"I suppose so." Harry shrugged. "He's certainly not what you could call a Light wizard."

"Then he no longer qualifies. You are truly the last heir to Slytherin, then. Enter freely." With that exchange, the door opened to show a small room, containing a simple podium with five large books upon it, and a parchment. Also, the ring that went with this vault materialised on Harry's right hand middle finger. Through his shock, he noted absently that the three rings seemed not to bother each other as they touched. He expected that they would have been uncomfortable on his hand. He picked up the parchment.

May these serve you well. They are enchanted to shrink at my Heir's command. They will return to this vault when the Heir's male descent fails

Salazar Slytherin

"Holy shit," he breathed. "Workbooks and his journal." He touched the emblem on each book and shrank them, placing the far more manageable books in his pockets, and then turning back to the door with a stunned look on his face.

"Damn. I need to do some serious rethinking about Slytherins now." He almost staggered to the second vault. Placing the ring face upon the circle, he stated his name. There was no conversation this time, merely a glow that preceded his entry into that vault. Again was a podium with

books and a note. There was also a dagger in a sheath next to the books.

Greetings, my descendent!

I hope that you find my books intriguing. My journal is merely a history of the school that we four founded. The others are my spell research and Potions research notebooks. I am particularly proud of my research notes. I hope they will serve you well in your efforts.

The dagger is charmed to return when you call it. Also, if you throw and miss, it will return instantly to the sheath. It will also serve you well as a backup wand.

Rowena Ravenclaw

He touched the raven emblem on each of them, almost caressing it, and each book shrank to manageable size. He picked up the dagger and carefully examined the sheath before realising that it was intended to be worn on the arm. He strapped it onto his left arm and felt the bindings seem to disappear, leaving nothing but the sheath and dagger. He pulled the dagger out and experimentally said, "*Lumos*." A bright beam shot from the end of the dagger, illuminating the wall. "Cool!" He turned to Mablung. "Is there any way of finding out who the other two Heirs are? Given the times, it would probably be a very good idea if we at least tried to work together to pool what knowledge the Founders had."

"I can request such information above. You are likely not to be privy to such, mind you."

"If it's not me, then I shouldn't be," he smiled. "Shall we return to the surface?" As he climbed in and then helped lower Lily into the cart, he grimaced. "Damn. I forgot to grab some money for the year."

"We can deal with that on the surface, Master Potter. With what you have at your command now, it would be best if we supplied you with certain tools, such as what some have called our Ever Full Money Pouch, and a wonderful Muggle invention called a credit card. It will actually work by debiting your account for the money, so it is more properly called a debit card. This would work well for your dealings within the Muggle world."

"Works for me. You understand money better than I do, so I'll trust you to do right by me."

The cart was silent except for the noise of their return travel. Finally, Mablung spoke again. "How precisely do you mean that, Master Potter?"

"Simple. This is a business. You deal with money far more than I ever will - your experience would dwarf mine even if I lived to be as old as Griselda Marchbanks and did nothing but study economics during that time. You know all the ways to make money, and I'd imagine you have investing schemes that work quite well for you. In fact, if I'm not breaking some taboo by doing so, I think I'd like to see if your people are willing to do my investing for me. I may have more money than I know what to do with right now, but I'm also sure I can come up with things to do with it, so knowing that it's being invested right will be good."

"We could rob you blind."

"You wouldn't - at least, not in such a way as to be obvious. You'd make more money holding my money and investing it than you would by stealing it and being forced to play games with moving it."

Mablung looked at him for long enough that Harry felt uncomfortable. "I'm sorry, sir," he said. "I obviously have just done something offensive, and if possible, I'd like to try to make amends."

"If being the first wizard in my lifetime to treat a goblin as an equal is an insult, then feel free to insult us in a similar fashion again. I apologise for making you feel that you had wronged us. I was simply stunned, quite honestly. You are a refreshing change. Are there more like you?"

He laughed. "Well, my best friend Hermione feels the same, but her methods leave something to be desired."

"Ah, Miss Granger, of house elf fame. Or infamy, as far as the elves are concerned."

"She means well. I think she needs a little help learning how to achieve her aims, though."

"Indeed," replied Mablung in a dry voice that Harry was now certain was hiding laughter.

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Back at the surface, Harry finally got a chance to see Lily in normal light, and realised that while she felt human, she looked marble. "Hmm, how to hide you without drawing attention to the fact that we're hiding you..."

She looked down. "Oh. Give me a moment." A few seconds later, a wave of colour flowed across her skin, and she looked as if she had been in the tropics for several months. Her hair was as black as his own. "My original is dead, so I think that walking around looking exactly like her would be a bad idea at best. At least this way people can think I look familiar, but not know why."

He nodded, once more impressed with the unknown sculptor. They were led to the counter and an unused station, where Mablung quickly delivered to Harry the promised card and pouch. "I look forward to working with you and Damrod both someday, Mablung," he said, bowing low before the goblin.

"As do I, my friend. As do I." Mablung bowed as well, and then disappeared through a door behind the counter. He returned a moment later with a piece of parchment. "Normally we would not do this, but you happen to know both people. Use it well, and do not break our faith in you."

Harry nodded and then headed to the entrance to Gringott's, changing his robes into something more Muggle before they had reached the doors.

He transformed the hat into something just as covering, but nowhere as ugly, and then they stepped out into the sunlight.

"Shall we go shopping in London before we head back to my place?" he asked.

"Working quick, aren't we?" she asked with a purr.

His response was to imitate a goldfish for a long moment, before she began to giggle. "I'm sorry," she said, "but your phrasing was just too good an opportunity to pass up. Seriously, I think we should. I'm going to need some clothes."

"You have an idea as to where to shop, so I'll trust you."

"Well, London has probably changed in the almost twenty years since I was there last."

"Doesn't matter. You have an idea, which is more than I do. Never been shopping in my life in Muggle London." They were quickly through the Alley and standing on the Muggle streets outside The Leaky Cauldron.

"Sirius never took you shopping out here?" she asked with a smile. "You stayed in the wizarding world?"

"Never met Sirius until the end of my third year at Hogwarts, after he'd escaped Azkaban."

"What ... how ..."

"Long story short," Harry said tersely. "You and Dad went into hiding under the *Fidelius* Charm, with Sirius supposedly your secret keeper."

"That's stupid! Everyone would know that we'd choose him! He'd be grabbed and tortured for the information so fast your head would spin!"

"Yup. You didn't choose Remus because he's a dark creature, and there was obviously a traitor in the midst of the people you were dealing with, so the dark creature was under suspicion the most."

She paused. "So he was a rat in more ways than one," she finally growled. "And he framed Sirius for something."

"Yeah. Your murders and the murder of himself and thirteen Muggles. Got a posthumous Order of Merlin for being a hero against the evil Sirius Black."

"So if you weren't with Sirius, where were you living?"

"Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon took ..." He didn't get any further than that before she spun, wide-eyed.

"Who was the mental midget who made *that* decision?"

"Albus Dumbledore," Harry said simply.

"Please tell me that he's still alive. I want the honour of feeding him his testicles for subjecting you to years of those ... those things!"

"Well, he was two days ago, so I doubt that it's changed much since then. I'd have seen mourning banners all over the place if he had." He looked up. "Well, this place looks like it sells clothes form men and women. What say we step inside?"

"May I help you?" a young woman asked as soon as they had stepped inside.

"Yes," Lily said, taking charge. "We need to get a pretty complete set of clothes while we wait for the airline to find our luggage. Our luggage apparently decided to visit Burma on the way back from Holland."

"Been there, honey," came the response. "I think my suitcase is still in Hawaii." In short order the two of them were leaving the store carrying multiple bags.

"Time for the Underground," Harry said and headed for the nearest station. "You're a good liar, by the way." She merely smiled and shrugged. This distracted Harry for a moment.

As they approached the wall, Lily said, "Harry? The entry is this way." She pointed toward the turnstiles.

"Yes, to the train. I'm going elsewhere." He reached up and moved the sconce, and the wall opened.

"Cool! A Notice-Me-Not charm!" she squealed. "Where does this lead?"

"Sirius's place," he said sadly. "Well, mine now, I assume."

"He's dead?" she asked softly as they entered the corridor.

"Yeah. Voldemort tricked me into trying to save Sirius, which led Sirius to try to save me. His cousin killed him."

"I always thought Bella was insane."

"How'd you know it was her?"

Well, it could be Bella, Cissy, or Rom. Rom was disowned for not marrying a pureblood, and Cissy was ..." Lily paused. "Cissy wouldn't do that, let's just say that, okay? That leaves the already crazy one, who always said she was willing to kill for pureblood superiority."

"And yet she blindly follows a half-blood," he said, shaking his head. "Voldemort's father was a Muggle."

Lily snorted. "Figures."

"I won't ask," Harry said.

"Couldn't properly explain it anyway. Just doesn't surprise me is all," They walked for a moment before she said, "Um, Harry, do you know that there's a portal up ahead?"

"That would probably explain the disconnect I feel walking down this hallway. Hold on to me if you're worried about being separated from me." He started slightly as her hand slid into his, interlocking their fingers. They hit the disconnect and Lily relaxed, and a few moments later they were at the sconce behind the armoire.

#####

They stepped into the hallway and were met by Bill almost immediately. "Dumbledore came by - a bit of a surprise, honestly - and he's mobilised the troops to locate you. Expect a lecture." Only after he had finished did he notice Lily. "Um, Harry?"

"Long story that I'll tell you, but I'm not sure who else. Let me introduce you to Lily."

"Pleased to meet you, Lily. Harry certainly knows how to find beautiful girls. I'm Bill Weasley." He bowed over her hand as if to kiss it.

"Thank you, good sir. I'm pleased to make your acquaintance." She curtsied in response.

"Well, into the fray," Harry said. "What part, if any, did you admit to?"

"I was in the third floor room, cleaning. It never really got any further. If you want me to come clean, I will."

"No. I'm taking responsibility for this, Bill. And let them deal with it as they will."

"Mind if I watch?" Bill chuckled.

Harry laughed quietly as he headed downstairs, Lily on his arm. At the bottom of the stairs he turned and found himself facing Severus Snape.

"Potter, of all the unbelievably immature and stupid things for you to do, this goes beyond the pale!" the pale Potions Master yelled. "This bit of idiocy surpasses getting that mangy mutt of a godfather of yours killed!" He stalked over and grabbed Harry's arm and began to drag him toward the drawing room.

Harry dug in his heels and said softly, "I'd appreciate your releasing my arm, Professor." He was seething inside.

"I don't care what a spoiled brat too stupid to understand what the concept of secrecy appreciates! You are going to explain yourself to the headmaster." Snape began to drag Harry toward the room.

Harry shook his left arm and felt the dagger fall into his hand. Repositioning it quickly, he set the blade against Severus's wrist. "Now, I have requested that you release my arm, phrased as a statement. Now I am stating that you will release my arm or lose the hand. You can either have it cut off or blasted off if you choose not to voluntarily release me."

Snape looked down at the blade and took the intelligent route of releasing Harry's arm, although with a deep sneer. "Have it your way, Potter. I'll have you dealt with for threatening me with a knife."

"It was no threat, sir. Had you not released me, you would be minus a hand. Now, I believe you said that the headmaster would like to see me?"

"Actually he said that you would explain yourself to him," Bill said helpfully.

"Perhaps he should come out here then, since I seriously doubt that anyone is likely to allow me in to see him with my lady friend, and you're a little trigger happy with your spells when you know you can do some damage. I'd prefer that you not pull a Lockhart on her." He turned to Lily. "Never did any of what his books said he did - he was a skilled Obliviator, though. Learned that when he tried to kill Ron and me. We will now pause to give our Potions Master a chance to think 'Pity he failed' before I continue."

"Must you antagonise him, Harry?" Dumbledore asked as he entered the room.

"Don't see why not. It's not like I'm ever going to get anything resembling fairness from him, so I might as well try to give as good as I get. Ever since first year he's hated me for existing. It's only fair that I return the favour." He shook his head. "We're not here to give him a reason to try to get me expelled though." He suddenly remembered the rings and thought at them, *If you can make yourselves invisible, do it now!* He looked down to see the Potter ring alone on his hand, although he could still feel the others.

"You are correct. May I ask you why you left the household, and where you went?"

"Yes," Harry responded.

After a long moment of silence, Snape snarled, "He asked you a question, Potter. Where were you?"

"Actually, he asked me if he could ask me. Two different things." He turned back to Dumbledore.

Albus Dumbledore shook his head sadly. "You are correct. Very well. Why did you leave, and where did you go?"

"I choose not to answer, sir, although I doubt you'll need to work very hard to figure it out."

"I am sorry, Mister Potter," Dumbledore said, "but while it was phrased as a question, I must insist that you tell me. Your leaving was quite dangerous. You also brought an unknown quantity back to this household, and that will have ramifications beyond what you might imagine."

"I am sorry as well, Professor Dumbledore, but I am exercising my right not to tell you." He saw the familiar twinkle begin in the headmaster's eyes and suddenly understood what its purpose was. He conjured up a simple image - his own right hand in a fist, with the two finger salute extended - and concentrated on it. He felt the pressure increase slightly, and held up the dagger, pointing it at the man. "*Incarcerous!*" he ground out, and suddenly the headmaster was covered head to foot in ropes. "Stay out of my mind. I was out doing business that is mine to know. Had you asked pleasantly, rather than ordering me by pretending to be pleasant, I might have told you. As for my female companion, given the circumstances of our meeting, I trust her a great deal more than I trust most other people I know."

"Thank you, Harry!" she said brightly. "That means a lot to me!"

"It's true, though. I can throw this house farther than I trust Snape over there to do anything in my best interests. Unless, of course, it's also in *his* best interests."

He was surprised to see a look he couldn't define slide across Lily's face. Knowing she'd likely tell him in her own time, he said, "They'll harass me until I give them what they want. May I tell them who you are?"

"Well, I am yours to do with as you will, Harry," she said, putting a spin on the phrasing that threatened a blood migration.

"Yeah. Right," he said weakly. Turning back to Dumbledore, he started to speak, but was interrupted by Snape.

"Sir, if you no longer need me here, I see no reason to stay and listen to Potter try to give an explanation why he left and then returned with his whore. Good day."

Harry looked to Lily, whose eyes were flashing. "Just don't kill him, Lily." He turned back to Dumbledore as he listened to her stalking over to Snape. "I left today because the goblins had informed me that there was something very important left to me by my parents. I felt that they would likely have had a reason for granting me access before my sixteenth birthday, so it became vital that I discover this reason. I disguised myself and left the house via a method I do not believe anyone here knows about, and I intend to keep it that way. At Gringott's, I spoke to Damrod and Mablung and discovered that the wards fell around the Dursley household because the adoption by Sirius made me legally an adult, since I am the last remaining Black." He stared darkly at Dumbledore. "Imagine my surprise when I discovered that my wizarding guardian prevented the same from happening the summer prior to the Tri-Wizard Tournament. There are no more Potters, so I should have been notified, and taught how to run a household. Instead, you chose to put this off until next year, I assume."

"You are not ready to take on the responsibilities of being an adult, Mister Potter," Albus said gently.

"And you have been quite careful to ensure that I not learn how to become one. That is neither here nor there, however. What is important is that I found the Potter family vault and gathered some things, such as a statue that is currently staring down Snape."

"*Professor* Snape," Albus admonished.

"Snape. I give him the same respect he gives me, sir. Without knowing anything about Lily, he proceeds to refer to her, *within her hearing*, as a whore. When he finds out who she is, he'd probably reiterate it, but that's a perfect example of what Snape is. He makes snap judgements. I was insulted for being the pampered Golden Boy from the moment I walked into my very first Potions class, Headmaster. I'm fairly certain that the rest of the professors know the treatment that the other houses get at his hands, since the students can't help but talk about it out of class. No one does anything about it, which means that the staff wants it to be that way. I can honestly say that since taking the job as Head of Slytherin House, he probably single-handedly is the reason that Slytherin is a reviled House. When you know that he can watch a Slytherin start a fight and not step in until the person from the other House defends themselves, and *then* remove points from the defender's House, well, can you see people being very forgiving to Slytherin?"

"What this really comes down to, sir, is that I am legally an adult. It also means that the next time he does something threatening toward me, I can legally defend myself with magic. I will not start anything against him, but I will damned well end it."

They heard the front door open and close, and Remus walked into the room, stopping as he saw the tension thick in the place. Lily turned from where she was staring down Severus Snape to look at the werewolf, and a grin split her face. "Remmy! How are you?"

"Lily?" he gasped, and fainted.

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My Father's Image

Chapter 3

Chapter 3

"Lily Potter?" Snape asked, aghast.

"Actually, Lily Evans," she replied, letting her skin tone lighten and her hair turn red. "I was carved while the flesh and blood Lily was still unmarried. I'm not Harry's mother, nor will I ever be, if only because I'm a statue, but also because I willingly let them carefully *Obliviate* my feelings for James. Yeah, Lil and I had some fun with him, but it was just romping, and I was put in the vault and deactivated before things went to hell as they so obviously did. I remember James fondly, but that's the most I ever will. So please, don't think of me as Harry's mother."

Remus was waking up on the floor. "Astonishing. I heard the explanation from 'I'm a statue', so I... wow. I'd heard about the statue work being done, but I never saw it. It's a remarkably complete job."

"Want to find out *how* complete the work he did was?" she asked with a laugh. "I don't need to eat, drink, sleep or excrete, but I can simulate the first three. I'm fully functional, Remmy." She wiggled her eyebrows at him. His own eyes went wide.

"You mean ..."

"I said that Lil and I romped with James. He couldn't tell the difference."

Severus growled. "I stand by my reference to her as a prostitute, then." Remus leapt to his feet and started toward Snape, but she held out her hand and stopped him.

"He has reason, and maybe someday you'll know why. Right now it's not my story to tell. It's his and one other's, but they'll tell it in their own time, if ever." She turned to Dumbledore. "So, now that you know that Harry has gone to his vault and gotten what you didn't want him to have for some reason. Are you willing to explain to me why you went against Lily's and James express wish to keep Harry out of the hands of Petunia and the walrus she married?"

Dumbledore looked carefully at her. "You will need to prove to me that you are, in fact, Lily Evans before I would even consider answering that question."

She walked forward and whispered something in his ear, and his eyebrows rose. "Indeed! That lends credence to your claim."

"Then perhaps I can get an answer to my question?"

"The greater good," Harry said. "Staying alive is the most important thing for me. *Everything* else is secondary. That's your answer, Lily." He turned back to Dumbledore. "Now, do you have any further questions, sir? I left because I felt that there was information that I needed to know, and your insistence that I wait was unacceptable to me. I did not do it purely to defy you. I was unaware that I would be legally made an adult today once I arrived at Gringott's. I merely felt that there were things that Mum and Dad wished me to know if they went to the trouble of giving me full access a full month before I should have gotten it."

"Very well. How did you leave the property?"

"By means known only to Lily and me, and even she doesn't really know everything about it."

"It leaves a security hole Harry. We need to ward that method."

"No one discovered it before, so I seriously doubt that we're suddenly going to see a thousand Death Eaters exploding into the house via that route." He paused. "Wouldn't mind seeing a thousand Death Eaters exploding, but that's something different. Maybe one a thousand times." He looked carefully at Severus Snape. "Even the owner of the house didn't use it, and I have reason to think that he knew about it, so even he forgot about it." He stopped. "Be honest with me, sir. If you needed to keep Arthur Weasley alive for something, would you force him into lock-down, preventing him from doing anything not on your list of things he should be allowed, or is it because I happen to be under the age of seventeen? You had to know that the wards would drop next July thirty-first."

"I had hoped to have things worked out by then, Harry," Dumbledore said kindly.

"Yes. Either Riddle dead, or me in a new home that's just as warded to keep me from doing anything without half a dozen people being aware."

"Harry ..."

"Sir, let's end this conversation right now. We can talk later on. At the moment, I'm too annoyed by your meddling and your attempts to prevent from learning what my parents wanted me to know. This implies that you know what it is, or that you at least suspect." He paused. "Actually, you stated that you were fairly certain what I would find, so your statement to me about being open with me was a lie. You now give me the same tired excuses as to why I should be locked away here. To be honest, sir, if you're really that worried about me going somewhere you don't want, I could just kill someone and let them send me to Azkaban. You'd know exactly where I was then."

"Enough of your childish tantrum, Potter. We're sick of hearing it," Snape snarled at him.

"We have to listen to your tantrums, so I figure that you should listen to mine. Be that as it may be, I am ending this conversation now before I say

something I can't take back." He turned and began to walk away.

"You will *not* turn your back on the headmaster until he gives you leave, Potter!" Snape barked. "*Incarcerous!*"

Harry leapt out of the way of the incoming spell somehow, and the dagger was quickly on its way across the room, slicing through Snape's left arm. "One warning, Snape. I'm an adult and can press charges now. I have a history with you that others can attest to, and you are a known Death Eater. At the moment I'm that Golden Boy you keep bitching about, as far as the Ministry is concerned. Do not try something that will cause me to bring you up on charges, because you *will* go to Azkaban for it." He called the dagger back to his hand and left the room, followed closely by Lily.

Upstairs, he stalked into the master bedroom, closing the door behind him carefully once she was inside. "Someday I will take great pleasure in going to Azkaban for killing that son of a bitch. He has intentionally gone after me since the first time we met." He shook himself and then looked to Lily. "Okay. As soon as possible - likely in the next week - I need to get to Gringott's and make some changes to the way my account or accounts are handled. I would not put it past Dumbledore to find some shill to act as my guardian - he may even nominate himself - and ensure that the control over the Potter and Black estates leave my control until such point as he deems that I'm ready. Of course, he won't train me in finances until after I've been his weapon and killed Voldemort."

"How do you say that so easily?" she asked, shivering slightly.

"It's just a word, Lily. It actually came from an anagram he made of his birth name - Tom Marvolo Riddle. That became 'I Am Lord Voldemort'. It's just a word. Shivering at the sound of it is like getting scared every time I use the word 'liver' or 'spleen'. It doesn't make sense."

She shook her head. "Do you really think so little of Professor Dumbledore?"

"My first letter was addressed to 'The Cupboard Under The Stairs.' I have always shown up in second-hand clothes that originally belonged to my massively overweight cousin. Until today, I never had Muggle clothing of my own, where I was the first person to wear them. I was given over to beaknose to learn Occlumency to keep Voldemort out of my head, and that failed miserably. My fault, of course. He knowingly throws me together with that vile excuse for a human being at every chance. What does he think Snape is, my father? Does he think we're going to bond?" He snorted. "The only bonding that'll happen is when he trusses me up to deliver me to his lord and master. Oh sorry, that's *bondage* ." He chuckled slightly. "Because of Dumbledore, I've faced Voldemort in my first year, a basilisk in my second year, an escaped murderer and a werewolf in my third, although the murderer wasn't, and in my fourth year, we were all taught by a practicing Death Eater, who ended up sending me to a place where I helped return Voldemort to a physical body and also killed a fellow student. Last year ended up killing Sirius just a few days ago, and found me being told the Prophecy that cost you and Dad your lives at the same time. I was also told, as if it were supposed to make me feel better, that I should have been the fifth year Prefect, but I already had too much on my plate. Hmm, Dumbledore, whose fault might that be?"

He looked up at a somewhat scared looking Lily. "I'm sorry, Lily. I have a tendency to frighten people. Comes from being a dangerous crazy."

"No, I was just ... there's so much to take in, Harry. He abandoned you with my sister and ... there's a lot you're going to learn in the journals I ... well, *she* wrote. You'll probably be unhappy with some of it, and I guarantee that you'll develop some problems with Dumbledore after reading them. He knows some of what's in them."

"He told me that I might be disturbed by some of what I read. Again, he's decided what I should and should not know. Given the Dumbledore I just discovered in the last year, I think I can honestly believe that had he had access to the vault, he would have destroyed these journals to ensure that I was never disturbed by them."

"Can you truly think so little of him, Harry?" Remus asked as he opened the door.

"If you had asked me that same question this time last year, he'd have been tops in my book, and I'd have fought anyone suggesting it. Given this year? I have every reason to believe that he's a manipulative old bastard who is just as bad as Tom, but on the side of Light. He'll run roughshod over anyone he has to, just to make sure we win. This is in opposition to Tom, who will run roughshod over everyone in his path in order to win." He took a deep breath. "That's why I walked away. Because I'd have said this stuff to him, and I'm well aware that a lot of this is my anger speaking. It's not like I ever had a chance to learn how a normal person reacts to anger - all I had was Vernon, the king of puce. Go against him, and he turns puce. I need to learn to control my anger, though. As opposed to what our esteemed Potions Master believes, I can actually learn, and have learned that getting angry at everyone solves nothing."

Harry ran his fingers through his hair in a gesture of obvious frustration. "I don't want to hate the man, but every time he steps in and prevents me from doing something - for my own good, of course - he becomes more and more like everyone else in my book. No owls from my friends during the summer. Well, I come from such a loving family, I obviously didn't need to talk to anyone outside my home. Then he sends people along to drag me to another place, without my consent. Then again, I was still a child, so he could do that, being my wizarding guardian." After a pause, Harry added softly, "I think the emotional abandonment hurt the most. He acted like a grandfather for four years, and I loved it, being as starved for affection as I was. Then as soon as Tom has a body back, he suddenly has nothing more to do with me. I'm just a student, just like everyone else." He ruthlessly fought back the prickle he felt behind his eyes. "He abandoned me, just like everyone else has."

"I'm here for you," Remus said.

"Where have you been in trying to keep Dumbledore from controlling me? What leash does he have to keep you away from me? He wants me to grow up alone and unloved. No contact with anyone because of the danger. Leave me with vile excuses for human beings. Give me the same upbringing as Tom. Is he trying to make me into a Dark Lord? Or am I some experiment to see if slight changes in upbringing leads to a different result?"

"Snape may not need love, but human beings do. I'm tired of being hated and vilified by everyone but Hermione when the slightest thing goes wrong at the school. Even the 'princess' that I saved from the 'dragon' in my second year sided with Ron and her brothers during the Goblet

iasco." He paused. "I didn't do it for thanks, but did you know that she's never once thanked me for saving her life? I was her prince, so of course I'd save her. It was expected."

"I just want it over, you know? I want the little fucker dead so that I can go on with my life and discover what else the public can vilify me for. Given their history, I can expect to go to Azkaban for murdering Voldemort, assuming I can ever get enough training to survive." He tilted his head back and looked at the ceiling for a moment. "I'm just so tired of it all."

"Is it always like this, Remus? Your life is so tightly controlled that you never have any say in it? Hell, I love Quidditch, and I was *informed* by McGonagall that I was on the team. Dumbledore forces me to live with abusive relatives because it keeps me safe. Until now, of course, when I had to be moved to here. Any bets that if I ask him to remove the charms that he'll find reasons not to? If I told him that as the adult owner of the house I wanted the Order to move elsewhere, I'd basically get told no?" Harry sighed deeply, a thoroughly depressed sound. "My life is hell. My parents are dead, my ex-guardians are sadistic and inhuman, and I've only got one friend I can rely on when the chips are down." He blinked as something seemed to strike him. "And I think I'm in love with her. Ack."

"Is that so wrong, Harry?" Lily asked with a sad smile.

"When she's in love with someone else? You tell me." He shook his head. "I think I'm going to have to slap some sense into Ron this year. He's going to lose her to someone else if he doesn't get off his arse and do something about it."

"That's neither here nor there," he finally said. "I need to get studying, both the journals that Mum left me, and the journals I got from the other two vaults."

"Other two vaults?" Remus asked, curious. "I didn't think that you would have access to the Black vault yet."

"I don't." He held up his hand and showed him the three rings he wore, which made Remus stagger back in shock. "You're the Ravenclaw heir?" he whispered.

He held up the dagger again. "This was apparently Rowena Ravenclaw's. Works as a back-up wand as well. And since I'm an adult, legally speaking, I don't have those pesky owls to worry about, either." He grinned. As an afterthought he said, "I'm officially the Heir of Slytherin, too. The vault picked me."

"Well, I suppose that I should let you be, then," Remus said.

"No, you're a lot like Hermione. If you want to stay and help me through the Slytherin and Ravenclaw journals ..."

With that statement, Snape came into the room. "Where did you get your hands on Salazar Slytherin's journals?" he demanded.

"... you can stay and help me work through them, Remus. And *only* you and Lily are part of that offer right now. Hermione will have access to them when she gets here, assuming the saviour of the wizarding world doesn't decide that she's safer somewhere else, as long as it's away from me."

"Answer my question, Potter. Where did you get those journals from? They belong with a Slytherin, not some smart-mouthed Gryffindor."

Harry looked at the Potions professor with ice in his eyes. "That is none of your business."

"I'm making it my business, Potter," snarled the teacher.

Harry blinked for a moment before saying with a vicious smile, "All right, then." He reached into the trunk and pulled out the journals, enlarging them as he set them down. Snape grabbed for one of them and found himself flying across the room, coming to a stop with a hard impact that shook the wall. "And there is the reason that Voldemort will eventually lose. Every Slytherin I've seen so far may be good at intrigue, but at the same time is somehow remarkably stupid." He stalked over to Snape and shoved the fistful of rings under his nose. "Take a look at the one with the green motif."

Snape's eyes focused for a moment and then widened. "Wonderful. It's bad enough that our bloodlines are weakened by Muggles breeding in, but now I find that the worst of all possible choices is the Heir of Slytherin. Even Longbottom or Creevey would be a better choice."

"Deal with it, Snivellus," Harry growled. "I am heir to two Households in Hogwarts, and know the names of the other two Heirs."

Snape looked at Harry for a moment before whipping out his wand and shouting "Legilimens!"

Harry felt the intrusion and began to see images of his trip to the vaults, his reaction to the realisation that this living statue was sexy, watching her climbing out of the car in her sundress ... it stopped suddenly, and Harry saw the dagger sticking out of Snape's stomach, his hand still on the hilt.

"Keep it up, Snape, and I'll yank upwards. Or I could cast a *Tickling Charm*, or maybe even experiment and find out what happens when you cast a *Stunning Curse* from *inside* the human body."

"Harry, please ..." Dumbledore began.

"Get him out of my sight, Headmaster. Take him to Madam Pomfrey and heal him, but get him out of my house. And never let him darken my door again. Be very glad that I'm willing to allow that you need him, or else I'd be calling the Aurors and having him carted away for attacking me. We have witnesses, remember."

"Will we ever return to a good relationship, Harry?" Dumbledore asked sadly.

"Did we ever have one, or was it acting because you needed me?"

The headmaster flinched as if slapped. "I see. I shall have to work at regaining your trust." He paused before adding, "It is worth the effort."

Harry nodded. "You might want to do something for him, sir, because I'm pulling the dagger out. I don't think Rowena would want him to have it." In short order, both men were gone from the premises.

Harry turned to Lily and Remus. "So, shall we start looking at the journals?" They looked at him for a moment in stunned shock, before finally turning to the journals.

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My Father's Image

Chapter 4

Chapter 4

Harry was sitting in the drawing room reading when he heard someone appear in the front hallway. He stepped out to find out who it was, and was met by Remus. "Snape didn't make it," he said simply, and Harry staggered back a step.

"You mean ..."

"Yes, Harry, you killed him." The werewolf's eyes blazed. "You have a history of doing that, don't you? Your parents are dead because of you, Cedric Diggory is dead because you exist, and you managed to kill Sirius with your hero's antics. My last friend in the world is dead because of *your* hero complex!" he bellowed. "And now you've murdered a teacher at Hogwarts!"

The last of the Marauders seem to change as Harry looked at him. The man seemed to grow, and it was too late to do anything when Harry realised that Remus was actually transforming into his werewolf form before his eyes. Harry was rooted to the spot, unable to move. All too soon, he was faced with a slavering wolf, which leapt at him. He screamed.

He was being smothered. He began to fight to free himself from Remus's attack, and found himself staring at a pair of breasts. Realising that he was free, he shimmied backwards, falling off the bed as he did. "What ... who ... where's Remus?" he finally panted. "I ... oh God ..." He suddenly reached for a waste receptacle and emptied his stomach's contents into it.

"You were dreaming, Harry," Lily cooed to him as he leaned into the waste bin. She had climbed from the bed and was now holding him as he retched. "It's all right. It was only a dream."

"Are you sure it was only a dream?" he gasped. "I had this horrible ... Snape died, and Remus transformed after blaming me for everyone dying. Sirius, Snape, Cedric, and even you and Dad."

"Well, it didn't happen. Severus was healed, and Remus is in the study, looking over some of the journals. I think you should take a look through mine at some point, to be honest, while Moony and I look through the Slytherin and Ravenclaw ones."

Upon hearing that Remus was in the study, Harry got up and ran for the room. As he came to a stop before the room, he found himself worried. The dream had been far too real for his tastes. Remus opened the door, and Harry couldn't keep himself from flinching. "Harry? Are you all right?"

Harry shook himself. "No, I'm not. I just woke up from a far-too-real dream."

"Was it a Voldemort dream?" Remus asked in alarm.

"I don't think so - my scar isn't hurting. What I ... what happened was ..." He stopped and took a deep breath. "You came back into the house, told me Snape had died of the wounds I had inflicted, blamed me for all the deaths I've caused over the years, and then transformed and attacked me."

Remus went white. "Oh my God, Harry," he breathed. "I never ... I don't blame you for any deaths that have happened. Even if Snape had died, it would have been his own fault, since he attacked you." He smiled, a sight containing no humour at all. "I'm giving serious thought to leaving the Order, Harry. Albus is already covering for the injury. Snape is too important to Dumbledore's cause to allow him to be hurt by accusations."

"Thereby validating the feeling that he has the right to torture students," Harry grumbled. "Unless he makes some changes in the way he treats that man, any relationship we had is gone. He is headmaster, and that is it." He paused. "I will lay money that he will return and insist that I take Occlumency lessons again, and he'll probably offer his own services up this time, since Snape and I are in such straits at the moment."

"Well, he *is* a master of the subject, I understand," Remus said with a frown.

"We have to trust him on that, to be honest. We should perhaps see if there are any books on the subject that can be explored."

"Do you want me to do that today?"

"Probably a good idea." Harry thought for a moment. "Remus, can I talk to you privately? I've got some ... well, some 'guy' questions to ask you."

This drew a real smile from Remus. "Is it time for 'The Talk', Harry?"

"Good God, I hope not!" Harry replied. "I've heard stories about 'The Talk'. Can I assume that the purpose is to scar the child such that he simply doesn't even think about it without a horrified shudder?" Harry chuckled at the end. "Besides, it was a requirement in our school. Had it when I was ten. I know the mechanics of what goes where, and the dangers of not being careful."

"What can I help you with, then?" Remus asked with curiosity as they re-entered the study.

Harry locked and silenced the room. "Lily. I don't know what to do, Remus! I've woken up a few time to find her in my bed. We've not done anything, but my body is certainly informing the both of us that I'm ready to at a moment's notice. Considering I woke up yesterday spooned against her, and ... uh, nonverbally stating my appreciation for her beauty, shall we say -"

"I won't wash your mouth out with soap if you use stronger language, Harry. Legally you're an adult now, so language isn't that big a worry. Have

you talked to her about it?"

Harry snorted. "Oh yeah, I can see how that conversation would go. 'Uh, Lily? Could you stop sleeping in my bed naked? I'm having dreams about you and Hermione and a tub of whipped cream.' That would go over well."

Remus snorted. "I don't know. Lil would probably insist on buying the whipped cream. Can't speak for Hermione, though. I assume she doesn't know, either?"

"I only realised that I'm in love with her on the first, Remus, and haven't had a chance to talk to her yet. Besides, what's that going to do to our friendship? 'Hi, Hermione? I know we're best friends, but did you know that, along with being your friend, I'd really like to get into something more involving a statue of my mother, a large tub of whipped cream, and little to no clothing?' She'd set a land speed record, Remus, running away from me!"

"Are you so sure of that?" the werewolf asked.

"Remus, I'm the most dangerous man in England to be close to right now. Hermione is too damned smart to let herself fall for me." He stopped speaking suddenly, and then snorted. "Listen to me, sounding like I'm something worth dating. Cho cried when she kissed me, and they *were*n't tears of joy, let me tell you."

"She was mourning Cedric, Harry, and mistakenly using you as her connection back to him. Not fair to any of the three of you - you, her, or Cedric." Remus smiled. "Can't speak for your date-worthiness, but my personal belief is that Hermione may well surprise you."

"Not sure that's a good thing, considering a few of the dreams I've had about her."

"What, you've fantasised about her? Everyone does that about the girl they're interested in."

"Maybe, but what does it say when I have a fantasy about her where ... Remus, I like her the way she is. Why am I having dreams where she's ..." Harry blushed.

"Go ahead and say it, Harry. You're an adult in the eyes of the law, so you can use the adult words," Remus chuckled.

"She was ... she was huge," Harry finally said, holding his hands at chest level. "Probably a C-cup, if I'm any judge, which I'm not." He scowled. "If I love her so much, why can't I be satisfied with the way she looks now? What makes it worse is that it was the only one of the dreams where we weren't ... uh ... weren't, well, naked. This was a normal kind of things dream - walking in the park, holding hands, just being together. So of course the only dream where I'm not trying to get into her knickers has her with bigger breasts. Doesn't say much for me and how I feel about her, does it? My own brain seems to think she's good for only one thing." He growled. "Not much of anything, am I? Can't be happy with my best friend the way she is, and I want to screw my own mother."

Remus scowled. "Harry, you grew up without family. The woman you've met is Lily Evans, with her love for James *Obliviated*. You're meeting the same woman that I wanked over during my school days. Yeah, I wanked over your mother. The woman you're getting to know is *not* Lily *Potter*, and never will be. She's the Lily *Evans* that I went to school with, who was the most popular girl in the school. I'd be surprised if you *hadn't* fallen for her, at least a little bit."

"And as for Hermione - you love her, right?" Harry nodded. "But you've also fantasised about what you think is the perfect body, and used her as your template, right?" Again, a nod. "So why worry about it? Do you have any intention of forcing her into 'perfecting her body'?"

"I'm not the type to say 'I love you, you're perfect, now change', Remus. I might think she'd be sexier with bigger breasts or a curvier rear end, but I fell in love with the girl with the smaller breasts. I'm happy the way she is right now."

"Then stop looking for things to beat yourself up about. It's senseless borrowing trouble when you have so much of it on your plate already. I can keep spouting platitudes at you all day, you know," Remus finished with a laugh.

Harry replied with his own. "I just might take you up on that someday and make you prove it. See how long you can go without repeating yourself."

Remus smiled at him. "To get back to the original point of the conversation - as far as your feelings toward Lily, you have to decide how far you want things to go with Hermione. For all intents and purposes, this statue *is* Lily. She remembers everything from our Hogwarts days, including a scenario that only she and I knew." He shook his head with a smile. "I think I'm falling for her all over again."

"How does she feel?" Harry asked. As soon as the words left his mouth, he knew he'd phrased it wrong, because he could see 'Marauder' written in Remus' expression.

"You'll have to tell me, Harry - you're the one who wakes up with her." At Harry's blush, Remus added, "Actually, what I know of her ... well, she's falling in love with you, Harry. I'll admit that I wish she could with me, but I'm now twice her age."

"Talk to her, Remus. She'll always be seventeen, physically speaking. See how she feels about you."

"On one condition, Harry - you talk to Hermione about your feelings when she gets here."

"Yeah - try peeling Ron away from her, though."

"We'll worry about that when they all get here. Don't borrow more trouble."

"Okay, okay," Harry said, holding his hands up in a gesture of surrender. "How about I start reading some of the journals?"

"I'd actually start with Lily's if I were you. Get a better idea of what your mother is like. She and I have been going through the others for cataloguing purposes. Give you a better idea of what you're looking for. Potions, look here, Charms, over here, Hexes, other there, that sort of thing. I am not about to tell you what you shouldn't read, if only because they're yours, and you're an adult."

"I trust you, Remus," Harry said simply. He grabbed her first year journal and headed to sit down. "Might as well start now, eh?" he smiled. Remus shook his head and went back to the Ravenclaw journals.

#####

May 23rd

Wow! I got a letter today that explained so much about what's been going on for the last few months! I've been accepted into a school that teaches magic! That's what I've been doing when I made Petunia's hair turn green, or that time that I tripped and fell out a window and ended up in the tree somehow.

I'm going to some school called Hogwarts, come this September. As usual, Petunia got ugly when she found out I was a witch. She never sees the stuff she does that gets Mum and Dad's attention, she just sees it when I get noticed. Bitch. (I hope Mum doesn't read this - hey, I wonder if I can lock this thing with magic ... have to look into that ...)

June 3rd

Birthday girl! I'm eleven today! I got all sorts of interesting things, especially since we went into the wizarding part of London to get my school things a few days ago. Mum and Daddy got me other things when I wasn't looking, it seems. I got a working model of the heavens, where you tap it with your wand to start it, and then point your wand at various spots to enlarge them. You can set it for a date and show what the sky looked like in a given place on a given day. I am so going to enjoy this!

Harry found many entries less interesting than these, learning quite a lot about the life of a young eleven year old girl, and discovering that it wasn't necessarily that much different from the life of an eleven year old boy. He read about Petunia's continued harassment of Lily, some of Lily's responses ... *Hmm, just realised that I haven't been back to get my things. I can't go back myself, because I know that Dumbledore will just find a way to lock me in there until September first - 'for my safety', of course. I understand the need for security, but I have no life with him in control! If only I had access to Dobby ...*

"Master Harry needs Dobby?" asked the house elf as he suddenly popped in before Harry. "Dobby will get Master Harry's things!" Harry was so shocked at the sudden arrival of the house elf that the journal he was reading shot skyward. "Dobby is sorry! Dobby did not mean to startle Master Harry! Bad Dobby! Bad, bad Dobby!" He began to smack his head against the table.

"Dobby, stop!" Harry said. "I apparently called you, so it's my fault I got startled. Don't blame yourself. Now, you say you can get all my things from the Dursleys?"

"Oh yes, Master!" Dobby replied, popping out again. Harry expected him at any time, so he didn't get too comfortable with the journal. He did get surprised by some of the entries, however.

October 1

Things changed today. Let's just say that I discovered there's more magic I can do with my wand than Charms.

I'd felt ... weird all day. Tingly down between my legs, and my nipples got very sensitive. Even my softest silk blouse was painful. It felt like they were throbbing all day. Above and below. The throbbing below was sort of all over, but seemed to be stronger up near the front. (Top?) This sort of hard nub. It was almost itching me during a free period, so I used my wand to rub against it, since I learned the hard way a few months ago that you can draw blood if you scratch too hard, and that is not somewhere I want to scratch raw.

Well, I almost went through the roof when my wand touched me there. Before I knew it, I was rubbing hard and gasping, and then I saw stars. I could feel myself thrashing, and was scared for a while that I'd caused an epileptic fit somehow. Gina told me otherwise. She turned eleven during the school year last year, so she had to wait to come to Hogwarts. She's twelve now, and already has breasts. She explained that what I'd done was called masturbation, if you wanted to be clinical, or wanking, or teasing myself, or pleasuring myself. That epileptic fit was an orgasm, getting clinical again.

That was six hours ago, and my nipples are still hard and throbbing. They could be seen even through my blouse and my robes, according to Gina.

October 2

I seem to have a girlfriend - a lover.

I woke up to find Gina in my bed, and she was naked. She wasn't touching me at all, she was just looking at me.

I didn't know I could react to girls, but when I saw her body, I felt my heart start to pound, and I know she could hear my breathing change. My nipples got sensitive again, and she smiled, 'cause she couldn't help but see it, since my blankets were down around my waist and I was wearing a thin nightdress. I felt her hand slip under the covers, then come to rest on my leg for only a second before it slid up further, under the fabric, coming to rest on my underwear. It was only there for a second before she moved it across, and then began to rub me where I'd used my

wand the night before, through my knickers.

I was moaning almost immediately, but jumped when her fingers slid under the leg of my knickers. Her fingers felt really good inside me, and I started to cry, according to her. Well, that's the wrong word. I was making a crying noise is better. She kept working and teased my clitoris occasionally with her thumb. I thought that my heart was going to explode out of my chest.

That wasn't it. Before I could come (that's what she tells me is a better word for describing an orgasm), she stopped, slid under the covers, and then slid my knickers off. I grabbed my pillow before she do anything. Good thing. When her tongue found my clit, I screamed. She drove me to no less than five orgasms that way. Then she slid up my body, bringing the gown with her. She caressed my breasts for a moment, making me shudder wonderfully, then sucked on my nipples for a few moments, making me come yet again.

She finally kissed my mouth, and I was surprised, both by her forcefulness, and how I kissed her back just as hard.

I think I'm in love. Am I supposed to be in love with a girl?

Holy shit! Harry thought to himself, moving uncomfortably in his chair as he realised just how he'd reacted to what he'd read. I am so glad that Hermione isn't here!

"Harry!" Hermione cried as she entered the room. *Shit! I spoke too soon.* "I just got here and was downstairs talking to Remus." She walked over to him, and he knew that his reaction wasn't going to go away any time soon. She was wearing a sky blue spaghetti-strap tank top and a soft summer-weight skirt that gave every indication of being at least mildly translucent. He wasn't going to stare to check, but if it was translucent, then she was the only thing under it. *She's definitely the only thing under that shirt,* he thought.

She pulled him to his feet and into a tight hug. She stiffened for a moment as their pelvises touched, and then she surprised him by melting against him. "Did I cause that, Harry?" she asked quietly.

"Yes and no. I've been reading Mum's journals from her days at Hogwarts, and she talks about her first times doing certain things. That started everything, and then you walk in looking like that and I knew that I wasn't going to be losing my reaction in the foreseeable future."

She loosened the hug for a moment and leaned back to stare at him in surprise. (He noticed that she was doing what she could to stay pressed against him below the waist.) "Harry?" she asked. "Like heck am I complaining about it, but you've never been this forward before."

"Well, it's not like I can really hide what you're doing to me, so I thought I'd do something unusual with you for once and tell you something important up front, rather than lying to you as I usually do, and forcing you to call me on my lies. You don't return the feelings, but you ought to know that somewhere along the line, I fell for you." He shrugged.

Her eyes widened. "Are you saying that you're in love with me?" she asked in a breathy voice.

"Well, yeah. I actually realised *that* little titbit just a few days ago. It was just me realising a state that had already been there. Then you walk in looking like that, and now I'm thinking things I shouldn't about you."

"Like finding out whether or not I'm wearing a bra?" she asked with a smile, pulling in closer and pressing her breasts against him.

"You're not," he strangled out. "No lines for the straps are visible, and ... uh ... you're ... uh ..."

"I'm pointing at you without bothering to use my hands?" she asked with an amused grin. "You've done that to me since fourth year, Harry - you've just never seen me without my bra before. I decided to throw caution to the wind when I was told that you were here already, and that the Weasleys weren't yet. I wanted the chance to talk to you without Ron around."

"What do we do about him?" Harry asked. "I think he fancies you."

"Tough. I love you, and you say that you love me. End of statement. Ron does nothing for me except as a friend." She paused. "Well, he does fill out his Quidditch trousers quite well, which causes a rather nice tingle, but I don't love him."

It was Harry's turn to goggle at her. "You ... you love me back?"

She pulled his head down and gently placed a kiss on his lips, a kiss that grew quickly in intensity. When it finally broke, Harry found that one of his arms was around her back, and the other led to his hand resting rather firmly on her derriere. "Take that as a yes, Harry, and don't you dare move that right hand, Harry. I like it there just fine." He stopped trying to pull his hand away.

"Hermione, where are we going from here? I've only just discovered that I love you, and the way things feel right now, if we let this go any further, I'll have given you my virginity before the day is through."

She bit her lower lip for a moment. "To be honest with you," she said, breathing a little heavily, "I've wanted you to have my virginity since last year. I'm not going to say no if we go somewhere and get rid of some of this clothing."

"I'm scared," he admitted softly. "Your friendship means everything to me, and if we don't work as a couple, I'm afraid that I'll lose the one thing that means everything to me." His right hand came up to her back and he pulled her even tighter into a hug as he started to shake slightly.

"Shh," she said softly, resting a hand on his head. "It's all right, Harry. We're in this for the long voyage. We mean too much to each other to let something get in the way of our friendship. I think we'll simply strengthen it. You are my friend and my love, and I hope to make you my lover as well. I will not let something as silly as an argument get in the way of our friendship." She hugged him as his shakes slowly disappeared. "Are you

feeling better now?" She felt her nod, so she pulled away from a kiss again, a soft, gentle thing that promised a long time walking in the park holding hands, watching sunsets, and just generally being together. She deepened the kiss, and soon was suggesting long steamy nights of passion, making love on sandy beaches, roaming hands and mouths, and if not children, many efforts at them.

When they finally broke again, panting, he found that he was holding her up - both hands were gripping her rear end, and she had her legs wrapped around his waist. "If there isn't a bed involved soon, I may just cry," she breathed in his ear. "I want you, and I want you now." She paused and looked into his eyes. "Please?"

It was a hard fought battle between his body, which wanted to rip off all of her clothing and not bother with a bedroom to make love to her, and his mind, which respected her too much to simply use her body for his own baser urges, no matter how much she wanted it so. In the end, his mind won the day.

"I'm sorry," he groaned. "It's too early for us. I care about you too much. I'm sorry."

She stared at him for a long second before releasing him and running from the room, tears starting to fall. He watched her exit numbly, and continued to look at the spot where she'd been for a long several minutes before he finally walked upstairs to where Buckbeak had been housed until recently. He waved his wand and created multiple targets to practice on. As an afterthought, he decided to make them simulacrum of himself. He also strengthened the walls as best he could.

The curses began to fly at that point. He had decided that screaming out the spells was a sure way to let your opponent know what was coming their way, so he was training himself to cast with as little vocalisation as possible. He started small, with curses that wouldn't do much damage even if it were a person rather than a dummy, but soon was using bludgeoning curses and other things that would break bones.

He'd been fighting the dummies for thirty minutes or so when he stopped for a moment and looked at his likeness and felt his anger rise. *You bastard*, he thought. Then the truly nasty curses came out - Cutting and Blasting curses mostly. Within ninety seconds, the room was filled with dust and the remnants of the simulacra. The head of one of them rolled to his feet. He looked at it for a long moment before putting the strongest damage resisting charms he could on the floor, "This is what you deserve, you bastard," he growled, and cast *Reducto* at the head, blowing it to dust. "And that's what you'll get when Tom is finally gone."

He heard a small gasp from the door and found Remus, Lily, and Hermione inside and offset from the door, looking in at him sadly, with understanding, and with horror, respectively. "I just thought I'd get in a little target practice. I needed to work off a little steam." He was out of the room before anyone could speak.

Beautiful, he thought. *Now she's not only hurt at my rejection of her, but horrified and likely disgusted with my brutality. The day couldn't likely get much worse.* He headed quickly for the master bedroom and slid behind the tapestry, heading down the stairs into the hallway, where he was surrounded by a darkness as black as his mood.

It was easily an hour later when he finally stood and decided to head back, this time going through the armoire. *I suppose I should face the music.* He headed down the stairs until he reached the study, where the other three sat talking. "Ah, Harry," Lily said with a smile. "You're back."

In a move that surprised Harry, Hermione was over the back of the loveseat and throwing her arms around him before he could even think. She didn't speak, instead choosing to hold him tightly and shiver a little.

"I'm sorry I scared everyone," he said quietly. "I figured that after I'd managed to both hurt and disgust Hermione in the span of about an hour, I should likely leave for a time, so I went somewhere to think."

"Brood is more like it," Lily said. "Don't think I haven't seen you and learned a lot about you this last week I've been active."

"I'm sorry," Hermione said softly. "I should have known that ... you're too honourable to ... I shouldn't have forced it, Harry, and I'm sorry for that."

"Hey, at least you got to see me for what I really am - someone so violent and destructive that you were horrified by my actions."

"No, I was horrified that I had made you so angry at yourself that ... please don't, Harry. I love you, and I'm sorry that I was the catalyst for so much self-loathing. If I'd only been better at ... well, with a boy they refer to it as 'keeping it in your trousers'. I won't put you in a position like that again, Harry. You did the right thing, and as much as my body is saying otherwise, I'll respect your decision."

"It's for the best anyway, Hermione," he said sadly. "I realised something as I sat alone for the last hour." He turned to Remus. "I need training, Remus. And I need a solicitor. Solicitor first."

"Why?" Hermione asked.

"I'm marked for death, Hermione. I'm not going to survive this war. My only hope is to take Tom Riddle with me when I go. To that end, I need to train to be in a better position to finish him off, and I need to have a will properly made so that my money does not end up in the hands of creatures like Fudge and Umbridge. More precisely, I need to keep it from Narcissa Malfoy and Bellatrix Lestrange, since that would mean that it would end up with Voldemort."

"Cissy's a Death Eater?" Lily asked in a stricken voice.

"No. She married one, though."

"We need to talk to her," Lily said. "I ... she should ... I want to talk to her before ..."

"She was a friend in school, wasn't she?" Harry asked.

"More. She was my lover."

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My Father's Image

Chapter 5

Chapter 5

Harry blinked for a moment before asking, "What happened to Gina?"

"Oh we were ... I was busy, let's just leave it at that. Gina, Cissy, James, Harmonia Wildbanks ... for reasons I never understood, I was 'The Girl Most Likely To', without the psychological problems that lead to such a thing normally. By the time I was sculpted, we were pretty sure it was a magical effect causing it, although no idea where it had come from." She shrugged. "You'll learn more about that in the journals, including some very detailed explanations of what I did with my various partners." A blush coloured her 'skin'. "I will always remember with extreme fondness, and more than a little arousal, the time I was so delightfully sandwiched between James and Remus here. I damn near passed out."

"You *did* pass out, Lil," Remus said softly. He looked at Harry, worry evident in his eyes.

Harry was utterly confused at that. "Remus? What's wrong? Is there something you aren't telling me about it? Are you actually my father or something?"

"Not unless the gestation was for more than a year," he said with a soft chuckle. "I just ... well, I didn't want to ruin your image of your mother."

"Remus, my image of her is irrevocably changed from the moment I met her statue. A part of me can't help but remember that she's a sculpture of Mum, but let's just say that another part of me makes itself evident when I wake up spooned against her. And if she was like this when you were in school with her, then I understand it perfectly." He looked back to Hermione. "That's something else, Hermione. I'm attracted to you, but I'm reacting to my own mother as a woman and not as my Mum, and let's not forget Tonks in all this - she walked in on my shower a week ago, and the thought of her in clinging wet clothes ..." He scowled. "I'm a fucking pervert is what I am! I can't decide on one woman, and I will not subject you to even more hurt by my actions."

She released him and stepped back. "Was Lily a pervert for having multiple lovers? It certainly sounds as if James Potter was a willing participant in the threesome she and Professor Lupin described. Were all three of them perverts? Am I a pervert for having made love to Ginny, and wanting to make love to Tonks and ..." She blushed for a moment. "Am I a pervert for wanting to be the centre of attention at an orgy with Ginny and all three of you in attendance?" She blushed deeply as she looked at Remus. "Sorry, but you caused more cases of wet knickers in the girls dormitories than I think you'd ever realise. You're a sexy man."

Remus looked gobsmacked, to say the least. "But ... but ... you were thirteen!" he finally gasped out.

"Fourteen, at least for me," Hermione replied. "My hormones kicked in over that ponce Lockheart, unfortunately, but thirteen is about when most girls really start to notice that the male of the species has some interesting lines to them, and develop a strong desire to check every single one of them out." She shrugged. "I might not participate with all the gossip, what with being almost a year older than my classmates, but it's hard to avoid hearing Parvati talking about how she wanted to get a detention with you and show up wearing nothing under her robes and ... well, you get the idea. I think we all thought about it. Just surprised neither she nor Lavender actually tried it." Hermione was blushing furiously. "Besides, you were the only teacher in the school worth thinking about. The Headmaster? Too old. Filch?" She shuddered. "Hagrid? Please," she scoffed at the last one. "The only other teacher of the right age group is Professor Snape."

Remus blinked for a moment as he thought. "Excuse me while I react to the thought of Snape as sexy." He performed an over-the-top full body shudder.

"Exactly," she replied with a smile before turning to Harry again. "I need to get back to something you said, though. Why aren't you going to survive the war, Harry?"

"A Prophecy and some intelligence. I was told, about a half hour after Sirius died, why I'd been tricked to the Ministry by Tom. *'The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches... born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies ... and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not ... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives ... the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies ...'* That's what was in that globe. Now, I have a chance to save this world, so I intend to give my best effort to taking Riddle with me. But I simply do not have the skill to survive that battle. So I have to plan on a mutual takeout. The solicitor is obvious, based on my life expectancy."

"Does Dumbledore know about this?" Hermione asked.

"Who do you think told me the Prophecy?" Harry asked quietly. "He's known since the moment that my parents died that I was the one. But he was being kind-hearted and making sure I grew up healthy and well-adjusted by putting me with a family that Lily says he *knew* hated magic." He sneered. "You must remember that he's older than most everyone else in the Order - Moody's a baby compared to him - so he's always right. People who might know the situation better simply don't see the big picture."

"But your mother's blood protections -" Remus said.

"Actually, I found out that it was *Dumbledore* who cast those blood wards. Mum really had nothing to do with it. People assume, because my touch destroyed Quirrell in my first year, that the wards are made of the same thing. I may well be safer in this place than I am at Number 4 Privet Drive." He scowled. "That reminds me - we did a really fast pack when I left there. I should go back and make sure that everything has been removed. Unless Dumbledore physically restrains me and drags me back there while I'm as unconscious as I'd *have* to be, I'm never returning there to live."

"Well, at least you're safe from that," Hermione said.

"Don't be too sure about that," Harry replied. "He's very good at packing bags for a guilt trip. He'll invoke my parents, and possibly Cedric and Sirius if he has to. He's also likely to invoke your safety, and I'll pay each of you a thousand Galleons if he *doesn't* take me to task for telling you the Prophecy."

Remus spoke up. "Harry, you'll want to know this. I was there when Sirius was most recently reworking his will with the goblin solicitor, and the properties are all going to you. Werewolves can't own property, or else I might have owned this place or somewhere else. He did put a requirement that you allow me to stay somewhere for something like a galleon a year, but I'll pay my way."

"And I'll be free to put that money right back into paying your salary. I'll need a business manager, and I'd rather it be someone that I trust. We'll deal with whatever fines may come from me thinking for myself, but I'm hiring you as my ... well, I guess it's major-domo, or whatever they call that role. As for a place to stay? Choose one of the properties, be it here or another, since the way you talk, there *are* others."

"Harry, you know I won't take charity ..."

"What charity?" Harry asked hotly. "I have more money than I know what to do with, since I was never trained to deal with that sort of thing, and no experience with the world. You've been about in both the wizard and Muggle worlds, working. You have enough of an idea about how to handle money that you've been able to live off the pittance that you can manage to make when you can get a job, which is far better than I know how to do. You'd be hired to handle those affairs, teach me the same things when I have the time, hire me tutors in things I need to know that Hogwarts can't or won't teach me, and generally be a pain in my arse to get me to do the things that I don't want to, but that I need to do. You saw some of it, and you can ask Hermione what a sulky little prick I was last year at this time. You won't be afraid to kick me in the arse when I need it. If you think that's charity, then I don't want to work in what you consider a *real* job."

Remus blinked at the sudden outburst, but then smiled. "I'll take the job, if only to kick you in the arse when I think you need it."

Harry grinned and turned to Hermione. "Could I talk you into some research on what that sort of position pays, Hermione? I'm paying him fairly."

She smiled brightly and kissed his cheek. "I'd be glad to."

Remus laughed outright. "Outmanoeuvred me before I could do anything. Good move. Let me get in touch with a goblin solicitor for your will, and we'll talk about my salary at that time. In the meantime, you should show Hermione your journals."

Hermione bit her lower lip, and Harry could see her nipples press against the tank top again. "Other journals," Harry said. "Not Mum's. He's talking Rowena Ravenclaw's and Salazar Slytherin's journals."

Her eyes went wide, and his eyebrows rose as her nipples stiffened even more. *Do libraries actually turn her on?* he asked himself.

"May I see them?" she asked a little breathlessly.

Harry stroked his chin as if thinking about it. "Hmm, should I let a woman who knows more about researching things than I'm likely to be able to forget look at these journals? Should I ask the third person I wanted to research them to actually do what I was hoping?" He grinned. "I'll take you to them, and see to it that someone comes to give you dinner and make you go to bed."

She glared at him for a moment before her face mellowed. "I have to admit that you're right." She bit her lower lip. "I'm certain that I could be convinced to stop if a certain green eyed man offered me kisses," she said softly.

He blinked at her for a moment. "You'd stop reading for that?"

"Not just any kisses," she said, reading his thoughts correctly. "Harry Potter kisses. I said it before and I'll say it again, Harry - I love you. I. Love. You. What good is being the best read person in the *world*, if I'm lonely?" She flowed into his arms and kissed his lips softly for a moment. "I'll try to rein in my hormones," she whispered into his ear, "but you've been affecting me that way since we started fourth year. I want you to have my virginity, and I will admit to no end of naughty thoughts about ways and places." She blushed. "Quite few in the Hogwarts library. Me bending over a table reading while wearing a short skirt, and you being overcome with lust, of course."

"With your arse?" he interrupted softly. "Of course I would be."

She stopped and looked at him, her jaw dropping slightly as she realised that he really felt that way. "Oh my - looks like I need to shop for mini-skirts," she moaned into his ear as she hugged him again.

"Jesus, do you want me to fail all my classes?" he asked with a laugh. "If I know you're wearing a skirt that shows off your legs, then I won't give a damn about the classes."

He shook his head. "Actually, that makes me think. The four of us should leave the house and buy some Muggle clothes. Remus will need better ones for his job as major-domo, and I want to buy the both of you ladies some clothes. Lily has some already, but since I have the sneaking suspicion that she'd like to return to Hogwarts with me in the fall, she ought to have a full wardrobe. And if I actually have a girlfriend now ..." he said, pausing to look fearfully at Hermione, who nodded happily. He continued with a grin. "Since I have a girlfriend, it's in the boyfriend contract that a boyfriend gets to spoil the girlfriend rotten if he so chooses. Guess what, he so chooses." She blushed prettily and started to open her mouth, but he cut her off. "I know I don't *have* to. I want to."

"Then I get to choose the fashions," she said softly. "When should we set up for the trip?"

"Well, let me head over to Gringott's today," Remus said, and set up an appointment. We can all go shopping tomorrow."

"Set yourself up as the employee of Lord Black," Harry said. "And have them begin paying you a fair wage immediately. I'll pay for the Muggle clothes on the credit card I have ... well, debit card ... and consider it business related. Promise me you'll not take the bare minimum for the position? I'll not cheat the last Marauder - Sirius wouldn't like it, and neither would my parents, I'll bet. Choose a mid-range salary."

"I would have fought you, but you play dirty," Remus laughed. "I'll go deal with that immediately. You three need to sit and talk for a bit, I'd think. You're just avoiding dealing with something, Harry. You've gone from terribly depressed about something to laughing in a single conversation, and that's not good. You're hiding from yourself. Talk to them, okay? Even if it's while perusing the journals."

They heard a crack in the hallway, followed immediately by a crash, and the screaming of the portrait of Sirius's mother. "Hey Tonks!" Harry shouted as he started to walk toward the foyer. He drew his wand as he got closer and looked at the painting. "You know, as Lord Black, I'm betting that I have a say in some of the things that happen in all the Black properties, whether or not I officially am the owner of record." He got a nod from Remus, and grinned.

After a quick stop by the tapestry, he stopped in front of the portrait. "Lydia Mugford Black, you are an abomination, and an example of all that is wrong with the wizarding world."

"HOW DARE YOU! YOU FILTHY HALF BLOODED -"

"SILENCE!" Harry bellowed at her. "As the duly accepted Lord of the Black Family, I have three things to say in your presence. First, I reverse the ruling concerning Andromeda Black Tonks - she is once again a member of the family. Second, Bellatrix Black Lestrangle is hereby disinherited and cast from the family. Third and most important thing, I repudiate you. You are also cast from the family - you are no longer a member of the Black Family. I say these things with witnesses present - the last two of them with a member of the Black Family present. You are now Lydia Mugford, and have no rights within the Black Family."

"YOU HAVE NO RIGHT -"

"Wrong," said a soft voice from beside Harry. He turned to face someone who was quite obviously related to Sirius. "I am Nymphadora Tonks, daughter of Andromeda Black Tonks. The fact that I can now look like this shows that Harry James Potter Black is in fact Lord of the Black Family. I am Family Black. I have heard Lord Black's pronouncement and verify that he has the right. I accept him as head of my family. You are cast out, Lydia Mugford."

"I, Remus Lupin, am the second adult to hear and certify this announcement. Harry James Potter Black is Lord of the Black Family. You are officially cast from the Black Family, Lydia Mugford."

Harry felt an odd flare of magic in the house, and quirked an eyebrow. "*Finite Incantatem.*" The painting fell from the wall with a loud clatter. Before anyone could say anything further, he Vanished her portrait. "Pity Sirius never thought of that," he murmured.

"Is it me, or is this house already feeling better?" Tonks asked with a quiet laugh. "Thank you, Harry." She leaned over and kissed his cheek.

"You're welcome, Miss Tonks. Feel free to call your mother at some point and let her know, if she hasn't already figured it out." He looked around the place. "Now I need to get someone in here to fix up the place. Would house elves be able to do some of that kid of work?"

"Harry ..." Hermione began, but Harry cut her off quickly.

"I can think of at least one house elf who would probably work for me if I asked, and I can think of another who isn't happy at Hogwarts. I was thinking of perhaps bonding Winky to me until we can find out enough to see about freeing her. She'd be much happier with a family, and can you really see me treating her and Dobby as the Malfoys or the Crouches would?"

Hermione blushed. "I'm sorry. I just ..."

"You have good ideas, but you need to figure out more information before you get too deeply into it. For all we know, freeing all the elves could make them go extinct. Maybe it's part of their magic that they *need* to be bound to a family or place, and elves like Dobby are mutations. I can easily agree to a campaign to get people to treat them more fairly. But before we go freeing them all, let's make sure that they'll be better for it, okay?"

She nodded. "Do you know that when you get passionate about something, you develop this sort of ... well, aura is the only word for it." She flushed. "It's rather sexy, to be honest."

"Ain't it though?" Tonks asked with a grin. "Don't you just want to tie him down and have your way with him?" she asked with a lascivious grin. Hermione's answer was non-verbal, but definitely in the affirmative. *I'm going to walk into walls if she doesn't wear a bra this summer.*

"I think that's my cue to leave," Remus said with a laugh. "You three get comfortable and work out your problems, okay?"

"Problems?" Tonks asked after Remus left.

"Harry here wants the three of us," Lily said easily. "He'd like to get you into the shower, Hermione bent over a desk, and me probably in the bed some morning. He's in love with her, probably you, and he could probably fall for me if he let himself." She grinned at him. "Figured I'd cut through the crap."

Harry frowned for a moment. "I honestly don't know what to do. Isn't it wrong to feel this way for more than one girl? Isn't it just me being a typical

teenager?"

Hermione spoke up again. "Is it wrong of me to want to get naked with Tonks in the shower the same as I want to be that way with you? Was your mother wrong to have both Remus and your father as lovers?"

"I don't know!" Harry answered in frustration. "I just ... maybe the Dursleys taught me too well, or who knows what other explanation there might be, but ..." He scowled deeply. "I'm afraid of losing any one of you if I take up with more than one of you. Hell, I'm afraid of losing you if I take up with you at all." He looked to Hermione and took her hands in his, surprising her. "Hermione, you have been everything to me as a friend. You have been my best friend ever since that interesting Halloween our first year. You just can't share fighting a mountain troll and not be friends afterward. You stood beside me even when Ron didn't. What scares me about beginning a romantic relationship with you is that if we don't work out, I'll have lost the one thing that stabilises my life. I would rather go through life having you as my friend than risk that by praying that having something more will work."

Hermione's jaw dropped, and Tonks and Lily were sniffing. Tonks finally stopped and said, "Harry, are you aware that you just told Hermione just how much you love her? The best loves came from those who were friends first, you know."

"But what do I do?" he asked in despair.

Tonks laughed. "I recommend we all head into the master bedroom and have an orgy. We'll figure things out from there. Hermione's legal, and will be an adult soon, if I remember correctly." Her eyes suddenly sparkled. "In fact, you're the underage one here. I guess you'll just have to watch *us* making love."

His eyes bugged for a moment as he imagined all three ladies nude. "You hate me, don't you," he asked. "Taunting me with an image like that when you know I'm a teenaged boy. You know what you did to me before."

She looked at him for a long moment. "I like joking with you, Harry, but if what I'm saying is hurting you, please tell me. I'm attracted to you - I'll admit that. I would like to follow through on that shower scene - I've been fantasising about you pinning me to the wall of that shower."

"Well, that makes two of us," he murmured.

Lily broke into the conversation. "Okay, let me see if I can put this in perspective, Harry. There are three women here who would like nothing more than singularly *and* as a group to screw your brains out as well as each others. You are afraid of letting this happen because you *might* lose their respect or friendship, and would rather love them from afar."

"What do I do with my life if I lose the people who make it worth living?" he asked.

"Do you think so little of us that you think we'd abandon you?" Hermione asked, pain evident in her voice and on her face. His eyes and mouth went wide, and he looked stricken. Without warning, he spun to face the wall and in that same move drove his hand into the wall with as much force as he could muster. A cracking noise was heard, and very little of it was the plaster from the wall, since he appeared to have located one of the wall studs. He pulled his hand back and cradled it, blood dripping from his knuckles where the broken bones were sticking out.

"I can't do anything right, can I? Even when I do the right thing, I insult and degrade the very people I'm trying to do right by. I try to treat Hermione properly, rather than listen to my hormones which were screaming to treat her like a piece of meat, but I do it so shoddily that she runs crying from the room. I work off my frustrations with a small fighting practice, and scare and horrify those who end up watching me. Now I insult the three of you by calling you faithless. Breaking my hand is worth it. If you ladies are smart, you will put as much space between yourselves and me as soon as you possibly can." He sneered and walked away from the group.

He didn't get far as Lily walked over to him and grabbed his shoulder. Being a statue, she was a great deal stronger than she looked, so Harry stopped moving. "Is this what the child who became Lily's son has come to? A whining child who looks for reasons to hate himself? Has it occurred to you that maybe people occasionally say things that don't come out the way that they intended? That perhaps Hermione had a valid point in saying what she did?" She let go of him and began to pace. "You may well be one of the most selfish people I have ever met! And you do it in the name of thinking of other people! You're even worse than Petunia!" She stalked away from Harry.

He looked at her for a moment. "Makes sense, when you think about it. For all intents and purposes, *she's* my mother, not you or your original. *She's* the one that raised me from a baby." He walked to the doorway and turned back around. "She's the one that made me into the worthless excuse for a human being that I apparently am - you even managed to bolster my case for me." He walked down the hallway, away from the three ladies.

Lily was clenching and unclenching her fists. "I want to hit him so badly, but I'd kill him. Is he always this infuriating?"

"He was an unholy terror last year," Hermione said, "but then again, no one gave him a chance to grieve for the death of Cedric, the Ministry called him insane and attention seeking because he said that Voldemort was back, Minister Fudge tried to have his wand broken for using magic in front of his cousin, saving him from Dementors, and then Sirius died just a few weeks ago. During the school year we had a teacher who made him write lines in the back of his own hand for telling the truth, and who was the one who sicced the Dementors on him in the first place, knowing that he'd cast the Patronus to get rid of them, thereby giving them the excuse to snap his wand. The entire year was horrible for him, and none of us made it any better. Now he's dealing with the grief of losing his godfather, discovering that he's the sole heir to that family, discovering that the headmaster has lied to him via the sin of omission by not telling him about the Potter legacy, and we're *all* expecting him to just sit back and be a normal sixteen year old boy. And we even know the prophecy hanging over his head, too!"

Lily looked horrified. "Oh, fuck," she moaned. "And I just hit somebody with two years of undealt-with grief with the exclamation that he's worse than the good for nothing bitch that is my sister. He needs to learn that other people think for themselves, but ... damn it, I've never gotten my temper under control. How do we make it up to him? As much as walking in on him, healing his hands and then shagging him unconscious would

be fun for all of us, I think it wouldn't really solve the problem."

"No, it wouldn't," Hermione answered. "I think we need to let him be for a little while, and then talk to him." A lone tear slid from her eye. "The pain he's been through, and to think that I'm actually helping *add* to it. Damn it."

Lily blinked. "And I need to apologise, and hope that he forgives me for the Petunia comment." She scowled. "Damn it to hell."

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My Father's Image

Chapter 6

Chapter 6

Harry sat in the kitchen with Remus. The werewolf had insisted on healing his hand and was now gently flexing Harry's hand to make sure he did it correctly. "What's got you down, Harry? What led to the hand getting broken?"

"Simply put? I'm a pervert, and I've learned that the Dursleys have trained me too well."

Remus sat back, puzzled. "Let's start with the Dursley comment first. What do you mean about them training you too well?"

"Well, during the conversation you insisted we have, I was informed, by the one person who is in a position to know mind you, that I am even more selfish than Aunt Petunia. That coupled with the fact that I want to have sex with that same woman makes me really a piece of work, hmm? Oedipus complex, I think they call it?"

Remus frowned, and his eyes sparked. "Lily always did have a tendency to engage her mouth before her brain. Not as badly as Sirius or James, but enough. I need to find out what the hell she meant, but I need to calm down first, or else we're going to discover whether or not an angry werewolf is stronger than a magical statue." At Harry's bewildered look, he answered the unasked question. "Lily went for the jugular, whether or not she knew it. She hit you in the one place that would hurt most, and I am particularly angry right now because of that. She's going to explain herself to me later, after I've calmed down."

"I'm going to explain myself now," Lily said as she entered the room.

She surprised Harry by dropping to her knees before him and bowing her head in submission. He tried valiantly to ignore the view down her dress.

"I spoke without anywhere near enough knowledge of what was happening in your life. You told me yourself that you lived with Petunia, and I forgot that. What I did was unforgivable, but I apologise anyway."

Harry snorted. "Call it karma or something. Ask Hermione and Ginny what I was like last year. I was even more of a prick than I am right now, so you can get an idea of just how bad I was. Ginny, Tonks, and Hermione are willing to deal with me still, even though I don't deserve it. If they can forgive me for being what I was last year, then what kind of a person would I be if I couldn't think of forgiving you?" He grinned wanly. "Now please get up from the floor before you realise just what kind of a view you're giving me."

"I sleep naked with you. If you want to look, then look."

"I want to do more, and that's the problem."

"We have a table here," she said seriously. "I'm agreeable if you are."

Harry closed his eyes and fought against the blood migration happening in his body. "Not just yet," he finally said in a shuddering voice. "I ... I don't have a real reference for the feeling I have for you, but I think it's love. But I feel it for Tonks and Hermione as well, and I think I do for Ginny on top of that. I don't think it's just lust, because I want more than simple sex. I want long nights of cuddling, of conversations in bed, and of just walking on a sandy beach when all this is finally done. I want ... I want a life."

Tonks and Hermione entered the room. "We're willing to share it with you, Harry," Hermione said. "I love you. You also make me want to strip naked in the Great Hall and beg you to fuck me senseless, but that's another thing entirely," she added with a laugh. "But I can tell my hormones to shut up, because I want the same things you do. I want to wake up one morning with my head on your chest, hearing your strong heartbeat in my ear, just cuddling with you. I want to be with you, and I could die happy knowing that I had shared that life with Ginny and Tonks as well as with you. Ginny and I are in love, Harry, and we both want you. As a lover, yes, but also simply as our love. Tonks cares deeply for you." She turned to Lily. "I don't really know you yet."

The pink-haired Auror blushed. "To be honest, Harry, I'm in love with quite a few people. Hermione, you, I'm falling hard for Lily, I know Ginny well enough to know that she's becoming special to me. I'll admit that I'm a member of the club that would like nothing more than to ... I'm going to be right blunt here, you two. I want nothing more than someday to feel the both of you men in me at the same time." Remus, quiet up until this point, made a strangled sound in the back of his throat. Tonks went on, "I'm in love with two men, as well as at least two women. Does that make me a pervert?"

Harry thought for a long moment. "No," he said, hanging his head in shame. "I never meant to tell you that you were."

"You didn't. You've never been in this position before, so you never had the chance to really think about it."

"But what do I do when I want all of you so much while my head is screaming at me that I'm a disgusting no good freak that's not even good enough to be a house elf?"

"You tell my good-for-nothing sister to shut up and mind her own fucking business," Lily replied seriously. "And tell me the same thing if you need to."

"I can't say that to a lady!" he objected.

"Still leaves you free to say it to Petunia, then," she laughed, and Harry found himself forced to join her.

"It is good to hear laughter in this house after the events of the last few months," came the voice of Albus Dumbledore from the doorway.

Harry's laughter stopped instantaneously, and his face went blank as he turned to face him. "Headmaster," he said calmly.

"So cold a reception?" came the somewhat pained response.

"We aren't that far away from the fireplace, sir. A simple call to announce yourself would have been polite before you came over. Instead, you simply arrived. This house was given to me, sir, by the man who is now my adopted father. I have been made an adult in order to oversee both the Potter and Black families. While I may still be a child in your eyes, I am an adult in the eyes of the law. It's merely good manners to announce that you are going to visit someone."

"You are correct, Harry, and I apologise for my rudeness."

"Please try to remember next time, though. You're forgiven for this one." He paused. "So what brings you to the home?"

"There had been an Order meeting planned, but I realise that we did not ask permission to use the premises, for which another apology is owed."

"Let's make this easy. Things have changed very recently, and we're going to be running into this a lot for a while. Let's work under the assumption that the first time something like this happens, it wasn't intended to offend whichever side got offended. Multiple offences by the same person, however ..."

"I understand your point and agree with it. May we use the house for tonight as our headquarters? Our next meeting can be somewhere else, if you prefer"

"Actually, I see no problem with using this property, as long as the Order remembers that it's my home now, and that I deserve the same respect that they would if it were being held in their homes. If I declare a floor or set of rooms off limits, then it stands. That should be acceptable."

He frowned "I've got one other ... request, I guess it is. You know as well as I do that this war is not going to pass me by, nor are Hermione, Ron, and Ginny going to suddenly decide that this has gotten too dangerous. If this war relies on me to win, then the Order really ought to let me, and those who have declared themselves my team, to sit in on meetings. We don't even have to be voting members, assuming such a thing exists in the group, but if you have anything that can help me, it's better that I hear it sooner rather than later.

"Molly will be the hard sell," he finished, "and I may well lose her respect, and even her love after my insistence, but I think it's important."

"They will argue, and I will admit that my choice would be otherwise as well."

"The day for us to be children has passed, sir. I have the knowledge that if I fail against Riddle, the world is basically forfeit. I love several people, and I'm damned if my inaction is going to leave them vulnerable. We can't afford me being a child anymore, sir."

"I regret that such is the case," the Headmaster said, "but I find that I must agree with your assessment."

"On that note, sir - what is it about Gringotts that you did not wish me to go there?"

"To be honest, there is information that I am aware of that might limit your effectiveness against Riddle. I will admit that your emancipation was also something that I had hoped to avoid, simply because of your reaction at the end of the school year. I was uncertain that you could handle the rigors of adulthood. I am still uncertain, but less so."

"I've hired Remus here as my major domo. He'll help make the really big decisions, if that helps you any."

"It does, actually," Albus said with a smile.

"Professor Dumbledore," Lily said suddenly, staring at Dumbledore with loathing in her eyes and no warmth in her voice. She had gotten to her feet at some point during the conversation. "I have a question for you that you will not appreciate. Why did you never check on Harry once you'd abandoned him to his abuse?"

"I hardly think ..."

"I know Petunia better than you, and I met Vernon Dursley more than once. Trust me, he suffered physical abuse, and the things he's been saying since I was awakened tell me that had mental abuse. Answer the question; why did you abandon him to abuse?"

"I was unaware that the Dursleys were so antagonistic to young Harry."

"In other words, you never bothered to check up on him during any of the years before he entered Hogwarts."

"I will admit that my assumption that he was getting a good upbringing was what made my choice. I could not conceive that anyone could treat a child that way." He frowned. "This knowledge makes my next statement that much more abhorrent, unfortunately."

Harry's face went blank. "When and why? Why is more important."

"As soon as possible, and because the protections guard you in ways you do not understand. I managed to rebuild them after you inadvertently pointed out the flaw in the shortcut I had used before to cement them."

"You've heard what they're like. I doubt they've even noticed that I'm gone."

"Unfortunately, after what happened in the Ministry, they are paying very close attention to you. They know about the protections. And because of that, you could run afoul of the law if Voldemort attacks them and they are killed."

Tonks gasped and then said in frustration, "You can't tell me that they'd actually prosecute him for something like that!" Remus also looked outraged at the situation.

"Unfortunately, yes. There are still factions that wish Harry either dead or in prison, and if they can manage it in a completely legal fashion, they will."

"What are you talking about?" Harry asked with no little annoyance.

Tonks frowned. "If you don't return, and the Dursleys are attacked, you could be tried for being an accessory to the crime. Death by inaction, when you knew that your actions would have an effect on saving them."

"So they get to hit and belittle me even more, or else I could end up in Azkaban for not wanting to be anywhere near them."

"Unfortunately," Dumbledore replied.

"Fine. I'll go, but I have conditions that they'll be forced to allow me, or else I can at least show the courts that I was willing, but they weren't."

#####

"Absolutely not!" Vernon bellowed. "We just got rid of you, and now you want to come waltzing back in and torture us some more?" Tonks pulled her wand to point at Vernon, but Harry laid a hand on her arm to stop her.

"It's simple, Uncle," Harry said calmly. "I'll live in the room upstairs, you won't have to feed me, and I'll have over whatever guests that I want. We won't bother each other in the slightest."

"No!" the fat man yelled. "I've gotten rid of you, I'll not take you back under this roof for any reason!"

"Well, Tonks," Harry said quietly, "you heard him. Would you be willing to testify in court that I was willing to stay here and protect them but was refused?"

"Certainly, Harry," she said with a smile. "Shall we, since our job here is done?"

"Wait," Petunia said with an exceptionally pinched look on her face. "Why is it so important that you stay here?"

"Well, from my point of view, it's in order to stay out of jail. From yours, it's a protective measure. There are wards up that feed off my living here. These wards protect you. How this protects me is that my staying here makes it harder for Voldemort to find you and kill you. If I moved out, knowing that I was leaving you to die, this would make me an accessory to your murders, and earn me a prison term. Personally, with the way you've all treated me over the past years, I don't care if you all die horribly. I do care about keeping my ass out of Azkaban, though." He grinned. "However, Vernon has stated that I'm not to live here ever again, no matter what, so with a witness that also happens to be a member of the wizarding police force, I can leave here with my head held high and no concerns about repercussions."

He stood and pulled out the Portkey that they had brought, just in case. Just as they were about to activate it, Vernon let out with a strangled, "Stop!"

"Yes, Uncle Vernon?" Harry responded in a cheerful voice.

"You can stay, but we're not paying for any of it. Your freak friends will pay for it." He ended with a grin on his face.

"Very well," Harry said. "Give a precise accounting of the expenses incurred during this stay that will start either today or tomorrow, and it will be dealt with in a timely manner."

"I already know what it's going to cost to house you -"

"Ah, but that was then, Uncle. We will be dealing with things differently this time around, so expenses will be different. Besides, I know you well enough to know that you expect to cheat the wizard paying for this, so the accounting will be looked over by a person with a solid knowledge of Muggle accounting." He smiled. "By the way, you'll find that your previous payments for my upbringing are finished. This is a completely new arrangement."

Vernon was utterly shocked by Harry's new attitude. He purpled again, raising a fist to Harry.

Tonks' wand was aimed at him instantly, with Harry's only a moment behind her. "Bad idea, Uncle. You see, I won't get those letters anymore. I am considered an emancipated minor in both the wizarding and Muggle worlds. It's the reason those payments will stop. It's the reason we worked out what I just did with you. I'm an adult in the eyes of the law."

Vernon was beyond shocked. He stared at the boy he'd been able to cow all these years, stunned by the sudden change. He finally drew himself together and blustered, "I'll not have anything unnatural happening under this roof!"

Harry's eyes sparkled. "Then how did Dudley come into being, you ruddy arse? He's a whale, your wife is a horse-faced giraffe, and I think you're a hippo, or maybe a walrus, what with that moustache." He opened his mouth to speak more, but Vernon exploded.

"SHE IS YOUR AUNT! HOW DARE YOU TALK ABOUT HER THAT WAY?"

Harry grinned and cast a mild *Sonorus* Charm on himself before responding. "IF SHE WANTED TO BE TREATED AS FAMILY, THEN SHE BLOODY WELL SHOULD HAVE ACTED LIKE IT, RATHER THAN HELPING YOU LOCK ME IN THE CUPBOARD FOR TEN YEARS! SHE SHOULD HAVE PROTECTED ME FROM YOU AND DUDLEY, RATHER THAN LYING ABOUT ME BEING A CRIMINAL! IF YOU TWO WANTED RESPECT, THEN YOU BLOODY WELL SHOULD HAVE EARNED IT!" He smiled and canceled the charm. "That's how you yell, Vernon. Make sure the whole neighbourhood hears it. Now as I was saying before, if I want to do magic under this roof, then I will. If I want to bring a harem of beauties in here and shag them in my bedroom after making sure that there's a *Sonorus* Charm on us, so that the entire neighbourhood can here the screams of soul-shattering ecstasy, then I will."

Harry noticed Tonks's eyes dilate out of the corner of his eye, but he refused to be distracted from the conversation. He met Vernon's eyes and finished coldly, "Deal with it, fatso. I'm here for the rest of the summer, most likely. We'll deal with the future from there."

#####

Harry let no grass grow under his feet. As soon as he entered his room, he pulled out his Charms and Transfiguration texts for reference. After a few minutes of study, he started by expanding the interior space so that the entire square footage within the room was easily double that of the Dursley household. He went on to split it into various rooms, such as a water closet and even a room with a small swimming pool, reminiscent of the prefect's bathroom at Hogwarts. There was a kitchen and several bedrooms, as well as a very large dining-slash-common room area, complete with fireplace.

The next afternoon he was reading some of his sixth year texts. Hermione was visiting him, and he was rather amused, as well as a little bothered. Ever since learning what the word bibliophile meant, he had agreed that the term fit her. Watching her while she read in a comfortable situation made him realise that there was a bit more to it than that. As she read one of Rowena Ravenclaw's journals, he watched her start to stretch the fabric of her form-fitting half-length T-shirt. She was already distracting enough in that shirt, since it was white and thin, but when her nipples stiffened, it made concentrating even more difficult. It was when her fingers started to tease the flesh of the inside of her thighs halfway down her leg that he started to have some serious problems.

He finally cleared his throat, breaking her from her reverie when he saw her hand starting to rise higher on her leg. She looked up in surprise, and he realised that her breath was a bit more rapid than it had been a few minutes earlier. "Hermione, I don't mean to be insulting or to embarrass you more than I already will, but would you like to be alone with that book? You ... uh ... well, you seem to be enjoying it," he finished rapidly, blushing furiously as he looked down at his feet.

There was silence for a moment before he heard her start to chuckle. "I'm sorry, Harry. You've never had a chance to see the way that I really am around books." He looked up to see her blushing furiously as well. "You should see me in the library at Hogwarts. I have this one section to myself usually - you guys sometimes sit there with me when we study together - and I ... well, let's just say that libraries have taught me to orgasm quietly. About the most expressive I get is biting my lower lip."

Harry thought for a moment, recalling all the times he'd watched her study and had seen her bite her lip. He'd mistaken it for concentration, but ...

He felt as if he should faint with the speed at which his body reacted to the information. Her eyes widened slightly and her face developed a knowing smile. "You'll never look at libraries the same way, will you?"

"No," he choked out. "Please don't be offended, Hermione, but could you put some more clothing on?"

"Why?" she asked. "I want you to be completely honest with me, Harry. If it's a good enough reason, I will."

He frowned. "I'm thinking things about you that I shouldn't be thinking. Can we please leave it at that?"

"No. Be precise. Why don't you want me dressed comfortably for me?" He stared at her for a moment. He opened his mouth a few times to speak and even rose to his feet and began to walk around in a state of increasing agitation. "Why do you want me wearing more clothing?"

He finally spun and yelled, "Because I'm afraid I'm going to rape you if you don't!" He hung his head in shame.

She walked over to him and put her hand on his cheek gently, lifting his gaze from the floor. Surprising him, she stopped him when his eyes were looking directly at her breasts. His head came up the rest of the way under his own volition. "Do you hate me, Harry?" she asked him simply.

"No!" he said, horrified. "You're my very best friend in the world! I could never hate you!" His eyes were wide.

She forced her mind to ignore the purely logical response that she had, that one could never be certain of future actions and beliefs, and accepted it in the manner in which it was meant. "Then you will never rape me, Harry. Rape is a crime of violence; of hatred and control. You have an entirely different reason for wanting to insert Tab A into Slot B, as it were," she said with a giggle. At his confused look, she said, "Sex. Your erection, in me. Tab A, Slot B."

He blushed furiously. "You're my best friend. I shouldn't think about you that way."

"Why not?"

"It degrades you. You should be looked at as the wonderful and beautiful witch that you are in your own right, not as a pair of beautiful breasts and a ..." He suddenly realised what he had said, and turned to walk away but stopped himself and stood before her. "Proof of what I was saying." He closed his eyes and stood, obviously awaiting the slap he knew would follow.

His eyes shot open as he felt her lips brush his own. "Harry, it would open me if that's *all* you thought about when you look at me. The fact that you think about who I am means the world to me and causes an interesting tingle to my very core. I *want* you to take advantage of that tingle you cause." She stepped away from him and undid her skirt, letting it fall to the floor, leaving her in a shirt that seemed to be going slightly transparent in the chest region due to how hard her nipples had become and a pair of knickers that seemed to be composed of two pieces of thin string to hold up the tiniest triangle of cloth Harry had ever seen in his life. She grinned at his obvious attraction. "You were saying something about my having a something that you like besides my beautiful breasts." She spun. "Could it have been my arse?" she asked, blushing at the use of the mild profanity.

He was beyond astonished to discover that she was wearing a thong. There was an even tinier triangle just above her rear end, but the flesh itself was ... "Wow," he strangled out. "It's perfect."

"I do not have a perfect arse, Harry. There are girls with much better looking ones than mine at school. Parvati, for one. Ginny for another. You're just reacting that way because I'm nearly naked in front of you."

He scowled at her suddenly. "Why is it bad for me to put myself down, but you're allowed to put yourself down?"

"I know myself better than you ever could, Harry. I know my faults."

"And you exaggerate them," he replied. "I happen to think that the arse that I've only just realised that I've been watching these past years is perfect. I'm also pervy enough to want to be pressed against it."

She complied by moulding her body against his. His erection throbbed insistently against her. "And I'm pervy enough to want *this*," she said, pressing harder against him, "throbbing *inside* my arse someday." She shuddered against him. "I want you so much it hurts, Harry," she said in a voice that neared a whimper. "My nipples ache sometimes when I think about you. My clit has gotten hard enough to hurt." She turned around and faced him. "What I really wish is that you would take my virginity over on that rug, in front of the fireplace. It's not the Gryffindor Common Room, but it's close enough."

"You want to make love in the common room?" he asked in shock, twitching against her.

"Harry, someday I'd love to figure out a way to make love on Snape's desk. But as long as it's you, I don't care if it's a broom closet, as long as we're not just doing it to relieve pressure. I want it because we love each other."

He stared into her eyes, and moved forward slightly to kiss her. Her mouth opened against his and their tongues met for a moment. "Are you sure about this?" he asked in a husky voice. "If you say yes, I don't know if I'd be able to stop myself in time if you changed your mind." She answered him by disengaging from him and peeling her shirt over her head, leaving her in only the skimpy thong.

"Make love to me, Harry. Be the man I give my virginity to." With that, she walked over to the rug in front of the fireplace and lay down on it.

He hadn't thought it possible to get any harder around her, but the sight before him proved him wrong. He followed her to the rug and started to speak, but she cut him off. "Please be naked with me, Harry," she said quietly. He smiled and shyly removed his clothing, intrigued when her eyes widened as his erection came into view finally. He joined her on the rug after he was completely nude.

"I have no idea what I'm doing, Hermione. I might hurt you, and I don't ... I couldn't forgive myself if that happened."

"I'm a virgin, so there is likely to be some pain the very first time when you break through my hymen." At his puzzled look, she added, "Maidenhead. Proof that I'm still a virgin. This, of course, assumes that it's still extant, given that I used to be a fairly active child, and it often breaks on its own." She paused. "Now, I give you permission to touch me, caress me, fondle me, and generally squeeze any body part you want to. If it hurts, I'll tell you."

With a shaking hand, he reached over and gently cupped her right breast with his left hand, covering the nipple. She sighed happily, and he began to slide his hand carefully around, feeling her nipple gliding across his palm, which drew a shuddering moan from her. "That feels *really* nice," she purred in a voice that made his brain scream "DO HER NOW, YOU FOOL!" That voice hit Harry hard, and he suddenly rolled away and jumped to his feet, running helter-skelter toward the water closet. He collided with things along the way, but he didn't care. He needed to be away from her.

#####

Hermione was in a deep reverie of the blissful feelings that he was causing in her when she felt him move away. As she opened her eyes to see what was happening, she heard him collide with a small table. She saw him leaving a trail of blood behind him as he ran, and she sighed. She was somewhat angry at Harry for leaving her like that, but she was also fairly certain that his training at the hands of those accursed Dursleys had kicked in again. She took a closer look at his path and shot to her feet. *Those aren't tiny drops of blood he's leaving; that's a significant cut!* she thought.

She followed the trail and quickly reached the door, and could hear him inside. "If it weren't for Voldemort, I'd let myself bleed out. How could I ... This isn't Hermione, no matter how much I want it to be. She's got to be under someone's control. I can't see Hermione acting like this toward me. Ron maybe, but not me." She heard a ripping noise. "Well, that's going to bleed through quickly enough. May have to heal it with magic."

She opened the door to see Harry finishing the job of taping up his leg. The gauze he had retrieved from the medicine cabinet was already beginning to develop a reddish tinge to it. "Harry, please heal your leg. We need to talk, and I'm not going to feel comfortable until you aren't in danger of bleeding out anymore." She could feel tears in her eyes.

He looked up at her for a long moment, and seemed to deflate even more. "I'm sorry, Hermione." He closed his eyes and called out, "Accio wand!" in a defeated voice, and a wand slid into the room and slapped into his palm. He murmured a spell and then undid the bandages. Hermione gasped as he did, for two entirely separate reasons, first was the amount of blood on the bandages he was removing, and the scar he

left behind, and the second was the fact that he had called and subsequently used hers. She grabbed it and erased the scar.

"Hey!" he cried with a scowl. "I was going to keep that scar to remind me not to take advantage of you!"

"All the more reason to erase it, Harry. I am not under Imperius, although for the life of me I can't figure out how to prove that to you at the moment. I am so angry right now at ..."

"I'm sorry," Harry interrupted. "Even when I try to do the right thing, I screw up badly. I didn't mean to get you that angry at me."

"It's not you I'm angry with, and I'd appreciate you letting me finish!" she yelled in exasperation. "I want so much to walk out that door and just destroy those Dursleys for what they've done to you. They have managed to convince you that you are so worthless that when a girl comes on to you and actually gets naked for you, you think that she has to be under the Imperius." She walked closer and pressed her bare breasts against his equally bare chest. "Harry, I decided the summer after fourth year that I was going to give my virginity to the man that I trusted most - the man that even Rita Skeeter saw that I loved, even before I did. I just wish that I could prove that I'm not under a spell, other than the one that your pheromones are spinning on me." She breathed deeply. "You have no idea how much I want to just leap up, wrap my legs around you, and move my knickers aside to get you inside me."

"But Hermione, can't you see why I'd think you were under the Imperius? I've never seen you like this!"

"That's because I decided to do something about it this year, Harry. I realised that I needed to make the moves first, because you're too polite and noble to do it yourself, and I'm also discovering that you wouldn't because the Dursleys trained you to think that you weren't worth it. So I've dressed the way I have been so far this summer to see if there's any interest there. Once I knew that, I started to be active in pursuing you." She paused. "You don't think I'm acting and dressing too much like ... Well, Molly Weasley would call me a 'scarlet woman', I think."

"No, I don't. I think you've always needed to hit me in the head to notice that you're a girl. I'm stupid that way."

She knew that he could hear her teeth grind together. "I would appreciate you not telling me that I fell in love with a stupid man," she said through those gritted teeth. "I'd like to think that I'm smarter than that."

She watched his face fall and bulled forward. "I'm not apologising for my tone, Harry, but I want you to know that I want you, and I have for a while. If I have anything to say about it, after we leave Hogwarts I have every intention of spending some time pregnant. I'd love to seduce Remus, but my first baby will be yours." She giggled as she felt his response. "I see you're interested in at least practicing for it."

He groaned. "I have a sexy woman wearing nothing but a tiny scrap of cloth below her waist sitting on my lap, I'm almost sixteen, and I'm a typical male. You should worry if I *didn't* react to you."

"You are anything but typical, Harry. If you were just another Dean or Seamus, I wouldn't be dressed as I am in front of you." She stood and quickly peeled off her thong and sat back down on his lap, pinning his straining erection between them. "Harry," she said, her voice far rougher than before, "I'd prefer the rug out there, but if it means I make love to you today, I'll accept sitting in here on this toilet."

He was obviously fighting a war within himself. Finally he said, "I know that it will annoy you, but I have to be sure. Are you certain about giving me something you can give to no other man once given to me?"

Her answer was to raise herself slightly and reposition so that he would slide inside her once she lowered herself. He moved her back and then stood. The look on her face was one of defeat, she knew, but then she saw his hands, held out to help her to her feet. When she was standing, he pulled her tightly to his chest. "I am so scared of hurting or losing you, Hermione. I want you so badly that I'm afraid of losing control. I'm honestly afraid that if you walked into the house in a miniskirt that I would end up publicly proving exactly how far the relationship has progressed."

She gasped as a fiery thrill tore through her at that statement. *Does he mean what I think he does?*

"I don't think Molly would greatly appreciate seeing me making love to you on a table she'd be planning on serving dinner on later," he said, grinding against her, although she could tell it was fairly unconscious on his part. "I'm serious - if you wear a miniskirt, don't wear knickers, because I'm likely to tear them to get at you."

Her knees gave out as another thrill shot through her, this one a bit more familiar to her. Just the thought of her mode of dress driving him to such animal passion in a public place made her knees give out, her heart pound, and her nipples and clitoris tighten so much that the erotic pain drove her over the edge of orgasm.

"Oh Harry," she moaned. "Please, I need you to ... to *fuck* me so hard that I won't walk straight for a week. Please?"

She gasped again as she felt him kneel and swoop her into his arms and stride out to the rug. He stumbled slightly on the recently wounded leg but made it without major mishap. He very slowly knelt, being careful not to drop her, and placed her softly on the rug before laying down atop her. "Last chance to stop me, Hermione," he whispered.

She responded by reaching down and gripping his member and forcing him to her very wet opening. Once the head was pressing against her moist heat, she grabbed his hips and pulled as she thrust toward him.

She heard him growl - a deep guttural noise of animal desire - and he thrust himself completely inside her in one single thrust, much to her intense pleasure. The look on his face made her gasp and tear up. For the first time she could ever remember, Harry looked ... complete. Her thoughts became a jumble as he began to thrust into her, though, slowly and sweetly.

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Harry looked down into her beautiful face, watching her slowly connect to the world again after her fifth orgasm. She'd had her most powerful one just as he'd finally begun his. He'd apparently done everything right to her in order to drive her delightfully mad so many times.

"I want her name," Hermione purred in a voice that made him twitch inside her. "I want the name of the woman who inspired you so much that you learned to do that to me." She sighed. "Now *that* is a way to lose your virginity," she finished contentedly.

He lowered himself and kissed her lips. He then rolled so that they were laying on their sides, although he was careful to keep them coupled as he was pretty sure that he'd be stiffening again fairly soon. "You want the name of my very first lover? The one who inspired me to make love like that?"

"Oh yes!" came the fervent reply.

"Her name is Hermione Granger," he said with a smile. "I agree with you, by the way. I can't think of a better way to lose my virginity either."

Her eyes shot wide. "You were a virgin?" she asked incredulously. "With what you did to me? It can't be!" She bit her lip suddenly as she realised what it sounded like.

He smiled and reached out for his wand, which absently snapped into his hand. "I swear by my magic that the first woman - the first *person* that I have ever made love to is Hermione Granger, since my hand doesn't count." There was a silver flare, and he said, "*Lumos*." The beam that came from his wand was bright.

She began to cry, and she pulled him close as she did. "What?" he asked, alarmed. "What's wrong?"

She sniffed and giggled a little. "The Polynesians call it crying happy, although they usually equate it with being pregnant, which would literally be a miracle with me, considering the charms I have on me right now." She pulled away and looked into his eyes. "Harry, you know how much I read. Do you doubt that I've read books on sex?" He shook his head. "What you did to me should have been almost impossible for the first time for either of us, let alone both of us. To find out that ... Harry, if you asked me to cast a Patronus right now, it would be huge." She blushed clear to her breasts. "And probably as horny as I still am." He felt himself shoot erect inside her and she moaned, "Oh yes," she hissed. "First time for a male is usually fast, and he rarely lasts long enough for his partner to come. That you held off your own until I had five distinct orgasms tells me more about your feelings for me than anything else I could get from you verbally." She closed her eyes partway and added, "And has given me a new area of study that I want to spend significant time exploring." The voice she used sent a shiver through him that made him pulse insistently inside her. Before he could speak, she had pulled him close and kissed him thoroughly before rolling him onto his back. His last coherent thought for a while was that the sight of her writhing atop him, her hair a halo around her face and her breasts gently bouncing; that sight would likely fuel his Patronus for decades.