

*Kinsfire*  
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# Redemption

## Chapter 1

He stood on the balcony and looked out over the city he now called home. He'd moved across an ocean to get away from his fame, and it had worked, thankfully. No one knew that he lived in New York City now, and he was perfectly happy to keep it that way.

He stopped his musings overlooking Central Park and turned back inside. His neighbor walked out on her balcony and waved to him. He waved absently back at her as he stepped off the balcony. It was July 31, 2000, and he was remembering. Summoning a bottled butterbeer from his refrigerator, he sat down in the only chair in his apartment. He absently turned on his stereo for mindless air-pudding for a background medium to think in.

*Happy fucking birthday to me. He raised his bottle and took a swig. If I could get 307 Ale without the Wizarding community figuring out where I was, I'd do it. I refuse to drink what these Americans call beer. There's a reason people nickname it 'sex in a canoe' - it really is fucking close to water.*

*Ah, another birthday. Another time to remember all the lives I've destroyed and taken in my twenty years. Let's start with the people I called friends. If I'd been their friend, then the Death Eaters never would have gotten their hands on them. And let's not forget the Death Eaters that I murdered with my bare hands. And while I'm at it, why don't I commemorate this day by destroying another person's life by giving them a still beating heart? Hmm, who should it be? The Headmaster of my old school? No, already done that. Who else do I know that well? The Weasleys? I've done that too, by not being there to keep the man I called my friend out of the St. Mungo's Psych ward. Ah, I'm sure I'll think of someone eventually.*

A knock at his door interrupted his birthday musings. Raising an eyebrow in a manner that would have been mistaken for intrigued by someone who didn't know his moods, he stood and walked to the heavily barred portal. Peering through the tiny aperture in the door, he was genuinely mildly surprised to see a familiar face outside his door.

After undoing enough locks to shame the Federal Reserve downtown, he opened the door to a further surprise - three more people than he had been able to see through the spy hole. The only male of the group caused his eyes to widen slightly, and he almost contemplated cracking a smile. The redheaded man was uncomfortably dressed in business casual dress slacks and a polo shirt, and had filled out somehow in the last three years. He was obviously uncomfortable for more reasons than the way he was dressed.

The girl he'd seen through the door was obviously the man's sister, with the same shocking red hair, and similar facial features. She'd grown some more in the last three years, though. He didn't remember her filling any dress quite that way before - she had a figure that would make a bishop kick through a stained glass window. She wore a dress that completely covered her from neck to knees, save her bare arms, yet somehow still looked at if it were threatening to cease coverage at any moment.

The first of the two female surprises was a slightly wide-eyed blonde in a sea-foam dress. That described both the colour, which rarely looked good on anything human but managed to on her, and also the apparent material of the outfit, looking as if she were going to peek out of it occasionally. He was reminded that she had certainly grown up - and out, in a manner that he would have contemplated enjoyably three years ago.

The second female surprise, and last one at the door, was the one who came closest to getting him to show any emotion. He'd always thought she was cute, and even beautiful, but the brunette that stood outside his door transcended that description now. Her hair was no longer as bushy and unruly as his remained, but instead cascaded in gentle waves past her shoulders. She was dressed in an outfit that should have been demure - a tweed blazer and matching skirt that fell to just past her knees, and a business-like white blouse. The sight of her made a part of him realize that when he was sixteen, had he seen this vision of Her, he would have chewed through the furniture in his House's common room - or bitten the buttons off her blouse, if he'd been able to muster the courage.

The group stood in his doorway for a long moment, contemplating him, while he contemplated them in return. He would have registered shock, were he able. Finally, someone spoke into the increasingly difficult silence.

"Well, Harry, aren't you going to invite us inside?" Ron asked.

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# Redemption

## Chapter 2

They conjured up chairs as Harry sat in his own, and the silence lengthened painfully. Finally Ron spoke again. "I guess it's up to the one terminally without a clue, and tactless to boot, to get this rolling." He looked at Hermione with a grin, and she blushed slightly. "Why New York, chum?"

"Because it wasn't England and the Wizard's World over there. Here in America, they look at the Voldemort business as something that was a European problem. We solved it on our own, so why should they even care about some piss-ant little wannabe wizarding dictator? Broke one bastard's jaw when he started talking about how Riddle was nothing, that *real* wizards would have been able to deal with him easily. Let's just say that I put some power behind my punch."

"You didn't answer the real question, Harry," Luna said serenely, tilting her head slightly and letting her long blonde hair fall over her shoulder. "Why did you leave?"

He stared at her for a long moment. "I used to love that about you. Piercing the bubble surrounding the real question and answer. Now I find it somewhat infuriating."

"Answer me," she said, still serene, but in a voice that brooked no argument.

He glowered at the group angrily, and almost smiled as he realized that none of them were cowed. *Of course not - these were the ones with me against Voldemort. If that couldn't scare them, nothing will.* "Let's see – why did I leave England after killing twenty people? Why did I leave England after burning any bridges with Dumbledore? Most importantly, why did I leave when I realized that my failure had scarred you all permanently?"

"Ah." Luna said. "Fear. Understandable reaction. You need to know something about each of us, though, Harry." She looked to the others. "Since I began to mention it, shall I tell my story first?" They nodded grimly.

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*Luna:*

The fight against Voldemort had been over for a week, and finally we'd finally decided on a Hogsmeade weekend. Yes, I know you know this part, but it helps me remember, all right, Harry? We'd been at the Three Broomsticks, and Madame Rosmerta had given us a table of honour. We sat to either side, as I recall, and kept switching seats as the day progressed.

I can still remember that toast to Neville. There wasn't a dry eye, especially mine. Not verbose, but the emotion you'd put into it, at the loss of a great friend – well, we all know that words have a power all their own. "Remember Neville Longbottom, a *true* hero!"

I'll admit that the good thing that I remember most about that day was getting up the nerve to walk over to you while you had your eyes shut. I was intending to brush your lips with a butterfly kiss, but you surprised me by putting your arms around me and kissing me rather thoroughly. A quick digression; just something I've always wondered about that – could you feel my heart pounding when you had finished that kiss? Yes, I know I'm blushing right now; memories of that kiss still do things to me. Why am I not surprised to hear you two ladies agree with me about the kisses he gave you?

The problem was when you headed to the bathroom to urinate. What? What is it about you men that you cannot call a simple bodily function what it is? "Shake the weasel", "water the flowers", "write your name in the snow". Silly, really, and embarrassing in a way. Then again, does anyone buy the "powdering our noses" excuse?

Back to what I had been saying. You left, and we stood to get some fresh air. We had all been drinking a great deal, and unlike you, some of us had tried the firewhiskey. We walked together as a group outside, where Ron decided that he really didn't like firewhiskey after all, and chose to return it. We'd gone into the alley, so as to help him avoid some of the embarrassment. It was after he was done that we realized that we'd let our guard down, believing we were safe after Voldemort's death. We each were hit with a dart, which served two purposes. First, it was drugged, to knock us out, and second, it was a portkey. Each to our own separate cell. Obviously, from this point on I can only speak to my own experiences.

Well, when I awoke, I was chained to a wall, and naked. Nude I don't mind. Naked, though...

Well, my torturers were Narcissa Malfoy and some other woman. Narcissa was the brains of that twosome, which left the other one as the brawn. Be that as it may be, Harry, I accepted the torture, which drove them quite beyond reason, which may be part of the reason I survived - they were cooking up new tortures for me when you came along. I still bear the scars of their cruel knives on my chest. What do you mean what scars? Oh, that's right. I was covered in blood, and I can remember you murmuring "Oh, your beautiful eyes" over and over again. I remember seeing you as they came back into the room.

What? Harry, I'm a seer; I always have been. Think about it. I'm a see-er; I see things. For Hermione's sake I tend to refer to it as clairvoyance. Having Narcissa remove my eyes inconvenienced me because of the pain, but it didn't stop me from being able to see. You should be glad you didn't know what she said before now. I still remember it to this day, because it led to the last sight I saw with real eyes. She'd said, "I understand that your Harry Potter is rather enamoured of the way your eyes look. I'll do him a favour, and make sure he can always look into them." It was then that the spoon came at me and she very carefully extracted my eyes. I'll admit to fainting from the pain.

Anyway, I remember the snap kick from you, and Narcissa fell to the floor - you hadn't even needed your wand. I'd heard her neck snap many a time before. It was just more frequent the closer we got to the day it happened. Then you pointed at the other woman and shouted *Expelliarmus* as she

stared at Narcissa lying dead on the floor, although Narcissa's head had not yet realized it. It may be evil of me, but I enjoyed the panic in her eyes as she realized that she was going to die. She'd been the architect of the scars on my body.

Okay, you don't know about the scars. That's true, I had the ones on my arms and legs regenerated, after Hermione and Ginny learned how to regenerate body parts. I left these scars on my chest, as a reminder of man's cruelty to man, and oddly enough, or maybe not, considering this is me, it's a reminder of how much I love you, and how much you loved me.

Thank you for the compliment, Ron. I told you you'd want a hat before the night was out. And thank you, Harry, for actually reacting, rather than sitting like a stone as you have been. It's not the reaction I wanted, but I'm still young, and so are you.

Actually, Hermione, no. I feel more comfortable this way. Although I *am* going to change my chair to something cloth, rather than this leather. Skin sticks to leather.

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Harry's hand reached out slightly as if to trace the scars he saw on Luna's bare chest, and then he pulled back. She stood and walked over to him, close enough for him to touch her. "Harry, if you wish to, then do. I bear these scars because I was bold enough to call you friend, and because I love you. They are a badge of honour; a badge that only those I truly trust will ever see. Trace them, Harry. They are part of me, and will be until I die." She reached out and took his hand and placed it between her breasts, where all the thin white lines seemed to radiate from, although Harry knew differently. He let himself trace some of the lines, and could feel himself start to shiver, but hoped that she couldn't feel it. It was then that he noticed...

"Luna, I remember hearing that they'd sliced off your nipples. Was that false?"

"No. When they were doing some of the regeneration, I let them regenerate the tissue of the mammary, and the nipples, because I hope someday to nurse children." She smiled. "A small bow to vanity."

"Not vanity," Hermione said. "I didn't understand at first why you'd want to keep the scars, but I supported the decision once you explained. Not that you needed my support in the first place."

"Actually, Hermione, I did. Knowing that I'd thought through an emotional decision logically..."

"Not always the smartest thing to do," Hermione laughed. "I remember quite logically figuring out that Severus Snape simply had to be homosexual – and was rather surprised to find him one day in Diagon Alley snogging Madame Vector."

They tried not to react when they heard a quiet snort come from Harry. Luna looked at the assembled group and said, "Who's next to explain?"

Ron spoke up. "I think I should go last, for obvious reasons. Ginny? Maybe you? You were more obviously hurt." He spun his head quickly, frowning. "I'm sorry, 'Mione, I didn't mean..."

"You're absolutely right, Ron. My damage was not as obvious. Let Ginny go first, because you and I have similar stories that work well together."

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*Ginny:*

Works for me, Hermione. Okay, before we go anywhere, let me just peel this dress off. First off, it should make Luna more comfortable not to be the only nude in the room, but more importantly, it should make two rather obvious points. Sorry about the grin; you know me and puns. They do stick out a bit, don't they?

That's the point, though, Harry. I'm healed. Yeah, I was tortured by six Death Eaters. I had so much blood loss that they didn't know if I'd survive. No, there's not a scar on me, because mine were more obvious, and I like to sunbathe nude.

They chained me up too. I don't remember who my torturers were, except for seeing Crabbe's and Goyle's dads. I remember that I was surprised that I wasn't raped. I guess they were having too much fun cutting things off me. I never understood why they went to the trouble to slice my tits off. Well, actually, I always did think they were my best feature, once I'd started to fill out, so that was probably why.

Okay, Hermione, the real reason I got rid of the scars is that I was a real mess, who couldn't wear a long sleeved shirt and pants without feeling self conscious. They took to calling me 'elf queen' because of the charms on my face to hide those scars. I'm not as at ease with myself as Luna is. So when I heard that Hermione was working on regeneration magic, and had figured out what to do, I was her first human victim...sorry Hermione, volunteer. No, I can't get this grin off my face.

Actually, yes I can, simply by looking at you, Harry. I had a crush on you when I was between the ages of ten and twelve. Then you started to treat me as a friend. I was lost, then. Harry, I love you so much that it hurts to see you like this. I love you so much that I would take the pain into myself, knowing it would kill me, just to see you happy again.

I'd dance at your wedding to another woman, knowing you were happy.

Yes, I know I'm crying, damn it. I love ... we love you, Harry, and it's killing me ... us to see you in so much pain. I know I'll never have your love, but please Harry, come back to us. Can I at least have your friendship again?

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Ginny was crying now, and without thinking, Harry took her into his arms and let her cry against him. He realized quickly that it had been a very bad idea, because he could feel all his own unshed tears trying to break free of their prison.

She broke free of him, feeling the fight within him. "I'm sorry, Harry, I shouldn't have..."

"It's not you, Ginny. I haven't allowed myself feelings since then. I was taught by the best that feelings are a liability. They get in the way when things need to be done. So I shut them off when the four of you were taken and tortured, and went in and killed all twenty of them. No feelings. I was a much better fighter for that. They were all dead before any of them could say anything to give the warning to the others. If I'd allowed myself feelings, then I'd have lost precious moments worrying about each of you, and then most of them would have been able to Apparate out."

"Then holding me closely to your chest and crying over my eyes was to make me feel better, and not because you actually felt anything for me?" Luna asked him with a piercing look.

He met her gaze for only a moment, and then looked at the floor. "Yes. I'm sorry."

Ron snorted from his chair. "Jeez, chum, I'm oblivious about reading other people's emotions and I can tell you were lying! Pull the other one!"

Harry looked up, pain in his eyes. Suddenly he picked up his now empty bottle of butterbeer and heaved it as hard as he could toward the garbage can, where it shattered loudly. As they looked in shock, he sank to his knees and began to cry uncontrollably. "Damn you!" he sobbed.

He cried only for a few moments before he visibly pulled himself together. "I'm sorry," he said. "I'm not usually that weak. I'll try not to let it happen again."

Hermione helped him to his feet, and then gently stroked his left cheek with the back of her right hand. "And we're going to do everything we can, Harry, to make sure it does." Tears began to come to her eyes. "Ron, I think you should go next, honestly. Mine is the more horrific sounding tale, I think." Ron nodded his agreement.

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*Ron:*

I really don't know what to say, Harry. They got me. I have very few scars on my body. After all, Trixie - sorry, my name for Bellatrix - Trixie seemed to have the fun of using *Crucio* on me; then again, as I recall, she liked to use that one a lot. Sort of a one trick pony, I think. I think she actually got off on that. She'd go all unfocused, and her breathing would get fast, and I noticed that her nipples would become visible through her robes, and she'd moan occasionally, and ... thank you, Ginny. It's still easy to slip back into hiding when I think too hard about the time that I was under their control.

You actually seem to register surprise that her "Harry needs you" was what brought me out. You never heard how I came out of it in the first place, did you? No, of course not - you were here, and I came out of it because I owe you big time.

Actually, Harry, there's another reason, but I won't tell you that one, yet. I don't think you're ready for it yet. We'll build up to that little shocker. No, Ginny, I am not carrying Harry's baby. It's been three years - I'd have given birth already.

You know how good it is to see that smile on your face, even if it was only a second or two long? Honestly.

I'm certainly not surprised that they drove me insane with pain. If they could do that to trained Aurors like Neville's parents, then what chance did I stand to stay sane? So I sat there and gibbered for two and a half years.

We've spent six months looking for you, you git! That's why! It's not like you made it easy to locate you. I sort of think that was the idea, right?

Gah. Here I am, screaming at you. I'm sorry. My main purpose was to tell you what brought me out of my screaming heebie-jeebies. You. These sexy young things walked into the room to tell me they were leaving. Yes, I include you, Ginny. I may be your brother, but I do have eyes. Why do you think I escorted you carrying a Quidditch bat?

Anyway, these three come in and sit with me for a while, and then Hermione broaches the subject. "Ron, we wanted you to know that we won't be visiting for a while. Harry needs us, and we're going to go find him."

They tell me I immediately focused and said, "How do you know that he needs us? Do you feel it too?" Yeah. I remember saying it, but I thought it took a bit longer to get to a coherent statement. Turns out all four of us could feel that you needed our help. So I told the little voice in my head that was trying to drag me back inside to hide from the pain; I told him to shut the fuck up, and let me get on with helping my best friend. I got my clothes from St. Mungo's, after telling them that they were not going to keep me for observation for another six months, thank you very much. The Minister for Magic came to make sure I was all right, and then sent me home.

Why am I smirking when I say that? The man they chose to replace Fudge after he was murdered was a bit unlikely from most people's point of view. Percy held the job as an interim thing, and was mildly depressed to see how fast they voted in someone to replace him permanently. Yes, we're talking with Percy again - he's still a bit of a prat, but at least he's not a thundering arse-hole anymore. No, I'm not telling you who it is. Consider it incentive to come back to England, if only long enough to stop in on Mum and Dad and the rest.

Seriously though, chum. It was knowing that the impression that you were in trouble was not an hallucination that brought me out into the real world again. They've said it, and I will too, Harry - you did everything for us. You rescued us, and brought us out alive. We owe you everything, if only for that. But we all love you, Harry, and we'd all die for you. Friends are that way.

Don't look at me that way. If you knew that going in to save our lives would have cost you your own life, would you have sat back and said, "Damn, I'll miss them"? I didn't think so. You'd have walked in there just like you did, and saved as many of us as you could before you were killed. So how could we sit back and watch you die one day at a time?

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Harry was stunned by what Ron had said. He could feel the tears coming again, but he ruthlessly quashed them, even more viciously than before.

"Not gonna work, chum," Ron said. "Your facade started to break while you were fondling that redheaded bit of fluff over there ..."

"Fluff, am I?" Ginny huffed as she walked over to Ron.

"Fluff, I said. Your facade started to break, and we're not leaving you until you either tell us to leave, in right mind enough to make the decision without trying to hurt yourself even more, or when we've helped you out of your own private hell."

"Fluff?" Ginny asked again dangerously, and then began tickling her brother, who began to try to wriggle out of her grasp, but she obviously had years of practice with this. Luna grinned and joined in, and it rapidly devolved to the three of them rolling on the floor.

Harry watched this for a moment, and then walked into his kitchen to find another butterbeer. He heard footsteps behind him and turned to see Hermione standing behind him. He handed her the butterbeer and reached for another one.

"Problem, Harry?" she asked.

"I have two incredibly sexy nude women on my floor in there, tickling my best friend, and I am unbelievably aroused watching that. So I thought it best to step away, for privacy's sake, if nothing else."

Hermione put her arms around Harry and pulled him into a tight hug. A moment later, she murmured with a slight giggle, "Mmm, yes, I can tell you're aroused."

"Hermione!" he said, finding that he wasn't actually as shocked as he tried to sound.

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*Hermione:*

I'm sorry, Harry, I couldn't resist.

You really don't get it, do you Harry? You have three women here who love you. Who love you so much that they would gladly die for you. Gladly, mind you. If any one of the *four* of us knew that our death would bring you back from this hell you've driven yourself to, we would go to it with a smile on our faces.

I see by the look on your face that you're remembering how you found me when you broke in on the Death Eaters. I also know that you and I had talked about some of the ways our first time might be, and taking me tied down was definitely one of them. Me tied down with Draco Malfoy raping me for the third time, while Crabbe and Goyle, and whoever the hell else they had there waited their next turns was definitely not one of them.

I think the closest I ever came to being scared of you was watching you as you gave those ... well, I'd have said Neanderthals but that would insult Neanderthals, but I think you get the gist of my choice of epithets against them. Watching you grow those poles from the stone floor, I didn't know what you were going to do with them until I saw you lift that Death Eater off the floor. Watching that sharp point come out his mouth was a little disconcerting. Actually, it was bloody terrifying, Harry.

Then you remembered some of our other conversations, from when we'd had those conversations about tortures through the ages, and you shortened and blunted all the stakes. I nearly retched then, Harry, but then I looked at Draco. Somehow, even then, that little fucker thought he was going to escape to live another day. My throat was raw, for the same reason that I was bleeding from my vagina and anus. If I'd been able to, I'd have cheered as you dropped him onto that stake.

Is it evil of me to enjoy the fact that he survived long enough for the Aurors to come and tsk over his predicament?

I think Ginny mentioned that I'd been working on regeneration magics. Well, you need to know why, Harry. All that they did to me, the things they used to rape me, other than their own foul bodies, well, the damage caused me to miscarry whoever's child it was. And unable to bear children of my own.

I was damned if I was going to let Draco and his ilk take that away from me. I want children, Harry, and I worked day and night to perfect the charms and spells that are starting to be used at St. Mungo's now.

I can see it in your eyes, Harry - what does my desire for children have to do with you? That's what your thinking right now, isn't it? You've always been so blind to how you affect people.

Harry, I admit that I want you healed for one very good reason; a very selfish one. You and I have never made love. And I want to bear your children; as many children as you want with me. Even at my worst, when I wouldn't let you near me, I've loved you. I wouldn't let you near me, not because I thought you'd hurt me, but because I didn't feel worthy of the most wonderful man I've ever known.

Damn - now I'm crying. I helped put you in this prison you're in, and I'll help you tear down the walls I helped to build. Even if you don't love me anymore. I can do no less for you.

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He held her as she cried. He was stunned by the revelation. He'd left because he thought she'd hated him for his intense cruelty toward the Death Eaters. To find out now ...

The howl of pain started somewhere deep in his gut, and he barely had time to activate the silencing charms before it escaped and he sobbed himself into insensibility.



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# Redemption

## Chapter 3

Harry awoke in his bed; he could tell by the aura of the room. He could also see sunlight through his closed eyelids, and mused over the odd dream he'd had - one with his old Hogwarts friends in it, getting him to break out of his self-imposed emotional exile. "Pity it wasn't real," he murmured.

"Pity what wasn't real?" he heard from in front of him, and his eyes snapped open to see beautiful brown eyes staring back at him.

"Hermione?" he asked. "That really happened last night?"

"Oh, the bit with the moose in a tutu?" said a deep voice from behind him. "Yeah, that happened, chum. We'll clean up the mess later on. We just wanted to be here for you. Could only fit three of us properly in this bed, so Hermione and I won the toss."

"Used *your* coin, huh?" he asked. He couldn't help it; good spirits were simply bubbling up out of him, and he moved his face slightly forward, and kissed Hermione's lips. He was going to make it a simple one, but she threw her arm around him, and drew him deeply into it. Finally, he broke free and hoarsely said, "Unless you're planning on inviting everyone else in on our first time, you'd best stop kissing me like that." She answered him by opening her lips slightly before kissing him again, and he moaned. "Gods, Hermione, it's not fair to them."

She reluctantly stopped kissing him, and giggled as she moved her hips against him for a moment. "Well, you feel as ready as I am, Harry."

"Hermione, don't ever let me go again." He smiled at her.

"I'll have to - I need to use the W.C.," she giggled. She climbed out of bed, and Harry was surprised to see that she was unselfconsciously nude, as she walked with a grace that made him sit up just to watch her for as long as he could. When she'd closed the door to the W.C., he noticed that Ron had been watching, too, as had Luna and Ginny, who were sitting on a conjured loveseat against one of the bedroom walls.

"God damn!" Ron breathed. "I think she could get a rise out of Blaise Zabini!"

Luna snorted. "You mean the Slytherin who not only came out of the closet, but staged the party and sold tickets?" At Ron's laughing nod, she changed the subject slightly. "She never fails to get me worked up when I see her like that."

"Does she know you feel that way?" Harry asked.

Ron looked at him. There was no sense of judgement in his face; it was purely a question. *What else would I expect from him?* he thought. As the door opened, he spoke. "Harry, it's time for something that I didn't tell you last night. It may not be a good time now, but I'll be uncomfortable if I don't tell you."

"Are you sure, Ron?" Hermione asked with some trepidation from the doorway to Harry's bedroom.

"It's now or never, 'Mione."

Harry looked between the two of them, and felt himself break slightly inside. *Damn it, I'm too late.* He kept it from his face, though, and said, "Don't worry, I've figured it out, and I have no problems with it."

"Really?" Ron asked. He relaxed visibly, and Harry found that he couldn't really hurt too much. His friend was so happy.

"I was so worried you'd have a problem with it," Hermione said, smiling widely. *They both are. How can I not be happy for them?*

"I have to admit that I wasn't sure how you'd react either, Harry," Ginny said from the loveseat, while Luna merely snorted. "What?"

"Wait for it," Luna said simply. "I think you'll find it as amusing as I do." She turned to Hermione and said, "Could you put on a robe or something? You're doing interesting things to me right now, and it's not the right time for an orgy, I think," she said with a smile.

"What do you think, Harry?" Hermione asked. "Should I get dressed or stay nude?"

"If you stay nude, I can't think," he laughed.

"That settles it," she laughed. "Nudity it is!"

Harry laughed and got out of bed, embarrassed at his rampant condition, but with the others nude, it really would have been rude not to be 'dressed' the same way. "I believe that I should get some breakfast going. Sound like an idea?" he asked as he walked toward the kitchen. Grabbing the full apron, he hung it around his neck and rummaged for the eggs and bacon, and a few potatoes. "How's eggs, bacon, and hash browns sound to you guys? I figured I'd make an omelot."

"Omelot?" Ron asked with amusement.

"Well, an omelette tends to be for one or two people, and this egg concoction will be for more than that, hence omelot." His bladder chose then to remind him of its existence, and he left with a quick apology. When he returned, he found Hermione cracking eggs into one of his bowls. She'd pulled out a number of his spices, and had a cheese grater grating some cheese off to the side.

He and Ron stood there for a moment simply watching her, and Harry murmured to his friend, "You are a very lucky man. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes, yes I do," Ron said, looking Harry in the eye before pulling him into a hug. "I've missed you, chum."

As they hugged, Luna gently elbowed Ginny. "Here it comes," she giggled.

After enjoying the hug more than he'd ever feel comfortable admitting to Ron, he finally said, "You know, she can start wearing her ring again if she wants to."

Ron broke from the hug and looked at Harry as if Harry had grown a new head. "What are you talking about?"

"That bit in the bedroom. You and Hermione. I don't have any problems with that."

"What?" Ron was looking more confused by the second.

"It was fairly obvious from the way you were reacting. You and Hermione are engaged, right? I can understand not wanting to tell me until you felt a little more secure in how I'd react."

Ron's face went white. "Oh shit."

"What is it, Ron?" Hermione asked in alarm. "What's wrong?"

"He thinks we're engaged." The bowl she was holding fell from her grasp as her hands flew to her mouth, and it was only Harry's Quidditch reflexes and skill with wandless magic that kept him from a shattered bowl and egg all over his floor.

"But, the way everyone was reacting in there ... I was just assuming that you two had decided on an open relationship, what with knowing that Hermione and those two were lovers, and that we'd ..." Harry's face took on a look of confusion, and he almost wanted to cry from the looks of it. "I thought ... oh, Jesus, Hermione, I'm sorry – I just realized how insulting what I was thinking was. But I ..."

She ran over to Harry and started to try to hug him, but suddenly didn't know what to do. Luna, on the other hand, was laughing raucously elsewhere in the room, with Ginny holding her in the chair, with a wide grin on her face.

"Why is she laughing so hard, Ginny?" Harry asked.

"The misunderstanding. Ron still has to tell you that ... well, it's his to tell. Part of you wants to know what the secret is, but a bigger part of you wants to celebrate not poaching on another man's wife so much that you'd like to bend Hermione over the kitchen counter right now and plant that baby she wants so badly."

Harry stood as if *Stupefied* for several seconds before breaking out in a wide grin. "Oh no," he said, taking Hermione into his arms as he realized that she was still available, and that she wasn't angry at him for what he'd thought. "I want face to face. I want to look in those eyes when we finally make love for the first time." He kissed her with all the passion he had for her. He wished that things had been different, because he would have proposed to her, and probably been married to her by now.

When the kiss broke, she smiled up at him and simply said, "Yes."

"Gods, if only that was the answer to the question I was thinking," he breathed in her ear.

"Well, I don't know what you were thinking, but I took the kiss as a proposal. Somehow, it felt like it."

"Are you telepathic, Hermione?" he asked in wonder.

"No."

"Then it's simply your blinding intelligence, my beautiful, sweet, sexy fiancée," Harry said, picking her up and swinging her around once.

The others came around and congratulated them, but Ron quickly stepped away, worried. "I still have to tell you something, but I don't want to ruin the moment."

Harry looked at Hermione, and his face fell slightly. "Actually, I have something to admit, too, that might make Hermione decide to rethink saying yes. I'm going to say it one way or another, but if you want to go first, you can."

"Let's flip a coin," Ron said. "Heads, you go first; tails, I do."

"Let's use an American coin, Ron, not one of the twins' joke products." Ron laughed and snapped his fingers as if caught.

His face fell slightly. "Harry, this is important, and if I don't say it now, I never will. I just hope I can keep your friendship." He took a deep breath. Harry noticed that all three of the girls were looking at the two of them in varying degrees of apprehension. Oddly enough, given the foretelling she'd been doing thus far, Luna was the most worried. "I came to a realization when I came out of the state I was in. Part of the reason was what I told you. You're my best friend, and I love you as my best friend. Problem is, Harry - there more to the feeling than that. I love you, Harry. As more than just a friend." He hung his head.

Harry smiled and walked over to his friend. and pulled up his chin. "Nice to know I wasn't the only one sneaking a peek in the showers, chum." Ron jaw dropped slightly right at the moment that Harry's mouth came forward, so they ended up rather quickly with their tongues in mortal combat. When the kiss finally broke, he said, "I think you can guess what I was worried about as well, Ron." He turned to speak to Hermione, but found her with Luna's arms wrapped around her, and Ginny standing behind her. It was fairly obvious that Luna and Hermione were kissing as deeply as Ron

and Harry and Ginny were rather obviously doing things to Hermione with her hands. Laughing, he said, "Is it safe to assume that no one currently in this room is completely straight or gay?"

Hermione disengaged reluctantly from the other two women. "Harry," she growled in a voice that caused most of his blood to rush south, "breakfast first. You're going to need your strength."

"I just hope I survive losing my virginity," he laughed.

Her eyes went wide, and when he nodded, she growled again, "To hell with breakfast," and pounced him.

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He stood on the balcony and looked out over the city he now called home. He'd moved across an ocean to get away from his fame, and it had worked, thankfully. No one knew that he lived in New York City now, and he was perfectly happy to keep it that way. Especially now that he'd started his way back toward being a real person again. *Damn, what a roller-coaster twenty-four hours these have been. From the depths of despair to the very pinnacle of joy.*

He heard his next-door neighbour open the door to her balcony, and she stepped out. She was a fairly pretty girl, and her hair was the most brilliant natural copper-red hair that Harry had ever seen. *Even redder than any of the Weasleys.* "Nice - holy..." She blushed deeply. "Sorry, but I never expected to see you on your balcony without a stitch on."

"Whoops! Sorry, let me go get a towel." He turned to walk back inside.

"Please, no. I've seen you out here so many time, and you always looked so sad. I guess I'm afraid that you'll walk inside and when you come back out, you'll be the sad person I've seen before." She blushed. "Besides, it's not like the scenery is unpleasant. You're a very attractive man."

Harry laughed and bowed as one would to royalty. "Thank you milady. What I see from here is quite enjoyable to look at as well."

"I'm not stripping out here on my balcony," she laughed.

Harry turned beet red. "I'm sorry, miss – I never intended to ..." He stopped as he watched her fold over laughing.

Finally, when she was able to speak, she said, "Don't worry about it, Harry. I took it the way you meant it. You're saying I'm pretty, right?" He nodded, still blushing. "I said, don't worry about it. Imagine what I'll be able to say at work tomorrow. 'I spent part of the evening talking across balconies to a naked Adonis.' Problem with that is that all my female co-workers will want to come visit suddenly." She laughed, and then her eyes widened. Harry turned to see Luna walking out onto the balcony, and found himself wondering if there was kneazel somewhere in her background, given the way she walked. "Oh my! You had her in the apartment, and you still think I look pretty?"

"I'm not the only one in there, miss," Luna said across the balcony. "His fiancée is in there, along with his best friend and his sister."

"Whose sister?" the girl asked, puzzled. "Wait, your fiancée is in there, and there's a naked woman walking out who *isn't* her?"

"Yes," Luna replied serenely. "The sister in question is his best friend's sister. They both have hair almost as red as yours."

"That's hard to believe. Oh my goodness! Was anyone dressed in there?" Harry turned to face the door again and saw Ron, Ginny, and Hermione stepping out onto the balcony. *No, it's women in general that are related to kneazels. My gods, are they beautiful!*

Hermione looked across the way and giggled before saying, "Depends on when during the day you're talking about. This time yesterday, yes. Since this morning, no."

"You are certainly secure in your relationship, if you don't mind him being around other naked women."

"Nude, please," Luna said. "Nude means merely unclothed. Naked means uncovered. Being at work and screamed at by your boss makes you feel naked to the world, right?"

The woman nodded. "Even so, I'm impressed. So, how long have you been engaged?"

"Since this morning," he said with a laugh. "Y'know, I've never gotten your name before, miss."

"Call me Dora," she laughed in return. "Is there an undress code for your apartment?"

"Why? Want to come over and talk with the four of us for a while?" Ginny asked.

"I wouldn't mind it, if you don't."

"Come on over. I'll wrap a towel around myself to answer the door, then. See you in a minute." He walked back inside, and as he motioned for the towel that shot to him, he stopped in mid-stride, causing the towel to shoot past him and gently slap Ginny in the chest. He barked out a quick laugh, and said, "This is going to be fun." He looked at Luna, who actually looked puzzled. "Oh, this is going to be *really* fun!"

He took the towel from Ginny, pausing long enough to give her a kiss that made her knees weak, and then opened the door, holding it in front of himself. Dora stepped in, and Hermione snapped her fingers. "Ron? I need help getting those chairs from the bedroom?" Ron looked blank for a moment, and then nodded. They came back a few moments later dragging matched seats.

With everyone sitting, Harry smiled. "So, since this is our first real meeting, Dora, what do you want to know? Why we're all sitting in here nude?"

Whether we were doing what I'm sure your mind is contemplating two guys doing with three goddesses in the room?"

She grinned. "With how comfortable you five are, I'm fairly sure that you have, you lucky stiff, which answers both questions. I know it's prying, but I guess I've always wondered what happened to you in Britain that made you come here? Your accent does make it a bit obvious that you're not a New Yorker."

He frowned. "Hell of a topic. I can understand it, though. Let me think for a while, because I really don't know how to say it believably, even though it all happened."

"Just tell me flat out, I'll try to believe you."

"Bellevue's number is by the phone. I've thought once or twice about using it on myself. Well Tonks, the short form is that something truly horrible happened to my friends, and I've been blaming myself for it for about three years. They decided that it was time I break out of the self-imposed incarceration, and came for me. That was last night. I haven't cried like that since ... well, actually, ever. I think I even cried for Sirius last night."

"So I'm now back in touch with my best friends. And sometime soon I have to go back to England to tender an apology that by all rights should not be accepted. Not after what I did to him. That's just inexcusable."

"You know him," Hermione said. "He'll forgive you."

"Yeah, you're right." He looked up at his visitor. "Is the Order still active, and if so, do they know where Dumbledore is?"

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She stared at him for a long moment, while the others looked at him as if he'd gone crazy. Finally, Dora threw her head back and laughed. "What gave me away?"

"Before a short time ago, we hadn't shared more than twenty or thirty words in our entire time talking in three years, and yet you knew my name was Harry. No one had said it where a Muggle could hear before you used the name. And then there's the fact that you didn't react at all when I used the name Tonks. My guess is that you're still in regular or semi-regular contact with either the Ministry or the Order, or both, so you're used to hearing the name Tonks, which is why you didn't react when I said it. If you'd really been the Muggle you were playing at, you'd have asked me who or what a 'Tonks' was."

He paused. "Let me guess – someone was worried about 'The Boy Who Lived' and sent a watcher?" He grinned suddenly. "Or maybe 'wotcher' is a better way of saying it?"

Her worried look evaporated, and the relieved sigh she let loose made her look as if she were deflating. "I was so worried you'd take it wrong, Harry." She looked sadly at him. "I was afraid to let you know I was here. I was afraid that you'd take it wrong, and go somewhere we'd never find you. These four aren't the only ones who care about you, Harry."

He stood back up and walked over to her. "Will you accept a 'thank you' hug from a naked man?" he asked with a grin.

"If he's as hot looking as you are, then hell yes!" she laughed. "Do I look stupid or something? Don't answer that, by the way." She stood and hugged him tightly, and he could feel her shuddering.

Quietly he whispered, "Should I let you go into the bedroom? You feel like you want to cry, the way you're shaking."

"No, I'm fine," she replied, voice quavering slightly. "Just a *lot* of relief at seeing you happy, after three years of darkness." When she felt him start, she quickly amended, "Not that kind of dark; not with a capital 'D', but more the type from when you've locked your soul away from everyone. You hurt so much, Harry, and so many of us wanted to help you." She lifted her head from his shoulder to kiss his cheek, but discovered that he was facing her, and found her lips meeting his. *Oh shit!* she thought for only a moment and she pressed her lips against his and kissed him harder than even she expected.

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He looked stunned when the kiss was over, and was more than slightly embarrassed to realize that he was poking her in the stomach. Trying to make her feel better, since she looked like a trapped wild animal at the moment, he said, "Damn! If I could bottle this, I'd make a killing in the cologne market!" She shivered, and suddenly pushed away from him and disappeared with a loud crack. "Shit."

Hermione was already picking up her clothes. "Screw the underwear; there's no time," she muttered as she jumped into her skirt and blouse, and shot out the door. Harry could hear her knocking on the door and saying, "Please, Dora, we need to talk. If you're not careful, I'm going to splinch out here, and I don't think either of us want that." He was pleased to hear the door open, and Hermione said, "Thank you, Dora. We'll solve this problem one way or another," before the door closed.

Harry chuckled nervously. "As I believe I once heard Professor Snape say once – Oy."

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"Come here, Tonks," Hermione said, pulling the shaking woman into an embrace.

"Doesn't it bother you to know that I kissed him hard enough to make him ... well, hard?" *And that I wouldn't have minded helping him with that problem?*

"So maybe one of those three will help him with it." She felt Tonks stiffen in her embrace. "You need to know something before we go anywhere

else, Tonks. The five of us over in that apartment are all bisexual, and we all became lovers today." She paused. "Read into that what you will. You'd probably be right, too."

She pushed the woman who was currently a redhead to arm's length. "Does it help to know that his own private nickname for you in school was Nymph? Came up with that one when he was talking with me about mythology, and we were arguing about which ones had origins in the Wizard world, and which ones were made up or wishful thinking. We'd gotten to nymphs, and I scoffed. He said quietly that he personally knew four girls beautiful enough to blind a man. Considering that at the time it was just us two, he blushed and tried to apologize. I kept a stern look on my face and made him tell me who they were. I remember him leaning forward and brushing his lips across mine as he said that I was first on the list. I finally got him to admit that two of the others were Luna and Ginny, and surprised him when I agreed with him a little more vociferously than he expected. He didn't know I was bi, and that I was in a threesome with those two. I almost had to threaten him with no kissing for a week to get him to admit that you were the fourth one he was thinking of."

"He doesn't even know what I look like in my original form. Hell, even *I* don't know anymore what my base form looks like!" Tonks wailed.

"Yes he does," Hermione said softly, pulling Tonks a little closer and putting her hand on Tonks' chest. "He's seen what you look like here. He'll never say it to you or me, unless I tell him that I don't mind, but he's always fancied you, Tonks." She blushed furiously as she said, "He's not the only one, either." She shook her head such that her hair tried to cover her face. "I'd better head over to Harry's place. We're not trying to force you into anything, Tonks, and you won't lose us as friends, no matter what. We're just letting you know that anything more than just friendship is not necessarily out. I'll let myself out and let them know you're okay." She headed to the door.

She was stopped by a hand on her arms, and turned into a shaking embrace. "Thank you, Hermione." Tonks began to cry on her shoulder, and she gently patted the crying woman's back.

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# Redemption

## Chapter 4

It had been about ninety minutes when there was a knock at the door, and Harry opened it to find a slightly stunned Hermione and a grinning Tonks behind her. "Wotcher, Harry!" Tonks said as if nothing had happened an hour and a half ago. They stepped through the door, and Hermione, in her more than slightly rumpled clothing, stumbled into Harry's arms. "Sorry 'bout that. She's a little weak right now."

"What the hell happened?" he asked, curiosity and worry warring within him. Hermione began to whisper in his ear, giggling occasionally, and his eyes widened. He also became rather noticeably aroused as well. "Damn! This may be the only time in my life that I've wished I was a girl," he murmured.

He got Hermione to a chair and then turned back to the group. "Before this turns into a royal cluster-fuck in both the literal and military senses, we need to get something clear. I will be returning to England soon, if only to let the people who care know that I'm still alive. More importantly, I need to apologize to Professor Dumbledore for what I did to him. In fact, I think what I did may have been a crime, so the Ministry will need to be told I'm returning, to prepare for my trial." He blew air out through puffed cheeks. "Time to stop running from everything."

Tonks looked at him asked, the worry evident on her face and in her voice, "Have you told them what you did? I don't know all of it, so I can't speak to the legal aspects of it."

"No, I haven't, and that's as inexcusable as what I did to Professor Dumbledore. I was enjoying myself rather than being completely honest with them." He motioned and his clothes flew to his hands. "I need to take a shower before I tell you, even though I'll probably need another after I'm done telling you." He tossed them into the hamper, grabbed clean clothes, and stepped into the shower, where he found Luna preparing the water. "I'm joining you. I already know what you did, my love, and I understand why you did it. You'll need someone to hold while you're in there." She smiled at him then. "And if anything else happens while we're in there, I don't think anyone is going to complain very loudly." She blushed demurely. "Especially not me."

He stepped in behind her in the shower, absently noting once again that it was certainly a joy to stand behind this girl when his mood was better. "You say you know what it is that I want to tell everyone, and that you understand?"

She turned to face him. "Let's just say that the thing that bothers you the most took the heart out of a lot of people." She opened her arms to him as he trembled and began to cry again, great shuddering sobs.

She stroked his hair as he cried, and as the sobs slowly subsided, she said, "I know you and I love you, Harry. I am here for you, and I will be for the remainder of your days on Earth." He felt a tingle shoot through him, and he stepped back in shock and surprise. "Yes, Harry, I just swore a Wizard's Oath to you, and I swore it knowing what will happen in the many, many years to come. I would also bet with you that the others will gladly wear the same oath to you, *after* they know what you did, and why you did it." She lifted her lips to his and kissed him deeply, and wrapped her legs around him as the kiss progressed. "Thank you," she gasped in his ear.

Out of the shower, he cast the drying charm on both of them, and enjoyed the way it quickly ran through her hair as if a breeze had rushed through the room. He dressed quickly and led her back into the living space and waited for her to sit down.

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*Harry:*

You four have all told me your stories. Well, it's time to tell you the one that glues them all together, and when I'm done, I'll free you from your Oath, Luna, and not hold it against you. I'm not sure I'd swear an oath to someone like me.

Don't protest until you know the whole story, okay? You can say that you couldn't feel that way, but you need to remember that you simply don't have all the facts.

Let's start at the beginning, where Luna mentioned. I came out from the W.C. in the Three Broomsticks, and noticed that you weren't at the table anymore, which was a little annoying, because I was sort of interested in snogging Luna a bit more, and then talking to Hermione and finding a spot to do considerably more than snogging. I sat down for a while to wait for you guys to be done holding Ron up while he emptied his stomach. When something like fifteen or twenty minutes had passed, I thought it might be a good idea to go check on you guys, even though I was a bit peeved – okay – pissed off that you hadn't even sent one of you back inside to tell me what was going on. I'll admit that after that kiss, I'd been hoping it might be Luna.

Anyway, I stepped outside and headed over to the nearest alley, where I found evidence of Ron's dislike for firewhiskey, but obviously no sign of you. I got worried, so I ran up to the school, and headed for Madame Pomfrey. No sign of you. On to the Gryffindor common room, and then into our room. No sign of you. Now I was pissed, and decided to go study, and planned to give you a piece of my tiny little mind when I saw you again during dinner, since you'd obviously decided to ditch me and have some fun of your own.

Yeah. While you guys were being tortured, I forgot everything I ever knew about the four of you and decided you'd gone off without me to snog or something. I stand by the tiny little mind comment for that reason alone.

When you weren't at dinner, I got *really* mad. I was snapping at everyone, and I was given detention for making a first year cry for no good reason. She'd be a fifth year student this coming September, wouldn't she? I ought to find her and apologize to her as well. I ended up storming back to the common room at some ungodly hour that night, and when I still didn't see you three – sorry, Luna, but being in a different House – I know you understand, but – okay, I'll finish. Well, I was feeling really pissy at the time, so I sat in the common room to wait for you. I was angry enough that I



was willing to do the detentions I'd have earned for the rest of the year just for waking the entire school up. Yeah, I'd have screamed at you that loudly. I was ready to tell the four of you to go fuck yourselves in the Great Hall, and you can take that with both meanings.

Well, I was in a towering rage, and Snape gave me a detention the second he saw me, because he knew what was coming. If I hadn't felt Ron's mind snap, I *would* have caused that scene, too. Then Dumbledore told me that I needed to calm down if I was going to be of any use at all to you four, and it suddenly hit me, what my life had been teaching to that point. Living with a family that should have been reported to social services, and who were very certain to make sure that I was aware that they did not love me, and that no love would be accepted in return. Getting me used to a teacher who absolutely hated me because of my father and his friends. Always making sure I was aware that there were others who knew more about my situation than I did, and making sure that I was never completely brought up to speed. Having me take Occlumency lessons with a teacher who would have more than happy to have burned my brain out if he had been allowed to. Getting me used to being treated in a grandfatherly by someone I'd grown to look up to, and then withholding that affection. Not letting me visit the only people who did show me affection. Even that incredibly curvy DADA teacher in our sixth year, whose private lessons were to teach me control of my emotions in order to make my martial arts that she was teaching me more effective.

My entire life to that point was teaching me that emotions were a bad thing to have. Even what I'd been thinking just prior to feeling Ron snap contributed. 'Don't love anyone, because they'll betray you, just like your parents and Dumbledore.' So I went cold and explained the situation to Dumbledore in that same cold voice.

Okay, it wasn't cold, because that's one of the things I do when I get angry. Flat affect? Is that what they call losing all emotion from your face? Of course you read it somewhere, Hermione.

Anyway, back to the story. I told Dumbledore what I had felt, and then we all dicked around for a while as they tried to verify that I might actually have felt what I felt. And then we had to figure out where the hell they'd taken you.

Somewhere along the line, someone found that your captors had dropped one of their blowguns, and brought it to have tests done on it. I picked it up after someone announced that it was obviously a portkey, and listened to a lecture from Snape about how stupid I must be to run the risk of being sent to the same place, wherever that might be. I looked him in the eye and said "Malfoy Manor". Even Dumbledore couldn't stop him from calling me every kind of idiot and moron for thinking that even Lucius Malfoy would be stupid enough to use the most obvious place he could think of. Still don't know how I traced it.

I remember looking at him and then turning to Dumbledore and saying "Get people to Malfoy Manor. They'll meet me there." I then touched the dart.

I guess not having anyone in that specific dungeon room was why the door was open and no one was in it. I went to the first one I saw, and found what was left on Ginny hanging on the wall. I could smell a fire, and looked carefully at the group in the room. The way they were situated it was going to be difficult for me to get in past them, so I did something else unforgivable, and woke Ginny up. She moaned and they all turned to face her. As soon as they were facing that way, I came through the door at a run, *Stupefy* ing two of them immediately, and leaping into the air to kick Crabbe and Goyle's dad's in the stomachs as they turned back toward the door. Oops, I missed and crushed their testicles instead. I *Accio* 'd the fifth one's wand to me, and then fired it back at him. Thirteen inches of mahogany going through someone's eye tends to put a crimp in their style, you know.

I gently pulled Ginny from the wall and put her in stasis. Kind of amusing, in a sick way. The blood I was covered in when I got to Ron's torturers wasn't Death Eater blood, or mine. By the way, I don't know if anyone had told you this before, Ginny, but the fire wasn't for torture purposes, unless some of the utensils there were for you to watch as they cooked and ate parts of you. It was a cooking fire.

Okay, everyone done vomiting in the sink? Might want to be ready for further use of it, 'cause it's not going to be gentler from here on in. Thanks, Tonks, for running water through the sink – that's stainless steel, and probably wouldn't handle the acids very well. Oh, I didn't know that, Hermione. I guess it will.

That's how the other four ended up with their wands embedded in their hearts, Tonks. I saw the cooking fire and got nasty. As I recall, you also found them well cooked. That's what happens when someone casts *Incendio* through a wand in someone's chest.

Aren't you glad that I created those waste baskets?

Ron's torturers were next on my list. After locking Ginny's door, I headed next door. They definitely had felt secure, I guess, because they were all facing Ron, and not the door. I could tell Bellatrix from behind, which probably means something far more disturbing than I intend to think about right now.

If I ever see that elf woman again, I think I need to thank her for teaching me some of those spells. Those magical acid arrows were wonderful, and those ice spears weren't too bad either. I seemed to have some problem with my aim, I noticed. I thought I was aiming for center of mass, which is an easier target to hit, but I kept spearing people through the eyes. Trixie, as Ron was enjoying calling her, was dealing with the results of having acid splashed on her, so she wasn't exactly prepared when I cast that flesh to stone spell.

Oh, you never heard what I did to her then? Well, somewhere along the line in my training, I'd learnt a simple spell for slicing through inanimate objects, so I cut off her arms and legs, lowering her gently to the ground before reversing the spell. Oh, I forgot. In the midst of it, I smoothed out her face a little. Her lips always looked so out of place on her face, so I basically Transfigured them away. She made the most interesting sounds when she was flesh again - that Harlan Ellison story title says it all - '*I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream*'. Oh, sorry, you three. He's a Muggle writer. Kind of dark work, which is why I took to it.

Oh, the other five? Dead. Three ice spears in three separate eyes, one who'd opened his mouth to shout as the arrow reached him, another so acid burned to have no real chance at survival, and Trixie. I knelt next to her and said, "I ought to do to you what I did to the elder Crabbe and Goyle, but you don't deserve the quick death of a wand to your heart and an *Incendio*. You get to lay here armless, legless, and mouthless until someone finds

you."

I led Ron to the dungeon I'd entered by and gently put him to sleep, and then locked the door. Did the same to Trixie's room, and then went hunting for the next one. Luna already pretty well described what I did when I found her room. I find that I'm more than a little happy to know that Narcissa survived long enough to feel herself die, after marrying that shit and whelping that thing. Yes, Hermione, whelping - I used the word properly.

I'm still sorry that I had to leave you alone, Luna. I know you understand, but it doesn't mean that I don't feel guilty about it.

On to the one that will haunt me until the day I die. Hermione. They were nowhere in the dungeons and I was getting a little worried. I carefully headed upstairs, and began to search the Manor House. I finally found the Malfoy Manor's ... recreation room. Hermione was the recreation of the evening, apparently. Have your trash bins ready, because I'm going to try to go through this only once, and I hate repeating myself on something like this.

The younger Crabbe and Goyle and three others that I have no knowledge concerning their names were watching as Lucius Malfoy woke her up. Draco stood by her head, and when she awoke and whimpered, said, "Ah, good, she's awake again, Father. Shall we continue with our fun?" It was when Lucius moved that I realized that Hermione was naked and tied tightly to a specially built table - one obviously designed for such a purpose as they were putting it to. Lucius moved around to between her legs and proceeded to ... he began to rape her. Yes, I know I'm crying, god damn it! Lucius made a comment about Hermione's tightness, and how excited she must be, given how slippery she felt. It was her damned blood they were using as lubricant! This got Draco excited, and he proceeded to rape her mouth. I could hear her whimpering, and my heart broke before my soul shattered. I still don't remember what I cast to freeze the five watchers, and I must have done something other than *Expelliarmus* to throw Lucius and Draco as far away as I did.

I remember clearly how I stalked into the room, freezing Draco and Lucius before removing my robe to give Hermione some sense of modesty. You probably don't remember flinching from me as I lay the robe across you. Can't say as I blame you, for so many different reasons. It was when you rolled slightly, trying to get away, that I realized how completely that they had violated you, and I knew the punishment right then and there. You were lost to me forever, simply because I hadn't been there for you before they could destroy your life. Let me finish; all of you. I'm describing how I felt at the time, okay?

I have never been able to replicate what I did to grow those spikes up out of the floor. Then again, I've never again felt such a mixture of hatred, rage, despair, and loathing, and never want to. I rather crudely removed what little clothing any of them were wearing. Would you believe that not one of those assholes had any concept about why their wands should be with them at all times? Given Draco and Lucius, I'd have expected them to keep a spare shoved up their asses, although they'd have enjoyed that, probably. I unfroze one of the three nameless ones and gently lowered him onto the sharp spike, but he died too quickly, especially when the spike protruded from his mouth. I measured them all carefully and shortened all the stakes, blunting them. I expect *you* would wince, Hermione. You're the one who told me why they used short blunt stakes for impaling. For those of you still in the dark, it was why Draco, Crabbe, and Goyle survived to make it to St. Mungo's.

So, I carefully raised each one of them and set them gently onto their own respective spike. Is it wrong of me to gloat over the fact that Draco was so scared that he lost control of his bowels and bladder? I admit to having fun taunting him, as well. "I'm surprised you're not enjoying this more, Draco. I heard that you like long hard things up your ass." I then cast another spell I have no idea about, and bonded him to it, on a molecular level.

Your eyes will fall out if they go any wider, Hermione. For the rest of you, let's just say that where his internal organs ended and the stake began became difficult to tell.

Interesting. The only time any of you threw up was when I described what they *would* have done to Ginny. I've just described the slow torturous murder of quite a few people; things that were actually done, and nothing. Odd.

Anyway, we come to Lucius Malfoy. Him I lifted to the wall and chained there. I told you it was a recreation room. Well, just as I got Lucius locked in, I heard a commotion outdoors and realized as I heard Snape's voice that they'd gotten people to the Manor. I shielded the room like nobody's business and continued.

"Well, Lucius, it's down to you and me. Everyone else is either dead or dying. I kicked your wife in the head so hard that I broke her neck. Your bastard over there is one with his spike. Crabbe and Goyle seniors should be done cooking soon. Bellatrix is going to have trouble casting a *Cruciatus* Curse with no arms, legs, or mouth. Face it, you pureblood moron. I just went through twenty of you. *And none of this blood I'm wearing is mine*. Yeah, the child of a pureblood and a 'Mudblood' just went through twenty of you without breaking a sweat. And now he's going to kill you with his bare hands, no magic at all, in front of your puppy, on the extremely slight chance that he survives what was done to him."

It was then that I drove my hand into his body under the ribcage and reached up. I found his beating heart and tore the blood vessels one by one. The aorta was the last one, and he expired immediately after. Hell, I'd been surprised that he'd made it that far.

I pulled the still beating heart out and cast a stasis on it immediately, since I had plans for it. Ah, there we go. You surprise me, Hermione. I'd expect you to be retching.

It was only then that I lowered the barrier and let everyone into the room. I was glad that you were there, Tonks, when I went over to Hermione and all she did was shriek in horror. Given what she witnessed, I'm not surprised, honestly. And the fact that I was covered in blood wouldn't have helped any. You got her to St. Mungo's, and for that alone I thank you. I led the others downstairs, and was surprised by Aurors retching at some of what I'd done. I thought they'd seen much worse. I explained what I'd done with Ginny, and led them to Ron. I remember picking up Luna and carrying her out, where we portkeyed over to St. Mungo's ourselves.

I headed back to Hogwarts, where I chose to shower before going to see Dumbledore. Turned out I'd gotten back in time for dinner, so I chose to do it then, after most of the students were gone. Snape decided once again to cut loose on me. "Do you have any idea how irresponsible and ..."

...and stupid, idiotic, moronic, imbecilic, and a host of other words meaning a lack of brain power. Shut up, Severus. I have no time for you." I turned to face Dumbledore but was stopped by Snape reaching over in a towering fury and gripping my shoulder. I grabbed that arm, which happened to be the one with the Dark Mark, his left one, and yanked the sleeve up. "I just single-handedly killed twenty Death Eaters, Severus. Want me to make it twenty-one?"

The room was silent, and I continued to Dumbledore. "Sir, I have something to say to you. It is certain that, without a doubt, I needed the lessons you taught me as I grew. I was put in a household with a Muggle family whose treatment of me would have landed them in Family Court, had not you felt it better I stay with them. I was given Occlumency lessons with a teacher who makes no attempt to hide his open contempt for me, or his open destruction of the potions I created in class. I have no doubt that the only reason I had successful O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s in Potions is that this teacher was *not* the one giving the actual test. I also have no doubt that he would gladly see my wand broken for daring to be the child of James Potter. However, I digress."

"I was also taught that I was only a weapon, and repeatedly admonished not to let my emotions get the better of me. As mentioned concerning a certain Potions professor, I was told to trust him, based purely on your say-so, despite all the evidence of my own experiences that he shouldn't be trusted. I won't even go into the fact that you are eternally the mastermind. On second thought, let's. The express purpose of the Order of the Phoenix was to fight Voldemort. You *knew* when you resurrected it what the Prophecy was, and that it directly concerned me. And yet I was too young to be brought into the Order. I was to be kept in the dark about everything until I was sharpened to a fine edge and then sent to slice the head off the snake, and hopefully come panting back to you, happy to have done what you wanted. Well, I killed the bastard. Voldemort is well and truly dead now. His Death Eaters weren't, though, and I was just taught today about how effective I can be with no emotions. Look at me. Not a scratch. Twenty dead, assuming that Bellatrix, Draco, Crabbe, and Goyle don't survive, and they aren't likely to, what with the first having no mouth and the last three have very large spikes up their asses."

"What I wanted to say was this: your lessons through these seven years have been effective. What happened during these last twenty-four hours have finally torn the heart of out my chest. Therefore, since you were the architect of that..."

I reached into my bag and pulled out Lucius' heart and cancelled the stasis and stalked from the Great Hall, put my already packed trunk on my broom, and left Hogwarts. The screams from those remaining as blood shot from the heart as it started pumping again did make me come as close to smiling as I'd done in the last three years.

I can only assume that my wand is forfeit the minute I set foot in England again, though. Ah well. Would have been nice to have graduated, but not from that school. I couldn't even go back and finish up what needed finishing. Wonderful the lengths some idiot like me will go to make a point.

Went to St. Mungo's to try to visit you four, but Hermione screamed every time she saw me. They tried to tell me she did that with every man who entered the room, but I saw one of the doctors talking to her. I couldn't see Ron because they were trying to break the catatonic state he was in, and Ginny wouldn't see me, either. I just gave up, Luna. I'm sorry. I just assumed that you wouldn't want to have me visit either. Especially with those blank eye sockets staring at me, if that makes any sense. I am *really* glad you let them regenerate your beautiful eyes.

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"Oh, these aren't regenerated eyes, Harry. These are just like Moody's." She reached up and popped one of them out and held it out. His face fell, and he started to tear up. "Oh, don't worry, Harry. I prefer it this way. I was given the choice, and chose this route. I made certain, though, that they were designed to look exactly like my originals, which Narcissa had so politely left undamaged." She blushed. "I hoped to look at you again and have you still love to look in my eyes."

"How much like Moody's are they?" Ginny asked.

She giggled. "Exactly. It was easier to simply copy all the enchantments on Moody's over to mine. Which means that I have enchantments on these things that only Aurors really ever need. I enjoy the see-through vision, though," she said, looking over at Tonks and wiggling her eyebrows lasciviously.

She turned to face Harry, and saw that he was downcast. She walked over to Harry and lifted his chin. "Harry, would you be happier if I had my eyes regenerated? I will if it would make you happier."

He looked at her in shock. "No! Do it because you want to, Luna. Are you truly happier with eyes you can pull out and wash?"

"Actually, yes. I don't know why, but I have much better control of my visions now. You still don't get it, Harry. I need to you hear you be as honest as you can possibly be. Would you be happier if when you looked in my eyes, you knew that they were real, and not false ones enchanted to help me see better?"

He sat down heavily, and began to think. *Why do you want her to have natural eyes? To assuage your guilt? Remember, you didn't know that her eyes weren't natural until just now. Does it really matter? She's happy with these eyes, and you know damned well that she can see with them just as easily as she could with natural ones. And she does seem to enjoy what she can see that natural eyes couldn't see.*

He finally refocused on her and smiled. "Luna, if I discover that you had your eyes regenerated for the sole purpose of making me happy, I will spank you." Her eyes twinkled. "Okay then, I *won't* spank you." She laughed, and he joined her. "You made me think. I wasn't happy that they were removed, but you seem very happy with these, and until you told me, I thought they were natural. I will be happiest with the eyes that make you happiest, Luna." She popped it back into the socket, and he gently kissed her eyelids. "That does remind me, though - I told you that you could be released from your oath if you so wished. I stand ready to release you."

"I say to you again, Harry James Potter, that I will be with you until the end of your days, even if that requires that I remain as a ghost for a time. I pledge my life and my heart to you."

Hermione walked up and softly asked, "Would you rather that Harry and I not be engaged? He would happily marry any of us; you know that."

"Hermione, I will have of Harry that which makes me happiest - his love. I need no ring on my finger to know that. Nor does Ginny, now that he knows how deeply he loves her. However, we both know that you two would probably be celebrating the birth of your second child, or the fact of you carrying his third, if not for those events. You two have been meant to be married by the gods of this world. It is a bond that transcends mere mortal understanding."

Harry stood and looked at the others in surprise as they nodded vociferously at himself and Hermione. Ron walked up to him and said, "I pledge myself to the both of you, until death separates us. I will never again abandon you, Harry, if it is within my power, and gladly accept the curse that I will deserve if I do."

Ginny also pledged to Harry and Hermione, bringing tears to both their eyes. He turned to Hermione to say something, and found her looking oddly into his eyes. "Harry James Potter, I pledge my body and soul to you, for as long as we both shall live."

Harry responded by dropping to his knees in front of the group, head bowed. "In return, I swear myself to the five of you; to do whatever it takes to protect you, even to the cost of my own life. Never again will you be abandoned as once I did to you. I swear my life and soul to this."

All five of the others gasped as they felt the power of his oath flow through them. Tonks walked forward to him. "Why'd you include me, Harry? I wasn't there for you, and didn't get taken, either."

"How long have you been living in New York, Nymph?"

She blushed as she realized what he'd called her. "Since you came here. Three years."

"So you took three years out of your life to watch a broken man sit around and do nothing except keep physically fit. You put your life on hold. You could have been home, romancing, and enjoying your job. Instead, you sat here in New York watching an emotional cripple."

"I was watching a man tearing himself apart over something that he shouldn't; a man that I ... a man that I respect a great deal, Harry." She took a deep breath. "Tell me, Harry. Will you ever forgive yourself?"

"Maybe on the day that the sun glows with pink and purple paisleys and comes down out of the sky to shake my hand."

Hermione walked over to Tonks and held the woman as she started to cry, and Harry walked into his den and powered up his computer. "What's that, chum?" Ron asked as he watched Harry.

"Computer. Muggle device for doing a lot of interesting things, one of which is getting tickets to England. Can I assume that you all bought one way tickets, not knowing when you'd be returning?"

"Well, 'Mione did it, but yeah. One way." Ginny and Luna had walked into the room behind Ron, in order to give Tonks some privacy as she cried, and marvelled as Harry typed madly, the screen appearance changing as he accessed a number of websites and finally ordered five first class tickets to Heathrow airport. "I've been getting a grasp on Muggle money, Harry. Isn't that a lot of money?"

"For a comfortable six to eight hour flight? Not really. Especially since I bought seats close together, so that we can continue to talk, rather than have to move around the cabin."

"What's this about flying?" Hermione asked as she came into the room with a happier looking Tonks, who walked over and threw her arms around Harry and hugged him.

"Well, I need to get back to England, and I ... umm ... I need ... Tonks, if you keep ... uh ... nibbling on my ear, I'm not going to ... umm ... oh, hell ..." He reached around and gently flipped her into his lap. "Shall we do this properly?" he asked, and kissed her.

He could hear Hermione behind him saying, "I told her to tell him how she feels. She thinks that a seven year difference between them is too much."

"How did this happen?" Harry finally asked, Tonks cuddling with him on his lap. "How did I end up with four women in my life in this manner?"

"It comes from your extremely non-traditional upbringing, I think," Hermione replied. "Quite likely, the lack of love from family figures as a child, and a sense of abandonment from others whom you designated to be surrogates led you to seek love where you could find it, and you happened to be lucky enough to find bisexual lovers who all happened to return your feelings." She smiled. "If I were to get metaphysical about it, I'd say that it's the universe's way of making up for all the crap it put you through."

Tonks laughed as she hugged Harry. "You two are meant for each other, Hermione. While you were talking, I could feel him starting to poke me in the back. You getting pedantic was making him horny!"

Harry blushed furiously. "I was just imagining her in that business suit she showed up in, with a pair of those rimmed glasses they always picture librarians wearing, looking over the top of them. If she ever started teaching and did that, I don't think a single male in the class would survive with dry shorts."

Tonks looked at Hermione for a moment and then laughed and said, "Oh, yeah, I can see what you mean - the sexy librarian fantasy." Hermione blushed and headed into the living room, and came back into the computer room wearing the tweed jacket, with the top buttons of her blouse unbuttoned, and she'd apparently borrowed Harry's spare glasses, which were sitting on the tip of her nose as she looked over the top of them.

"Jesus Christ," Harry breathed. "It's even better than I thought ..." Conversation degenerated from there into the distinctly non-verbal kind.

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# Redemption

## Chapter 5

"I see what you mean about First Class, Harry," Ron said. "This is incredible. Thanks again."

"Why do you think I wanted it? It is incredible. And I'll tell you five again. If I have to go bankrupt to make up to you for abandoning you when you needed me most, I will. You mean more to me than any amount of money in the bank."

Ginny looked at her hand and grinned. "I can tell. You know, Mum is going to have a conniption when she sees this, especially since all six of us are wearing the exact same ring."

"How do you think my folks are going to feel?" Hermione said. "I left six weeks ago to find Harry, do so almost immediately, and come back to talk to them with incipient grandchild."

"Nowhere nearly as badly as Mum will react when she learns the same about Ginny, Luna, and Tonks," Ron said, turning mildly green at the thought.

"And that the father is either you or me," Harry said, also turning green. "How in hell could you all be fertile at the same time?!" he finished, squeaking the last words out. "I mean, Hermione, what were the odds that was going to happen?"

She blushed. "Actually, given the fact that Tonks helped us brew the Fertility Potion..." She couldn't help but laugh at Harry's jaw dropping.

"All four of you?"

It was Luna's turn to blush. "Actually, no. You got me in the shower. That was nature at work."

Harry laughed fairly hard. "Gods, another thing for the Ministry to hate me for." He wiped a tear of laughter away from his eye. "This is going to be amusing. 'Boy-Who-Saved-The-World flaunts societal rules again!' reads the Prophet's headline."

"Thinking what you are about the Ministry," Tonks said, "it's odd that you're looking at it the way you are. I wouldn't expect laughter."

"Well, either I'm insane, or I trust the group of you when you say that the Minister for Magic is someone friendly to me." He paused for a moment. "I'm still not certain that the first choice isn't the right one. I mean, think about it. I'm willingly walking back into a situation where I could end up in Azkaban for the remainder of my life."

He heard knuckles crack. "You won't, Harry. I won't let it happen." He turned to face Hermione, who had a fierce look on her face. "I will not let my husband go to prison for justifiable homicide."

"Guys," Tonks said quietly. "Trust me when I say that the Minister will understand. I've already talked with him, and told him your concerns. He's spent these last six weeks researching, and I believe him when he says that he'll twist arms if necessary to keep you out of prison, Harry."

"I still don't understand why the Minister would care so much for me, unless it's as politically expedient for him to praise me as it was for Fudge to vilify me. I am really not looking forward to seeing the power-hungry fool they've replaced Fudge with," he said, closing his eyes. "We'll be landing in a couple hours, I think, and I want to nap a little."

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He opened his eyes just before they landed, and were quickly shuttled through Heathrow's Customs checkpoint to the waiting car, a man standing in the waiting area with a card reading 'Harry Potter'. They were quickly hustled into the car, to discover Percy inside. Before Harry could say anything, Percy spoke.

"I can never apologize enough to you, Harry, for the things I said about you in the past few years, and even if I did apologize, I would expect you not to accept it. If I know my brother Ron, I've already been called a 'thundering arse-hole', and he's absolutely right."

"Actually, Percy," Ginny interjected, "he called you a prat, but said that you're no longer a thundering arse-hole." She laughed as she finished, and Percy chuckled with her.

"My dear siblings are more forgiving than I deserve, Harry. I should have been sorted into Slytherin, and I think we all know that now. Fred and George may have forgiven me, but there's one person who will never forgive me, nor should he."

"Who?" Harry asked, intrigued.

"Me. What I did was unforgivable, and at least one person is smart enough to remember that."

Harry scowled. "Percy, you're being too hard on yourself. Given the situation at the time, you truly felt you were doing the right thing, didn't you? You were certain that I was less than stable – I mean, here was this child saying that the Dark Lord has returned, when everyone knew he was dead. What possible reason would you have had to believe me? You thought I was crazy, and that I was able to convince your parents and siblings that I was right. You were doing what you thought was right, not having full information, to protect your family."

"George and Fred have forgiven you, right?" Percy nodded. "The twins, who wanted you strung up and tortured before they got nasty? Then that's good enough for me. You did what was right in your own mind, and you owned up to your mistakes once you realized that they were mistakes. You faced up to your accusers, and now they accept you again. Even if you don't feel that you're worth loving, you are." He stuck his hand out to Percy, who took it. Harry surprised him by pulling him closer and hugging him. "Welcome back, Percy, and I hope someday you find it in your heart to

forgive yourself.”

There was silence in the car for a moment before Luna whispered into it, “Physician, heal thyself.”

“That’s entirely different, Luna, and you know it,” he replied hotly.

Those piercing eyes of hers bored into him. “Think of exactly what you said to Percy, and tell me how the situations are different. He did what he felt was the right thing at the time, to protect those that he loves more than anything; more than life itself. Once he knew what he had done, he distanced himself from everyone, not feeling worthy of them. Once made aware that he was loved, he chose to face up to what he had done, clear the air, and accept whatever punishment was due him.” She smiled at him. “You’re absolutely right, Harry. Absolutely nothing about the situations is in any way similar.”

Ginny laughed. “Percy, Harry was saying on the plane that he’s not looking forward to meeting the ... what was the phrase you used, Harry?”

“I believe I used the phrase ‘power-hungry fool’ to describe him,” Harry said. He closed his eyes for the drive. “I am still tired, folks. These have been six weeks of a roller-coaster ride I wouldn’t wish on anyone. Except maybe ... nah, even if they were still alive, this would be too kind for them. Besides, they’d have to have souls to feel pain.”

He didn’t see the looks that passed between the occupants of the car.

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Once in the parking garage of the Ministry, they quickly headed upstairs, Percy heading up first to let the Minister know that Harry was there. “Damn, I hate this,” Harry grumbled. “I’ll either be fawned over or berated in one way or another. Nothing I’ve ever done has made the Ministry happy. The death of Voldemort was at my hands, due to Neville’s sacrifice, and they couldn’t find any way to take credit for it. Then I finish off the Death Eaters before the Aurors can come in and do anything except clean up after me. At least I gave them a proper ‘Crazy Boy-Who-Lived’ story to work with.”

The lift rose all the way to the top floor, and it opened into the waiting room for the office space of the Minister for Magic. He found Arthur Weasley standing there. “Harry my boy!” he said thickly, enveloping Harry in a hug. “I’ve been asked to escort you into the office for the Minister,” he grinned.

“Sir? I’ve said some things over the years, and I so need to apologize to you for not being there for Ginny and Ron when they needed me most.”

“Let’s step into the Minister’s office and we’ll talk about it, son,” Arthur led him to the door, through it, and to a chair. He then sat behind the desk and placed the nameplate on the desk with a grin. It read ‘Arthur Weasley, Minister for Magic’.

Harry stood and walked to the door. “Ron, Ginny, Percy; could you come here and punch me as hard as you possibly can for insulting your father?”

The two younger male Weasleys motioned Ginny forward. “It was agreed that I’d deliver the punishment, since I can outdo Fred and George for deviousness.” She pulled him down and delivered a kiss that sent the blood pounding in his ears - and other places. “Now you have to have that meeting with Dad with no concentration whatsoever. And you get to explain to him why I kissed you like that.”

“Oh my god, you are evil, Ginny,” Harry groaned. He attempted to readjust himself and turned to face Arthur Weasley again. With the door open, he said, so that everyone could hear, “Minister, I owe you an apology, and a public one at that. Without trying to find out who the new Minister was, I referred to the person in that position, meaning you, as a power-mad fool. At very best, this is an insulting thing to say about one of the kindest men it has ever been my pleasure to know, as well as a man who has proved time and again that he is neither power mad nor a fool.” Harry closed the door behind himself at that point.

Arthur looked at him for a long time. “I never thought it was possible to hate Vernon Dursley more than I already did.”

“I don’t understand, sir.”

“Please, Harry, after all this time, I think you can call me Arthur. The reason that I say what I do is that you have a tendency to take all the blame for things onto yourself. The death of Cedric Diggory, for example. How were you to know that you were touching a portkey? Had it been the way it was supposed to be, both you and Cedric would have been declared the winners of the Tri-Wizard competition, and that would have been that. You were given a teacher for Occlumency who hated you, and Dumbledore could not see that, so of course you didn’t do well with the lessons. You blame yourself for the death of Neville, if I know you. Honestly, if I know you, you probably have found a way to blame yourself for the deaths of your parents.”

“And the entirety of this self-hatred of yours falls squarely on the shoulders of Vernon Dursley. If it were permissible, I would curse him such that he’d never recover.” He paused for a moment. “If it means anything to you, I accept the apology for something you have no need to apologize for. You have far too much experience with people like the late Cornelius Fudge. So of course you got used to the position being filled by a power mad fool.”

He grinned then. “Would you have a problem being invited to the Burrow for a proper Molly-cooked meal? You know she’ll want to greet you properly, now that you’re back in England.”

Harry grinned. “I’d love it.” His face fell then. “But there are two things to deal with first, before I can do that. I need to tell you something, and I need to find Albus Dumbledore, to apologize to him, and accept what punishment he decrees.”

“I can get you Albus’ location, so you can deal with that in a while. What do you need to tell me?”

“Well, it’s something that I need to tell your family, and since you’re right here...” He stood and walked to the door. “Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Luna, Tonks; could you come in here?” He could see Hermione bite back a comment, and he grinned at her.

"What do you need, Harry?" Ginny asked.

"Well, I thought it was a good time to explain why you kissed me in a manner that pretty much demanded that we borrow a couch." She blushed as Harry turned to face Arthur. "You need to know that I can now be referred to as 'The Boy Who Lived and Became a Pervert' or some such thing. For all intents and purposes, I am married to all five of these people. I love them more than my own life, sir."

Arthur sat down in his chair again, somewhat heavily. Hermione spoke. "Actually, it's a little more complicated than that, sir."

"Let me," Ron said. "I was never really an adult before, and it's time I took responsibility for my own actions. In every way important, Dad, we're all married to each other. And yes, that means that Ginny's included. Doesn't mean we're having sex, but the relationship's more than brother-sister now."

Ginny blushed fiercely as she stared at her father. "Doesn't mean we're *not* having sex either. Dad, the six of us have a weird relationship, but it works for us."

Arthur blinked for a few moments before finally speaking. "Answer me one question. Same question to all of you. Are you happy with this arrangement?" They circled Harry and hugged him, nodding happily. Harry closed his eyes and felt tears leaking, but the smile on his face answered the question. "Then I have no problems with it." He looked to Ginny. "Just try to be careful, pregnancy-wise, okay?" All four of the women blushed. "Already?" he laughed. "Well, it just gives a new meaning to the phrase Molly-coddling, I guess."

He walked to the door and looked to the secretary. "Matilda, I think that I am taking the rest of the day off. I don't care how many people I annoy; family comes first, and my seventh son has finally come home."

"Anyone who is worth anything will understand, sir," the woman replied. "And Mr Potter? May I offer my thanks for your part in bringing down Voldemort?"

"Thank you for phrasing it that way," he replied. "I couldn't have succeeded without the help of a lot of people, especially Neville."

"I'm one of Neville's aunt's," she said, tears in her eyes. "Thank you for remembering him."

"How could I not? I literally would not have succeeded if Neville hadn't been wearing that bastard down." He blushed. "Even if it is accurate, it's still bad form. My apologies."

She laughed. "Hearing problems, don't you know?" she said. "I seem to lose my hearing when somebody tells the truth in a somewhat embarrassing manner." He grinned back at her.

Soon, the group was en route to the Burrow, and Harry soon found himself smothered in a deep hug by Molly Weasley. The group surrounded him when they realised that the instant acceptance from her had broken through another of his walls, because he was once again sobbing, this time against the Weasley matron.

"Sorry about that, Mum," he whispered in a rough voice.

"None of that, Harry. If you need to cry on me, then you do so. I've always thought of you as one of my sons, and the fact that you felt willing to cry on me makes me feel -" She stopped and sniffed. "Well, I feel like your mother right now."

When he finally was reluctantly released from the embrace, he found Luna's eyes sitting in a glass of water. "I told you - crying makes them sticky. If it's going to be like this for a while, I'll leave them out." She smiled serenely. "I'll cry for a month, if it's happy tears like these, though."

Harry smiled back, and was bemused to watch her turn to face him, and her eyes spin in the glass until they were obviously focused on him. She moved the glass in front of her, to make it easier on Harry. He laughed as he realized the placement. "Oh great, after all this time of learning not to talk to a beautiful woman's chest, now I have to. Not that I'm complaining, mind you," he added quickly.

"It's so good to see you smiling again," Arthur said, and Molly merely sniffled her agreement.

"It's because of them, sir. They all came back from their own private hells for me. I've still got a long road ahead of me, I know that. Healing doesn't happen overnight. But with these four with me, I'll make it." He smiled and looked at them again. "One of them said the night they found me, 'If you insist on taking the responsibility for our hurts, then you must take the responsibility for our healing as well.' They came back for me, sir. How can I do any less for them?" He frowned. "Healing comes in many parts, though. One of them is attempting to make up for the damage I caused. Which is why I'm here. First, I need to contact someone to apologize, and accept whatever curse he feels is proper. Second, I need to look to the Ministry to see what punishments I may have run out on."

"I can answer that second one easily, Harry," Arthur said. "Nothing you did requires intercession on the part of the Ministry. The Death Eaters you executed were not killed with Unforgivable Curses, so we don't truly care how they died, other than to remind us that it can be a bad idea to get some people angry. Note, by the way, my usage of the word 'executed'. You were simply carrying out a sentence that had already been passed on these final rogue Death Eaters."

Arthur paused. "Is it safe to assume that you need to contact Albus Dumbledore?" When Harry nodded, Arthur walked over to a desk and pulled an envelope from a slot. "Albus left this with us in the even that you ever decided to return and wished to speak to him. It gives directions on locating him."

"I am so scared right now," Harry said. "But I have to. I don't know when I'll return, because there *will* be penance of some sort." He opened the envelope, read the short letter inside, and smiled sadly. He stepped outside and disappeared with a loud crack.



Albus Dumbledore heard the crack outside his door, and knew that it was one of three people. Sadly, the third was the one he most wished to see, and likely never would. "Come in Molly, Arthur, the door is unlocked." As he finished dealing with his teapot, he heard a different voice speak.

"I'm not Mr. or Mrs. Weasley, but may I speak with you, sir?"

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For the first time in his life, Harry saw Albus Dumbledore so shocked that he dropped something. "*Accio* teapot!" he said, and the pot flew to his hands, scalding them as he grabbed it. He carefully walked to the table and set it down. "I may have spilled some water, sir. Get me something and I'll clean it up."

"Harry, is that actually you, or have I become so old that I have begun to see things that are not there?"

"It's me, Professor, and I'm here to apologize to you."

He watched Dumbledore sit heavily in a chair and put his head in his hands for several seconds. His body shook for a few moments, and Harry felt his own façade trying to drop back into place, just to hide from the pain of seeing what he had done to this man. He ruthlessly quashed the attempt, and spoke again. "Correction, sir. I come to put myself at your command for having done the unforgivable." He dropped to his knees and bowed his head in submission.

It was a surprisingly short time before he felt a hand on his shoulder. "Rise, Harry. The man who saved us all should not bow to any man or woman."

"Yes sir." He stood and let Albus lead him to a chair.

"I had hoped to see you again someday, Harry. You look well. I take it that those four found you?"

Harry smiled. "Yes, sir, and Tonks. I'm on the road to healing." He stopped to take a deep breath. "That's why I'm here, sir. In my anger and pain, I did something hideously unforgivable to the greatest man I have ever known. I would offer an apology, but there is no excusing what I did to you. Instead, I place myself into your hands, to do with as you will." He met the old headmaster's eyes, trying not to cry.

"Even were I to tell you that you must do something that would be ultimately fatal to you?" Albus asked.

"Yes sir. Whether or not such truly exists between us, I feel that I owe you a tremendous wizard's debt, and if my life is required to pay that debt, then so be it."

Dumbledore looked at him for many moments before standing and walking over to Harry. He leaned down and kissed his forehead in benediction. "I understand your need for an apology, Harry, and whether or not you feel you deserve absolution, I grant it to you. Your actions helped me to realize that I was using people. Using them for good ends, but when all was examined in the end, those were my actions. I left you in a home for seventeen years where you suffered constant abuse, and refused to let you leave, convincing you that it was in your best interests. I continually told you only enough to pique your interest, to pull you deeper into your fate. In your fifth year, I changed my demeanour toward you from grandfatherly to merely that of teacher to student. I gave you a teacher who actively hated you for a series of lessons of an extremely intimate nature. I placed you on the path you took, which led inexorably toward Lucius Malfoy's heart beating on the table before me. I am as much to blame for your actions as you are, Harry. And yours are far more justified, based purely on the rage you felt at your four closest being so badly hurt."

Harry laughed bitterly. "And the final infamy – I've convinced you that you were the one in the wrong. The hatred I had developed at the end spilled over to everyone around. Neville was murdered by Voldemort, but not before damaging him enough to get me the opening I needed. The four remaining were so badly hurt in various ways that it drove me coldly insane. Whether or not the Ministry had marked him for execution, whether or not he raised the piece of mobile offal that raped my Hermione, I reached inside a man's chest while he was conscious and tore out his heart. I simply carried that cruelty into the graduation and took that hatred out on you, the man who least deserved it. And who can I talk to? If I talk to the Muggles, I'll end up in a hospital for the dangerously insane, and wizards will simply tell me that Lucius deserved it. How do I pay for the twenty cold-blooded murders that I performed, pretending it was in the name of justice? How do I pay for the destruction of the career of the best headmaster that Hogwarts ever saw, simply because I was so angry that I kept raging even after the reasons were dead?" Tears began to flow again. "Lucius wasn't the only one whose heart I tore out. Luna stopped herself from saying it a week ago, but it stuck with me. What I did took the heart out of you as well." He lost control and began to sob.

He came to his senses again being rocked gently by Albus. "I'm sorry, Professor."

"I think you are old enough to call me Albus, if you can bring yourself to it. Remember one thing concerning this, dear Harry. I survived the ordeal, which is more than I can say for Lucius." Harry looked at his old headmaster for a moment in surprise, and saw the old twinkle in the eyes. He couldn't control it; he began to giggle as hysterically as he had been crying shortly before.

"I'm sorry, Profe...Albus, but something about that simply hit me as funny."

"I intended it so, Harry. We both have healing to do. If you insist on a geas of some sort from me, then I shall insist that it be this: you find what help you need to heal. In return, you shall help me to return to the land of the living." He helped Harry to his feet. "Shall we go? I believe that I would like a cup of Molly's most excellent tea."

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Hermione sat and fidgeted as she waited. Luna walked over and put her arms around her and smiled. "He'll be all right, and I'll bet he'll bring the Headmaster back from his deep blue funk as well." The kiss she planted on Hermione's neck made her melt slightly.

Molly cleared her throat. "Um, dears – does Harry know about your relationship?"

She was answered by Ron and Ginny bursting out laughing. "Mum, you have no idea!" Ron said. At her puzzled look, he explained, after a quick look around the room at the others. "When we found Harry, he broke down after we talked to him." He snorted. "I knew I could be clueless, but that was ridiculous!"

"Ron, you know better than that," Hermione said with a smile.

"Who made him cry, 'Mione? Think back to that conversation." He turned back to his mother. "Well, we ended up eventually carrying him into his bedroom after he completely broke the second time. Short story is that he woke up sandwiched between Hermione and me." He blushed furiously. "It wasn't much after that when I realized I was in the midst of an orgy."

"Correction, Ronald," Luna said. "It was a celebration of life, after so much death. It just happened to involve a lot of sex."

Molly was looking apoplectic, and Arthur was simply looking amused. Ron cleared his throat. "Mum, Dad? I have a confession to make. Not only am I in love with Luna, but I love Harry as well."

Luna chimed in again. "We're going to stay with Harry until he decides that he no longer needs us to be there. If that means that we spend the balance of our lives with him, then so be it." The others nodded their agreement.

Molly was about to respond when two loud cracks happened in front of the door, followed by a knock.

It was opened to Albus Dumbledore, who said with a smile, "Greetings, Molly. Might I trouble you for a cup of your most exquisite tea?"

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He walked in the door and looked at the assembled crowd. "Ah, I see." He turned to Harry. "You never stood a chance."

"I accept your geas, sir. With them, I'll heal. Slowly, but I'll heal." They swarmed around him to hug him, and a few moments later a startled squeak of "Ron!" came from the centre of the hug. When it broke, Harry was looking at him with amusement. "We're at your parents' house, Ron!"

"Well, after how worried you were, I just wanted to make sure everything was where it had been when you left," came the unrepentant answer, accompanied by a grin.

"What happens now?" Arthur finally asked after he and his wife had stopped laughing.

Harry sighed. "Well, I supposed that we let the wizarding world know that I'm back, if they still care. And the group of us get on with our lives."

"A noble sentiment, Harry," Albus smiled.

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He stood on the balcony and looked out over one of the cities he lived in. It was July 31, 2008, and he stood looking out over Central Park in New York City. He heard footsteps behind him, and a small voice. "Coming inside, Daddy? Mama Ginny says that we're ready for you." He turned and scooped the violently redheaded little girl into his arms and smiled.

"I'm ready, Molly. Let's go get some birthday cake." He stepped inside with the six-year-old and grinned at the banners, the large cake, but most of all, at the gathering before him. The entire Weasley Clan, Tonks, Moody, Albus Dumbledore, and most importantly Hermione, Luna, and the three children each woman had borne. He laughed. "Thank you all for the greatest birthday present a man could ever get!"

"You haven't opened your presents yet!" little Molly exclaimed. "How could you know that you've gotten the greatest present ever?"

He kissed her forehead. "My friends, your mummies, and your sisters are here for my birthday. I've already been given the best gift anyone could ever want. Your love." His eyes locked with Ginny, Hermione, Luna, and Ron for just a moment each, and he mouthed "Thank you," with tears in his eyes. "I love you all."