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The-New-Dawn

Книги

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Гарри Поттер

Гарри Поттер и Новая заря

Автор:

Прабал

ГЛАВА 12 ЗАГРУЖЕНА!

Продолжение «Сила Хогвартса».

Все ждут, что Гарри поведет остальных в бой, но готов ли он?

Сможет ли он разобраться во всем до финальной схватки?

АУ.

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1. Initial Reactions

Ok. Everyone knows the drill. Still here goes nothing -

Harry Potter and the other characters of J.K. Rowling are strictly hers. I

am not the original writer (though I wish I could be J) and I do not wish to make money from this. Most Importantly, I DO NOT want to get sued. So if anyone has any problems with anything I write, then just tell me.

There's plenty more...blah blah blah...forget it and let the story begin :).

Note: US English has been used here.

Note: This is the sequel to Harry Potter & The Power Of Hogwarts. Please read it before moving on with this story.

HARRY POTTER & THE NEW DAWN

Chapter 1 - Initial Reactions

Harry Potter. These two words gave relief to some while others hated it. But one thing which was certain was that these two words were the most widely known ones except maybe for the phrase "You Know Who".

Harry Potter was sitting in complete darkness of his room in the trunk and thinking of what had happened on the previous night. New Year was generally a happy time for him because it meant getting presents and having lots of fun. Alas, this year had started off with misery as he lost the love of his life. Nymphadora Tonks was someone whom he had silently loved the whole of the past year. He didn't dare to say anything to her as he was afraid that he might lose her as a friend but now it seemed as if he had been foolish to hide his feelings. Now that she was not here anymore he felt kind of lost in this world.

Lost wouldn't be the right word to describe his feelings since he knew the goal of his life perfectly well. But still, Tonks had seemed like a guiding force to him along with Remus. Add to that the fact that he loved Tonks, she had become the single most important person to him in the past few months. Tonks was the only one who used to get angry with him over the slightest of things he did which she thought might harm him. Remus used to have a talk with him but Tonks was the one whose reaction would be

extreme. He would miss that forever. Only if he had known that her reactions were the way they were because of her love for him, then he might have made some different choices down the road just to be with her.

Harry sighed in the darkness and if anyone had been around then they would have been able to detect the undiluted sadness in that one sigh. He had shed a lot of tears when Tonks had died but now he didn't have any more tears to shed. Now, he only had her memory on every part of his heart and soul. Now he knew that she used to love him too and that was enough for him. Even if Nymphadora Tonks was not there with him physically, she would always be there in his heart.

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"No...this can not be true" Molly Weasley's wails rang throughout the office of Albus Dumbledore on the morning of January 1st. The Weasleys had been celebrating the New Year when they had suddenly found that Ginny was missing. Initially they had thought that it was one of Ginny's numerous pranks but later on, they had realized she was really not in the house. It was then that they had had panicked and called up all of her friends but without any results. Then, in the early hours of the morning, Dumbledore had flooded and had asked the whole Weasley family to come to Hogwarts.

"I am sorry Molly" Dumbledore said with a heavy heart. He looked quite old now that he had just been back from Tonk's funeral and he knew that this was going to be one of the most emotionally straining days in his life.

"No Albus...it can not be true" Molly repeated. "It just can't be"

"This must be a misunderstanding Albus" Arthur Weasley said to the elderly headmaster in a pleading voice. "Surely it was someone else under

the polyjuice or something...". Arthur looked at the headmaster with expectant eyes but the headmaster refused to meet his gaze.

"This is a big joke...I know it" Arthur Weasley said at last. "You are in this along with Ginny. I never knew she could persuade you to join her in such an evil prank". Arthur Weasley gave a small but unconvincing laugh at this.

"Was it really Ginny?" Fred spoke for the first time since hearing the news. If someone thought that the twins could never get serious, then they could not have been more mistaken at the moment. The seriousness on the twins faces was rivaled only by that of the headmaster who gave a silent nod.

"Surely you don't believe him" Ron said in a bewildered manner to the twins who seemed to take the headmaster's word as the final verdict.

"Ron...it was Ginny" George said.

"WRONG!" Arthur shouted. "It could not have been Ginny. She wouldn't do anything to hurt us"

"You are right" Molly Weasley added confidently. "There must have been a mistake. These kinds of things have happened in the past too Albus... when people under the polyjuice..."

"Arthur..." the headmaster looked gravely at one of his favorite students of all times. "It was Ginny". There was a sense of finality in that statement which Mr. Weasley couldn't question. He looked at the headmaster for a couple of seconds before collapsing on the chair nearest to him. Slowly, he began to understand the implications of Dumbledore's words.

"Surely you don't believe him" it was Ron again this time repeating his previous statement. "I mean...how can it be Ginny? Ginny...a death ea... yuck...no way!" Ron looked adamantly at everyone present. Dumbledore had a sad look on his face while the twins looked as if someone had died

in the family. His father also looked as if he was trying to distinguish between what was correct and what was not. Only his mother seemed as adamant as himself.

"It was...Ginny?" Arthur Weasley asked again after a long period of silence. Seeing the expression in the eyes of Dumbledore, Arthur broke down completely. This had to be some kind of a nightmare. He couldn't have lost two of his kids to the dark side...not after the sacrifices they had made in the first war. Percy and Ginny had always listened to how their uncle's had laid down their lives to protect them from the death eaters and, every time they had heard it, they seemed to appreciate and respect the efforts of their uncles even more. Ginny always used to say that she would grow up to be like her eldest uncle who had taken on seven death eaters on his own to give Arthur enough time to save everyone else from a death eater attack. The thought that the same Ginny could have turned dark was just...heartbreaking.

"WHY?" Arthur Weasley's scream rang throughout the corridors of Hogwarts. "Just because I don't have enough money? Just because I am too poor to satisfy their needs?" he looked at his sons with tears in his eyes. The twins shook their head while Ron seemed too stunned to do anything.

"You-Know-Who must have offered Ginny lots of money to join him" Arthur said as he looked at the headmaster again. "I will give Ginny money. I will do anything...I will beg on the streets...I will sell everything I have but I will give Ginny all the money she wants". Even Dumbledore couldn't stop his eyes from going misty at this statement.

"Fred...George..." Mr. Weasley, tears in his eyes, rushed over to his sons.

"Can you two please lend some money to this poor father of yours?" he asked hopefully. "I will repay every knut...I promise. I just want to bring

Ginny back home". The tears of Mr. Weasley just wouldn't stop. "I beg of you"

"Father...please...don't speak like this" Fred and George said simultaneously. Even they were crying. No one had ever seen or heard Arthur Weasley say things like these.

"Ron..." Arthur rushed over to his youngest son. "Can you get me to talk to Harry?" Ron looked shocked at this. "He has a lot of money...he is a very good kid...he will surely lend me some. I will repay him every bit...I will work day and night to repay him". The look of emotion on Mr. Weasley's face was indescribable.

"Molly..." Mr. Weasley rushed over to his wife who herself seemed shocked at his statements. Everyone knew how proud Arthur was when it came to monetary matters and, here he was, begging for money to bring back his daughter. "Molly...we can repay everyone, cant we? Just tell me that I can and I will be able to do it" Mr. Weasley's voice quavered as he said this. "You are my strength Molly...you will be there for me, wont you?"

"Dad..." a voice came from the doorway. Standing there were Bill and Charlie with tears flowing down their cheeks. They had entered a few moments ago and had heard enough to comprehend what might have had happened. It tore their heart apart to see their dad ready to beg for money.

"Bill...Charlie..." Mr. Weasley looked helplessly at his two most established sons and rushed towards them. "Bill...your sister needs lots of money. Can you help me get it?"

"Dad!" Bill hugged his dad tightly. "Dad...please don't beg for her. Please dad..."

"She's your sister son" Arthur said in between hiccups.

"No dad...she was our sister" Charlie came forth and said. "Not anymore" "Shut up Charlie". Mrs. Weasley hissed at her son. No one had seen the change coming on Mrs. Weasley's face when she had seen the emotions her husband was going through. Even though he had never admitted it openly, it was not too hard to know that he always had a soft spot for Ginny. Without her, Mr. Weasley looked as if he had gone mad and Molly Weasley couldn't stand the scene. She had reconciled herself to the fact that what Dumbledore had said must be true. She had already lost Percy and Ginny to the dark side but she couldn't see Arthur weeping and begging like this. Whenever she had broken down, Arthur was there to support her. Now was the time for her to give some support to her husband.

"Ginny is still your sister" Mrs. Weasley said as she came over and placed a hand over Arthur's shoulders. She knew how hard it would be if Arthur was to think of Ginny being family as a past tense. "Don't worry Arthur... all of us will be there for you...always" Molly said.

"But Ginny?" Arthur asked in a helpless tone. "How do we get her back?"

"She is lost Arthur" Molly said as tears started to form in her eyes once again. "Lost forever"

"No Molly..." Arthur shook his head like a child denying that something had gone wrong. "Not our Ginny...not my Ginny"

"She tried to kill Harry?" Bill exclaimed from another part of the room as Fred and George explained the whole thing to him and Charlie. His initial estimates seemed to dwarf in comparison to the reality.

"Yes but Tonks saved Harry" Fred replied.

"And she died in the process" George added gloomily.

"Tonks! Dead!" Charlie looked as if some sacrilege had been committed.

"Ginny killed Tonks! Oh - my - god!" Charlie said as he collapsed into the

chair nearby, his head in his hands.

"Some mistake..." Mr. Weasley said in between hiccups but he too knew that it wasn't any mistake of any kind. Somewhere deep down, he had started accepting the fact that Ginny was really lost to them forever.

"What about Harry?" Ron asked in a low voice. Charlie and Bill looked at the headmaster for an explanation along with all the others present.

"He is now at Tonks's grave" Dumbledore replied. "It has been very tough for him"

"Weren't Tonks, Remus and Harry living together somewhere?" Bill queried. Dumbledore nodded in reply.

"Poor Harry" Charlie said with a sigh. "He's just lost another person"

"Not just anyone..." Dumbledore said as he got up to leave the room. He knew that the Weasleys needed some time alone. "He lost a person very close to his heart". The Weasleys stared at each other as Dumbledore walked out of the room. They couldn't understand Dumbledore's statement. It was Bill who suddenly looked up in astonishment.

"Did he mean that Tonks and Harry...?" he looked at the others without finishing his question but knew that they had understood him perfectly.

A fresh bout of gloom descended on the room as they understood the real meaning of the headmaster's words.

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"Why is Dumbledore calling us in so early?" Neville asked Ron as they climbed down the boy's dormitory stairs.

"There have been some...developments" Ron said wearily. Something about Ron's tone told Neville that he was not in the right mood to talk. Little did he know what trauma the Weasley family was going through.

"I have heard that death eaters attacked Hogwarts yesterday" Seamus came up from behind Neville. At this, Ron sighed and started to walk

slower. He couldn't listen to all this...not after what had happened during the night before and how his sister was involved in all that.

"Me too" Lavender said as she overheard Seamus. "People are saying some student was involved too"

"Bet Harry was in it" Parvati Patil chipped in. "He is always there when something happens"

"Why do you guys drag him into everything all the time?" Neville seemed slightly annoyed.

"Well...he's the Boy-Who-Lived for god's sake" Lavender said with a roll of her eyes. "And the number of scrapes he has gone through..."

Lavender's voice trailed off as they moved out of the common room and into the corridors. No one noticed Ron staying behind and then go up to his room again.

"Hi there" a female voice called out from behind. Neville turned around to see Cho and Soha hurrying towards them.

"Good Morning" Neville said. As the others exchanged greetings, Soha spoke up. "Where is Harry?". Neville gave a shrug of his shoulders to indicate he had no idea.

"Is he alright?" Cho asked in a concerned manner.

"Guess so" Seamus said as the group proceeded towards the great hall.

"You guys are supposed to be in the same house as him" Soha said, throwing up her arms. "How come you never have a definite answer?"

"It's not our fault" Neville replied in a sincere voice. "It's been like this for quite some time now. No one can say anything about Harry nowadays"

"Well...maybe Hermione knows something" Soha's voice had a hint of hope in it.

"Maybe..." Neville said. "But we haven't seen much of her. The last time we saw her was when she was talking to Ron early today morning for a

few minutes"

"Why do you think Dumbledore is calling us?" Seamus asked to no one in particular. "I mean, there have been attacks in the past too but he hasn't called everyone in like this at such a short notice"

"And to think we just got back..." Lavender added.

"It must be very important" Cho said even as Soha cast her glance around, searching for Harry's face in the sea of faces around.

"Did you guys feel something yesterday morning?" Parvati said suddenly.

"I was checking out the stars positions when there was a kind of vibration all around"

"Really?" Neville said. "Now I understand how I got awakened all of a sudden without my granny poking me"

"I felt something too!" Cho added not knowing that it was the effect of the Power of Hogwarts getting destroyed. "I thought I was just imagining things but now that you guys have felt the same thing..." Cho looked around in puzzlement.

"Maybe the stars have formed some kind of alignment which..." Lavender started to explain but stopped when she saw that the others weren't the least bit interested in her theory.

"Do you think it was some magical thing?" Neville asked to everyone at the same time.

"Well..." Cho seemed thoughtful. "How else do you explain something which has been felt all over the world?"

"But something like that must be really powerful" Soha countered, her Ravenclaw logic forcing her to join the conversation. "It could have been something natural too. After all, nothing is more powerful than Mother Nature herself"

"Well...I guess there is only one way to find out the truth" Neville said.

"Listen to Dumbledore". They had all entered the great hall and knew that only Dumbledore could give an explanation about the tremors, if at all.

With a quick nod to the others, everyone went over to sit in their usual places. As Neville took his place, he found three vital seats empty - those of Ron, Hermione and Harry whose new position was at the extreme end of the table. Harry not being present was not too unusual nowadays but the absence of Ron and Hermione was of great significance.

"Where's Hermione?" Neville instinctively asked the person sitting next to him. With a start he realized that that seat was empty too. He had been so busy searching out Harry, Ron and Hermione on the table that he had ignored the fact that the seat to his left was also empty - that of Ginny Weasley.

"What's the matter?" Seamus, who was sitting opposite to Neville, asked.

"Where the hell are these guys?" Seamus's question seemed to be on everyone's mind as more and more people cast a puzzled look at the spot where the Weasleys generally sat along with Neville and Hermione.

"No idea" Neville answered absent mindedly. His mind seemed to be racing as he tried to add up all the happenings. There seemed to be some relation in all this but he didn't know exactly what it was. A lot of muttering continued around the hall as more and more people speculated as to what could have happened. What worried many people were the smiling faces of a lot of Slytherins. Whenever they smiled, it meant something bad could be coming for the rest. The one notable exception was Malfoy. He didn't seem to be showing too many emotions with comparison to many others and that was saying something. If something really bad happened, it was always Malfoy who strutted around happily about it but for some reason he didn't seem too enthusiastic about anything.

Slowly the teacher's table started filling up. Most of them looked very stressed out while Hagrid looked as if he was on the brink of crying. His eyes were deep red and anyone who knew Hagrid could swear that he had been crying his heart out. Even McGonagall didn't seem as composed as she usually did. One person stood out amongst all the teachers and that was Fleur as usual. This time however it was her pale face which seemed to attract unusual stares from the students as no one had ever seen the quarter veela so pale before. Another notable thing was the empty seat of Snape.

"Maybe Snape died" Seamus cracked a joke when he saw that, except for Dumbledore, all the teachers had taken their place. "And Dumbledore has called us to say that". Some of the Gryffindors around smirked at this comment.

"But why would Professor Fleur be so pale?" Mark Evans asked very seriously.

"Kid...maybe she loved Snape" Seamus replied much to the amusement of some of the other seniors. Amidst all this, one grave voice spoke up.

"Something is wrong..." Neville said with a very calculated look in his eyes. "...very wrong". Just then the whole hall fell silent. Albus

Dumbledore had just walked in.

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"Hey" Remus said as he walked into Harry's dimly lit room. Remus has been to an urgent meeting with the teachers of Hogwarts but he didn't feel like staying any more. Instead, in the middle of the meeting, Remus asked Dumbledore to let him go so that he could be with Harry. In a very rare gesture, Dumbledore had granted him the permission to leave the meeting halfway through.

"Hi" Harry replied in a voice devoid of any emotion.

"Want to eat something?" Remus asked in concern. He knew that Harry had lost track of time ever since the death of Tonks and didn't even care about eating anymore.

"I don't feel hungry" Harry replied.

"Well...you got to eat timely" Remus said and got up to get some food. In the kitchen, he found some ready food inside one of the "magic" refrigerators which Harry used to use in Sunshine Villa before Dobby came over to live with him.

"Here you go" Remus said putting down a few slices of sandwich and a glass of mango juice in front of Harry.

"I said I don't feel like eating" Harry said again with slight irritation in his voice.

"But your health will break down if you don't eat!" Remus looked Harry straight in his eyes but Harry refused to meet his gaze. "You have got to eat something Harry"

"Oh well..." Harry sighed but didn't make any movement to pick up anything. Seeing no response coming, Remus took one of the sandwiches and held it in front of Harry's mouth. After a few anxious moments, Harry took the sandwich from Remus's hands and took a bite off it. As soon as he started chewing, he suddenly realized how hungry he really was.

Remus watched in satisfaction as Harry cleared up the whole plate and gulped down the last of the juice in front of him. Even though Harry wouldn't admit it, he felt slightly relieved when his stomach felt full. A voice from deep within himself had been constantly telling him that he needed to eat properly but he had ignored it till now. At long last, that voice finally seemed to die away.

"Feeling better now?" Remus asked knowing very well that he wouldn't

get an answer for that. Pausing for a second, he continued "Do you want to go to the great hall?". At this, Harry shot Remus a quizzical look.

"All the students have assembled in the hall" Remus explained.

"Dumbledore wants to tell them about the things which have happened in the past couple of days"

"So what am I supposed to do about it?" Harry asked in a monotonous voice.

"Well..." Remus looked slightly thoughtful. "...when the students hear about what had happened, they will need some kind of a reassurance".

Harry narrowed his eyes at this. If Remus expected him to tell everyone that he was going to save them from some dark wizard then he was grossly mistaken. Remus seemed to read what was going through Harry's mind.

"What I meant was that people look up to Dumbledore for protection. Even the students know that as long as he is around they are safe. But..." Remus paused again at this and seemed to be carefully weighing his words. "...but...the students need someone who can lead them...someone who motivates them to fight for justice"

"Remus..." Harry began but was stopped by the hand raised by Remus.

"Harry...you know as well as me that everyone has to look out for themselves now. Also, they have to know that they too can fight when necessary. They need you in their midst" Remus said.

"But all I have ever brought to anyone's life is pain and suffering" Harry said in a slightly quavering voice.

"And love...and the will to fight...the will to protect others even at the cost of their own!" Remus's voice seemed very determined as he said this.

Harry looked at Remus for a moment but turned his head away. Remus sat still for some time awaiting an answer from Harry but nothing of the

sort came forth. With a sigh Remus got up and left the room.

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"Today is one of the most vital days in the history of the wizarding world" Dumbledore said to all the students who had gathered in the Great Hall of Hogwarts on the morning of January the 2'nd. A murmur went through the hall as everyone started speculating as to what could have happened. However, the hall fell into pin drop silence within a few more seconds.

"There had been another death eater attack on the castle yesterday". Even as Dumbledore said this, looks of panic could be seen in the eyes of many of the students. Dumbledore, however, looked as calm as ever. "I am afraid your parents will not be too pleased about you knowing the truth but I have always maintained transparency about everything that happens at Hogwarts. You may be young but you have the right to know the truth". Even as a murmur of consent went through the students, except for the Slytherins, Dumbledore continued.

"Yesterday a couple of persons, whom everyone knew very well, decided to choose the dark side over the light. They decided their priorities lay with Lord Voldemort rather than with the rest of us". Before Dumbledore could finish the sentences, the whole hall burst into wild speculations. Some of the students were shouting across the house tables while some others were talking in whispers. Still others were looking petrified at the prospect of some of their known people joining You-Know-Who. Slowly but surely, a few eyes came to rest at the empty seats in the Gryffindor table.

"Please calm down" Dumbledore said over the noise the students were making. Even as the last murmur died down, Dumbledore continued his speech.

"As you can see, there are some empty seats around the hall". Some people nodded to each other as to prove that what they had been thinking was right all along the way. "Yesterday night, one of our teachers and one of your fellow classmates left us. They were Severus Snape and Ginny Weasley". If someone had expected the students to start their conversations again then they couldn't have been more mistaken. No one made a sound as the enormity of words sank in. Not only had the Slytherins lost their head of the house, the brave Gryffindors had lost one of their members to their enemy. Nothing could be more shameful than that.

"I know this is very disturbing news for all of you" Dumbledore continued after pausing for a few moments. "I must apologize to all of you for not understanding Severus Snape's loyalties before. But..." Dumbledore paused again to gain everyone's attention. "...we have to accept the fact that everyone here will make a choice. Some of you will choose to follow Lord Voldemort whilst others will fight against him till your last breath" Dumbledore's eyes rested on Neville as he finished off this sentence. The boy looked slightly blue in the face but his hands were tightly balled and the look of determination on his face told the whole story.

"The choice you make will decide your and the wizarding world's fate" Dumbledore continued once again. "It is up to you to decide which path you will walk. Succumbing to Lord Voldemort's fear is much easier than standing up to him. Now is the moment to unite once and for all". Many heads amongst the students nodded in consent along with those of the teachers. "Stand together and we will win"

"What about Harry?" one voice called out. It was Colin Creevy. Everyone held their breath at this question. It was a well known fact that somehow Harry always got involved in these kinds of things.

"Mr. Potter..." Dumbledore started but his voice trailed away for a moment. Dumbledore adjusted his monocles as everyone kept looking at him with rapt attention. Some of the teachers, however, were having trouble keeping their emotions in check.

"Harry Potter tried to stop Severus Snape and Ginny Weasley"

Dumbledore continued, albeit in a very sad voice. "In trying to do so, he lost a beloved friend of his". Some of the boys were staring open-mouthed at the headmaster while many of the girls had covered their mouths with their hands in shock. Dumbledore looked around for a few moments, unsure of whether to say something or not. It was very unusual to see the headmaster lost for words.

After a long pause, he continued "I hope you will respect his privacy and give him some space. Also, Mr. Weasley and his family have suffered a great loss too. Please give him the required space too. I don't have anything else to say now. Thank you.". Without saying anything more, the headmaster walked out of the great hall. Even after the headmaster had left the hall, no one made a move to leave their seats. It seemed like a bad dream for all of them...a very bad dream. No one noticed McGonagall getting up from her seat to say something.

"I can understand this has been a tough beginning for you all this year" McGonagall said. "However, Hogwarts will continue to function as normal. Your classes will continue as specified earlier. Professor Flitwick will take over the Defense against Dark Arts classes until a suitable replacement is found". McGonagall could see the look of disbelief on the faces of the students but she knew that life must go on. "Thank you" McGonagall said as she left the hall too, leaving in her wake lots and lots of angry and disgruntled students.

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Harry sat silently for many an hour after Remus had gone away. He knew that Remus was right in a way that the students needed someone to follow in the battle. He didn't want to be the leader who would show the way to the students...not after what had happened to Tonks. Every time someone came close to him, he or she inevitably died. It was strange...it was inexplicable...but it was the fact. And every time, they had died trying to protect him. He didn't want this to happen again. He knew many of the students would be more than willing to follow his lead but did he really want that to happen? Was he really ready for someone else sacrificing their life for him again?

No. He couldn't let others die to save him time and again. He just couldn't let it happen. With a determined face, Harry kept staring at the wall opposite to him and tried to think up of ways to defeat Voldemort. Hours and hours of thinking didn't yield any idea which might have good potential of succeeding. Slowly but surely, the tired brain of Harry gave up to the attractions of a much needed sleep.

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Harry found himself walking in the white, boundary less corridor again. This time however, he asked himself as to what this place really was. Was it just a dream or was it something else? Even as this thought seemed to be occupying his mind, his feet slowly walked down the well known path which led to the area where he had first seen his parents.

"Harry"

"Mom" Harry replied with tears in his eyes. There was a yearning in his voice which he himself had never heard before. Somehow, now was the time he needed the support of his parents the most but he knew they were lost to him forever.

"Don't be so hard on yourself son" Lily Potter had tears in her eyes too.

The thirst in Harry's voice was something which she couldn't miss.

"Yes son" James Potter spoke up. His face seemed to reflect the pain which Harry felt at that moment. "It's quite tough for you as it is...don't make it tougher"

"But dad..." Harry looked on helplessly. "What can I do? I can't lead this people to battle...I can't let anyone else die"

"They don't want you to lead them to battle Harry" James replied. "They want you to show them the way"

"But the way is right in front of them" Harry said, anger getting the better of his other emotions. "They don't know how to live a life of honor?"

"You are asking them to do something which you yourself are afraid to do?" the taunting voice of Sirius Black asked Harry. Harry seemed slightly taken aback at this.

"What's the matter Harry?" Sirius's face showed the anger he himself was feeling. "You are pushing away your friends so that they don't die because of you and then you think they should all fight together to save each other's lives? Why...they also have every right to separate themselves from the others and start fighting Voldemort...everyone can fight Voldemort...but tell me, who is going to win it this way?" Sirius knew it was time for some hard talk. Sometimes Harry had to be brought back to his senses in a manner different from which his parents thought was the best for him.

"I...uh..." Harry stammered slightly even as Sirius continued.

"Even Voldemort has his supporters. Why are you being foolish Harry? You need people to fight with you...side by side, shoulder to shoulder, as a team and not as individuals. You can't do this all alone and if you think you can then you are an even bigger fool than Voldemort who thinks he will become immortal one day"

"But every time someone..."

"Old excuse" Sirius glared at Harry. "People died trying to save you because they foresaw you fighting Voldemort on equal terms one day. I didn't die thinking you will defeat Voldemort and his whole army alone. You have to fight Voldemort...but what about the death eaters? Who will fight them?"

"I don't know" Harry turned his face away.

"Look at me young man" Sirius seemed to be in complete control of the situation and neither Lily nor James dared to say anything in between. Slowly, Harry faced Sirius again but was relieved to see that Sirius's face had softened considerably.

"Harry...Harry...you need help. You can't do this all alone...none of us can. You are our only chance. Don't blow it by being over-cautious" Sirius was almost pleading with Harry.

"But Tonks..." Harry's voice choked as he mentioned the name of his one and only true love.

"Tonks was a beautiful girl" Lily said. This was something which she could handle better than Sirius. "She did what was right and it was her own decision. You should show respect to her decision"

"But mother..."

"Harry..." Lily cut short Harry. "If you knew that a fatal spell was going to hit Tonks, would you have given your life to save her?"

"Yes!" Harry replied without any hesitation. He wouldn't have thought twice before doing the same as what Tonks had done for him.

"Then why don't you accept that fact and move on?" Lily asked. "She loved you and gave her life to save you. Tonks didn't want you to be all alone, did she?". Slowly Harry gave a nod.

"Tonks wanted to see you with your friends Harry" Lily continued. "Please

respect her wish".

"WHY SHOULD I?" Harry screamed out at his mother. "I wanted her to live...with me. Did she respect my wish? Why didn't she do what I wanted her to do?" Tears were flowing freely down Harry's face.

Lily Potter's heart bled as she saw the pain on Harry's face. No one knew better than her as to how hard Harry's life had been. Tonks had been like a breath of fresh air in his life but that too was gone now, making it even harder for him to carry on.

"Son..." James spoke up. "You know why Tonks did what she did, don't you?". James waited patiently for Harry's reply. He knew Harry would start thinking logically again once his emotions were under his control again. After many a second, Harry finally nodded his head.

"I know dad...I know" Harry said with a deep sigh as he brushed off his tears. "I guess I should keep her wish". James, Lily and Sirius looked greatly relieved at this statement. "But I still have to think about this" Harry said with his jaws firmly set. "I have to know how I want to plan out everything. Then only I will approach the others"

"Fair enough" Sirius replied while the others nodded. After all, they had got some sort of a compromise from Harry's side which was more than enough for now. They knew he would take the right decision when the right time came.

"Thanks mom...thanks dad" Harry said as the room started to dissolve from his view. "THANKS SIRIUS". Even as he said this, the room went completely out of view. Moments later, a much relieved Harry was lying awake on his bed.

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"Ginny Weasley!" the general tone of disbelief attached with this name right now could be heard in every part of Hogwarts. No one could ever

imagine a Weasley going dark, that too Ginny who was such a lively girl. Her likeable personality had won her friends in all the houses except Slytherin and yet she had turned out to be more Slytherin in her approach than anyone else.

"She fought with us at the Department of Mysteries for god's sake" Neville said for the umpteenth time to Luna who nodded her head vaguely. They were sitting in their Potions class but Fleur didn't seem to be in a mood to teach. Rather, she had told the class to go over what they had learnt in the past couple of months.

"How can she go over and join...him?" Neville's voice had such contempt in it that a couple of students sitting in front of them turned around and gave him a look. Without caring for them, Neville kept on repeating the same thing over and over.

"Maybe it is related to the tremors we felt on January 1'st" Luna said dreamily but Neville didn't seem to hear him and continued asking on the same question over and over again.

"I don't know what happened" Dean Thomas was not in a mood to talk to anyone but he couldn't keep his emotions in check when his roommate Seamus sat down beside him in the Potions class. "I just don't know what happened to her" Dean kept on shaking his head.

"Don't know mate..." Seamus seemed slightly dazed at all that had happened from the morning. "This is some bad dream"

"No...this is life during war" came a voice from behind. Looking around, they saw that a Ravenclaw boy had made the comment. At the looks given to him by the Gryffindor boys, the Ravenclaw continued.

"1 brother and 2 uncles on that side" he said with a sad smile. "The rest of us on this side". The ease and the manner with which the boy described the whole thing was quite astounding and it left the two Gryffindor

students speechless for a second. "That's how it goes during this war" The boy continued. "Our family is already torn...god knows how many more will be".

"Hopefully none" Dean said.

"Hopefully" the Ravenclaw boy replied with a slight sigh.

&&&&

"Still can't believe Snape was working for him all the time" Hagrid grumbled at the emergency Order meeting Dumbledore had called during the afternoon. This meeting was very important as not everyone knew about Snape's actions on the night of January 1. Soon, the room was filled with all the important Order members including Remus. The persons who were conspicuously absent were the Weasleys. Dumbledore was the last to enter the room which was eerily silent as many of the members had learnt about the happenings due to Hagrid's constant grumbling.

Without waiting for too long, Dumbledore informed everyone about the happenings at Hogwarts and how Tonks had died trying to save Harry. Everyone seemed shocked at hearing what had happened not to mention the fact that the daughter of Arthur and Molly Weasley had gone over to the dark side. Many wondered aloud what the Weasleys might be going through after what had happened with Percy. They couldn't help but pity Arthur and Molly at the turn of the events.

"You didn't have the remotest idea that Snape was working for Voldemort?" Remus talked for the first time during the meeting. His voice seemed devoid of all emotion.

"No Remus" Dumbledore couldn't meet Remus's gaze while replying. He could only guess what Remus and Harry had gone through in the past 36 hours or so. "If I had only known before..." Dumbledore's voice trailed

away.

"Don't you think that we should shift the headquarters?" a young witch asked. As Remus looked at her, he saw that she looked of foreign origin and had dark features.

"You are right" McGonagall said in agreement. "We should move the headquarters as soon as possible"

"I have already made arrangements for that" Dumbledore said. "Since Hogwarts is the safest place right now, I think we should make this room our meeting place all the time"

"But this is an ordinary classroom Albus" McGonagall did not think that the decision to convert a classroom into the headquarters was a very appealing idea. Any of the students could easily find their way to it.

"It's not ordinary any more" Dumbledore corrected her. "Only the officially inducted Order members will be able to remember this classroom's location. Also, I have placed this room under the Fidelius too so we don't have to worry about any student stumbling in"

"Not a bad idea then" the young witch spoke up again. "We could all turn up as the parents of some of the students and pretend to come here for meeting the headmaster on the pretext of something or the other from time to time"

"I don't think that would be necessary Alba" Dumbledore said as he addressed the young witch. "The war is all out in the open. No pretending of any sort is going to help anyone anymore. But yes, there is no harm in taking precautions"

"Tha's sorte' out then" Hagrid said from the corner seat he had occupied.

"What about Harry?" another wizard asked this time. "Do we really have to keep someone or the other to protect him and drain our resources?" A few people nodded in agreement while others protested this statement.

The wizard, however, continued "We can't keep losing Order members like this any longer, can we?"

Before Dumbledore could say anything, Remus spoke up. "Tonks was not there on the Order's instructions. She was a friend of Harry's and did what any one friend would do for another"

"Then it was most irresponsible of her" the other wizard said. "She was the only metamorphmagus in the Order and..." Before the foreign wizard could say anything more, he found himself pinned to the wall.

"She was just a metamorphmagus to you, wasn't she?" Remus asked in a hissing voice as he gripped the man's neck even more tightly. As the man struggled for air, Remus shouted "SPEAK TO ME. SHE WAS JUST A METAMORPHMAGUS, WASN'T SHE?". It was seldom that Remus lost his temper and it was during these times that the powerful beast within came into view. With one powerful thrust, Remus lifted the man a couple of feet in air.

"You have tested my patience a lot of times, Veldor" Remus continued in the same hissing tone. The others in the room were too frightened to say anything. Seldom had they seen Remus this angry. Furthermore, some of the present members shivered at the thought of what this werewolf was capable of when he was real angry and out of control.

Remus didn't hear Dumbledore asking him to calm down. Instead, he grew even angrier at the man named Veldor as his breathing got faster and faster. "I don't think I want to give you any more chances Veldor". Veldor seemed scared out of his wits as he saw the werewolf bare his fangs. Instantly he let out a scream.

"Let him go Remus". Remus turned around as he felt a hand being placed on his shoulder. The deadly look on his face slowly started to fade as he saw the sympathetic face of the headmaster looking at him.

"Save your anger for the persons who have caused such pain to you"

Dumbledore said in a reassuring voice. The anger started to subside and made way for the pain which Remus had been constantly feeling. Slowly he let Veldor out of his grip. Instantly Veldor collapsed to the ground, coughing and gasping for breath.

"Let this be clear once and for all" Dumbledore spoke up once. "Harry Potter is a very important person in this war and we have to protect him at all costs. And, even if the Order doesn't do it..." Dumbledore glanced at Remus as he said this. "...then there are plenty of people who are more than willing to look after Harry on their own..." Dumbledore gave a reassuring smile to Remus as he said this. "...including myself"

&&&&

"This is quite a nice place" Mrs. Delacour said to her husband as she looked around their 'new' home in Godric's Hollow. It was a small two storeyed building with a small garden in the front. Overall, the house was a cozy place to live in.

"Yeah...I agree" Mr. Delacour replied as their two daughters and son moved in. Gabriel instantly ran off and could be seen from time to time as she moved from one area to another to inspect the place. Soon she had gone upstairs and they could hear her feet going back and forth.

"Seems like she is deciding where she wants to sleep" Mr. Delacour said with a smile to his wife.

"That's your darling daughter alright" Mrs. Delacour responded. Mr. Delacour opened his mouth to protest but closed it again. It was a well known fact that Gabrielle was the gem of his eye.

"You guys like this place?" Mrs. Delacour asked her other children. Her son gave a short nod which was the most he could manage but Fleur didn't respond. Rather, she seemed lost in her own thoughts.

"What's the matter Fleur?" her mother asked her. Upon hearing her name, Fleur seemed to snap out of the trance-like state she had been in.

"Yes mother?" Fleur asked in a confused manner. It couldn't be more obvious that her thoughts had been elsewhere.

"Do you like this place sweetie?" her mother asked as she slowly guided her to the kitchen which was empty.

"Yes mother...it's very nice" Fleur replied instantly.

"But you haven't even had a look around dear" her mother said. Fleur seemed slightly uncomfortable at this but her mother continued. "Tell me...what's bothering you?"

"Nothing" Fleur replied though she didn't look straight into her mother's eyes.

"No problem if you don't want to say anything" her mother said. "But if you want to...". With this, Mrs. Delacour stood silently waiting for Fleur to say something. Mr. Delacour was entering the kitchen but Mrs. Delacour silently asked him to leave them alone for the moment. Mr. Delacour duly obliged.

"Tonks is dead" Fleur said after a long pause, without taking her eyes off her hands which she was carefully scrutinizing. There was a sense of disbelief in her voice which was unmistakable.

"We know dear" Mrs. Delacour moved closer to her daughter and placed a hand on her shoulder. "It was very tragic". Even though it had been a couple of days since the incident had happened, Fleur seemed unable to take her mind off it.

"She was so nice mom" Fleur said after a few seconds pause. "I mean...she died to save Harry. How many people would do that?"

"Not many honey" Mrs. Delacour replied. "That's what made her special". Even though Mrs. Delacour didn't want to raise the issue, she knew that

her daughter felt guilty about loving Harry now that she knew how much Tonks had loved him.

"She even asked me if I liked...you know..." Fleur hesitated but was given a reassuring squeeze by her mother. "When I asked her if she liked him then she said she liked him only as a friend. Why would she do that?"

Fleur asked in a confused voice, still looking down at her hands.

"Maybe she thought she was not the right person for him" Mrs. Delacour suggested softly.

"But she was the right person!" Fleur exclaimed as a couple of tears made their way down her cheeks. She knew she couldn't be as selfless as Tonks and it pained her to think of what that girl might have gone through all the time she had been near Harry and yet unable to confess her feelings to him.

"Maybe...maybe not..." her mother replied. "But, at the end, they both knew how the other felt"

"At the end, mom...at - the - very - end!" Fleur looked up with tears in her eyes. "Is that justice mother? They loved each other so much and yet..."

"Life is not always fair, my child" Mrs. Delacour said as she hugged her elder daughter. Fleur was very insecure at the moment and she knew she had to guide her right now. "And it doesn't stop for anyone honey"

"It has stopped for Harry" Fleur shed more tears as she said this. "I could see it in his eyes"

"He will get over it dear...he has to get over it" Mrs. Delacour replied.

"But how?" Fleur asked again. "I listened to the words he had said...I heard the passion and the pureness in them. He loved her with every part of his self. How can he 'get over' this tragedy?"

"We have to help him get over it honey" Mrs. Delacour replied. "We have

to be there to support him"

"Why did it have to happen this way...why?" Fleur asked to no one in particular. "They would have been so happy together..."

"It will be alright dear" Mrs. Delacour said. "Just be there for Harry when he needs your support, ok?"

"Ok mom" Fleur said reluctantly as another tear fell. She knew she would never be the one whom Harry would love. This, in itself, was very painful. But what was even more painful was the fact that she would never be able to bring herself to confess her love to Harry...not after seeing Harry and Tonks together. However, one thing was for sure - she would always be there for Harry when he would need her.

&&&&

"Where is Harry?" Soha asked Neville during their next Potions class together.

"Don't know" Neville replied. No one had seen Harry except for the time when he had come to meet Fleur for a brief minute in between classes. He had apparently come to pass on his best wishes to the Delacours for their new home. After a minute or two, he had vanished again. His roommates knew that he was sitting inside his trunk but they didn't say this to anyone else.

"How come he gets away with not attending classes?" a Ravenclaw student sitting behind them asked in a puzzled manner.

"Dumbledore said he needed some time" Soha replied, clearing up the boy's question.

"But..." Soha turned back towards Neville. "...aren't you guys roommates? You should know where he is or what he is doing?"

"Look..." Neville sounded slightly irritated. "...none of us has any interest in disturbing Harry now. He was just recovering from his godfather's

death when someone else dies again. Would you have gone meddling into his business at this moment?"

Soha looked taken aback at this question but recovered quickly. "I am not asking you people to meddle into his life now. All I wanted to know is whether he is fine or not".

"He is fine" Neville replied. "He just needs some time and we don't want to disturb him right now"

"What about Ron?" Soha continued but her eyes went over to where Hermione was working fervently on her potion. Hermione had been unusually quiet in the class for the past few days. "I haven't seen him in the classes either for the last couple of days"

"He will be back too" Neville replied. "It's been very tough for him and his family to suffer this double loss"

"Double loss?" Soha looked slightly puzzled. It was then that Neville realized that very few people knew about Percy. He had got to know about Percy because Ron had told him about it. With Harry mourning Tonks's death, Ron had no other person to go to other than Hermione and Neville who had become quite close to this couple over the past few months.

"Oh...someone passed away in his family just before all this happened" Neville quickly made this up but, seeing Soha's reaction, felt that she wasn't entirely satisfied with his answer. In any case, she didn't pursue the topic further and started to concentrate on the potion in front of her. It had been only a couple of days since they had got back and already everyone could feel the absence of Harry and Ron in the classrooms. Silently Soha said a prayer for both Harry and Ron. Both had suffered losses and she hoped that god will give them the strength to move on in life and keep fighting.

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"What is happening?" a man in his mid-thirties got up as he heard sounds outside. It was around midnight that he suddenly woke up but he couldn't understand why. In his dreams he seemed to have heard some screams but now that he was awake, the night air seemed perfectly still. "Go back to sleep" came the disgruntled reply. Obviously his wife didn't like being disturbed in her sleep.

"Something is wrong tonight..." the man said hesitantly as he climbed out of his bed. Something about the stillness outside gave him a nervous feeling.

"Yeah" his wife replied as she turned over in her bed. "You are awake in the middle of the night...that's what is wrong"

"What are those lights over there?" the man's voice had a curiosity which made his wife open her eyes for the first time. "Green light...red light... all kinds of lights..."

"Get back to bed, will you?" his wife said as she looked at her husband who was standing near the window and looking out in wonder. She could see some flashes of lights across the window pane but she brushed it off as some kids sending of crackers even though it seemed absurd. Whatever be the case, she just didn't like to be disturbed like this.

"No...this cant be!" her husband's voice sounded astonished along with a tinge of fear. It was as if he had seen something unbelievable, yet terrible. "People are appearing out of thin air!"

His wife looked very irritated and seemed to have overlooked the fear on the man's face. Even as she got up to a sitting position, her husband stumbled backwards and fell down. Within seconds however, he had scrambled back on to the bed and was sweating heavily.

"One man saw...saw...me..." the man gasped out.

"Have you gone mad?" his wife seemed to be getting more upset with every second passing by. It seemed like they were going to have another argument. Not a single day passed without them having any argument of some kind and now he had to start acting weirdly at night.

"No" came the reply. The man's wife seemed taken aback at the difference in her husband's voice. It seemed very harsh...and ruthless.

"But now he will be" the voice continued. Only then did the woman realize that the voice was not that of her husband who was already looking at a dark corner of the room. As she looked around, a hooded person stepped out of the shadows and lowered the hood to reveal a handsome, red-haired young man. He had a small stick in his hand which he pointed at the man sitting in front of him with his mouth open in astonishment and fear.

"And you will have the privilege to join him too". A split second after the boy finished the sentence, the air around them filled up with spine-chilling screams.

&&&&

Harry jumped up from the position where he had fallen asleep whilst he was thinking about Tonks. He did not know what had happened but he was sure he had heard blood curling screams nearby. For a moment Harry wondered where he was but, upon realizing that he was in the trunk, he started to wonder what it was that he had heard. He was sure he had heard something but then again, it could have been a dream. Even as he tried to remember, he couldn't recall any dream he had been having.

Harry got up from his bed and went over to the kitchen to drink some water. He had the glass of water near his mouth when it stuck him. It had not been a dream...rather, it was the sound emitted from one of the

spying devices implanted on the death eaters. The voice had seemed recognizable to a certain degree but he couldn't remember it clearly now. Not caring much about whose voice it was, Harry started to think about how to stop what he had just heard - people being massacred.

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"Neville...get up" Dean Thomas tugged heavily at Neville's blankets. Neville lifted his head with great difficulty and looked at the watch on his bedside table. 5:30 A.M.!

"Go away Dean" Neville said as he covered himself with the blankets only to find that they were gone the next second.

"You got to see this" Dean said excitedly...and nervously. As Neville looked up again, he saw Seamus, Ron and Harry looking out of the windows of their room each having a different expression on his face. While Seamus seemed puzzled at what he was seeing, Ron looked fearful. Harry, seen after more than 48 hours by Neville, looked on with his face set in stony determination. There was something about his stony expression which made Neville shiver inwardly. Neville saw that their eyes were going back and forth on something on the grounds of Hogwarts.

"Don't complain later" Dean said as he peeked out of another window. His curiosity peaked, Neville got out of his bed, put on a jacket due to the intense January cold and went over to Dean's window. Looking out, he saw a scene he had never imagined in his wildest dreams.

Hundreds of people seemed to be crossing the Hogwarts grounds. As Neville looked around, he saw one family of husband, wife and a small kid. The lady seemed to be having a hard time putting the kid to sleep in this cold weather while her husband was busy levitating their luggage in front of them. Another group of people consisted of a very old couple

along with two small kids who were constantly crying even as they walked across the ground. Their clothes seemed smeared with an unusual color of red.

"What the hell?" Dean said as he pointed out the kids to Neville.

Apparently he was looking at the same group. "Why are they crying so much?"

"Because they have lost their parents a few hours ago" it was Harry who replied. The icy coolness in his voice caused everyone to look at him oddly. "And the color on their shirts...it's blood...the blood of their parents". At this everyone else in the room looked from Harry to the kids and back at Harry. Harry couldn't be right...rather, he shouldn't be right. This was what was going on through everyone's mind as they inspected the kids again. No matter how much their minds tried to deny Harry's statement, it seemed as if he was correct. A shiver went down everyone's spine's as they imagined what might have happened to these kid's parents and what these kids might have watched with their own eyes.

"What the..." Dean looked lost for words as more and more people came into view. Some were just wearing their night dresses while yet others were wearing a weird assortment of muggle clothes. Everyone seemed to be shivering in the tremendous cold outside not to mention the slight drizzle which had been there all through the night.

As they watched, they saw a few familiar faces appearing along with their families. Harry remembered many of them from his first couple of years at Hogwarts. More and more people were looking upwards as they passed. Harry guessed that most of the lights of Hogwarts must have been turned on by now. Even as he turned around, Harry saw Neville facing him with a questioning look.

"Yes Neville..." Harry said. He knew what question was on Neville's mind.

"He has started killing again"

&&&&

"Oh my god...I can't believe this" Hermione said as she looked out of the window of the Gryffindor common room.

"What is the matter?" Katie said as she descended down the stairs which led to the girl's dormitories. She had been awakened by all the commotion in her room and, deciding that she won't be able to sleep again, she had got dressed and come down to find a room full of students.

"Hundreds of people...they are all attacking Hogwarts" one small girl squeaked from behind a curtain. Apparently she had thought she could escape by hiding.

"Stop it kid" Hermione scowled. "Have a look for yourself" she said to Katie. As Katie joined the other students near the windows, she saw the same scene which Harry and his friends had witnessed.

"What is the meaning of this?" Katie looked stunned at what she had just seen. She knew what this could mean but she wasn't willing to spell it out herself.

"Refugees" Hermione said the one word which described the whole situation perfectly.

"Harry!" one of the students exclaimed in delight. Everyone looked towards the boy's staircase and saw the familiar, yet rarely seen figure of the Boy-Who-Lived. Everyone watched the boy, rather the young man, climb down the stairs followed by Neville. Harry moved on through the throngs of students and out of the portrait hole with Neville. Once outside, Harry went on towards Dumbledore's office while Neville went off towards the Ravenclaw tower. The D.A. had to meet soon and it was best if Cho had seen what they had just viewed.

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The Daily Prophet

Largest Killing Spree Of The Century

Our special correspondent Rita Skeeter reports what is probably the largest death eater attack ever of the current century. Over seventy wizarding villages were simultaneously attacked according to our sources. The attacks, which started with the appearance of the Dark Mark at Midnight of January 5'th, were carried out for more than an hour. It is estimated that around four hundred death eaters carried out the attacks in groups of five to seven each per village. It is not known whether the ministry aurors were able to capture any of them or not but reports of fights between aurors and death eaters are doing the rounds. Many people say they had been saved by the aurors while yet others complained about the ministries false promises.

The total number of casualties estimated right now is a staggering Nine Hundred and Forty Seven. And it is still on the rise! The ministry, however, denies this.

"About a hundred people were killed in the attacks" Minister Fudge told us exclusively. "We had been successful in preventing larger number of deaths because our forces were already on high alert. We had been prepared for something like this"

However the unofficial reports contradict what the minister told us. It seems like our ministry has failed in its promise to protect the people - yet again!

It is still not known why this particular day was chosen for the attack but it seems He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named has decided to make his presence felt. The last big attack was on the ministry building itself six months back when death eaters attacked there. It is rumored that something was

stolen from the ministry building on that day but there had been no reliable confirmations. After that, no attack of such significance had taken place though there had been unofficial reports of death eaters attacking Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft and The Delacour Manor in France during Christmas. Currently, Fleur Delacour is occupying a teacher's post at Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft.

"Where is Albus Dumbledore and Harry Potter?". This is the common question which is on everyone's lips today. People believe that if anyone can stop these attacks then it has to be either of these persons. Even a ministry official, on the condition of anonymity, told us that many of the captured death eaters feared only these two persons. It seems that both Albus Dumbledore and the Boy-Who-Lived have their work cut out for them.

On the belief that Albus Dumbledore and the Harry Potter were their best chances at staying alive, hundreds of people were seen proceeding towards the Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft. Unofficial estimates put the number of 'refugees' at Hogwarts at over two thousand.

People have flocked to the Hogwarts castle from all over England and reports of more people leaving for Hogwarts are still coming in.

Overnight, many of the wizarding villages have turned into ghost towns.

The war has started!

Page 4: What can the Boy-Who-Lived do to save us?

Page 5: Dumbledore - Why doesn't he take care of this situation once and for all?

Page 6: "We don't need anyone else!" says Minister Fudge.

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A/N: Sorry for this HUGE delay in posting the first chapter of the Sequel.

Caught up in my work...blah blah blah.

I didn't go for a prologue or any introductory scenes because I just didn't feel repeating too much of PoH here. Hopefully this chapter was an ok one to start off with.

A special thanks to Catherine for helping me out with certain stuff for this story.

I am posting this under the Harry/Tonks section since Tonks will occupy a huge portion of this story in some way or the other. How? Sorry...can't say that right now but Tonks will be a big factor for Harry and this story.

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2. It Isn't The Right Time...Yet

Ok. Everyone knows the drill. Still here goes nothing -

Harry Potter and the other characters of J.K. Rowling are strictly hers. I am not the original writer (though I wish I could be J) and I do not wish to make money from this. Most Importantly, I DO NOT want to get sued. So if anyone has any problems with anything I write, then just tell me.

There's plenty more...blah blah blah...forget it and let the story begin :).

Note: US English has been used here.

Note: This is the sequel to Harry Potter & The Power Of Hogwarts. Please read it before moving on with this story.

HARRY POTTER & THE NEW DAWN

Chapter 2 - It Isn't The Right Time...Yet

The Daily Prophet

Largest Killing Spree Of The Century by Rita Skeeter

Our special correspondent Rita Skeeter reports what is probably the largest death eater attack ever of the current century...

...People have flocked to the Hogwarts castle from all over England and reports of more people leaving for Hogwarts are still coming in.

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The war has started!

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As Harry made his way towards Dumbledore's office he cast a glance at a corridor leading towards the great hall. Even in the warm shelter of the castle, Harry could feel the drift of the cold wind rushing in through the open doorway of the great hall. As the blast of ice cold wind hit his face, he couldn't fail to notice the murmur of hundreds of people being carried on by the wind. He could hear children crying while some other people seemed to be arguing with each other. One voice seemed to be much higher than those of the others and Harry came to the conclusion that it was the voice of Filch. Obviously he was disgusted at the amount of dirt these "filthy" people might have brought with them. Hurrying on so that he would have to meet an angry Filch coming down the passageway Harry soon found himself in front of the stone gargoyle.

"Cadbury" Harry said absent mindedly. The gargoyle seemed to give a small smile as it jumped aside. Taking the moving stairs upwards, Harry soon found himself outside the headmaster's office. Just as he was about to knock, the door opened revealing the figure of Minerva McGonagall stepping forward. She was looking at something in her hand when she noticed someone standing a couple of feet from her.

"OH!" Professor McGonagall exclaimed as she looked at the person. It was quite obvious that she had not expected anyone to be up here at the moment and Harry's presence had scared her for a moment. Regaining her composure as quickly as possible, she asked "What are you doing here so early, Mr. Potter?"

"I came to meet the headmaster" Harry replied even as he mentally counted the time it took for McGonagall to recover from her shock. His

calculation revealed she had taken approximately 3 seconds.

"He is not here at the moment" Professor McGonagall said as she closed the door behind her.

"But I need to talk to him" Harry said in a desperate tone. "It's important"

"He is not at Hogwarts now Mr. Potter" Professor McGonagall replied as she passed him and proceeded down the staircase. Harry, seeing no other option, decided to follow her.

"When is he going to come back?" Harry asked again.

"As soon as his work is done at the places he is required most" came the curt reply.

"But..." Harry started to say something but stopped. After all, there was no point in asking McGonagall repeatedly as to when Dumbledore would be back. Maybe she knew when he would be back...maybe she didn't.

Whatever might be the case, he decided that he would have to come back later to check again. Even as Harry had finished coming to this conclusion, he found that he had walked past the stone gargoyle once again.

"He might come back in a few hours" McGonagall said as she walked in front of him. "Check after some time". It looked as if McGonagall had sensed exactly what was going through his mind.

"Yes ma'am" Harry replied and hurried past his transfiguration teacher. However, he suddenly found a hand on his shoulder stopping his movements.

"How are you doing Harry?" McGonagall asked in a low voice. As he looked at her, he once again saw a very concerned looking face similar to the one he had seen many a month back. This face didn't seem like that of the teacher who taught them transfiguration.

"Hmmm...I think I am doing ok" Harry replied without exactly knowing

what he felt like. He was really sad in his heart but he hadn't been able to get over Tonks yet. He knew it would take time but somehow it was proving much harder than the time Sirius had died.

"If you want to talk about something then you can come to me, ok?"

Professor McGonagall continued in her concerned voice. As Harry nodded in reply, his face showing gratitude for the offer the Professor had just made, the look on McGonagall's face changed back to her normal one.

"And now get down to the hall for some breakfast" McGonagall said. "You need to eat properly"

"Yes ma'am" Harry replied obediently. He knew that McGonagall wanted her students to be disciplined in all their tasks but, somewhere deep down, she cared for their feelings more than anything else. He couldn't help but respect the manner in which she conducted herself and yet got through to all the students when the necessity arose. Harry was lost in his thoughts as McGonagall turned a corner and vanished from his view. As Harry looked around, he saw that he had reached the passageway to the great hall once again but the number of voices seemed to have increased. Not wanting to go in the middle of so many people, he proceeded on walking towards the Gryffindor tower all by himself. Just as he turned a corner, he came face to face with a well known person.

"Potter" Draco Malfoy said in a loathing voice. "Seems like your friends have deserted you". Harry didn't want to get into a skirmish and ignored the boy's words. He moved right past him and continued on his way.

"Sorry she had to die" Malfoy said in an awkward tone. This caused Harry to stop dead in his tracks, his anger suddenly rising.

"Your friends always seem to end up..."

"Stop it Malfoy" Harry said in an icy cool voice, his fists balled to keep himself into control.

"From what I have heard, you rejected the Weasley for her" Malfoy's taunting voice continued. Harry turned around slowly to face Malfoy who had also turned around to look at him.

"Nice choice though" Malfoy said again with a sneer on his face. However the sneer vanished as he saw something inside Harry snap. All of a sudden Malfoy found Harry holding him by the collar of his cloak with a deadly look on his face.

"One more word Malfoy..." Harry hissed a warning through gritted teeth as he pushed Malfoy up the wall. Harry expected Malfoy to take out his wand and hence balled his right fist in case Malfoy tried anything of the kind. However, Malfoy made no such move. Instead, he put up his hands in surrender.

"Take it...easy...Potter" Malfoy said in small gasps. Slowly Harry loosened the grip as his anger started to fade slightly. He let go of Malfoy, who was breathing heavily, and started to make his way towards the Gryffindor tower once again.

"Why don't you take care of this issue once and for all Potter?" Harry had moved about four paces when he heard Malfoy speak up again.

"What do you mean Malfoy?" Harry asked as he stopped in his tracks once again.

"Why don't you fight the dark lord once and for all and get this sorted out?" Malfoy explained. Harry turned around at this and his eyes closely inspected Malfoy.

"And why would you be suggesting this Malfoy?" Harry asked, his eyes narrowed with suspicion.

"It would be helpful for me" Malfoy replied still rubbing his neck where Harry had squeezed it hard.

"Helpful?" Harry seemed confused.

"Yeah" Malfoy said. When he saw that Harry was still looking confused, he rolled his eyes and continued. "Not enough brains in that brave mind of yours, is there?". Harry didn't let the taunt get to him again and seeing that he was getting nowhere, Malfoy seemed to give up on the taunts.

"Look...if you two finish this off, then I, for one, will be able to choose which side I want to be" Malfoy explained. Seeing the look of disbelief on Harry's face, Malfoy continued "I am a Slytherin Potter. I don't want to end up dead. And I am not going to join any side until I know it is going to win for sure"

"But you were always so sure that the Voldemort is going to win this war" Malfoy winced at the name of Voldemort but Harry ignored it. "What happened to you Malfoy?"

"I grew up Potter" Malfoy replied with a cunning look on his face. "I don't care what happens to others as long as this war is over quickly. Even though you..." Malfoy stepped back and looked at Harry from top to bottom and then back to the top. "...you are no match for the dark lord, I can't say the same thing about Dumbledore"

"Afraid Malfoy?" Harry asked in a voice which he tried to make taunting. He didn't like taunting anyone but he had to pretend to do so right now because he wanted to be sure of what Malfoy was really up to.

"No Potter" Malfoy replied in his usual snobby manner. "Just being more intelligent than those fools who call themselves your friends and would blindly follow you to death. I am not with anyone in this war...yet...but I do plan to remain on the winning side"

"Seems like you are being as selfish as ever" Harry had a look of disgust on his face but couldn't help but appreciate the fact that Malfoy was checking all options available before taking his final decision.

"I am" Malfoy retorted. "And I am proud of it. Anyway..." Malfoy said in

an arrogant manner. "...enough chit-chat. Just finish this thing soon so that I can make my decision, ok?". Even as Harry made to answer, Malfoy had turned on his heels and left. A worried looking Harry stood there for quite a few seconds before finally resuming his journey to the Gryffindor common room.

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"Not again" one of the first year students cried out as his fellow classmates dragged him out of his bed saying that they had to reach the great hall for an urgent announcement. This was the general voice of the entire Hogwarts student community including the Slytherins.

"What happened?" one of the fifth years asked a sixth year student.

"Look outside" the sixth year replied in a resentful voice as they proceeded towards the great hall. The fifth year student looked out of one of the windows they were passing and saw people still trickling across the Hogwarts grounds. His eyebrows were frowned in deep thought when it stuck him. These people must have come to Hogwarts to seek some kind of a refuge.

Slowly but surely the great hall seemed to be filled up by students. As the students entered the great hall, they couldn't help but notice that the hall had been enlarged to at least thrice of its original size. The house tables were still in their original position but the area between the house tables and the great hall door seemed as big as a quidditch pitch now. The only difference was that instead of being empty like a quidditch pitch, this area was brimming to the top with people coming in.

"Please be seated" Professor McGonagall said once she was sure that most of the students had come in. She saw that Harry was still not there but didn't read too much into it. He was obviously trying to avoid all these people here.

"As you all can see the attacks have begun" McGonagall said in a pained voice. "There are many of us here who have been affected by the attacks carried on yesterday night". Many of the students started talking amongst themselves in a concerned manner. Now that McGonagall had raised this point, it stuck them that none of them had had much news from their families...at least not yet.

"Hogwarts..." McGonagall said in a high pitched voice so that everyone could hear her over the commotion. The hall once again fell silent at hearing her voice. "Hogwarts will provide shelter to those who need it. We know that this is the time where we have to stand together and be there for each other". Many people in the crowd murmured their approval. "There are many ex-students of Hogwarts amongst you. This had been your home for seven years. Please treat this as your home...just like in the old days". Loads of people clapped and cheered at this statement.

"But there are others too who haven't been to Hogwarts before" McGonagall continued, addressing a section of people who looked slightly overwhelmed by what they had just seen. "Please treat Hogwarts as your home until we can find everyone a suitable replacement". A smile crossed the faces of most of the people present. This was what Hogwarts really stood for - friendship and camaraderie. They had only heard of it before but they were having the privilege to see it first hand for the first time in their lives. When they had left their homes many didn't know how they will be received here but McGonagall's words had reassured them to a large extent.

"Your living arrangements will be made in this hall for the moment after the students have dispersed" McGonagall continued from where she had left off. "Now..." McGonagall turned her attention to the students who

had been listening to her for the past 10 minutes. "I know you won't like this but classes at Hogwarts are being postponed indefinitely for the time being". Even though the situation was very grave, some smiles could be seen on the lips of a few students. "Also, we expect you to treat our guests here with respect and dignity"

"Also, we, the teachers of Hogwarts, expect all of you present..."

McGonagall looked at the refugees "...to treat the students with the respect they deserve". Almost everyone nodded their head in consent.

"Now..." McGonagall turned to face the students once again. "...I will call the names of certain people and they will follow me to my office"

"Where is Dumbledore?" a person shouted from near the back of the hall.

"Yeah...where is he?" another voice echoed the same sentiment. "We need to talk to him. We can only be safe if he is around"

"Yes" a chorus of voices were heard the next moment.

"Only Dumbledore can save us from You-Know-Who" a voice was heard as saying.

"Please calm down" McGonagall looked irritated at the behavior of the people present but she knew that all of them were feeling very insecure.

As the chaotic scene came under control a bit, she continued.

"Headmaster Dumbledore has gone to meet the minister and take care of this situation at hand. He will be back by noon today". A feeling of unrest seemed to grow in the crowd.

"Till noon! That means we are without protection till then" one woman said shrilly, her weary face covered with lines of worry.

"No..." another voice spoke up. "Harry Potter is here, isn't he?"

"Yes..." another refugee spoke up. "Where is Harry Potter? Is he here?"

"He can protect us till Dumbledore gets here"

"BE QUIET" the magically enhanced voice of Professor McGonagall

silenced the whole room in a single moment. "Please know that we maintain strict discipline here at Hogwarts and anyone who doesn't adhere by that is welcome to leave"

"We want to live Professor" one man spoke up. "Is that too much to ask for?" Professor McGonagall looked lost for words when another voice spoke up.

"If you want to live then live with honor" Fleur Delacour had entered the great hall. "Don't rely on just one person...rely on everyone around you. Fight for your honor". The hall fell into pin-drop silence at this.

"Easy for you to say lady" the man spoke again. "You live in this huge castle and have a posh lifestyle. How would you know what it means to live every moment thinking that it will be your last?"

"How would I know?" Fleur replied scathingly. "My house was destroyed by death eaters long before yours mister. My friend..." Fleur's voice choked slightly. "...she died in front of my eyes 5 days back. How would I know?" Fleur almost rushed towards the man when she found that one hand seemed to hold her back. Looking around, she saw it was Harry who had her in a tight grip. He was standing in such a way that part of his face and body was covered by the shadow cast by one of the pillars of the hall.

"You know what..." Harry said as he let go of Fleur. "...I think most of you do not have the slightest bit of self respect"

"Says who?" the man asked, his pride taking a beating.

"Me" Harry said as he stepped out of the shadows. "Harry Potter". The man gulped at the sight of seeing Harry Potter in flesh and blood for the first time. Same was the case with many others. However, many people in the crowd looked relieved at the sight of the Boy-Who-Lived.

"What makes you think that I can protect you from all the death eaters

and Voldemort?" Everyone present in the hall winced at the name of the dark lord being mentioned. "I am a kid compared to many of you and yet you rely on me protecting you!"

"You are the Boy-Who-Lived" one woman said from the crowd.

"Do you want your son to be the Boy-Who-Lived lady?" Harry asked, looking at the woman. "Do you think that if he had been in my place then he could have saved the world by just waving his wand around?" Harry looked calm outside but was seething with rage inside. How could these people think that he was a match for one of the greatest wizards ever?

"Leave her" another person spoke up. "You have fought You-Know-Who so many times and yet you are alive!" the man's voice had a hint of disbelief in them. "If you can't save us..."

"He's a kid" another man, albeit much taller than the first one said. "He is no better than us. Only Dumbledore can help us"

"Shut up John" the first man replied. As Harry looked around, he could clearly see that there was a divide between these people. While most of them believed that he could save them, there were some who thought of this as a crazy idea.

"Look at what he is saying" the man named John replied. "He himself doesn't believe he can fight You-Know-Who"

"Because he has more brains than you" a woman replied. "If you had half his brains then god knows that you would have been a great wizard yourself"

"Martha!" John pointed his finger at her, clearly giving her the warning to stop.

"Will you all stop bickering?" the man, whose name was Peter, spoke up again. "John...we all know that he is a young man but he also has great courage. Even if half of what we have heard is true then..."

"Then what?" Harry asked, his eyes narrowed. "Then I will be able to save you all from a dark lord and hundreds of death eaters?". Peter squirmed under Harry's intense gaze.

"You people don't get the point, do you?" Neville spoke up from behind Harry. "A war is not fought alone. Harry cannot fight on his own"

"Leave it Neville" Harry cut in. "These people wont understand". With that, Harry turned around and left the great hall.

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"What are we going to do Peter?" a woman asked the man named Peter who had earlier taken a stance against the person named John.

"We will do fine Betty" Peter said to his wife as she cast a spell to clean another shirt which had been covered with blood.

"They killed him..." Betty sobbed. "They...they murdered our only child Peter". Betty couldn't control herself any longer and burst into tears.

Peter, somehow managing to hold back his own tears, held his wife tightly in his arms. His heart was filled with hate for all the death eaters who had destroyed many a family the previous night.

He and his wife had been out on a social call and, on their way back, they had got stuck at the apparition point of Diagon Alley. For some reason, hundreds of people were apparating in that area around midnight and there were chaos all around. Rumor had it that death eaters were attacking the whole of England. Even as they tried to apparate to their homes, they found themselves about four kilometers from their target. Peter, who worked at the ministry, knew that this could mean only one thing - ministry aurors must have set up anti apparation wards around their village and were redirecting any apparition attempt to the nearest apparation point.

Even as Peter and Betty ran towards their village, they saw the dark mark

over many houses. A spine chilling feeling passed through their bodies at every such sight and they ran even harder towards their village. Peter could hear Betty muttering a prayer that their eight year old son would be safe and sound...that they should find him sleeping in his bed just like any other day. Alas, that was not to be. As they turned the last corner and their home came in to view, the dreaded dark mark shadow loomed large over it. It was all over.

"They will all perish Betty" Peter said in a choked but confident voice.

"They will Peter...the have to" Betty said in between her sobs.

All around Peter and Betty, the same scenes were getting repeated over and over again. Even though the great hall was filled with a couple of thousand people, there wasn't much mingling between them. Everyone was lost in their own sorrow, trying to recover from the shock they had suffered yesterday. The two kids, whom Harry and the others had seen through the dormitory window, were the ones who seemed the most affected. Their grandparents were repeatedly trying to get them to talk but neither the ten year old boy nor his thirteen year old sister muttered a word. All they did was sit in a corner and stare blankly at everything that was happening around them. Some of the occupants of the hall pitied the condition of these kids but they too were not in a much better condition either. A look of sympathy was the most that these kids got. However, unknown to everyone present there, a single pair of green eyes watched the kids with great empathy. Everyone in this hall wanted revenge...and they would get it when the right time came.

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A couple of days later, Harry just didn't feel like staying in the trunk any longer. Instead, he wanted to go somewhere. Where, he didn't know...but he just wanted to get away from his memories for a short period of time.

He knew that he couldn't run from his memories as they defined what he really was. However, it was one of those times when he just felt the need to go for a walk.

The common room was brimming with students as Harry climbed down the stairs. The commotion in the common room, which was quite common nowadays, stopped briefly as everyone paused to look at Harry. Harry sighed inwardly and stepped out of the portrait hole and into the corridors of Hogwarts. The corridors were much deserted nowadays since there were no classes held. Harry found the corridors more to his liking and started walking without thinking where he was going. It was as if his feet had a mind of it's own as he kept on walking slowly. He had thought that a long walk would take his mind off Tonks for some time but that did not happen. On the contrary, the memory of Tonks seemed to come back to him like a flood.

Harry could clearly remember the look on Tonks face as she had got hit by the curse. That smile...that lovely smile which always made him smile even in the worst situation. However, on that day, that smile had made him cry.

The last time he had cried before that was the day Dobby had died. He had never thought of his life without these two person's present but fate had something else in store for him altogether. He didn't know how Remus was managing it. As for himself, his eyes were set on quite a few figures for the time being - Voldemort, Snape, Wormtail and Ginny.

"Harry!"

Harry turned round to see the figure of Soha approaching him from one of the corridors.

"I have been..." Soha stopped to regain her breath before continuing. "... looking for you all day long"

"Is there anything important?" Harry asked as he started to walk down the corridor once again.

"Yes" Soha said in a very concerned voice as she fell in step with Harry.

"The thing is..." Soha was still lost for breath but somehow managed to go through her sentences. "The thing is that many people out there are concerned for you but you don't even talk to them". Harry didn't reply to this and, casting his glance in different directions, calmly continued to walk down the corridor.

"You once told me that it was for your friend's own good" Soha carried on. "But it is not doing them any good. Everyone is worried sick about you"

"People still worry about the Boy-Who-Lived Soha" Harry replied in a cold voice as he turned another corner. "Very..." Harry lost his voice for a second before continuing. "...very few people have really cared about Harry"

"You are wrong" Soha stomped her foot on the floor. "You are so wrong. Ron, Hermione, Neville, Cho, myself...we all care about you Harry"

"Maybe you are right Soha" Harry replied softly. Soha continued walking along with Harry expecting something more from him but he didn't say anything.

"So?" Soha stepped in front of Harry to stop him. "What are you going to do?"

"Walk along a bit more if you don't mind" Harry replied calmly. He tried to side step Soha but she was too quick for him and blocked his path again.

"Why are you doing this to us Harry?" Soha asked in exasperation.

"Forget me...I am new here...you have known Ron and Hermione and the others for so long. Why are you doing this to them?". A vague look came

over Harry's face and Soha could understand that he was reliving some of his old memories. However, the face soon became expressionless again as was the case ever since the New Year had dawned.

"I don't know" Harry said absent mindedly and walked past a helpless Soha. If someone had been near Harry as he turned yet another corner, they would clearly have heard him say "It isn't the right time...yet"

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"What can we do to stop all this?" Anthony Goldstein's whisper could be clearly heard in the D.A. meeting room. The D.A. had met to discuss the future planning's of it's operations now that there were refugees in Hogwarts but none of them could think of anything. All that was going through everyone's mind was the state of devastation they had seen outside.

"I don't think there is much we can do right now" Hermione said. "We have got to help out the needy people right now"

"But we need to do something for people to stop becoming needy"

Anthony said in a sarcastic voice. He had been very upset from the morning when he had learnt that his uncle and aunt had died in the attacks and none dared argue with him at the moment.

"I agree with Anthony" Neville said.

"But what can we do?" Hermione asked Neville. "I mean...there are hundreds of death eaters out there. We can't fight them"

"Hermione's right" Cho chipped in. "For the time being, I think that all we can do is try to keep Hogwarts safe"

"Hogwarts IS safe" Anthony said again. "Hogwarts has Dumbledore. Others don't"

"Anthony..." Neville went over to the boy and sat down beside him. "...we all know how terrible you must be feeling. But we just can't rush out

there, can we?"

"Why not?" the boy asked in a choked voice. The emotion in his voice conveyed the message as to how much his aunt and uncle had meant to him.

"No Anthony...we have to wait for the right time" Neville said in a soothing voice. "Also, we are still not up to the level to take on hordes of death eaters"

"No...we can" another student, a Hufflepuff, said. "We took on those giants and the death eaters"

"They were not using the unforgivables" Cho spoke up. "If they had, then most of us wouldn't have been present here today"

"But we need to do something" another member spoke up. "Just look at the people outside. I mean...none of us wants to be in a similar situation and nor do we want others to have a life like this"

"Yes...I agree with you mate" another guy, a Ravenclaw, spoke. "But we still need a lot of things to be of some real help outside. I think it is better that we play to our strengths"

"And they are?" came the question.

"Our strength is that we know Hogwarts inside out" Hermione spoke again after a long time. "Many people will be coming here to seek refuge. We can ensure that they have a safe passage across the fields and around the lake and don't stray outside when it is dark"

"As if that is going to stop You-Know-Who" Anthony's voice was filled with loathing.

"No" Cho said. She could feel the tension in the D.A. and she knew that somewhere deep down every member was scared. It was her and Neville's responsibility to calm them down. She missed Harry very much right now since, whenever Harry was present, they always could look up to him and

think that here was a person who had suffered many a loss and yet was fighting it out. They needed someone like that amongst them right now but Cho knew that Harry was not yet ready to come back...not after what Soha had told her about her conversation with Harry. Fighting a feeling to go and look for Harry, Cho opened her mouth to speak but stopped as the door to the Room of Requirements opened. In the doorway stood Ron.

No one except Hermione had dared to talk to Ron ever since they had heard about what had happened. Some of those present knew the feeling since a few of their family members had joined the dark side in the war. In any case, everyone knew from the look on Ron's face that he was feeling awful.

"C'mon inside Ron" Hermione said after Ron didn't move from his place for well over a minute. He seemed to be staring at everyone present to see if they were staring back at him or not. While the younger members did stare at him, the older ones didn't meet his eye. He considered every stare cautiously, as if to see whether they held sympathy for him or whether it was hatred. Finally satisfying himself that he was amongst friends and well wishers, he proceeded towards the back of the room and sat down on one of the empty chairs present.

Even as Cho saw Ron walking towards the back of the room, a thought stuck her. She knew that Ron was going through one hell of a time and yet...

"Look at Ron" Cho said with emphasis and got up from his feet. Everyone seemed slightly stunned at these sudden words but continued to listen nonetheless.

"We all know he is going through one of the worst phases of his life" Cho said as she looked Ron dead in the eye. She knew that she had to make

her point and yet she should not hurt Ron's feelings. "We all sympathize with you Ron and we all hope that nothing like this happens to any of us but..." Cho paused slightly to make her point. "...but it will happen again. Today someone from Ron's family has made a wrong choice, tomorrow it might be my own brother. Today a lot of people have died...some very near and dear to many of us. Tomorrow's casualty list might contain my parents list". Many people, including Neville, looked on with a new found respect for Cho and the way she was dealing with the members of the D.A.

"We know the times are bad but we have to do what we have to do" Cho continued. "Ron came here because he felt it his duty to be here. We have to protect the people at Hogwarts because it is our duty. If we can at least protect these people, then also we will be taking a lot of burden off Dumbledore's shoulders. Then..."

"Then he will be able to devote more of his time to gather his own forces and get ready for the final battle". Neville said the very words which were on Cho's mind. Cho stopped once she saw that Neville had taken over the mantle. They had developed a good understanding over the past few months and knew where to let the other take the lead. She now knew why Harry had asked both of them to be joint leaders.

"We have to protect these people" Neville said earnestly. He knew how it was to grow up without the love of one's parents since his parents were all but dead. "These people think that only Dumbledore can protect them and if Dumbledore is not there then they are unsafe. We have to give them a feeling of security"

"And..." Cho took over from Neville and started circling the students. "...once they know that we are there to save them if needed, then they will be there to help us when we need them. God knows we need as many

people fighting as possible. If the adults in these groups know that we can protect their kids then they might also take Dumbledore's side when the war comes to the door of Hogwarts"

"We need everyone fighting for us" Hermione was the one to speak up now. "We can't just rush off to our homes and fight there. One person..."

Hermione's eyes became a bit misty as she stopped for a moment. "One person suffered a lot to see us work as a team. We can't let him down".

Everyone in the D.A. knew that Hermione was talking about Harry. Even though they still thought that Dumbledore had been the one to organize the D.A. training under Moody, they believed that it was at Harry's insistence that the training had taken place. And everyone knew that it was because of the training that they had survived the last Halloween feast.

Slowly a murmur of consent went through almost everyone present there.

They had their own problems but they knew that they had to do their duty - that to protect Hogwarts and its occupants to the best of their capabilities. They couldn't let them down...they couldn't let Harry down.

However, one person seated at the back did not say anything. All that was racing through his mind was a single sentence"

"My sister let us down...she let you down Harry"

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"That was close" Cho said to Neville and Hermione as they gathered in the great hall for the dinner.

"Well..." Hermione looked at Cho and said "You showed great guts to take the example of Ron. I would never have dared to say anything like that". Hermione's voice reflected the admiration she had for Cho's action.

"I had my fingers crossed" Cho replied. "I don't know Ron too well but he is sometimes a bit short tempered. I was just hoping that..." Cho's voice

trailed off at this.

"I must say he took it very well" Neville said thoughtfully. "Ron's changed a lot"

"Yes...he has" Hermione agreed as Cho went towards the Ravenclaw table while she followed Neville to the Gryffindor table.

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"Harry" Remus called out softly as he entered the trunk. Finding Harry's room empty, he went over to the training area. There he found Harry hard at work with different spells. Remus recognized some of the spells which Harry used while a couple of spells looked new to him. He knew that Harry was going through his books a lot lately to take his mind off Tonks and hence he had started learning new spells at a fast rate. Not wanting to disturb Harry, Remus settled down at an empty chair in the dining table and kept watching his godson at practice.

Harry seemed to have changed a lot in the past week. Nowadays he seemed much more focused in his daily routine and his every movement seemed to be calculated. He spent a lot of time training...sometimes more than necessary. His mingling with his old friends, which had been on a comeback trail before the death of Tonks, also seemed to have taken a backseat. Also, he sometimes behaved like a younger version of Moody but Remus knew that he couldn't blame Harry for being over cautious. After all, what could be expected if someone like Ginny betrayed him? However, on other occasions, Harry seemed to care about nothing in this world. He would spend hours on the end in the trunk gazing at some place or the other. Remus could only guess that Harry was thinking of Tonks in those moments. It's not as if Remus himself didn't think about Tonks. In fact, he thought about her a lot and wished that maybe somehow she would be in their midst. Similarly, he couldn't forget the

little man of the trunk - Dobby.

Harry didn't say anything about Dobby but Remus could feel how much Harry missed Dobby. Whenever Harry entered the kitchen to fix himself a snack or make their dinner, he would stop for a moment and look at Dobby's room. It was a small one attached to one end of the kitchen. Just by the look of emotion in Harry's eyes whenever he looked at Dobby's room, Remus could tell how deeply scarred Harry had been by the little elf's death. Without Dobby and Tonks around, the trunk seemed very quite and...it seemed just like a trunk. He missed the yelling of Tonks... about how Dobby...

"Hi Remus" Remus was brought out of his thoughts by the distant voice of Harry. Looking around, he saw Harry walking towards him with their dinner levitated in front of him. Presently, Harry placed the plates on the table.

"You seemed lost in your thoughts" Harry said in an apologetic voice.

"Sorry if I disturbed you"

"No" Remus brushed off the apology and pulled his dinner plate towards him. "No problem at all"

"What were you thinking?" Harry asked curiously.

Remus squirmed around in his seat for a couple of seconds even as Harry continued to gaze at him. "I was just thinking of some...old times" he finally managed to say. Harry didn't say anything at this and his focus shifted to his food. The rest of the dinner passed off in silence as both of them were lost in their own thoughts. Soon the table was cleared away by Harry and they found themselves sitting at their respective places. The only difference was that two of the opposite chairs were empty.

"They were very good to us" Remus said finally. Harry just kept looking at the chair opposite to him and didn't say anything in reply.

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"I have heard that some auror died that night" one of the girls in the Gryffindor common room said to another. The rumors regarding the death of Tonks had subsided in a couple of days but now that classes had been postponed sine-die, many of the students had nothing better than to gossip around.

"Yeah" replied the other girl. "And I hear that she had died while fighting Severus Snape"

"That's not true" one of the boys who had overheard these girls came over. "She was killed when they were fighting Ginny"

"She?" one of the girls looked at the boy in a wide-eyed manner.

"Yes" another member of the group spoke up. "I had also heard that it was a lady"

"Was Harry there?" came another question.

"I heard she died trying to save Harry" the boy replied.

"How do you know that?"

"Word gets around fast here, doesn't it?" the boy replied. "I have reliable sources"

"Why would someone risk their life for Harry?" the first girl asked even though she knew the answer to this.

"Lots of people are out there who would do anything for him" the second girl replied, saying exactly what was on the first girls mind.

"It was a girl, right?" another guy had joined the group of gossip mongers. More and more people were beginning to listen to this conversation.

"Yeah" the guy who had first come over replied.

"Do you think she was Harry's girlfriend?" the new boy asked. At this many people exchanged glances. Most of the people present there knew

that Harry didn't have any serious girlfriend after the problem with Cho.

Also, lately he had withdrawn himself from Hogwarts public life

completely and hence had almost no chance to mingle with other girls.

"No" one of the girls replied. "From what I had heard, she was much older than him. After all, she was an auror"

"And where is it written that a guy cannot have an older girlfriend?" the new boy asked in a sarcastic voice. "What do the others think? Why would a girl die for someone?"

"Well..." one of the girls looked very thoughtful. "Hermione tried to save Ron but they were a couple then"

"Exactly" the boy said emphatically. "People do these kinds of things for their families and loved ones. If she was not his family, as we all know Harry has no family, then..." the boy left the sentence hanging and looked at everyone present. No one could argue with his logic and yet they didn't dare to agree with the boy completely.

"He must be so sad then" one of the girls in the group, which had swelled up to twenty five by then, spoke up. "I mean...if they really were a couple then it must be so hard for him to take it". Many of the girls had sympathetic looks on their faces.

"Why don't we ask Harry if the auror was his girlfriend or not?" another new member to the group said.

"Are you nuts?" the girls who had first started this conversation said in a chorus. "He will curse you to oblivion"

"Whatever you think!" the boy said with a shrug. "I just suggested the best way to confirm whether we are thinking the right thing or not"

"Yeah" another girl said with a roll of her eyes. "The best way to know whether meddling with the private life of the current best DADA student is going to have a good effect on your life or not"

"Well...he has a point though" the first boy said. "If we just asked Harry politely..." at this moment, the voice of the boy trailed off. Everyone looked at each other questioningly as to what had happened when a series of nudges pointed out the source of this abrupt stop. Everyone followed the fifth year boy's gaze and found it to be fixed on the figure of a serious looking Harry Potter whose cold stare sent a chill down everyone's spine.

No one said a thing as Harry climbed down the dormitory stairs. The whole Gryffindor common room had fallen into pin drop silence. Other students, who had avoided getting into the gang of gossipers, looked on in anticipation to see what might happen next. Everyone's eyes were fixed on Harry whose eyes were scrutinizing the faces of thirty odd students gathered around the fire.

"Ask me what?" Harry asked in a calm but cold voice as soon as he came up to the group. Many of the group members turned their eyes towards the floor. This included the boy who had just suggested asking Harry about Tonks.

"You people were going to ask me something" Harry said again. "What did you want to know about?". There was something in Harry's voice which dared anyone to ask him anything. Everyone knew that Harry had overheard a part of the conversation and knew exactly what they wanted to ask and yet they didn't dare say anything. Gone was their Gryffindor courage in front of Harry's commanding presence. Neville, who was standing near the staircase to the boy's dormitory, could not help but admire Harry's overall personality. He knew that deep down Harry was just the same old person they had always known and yet, when the situation demanded, he could go that extra step to keep the situation under control. He had not seen this side of Harry at the end of their

previous year of schooling and guessed that Harry had matured a bit more than the others and knew how to handle different situations better than most. Only if he had been there to lead to the D.A. then they would have been able to achieve much higher standards.

"It's always better to speak in front of a person rather than gossip behind their backs" Harry said slowly to make his point very clear. "Would you have liked someone else prying on your private life if it had been you instead of me?". The remaining students, who still were maintaining some kind of eye contact, also lowered their heads. They knew that Harry was right and they wouldn't want to be in his shoes for all the gold in the world.

"We are sorry Harry" said one of the boys. Harry knew that it took a lot of courage to admit one's own mistake and he appreciated the boy for it. Gossiping was something which everyone did...more so when they were in their teens. It's just that he was slightly weary of all this gossiping because of the amount of controversies he had been involved in throughout his life in the wizarding world. Just nodding his head towards the boy in an acknowledging gesture, Harry walked across the common room and climbed out of the portrait hole.

"Ouch!"

"Oh...sorry Fleur" Harry said as he recognized the person with whom he had collided outside the portrait hole.

"It's ok" Fleur replied. Seeing that Harry seemed a bit upset, Fleur continued "Where are you headed now?"

"Well..." Harry looked around uncertainly. Now that he thought of it, he really didn't know where he was going. "I was just going for a walk inside the castle" he said truthfully. Harry didn't know when this had become a habit for him but every day he wandered around the corridors of

Hogwarts aimlessly. Every evening he was reminded of the happenings of the dawning of the New Year and he would inevitably end up going to the spot where Tonks had got hit by the fatal curse from Ginny.

Inexplicably, he felt very peaceful whenever he was at that spot.

"Maybe you could spend some time with us" Fleur said a bit timidly. To tell the truth, she was in a mental mess. She didn't know whether talking too much with Harry was good or bad for her. She was way too deep in love with him to avoid him all the time. However, she loved him so dearly that the thought of her confessing her love for him was sacrilege to her. How could she even dare to take the place in Harry's heart which he had reserved for Tonks?

"Us?" Harry asked in mild confusion.

"Well...my family has come over to visit me" Fleur explained. "When they saw the reports of attacks all over..."

"I see" Harry absentmindedly interrupted Fleur. "Ok...I think I will like seeing them once more". Fleur's smiled at this and led the way towards the dungeons which was her home at Hogwarts. Inside, she felt her heart skipping a beat with every step but on the outside she knew couldn't show it. She knew very well that she was nowhere near to the place which she wanted in her heart. Whatever be the case, she had made a resolve to be Harry's friend throughout their lives. If this meant that confessing her love might destroy their friendship, she wouldn't do so. Just having Harry by her side was enough for her.

"How is Gabrielle doing?" Harry asked as they came nearer to Fleur's living quarters.

"Why don't you find out for yourself when you get there" Fleur replied with a smile and continued walking beside Harry. The ecstasy she felt having Harry beside her was too much for her right now. She hadn't met

him for what seemed to be a very long time and she wanted to enjoy the moment of walking side by side with Harry. Maybe one day he will hold her hand when they walked side by side...

"No" Fleur whispered lightly to herself at this thought. She couldn't let her heart get the better of her head. She couldn't replace Tonks. With an inwardly sigh, she opened the door to the potions classroom and led Harry to the room where her family was present.

&&&&

Harry was walking towards his dormitory and felt much better after meeting with Fleur's parents and siblings. They loved him very dearly... almost as if he was family. However, he didn't wish to have a repeat of what had happened to Tonks. He had made it a point to be as far as possible from Fleur and her family in public. Also, whenever they asked him as to what he was doing or how he was feeling, he would always provide a positive answer. He would always tell them that he was busy studying or that Remus had helped him in overcoming the "problems" they had been facing in the recent times. The Delacours never referred to the death of Dobby and Tonks directly and Harry was grateful for it. He wouldn't have minded if the Delacours had spoken about the deaths again but he still preferred to keep the conversations away from this topic.

"I feel much safe now that he is here" Harry heard a group of people coming down the corridor around the bend. Not wanting to face them, Harry quickly ducked into one of the empty classrooms on his left. The last thing he needed now was another "save the world" plea.

"I agree with you Matt" a female voice said. "Having Dumbledore here is really reassuring"

"But what can he do to save us mommy?" a tiny voice asked. Harry

guessed that the lady was not taking any chances by leaving her daughter alone in the great hall. After all, Hogwarts was a huge place and any kid could get lost easily.

"He will fight against You-Know-Who and protect us all honey" her mother said in a soothing voice. Harry stood still in the dark and listened as the group came nearer and nearer, their voices becoming clearer by the moment.

"The thing is..." one person whose voice sounded more deep than the others, said. "...why isn't the headmaster getting rid of You-Know-Who?". Harry guessed that this person was a student of Hogwarts sometime long ago since he referred to Dumbledore as 'headmaster'.

"Don't know" another person replied. "They say Harry Potter is the only person who can fight against him"

"He's a kid" someone else said. "But he has a lot of character in him"

"That's right" the lady spoke again. "The way he was speaking in the hall in front of everyone...even John didn't say anything after that"

"Mommy...was he really Harry Potter?" Harry heard the little girl ask in a awestruck voice. As he peeked at the group passing by, he saw the girl couldn't be more than eight years old.

"Yes dear" her mother replied, causing the girl's eyes to go wide. "But don't you stare at him when he comes in front of you. It is..."

"...rude to stare" the girl completed the sentence with a giggle. Evidently she was used to hearing it quite often. The group's voice grew

indistinctive as they moved farther away from Harry's hiding spot. Once their footsteps had died down, Harry slowly stepped out of the classroom and started walking towards the Gryffindor tower thinking about what he had just heard. Dumbledore was back...and he needed to talk to him.

Quickly Harry turned and started walking towards Dumbledore's office.

He had to take many detours to avoid groups of people talking to some professor or the other in the corridors. Finally, he found himself in front of the gargoyle guarding the opening to the spiraling staircase. Upon giving the password, he climbed the stairs and was about to knock when he heard the voice of McGonagall inside.

"What is the matter Albus?" she asked impatiently. It seemed as if she had been asking him this question repeatedly over many an hour or many a day.

"It's very hard to let go Minerva" Dumbledore said in an emotional voice.

"Let go of what?" McGonagall seemed slightly puzzled.

"Memories..." Dumbledore replied as Harry listened from outside. "...the past...the present..."

"How come you still manage to confuse me with your words?"

McGonagall said in exasperation.

"Experience" Dumbledore said with a sigh. To Harry, it seemed as if Dumbledore was bearing a great burden on his shoulders...one which was starting to take its toll on him.

"Can I help you in any way Albus?" McGonagall asked.

"You have always been very helpful Minerva..." Dumbledore said slowly.

"...but not this time"

"You have always had your way" McGonagall sounded very irritated.

"Something is building inside..."

"I think I will like to talk to Mr. Potter now" Dumbledore cut short

McGonagall which, to Harry, seemed very rude. He knew Dumbledore was not the sort of person who would do something like that to hurt anyone but then again, maybe the situation was such that he had to do it.

Harry's thoughts, however, were interrupted by five words "You may come in Harry".

"Good evening sir" Harry said as he pushed open the door and entered the headmaster's office. "Good evening Professor McGonagall"

"Good evening" McGonagall replied in a cold manner without meeting Harry's eyes and walked out of the room. Harry knew for sure that McGonagall had been deeply hurt and he had a slight inkling that he had seen tears in her eyes as she had passed him.

"Minerva told me that you were looking for me" Dumbledore said as Harry took the seat on offer.

"Yes sir" Harry replied, feeling a bit angry at how Dumbledore seemed to be unaffected by the way McGonagall had walked out. There was no way Dumbledore could not have known that McGonagall had been deeply hurt but Harry decided it was best to leave those matters alone. Just as he didn't like others meddling in his life, he didn't want to meddle in anyone else's life either.

"So what is it that is on your mind?" Dumbledore said as he cleaned his glasses.

"Where is all this leading to sir?" Harry asked in a voice devoid of all emotion.

"To you Harry" Dumbledore replied calmly.

"And these people?" Harry asked in the same monotonous voice. "Why do they have to suffer?"

"I really don't have an answer to that one Harry" Dumbledore replied as he put on his glasses, a strained look on his face. "He is exerting his new found freedom"

"What can I do to stop him?"

"I am afraid that we cannot do anything right now Harry" Dumbledore replied as he stared out of the window on the dark horizon. "He has all the cards right now and we have to wait for him to make a wrong move"

"But..." Harry's voice rose as his temper got the better of him. "But...by then a lot of people will end up dead. Families destroyed...orphans..."

"I can understand your feelings Harry" Dumbledore said as he looked straight at his favorite pupil. "But we have to take into consideration that we are fighting one of the greatest wizards of all times who also has a big army of death eaters now"

"But there must be something we can do" Harry stood up, his adrenaline running high. "There must be something the Order can do to stop his followers...or maybe the ministry aurors..."

"We are doing whatever we can Harry" Dumbledore replied. "We have over 50 Order members and 60 aurors..."

"50!" Harry looked at Dumbledore as if it was the most ridiculous thing he had ever heard. "60!" Harry's voice peaked even more. "What are you trying to tell me? There are hundreds of death eaters out there and we have about 110 light wizards protecting the people of England?"

"I am afraid that is the strength we could muster till now" Dumbledore replied. "But they are not protecting the people of England"

"Then what the hell are they doing?" Harry asked, his face betraying the anger inside him.

"They are escorting everyone to a safe place" Dumbledore said. Harry looked at Dumbledore with narrowed eyes before comprehension dawned upon him.

"They are escorting everyone...here?". As Dumbledore nodded in reply, Harry got up from his seat.

"Voldemort knows I am here so sooner or later he will come here" Harry seemed to be thinking aloud as he started pacing around the room. "If there are so many refugees here, then he will come here sooner so that he can take care of everyone at once. I don't care what happens to me but if

there is a war here at Hogwarts...which there will be...then there will be lots of casualties..." Harry stopped in his tracks and looked at Dumbledore. "You can't keep them here"

"I can understand your feelings but..." Dumbledore paused for a long moment before continuing. "...but...I cannot stop anyone from wanting to come here. We are not forcing anyone to come here. We are only escorting those people here who want to come here"

Harry leaned over Dumbledore's desk and asked "And how many of those people are there who want to come here?"

"I have to admit there are quite a lot of them" Dumbledore replied.

"You just cannot let this happen" Harry threw up his arms in the air in desperation. "The more the people are near to me the more they are near to their doom"

"The more the people that are near you, the more united we will be and the better we will be able to fight Lord Voldemort" Dumbledore countered Harry. Harry looked at Dumbledore for a second before starting to pace the room again.

"That's your way of looking at it" Harry said bitterly. "If only you had lived my life...seeing my near and dear ones..." his voice choked slightly and he stopped momentarily to blink back the tears that were starting to form in his eyes.

"We always have to move on Harry" Dumbledore said in a sympathetic voice. "We have to live for the future"

"But we can't leave our pasts behind" Harry said as he slumped down in his chair once more. "I still think this is one bad idea. I mean...how many people have died in this first wave of attacks? Thousands if I am not wrong". Harry cast a questioning look at Dumbledore who gave a sad nod. "And now, more people are coming here. An absurd amount of

people will end up dying if Hogwarts is attacked. And I don't know what protection you have got here but if Voldemort attacks with all his forces, then he is surely going to kill a lot of innocent people regardless of the outcome of this war"

"But I can't help it any more than you can Harry. If there is an attack then we will have to face it when it comes" Dumbledore replied. "We all know he will attack Hogwarts. This place resembles hope for all the people of England and conquering Hogwarts will easily propel Lord Voldemort to greater heights. However, I cannot stop anyone from coming here. I cannot force anyone to leave this place"

"Maybe I should leave this place" Harry suggested, the bitterness still present in his voice.

"No!" Dumbledore said in an alarmed manner. "You are our only hope but you don't stand a chance to fight against everyone single handedly. Never leave this place or else we will all perish". As Dumbledore continued to look at Harry, he saw a range of emotions crossing the face of the young man.

"Give me your word that you won't leave Hogwarts until the war is over" Dumbledore said as he leant forward. Seconds turned into minutes as Harry didn't reply to Dumbledore. He was weighing every option in his head to see which was the best possible way to fight Voldemort.

Dumbledore, seeing Harry deep in thought, didn't want to disturb him either. However, he didn't take his eyes off Harry even for a second.

"Ok...you have my word" Harry said at last. At this, Dumbledore leaned back in his chair, relief washing over his features. "But I might leave Hogwarts...temporarily" Harry continued. "Maybe for a few hours or so..."

"I have no objection to that" Dumbledore said.

"I still think keeping all the refugees here is a bad idea" Harry said as he got up to leave. "Hopefully I am wrong"

"Hopefully" Dumbledore said as he saw Harry leave his office.

&&&&

"Hi"

"Hi" Harry said as he sat down at the end of his bed. He had not expected Ron to be present at that time but now that Ron had greeted him, he had to hang around a bit longer.

"How are you doing?" Ron asked tentatively. Harry could notice that Ron's voice had a hint of fear in them but at the same time the concern in his voice could not be missed either.

"Fine" Harry replied as briefly as possible.

"It's very hard, isn't it?" Ron continued but it seemed that he was talking more to himself than Harry. "After you have known someone for so long..."

"People make choices" Harry said, the scene of Tonks jumping in front of him seemed to be replaying itself in his mind. Tonks had definitely made a choice.

"Tonks choose to die" Ron said in a sorrow filled voice. "She was always so jolly...keeping us all laughing". Harry didn't reply to this and kept looking out of the window at the setting sun.

"She was a great friend" Harry said at last.

"I bet she was" Ron said with a nod. "Even I wouldn't die for someone with a scar on his head" Ron gave a hesitant laugh at this. Harry smiled slightly at Ron's pathetic attempt to lighten up the mood but didn't say anything. He knew that if required then Ron would die for him hundred times over but he didn't think saying all this stuff was of much use now.

"I wish I could have got to know her a bit better" Ron continued. "It's

weird...six months and there is no Sirius...no Tonks". Ron stopped as he saw that Harry had balled his fists tightly at the mention of Sirius's name.

"I am sorry" Ron said as Harry slowly relaxed once more. Ron knew he had made a mistake by bringing up the issue of Sirius when Harry was already grieving Tonks. "I shouldn't have said that"

"No..." Harry replied. "I have to live with the fact"

"Yeah" Ron gave a sigh.

"I am sorry about Ginny and Percy" Harry said after a couple of minutes of silence.

"There's no need to feel sorry for them" Ron's voice was filled with loathing. "That girl tried to kill you...my best..."

"friend" Harry thought to himself as Ron stopped in the middle of the sentence looking slightly uncomfortable. Deep down however, he felt grateful to Ron for being so faithful...for still being there for him if needed. However, he knew that he couldn't let his emotions get the better of him. Not now...not after so long.

"I..." Ron stuttered slightly before continuing. "They are...they..."

"I understand" Harry said in a consoling voice. He knew that it must have been very hard for the Weasley's to know that members of their family had joined Voldemort. They must have felt as if two people of their family had died.

"Mom...Dad..." Ron kept on saying some broken words and kept shaking his head in disbelief.

"You guys are there to take care of them" Harry felt the need to take an elder brotherly attitude after seeing Ron almost breaking down. He knew that Ron must have kept a hold on his emotions throughout this period since he didn't want to appear weak in front of his family. However, the last thing Harry needed was to have to console Ron. "You, Fred and

George have to be there for your parents when they need you the most"

"You are right" Ron said spontaneously with a firm determination in his voice. "We are not dead yet"

"You won't be" Harry said in a voice just low enough for Ron to clearly distinguish what he had said.

"You said something?" Ron asked.

"No" Harry said with a sigh.

"Do you think they have met?" Ron asked curiously.

"Who?" Harry questioned back.

"Sirius and Tonks" Ron replied before continuing. "I wonder what it is like in the afterlife". Harry looked at Ron for a few seconds before shrugging his shoulders. Ron didn't say anything else for a long time. It was Harry who broke the silence.

"Wherever they are, hopefully they are happy" Harry said. Before Ron could say anything in reply, Harry got up and entered the trunk. He needed some time alone. Dumbledore had been right after all. It was very hard to let go of memories.

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A/N: Second chapter here. Hopefully the continuity in the storyline is there. Thanks for all those reviews. Every review which you people made is very much appreciated. Please know that.

HP18 - Sorry but the time for Harry to make up with all his friends has still not come as is suggested by this chapter and its title.

Danielc - As to why Harry didn't see Tonks in his dream...that has something to do with his mental state. It will become clearer in the future 2-3 chapters.

polar2292 - If I am not wrong then you are the person who registered on to review PoH initially. Thanks for sticking around :)

cazten - This is listed under Harry/Tonks because Tonks will be a large influence on Harry throughout this story. Plus other information regarding Tonks will also come forth in the coming chapters.

Makotochi, Silverscale, yorkvillebird - Nice to see that you are following this story too. Thanks :)

Yoko Kitsune - Sorry about killing off Tonks in PoH. It was very essential in this story. How? You have to hang around this fic for a while to know.

strangeryou don't know - I don't know about romance yet but Harry will have some happiness in terms of a romantic life

Everyone else - A BIG thanks for all your reviews. Just because I didn't mention your name doesn't mean your review is of any less importance to me. It is very much appreciated. Also, those who didn't review - thanks for taking the time to read my fic.

&&&&

3. All In The Family

Ok. Everyone knows the drill. Still here goes nothing -

Harry Potter and the other characters of J.K. Rowling are strictly hers. I am not the original writer (though I wish I could be J) and I do not wish to make money from this. Most Importantly, I DO NOT want to get sued. So if anyone has any problems with anything I write, then just tell me.

There's plenty more...blah blah blah...forget it and let the story begin :).

Note: US English has been used here.

Note: This is the sequel to Harry Potter & The Power Of Hogwarts. Please read it before moving on with this story.

HARRY POTTER & THE NEW DAWN

Chapter 3 - All In The Family

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&&&&

"Hello Professor"

"Hi Soha" Fleur replied, looking up from the papers on her desk. "What brings you here?"

"With the classes suspended, I thought I could do some potions practice here if you didn't mind" Soha replied with an expectant look on her face. She was a Ravenclaw to the boot.

"Please help yourself" Fleur replied. "Just inform me which potion you are making so that I know whether you might end up blowing this place or not"

"Nothing of that sort Professor" Soha replied with a smile and walked off to the nearest table. She took a bunch of papers and started going through the various potions list which had been given there. Some of them were titled as "Super Fast Enervate Potion", "5 Minute Invisibility Potion" etc. which the D.A. had got from an unknown source.

Initially everyone had been suspicious about whether this was a trick of the Slytherins or not but after a thorough research by Hermione and a couple other Ravenclaws, the D.A. had decided that all of these potions were safe and were a huge advantage to have. The fact that many of these potions could be made from some commonly available ingredients made them even easier to prepare. Only thing was that they needed to

make this in bulk and the process to make these potions was not a very easy one. Soha had got the job to make these potions after Hermione and another Ravenclaw girl had said they were too busy to brew these. Soha, one of the brightest in potions, got the position.

Fleur was herself very busy in an important potion recipe which Dumbledore had asked her to make. Even though she hated to admit it, making the potion would have been a lot easier if Snape had been around. She was so immersed in her work that she didn't notice the unfamiliar blue vapor rising from one of Soha's potions. Try as she might, Soha knew she wouldn't be able to hide the vapor's color from Fleur. And if Fleur asked her what she was brewing, then she would have to tell her the truth. This was already causing her to perspire a lot but her tension started to fade slowly when she saw Fleur completely lost in her work. "Are you done?" Fleur asked without raising her head from the pile of parchments and books in front of her. Even though she was very busy, she knew that Soha had been there for at least a couple of hours now, if not more. After all, Fleur herself had managed to prepare about 25 of the recipe of a very complicated potion and that was really saying something. "Almost" Soha replied instantly. She had finished a part of the potion she was brewing and knew she would have to come back for another couple of days to complete it. Fleur didn't say anything in reply and the continuous scratching of a quill against a parchment confirmed Soha's assumption that Fleur was simply continuing her work. Soha slowly put away the potion in one of the many vials she had and then continued to rearrange all the ingredients and the cauldrons in one of the many cupboards lining the dungeon. At last, after 5 more minutes, she was ready to go.

"I am done Professor" Soha said to Fleur and, not expecting a reply,

proceeded towards the door.

"One minute Soha" Fleur said in a strange voice which caused Soha to freeze in mid-step. Slowly she turned around and saw Fleur still scribbling on the parchments in front of her. Not knowing what to do, she stood still in her place.

"So..." Fleur slowly put away her quill and looked at Soha. Soha could see that Fleur seemed to be upset about something and she braced herself for the worst. "What did you brew?" Fleur asked and raised her left eyebrow slightly. Soha didn't know that Fleur could do that and looked surprised for a moment before answering in a hurry "Nothing".

"Nothing?" Fleur didn't seem too impressed with the reply. The look on her face seemed to take a turn for the worse and Soha knew she could be in deep trouble if she didn't reply quickly enough.

"Polyjuice..." Soha replied, her mind racing against time. She knew that brewing Polyjuice Potion required permission but she just couldn't tell Fleur the real names of the potions. Brewing the Polyjuice Potion and getting caught was much better than what she had actually been doing.

"Polyjuice potion!" This time there was a distinct look of alarm on Fleur's face.

"...variant for...hmmm...animals" Soha added awkwardly.

"What?" Fleur looked confused.

"I was trying the Polyjuice variant for the animals" Soha felt a bit more comfortable now. "You know...turning one animal into another..."

"I don't remember any such potion" Fleur said, her face still showing her confusion. Had it been Snape in her position, then he would have seen through the blatant lie of Soha. However, Fleur was still learning to deal with the kinds of tales told by students and had a long way to go.

"I found one methodology in an old book..." Soha said a bit more boldly.

"...in the library"

"I see" Fleur seemed slightly fazed by this new piece of information. It was a well known fact that no one exactly knew the extent of information present in the library and Fleur thought that she might have to do a little bit of research herself as well.

"Well...the next time you brew it, just call me once so that I can have a look too" Fleur said. Soha nodded lamely at this thinking of what a mess she had got herself into. She could have said the name of a hundred potions but no, the only name which had come to her mind at that instant had been polyjuice. And the next time she came here, she would have to ask Fleur to come and see her potion too. Oh god, she thought and mentally kicked herself.

"By the way..." the strain in Fleur's voice was back. "...from when did you start brewing potions without a partner?"

"Partner?". This time Soha was the one who looked confused.

"Yeah..." Fleur said but didn't look directly at Soha. She started arranging some of the parchments in front of her and continued "Why is Mr. Potter not with you?"

"Oh..." Soha said in realization. "Harry...hmmm...". Fleur saw a helpless look come over the teenager's face. It was as if she was caught unawares by the question and didn't have any clue as to what to answer.

"You are not on talking terms with him?" Fleur asked in a concerned voice. Soha took it to be the concerned voice of a teacher who didn't like any trouble between students whereas, in reality, Fleur was concerned that Harry might be staying away from everyone and getting himself into some kind of trouble.

"No...it's not that" Soha replied. "Actually..." Soha's voice trailed off at this.

"Have a seat" Fleur motioned to Soha. "Is there a problem with Mr. Potter?"

"Not really" Soha said as she sat down. It was kind of awkward talking to teachers about her friends but then again, Fleur wasn't too old and didn't seem that much of a teacher. "He's just so...quiet nowadays"

"Too quiet?" Fleur asked.

"Yeah...kinds of" Soha replied. "I asked him what his problem was but he said it was nothing"

"Maybe he needs someone to talk to" Fleur suggested. "Maybe youyou're your friends should get together and get him to break the ice"

"NO" Soha replied instantly, her eyes going wide.

"Why not?" Fleur asked at the look on Soha's face. She looked slightly frightened.

"He is so..." Soha looked lost for words before saying "...commanding. Even his house students don't have the courage to stand up to him"

"Really?" this was really disturbing news for Fleur. Harry had said to her family that he was much "better" now with Remus helping him with his "troubles" but it looked like he had not told them the whole truth.

"Yes" Soha said. "I suggested the same thing to Neville and he said he did not dare to talk to Harry about his private life. Harry would talk about it when the right time came, Neville said. The others also voiced similar sentiments"

"I see" Fleur said as she got up from her seat. She was deep in thought when Soha asked her something.

"Sorry...I didn't get you" Fleur said with an apologetic look on her face for not hearing what Soha had said.

"Can I ask you something?" Soha asked in a tentative voice.

"Go on" Fleur said in reply.

"Who was the person who died on that night?"

Fleur looked distinctively uncomfortable at this. She knew that it was up to Dumbledore and Harry to reveal the person's name if they wanted and she had to make sure it remained that way.

"It was a friend" Fleur replied as truthfully as she could. "A close one"

"Harry's friend?" Soha couldn't believe what she was hearing. So all those rumors that maybe Harry's girlfriend had died to save him were...

"Everyone's...including Harry's" Fleur replied in a tone which suggested that she didn't want to pursue the matter further. However, in her curiosity to know more, Soha failed to notice the tone.

"Was that person a girl?" Soha asked.

"I don't think that is a matter which concerns you Ms. Mentieva". This statement from Fleur snapped Soha back to reality which was that Fleur didn't want to continue on this topic. Soha knew that she had been lucky enough to get through the evening without getting caught with the potion she was brewing and didn't want to push her luck too much. Quickly gathering her books and bag, she stood up with an apologetic look on her face.

"Sorry ma'am" Soha said. "I didn't meant to upset you"

"It's ok" Fleur replied. She didn't like to snap at her students but she wasn't in the mood to discuss anything more right now. As Soha left the room, a thoughtful Fleur went back to her seat and started looking blankly at the dungeon wall opposite to her.

&&&&

"Oh no...not again" Fudge was sitting in his office when he felt something warm in his pocket. The warm thing in his pocket was none other than the medallion which Simon Sinatras had given him. It was their, or rather his, way of saying that they needed to meet to discuss something.

Fudge gave a reluctant sigh and waved away the parchments on his desk. He knew that Simon didn't like to wait too much. Simon...the name itself had become a nightmare for Fudge even a couple of months back. He would sometimes get up screaming at night "No...I didn't take any money" only to find out that he had been having a bad dream about Simon turning him over to the public and saying he had taken money from Malfoy. On those occasions, he would see himself getting cursed and, somewhat strangely, getting stoned too. Maybe it was because he had seen a man getting stoned by muggles when he was a child but whatever may be the case, the name Simon was not good for his health. The past couple of months had been much quieter for Fudge with Simon only calling once. He had checked in to see whether everything was going ok at the Wizard Council or not. After that meeting, Simon had not bothered to call again. Slowly but surely, Fudge had managed to convince himself that the boy was either dead or had moved away to another country. Recently he had started to exert his freedom on the aurors too. He had taken it upon himself to make some new recruitments who, much to his dismay later on, proved worthless. However, he had still been satisfied that the face of the teenager in muggle clothes had not appeared when all that had happened.

However, now that the medallion had once again heated up, Fudge knew that he had been wrong in thinking that Simon had gone away. It felt as if someone had just taken away his oxygen supply...as if the ground had been pulled away from under his feet. Try as he might, he couldn't do anything about this "kid". He knew he had to meet him and do whatever that kid told him to do. As the parchments settled down in a haphazard manner on a nearby desk, Fudge took out a bit of floo powder and flooed to the Leaky Cauldron.

"You are 2 minutes late" Simon, or rather Harry, said as soon as Fudge entered the room where they usually met.

"I had to finish some work" Fudge replied, his face showing traces of the disgust he held for the person in front of him. He was well practiced in hiding his emotions but he couldn't control himself after seeing this person after so long. However, he changed his expression to a neutral state as fast as he could.

"You mean the work which is done by a minister?" Harry asked mockingly. "And it was more important than doing the work required to remain as the minister?"

"I have to live up to people's expectations" Fudge said in a well-rehearsed manner. "I have to do what I had promised them and if..."

"Oh, shut up Fudge" Harry said casually. "I am not in a mood to hear all this rubbish from you". Fudge didn't say anything and took his seat opposite to Simon.

"What can I do for you this time?" Fudge asked after a long phase of silence had passed between them.

"Rather..." Harry said "...what can you do for yourself, right?". Fudge didn't reply to this knowing fully well that Simon was right. After all, Fudge was doing everything for himself and to keep his place as the minister safe.

"Ok..." Harry jerked into an upright position, shrugging off his self-induced laziness. "Let's come down to business". Fudge gave a small acknowledging nod.

"What do you propose to do about the situation at hand?" Harry asked in a keen manner.

"What situation?"

"Refugees" Harry replied.

"Where?" Fudge gave a shrug.

"You know where" Harry said coldly. The more he saw of Fudge, the more he was astonished by his stupidity. Why did this man always have to make Harry's task difficult when he knew very well that he didn't have any bargaining power?

"Are you talking about Hogwarts?" Fudge asked in concern, more due to the look on Harry's face.

"Yes minister" Harry's voice was filled with hatred.

"What about it?" Fudge said in an I-don't-care voice. "Dumbledore is taking care of matters I guess"

"You guess?" Harry asked slowly. "And when were you paid for guessing?". Not expecting a reply from Fudge, Harry went on.

"Dumbledore is doing everything to take care of the situation now but the number of people going to Hogwarts is just too great. They need more protection"

"Hogwarts is filled with courageous wizards and witches" Fudge replied.

"They can take care of the refugees. Anyone can take care of a few refugees"

"Then why don't I send some to your home and tell the death eaters that you are sheltering them?" Harry leaned forward and looked calmly into Fudge's eyes. Fudge shuddered as their eyes met - the eyes of Harry didn't have any emotion in them. This guy in front of him was saying all this in such a cold blooded manner that it made the hair on Fudge's neck rise.

"Wha...wha..." Fudge stuttered before recovering slightly. "You know death eaters too?"

"And what if I do?" Harry asked, the faces of Wormtail, Snape and Ginny coming to his mind.

"It's illegal" Fudge said in a none to convincing voice.

"To know that someone is a death eater?" Harry wondered aloud.

"To know and not to report them" Fudge said, his confidence growing. At last he had something which could land this lad in the jail.

"I remember one person named Malfoy" Harry replied in a monotonous voice. "And I know someone who has repeatedly taken money from him and...". Hearing this, Fudge started to cough loudly.

"So what about Hogwarts?" Fudge asked once he had recovered. "What do you want me to do there?"

"I want more aurors at Hogwarts" Harry said as he relaxed slightly in his chair.

"But we don't have enough of them" Fudge threw up his hands in frustration. "I can't even get more than four aurors to protect me and you..." Fudge stopped abruptly. He knew he had put his foot into his mouth and now he was going to pay for it.

"Four aurors to protect you when the people of England don't have enough protection?" Harry's eyes grew narrower as he said this. Fudge would have had to pay with his life if Harry had his way.

"That was last week..." Fudge added hastily. "...during the International Ministers meeting..."

"Hmmm..." Harry just kept looking at a fidgeting Fudge for a minute before adding in an even colder voice "I will deal with that later. But for now, I need more aurors at Hogwarts"

"But you don't understand..." Fudge said in true desperation. "...I just don't have that many aurors at my disposal"

"How many do you have on hand?" Harry asked.

"5" Fudge replied. Harry kept staring at him coldly.

"Ok...10" Fudge said after a few seconds. By now he was sweating

heavily and Harry's staring wasn't helping matters for him.

"Fine..." Fudge said desperately once again. "I have 24 spare aurors".

Harry's cold gaze shifted towards the floor as his mind started racing once again. Fudge's body language suggested that he had spelled out the correct number of aurors this time around. If he was correct, then Harry knew he would have to make a strategy as to how many aurors are to be allocated to Hogwarts and how many should remain protecting the ministry.

"Wait" Harry thought to himself. "Fudge said that these were spare aurors. That means he has more aurors protecting the ministry". Harry felt slightly foolish at this logic because it was so obvious. However, his chain of thoughts continued. "So, say if 14 aurors are placed at Hogwarts, what can be done with the other 10? Fudge would most probably end up using them as his bodyguards unless...unless..." and then it stuck Harry.

Harry felt like kicking himself for being so blind. How could he have ignored the idea that there could be other places which can be targeted too and which would have a very devastating effect on the whole moral of the wizarding community! There was one more place which, according to many people, might be more important than Hogwarts at the moment. St. Mungo's!

It was not that St. Mungo's was just a hospital. It was the place where many previous victims of the death eaters were being treated. It was where Neville's parents were staying and hopefully getting better. It just wasn't a hospital...it was a place of memories of the past and hopes for a happier future. And, sooner or later, the death eaters would come for these people again and maybe they would torture them beyond words can describe.

"Hey!" Fudge's voice brought out Harry from his thoughts. He had been

so overwhelmed by the fact that he had turned a blind eye at St. Mungo's that he had forgotten where he was for a moment.

"Hold on" Harry said irritably. "I am busy organizing things"

"I have things of mine to organize too" Fudge replied sarcastically.

"Like packing your bags and leaving the ministry allocated residential complex of yours?" Harry queried with a hint of taunt in his voice. "Like going to a wizard jail for assisting a death eater?". With this Harry turned his gaze away from Fudge once more. He knew he had said enough to keep Fudge quiet for the time being.

"I want..." Harry started off slowly after a minute had passed. "...

hmmm...14 aurors for Hogwarts and the remaining 10 for St. Mungo's"

"St. Mungo's!" Fudge exclaimed. "Why on the earth..."

"You have any wish to go against what I want?" Harry asked coldly but didn't look at Fudge this time. He knew he had more important things to sort out than giving Fudge a cold glare.

"I didn't say that" Fudge replied hesitantly. He could see that the boy in front of him was thinking and he hated him with all his heart at that moment. The more this boy thought, the more trouble Fudge found himself in.

"St. Mungo's needs more protection" Harry said with a far-away look on his face. It seemed to him that he was trying to visualize something. "The patients there need more protection"

"It is protected enough" Fudge said grudgingly.

"However..." Harry's voice trailed off as his eyes seemed to move around frantically in their sockets. It seemed like he was trying to see something moving very fast in front of him...something invisible.

"However?" Fudge asked in a tentative voice. He didn't like the look on Harry's face. Slowly, the creases on Harry's forehead seemed to go away,

only to be replaced by a smile. "How..ever...?" Fudge asked in a frightened voice as he saw the smile on Harry's face. More trouble for him, he thought.

"However..." Harry turned around to look at Fudge with the same smile plastered on his face. He guessed that this must be the first time that Fudge had seen him smiling genuinely. Without Fudge noticing, Harry cast a silencing charm all around them "...I want you to..."

Fudge listened quietly to the whole thing which Harry explained. Slowly but surely, Fudge's eyes grew wide in horror as he understood the enormity of Harry's words. This boy had to be totally insane, Fudge thought as he listened to Harry. As Harry finished, a worried look came upon his face. There was a very good chance that his plan might taste grand success and yet...

"YOU ARE INSANE" Fudge shouted as he jumped up from his chair. "You are SO insane". Harry gave himself a mental pat on his back for casting the silencing charm because Fudge's reaction was just what he had expected. However, he didn't show any emotion on the outside.

"That's the way it is going to happen" Harry said matter-of-factly.

"Over my dead body" Fudge said angrily.

"Then so be it" Harry replied. Fudge blinked for a couple of seconds before understanding what he had just said.

"I meant..." Fudge looked around frantically in a manner which was reminiscent of Wormtail looking around in the shrieking shack when Sirius and Remus had got to him. "I mean...this is suicide" Fudge said in a much calmer voice though it was clear that he was still in a very strained state of mind.

"It is not" Harry said. "And in any case, your life is not on the line, is it?"

"People will question me if something happens" Fudge almost made to

bang the table in front of him but stopped at the last second.

"As if you really care what they want and what they don't" Harry replied sarcastically. "As if you value your prestige more than the pieces of galleons in your bank"

"I do" Fudge said in indignation.

"Shut up" Harry said angrily. He was getting fed up with Fudge's attitude and if Fudge had not been in a position to help Harry, then he would have gone to the authorities right now and handed over all the papers incriminating Fudge. "And I want all this done by tomorrow"

"Tommorow!" Fudge looked up in shock as Harry stood up to leave. "I can't arrange all this in such a short..." Fudge looked around as Harry walked out of the room, not even listening to him. "...time". Fudge finished the sentence with a sigh. He was in some really deep trouble right now and he knew he had nothing in his power to change it. With another deep sigh, he rose from his chair and left the room.

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"Have you heard about what has happened?"

"What?" Seamus asked one of his house mates.

"There have been hundreds of attacks last night" a guy named Michael replied.

"What!" Seamus seemed shocked and almost fell off his seat in the common room. It was early in the morning and, with the classes postponed, many of the students were yet to rise. The few who were there came to join in the discussion which seemed to be starting.

"Yes" Michael replied. "In Magical Yorkshire itself about 50 dementors were spotted by aurors"

"50 in a single attack or..."

"Single" Michael replied before the other boy had been able to finish his

question. "They attacked the ministry office there and many people were kissed". Everyone drew in a sharp breath at this. Being kissed by a dementor was the worst thing which could happen to a living being. It was better to die rather than being kissed by a dementor.

"You must be joking" one of the guys said with a doubtful laugh. It seemed just so...impossible.

"Check the Prophet Joe" Michael said and tossed The Daily Prophet towards him. Going through it, the other boy saw that it was true.

"What does it say?" another boy in the group asked Joe.

"Just what Michael said..." Joe's voice was kind of fazed. "50 dementors...". Joe's voice trailed off at this.

"50 dementors what?" one of the boys asked after Joe seemed to be staring blankly at the wall opposite to him.

"50 odd dementors attacked the ministry office in Magical Yorkshire" Joe said after clearing his throat a bit more loudly than usual. "More than 20 people were kissed"

"What!" the same, if not greater, sound of disbelief could be heard in the boys voices again.

"What did the aurors do then?" one of the boys got up in disgust and kicked his chair. "Were they just sitting around the fire and playing exploding snap or something?"

"Do you understand what the impact of 50 plus dementors is like?"

Michael asked. "They can drive you mad"

"Yeah" another boy said. "Remember how we were screaming when the dementors attacked Hogwarts?"

"Aurors are trained for this!" the other boy said in even more frustration.

"Hell...they are paid for protecting us and if..."

"Money cannot buy everything mate" Joe said in a sullen voice. "They..."

"What the hell do you mean?" another boy spoke up angrily. "You mean so many aurors cannot cast a patronus?"

"Maybe they didn't have the time" Seamus said.

"The time required to save others?" Joe didn't know who was right or wrong. When someone spoke for the aurors then their logic seemed right but when someone gave an argument against them then they too seemed correct. "Man...I don't know who is right and who is wrong" Joe slumped into his chair and withdrew himself from the argument.

"Those aurors should have been kissed" another boy commented angrily. By this time the sun had already risen high and more students had started pouring in. Seeing a commotion in the middle, many climbed down the stairs rapidly to see what had happened.

"Some were" Michael said as he re-read the article.

"I hate all these so-called aurors" one of the girls said angrily. She had been amongst the first to come down and take a peek at the article over Michael's shoulders. Apparently she had read enough to come to her own conclusion.

"They must have tried" Michael said again. After all, his father was an auror who had died a few days ago trying to protect a family from death eaters and he just couldn't think of an auror running away from a battle scene where innocents might get killed.

"Maybe they should learn how to cast a patronus" the girl said again in a shrill voice. "I mean, Harry drove away the dementors here and so many aurors couldn't drive away these dementors"

"Harry is different" Michael said quietly. "Many people cannot match him"

"C'mon Michael..." the girl replied. "You don't think Harry alone can do such things"

"What's happening here?" the voice of Neville Longbottom stopped Michael before he could reply.

"This" the girl said angrily and thrust the newspaper into Neville's hands. Neville's hands were trembling with anger as he finished reading the article.

"Those death eaters and dementors...ARGH" Neville almost crushed the newspaper in his hand before throwing it away in disgust. It landed near the girl's staircase just as Katie Bell and Hermione were coming down. Hermione, seeing Neville in such an agitated state, quickly picked up the newspaper and read the portion under a moving picture of people running in all directions and screaming all along. After reading it, she passed it on to Katie and moved towards the seat which had been occupied by a very angry Neville.

"Hey"

"Hi" Neville said in a controlled manner but couldn't hide his anger.

"I know it is very upsetting" Hermione said with a sigh. "But..."

"But what Hermione...but what?" Neville's voice rose slightly causing a few people to turn and look at him. "How much longer do we have to take all this?"

"Neville..." Hermione said in a calm voice "...You know this is just the start of the war. We have to hold on much longer"

"But I don't want to hold on much longer" Neville said in a disgusted manner. "I don't know how many more people are getting killed daily... tortured...becoming like my parents...". Unable to keep his emotions under control, Neville turned his head away and blinked back his tears.

"I know it is very painful but we have to hold on, right?" Hermione was having trouble keeping her emotions in control. "We have to..."

"I know" Neville finally said in a slightly quavering voice. "I just hope

someone ends this goddamned war"

"Dumbledore must be surely doing something about it" Hermione continued.

"But..." Neville stopped abruptly as he saw Ron climb down the boy's dormitory staircase. Ron glanced around at the angry faces of those present in the common room and seemed to be trying to make some sense of it. Initially he thought they were somehow angry with him because of Ginny...at least that's what he thought whenever he saw someone angry and shouting about death eaters or any dark creatures. But then he saw the article in Katie's hands and seemed to relax slightly. However, his eyebrows seemed to touch each other as he looked to be deep in thought.

"Want to seat with us?" Hermione called out to her boyfriend who had become very quiet nowadays. Ron gave an acknowledging nod and slowly walked up to a chair beside the other two.

"A dementor attack" Hermione said as Ron took his seat.

"Hmmm..." was the only sound which came from Ron's throat. Hermione could only wonder what Ron was thinking about. Maybe he was thinking about how to fight off dementors...maybe he was thinking about her... maybe he was thinking about Harry...

"My sister is behind all this" Ron said suddenly.

"Wha..." Hermione looked stunned for a second before continuing. "You shouldn't think like that"

"I should because I know it" Ron said defiantly. "Everything has gone wrong from the day she helped Snape"

"C'mon Ron..." Hermione said, placing a soothing hand on his shoulders.

"It's just a coincidence"

"Dark magic doesn't have coincidences" Ron replied grimly. "Something

happened that night which has led to all this and my sister...damn her"

"Ron..." Neville began in a low voice when, all of a sudden, the commotion in the common room came to a standstill. Everyone could hear a large amount of chattering coming nearer and nearer and...

"Owls..." Hermione pointed as the first owl swooped inside the Gryffindor common room through one of the many open windows. "...and they have newspapers with them"

"But I thought the prophet had been delivered" Neville looked astonished as one of the owls landed in front of him and held out one of it's legs. He could see the newspaper folded in a sheet of parchment specifying "Special Edition for 5 knuts". Curious as to what this special edition could be, Neville took the newspaper from the owl and paid the mandatory five knuts.

"What is it?" Ron asked in a nervous voice as Neville tried to open it. He had a bad feeling about this. As Neville finally got a view of the front page, Ron and Hermione heard him draw his breath in sharply.

"What is it?" this time it was Hermione who was the one to raise the question. In answer to her question, Neville laid down the paper in front of them.

Werewolves Follow Dementors

There were large scale werewolf attacks hours after the dementors went on a kissing spree yesterday night. It is not certain what led to the werewolves to attack in such large numbers but it seems yesterday's full moon witnessed the first such large attack since the last war when 48 werewolves reportedly attacked Diagon Alley in a single night. A much larger number was spotted this time around with rumors specifying the number of werewolves sighted at over hundred.

"Over 50 werewolves attacked our village tonight" said a devastated John who

refused to divulge his last name. "One of my own children was bitten"

"What did we do to warrant such an attack?" a broken Rita McMillan asked as she held onto her only child who had severe werewolf scratches on her back.

"Where were the aurors?" asked a group of angry young men all of whom had werewolf claw marks on their bodies. Reportedly, this particular group of 15 young wizards had fought off 5 werewolves attacking their family. They were all having a party in their lawn when the attack started near their homes and rushed inside seconds before the werewolves had broken through their fences. With their homes getting ravaged and seeing their families in danger, these men set an example by fighting off the werewolves bravely. However, whether the scratches made by the werewolves will have any lasting effect or not remains to be seen.

The ministry aurors have been blamed for not being present when the werewolf attack took place. Reports were published earlier as to how the aurors had fled when dementors had attacked the ministry office of Magical Yorkshire. It seems that this time the aurors thought it best if they did not come out in the open at all.

"That is not true" a ministry official denied the allegations that none of the aurors present had gone to fight the werewolves. "The aurors went in groups of two each to all the locations possible and saved many a poor soul from getting bitten by these horrendous creatures". When queried as to why the werewolves had launched such an attack, the ministry official refused to comment on it. It seems more and more attacks are on the cards now. Attacks by dementors and werewolves in a single night cannot be a mere coincidence. It seems He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is challenging the law and order of the English ministry. And the fact that there are no ministry personnel trying to stop him is even more disturbing.

Mr. Fudge, are you listening?

Page 2: How to fight dementors?

Page 3: Did Harry Potter really fight dementors during Halloween?

Page 4 & 5: Mad Eye Moody writes a special article on dark creatures

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"Hermione...what is the matter?". Hermione was sitting alone in the library when Soha had walked up to her and asked her this question. The fact that Hermione looked devastated was the reason why Soha had decided she couldn't wait for Hermione to leave the library before asking this.

"Nothing" Hermione said with a shrug.

"Would you mind coming with me for a walk?" Soha asked gently. She knew something was up but she didn't want to talk too much inside the library. After all, no one respected the sanctity of a library more than a Ravenclaw.

"Ok" Hermione said after a few quiet seconds and put away the books in front of her in their right places.

"So..." Soha asked finally once they were outside the library. "What is bothering you?"

"Nothing in particular" Hermione replied.

"It doesn't seem so at least" Soha said. "You look...disheveled"

"Forget it" Hermione said with great disdain. Who cared if she looked a mess or not...there were enough troubles already.

"I would like to help you if you want" Soha pushed on. "I mean...Harry's not always there now and Ron is...well...your boyfriend. Sometimes people need to talk to others too. It becomes easier"

"Maybe you are right" Hermione said after contemplating Soha's statement. After all, if Harry had been there then she would have

instantly gone to him to discuss the issue on her mind but that was not possible now. Also, she just couldn't talk to Ron about these things at the moment. Soha was not the best of her friends but if Harry could trust her like he had done before then so could she.

"Well?" Soha asked gently once more. She desperately wanted to be of some help to Hermione and her friends. She knew how much they missed Harry and, ever since the Ginny thing, Ron was often very moody. So it was up to the others to help out Hermione or Neville or Seamus whenever they were in some trouble or the other unless they were helping out each other.

"It's Neville" Hermione said at long last.

"What about him?" Soha asked in a concerned manner. After all, if something happened to one of the leaders of the D.A. then...

"Well...hmmm..."

"Tell me Hermione" Soha said in a slightly emphatic manner which made Hermione relent.

"He is getting angrier by the day" Hermione said. "You know...every time he sees something related to death eaters and dementors and..."

"I understand what you are saying" Soha said sympathetically. "Even my blood boils when I see all those things in the paper"

"It's not just that!" Hermione said. "I have seen Neville for the past five and a half years and I have never known him to be like this. I mean, he gets angrier than normal"

"I see" Soha said. The expression on her face showed that she was thinking about something. "You think he is over-reacting?"

"Yeah" Hermione said with a very worried look as they climbed yet another staircase.

"Some people do over react to certain things" Soha applied her

Ravenclaw logic. "Maybe it has something to do with his past...maybe something happened...". Hermione knew that Soha was tantalizingly close to the truth regarding Neville's family but also knew that Soha had no idea about it. She couldn't help but appreciate her logical reasoning. However, she also knew that she couldn't tell Soha the truth.

"I don't know..." Hermione said with a shrug. "But..."

"But what?" Soha asked as she saw Hermione's face fall.

"I just have a bad feeling about this" Hermione came to a stop and turned round to look at Soha. Soha was slightly surprised to see that tears were forming in Hermione's eyes.

"Why are you crying Hermione?" Soha asked as a single tear made its way down Hermione's cheek.

"I don't want to lose another friend" Hermione said with a sniff. "I don't want to lose Neville"

Soha couldn't help but feel sympathetic for the girl in front of her.

However, she couldn't resist asking the question which had popped up in her mind.

"Who else have you lost?" Soha queried.

"Harry" came Hermione's short reply before she burst into tears. Even before Soha could know what was happening, Hermione had hugged her tightly and was crying almost uncontrollably.

"And...and I think I am losing Ron in this war too" were the only other decipherable words uttered by Hermione after she broke down completely.

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"Oh god...just look at that!" one tiny girl squeaked as she peeked out of the common room of the Gryffindor tower. Hearing her voice, everyone rushed to see what had happened. What they saw was absolutely mind

blowing.

"How many people are coming here?" Neville asked in slight shock as he saw hundreds of people walking towards the castle. As far as Neville could estimate, over a few thousand people were in his view with more coming into view with every passing second. There was not enough room to even walk properly. The initial number of refugees who had taken shelter after the first phase of attacks seemed a fraction of the number of people in sight now.

"4...5 thousand...maybe more" Dean replied without taking his eyes off from the scene. Many of the people moving across the grounds were badly wounded and were being carried on stretchers. As a small group of people came into view, a few of the younger girls and boys screamed in horror - a couple of these people had their arms missing and from the way the shreds of flesh were hanging limply, it wasn't hard to tell what had happened. Werewolves must have torn out their arms in the fight of the previous night!

"How are they still walking?" one of the fifth year girls asked in a voice filled with fright. "They have lost a lot of blood and..."

"I have no idea at all" a seventh year student replied. "Even pain killing potions...anti-sleep potions...they wouldn't have been able to stop them from being unconscious for the loss of blood"

"Willpower" Neville said quietly. He could understand why these people were still walking around normally - they had decided they would have to come to Hogwarts and their sheer determination was driving them towards their current goal.

"Where will all these people stay?" Hermione asked. No one had noticed her joining the group from behind.

"Don't know" replied Dean. "Maybe they will expand the great hall even

more"

"Every magic has a limit" Hermione said in a low voice. She didn't want to sound bossy or anything like that. "If the great hall is expanded infinitely, then it will burst"

"That can happen?" Dean turned around with a shocked look on his face. Seeing Hermione give an affirmative nod, his eyes went wide and he muttered something to himself before turning back towards the window. As far as he could see, the sea of people didn't end. It was more like an ocean of people out there.

"When the hell will all this end?" Neville almost asked himself in a hissing voice.

"Soon my dear friend" Ron Weasley said in a reassuring whisper in Neville's ears.

&&&&

"What do we do Albus?" Minerva McGonagall and several other senior teachers of Hogwarts had come for an emergency meeting to the Headmaster's room.

"I am afraid we don't have too many choices" Dumbledore replied calmly.

"I would not have preferred for such a scenario so soon but it seems we must be ready for everything from now onwards"

"But how do we accommodate so many people in here?" little Professor Flitwick asked. "Even if they camp in the grounds, then also it will be too small"

"Hmmm" Dumbledore dwindled his fingers as he thought of the issue. They were right...accommodating six thousand four hundred eighty six people was no mean feat. Also, the numbers were growing by the minute. For some reason, it seemed that the whole of England had decided that Hogwarts was the safest place to be at.

"Maybe we can arrange something at Godric's Hollow" Fleur Delacour suggested. Even though she was a newcomer, she knew her comments would carry the same weight as that of the others.

"Excellent idea in my opinion" Dumbledore's eyes got back a bit of their lost twinkle at hearing this. "What do you all have to say about this?"

"Well..." McGonagall seemed a bit lost in her thoughts. "Godric's Hollow is big enough but at this rate it will soon be overflowing. These people will need houses"

"What about the existing people there?" Madam Pomfrey asked. "I mean, will they want new people to come and live amongst them?"

"A very good point Poppy" Dumbledore said before continuing with his explanation. "Everyone knows what it is like out there and from my own personal experience, I can guarantee that the people of Godric's Hollow would be the first to offer their help to other people without caring where they are from or other things"

"Yes" Flitwick said with a far-away look in his eyes. "I agree that Godric's Hollow has a large number of helpful people to say the least. After all their parents and grand parents had been such great people too".

Everyone there could feel that Flitwick was really fond of the people he had taught in the past. "They have inherited the characteristics of their forefathers" Flitwick finished off in a slightly emotional voice.

"Any objections to allowing these people to build houses in Godric's Hollow and live there till the war is over?" Dumbledore seemed to be taking a vote on this. Seeing no negative responses, he decided that that was the way it would have to be done. He then instructed the different teachers as to what was expected of them in the coming 24 hours and soon everyone was on their way to carry out their duties except Minerva McGonagall.

"What's happening Albus?" Professor McGonagall asked in a concerned voice. "What can we do to stop all this from happening?"

"Someone else asked me the same question a few days ago and I will give you the same reply I had given then" Dumbledore said in his usual calm manner. "All we can do right now is to wait for Lord Voldemort to make a wrong move"

"But the losses are mounting hugely" McGonagall seemed stressed. "We have to do something to stem that"

"I have had a chat with everyone concerned" Dumbledore's voice sounded a bit more serious than before. "Some have to undertake a few dangerous missions and everyone has agreed to it"

"Who are those people?" McGonagall asked in curiosity. It was very unlike Dumbledore to not mention such a thing to her before.

"Our friends" was the reply. McGonagall took this as a sign that Dumbledore didn't want to tell anyone the names of the people involved. Maybe it was for the safety of the missions or maybe it was because Dumbledore didn't want other's to get too worried about it. Whatever it might be, McGonagall knew Dumbledore had his reasons and didn't pursue the matter further. When the right time came, Dumbledore would surely let her know.

"And how is Mr. Potter handling all this?" McGonagall continued in an even more concerned voice. She knew that all this must have had a telling effect on the young lad.

"He wants all this to stop" Dumbledore replied in a strange sort of voice.

"But one doesn't always get what one wishes for"

"What do you mean by that?" McGonagall asked sharply.

"Oh...it was nothing" Dumbledore said with a small smile. "Just an old man's wild thoughts"

"You know that you can still confuse me but you surely know that you can't fool me, right?" McGonagall asked in a slightly angry tone.

"Of course" Dumbledore replied with a slight chuckle. "How foolish of me to try such a thing!"

"What is it that you are hiding Albus?" McGonagall asked, her eyes scanning every part of Dumbledore's features to detect the slightest of expressions.

"Nothing which can be of any benefit to anyone" Dumbledore replied with a sigh.

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"Thank god the day is finally over" Fleur said with a sigh of relief as she sat down with her family members in their home at Godric's Hollow.

"Are all these people refugees?" Mrs. Delacour asked as she peeked outside for the umpteenth time. The whole day they had seen people coming in by huge numbers and setting up tents and everything else.

From being a sparsely populated area, Godric's Hollow had become one of the most densely populated areas in a matter of hours.

"Yes Ma" Fleur replied. "Plus they have only got started. From tomorrow onwards more work will take place"

"More work?" Gabriel queried.

"Yes dear" Mr. Delacour said. "These people have to build their new homes here"

"War is bad" Gabriel said with great dislike. "I hate those who have hurt so many people"

"So do we dear" Mr. Delacour shared the same feeling. "But now we should all go to bed and have a good night's sleep. Your sister is very tired"

"But she will go back to the castle" Gabriel's face fell at this. "She never

stay's over"

"I have work to do" Fleur ruffled the hair of her kid-sister in a playful manner. "You know that, don't you?"

"Yeah yeah..." Gabriel said sarcastically and fell silent. Mr. and Mrs. Delacour thought it best to let the girls talk over this matter and left them alone. After all, Gabriel had grown enough to understand that there were lots of things which were more important than staying home with your family during this phase of their lives.

"Ok...I will stay today". This sudden statement from Fleur took Gabriel by complete surprise. For a minute she thought that she was hearing things but then saw that Fleur was serious. Her joy knew no bounds as she embraced her elder sister. After all, seldom did Fleur stay at home as she felt that Hogwarts needed her most at this moment. But just before she embraced her, Gabriel saw another expression on Fleur's face...one which she had seen many times in the past one month or so.

"Now I get it" Gabriel said as she pulled away from her sister. Even though she was very happy that her sister had relented to stay, still there was some sadness inside her because she knew her sister's decision had not been fully for her happiness. Even though she could understand her sister's point of view, still, something seemed missing.

"What?" Fleur asked in an astonished manner. The expression on Gabriel's face showed that she was sad about something. About what, Fleur had no answer to that.

"You are not staying back because I asked you too, are you?" Gabriel asked in return.

"Of course I am" Fleur said and guided her sister to the empty seat beside her. "Why do you think I am not doing this on your saying?"

"Flu...I have been your sister long enough now" Gabriel said in a manner

which reminded Fleur of her mother. "I know what you are thinking when I see your face". She had not said anything in the past but she felt she should comment on a few things now.

"Really?" Fleur asked, feigning surprise. Surely Gabriel couldn't have guessed what was on Fleur's mind!

"It's him, isn't it?" Gabriel asked in a matter-of-factly voice. "You stayed back because you don't want to stay too close to him, right?"

"Him?" Fleur asked in a mocking but very nervous voice. Was it that apparent? Her pulse rate had started to quicken when Gabriel had given the first hint that she knew what was on Fleur's mind. How would she control herself if everyone noticed her feelings?

"Do I have to say his name as well?" Gabriel asked in a bored voice. "I am part veela too Flu and I can understand some of these things. Him is equal to Harr..."

"STOP!" Fleur cupped her sister's mouth before she could say anything more. Even though a small part of Gabriel wanted to burst out in laughter at Fleur's reaction, the major part felt very sad at the way Fleur's life was progressing.

"Is it that much apparent to everyone?" Fleur didn't remove her hands from over Gabriel's mouth as she asked her question. When she got no response from Gabriel, she finally noticed that her strong grip was preventing Gabriel from even moving her face.

"No" Gabriel said after taking in a long gasp of air. "It's just that I am your sister and I can detect these very easily. And don't do that again, ok?"

"Sorry about that" Fleur said a bit apologetically. "You were about to say his name and..."

"Because you were pretending as if I was just kidding you, you dumb old veela" Gabriel said with a raised eyebrow. Fleur couldn't help but smile at

being called a "dumb old veela". Maybe that was how she would end up in her life.

"Sorry" Fleur said apologetically and got a lovely smile from her sister as the answer. This could only mean that her "sins" were forgiven.

"How long are you going to run away from him Flu?". All of a sudden, Gabriel seemed the older of the two.

"Easy for you to say" Fleur said in mock anger. "What would you have done if you were in my place?"

"Told him the truth" Gabriel replied honestly.

"It's not so easy 'elle" Fleur replied with a shake of her head. "Not after Tonks"

"Well...maybe" Gabriel replied. "I don't know how close they were"

"Emotionally they were a single person at the end"

"You mean they were ready to die for each other?" Gabriel asked in slight awe.

"Tonks died to save Harry, remember?" Fleur said. At this Gabriel frowned at her.

"That's what happened that night, didn't it?" Gabriel seemed very angry.

"You all think I am too young for all this and you don't even say to me about 'why' Tonks died in the first place!"

"Oh" Fleur squirmed in her seat when she realized that they had decided not to tell Gabriel as to why Tonks had died. They had just decided that this information was too sensitive for anyone else to know. "I am very sorry 'elle...I just thought that Harry might not want everyone to know about this"

"But he would want me to know about it, wouldn't he?" Gabriel was very angry now. After all, Harry would never hide anything from her.

"Now that I think of it then I must agree that Harry would have told you

the truth if this topic had come up" Fleur replied after a few seconds of thinking. "I am so sorry"

"It's ok" Gabriel said with a frown. Fleur didn't say anything more because she knew that Gabriel was thinking something.

"This changes everything then" Gabriel said at last. "You just..."

"...cannot go up to him and say it, can I?" Fleur completed the sentence before Gabrielle could even finish it.

"Yeah" Gabrielle said with a sigh. "But you do like him, don't you?". Fleur just nodded in reply.

"You love him?" Gabrielle asked after a few minutes of complete silence. Even though the word love was a small one, it had a much larger meaning than liking someone.

"Yes" Fleur replied in a barely audible whisper. She was looking towards the floor as she said this and Gabrielle noticed a small drop of tear fall to the ground.

"It's hard, isn't it?" Gabrielle was trying to understand the kind of feelings her elder sister was going through. "Being so near to him and yet...". Gabriel's voice trailed off at this and more tears fell to the ground in front of Fleur.

"But why don't you say it to him?" Gabriel asked defiantly. "I mean, he has to move on as well, isn't that so?"

"What if he doesn't want to move on?" Fleur replied. "What if the memory of Tonks is enough to last him for this life?"

"That can't be true" Gabriel said.

"Believe me, it can be true" Fleur said in a very slow voice. Gabriel tried to understand the meaning of Fleur's sentence and didn't say anything for a few minutes. Suddenly it struck her as a bolt of lightning.

"NO!" Gabriel said in a shocked voice and turned to face her sister. "You

don't mean to say..."

"elle...there will be no one else in my life" Fleur said as she heard her sister's voice fade away. "I have already made that promise to myself"

"But Flu...you are only 20!" Gabrielle said in desperation. "How can you even think of something like that?"

"I think this is what they call love" Fleur said with a sad smile. "They say it is blind...it doesn't allow one to think logically...maybe this is what it is about"

"But isn't love supposed to be something which makes one happy?"

Gabrielle asked with the innocence which could only come from a person of her age.

"I am happy the way I am 'elle" Fleur replied. "I am happy if he is happy"

"What if he isn't happy?" Gabrielle countered her elder sister. "What if he really needs someone in his life to give him the emotional support he needs now?"

"His godfather is there for him"

"What if he needs someone more than his godfather?" Gabrielle asked.

Placing her hand on Fleur's chin, she slowly lifted her face so that Fleur had to look Gabrielle straight in her eyes. "What if he needs someone like you right now?"

"What if he doesn't?" Fleur asked as she looked into the big eyes of her beautiful sister. She could see the pain which Gabrielle was feeling for her and she was reminded once again why Gabrielle had been the "object she would have missed most" in the Tri-wizard tournament. Fleur reminded herself how lucky she was to have such a sister.

"Maybe he does...maybe he doesn't..." Gabrielle said without breaking eye contact with her sister. "But if he asks you then promise me you won't say no"

"elle..." Fleur began but was cut short by her sister.

"Promise?" Gabrielle had a stubborn look on her face and it was clear she would let her sister off the hook without getting her promise.

"Ok..." Fleur relented at last.

"Till then you will stay on as his friend, right?" Gabrielle just wanted to be sure that her sister didn't push away Harry from her life altogether.

"I will try" was the reply which Gabrielle got.

&&&&

"Damn it" Neville threw away the book titled "Thinking the Light Way".

"What is the matter Neville?" a serious voice asked. Neville looked up to see his friend standing next to a trunk.

"Nothing Harry" Neville replied.

"Neville Longbottom doesn't throw away a book in anger unless it is something really important" Harry said as he sat down opposite to Neville.

"Who cares about what Neville Longbottom does?" Neville said in a disgusted voice.

"Maybe there are more people who care about you than you know Neville" Harry said.

"No Harry...I think you are wrong" Neville said stubbornly.

"Maybe..." Harry replied. "Only time will tell"

"Yeah" Neville said in a tone which still held some of the anger which had been building inside him just before Harry had climbed out of his trunk.

"Won't you talk about what is bothering you then?" Harry asked again. He knew Neville was very upset about something and he was keeping it to himself for the moment. Even though Harry didn't want anyone to poke their noses in his own life, he knew Neville was the sort of person

who was better off sharing their own problems. Also, for that matter, Harry had Remus to talk to. Neville had no one except his grandmother, who was very far away at the moment, and his friends.

"Well..." Neville looked at Harry with a look of helplessness on his face. He didn't say anything more but the look on his face was enough to tell Harry that Neville was living in a nightmarish situation for the past few days or something.

"What is it Neville?" Harry asked in a concerned voice and leant forward. Neville saw Harry's concerned look and knew his friend was still there for him when the time came. Harry had never gone away from any of them to tell the truth. He may have distanced himself but he was there for them whenever they needed any kind of help.

"It's...hard to say" Neville said after what seemed like an eternity. It was clear that he was having a fight with his own self over whether he should tell Harry or not. Harry didn't mind that. However, he just wanted Neville to be more comfortable with his own self. After all, if one of the leaders of the D.A. is disturbed at this moment, then it won't take long for the others to feel uncomfortable either.

"Try me" Harry said slowly. "I have been in many situations which are hard to explain"

"Harry..." Neville's voice seemed more in control now and Harry could feel that something was building up inside him. "What happened that night?"

Harry didn't know how to react to this question. It was quite obvious as to which night Neville was referring to. The tone of Neville's voice was so different than that of the others that Harry knew he just had to tell Neville the truth. There was just something about Neville's voice...the eagerness combined with a great sadness...Harry knew he couldn't say no

to Neville. With a huge sigh, Harry told Neville the details of what had happened from the time he knew Ginny was in the castle. He stopped his narration at the point of where Ginny, Snape and Wormtail had apparated away and told Neville that Tonks had died due to the curse meant for him. Harry stopped a couple of times in between when he got too emotional and, to his great relief, he found that Neville didn't push him for every tiny detail about his interaction with Tonks or their relationship. At last the room fell into complete silence.

"She did it then?" Neville spoke up at last. Harry, to his astonishment, felt a huge amount of hatred in Neville's voice.

"Who did what?" Harry asked in a slightly confused tone.

"Ginny..." Neville said looking at the floor. "...killed an auror, didn't she?"

"You can say that" Harry replied. "She wanted to kill me but Tonks...".

Harry's voice got stuck at this point once again.

"I never thought Ginny could do something like this" Neville said in a very emotional voice. "Not after we had such long chats all the time"

"We?" Harry seemed even more confused.

"I..." Neville stopped slightly and started shaking his head. Harry saw a couple of tears fall to the ground. At this, he stood up and sat beside Neville.

"Neville?" Harry prompted Neville ever so slowly.

"I...I..." Neville looked up at Harry at that moment and Harry saw Neville's eyes were filled with tears. "I loved her Harry" Neville said in a helpless tone before repeating the same thing "I loved her".

Harry looked stunned for a moment. The very thought that Neville could love some girl, least of all Ginny, had never passed through Harry's mind ever. Everyone thought of Neville as a straightforward and honest boy but no one...maybe not all but many never even thought Neville could

ever propose to a girl. Maybe it was because of the way Neville conducted himself...maybe because he was too straight a person... whatever be the cause, Harry couldn't fathom the level of sadness Neville was feeling right now.

"You..." Harry hesitated for a moment before continuing "...loved Ginny". Neville gave an affirmative nod of his head before breaking down into tears altogether.

"I...had thought I will...tell her after the holidays" Neville said in between his sniffs. "I guess it wasn't meant to be after all"

"I am sorry Neville" Harry said. Harry had also lost the person he had loved but at least he had the consolation that Tonks had died for an honorable death. Neville, on the other hand, didn't have that consolation. Ginny was as good as dead for him but he had to endure the extra pain of knowing that the person he had loved had joined the dark side.

"You don't have to be sorry about anything" Neville said very grimly. "It was my fault after all"

"It wasn't your fault" Harry reiterated.

"It was" Neville said stubbornly. "How could I have loved her if I didn't even know she was going to join...him?" Harry could only hear what Neville was saying. He didn't have anything to say which could lessen Neville's pain. "It can only mean that I didn't understand her at all. That I didn't love the real Ginny after all...that I didn't know the real Ginny at all"

"Neville..." Harry began but was stopped by the ongoing barrage of comments coming from Neville.

"She tried to kill you!" Neville said angrily. "She tried to kill the best friend of her own brother. That's unforgivable. She is not one of us anymore...she is dead for me at least". Tears flowed down Neville's face

as he said this but at the same time there was a grim determination on his face. Harry knew Neville had hardened himself. Even though Harry knew that it was the only way Neville could deal with the current situation, Harry only hoped Neville didn't push himself as far as Harry had done.

"I cannot forgive her" Neville said, his fists balled in anger. "Not for what she did to you...not for what she has done to your auror friend". Harry only gulped at reference of Tonks thinking just how great a friend she was after all. "I promise you Harry that one day I will avenge your friend" "What?" Harry suddenly gave a shake of his head as if he had come out of a stupor.

"One day I am going to kill Ginny Weasley myself" Neville looked Harry dead in the eyes as he said this and Harry could see that he meant every word he had just said. Harry looked at Neville unable to say a single word. He could only imagine what level of courage and determination Neville had to say that he would kill Ginny...the girl he loved. Harry felt like saying that Neville wasn't serious but he knew that Neville was more serious than he had ever been in his entire life. At that moment, the respect Harry had for Neville surpassed all limits which might have been there initially.

"NO" a voice broke the pin drop silence in the room. Looking around in surprise, Harry and Neville saw Ron standing in the doorway with Fred and George behind him. Harry suddenly realized that the door had been unlocked and Ron and the others could have entered mid-way during their conversation. After all, Harry and Neville had been so engrossed in their talk that they couldn't have noticed anyone silently entering the room.

"You - will - do - nothing - to - Ginny" Ron said very slowly as he

moved towards Neville. Harry saw that Ron's face was red with anger.

"I don't care if she is your sister Ron" Neville replied angrily as he stood up from his seat. "She will not escape me"

"She is my sister Neville" Ron was having trouble keeping his voice down.

"And I have the first claim to her"

"What?" Harry looked at Ron in a bewildered manner. He had just thought that Ron was angry because Neville wanted revenge but...

"She is my sister and she tried to kill Harry" Ron explained. "I will have my revenge" Ron's eyes were gleaming with anger and, Harry felt, a few tears were also forming. After all, taking revenge from one's own sister was no small thing to talk about. "I won't let anyone get in my way

Neville" Ron continued. "I will be the one to kill Ginny"

"And we will be the ones to take care of Percy" the twins added without a touch of humor in their voices. They had been like this ever since the Ginny episode and everyone around knew that only time could heal their wounds. They would return to their normal selves one day but that day was still far away.

"It's all in the family" Ron said as he and his brothers walked out of the room leaving Harry and Neville in their wake.

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A/N: Third chapter here. It's been 2 months since I last updated. Sorry for the delay.

Thanks for all those reviews. Every review which you people made is very much appreciated. Please know that.

mary - No...Ginny was not under the Imperius in PoH. She did what she did on her own free will.

harrisonpotter - Hmmm...I can't really answer whether Harry and Fleur will get together in this story. You will have to wait and see.

PwnMaster Paladin - Yes...it takes a really loooong time to get over one person's death.

Junky - In the last chapter, Harry wasn't contemplating about meeting Tonks in the afterlife. Rather, it was Ron who was thinking about how it is in the afterlife.

ExsulRegina - Thanks for the review. You printed out all 600 pages of PoH? Whoa!

Everyone else - A BIG thanks for all your reviews. Just because I didn't mention your name doesn't mean your review is of any less importance to me. It is very much appreciated. Also, those who didn't review - thanks for taking the time to read my fic.

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4. Messages

Ok. Everyone knows the drill. Still here goes nothing -

Harry Potter and the other characters of J.K. Rowling are strictly hers. I am not the original writer (though I wish I could be J) and I do not wish to make money from this. Most Importantly, I DO NOT want to get sued. So if anyone has any problems with anything I write, then just tell me.

There's plenty more...blah blah blah...forget it and let the story begin :).

Note: US English has been used here.

Note: This is the sequel to Harry Potter & The Power Of Hogwarts. Please read it before moving on with this story.

HARRY POTTER & THE NEW DAWN

Chapter 4 - Messages

"It's all in the family" Ron said as he and his brothers walked out of the room leaving Harry and Neville in their wake.

&&&&

"Hello Professor" Soha said as she turned up to work on the potions

which were her responsibility now.

"Hello Ms. Mentieva" Fleur acknowledged. "Come to brew some potions again I assume"

"Yes ma'am" Soha said very obediently. She had a very bad feeling about this but hoped she would have some good luck today. And if Professor Delacour got too suspicious, Cho had said they would make some alternative arrangements. What arrangements, Soha didn't know but one thing she knew very well was that any kind of alternative arrangement would take time and that was one thing they couldn't afford to lose. After all, no one knew just when a death eater attack might occur!

"Please help yourself" Fleur told Soha. "I will be in the back office if you need me". Soha stood there in complete silence for a minute as Fleur moved to her back office and closed the door. She just couldn't believe her luck at the prospect of being able to brew the potions in a completely care free manner. Quickly regaining her composure, she started getting all the ingredients in place and started on her potions.

It was well over a couple of hours before Soha finally decided to stop. She stopped more out of physical fatigue than anything else because her eyes were burning like hell due to the various vapors rising from the potion. She had not counted on that initially and decided to take some precautions from the next time onwards. Even though she wanted to continue now, she knew that there was a limit to everything. Grudgingly, she put the potions in different vials and slowly started to put the rest of the ingredients back in their respective places. Her back was turned at her books and bags and vials when she heard a slight cough.

"Are you finished Ms. Mentieva?" Fleur asked in her normal voice.

"Yes" Soha said slowly as she kept on placing the ingredients back but her hands had started shaking out of fear. What if Fleur had noticed the

vials?

"Please be careful about those ingredients because I see your hands are shaking slightly..." Fleur said before adding. "...and if I were you then I would also explain as to what exactly was brewed here in the past couple of hours". Soha bit her lips at this - caught!

Soha had started breathing very heavily by now. As she turned around, Fleur couldn't help but pity the girl. She had turned a ghastly white and her breathing was taking place in short gasps.

"You don't look too well to me" Fleur said, waiting for a reply.

"I am ok" squeaked Soha in an abnormal kind of voice. She was mentally cursing herself for not possessing either the courage of a Gryffindor nor the cunning of a Slytherin. The one thing which she possessed, the logic of a Ravenclaw, told her that she had been hopelessly caught by her professor. Also, she had the feeling that Fleur had knowingly gone into the back office room so that Soha could brew the potion without any tension and could be caught red handed.

"But..." Fleur wondered aloud. "...if you are ok then why is your voice getting stuck?". A smile played on Fleur's lips for a second before it disappeared, only to be replaced by a serious look. "I would like an explanation to what is happening"

Soha shifted her weight from one leg to another as she thought of what she should tell Fleur. If she told that she was brewing the potions for the D.A. then the whole secrecy thing will be blown off and she, being one of the newest members, could be branded as a traitor. On the other hand, if she told Fleur that she was brewing the potions for her own experiments then many questions will arise as to how she got hold of the recipes and most importantly, what she planned to do with all this. Saying that these were needed by the D.A. would be a satisfactory answer whereas saying

that it were for personal...

"I am waiting for you Ms. Mentieva" Fleur said a bit impatiently.

"Well..." Soha bit her lips slightly as she finally decided to tell the truth to Fleur. She would have to trust Fleur not to blow the cover off the D.A. and it's potion making conquests but then again, it could be a disaster. She knew she had to take a risk as she had no other choice left.

"Actually...these are for the D.A." Soha said hesitantly before adding

"Please do not say this to anyone...please..."

"D.A.?" Fleur looked surprised. "What is that?"

At that point it stuck Soha that this was the same question which she had asked when she had heard the term 'D.A.' for the first time. She guessed that Fleur didn't have any knowledge of the D.A. and this, in her opinion, made matters even worse. Now she had to tell Fleur about the whole background of the D.A.

"Then I will start from the beginning ma'am" Soha said with a sigh. "But you will have to promise me that you will not tell anyone about what I am going to say to you now"

"I cannot promise you anything right now, Ms. Mentieva" Fleur said in a stern tone. "If what you say is harmful to anyone, then I will have to talk to the headmaster about it"

"No..." Soha said immediately. "This is not meant to harm anyone"

"I will come to that conclusion if you don't mind" Fleur replied. Soha just nodded her head in a half hearted manner. "And..." Fleur continued. "... since it looks like this discussion will carry on for some time, then we will be better off if we were seated". With a swish of her wand, Fleur conjured up two chairs and soon Soha was telling a thoughtful Fleur everything she knew about the D.A. When she was finished, Fleur kept looking blankly against the opposite wall for a long time before finally

speaking again.

"Harry Potter started the D.A.?" Fleur asked. Soha just nodded in reply.

"And the headmaster knows about it?". Again an affirmative nod came from Soha in answer to Fleur's second question.

"Ms. Mentieva..." Fleur said after another long pause. "...it seems this D.A. has special powers at Hogwarts even though I did not have any previous knowledge about it. But..." Fleur paused for effect. "...it still doesn't give you the power to come in here and brew any kind of potion you want. I want to know exactly what these potions are". Soha looked helplessly at Fleur and explained how the D.A. had found some potion recipes and had thought that they were a trap by the Slytherins. Later on they had researched and found that these were really useful ones.

"You are telling me that you are brewing some potions whose source is unknown to any of you?" Fleur asked in astonishment. Surely the sixth year students knew better than that.

"Yes ma'am"

"Do you have any idea what can happen if any of the potions goes wrong?" Fleur asked in a very high pitched voice which made Soha start from her seat. "If there is even the slightest of mistakes in these recipes then the people who will use that potion might be permanently stuck with the effects!"

"We know" Soha replied, her eyes pointing at her feet. "But we also think that whoever has given us the recipes had our best in his or her heart"

"And what if that person himself had made a mistake?" Fleur asked.

"What if these are some potions that person invented herself? Or what if that person made a mistake when copying it down from some other book?"

"We have to take that risk professor" Soha replied in a low voice.

"Oh my god!" Fleur threw up her hands and stood up. She looked at Soha for a moment and then started pacing around frantically. "Has this war taken away all your brains Soha? I thought you used to have some"

"This war has made us desperate professor" Soha replied with a little more confidence. She was stating what she had seen in the D.A. meetings and knew that whatever they did now had some direction...some target which might be achievable...and may turn out to be affective.

"Look young lady..." Fleur said in a slightly angry tone.

"Professor..." Soha cut off Fleur as she stood up. "You haven't been to any of our D.A. meetings. You haven't seen how Anthony wanted to take revenge for the killing of his relatives. You haven't seen the face of Ron Weasley...the shame on it...the disbelief on it...". Fleur was stunned for a moment at these emotional statements from Soha.

"You haven't seen the anger which is eating up Neville" Soha continued, tears streaming down her face by now. "You haven't seen the pain which Hermione is in because she fears she will lose her other friends just as she has lost Harry. You haven't seen everyone asking 'where is Harry Potter' and getting no replies...you haven't seen what we are going through..." at this point, Soha broke down completely in tears. The D.A. now was more than just a fighting unit...it had become a family in itself. Fleur slowly started to understand the depth of the feelings which now ran in the D.A. Here was a sixth year student who was ready to brew unknown potions so that they could use it to fight dark wizards when the time came. They did not doubt each other...did not have any bitter feelings towards each other...all they wanted to do was to help others and if that meant that they had to take additional risks then everyone was ready to put his or her foot forward.

"Please calm down Soha" Fleur said as she drew the girl closer to herself

and hugged her. The effect of Fleur's veela charm was drastic and, after a couple of seconds, Soha had regained her composure.

"I understand your feelings..." Fleur continued. "...but I still think it was very irresponsible of you to brew the potions in this manner". Soha's face fell at hearing this. She knew that their chance of brewing the potions in the potions room was gone. Now they would have to get ingredients and what not to brew the required potions. After all, there was no way they could stop on this now.

"However..." Fleur continued again after a pause. "...I have decided that you are doing this to help others and hence I will help you in brewin..."

"YOU WILL!" Soha jumped in joy and astonishment as she heard this. She just couldn't believe her ears.

"Only if you don't go around telling everyone" Fleur said with a smile.

"And please do stop jumping!"

&&&&

"Seems like you followed me" Harry said as the figure of Hedwig landed on his left shoulder. "I am sorry I haven't been able to give much time to you lately". At this, Hedwig gave an affectionate nibble on Harry's ears as if to say that she could understand Harry's feelings at the moment.

"Thank you girl" Harry grinned slightly as he tried to comprehend just how intelligent these magical creatures were. "Well...here we are" Harry said as he came to a stop in a graveyard. He looked down at the tombstone of Nymphadora Tonks and placed a pink rose on it. This had become a daily routine for him in the evenings. He would daily come to Godric's Hollow and place the pink rose...sit there for a few moments and then return to the castle. For some reason, he felt Tonks very close to him whenever he was here.

"I will be yours...always" Harry said as he looked at the tombstone. The

exact emotions in his heart were not on his lips but if anyone had had a look at his eyes at that moment then they would have known just how much he had meant the words he had just said. He did not shed tears anymore because he did not want to undermine Tonks's sacrifice. He knew Tonks would not like to see him sad all the time so he had decided he would try to remain a bit more...cheerful...from now on. But, in the heart of his hearts, he knew he just couldn't "move on".

Harry looked on at the tombstone for a few more moments before he sat down beside it. It was on a higher level than the rest of Godric's Hollow and Harry could see all the people working frantically to build their homes there. Luckily for him, his seating position was such that he was hidden in the shadows cast by a great oak tree nearby and no one could see him.

"There are just...too many people here" Harry said to no one in particular but knew that Hedwig understood each and every word which he was saying. He kept on looking at everyone running around to finish their tasks before the sun finally went down and he wondered just how many people had been affected by the attacks all over the country. A few children were playing around while some others were sitting alone under a tree or in an opening. It wasn't hard to guess what had happened to those who were sitting all alone. Obviously they had lost someone near to themselves and, if their emotions were anything to go by, then it had happened right before their eyes.

As he looked around, his eyes came to rest at a small clearing where an old man had created a small one storyed house made of stones. The house looked as if it would collapse any moment but Harry could see some strong magic holding the place together. Harry looked on at the house in curiosity...it had no windows...no ventilation...nothing except

for a door and he wondered how the people inside were living without any light or air. Even though he didn't know how many people lived inside, still it must be suffocating enough for even one person in his opinion. Strange were the ways of people in the time of war. It was as if some felt that without any windows to get through, they were able to block one of the entrances which dark wizards might have.

"I wonder what he is up to" Harry said as he saw the old man come out of the house. The man looked to be in his seventies and walked with the help of a wooden stick. A part of his skull looked as if it had been banged in by something very hard...like a club or something. He looked very different from the rest and his eyes were kind of weird too. In a way, Harry was reminded of Mad Eye Moody by this man.

Harry saw the old man walk past many people, some of whom looked at him curiously, and many frightened children. Presently the man took a turn to the left and started walking towards the graveyard where Harry was seated. Harry moved a bit more into the shadows and cast a disillusionment charm on him. After all, the last thing he wanted was for some old man to see him and run towards everyone saying Harry Potter was there.

Harry watched with narrowed eyes as the man came nearer and nearer to the iron gate of the graveyard. Just as he thought that the man would push open the gate and enter inside, Harry saw him take out a small parchment and place it on a rock beside the gate. Looking around a bit fervently, the man quickly turned around and started his walk back at a much faster rate. Harry had the impression that the old man had been fearful that he might have been watched. Even though the old man had a frightening effect on the others, he seemed frightened at the prospect of coming in front of a graveyard all alone. He did not find it convenient at

all...at least that was what Harry felt.

Harry sat there for a few silent minutes and watched the old man hobble back to his house. The man would frequently cast a glance over his shoulders to see if he was being followed or not. His walking pace slowed once he was back amongst the other people of Godric's Hollow and he resumed his old appearance there. The old man went up to the house and knocked on it once...twice...thrice. Harry found the combination of knocks a bit strange. It was almost as if it was a technique which only a few people knew. Presently the door opened and the old man walked inside but not before glancing all around him to be sure no one was seeing him enter. Harry estimated that there was at least one more person inside who had opened the door for the old man. As to why the man didn't just open the door using a spell...Harry was baffled about it. Harry looked around for quite a while to see if anyone came near to the parchment or not. Even though he hated to admit it, he felt his curiosity grow with every passing second. He wanted to know what was written on that parchment and he wanted to know it badly. One thing he was certain of by now was that whatever was in the parchment was not for the eyes of everyone. When Harry was sure that no one else was going to turn up just yet, he summoned the piece of parchment to himself and read it carefully.

"Well...well...well...what do we have here?" Harry said rather loudly as he finished reading the whole letter. Slowly but surely, a smile spread on his face.

&&&&

"Hi"

"Oh...Hi" Neville said as soon as he recognized that the person he had run into was Soha. "Sorry for the collision" Neville apologized.

"No need for that" Soha replied. "I should have looked out too". An awkward silence followed this statement as none knew what else to say. After all, most of their interaction had been limited just to the D.A. meetings and they had never had any chit-chat before. Just as Neville had thought up of saying something, Soha asked him a question which took him aback.

"Do you know that your friends are very worried about you?" Soha asked.

"What?" Neville looked surprised at this sudden statement.

"Yes" Soha said as she started to walk slowly. Neville, in his curiosity, fell in step with her.

"I don't get what you are saying" Neville replied truthfully. "Why would anyone suddenly get worried about me?"

"Because they care about you" Soha replied in a voice which conveyed the feeling that Neville had just asked an absurd question.

"I don't understand a bit of what you are saying" Neville still looked confused.

"I had a chat with one of your house mates a couple of days ago" Soha took care not to mention Hermione's name. "That person was very worried that you were hmm...." Soha looked distinctly uncomfortable trying to find the right words to convey what she had in mind. "...that you were losing control of yourself"

"Losing control of myself?" Neville stopped in the middle of the corridor. He looked questioningly Soha who looked even more uncomfortable now.

"Well..." Soha said slowly. "People are worried that you might do something on your own which..."

"What will I do on my own?" Neville cut in between Soha's sentence.

"Nothing..." Soha added hastily before continuing. "It's just that everyone

wants you to know that they are always there to do what you want them to do but they also care about what you do to yourself"

"I see" Neville said in a slightly angry tone. "So now people want me to be calm and just look on at what is happening all around"

"NO" Soha reiterated as fast as she could. She had taken the decision to talk to Neville and she had to keep the whole thing in control. Otherwise there was no way of telling what Neville might say to his house members.

"Look..." Soha put up her hands more in a manner to calm herself than Neville. "We just want you to know that we are there for you"

"I already know that" Neville said, his anger subsiding a little.

"But please promise that you won't end up like Harry" Soha said apprehensively. "We don't want to..."

"Harry is not doing anything wrong" Neville said before Soha could finish her sentence.

"I know" Soha said. "But still, people need Harry and yet he is not around all the time. Surely you will agree that Harry used to be around all the time to help others in his first five years, wasn't he?". Neville didn't reply to this one as he knew the answer to it all too well. He knew that he would have loved to have a chat with Harry every now and then as to what to do in this war but he just couldn't 'find' Harry. Harry seemed to be inside his trunk most of the time and whenever he came out, it was mostly through coincidence that they got to talk.

"We want you to be there for us..." Soha took hold of Neville by both his shoulders. "...always"

"What if I can't?" Neville asked in a slightly uncomfortable voice.

"You have to..." Soha replied. "...For the sake of all of us"

&&&&

"Hi Remus"

"Hello Harry" Remus greeted his godson as he entered the trunk.

"So...where are you going?" Harry asked. Remus seemed to be dressed in some formal clothes which were better than his normal ragged one's.

"I just came back after a little...hmmm...shopping" Remus said with a shy grin. Harry looked at his godfather for a few seconds and smiled inwardly. Remus was shy to tell Harry that he went to buy some new clothes for himself. What would he tell the others?

"It's quite normal to buy some new clothes" Harry said as he kept on gazing at Remus who refused to meet his eye. "I hope you understand that, don't you?"

"Well...yeah!" Remus exclaimed a bit hurriedly...too hurriedly for Harry's comfort.

"C'mon Remus...you look nice in these" Harry comforted his godfather.

"But I feel strange" Remus finally blurted out his true feelings. "I haven't had new clothes for the past six years"

"What!" Harry looked astonished. In his years at the Dursley's Harry had always worn Dudley's clothes but to think that a wizard, who had his own income, didn't buy new clothes for six years was unthinkable. Harry himself thought about the new clothes he had bought just before coming to Hogwarts for the sixth year and was glad about his choice. Some had adjusted very nicely and he knew he wouldn't require any new clothes for another year or two at least. But...

"You didn't buy a single new piece of clothing for six years?" Harry looked thunderstruck.

"Unless you count the underwear" Remus replied a bit awkwardly.

"Only new underwear?" Harry looked on for a minute in complete disbelief. He just couldn't believe he was having this kind of a conversation, least of all with Remus.

"What else did I need?" Remus was talking more to himself than Harry. "I had my robes..."

"Worn out long ago" Harry commented.

"...plus my shoes"

"Torn beyond thinkable limits" Harry said again.

"...and my wand holster"

"That piece of leather is a holster?" Harry's eyes went wide in alarm.

"...and..."

"Forget it!" Harry shut off Remus completely. He just couldn't believe how he never thought of forcing Remus to buy some new clothes. "I am so sorry"

"About what?" this time Remus looked bewildered.

"About not buying you new clothes or something like that" Harry said, regretting it immediately after. The look on Remus's face was enough to tell him that he had made that wrong move again.

"Sorry..." Harry said as he took Remus by the shoulders. "I didn't mean to brag about money or anything...it's just that I should have gifted you something. If I don't take care of you then who will?". Remus looked at Harry with genuine gratitude. This boy was James Potter son to the boot.

"No problem Harry" Remus said as he gave his godson a tight hug.

"But..." he continued after pulling away from Harry. "...it feels nice to buy something with one's own money and have plenty still left over".

Harry gave a knowing smile at this. He knew that Sknoher Security Systems were doing a lot of business daily and at this rate Remus would become a millionaire soon.

"She would have loved to see us smile like this once again" Remus suddenly said.

"I bet she would" Harry said in a strange tone.

"I think we should have these kinds of chats more now onwards" Remus said with a sad smile on his face. "This is what she would have wanted us to be like...to be happy...to smile"

"I guess so" Harry said after giving Remus's words a lot of thought. "But I really miss her"

"Me too" Remus said.

"She really did a lot to change the atmosphere of this...this..." Harry looked around himself at the rooms and the kitchen and his training area and found that they just didn't make too much sense now. "...this trunk" he said finally. This place had been a home once but not anymore.

"Dobby too" Remus added. He knew that Tonks's death had had a heavier impact on Harry but he also knew that Dobby had been one of the most important person, or rather elf, in Harry's life. Even though Harry didn't mention Dobby all the time, the little elf had created a lasting impression on him.

"Yeah" Harry said with a far away look on his face. He looked around the trunk and could almost see Dobby and Tonks having a fight over who gets to sit where...Dobby being chased around by Tonks for calling her Harry Potter's Tonkie...

"They made a good pair" Remus almost seemed to read Harry's thoughts.

"They sure did" Harry replied in an emotional voice.

Remus, seeing that Harry's mood had taken a beating, decided to change the subject. "Can you get us some dinner?"

"Oh...I forgot completely" Harry stuck his forehead with his palm. "I better get started soon"

"What do you mean?" Remus looked slightly puzzled.

"Let me get the dinner ready first and then we will talk" Harry said as he rushed into the kitchen. Remus started drumming the table in

anticipation. Whatever Harry was going to tell him may not be to his liking. For quite a few days now it looked like Harry was in some kind of deep thought. If what he was about to say was something related, then it surely meant trouble.

"Here you go" Harry said as he gave Remus a plate of noodles and went back to bring his own. Soon, they were seated opposite each other and eating their dinner.

"So..." Remus started. "You wanted to say something"

"Yeah" Harry said a bit thoughtfully knowing fully well that the information he was about to share with Remus would not please him at all. He had to choose his words carefully so that he didn't end up making Remus mad at him...rather...too mad at him.

"I had a chat with Fudge a couple..."

"You or Simon?" Remus interrupted sharply. Harry knew he had to tackle this situation with tact.

"Simon" Harry said and continued fast enough so that Remus would not be able to say anything else. "Let's not go into that stuff right now. I want to get into some more important things"

"Ok" Remus replied. "As you wish"

"Basically I was thinking..." Harry slowly told Remus of the things he had discussed with Fudge. He explained that Fudge had extra aurors left even after an adequate number had been provided for Hogwarts.

"So what are you thinking of doing with these 10 extra aurors?" Remus looked distinctly alarmed now.

"I have been thinking they would be better off protecting some place else" Harry said apprehensively. At Remus's questioning look, Harry said "St. Mungo's"

"Go on" Remus replied in a grave tone. "I want to hear the rest of it". At

this Harry gave a deep sigh and started to explain what he had in mind.

As he continued explaining, he saw Remus's features darkening with every passing second. At last he finished his explanation.

"Hmmm" this was the only sound which came from Remus once he understood that Harry had finished telling his idea to him.

"Should I get you something more to eat?" Harry asked, trying to get Remus's to take the situation less lightly.

"This is not an easy thing to pull off" Remus said after giving it a lot of thought.

"I know" Harry said. "That's why I am asking you to help me"

"To get yourself killed?" Remus asked grimly. "You are testing your luck a lot Harry Potter". Harry knew that this time Remus was really concerned and angry. He had never addressed Harry by his full name before and this only meant that he was in trouble.

"I am doing what fate has in store for me" Harry said.

"That doesn't mean you have to go and seek trouble yourself" Remus replied. "Maybe fate had decided that I had to be a werewolf but that didn't mean that I had to seek out the werewolf which bit me"

"But I am not trying to do it alone" Harry threw up his arms in exasperation. "For god's sake, I try to tell you something so that you can help me and you start to say I shouldn't do it! Maybe I shouldn't have told you anything at all"

"I didn't mean that" Remus continued in the same tone. He wasn't going to be emotionally blackmailed by his godson but he also knew that Harry meant what he was saying. Also the fact that Harry had told Remus about his plan showed that he was really serious about it and knew it could take a turn for the worse.

"I will think about this and let you know" Remus said at the slightly

angry but expectant look of Harry. "I can't say anything right now"

"As you wish" Harry said. This was more than he had bargained for and he knew that Remus would agree to help him if needed. With a small nod at Remus, Harry proceeded towards his exercise area and started practicing spells and other maneuvers. Remus kept looking at him quietly for a long time before he finally got up and left Harry alone. He had some real hard thinking to do.

&&&&

"Hi"

"Oh...Hello Fleur" Harry said as he looked up to see whom he had run into. He knew that he had developed this bad habit of looking down at his feet and walking whenever he was deep in thought. This had led to many a collision and he knew he had to put an end to it.

"Where are you going now?" Fleur asked Harry as she looked at her watch. It was 8 at night. For the first time Harry noticed that Fleur wore a muggle watch too.

"Nowhere in particular" replied Harry. "What about you? What were you doing?"

"I was just coming back from Godric's Hollow" Fleur said. "There's a lot of work to be done there"

"Yeah...I know that" Harry said and cast a glance at his own watch.

"Hey...I got to go. I have to eat dinner"

"Why don't you eat with me?"

"You mean you and your family, right?" Harry asked. For a minute he wondered whether Fleur's parents spent all their time in the castle but then Fleur cleared up the misunderstanding.

"No...it's just me" Fleur said before adding "Dumb old veela in a dumb old dungeon". She tried to sound as if she was cracking a joke but Harry

detected something else in her voice.

"Ok...let's have dinner" Harry said as he cast a curious glance at his potions teacher. He knew that Remus would prepare his dinner if Harry didn't come in by 8:30 and hence it wouldn't be a problem. What intrigued Harry was the way in which Fleur had just conducted herself. It was just not like her...and he, as a friend, had to see if there was anything which he could do or not to help her.

"Thanks" Fleur said with a smile. She had been feeling slightly uncomfortable about her "joke" but was relieved to see that Harry had not raised the issue. It had really sounded very weird now that she came to think of it.

Both of them slowly walked towards the dungeons with an air of awkwardness between them. Harry was the one who broke the silence.

"How are your parents doing?" Harry asked.

"Kind of ok" Fleur replied. "At least it is better than what we had back there"

"But that was your home" Harry said. "Nothing can match one's own home even if it is coming down in portions..."

"No" Fleur interrupted Harry. "It's not that. The main thing there was that not too many people trusted us anymore after...you know...". Harry nodded in acknowledgement as he remembered how Fleur's brother had almost joined the death eaters before bailing out at the last moment. As a result, the death eaters had made an example out of him and attacked him in the middle of the city late one night. The news about the attack on Zesauas Delacour and why it had taken place had traveled throughout the length and breadth of France in a matter of hours and the family had been disgraced ever since. Only a few people still remained loyal to the family which was once one of the most respected in France.

"Here we are" Fleur said as she opened the door to the dungeon and let Harry in first.

"So..." Harry said as he entered the dungeon. "...what variety of food is available here?"

"Only English for the moment" Fleur said with an almost apologetic smile. "We can't yet afford French fo..."

"I am hungry" Harry said hastily. He didn't want to start another conversation of who could afford what or not. Why did people around him always have to say things like these, Harry asked himself in vain. Ron couldn't afford this...or that...Remus said he couldn't afford new clothes...and now Fleur...Harry almost felt like shouting out in frustration.

"Ok" Fleur replied in an embarrassed voice as she guessed what Harry was thinking. Soon both of them were eating a nice English dinner.

"Is it ok?" Fleur asked hesitantly.

"Why?" Harry queried back. Why did it seem to him that Fleur was a bit extra sensitive nowadays as to whether anyone was liking her things or not?

"I made it myself..." Fleur replied, making a face at the food. "I am not good at this...so..."

"I think it is quite good" Harry replied after understanding the reason behind Fleur's question. "At least, I am not complaining about the quality of cooking here. I like it very much"

"Thanks" Fleur said with a grin and her whole face lit up. At least Harry liked her cooking and maybe someday he would like her too.

"No, I can't let these thoughts get hold of me...I just cannot" Fleur told herself and mentally slapped her inner demons. She could never take the place of Tonks in Harry's life. Muttering that to herself, she decided to enjoy

Harry's company as much as she could...just as a friend, nothing more.

&&&&

"What else should we do now?" Arthur Weasley asked his twin sons as they tried to arrange their new home at Godric's Hollow. Following the attacks which had taken place, the Weasley's had decided to stay as near to Hogwarts as possible.

"We need to place this bed over in that room" George replied. Arthur Weasley nodded in reply and levitated the bed to the next room. For a second it got stuck in the doorway but Arthur shrank it and then enlarged it once it was fully inside the room.

"May I come in?" a recognizable female voice queried from the doorway.

"You may" Molly Weasley said without looking up from the work she was doing. The recent happenings had had a terrible effect on Mrs. Weasley. She still had not been able to believe that Percy and Ginny had joined You-Know-Who. They were Weasleys and Weasleys don't go bad! This was the thought which went through her mind over and over again.

Sometimes she broke down completely and blamed herself for all that had gone wrong. She would say that she should have treated them better and should have given them new clothes, brooms etc. whenever needed.

Sometimes she would blame Arthur Weasley for everything that had gone wrong. She would say that he just didn't have the urge to earn the money required to keep their children's satisfied. However, she knew that no one was at fault...no one except Percy and Ginny. Still, she couldn't bring herself to blame them publicly. How could she blame her children when she had had them in her womb for 9 months?

"Oh...Mrs. Weasley!". Everyone looked up to see that the new entrant was none other than Fleur Delacour.

"Fleur!" Mrs. Weasley looked surprised for a moment before remembering

that Fleur was now a professor at Hogwarts.

"I was just checking if anyone needed anything in this tent or not" Fleur explained. "This is my job for the time being...to see who needs what and to help them as much as possible"

"We don't need any help" George said in an offended voice. It was very clear that everyone's nerves were strained after the Ginny episode.

"No...I didn't mean it that way" Fleur clarified before adding with a slightly hurt look. "I am just doing my job!"

"Forget him Fleur" Mrs. Weasley glared at George as she said this. "Please come in and make yourself comfortable"

"Thank you Mrs. Weasley but I really can not come in if you don't need any kind of help" Fleur replied gratefully. "There are a lot of people out here who need our help at this moment"

"Yes...you are right" Mrs. Weasley added in a strange tone. Whenever she was reminded of the refugees around their new home, her thoughts inadvertently were drawn towards that of Percy and Ginny. This was something which she knew she would have to live with all her life and maybe time could lessen the pain slightly. However, it was bound to haunt her.

Fleur, seeing the look on Mrs. Weasley's face, understood the emotions inside her. After all, she had seen similar emotions and reactions when her mother had first learnt that her eldest son was joining the dark forces. It had been a very tough period in their lives but one which they would never forget. It was all too plain to Fleur that Mrs. Weasley was thinking of her two children and Fleur knew that talking about it might help her release some emotions. Slowly Fleur walked up to Mrs. Weasley. "I am sorry for whatever happened" Fleur said as she placed a consoling hand on Mrs. Weasley's shoulders. Mr. Weasley heard the statement and

left them alone. Some matters didn't require his interference and he thought it was best if he left the two ladies to talk in private.

"You don't have to be sorry for anything" Mrs. Weasley continued in the same strange tone.

"She was my student too" Fleur said. "We should have noticed some signs"

"I don't want to think about it anymore" Mrs. Weasley said in a choked tone and entered another room. Even though this room was very neat and clean, still she found something to do to keep her busy.

"If you need to talk about anything then I am here" Fleur said as she followed Mrs. Weasley inside. "Also my family lives nearby so if you want to spend some time with my parents..."

"Who would want to spend time with the parents of..." Mrs. Weasley found it hard to say but knew it was something she would have to say one day. "...the parents of...death eat...". At this point she broke down completely and couldn't continue anymore. Fleur quickly closed the door of that room and sat down beside a silently weeping Molly Weasley.

"Oh Fleur..." Mrs. Weasley said as she tightly hugged the girl. "...I don't think I can live with this...I don't want to..."

"You shouldn't say that" Fleur said as she slowly stroked Mrs. Weasley's back as a mother would do with her child. "We all have some bad things happening..."

"But this is not just bad..." Mrs. Weasley said in between her sniffs. "They are...they are...death...". The silent crying turned into a howl for a second before Mrs. Weasley covered her mouth with her hands. She couldn't let her other children hear her wailing.

Fleur held on to Mrs. Weasley for a long time. She just didn't know what to say. Here was a woman who took pride of her family's name and two of her favorite children had gone on to betray her. They had rubbished

that very name which had made them hold their heads high in front of the magical community in spite of the fact that they weren't too rich or influential. And their mother was the one to suffer the most. She couldn't stop crying thinking of what had happened and yet she dared not show her emotions to her other children. She had to be strong for them...she couldn't lose control of herself now. But yet...yet, how could she just forget the past?

Fleur's mind raced against time to think of some consolatory words to say to Mrs. Weasley but she found that she was incapable of it. This is where the experience of a lifetime came in and she knew her mother would have had something to say to console Mrs. Weasley at that moment. She made a mental note to tell her mother to talk to the Weasley's one evening soon.

"I have to leave now" Fleur said to Mrs. Weasley as soon as she cast a glance at her watch. They had been sitting there for almost 45 minutes now and Fleur knew she had to visit many other families that day. She couldn't let her emotions keep her restricted to only one family at a time like this.

"Thank you Fleur" Mrs. Weasley said as she rubbed her eyes which were red by now.

"For what?" Fleur asked in slight astonishment.

"For being here" Mrs. Weasley replied. Fleur looked on for a moment and decided not to comment on it. Staying beside Mrs. Weasley had been her duty but she didn't want to say that "it was nothing". It would belittle Molly Weasley's feelings. She only gave a silent nod in reply.

"Oh...before you go..." Molly Weasley said as she got up. "...do I look ok? I mean..." she looked slightly embarrassed "...I don't want the others to know..."

"You look fine" Fleur said in reply at which Mrs. Weasley just smiled.

"Thanks" Mrs. Weasley said slowly as she opened the door of the room to let Fleur out. Fleur slowly walked out of the room towards the main door when suddenly Bill entered.

"Oh..." Bill looked stunned for a moment before he regained his composure. "Hi"

"Hello Bill" Fleur replied, an uncomfortable feeling growing inside her. She still had not been able to forget how Bill had been more attracted to her veela beauty than herself as a person but she also knew it was a thing which happened all too often with men around her. Except Harry maybe...

"So..." Bill looked lost for words. "...hmmm...You are leaving?"

"Yes" Fleur replied. "But I am afraid you are blocking the doorway"

"Oh..." Bill replied in slight embarrassment and moved away quickly. "I didn't mean to..."

"I know" Fleur replied with a small friendly smile. "It happens"

"Yeah" Bill said in a slightly slower voice than normal as he too seemed to be thinking of something.

"Well...see you guys later then" Fleur said to everyone present in the room and walked out.

"Hey Fleur" Bill called out just after she had walked a few paces.

"Yes?" Fleur asked as she turned around.

"This may sound a bit awkward..." Bill said in a really awkward voice.

"...but maybe we could have some butterbeer sometime..." his voice trailed off at this.

Fleur was not expecting anything of this kind from Bill. She didn't know how to take this comment at all. Maybe Bill just wanted to clear up the air between them so that they could maintain a friendly relation but what

if he said something more? Fleur couldn't rule out any of the two options and decided it was best to have a chat with Bill if he wanted to have it.

"Ok" Fleur replied. "But I don't know when I can make it. I am just too..."

"No problem" Bill replied with a relieved smile. "Whenever you have time is fine with me". With a final friendly smile Fleur turned her back towards Bill and proceeded to the next tent, her mind lost in thought.

&&&&

"I have to ask him about this" Harry said to himself as he moved towards Dumbledore's office. Something just didn't feel right to him with the way the war was going and he needed some kind of clarification from the headmaster. Harry turned down the last corridor towards Dumbledore's office when he saw the headmaster approaching the gargoyle himself.

"Hello there Harry" Dumbledore said just as he was about to say the password to the gargoyle guarding his office. "Would you like to have a cup of tea with me?". Without waiting for Harry's answer, Dumbledore moved onto the staircase and Harry had the distinct feeling that Dumbledore knew exactly why he had been coming to him.

"How are you Professor?" Harry asked Dumbledore as the spiral staircase moved towards its destination.

"Fine" Dumbledore replied and then turned back to have a peek at Harry's face. "And I see you are doing better too"

"Time is a great healer, isn't it professor?" Harry said in reply.

"In most cases...yes" Dumbledore replied cryptically. Harry frowned for a second before Dumbledore said "Remus is a very good man"

"Yes sir" Harry couldn't help but agree. After Sirius, he was grateful to have a person like Remus in his life to take over the role of a godfather. Harry was lost in his thoughts as the headmaster motioned him to get seated.

"How can I help you Harry?" Dumbledore's question brought Harry out of his thoughts.

"I can't understand all that is happening sir" Harry said.

"Regarding?" Harry knew for sure that Dumbledore knew his answer and yet he knew he had no choice but to spell it out to the headmaster.

"This war sir" Harry said and cast a glance out of the window towards Godric's Hollow.

"And what are you unable to comprehend?" Dumbledore asked again.

"Why is he attacking these innocent people?" Harry asked. "Why doesn't Voldemort just attack the ministry and be done with all this?". Hearing this, Dumbledore gave a smile which indicated that this was a question which he had faced many times before.

"Lord Voldemort is known by many names...which I find to be rather funny at times" Dumbledore added with a smile. Harry couldn't help but grin too. After all, it really was absurd for grown ups, let alone their young one's, to be afraid of a name.

"Never has there been such a dark lord in the history of magic"

Dumbledore continued. "Grindewald was a great dark wizard too but he was not feared as much as these people fear Lord Voldemort. These people fear to say his name!" Dumbledore gave a shrug at this as if he too was unable to understand just why so many wizards and witches found it hard to say Voldemort's name. "I had spent many a night wondering why this was the case...as to why people feared to say his name. At last..."

Dumbledore said with a small sigh "...I found just why they feared Lord Voldemort so much. Do you know why they fear him so much Harry?"

Dumbledore looked questioningly at Harry. Harry, on the other hand, had decided he would let Dumbledore do all the talking and replied in the negative. After all, he didn't want to always play along with

Dumbledore.

"Lord Voldemort strikes at the very heart of every family" Dumbledore explained with an emotion Harry had never seen before. He seemed angry...he seemed to think of Voldemort's actions as below human...and yet he was maintaining the composure which he was famous for. Maybe Dumbledore could hate too, Harry thought. After all, he was a mere mortal. But the manner in which he spoke was enough to convey just how much he valued human life and just why he hated Voldemort.

"Lord Voldemort wants to embed a fear in every human being...he wants everyone to know who the best is...rather...who the master is. And in his quest to do so, he recruited death eaters" Dumbledore continued explaining. Some of this information seemed redundant to Harry but still he listened on without interrupting. "Lord Voldemort does not think every mortal deserves a death by his own wand...no...he is far too superior for it. But..." Dumbledore paused slightly. "...but he knows that if he is the master of all the killers then he is indirectly killing them and they will end up fearing him only and not the death eaters individually" "But it's kind of absurd that he has not tried to take over the ministry yet"

Harry interrupted Dumbledore.

"Harry..." Dumbledore got up and started pacing the room as if it was a tough thing which he was about to explain. "Lord Voldemort doesn't like symbols of power. The ministry is nothing but a building with a few wizards and witches which his army of death eaters can capture at any moment. But..." Dumbledore paused as if trying to visualize something. "But...it is all too easy and there is no challenge for him there. No...Tom Riddle never liked to own something which was merely a symbol of power but didn't have any power of its own...he wants to be the symbol of power"

"Does that mean he will not attack the ministry?" Harry asked in a bewildered manner. What was this evil lord up to anyway?

"He will" Dumbledore replied. "But only when that is the last thing left to destroy. It will be a symbolic attack and I hope that day does not come because it would mean the start of the darkest era ever"

"But why sir?" Harry asked. "I understand that he wants to strike fear in everyone's heart but attacking everyone in England all the time is illogical. I mean, he could just attack 4-5 villages and that news will be all over England within a few hours and most commoners will fear him"

Harry reasoned. "Why does he want to attack almost everyone?"

"He doesn't" Dumbledore replied as he resumed his seat. "You see..."

Dumbledore explained "...Lord Voldemort has a huge army of death eaters now. But how can he expect a wizard or a witch to be a death eater from their hearts?". Harry knew how Voldemort didn't proceed with a plan unless he was absolutely sure that it was going to succeed.

Similarly, Voldemort could not be expected to have an army of death eaters when he wasn't sure...

"Lord Voldemort does not take any chances unless it is absolutely necessary" Dumbledore's voice interrupted Harry's chain of thoughts. "He is making sure that those who join him have to remain beside him till the last moment they live. And the only way to do it is have everyone kill at least one person"

"But it is still illogical!" Harry argued. "I mean, I can be a death eater, kill someone and still go against Voldemort, can't I?"

"Of course you can" Dumbledore replied. "But where will you go? If you come back to the wizarding community then you will be thrown in a jail. If you don't go back to Lord Voldemort then his followers will hunt you down and kill you. The only way out for you..." Dumbledore relaxed in

his seat slightly and continued "...will be to gather your own followers, which will be almost impossible for a common wizard"

"Does that mean he will go on killing until there are no people left in England?" Harry asked, trying to understand what exactly Voldmort's motive could be.

"I think he will stop soon" Dumbledore said with a distant look on his face. "He has got his death eaters enough practice to ensure that they don't leave his side. The very fact that Lord Voldemort is attacking more and more people makes me think that he is getting his troops ready for the final showdown"

"At Hogwarts?"

"Yes" Dumbledore replied.

"Because..." Harry started putting in the pieces of the puzzle together. "...because Hogwarts is not only a symbol of power, it actually has to be won over. He will have to defeat those who stand in his way to ultimate supremacy". Dumbledore nodded slightly at this. "And..." Harry continued. "...he will have to defeat Albus Dumbledore himself which would mean..."

"Nothing" Dumbledore corrected Harry. "Defeating just me will get him nothing. Attacking Hogwarts allows him to attack you once again and that is what he wants at the moment"

"But what can he get from just defeating me?" Harry said. "After all, he will want to defeat you and capture Hogwarts and then attack the ministry. He doesn't know about the prophecy and so he should not be interested in me"

"True that he wants to defeat me also but defeating you will get rid of his own inner fear" Dumbledore leaned closer to emphasize his point more clearly. "Lord Voldemort will do anything to silence his critics. He will go

to any extent to show that he is the best. But, in spite of what others think, he still has to answer to one person as to who is the best...as to which person he wants to defeat the most...as to when he will avenge his downfall 16 years earlier. And the answer to that is that he wants to defeat you the most, Harry"

"Who is this person to whom Voldemort has to answer to?" Harry asked even though his subconscious mind knew the answer.

"Himself" was Dumbledore's response.

&&&&

Harry was quietly sitting in the grounds, looking at the hordes of people moving to and fro between Hogwarts and Godric's Hollow. New refugees were being escorted to Godric's Hollow by teachers and then they were helped to settle down. Also, since Godric's Hollow was getting filled to the capacity, many people had started settling down at Hogsmeade and the nearby places. Everyone wanted to be near Hogwarts.

However, much to Harry's relief, the number of refugees pouring in everyday had come down drastically after the first couple of days since the attack. This had been mainly due to the additional security provided by the ministry to different areas in England in addition to a drive launched in which emergency portkeys were being installed in various public places which portkeyed people to different safe places outside England. These portkeys were made by the best of the best in the ministry so that death eaters could not use it for their purposes. No person with the dark mark would be able to use the portkeys. This, however, did not make them fail safe but many people were satisfied that at least something was being done.

Harry was wondering about how he had forced Fudge to launch the portkey drive when a strange falcon swooped down towards him. For a

second he seemed stunned by the sudden dive of the falcon and his next reaction was to go for the wand. But something told him to hold himself back. Keeping a tight grip on his wand, Harry watched the Falcon glide to a smooth landing just a few feet away from him. Not for a second did anyone break eye contact with the other. It was Harry who relented at last and saw that a letter was attached to the leg of the falcon.

The falcon kept watching Harry as he looked at the letter and then back at it. It did not offer the letter to Harry which made him wonder for a second as to whether the letter was really for him or not. Then Harry saw the falcon's eyes dart towards something before staring at him again. It was then he understood that the falcon did not trust him...because he had a tight grip on his wand. Realizing that this falcon must be some special kind of a messenger and that falcon's might be suspicious by nature, Harry slowly let go of his wand. A few tense seconds passed before the falcon finally offered Harry the letter.

No sooner had Harry taken the letter from the falcon that it took to flight. Harry watched it for a few seconds before his attention was drawn back towards the letter. It was just addressed to Harry Potter. Opening it curiously, Harry found that it had been sent from Gringotts.

Dear Mr. Potter,

You had been kind enough to use our prototype wallet for the past few months. Since there had been no complaints from your side in this time period we are taking the liberty of assuming that our product was up to your satisfaction.

We would also like to remind you that we had agreed that you will be able to use our product at a discounted rate on certain terms and conditions. We are enclosing a copy of the contract signed between you and Gringotts for your cross reference.

We are planning on a commercial launch of this product any day now. As agreed in our contract, you are required to be present on the day of the launch and give an interview on the usability of the products. We hope you will be true to your written word and will take time out of your busy itinerary to launch this product.

As a goodwill gesture from Gringotts, we would also like to offer you and a couple of your friends the lifelong usage of this product once it is launched. In return, all we ask for is that you acknowledge this fact in public.

Hoping for an affirmative answer from your side as soon as possible.

Yours truly,

TevridGranghok

London Branch,

Gringotts.

Harry looked at the sign at the bottom of the page and remembered the whole conversation he had had with the goblin named Tevrid. Harry had agreed to do a few interviews and advertisements for Gringotts but he had never thought that it would be in the middle of a war. He thought for a long while as to why would goblins launch such an expensive product in the middle of a war and the only answer which came to his mind was they wanted to take advantage of the fact that people did not want to come out of their homes anymore. They would rather pay an extra hundred galleon once to get a wallet rather than risk their lives every single time they went to Gringotts. After all, rumors had it that Gringotts would be attacked any day soon for all the gold it had but Harry seriously doubted it. If he had understood the goblins even a little bit then they had most probably taken precautions against it already.

"When should I go?" Harry thought. Without classes going on, he had all the time in the world to go to Gringotts. However, he didn't want to act

too fast on this letter. After all, if he replied instantly then the goblins would think that Harry had fallen for their trap deal of a lifetime free usage of their wallet. He wasn't greedy and he didn't want to do anything which would make them think so. Hence he knew that he would have to carefully plan when he would go to Gringotts. Thinking about his busy itinerary, Harry quickly selected a couple of days on which he might go to Gringotts. He made a mental note to write a letter to Tevrid in a couple of days time so that he could be absolutely sure on which day he would be going. Goblins didn't like false promises and he was not going to make one right now. A couple of days more would not mean the end of the world for anyone, Harry thought.

&&&&

"Give this to Mr. Tevrid" Harry told Hedwig as he tied a letter to the owl's leg. Hedwig gave an acknowledging hoot and flew off into the night sky even as Harry kept on watching. Finally, after Hedwig had gone out of sight for a minute or so, Harry started his walk back towards the castle and his dormitory.

After Harry had entered the castle, he started to walk along the many corridors and took numerous long cuts to different places. For some reason, the castle seemed to be calling out to him...he could almost feel it as a part of himself and a strange sense of calm came into him whenever he walked through one of its many corridors.

Initially Harry had thought that it was kind of weird but then he assumed that it was due to the calmness of the deserted corridors that made his own self comfortable. Hogwarts now felt more like what the trunk used to feel when Tonks and Dobby were still alive - home.

As Harry walked along the corridors, he slowly placed his hand on the walls of the castle and continued walking. He almost felt as if something

was connected to himself...something...

"Quite late to be out of your bed Mr. Potter" said a strange sounding voice.

"Who is it?" Harry said because he couldn't see anyone around. Suddenly the form of Nearly Headless Nick came into view out of one of the walls.

"Don't do that again, will you?" Harry said with a sense of relief. Nearly Headless Nick saw the young man in front of him had a firm grip on his wand and came to the conclusion that if a human had come in front of him then most likely Harry would have sent a spell towards that person.

"Sorry to startle you" Nick said to Harry. "But you should be someone who should know that staying out of bed at this late time is not allowed"

"Professor Dumbledore has allowed me certain allowances" Harry replied curtly.

"I know that Mr. Potter" Nick looked slightly hurt at the way Harry had said his last statement. Harry, seeing the look on Nick's face, regretted his actions.

"Well..." Harry said with an apologetic look on his face. "...sorry for the way I just said what I did. I shouldn't have done that"

"It happens a lot with me" Nick said, his face still showing his disappointment. "People just think that I am a ghost and hence they don't respect me anymore"

"That's not true" Harry reiterated, though it was more for Nick's satisfaction than his own inner feelings. "Everyone in our house loves you"

"I don't think so" Nick said in a dejected voice. "The way some make fun of me..."

"No...you are misunderstanding that!" Harry said. "They do all those stuff because they think of you as their friend. We play jokes on our friends,

don't we? So, if we play jokes on you, doesn't it make sense that we think of you as our friend?". Nearly Headless Nick's face brightened at this comment and Harry gave an inwardly sigh. At least the ghost will feel a little better now.

"But..." the look on Nick's face had turned from a happy one to a look of graveness. "...You don't play any jokes on anyone nowadays, do you?"

"Wha..." Harry seemed a bit taken aback at this comment. Seeing that this might lead to something which might not be to his liking, he started walking again.

"You didn't answer me" Nick called out to Harry from behind. Harry stopped and turned around to look at Nick.

"I don't like playing jokes anymore" Harry said in a serious voice which could have matched Dumbledore's.

"But you have to let the past go Harry" Nick said in a fatherly kind of tone. "If you don't then you will suffer and the others will try to help you by staying away and giving you some room. You will make them suffer too...everyone will suffer...everyone will remain trapped...everyone will be waiting for you to do something". Harry didn't know ghosts could cry or not but Nearly Headless Nick's eyes seemed slightly misty to him. "You have to let go Harry" Nick said in a very emotional voice. Harry looked on for a moment before he turned around and started walking. Nick hung there in mid air as he saw Harry approaching a corner.

"I can't" Harry said as he turned round the corner and went out of Nearly Headless Nick's sight.

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A/N: Fourth chapter here. This was pretty quick by my recent standards, wasn't it? ;)

I know the initial chapters are slightly "slow" and have quite a lot of

angst in them but that is necessary. Ultimately, I try to build characters so that the latter chapters won't seem artificial (anyone remember how a "beast" was building up inside Harry in HBP and one fine day he kissed Ginny. Nah...not so fast...needed some more emotions in my opinion). If you feel the initial chapters are too much of a drag on then please say so. The main story line starts to slowly kick start hence forth.

Thanks for all those reviews. Every review which you people made is very much appreciated.

Jeefus - The trio will reunite in time (same words again!). By the way, can you give me a link to the lyrics of the song you mentioned:)

-never- - I don't know either why I get lesser reviews but I guess it is because I don't review other people's fics a lot either (I don't read a lot and hence can't review). I am not complaining because I know people are reading it and hopefully enjoying it a bit too. Currently, I average about 1 review for every 670'th word I write. Its not too bad I guess :)

Also, you have assumed correctly that some interactions were needed for the latter part of the stories to fit in. The plot starts moving henceforth ever so slowly.

PwnMaster Paladin - Yeah...it takes a bit of hard work to bring Harry out nowadays.

KingofthePhoenixes - You will have to wait for the pairing (if any!).

harrisonpotter - Man...I just can't tell you the plot, can I:)

Everyone else - A BIG thanks for all your reviews. Just because I didn't mention your name doesn't mean your review is of any less importance to me. It is very much appreciated. Also, those who didn't review - thanks for taking the time to read my fic.

&&&&

5. Emotional Conflicts

Ok. Everyone knows the drill. Still here goes nothing -

Harry Potter and the other characters of J.K. Rowling are strictly hers. I am not the original writer (though I wish I could be J) and I do not wish to make money from this. Most Importantly, I DO NOT want to get sued. So if anyone has any problems with anything I write, then just tell me. There's plenty more...blah blah blah...forget it and let the story begin :).

Note: US English has been used here.

Note: This is the sequel to Harry Potter & The Power Of Hogwarts. Please read it before moving on with this story.

HARRY POTTER & THE NEW DAWN

Chapter 5 - Emotional Conflicts

"You have to let go Harry" Nick said in a very emotional voice. Harry looked on for a moment before he turned around and started walking.

Nick hung there in mid air as he saw Harry approaching a corner.

"I can't" Harry said as he turned round the corner and went out of Nearly Headless Nick's sight.

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"Where are you going now?"

"Oh...you are awake?" Harry said as he turned round to see Remus coming out of his room. "I am just going for a walk"

"Where do you go for these walks?" Remus asked as he passed Harry and sat down at their dining table. "That also at 6 in the morning"

"I don't think there is any problem in going for a walk in the morning"

Harry's voice sounded slightly offended. "I just go for a walk in the castle corridors"

"I see" Remus toned down his voice, clearly understanding that Harry had not taken too kindly at being questioned like this. One part of Remus always wanted to protect Harry whereas the other part argued that Harry

was old enough to make his own decisions and things like "going for a walk" should not be questioned. However, to Remus, Harry would always remain the emerald eyed kid who was the only living link to the memory of James, Lily and Sirius. He couldn't let go of him so easily.

"Anything else?" Harry asked tentatively as he noticed a far away look in Remus's eyes. Harry knew this look very well...Remus was thinking of something of the past and fond memories were playing themselves in his mind.

"Uh..." Remus looked slightly startled at this before realizing what Harry had just said. "Yes...I think there is something else too..." Remus's voice trailed off at this and he adjusted himself in his seat. Harry took this as a sign that Remus wanted Harry to sit down and have a chat with him.

"What's on your mind Remus?" Harry asked as he sat down. Sometimes he felt angry at being interrupted or questioned for what seemed to be no issues at all whereas at other times, when he was thinking more deeply or meditating, he would understand the real feelings behind Remus's behavior.

"I was thinking of what you had told me about your..." Remus paused a bit before looking at Harry. "...your plans". Harry's stomach turned at the way Remus emphasized the word 'plans'. He questioned his wisdom of sharing this information with Remus but then again reminded himself how he had promised that he won't hide any information again. That promise was made to Tonks and he just couldn't disregard it.

"I cannot stop you from doing anything..." Remus interrupted Harry's chain of thoughts. "...so I will not stop you from doing what you are doing. However..." Remus leaned forward and looked at Harry with a grave expression on his face. "...however, I would like you to remain on your toes all the time". Harry gave a serious nod at this. He knew that

Remus was not agreeing to his plan at all but he knew it was too late to do anything about it now. Also, by the look of things, it seemed as if Remus had also come to the same conclusion.

"Remus..." Harry began but was stopped by a raised finger from Remus.

"I am not finished yet Harry" Remus said calmly but it was not that hard for Harry to see through the calm exterior into his true feelings.

Somewhere deep down Harry could understand that Remus was feeling something which he had never felt before in his life - fear...the fear of losing the last of his near and dear one's.

"I want you to contact me if anything occurs" Remus spoke again after a couple of seconds of silence. "No matter where you are, I want you to let me know about what is going to happen and what you are planning to do". Harry gave a nod at this as Remus continued. "I think we are both in agreement that I do not like you taking unnecessary risks but..." Remus paused once again and Harry had the feeling that Remus was searching for the best words to describe the situation at hand now. "...but in the face of the circumstances surrounding us, I know you will have to do some things which might not be to my liking. I have surrendered that thing to my fate" Remus said in a very sad tone.

"It's not always in my hands" Harry said as he placed a hand on his godfather's hand.

"I know" Remus replied as he felt the young yet firm grip trying to reassure him that nothing will go wrong. "But I want you to..."

"I know...I know" Harry said instantly. "I will not hide anything from you and I will let you know what is happening"

"Thanks" Remus said in a grateful voice. "I really appreciate..."

"You don't have to thank me" Harry interrupted Remus with an angry look on his face. The last thing he needed was for Remus to feel he was

unwanted and meddling in things he shouldn't be. "We are a family, remember?". Remus didn't say anything in reply but gave a sad sigh. The trouble with having a family in times of war was the prospect of losing them. He had been through such a scenario once before and now he was in such a scenario for the second time. Hopefully this second war was going to be the last one.

"Anything else then?" Harry asked uncertainly after over a minute of silence had passed between them.

"No" Remus said with a slight smile.

"See you later then" Harry said and started to leave when Remus spoke once again.

"I had a chat with Dumbledore the other day". Harry stopped and turned round to face Remus. Remus had had many a chat with the headmaster in the past too but he never mentioned them. Since he was mentioning this one, Harry concluded that it must have been a very important discussion.

"What did he say?" Harry asked, albeit with a great deal of curiosity.

"He talked about a lot of things...quite unlike himself" Remus said. "He mainly talked about you"

"Me?" Harry's eyebrows curved in a frown.

"Yes" Remus said with a thoughtful look on his face. "He was especially worried about you and how you were dealing with everything"

"I am fine" Harry said in a strange sort of voice.

"I know" Remus replied in an almost similar voice. "But the headmaster does not think so"

"Did he say that?" Harry asked, his normal voice not regained yet.

"No..." Remus replied. "But that's the conclusion I came too. He said we have to be less emotional now because a lot of unwanted things are going

to happen in the near future"

"He can't expect people to be less emotional about their families, can he?"

Harry sounded irritated.

"I don't know" Remus said with a shrug. "But in some ways he is right"

"What do you mean?" Harry asked, his eyes narrowed as he looked at Remus.

"I think we should move on..." Remus said in a very sad voice. "...they would have wanted..."

"And what about what we want?" Harry asked, his anger getting the better of him. "What - about - what - I - want?". Harry's almost shouted at Remus who looked slightly taken aback at this.

"I didn't mean..." Remus began but wasn't allowed to finish his sentence.

"I don't care what you meant" Harry said in a high-pitched voice. "I cannot let go of the past memories". With that, Harry turned on his heels and proceeded towards the door leading to the fourth compartment. Just as he was about to walk through, he stopped and turned back.

"And in case anyone forgets..." Harry said. "...it's not the fact that I cannot let go of the past...it's just that I will not let go of Tonks and Dobby from my life". Remus looked on guiltily as a seething Harry left the room.

&&&&

"Why are you sitting all alone here?" Soha asked when she saw Cho sitting in the Ravenclaw common room all by herself. The other's had gone to have their lunch and it was uncommon for anyone to stay behind. Soha had got delayed because she had been very busy reading up the potions which she was brewing but there was no reason why Cho might have stayed behind.

"I just don't feel like eating" Cho replied casually but there was no

mistaking the sadness in her voice. Her senses on alert, Soha sat down next to Cho with a concerned look on her face.

"What is the matter Cho?" Soha asked.

"Nothing" Cho said. As if to prove her point, she looked around at Soha and smiled at her.

"Hmmm..." Soha said as she saw Cho smile. "That's a good one...but you don't fool me". At this Cho looked slightly offended but soon her shoulders drooped and her expressions returned to being sad once again.

"I think I have been at Hogwarts long enough to be trusted" Soha said.

"But for some reason, many people think I am not worth talking to"

"NO!" Cho exclaimed, her eyes wide in alarm. She knew that in a way Soha was right. Many of the girls had still not been able to accept Soha into their midst but that kind of feeling was not present in the D.A. at least. The main reason why many girls did not like Soha was the fact that she was very pretty but seemed quite oblivious to the fact that many guys at Hogwarts kept trying to impress her instead of others. Most of the girls thought that Soha only acted as if she did not know anything but many people in the D.A. knew that Soha really didn't notice these things much. When she was told that some guy was looking at her or was interested in her then she would just dismiss it with some other explanation. Being Soha at Hogwarts was very tough unless someone counted Harry, Fleur and a few other people.

"Well..." Soha looked at Cho for a second before she gave a shrug and rose from her seat. "I think I should be going now. I have to learn fast as to when I am not wanted"

"It's nothing like that" Cho said in an angry voice as she pulled Soha down on the seat beside her. Ignoring the 'ouch' coming from Soha, she continued angrily. "Have I ever done anything to make you feel

unwanted?"

"You are doing so now" Soha replied in her defense.

"Sorry if I..." Cho looked lost for words. She didn't know what to say to Soha or how to explain that she just wanted to be alone with her thoughts for some time. However, Cho thought, maybe having someone like Soha beside her at this moment was all for the best.

"It's ok" Soha said as she understood that Cho was in some emotional distress which was making her act differently. "I think you need some time alone. We can talk later when..."

"Maybe we can talk now?" Cho interrupted Soha. "I think it is best if I talked to someone". At this, Soha smiled warmly at Cho.

"If I can be of any help then I will be really happy" Soha said. "What's bothering you Cho?"

"Well..." Cho looked a bit awkwardly at Soha before speaking. "...it's just the way others are behaving nowadays"

"What do you mean?" Soha asked curiously. What was wrong with other people's behaviors?

"You see...how Ron is so suspicious all the time" Cho replied. "The way Neville gets angry at the D.A. meetings and how he too is now saying that we need to do something now. In fact..." Cho paused for a moment.

"...in fact he was one of those who said that protecting Hogwarts was our first priority"

"I know" Soha replied, her voice sharing the same concern as that of Cho. The behavior of Neville was affecting that of a lot of the others too. What most people did not know was the background of Neville's parent's fate and hence they were unable to understand the reason for Neville's extreme reactions nowadays. Still, it was very disturbing indeed.

"There is a reason to everything I guess" Cho continued slowly. "Ron..."

Neville...I guess they are going through terrible times in their personal lives"

"I guess so" Soha agreed. "I can understand about Ron but Neville?"

"He has changed a lot in these past few days, hasn't he?" Cho looked at Soha questioningly. "I mean, you have seen him for some time now... hasn't he changed a lot?"

"Hmmm..." Soha looked thoughtful. "Five months is not a long time to see a lot of change but yes...I think he has changed somewhat since the starting of this year"

"Harry changed a lot in two months" Cho said after a pause of a few seconds.

"I always keep hearing these things about how much he has changed" Soha said. "Has he really changed a lot?"

"If you don't see Harry Potter going around with Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, then there is something seriously wrong there" Cho replied. "And..." Cho added in a concerned voice. "...the person who is wrong here is Harry"

"I don't think it is a matter of right or wrong" Soha replied. "I think it is a matter of personal decisions"

"Maybe" Cho gave a shrug of her shoulders. "By the way..." she suddenly turned around to face Soha. "...is he very sad nowadays?". Soha looked bewildered for a moment as she wondered why everyone always had to ask her this question.

"Why do you ask?" Soha queried, knowing the answer all too well.

"Well..." Cho said. "You are the only one to whom he chats from time to time and..."

"Ok...ok...no need to say anything more...the same explanation again"

Soha said in a desperate voice. She had almost surrendered herself to the

fate of answering this question throughout her life if needed. However, on seeing Cho's mystified look, she said "Nothing of importance... everyone asks me the same question and say that I am the only one who Harry talks to"

"I see" Cho said as she understood the reason behind the slightly tired look on Soha's face. By the look of it, she had gone through this ordeal a lot of times.

"Anyway...Harry is..." Soha's voice trailed off as she tried to visualize Harry's face. Was it sadness that she was seeing on his face nowadays or was it something else? Was it anger or was it hope? Was he doing things for himself or was he doing everything to achieve some unknown target?

"What happened?" Cho put her hand ever so lightly on Soha's shoulder who jumped away in fright.

"Sorry..." Soha said, taking a huge gasp of air. "I was thinking of something and you suddenly...I got frightened..."

"I didn't mean it" Cho said apologetically.

"No...no..." Soha shook her head vigorously. "It's not your fault or anything"

"You were saying something" Cho prompted Soha.

"Yeah..." Soha replied. "It's just that I don't know what Harry is like nowadays. He is not sad...he is not angry...there is something else"

"What do you mean?" Cho asked.

"Well...I have seen him closely when he was sad..." Soha said. At Cho's questioning glance, she explained further. "...you know, the time when he started staying away from Ron and Hermione. I saw the look in his eyes when he saw them together. It was almost as if he wanted to go up to them and talk to them but couldn't do so. The look of sadness in his eyes in those times was..." Soha just threw up her hands in the air as she

found herself lost for words to explain her emotions.

"I have seen him angry too" Soha continued after a few more seconds.

"Since the dawn of this year, I have talked to him only a couple of times and in those times I had a distinct feeling that his mind was somewhere else"

"Somewhere else?" Cho looked on even more curiously.

"Yes..." Soha said. "It's almost as if he didn't want to be disturbed...as if he wanted to be all alone with his thoughts..."

"Thoughts of?" Cho queried again.

"I don't know" Soha replied. "I mean, there are a few rumors about him going on..."

"The auror girl thing?" Cho said before continuing. "Is it true?"

"How would I know?" Soha looked angrily at Cho. However her anger subsided as she understood that Cho only wanted to know what was wrong with her friend and not what was wrong with the Boy-Who-Lived.

"I don't know" Soha looked very uncomfortable as she said this. "But it looks like there is a lot on his mind"

"So maybe the rumors are true" Cho said in a slightly defeated voice.

Somewhere deep down she still longed for Harry but she knew that she had been wrong to turn down the offer when it had been made. She just didn't turn it down, she had even gone on to rub a lot of salt on it too. It was a kind of balancing out things evenly.

"I don't know" Soha repeated again. "All I know is that he is very lonely right now"

"I can understand" Cho said in a low voice. A feeling of depression threatened to take over Cho's feelings but she somehow kept herself under control.

"Do you like him?"

"WHAT!" Cho sat bolt upright in her seat at hearing this sudden question from Soha.

"I don't mean to offend you..." Soha said in an apprehensive manner. "... but I have seen both of you quite a lot in the last few months and..." Soha didn't know how to finish the sentence and hence didn't continue. How could she say that she had seen many a feeling in Cho's eyes whenever she had set her sights on Harry?

Cho looked livid for a few moments at being asked this question so bluntly but decided that there was no point in hiding the obvious truth. After all, Soha did have a good look at her since they were both in the same house.

"We...we..." Cho stuttered slightly as she broke the uneasy silence. "... have a history" the last three words came out in a hurry. It seemed as if she was almost relieved to have been able to say it.

"Ok" Soha said awkwardly. She knew she hadn't done the brightest thing by saying what she had just done but she knew it could not be undone now.

"I think I will be going now". Without saying anything more Cho walked out of the Ravenclaw common room.

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"Pleath thave me". Harry looked at the barely 3 year old boy who had appeared out of nowhere and was now clinging on to his left leg as if that was all he needed. "Hally Pottal...pleath thave me"

"Where are you Ted?" a woman's voice called out from somewhere near the Great Hall. Unknowingly, Harry had wandered just too close to the Great Hall where some families were still staying until their homes at Godric's Hollow had been constructed completely.

"There you are" the relieved voice of Ted's mother made Harry took away

Harry's attention from the kid who was looking at him in wonder. Harry did not know how such a little kid could have recognized him but then he concluded that the kid might have seen him before also or had noticed the elders pointing towards him or something...

"Thank god you are ok" the woman continued speaking as she scurried to pick up her son. "I am sorry Sir if he was a trouble..." the woman shifted her gaze towards Harry as she literally tore her son away from him. "He must have..." at this point the flow of words suddenly stopped. The woman's eyes bulged as she recognized the person standing in front of her and she looked enthralled. Harry groaned inwardly as he realized that he was just going to be hero-worshipped once again when...

"GET AWAY FROM MY CHILD!" the woman screeched at the top of her lungs taking Harry completely by surprise.

"I...I...am..." Harry tried to say something in response but found himself tongue tied. He had not expected this kind of a response. "...sorry" Harry finally managed to complete the sentence. However, thinking quickly, he found no reason as to why he had just apologized. What did he say "sorry" for?

"Just stay away from him" the woman said in a hissing voice before she turned around and started dragging her son back to their temporary residence.

"Ma!" the child started wailing at the pain he felt.

"Please be careful" Harry said instinctively as he almost felt the pain of the boy. After all, his first 11 years had been a tale of pain and suffering.

"What did you say?" the woman turned round so fast that Harry was slightly shocked again. His feeling was replaced by one of curiosity as he saw the woman in front of him fuming in anger.

"I just asked you to be a little more careful" Harry replied in a calm tone.

He wasn't going to stammer this time.

"And who asked you to say anything in the first place?" the woman slowly started walking towards Harry as she said this. Harry didn't say anything in reply but his mind was working furiously. Why was this woman so angry with him? Rather, why did she seem to almost hate him?

"C'mon boy...tell me who told you to interfere between me and my child?" the woman seemed to be losing her patience slightly. Harry, on the other hand, started to wonder how long it had been since he had been addressed as a "boy". Maybe, Harry thought, this woman was his Uncle Vernon under the polyjuice!

"What's wrong here?"

"What is going on?". Quite a number of voices seemed to have sprung up from nowhere. Looking behind the woman's back, Harry saw a group of people suddenly coming towards them through the narrow corridor.

Leading the way was none other than Ted, the kid who must have run from his mother's clutches when she had turned around to face Harry.

"The'l they aal...the'l they aal..." Ted was running as fast as his tiny legs could permit and kept pointing at his mother and Harry. As the faces of the people coming towards them became prominent, Harry saw a trace of grave concern on the faces of many people. The look on their faces took a turn for the worse when their eyes rested on Harry's face.

"Why is ma angry?" Ted asked innocently. It was evident he was still learning to speak every word correctly at this young age.

"Ma is not angry at you dear" Harry heard one of the ladies in the group saying. It could mean only one thing...the lady in front of Harry was angry at him.

"Why are you not answering me..." Ted's mother asked before adding. "...

the Boy-Who-Lived".

Harry looked closely at the woman without answering. It seemed that the woman was angry at the Boy-Who-Lived. Why...to that Harry had no answer.

"I don't think I have harmed him in any way ma'am" Harry replied as the other people came to a stop behind the woman. "So there was no reason for you to scream at me at first even though your reasons might be different from the one's I know of"

"Oh yes..." the woman replied. "...they are very different than anything you can even think of Mr. Potter. But..." the woman raised a finger as to warn Harry of something. "...don't ever dare to come near my son"

"Mary..." one of the ladies laid a hand on the woman's shoulders which was rudely thrown off.

"Don't tell me it isn't his fault...just don't!" the woman replied. "And don't you dare speak for him"

"Mary...it really isn't..." another man started to speak but was rudely stopped too.

"It is!" Mary screamed. "He is the reason behind all this and yet...yet..."

"Is Ma angry with Hally Pottal?" this innocent question from Ted broke the tense silence which had befallen the whole of the group.

"Yes". Oddly, it was Harry who replied instead of any of the others.

Kneeling so that he could be on the kid's level, Harry continued "Ma is angry because Harry Potter is a bad man". Ted's mother looked on in an astonished manner as she heard Harry say this.

"Hally Pottal is not bad" Ted shook his head vigorously in disagreement.

How can 'Hally Pottal', his hero, be bad?

"He is bad" his mother agreed as she took her son by his hand and started walking away. "And you stay away from him"

"No!" Ted somehow managed to get out of his mother's grip and ran over to Harry who was still in a kneeled position. He gripped one of Harry's arms tightly...so tightly that Harry cringed in pain.

"You get back here right NOW" the last word was said in such a loud voice that Ted stumbled in fright. He had never seen his mother so angry and she had never shouted at him like that. Little tears started to form in his eyes but he still wouldn't let go of Harry.

"Ted..." Harry spoke in a whisper. "Go over to your Ma. She is very sad". Everyone could see Harry whispering something but only a very few could actually hear him.

"She iz nevel thidth angly" Ted said in a similar whisper which was followed by a sniff. "I am aflaid"

"Don't be afraid" Harry slowly patted the kid on his head. He saw Ted's mother looking at him in a peculiar manner as he did this. In the past five minutes or so, Harry had the distinct feeling that sometimes the lady in front of him hated him very much whereas at other times she seemed to look at him with a sort of regret in her eyes. It seemed like she was caught between her feelings and conscience over something.

"Go" Harry said as slowly unwrapped the kid's hands from around his arm. Giving a slight push to him, he slowly stood up...his eyes traveling from the kid to his mother. Ted looked uncertainly at Harry and then his mother. Then, all of a sudden, he seemed to decide that he would be better off with his mother and ran straight to her.

"Solly Ma" Ted mumbled in between his sniffing. He was now crying openly. His mother, seeing her son in such a state, could not hold back her tears either.

"I am sorry I screamed at you" she said as she took the hand of Ted. Tears were flowing down her face by now. "Let's go now". Slowly both of them

went out of Harry's view but not before Ted had sneaked a few glances at him.

"She's a bit emotional" a heavy voice suddenly shook Harry out of his thoughts.

"Wha..." Harry looked slightly confused.

"She's slightly emotional" the man repeated as many of the people who had gathered there started to leave except for a couple of persons.

"Does she hate me?" Harry couldn't quite stop himself from asking the question which was on his mind for the past five odd minutes. "I mean she does hate me but why?"

"She doesn't hate you" one of the women who had stayed behind clarified. "She's just confused over a lot of things"

"And with this war..." another man, much younger than the other two, chipped in. "...everyone is slightly stressed"

"She has something personal against me" Harry wondered aloud. He saw the two elders in front of him exchanging a quick glance before they seemingly came to a conclusion.

Finally the elderly man said in his deep voice. "Hopefully one day Mary's misconceptions will be driven away. She just has to realize that...you couldn't have done anything about it"

"About what?" Harry asked curiously. He had a temptation to use his legilimency skills on the man in front of him but resisted the urge. There was always a difference between what was easy and what was right.

"It's not ours to tell" the man said in an almost apologetic voice. "Good day Mr. Potter..." the man touched the tip of his hat as he said this. "We wish you win this war...for yourself...for everyone". With that, the three of them turned around and left, leaving a frowning Harry standing all alone, lost deep in thought.

&&&&

"What are you doing here Malfoy?"

"It's none of your business Chang" Malfoy said as Cho stopped him near the library. Cho had noticed Malfoy standing in a corner for a long time and looking at his watch frequently. Thinking that Malfoy was up to something, she decided it was best to confront him head on.

"I hope you know that you are answerable to the Hogwarts Peace Keeping Force"

"Yeah...yeah...the HPKF thing" Malfoy rolled his eyes as he said this.

"Couldn't you come up with a better name?"

"What are you doing here Malfoy?" Cho asked in a much sterner voice. "If you don't answer me then I will be forced to ask you to leave this place right now"

"On what basis Chang?" Malfoy asked in a sarcastic voice.

"On suspicion of trying to cause trouble" Cho replied. "I think that many people will believe me"

"Whatever" Malfoy said. "I am here to meet a friend of mine, ok?"

"Name?" Cho asked.

"Does it say that I have to say everyone's name too?" Malfoy asked, his voice showing his irritation.

"If asked, you are bound to" Cho replied before adding. "Remember what you did in Umbridge's time? What goes around comes back"

"I did what I did in past because I was foolish" Malfoy said.

"WHAT?" Cho almost shouted in shock. Draco Malfoy, the son of Lucius Malfoy, was saying that he had done something foolish!

"Yeah" Malfoy smiled cunningly when he registered Cho's shock. "I should have understood that Umbridge wouldn't last long enough. I should have played my cards better"

"You are sick Malfoy" Cho said in disgust.

"And you are still after Potter who doesn't care for you Chang" Malfoy said with a snicker.

"What t..." Cho seemed shocked for the second time. "How dare you say such a thing?"

"Everyone knows it Chang" Malfoy continued in his bossy voice. "It's in your eyes"

"And when did you start eyeing me Malfoy?" Cho said in an apparent effort to make Malfoy uncomfortable and, to her satisfaction, saw Malfoy's smile fade.

"Don't you dare talk to me like that" Malfoy said. Even as Cho started to open her mouth to say something, Malfoy said "I think my friend will not turn up anymore. I should be going". With that, Malfoy walked away before Cho had a chance to counter him.

"Is it that apparent?" Cho queried to herself. "Do I really like Harry in that manner? No...I can't do that...he doesn't like me" Cho reassured herself but couldn't stop her thoughts. It almost seemed as if two parts of her were speaking two different things. "Can you do it that easily? Can you forget him just like that?"

"I rejected him when he approached me...I behaved badly with him last year"

"Yes...but everyone makes mistakes" a second voice spoke up from inside her. "Don't you think that you should at least make an attempt?"

"No" a firm voice replied. "I can't...he has moved on...I should move on too".

Cho nodded her head as she agreed with it.

"It won't be that easy Cho, it won't be that easy" the other voice gave it's final warning.

&&&&

"What in heavens name are you doing in there?" Harry shouted from his

bed in the trunk. He had been reading one of the books he had got from the Black family vault when noises had started in Remus's room.

"Getting ready" came the short reply.

"Why?" Harry asked causally. Looking at his watch he queried again.

"Another Order meeting?"

"No". The tone of Remus's reply didn't go down too well with Harry. He waited for a few seconds to see if Remus would clarify things a bit more or not but, on finding no other comments coming from him, Harry got up from his bed and went over to Remus's room.

"What are you doing?" Harry asked curiously as he saw the mess the room was in. All kinds of stuff were lying around of which he could make neither head nor tail. Remus was getting ready alright but if he had not known better, it would have seemed that he was getting ready for some kind of war.

"Packing" Remus replied without looking up at Harry. He quickly opened a book, checked its contents and put it in a heap near one of the bags.

Both the bags on the bed were empty but loads of stuff was dumped in front of them. Harry assumed that Remus was short listing things before he started his packing.

"I can see that" Harry replied slowly as he scrutinized the things on the bed. "But where are you going? You never start packing all of a sudden like this"

"It's an emergency" Remus said as he picked up a white vial filled with brownish liquid in it. He set it down lightly near a few other vials and started looking for something else. Harry stepped forward and picked up a piece of parchment which was lying on top of a table. It was a list of names.

"Who are these people?" Harry asked curiously. He saw Remus cast one

glance at the parchment before he turned away.

"C'mon" Harry said. "Who are these people?"

"Werewolves" came the reply in a very un-Remus voice. The voice had something which Harry had seldom heard before whenever Remus talked - fear.

"Werewolves?" Harry somehow felt the fear in Remus's voice casting its shadow on himself too. Why would Remus be carrying a list of werewolves? Why...unless...

"I have to meet them" Remus looked straight into Harry's eyes for the first time since Harry had entered the room. Harry could see a hint of the fear he had heard in Remus's voice present in his eyes too. But, apart from that, there was an expression of steely determination in them. At that moment Harry knew there was something gravely wrong.

"Would you please care to clarify this whole thing to me?" Harry asked in a quite voice. The silence in the room was deafening...as if it was the calm before the storm. At long last Remus spoke up.

"There have been an unprecedented number of werewolf bitings in the past couple of days" Remus said in a grave voice. "It seems Voldemort is giving the werewolves a free reign in the country side...as if to tell them that this is what they will get when he is able to rule the whole of England"

"I see" Harry said but didn't add anything extra. He needed to know exactly what was going to happen.

"That..." Remus pointed to the list in Harry's hand. "...that has the names of some werewolves...some who...who...". It seemed to Harry as if Remus was having to endure a lot of mental pain in trying to explain the names.

"Who?" Harry prompted.

Taking a deep sigh, Remus continued. "They are the worst of us. There isn't a single thing which those on that list haven't done. The one on the top..." a look of hatred could be clearly seen in Remus's voice "...is the one who bit me...made me who I am...and I have to meet that...that filthy...". Remus bit his lower lip in anger and frustration as Harry understood the true feelings of his godfather. On one hand Remus was angry at having to meet the man who had doomed his life forever...Harry could bet that he even wanted to kill him if possible but he couldn't do that. However, on the other hand, he would have to talk politely with him if required. Meeting such an old foe was both painful plus it involved reliving one's past. Reliving the past was a terrible thing when it involved all the things Remus had to endure as a child.

"Anyway..." Remus said after gaining his composure. "...that's about it I guess. I have to meet these people and somehow persuade them not to join Voldemort"

"I see" Harry replied gravely and, stepping forward, replaced the list in its original place. Without saying anything, he stepped out of the room and headed towards the dining area.

Remus stood quite for a second as he watched Harry leave without saying anything. He knew that Harry was concerned about him and was worried. However, he had to finish his packing first. Quickly finishing the task in another fifteen minutes, he came out of his room to find Harry sitting at his normal place in the dining table and staring blankly at the chair opposite to him. Remus went up to his chair and quietly sat down.

"Don't worry..." Remus said. "I'll be..."

"Don't you tell me that" Harry said in a sharp voice. "Don't you tell me you will be fine...don't tell me that you will return...don't!"

"Harry..." Remus said in a fatherly tone. "You know this has to be done,

don't you? You know I have to go"

"And you know that you are the last one of my family..." Harry looked at Remus with tears in his eyes. "...don't you? Tell me Remus Lupin...DON'T YOU KNOW THAT?". Harry banged his fist down on the table at this. Even though Remus had not expected such a reaction, he knew he had to somehow pacify Harry.

"Your friends are there Harry" Remus said in a calm voice. "They consider you as family. You should do the same if not more"

"Why?" Harry leaned forward as this question escaped his mouth. "Why should I keep thinking of others as my family when I have always ended up being the person others died for? Why should I let them near me when I am sure they will die for it? Why should I bear the pain when one of them leaves my side to fight...or to talk to others to maintain peace? Why Remus...why?" Harry finished his sentence in a desperate tone. For a moment he seemed like a lost kid to Remus...one who was still searching for answers...one who wanted to wake up one day and find that there was no war going on...one who would be able to embrace the others without having to fear for their lives.

"Because..." Remus paused to let Harry calm down before continuing. "...because that is the way life is Harry. You have a destiny to fulfill and it is going to cost you something. If you want to give millions of people a chance to live happily then you will have to..." Remus gulped at the thought of what he was going to say. "...be ready to lose a few on your side. It is a trade off which cannot..."

"I - don't - want - to - trade" Harry almost shouted at Remus. "We are talking about human lives and not some shop where we can trade old things for new"

"I understand Harry" Remus knew this was going to be another tough

conversation but he couldn't blame Harry entirely. Here was a boy who had lost three very close persons to him in the last six months and was right now about to see another of his 'relatives' go off on a very dangerous mission. Who wouldn't be upset at such a prospect?

"You people..." Harry gave a sad smile as he seemed to have suddenly realized that he just couldn't fight with destiny. "...you guys don't understand anything. You don't! I don't blame you"

"We try" Remus said honestly. "We cannot live your life for you but we do try to understand the problems you are having"

"Anyway..." Harry suddenly became serious. "So when are you leaving?"

"In an hour" Remus replied a bit timidly as he didn't quite know how he should interpret Harry's words. "You are not mad at me, are you?"

"No" Harry waved off Remus's remark. "You are doing your duty...I am doing mine...it's part of the job" Harry's voice betrayed the sadness he was feeling. "It...it just gets a bit tough sometimes"

"It surely does" Remus agreed.

"You sure you will be ok?" Harry asked in a concerned voice.

"Yes" came the reply.

"You are not going there alone, are you?" Harry asked a bit suspiciously even though he knew Remus was not the type to do such things unless it was an absolute necessity.

"No" Remus replied with a smile. "I have two other people traveling with me and we won't be meeting more than three werewolves at a time"

"Be careful, ok?" Harry couldn't stop worrying about Remus. God forbid if something happened to Remus.

"Don't worry...nothing will go wrong" Remus replied before adding. "And if anything goes wrong then I can always take on some of them on my own"

"Yeah" Harry said with a smile. "But be careful...you might break that old back of yours"

"Hey...I am not old!" Remus said in mock anger.

"You are" Harry replied with a laugh. He was going to enjoy this one hour with Remus to the maximum limit possible!

&&&&

"Hello Harry Potter"

"Oh...hello Professor Firenze" Harry said as he saw the centaur coming towards him. It had been a long time since they had last talked but somehow, Harry always had the feeling that Firenze knew where he should be at a particular time. Maybe centaurs could really tell the future.

"How are you doing Harry Potter?" Firenze asked in a polite manner.

"Fine..." Harry replied before adding. "...at least I think so"

"Everyone likes to think they are fine but their destinies decide their lives". Harry couldn't help but agree with Firenze. "Your friend is going on a dangerous task...his well being will be decided by the decisions he makes on the day of the moon"

"What?" Harry asked in a slightly dazed voice. He replayed the words in his mind to understand what could be the meaning of Firenze's words and, to his utter surprise, he found this message much more simple than the others he had heard before.

"Where are you coming from Harry Potter?" Firenze asked again and slowly started walking towards his office.

"I had just gone to see off my friend...in Dumbledore's office" Harry hesitated for a single moment before thinking that it would be better if he told the truth. After all, Dumbledore had once said that centaur's distrusted the wizarding community and he didn't want to start lying to

Firenze.

"He goes for peace which is what we need..." Firenze said as he cast a glance out of the window at the sky. "...but which we are unlikely to get"

"Why do you say that?" Harry asked as he glanced out of the window too as if he could somehow "see" what Firenze was seeing.

"Some will sway" Firenze continued speaking as if he hadn't heard what Harry had just asked. "But many humans tend to believe that wealth is the solution to everything. Your friend will have a hard time convincing them"

"I know" Harry nodded his head in agreement.

"Harry Potter" Firenze suddenly stopped in his tracks and turned to face the young man.

"Yes Professor?"

"I have a favor to ask you". For a fleeting second Harry thought he had seen a trace of shame on Firenze's face...almost as if asking for a favor from a wizard was below him. But the emotion was gone the very next instant. Harry guessed that years of prejudice, however little it might have been, took a little time to go away.

"Please go on Professor" Harry replied as politely as possible. "It will be my honor to be able to help you"

"I want you to talk with the other centaurs present in the jungle" Firenze said in a slower voice. "They need to leave aside their bias and assist Albus Dumbledore and you in this battle". Harry looked very thoughtful as he tried to imagine the reaction of the centaurs at such a suggestion from a wizard. It didn't seem such a good idea to him.

"Will they listen to me?" Harry asked in an apprehensive voice. "I mean, they are much wiser than me and know..."

"They might be wiser in many ways but..." Firenze paused slightly as he

seemed to weigh his words. "...I don't think they are doing the right thing now"

"I am not the one to judge right or wrong" Harry said as diplomatically as possible. "What I am thinking is whether I should talk to them or not.

Don't you think they will listen to you more than me?"

"No" Firenze replied. "They will listen to only Dumbledore and you. And now..." Firenze looked outside at the current celestial formation before continuing. "...now they will listen to you more than even Dumbledore"

Harry thought for a few seconds as to what he should do. He knew that Firenze was an outcast now and the centaurs would never listen to him. He also knew that if Firenze had asked Harry to talk to the centaurs then there must be a reason behind it. He was not the one to act whimsically. The only thing he didn't know was whether the stars could really tell the centaurs of the prophecy. Whether the centaurs would really give value to his words...

"Ok" Harry said as he came to the conclusion that he had to give it a try. After all, they needed as many allies as possible.

"Thank you Harry Potter" Firenze said when he heard Harry's reply. With a last nod at Harry's direction, he strode off towards his quarters in the castle with a hope that maybe Harry could make his fellow centaurs walk down the path which he had taken long ago.

&&&&

"How are you doing Angelina?" Katie Bell asked her friend who had taken refuge in Hogwarts along with her parents.

"I am fine I guess" Angelina said as she shuffled a few things to make room for Katie to enter the tent.

"Oh well...it's getting worse by the day" Katie said. "I don't know when all of this will end"

"Is there anyone named Angelina Johnson here?"

"Alicia!" Angelina jumped up and rushed outside to meet the last of the trio of the famous chasers of Gryffindor. Both of them screamed at the sight of the other and hugged each other tightly. Katie stood back looking at the scene unfolding in front of her.

"Katie!" Alicia exclaimed at the sight of the most controlled of the three friends. "C'mon"

"Yeah...yeah" Katie rolled her eyes and hugged Alicia. Then all three of them went inside Angelina's tent.

"So...when did you get here?" Katie asked Alicia. "Angelina got here yesterday"

"I got here about 20 minutes back" Alicia informed the others. "The last couple of nights had been horrible"

"Every night nowadays is horrible" Angelina said.

"Yeah" echoed Katie. "So many people still pouring in. I heard people are settling down near Hogsmeade too"

"You heard right" Alicia said. "Lots of people are down there"

"But what is going to be the solution of all this?" Angelina queried. "How long will this last? It's odd you know. It's like a volcano suddenly erupted and threw everything haywire"

"Yeah" Alicia agreed. "This new year began very badly".

"Everything is said to have started from here it is said" Katie told her friends.

"Here?" Alicia and Angelina chorused. "Hogwarts?"

"Yup" Katie replied and informed them about the rumors surrounding Harry, a female auror, Ginny and Snape. After listening to her complete narration, the others seemed shocked.

"Don't tell me that..." Angelina started to speak but couldn't finish her

sentence. She just kept shaking her head every now and then.

"Harry again?" Alicia asked in a pitiful voice. "Oh god...doesn't he get a break from all this?"

"It doesn't seem so" Katie said. "I wonder if You-Know-Who will come for him or not"

"He will" Alicia said emphatically. "May my words be wrong but my gut feeling tells me You-Know-Who will come for him sooner rather than later"

"He had even started to open up a bit more recently" Katie said. Looking at the puzzled features of her two friends, she explained how Harry had become an altogether different person from the starting of his sixth year.

"And he had even wished us all a Merry Christmas..." Katie continued.

"...had bought gifts for Ron...you see...he was coming back in a way"

"And then all this happens" Alicia said in frustration. She couldn't believe that the boy who was like a kid brother to her had changed so much.

"And with the talks last year about the department of ministries thing..."

Angelina finally seemed to have found her voice. "...damn!" was the only way she could express her emotions.

"Yeah..." Katie agreed. "Damn!"

&&&&

Remus walked down the path and remembered the last time when he had visited this place. It had been much cleaner at that time and the bushes on either side had been trimmed nicely. Now it seemed as if the bushes and the trees had not been tended to in a long, long time. The house in front of him also seemed to be a shadow of what it had been in the past. Once it had been the pride of the whole of Magical Yorkshire but now it looked isolated from the whole world. The gloom surrounding the house and its surroundings was enough to keep strangers and kids away from

that place. Remus peered closely at the house to see if he could detect any movement or signs of life but then thought it would be best to just go up and knock. After all, life had not been the same ever since the first born of the Wallace's had been bitten by a werewolf.

"Who's there?" a gruff voice asked after Remus had knocked for the third time.

"Remus" Remus replied.

"Remus?" the voice queried. "I don't know any Remus"

"I think you do know me Frank. I was the other one at Hogwarts when you left in the second year" Remus replied from outside. The voice opposite to him had come much closer and Remus could only guess that Frank was now almost standing on the other side of the door.

"Lupin?" the voice asked again.

"The same old one" Remus replied in a cheerful voice. The door in front of him was instantly flung open and a man in his late thirties came out. He looked at Remus for a few seconds before hugging him tightly.

"It's been a long time Lupin" Frank said as he pulled away.

"Yes" Remus agreed. "It's been a really long time". Frank then quickly cast a glance all around before pulling in Remus and closing the door. It was quite apparent that he feared something. Remus could only guess as to what that could be.

"So..." Frank said as he led the way to the dining room which seemed to have lost almost all of its past glamour. "...how's it going for you?"

"Just the same" Remus replied. "The same kind of behaviors everywhere except for Hogwarts"

"I know that" Frank said in a sad voice. "If only my dad had not been so stubborn then maybe I could have finished my graduation from Hogwarts too"

"Dumbledore still remembers you" Remus said.

"He does?" Frank asked in astonishment before his lips spread in a smile.

"Trust Dumbledore to remember everything in this world"

"Not everything..." Remus said. "...but the important things at least"

"What does he say about me?" Frank asked in a very curious manner.

Remus knew that this piece of information was very precious to Frank who had lived almost isolated for the past twenty odd years.

"That how you would have made one of the greatest wizards ever" Remus replied at which Frank burst out laughing.

"He sure has a sense of humor" Frank said with reference to Dumbledore.

"You know the truth as well as him" Remus said in a serious tone.

"Anyway, that's a thing of the past now and, from what I have heard, you have developed some very good spells in the past decade"

"Nothing important" Frank replied modestly not preferring to mention that a couple of his spells were taught in advanced auror training. "It's just a hobby. By the way, what brings you here after so long?" Frank asked. "You seemed to have caused quite a stir a few years back when you taught at Hogwarts"

"Yeah..." Remus said thinking of Harry's third year. "It had been one hell of a year. As to what brings me here..." Remus adjusted himself in his seat as he said this. "...what happened yesterday and the day before was not nice"

"Yeah...I know that" Frank said in an angry tone. "I hate those guys. You know, if I had my way then I would slowly boil them in silver"

"Frank!"

"Sorry..." Frank said. "Just like the old days, huh? I used to get angry and you used to reprimand me"

"Because I am older than you" Remus said.

"Yes" Frank replied in a sarcastic voice. "Just two months older.

Whatever...that is not the point here. Tell me, what can I do for you?"

"You are still in touch with the other guys?" Remus queried.

"Yes" Frank replied. "They are the only people who would come here"

"I see" Remus said. "How many are with Voldemort?"

"Most of them I think" Frank replied. "He gave an open invitation to everyone on the last couple of days"

"That's what we had guessed too" Remus said thoughtfully. So Dumbledore's assumption had been true after all. Voldemort had thrown the dice and now had quite a few greedy followers it would seem.

"What are you thinking?" Frank asked.

"I have a proposal for all of them" Remus began but was promptly interrupted by Frank.

"Not another one Remus" Frank said. "I have heard about your proposals to different werewolves and none have materialized till date"

"I know" Remus said. "But this time it is different. This time even Fudge has signed the papers and has agreed with Dumbledore. Dumbledore has persuaded Fudge at long last". Remus finished thinking how Harry had got Fudge to sign the papers disguised as Simon Sinatras.

"It can't be true" Frank said in an almost disbelieving voice.

"You can see the parchments here". Remus took out a bundle of parchments. His hands shaking, Frank picked up the parchments and started skimming through them. With every second his eyes grew larger.

"You know what this means?" Frank said as he leapt in joy. "Werewolves are getting recognitions as magical creatures. I will be able to get a job".

Remus couldn't help but smile. He had reacted similarly when he had seen the signed papers. "We will be able to get the wolfsbane at cheap rates. Yipee!" Frank did a dance around the table. His joy knew no

bounds at the moment and it was only when Remus cleared his throat that he stopped.

"We have to convey this to everyone" Remus said. "Hopefully they will..."

"I don't know" Frank said as he slumped down in his chair, more out of exhaustion than anything else.

"Don't know?" Remus sounded confused.

"Remus...they have already pledged their alliance" Frank explained. "And you know what happens if anyone breaks that?"

"We have Dumbledore on our side" Remus said. "Surely everyone knows that Voldemort wouldn't dare to attack him"

"We all know that but the thing is that this proposal has come two days later than the first biting spree" Frank said. "If it had come a little bit earlier...two days earlier..."

"Don't tell me that no one will care for this proposal" Remus said.

"Frank...you have the most connections...you have to fix up something"

"It is going to be hard" Frank said pensively. "There are a few who still swear by Dumbledore's name but..."

"Do whatever you can" Remus said. "We have to act as fast as we can"

&&&&

"Please meet me at my office at 10 am tomorrow". Harry went over the note which he had received from Dumbledore for the umpteenth time and wondered why Dumbledore wanted to meet him. If anything had happened to Remus then he would have called Harry immediately. This was a relief in a way for Harry who was worrying a lot over the past couple of days regarding Remus's safety. He could only hope that everything would go well with Remus.

Harry looked at his watch once again and saw it was 9:56 AM. Thinking that he had just enough time to make it to the headmaster's office, he

quickly got out of the trunk and into his dormitory. With the castle so full nowadays, he couldn't risk portkeying right in front of the gargoyle or anywhere else for that matter. He went down the staircase and proceeded out of the common room which had fallen silent at his entrance. On his way to Dumbledore's office, Harry noticed several empty portraits.

"Must have sent them to do some spying" Harry thought to himself as he turned the last corner which led to his destination. The gargoyle leapt aside when Harry said the password and Harry stepped onto the spiraling staircase.

"Right on time" Harry grinned slightly as he saw that only 20 seconds were left for the clock to strike 10. He hopped off the staircase at the top and knocked on the door once but got no reply.

"Strange" Harry thought to himself as he stood outside the door. At other times, Dumbledore would call him inside even before he knocked but today he didn't even answer to the first knock. Thinking this was really strange, Harry knocked again with the same result. Harry stood outside Dumbledore's office with a puzzled look on his face. It just wasn't like Dumbledore to forget a meeting with someone, that too when he had asked for the meeting in the first place.

"Professor" Harry called out but to no avail. He turned around in a disgruntled mood when something in the back of his mind asked him to try the door once. Taking the advice, he turned the door knob to find that it was open!

"What the..." Harry looked more astonished than ever. Why would Dumbledore leave his office in this manner? He knew that the headmaster trusted his staff members a lot but then again Snape had taken full advantage of that trust. The headmaster just wouldn't change, Harry thought to himself as he strode inside.

"Hi Fawkes" Harry said when he saw the phoenix. The bird instantly flew over and settled down on Harry's shoulder who instinctively started running his hands through the bird's feathers.

"You like that, don't you?" Harry asked curiously and was pleasantly surprised at the acknowledging trill from the phoenix. He couldn't help but smile at the intelligent phoenix.

"Well...I think I will wait here for the headmaster to come back" Harry said to no one in particular as he closed the door and sat down. Fawkes trilled his approval at this. As Harry was sitting down, he noticed a book open on the headmaster's table. It was pointed towards the headmaster's chair which could only mean that Dumbledore was reading it before he left or went out.

His curiosity peaked; Harry went around the table and glanced on the open page in front of him. The page in front of him had the heading "Goblet of Fire: The Truth". Harry quickly started reading the contents in front of him and was astonished to learn about some of the powers of the goblet of fire. More astonishing was a footnote made by the author which read "The Power of Hogwarts exists in the person who had last wielded it and not in the objects only".

"Oh - my - god" Harry said as he tried to apprehend all the information in front of him. "Damn it...why couldn't Dumbledore lend me this book for a day!" he thought. Without thinking too much, Harry quickly turned the page and started to go over the other information present. The subsequent pages did not mention anything important about the Power of Hogwarts but they contained information regarding some dark spells and their effects. He even saw the name of the spell which had caused Tonks' death and read the contents with great difficulty. Just reading the correct incantation itself was an ordeal for him as it reminded him of the

incidents of that night. But hours of meditation had enabled him to get a grip on himself and he continued to go over some soul extraction spells ("this was how dementors extract the souls of its victims") to legilimency spells which he didn't know could exist.

Harry, not finding this information too useful, quickly turned a few more pages before he froze. The heading read "A complete history of the Power of Hogwarts". Without caring to check his watch, he quickly started reading it as fast as possible. He didn't try to understand everything at that moment since he could go through it in detail during meditation. Quickly savoring as much information as he could, he turned the pages and moved on to the next sections. At long last, he was finally able to finish it.

"Whoa!" Harry said to himself as he turned the pages to the one which had been originally open. After all, he didn't want Dumbledore to know that he had gone through some sections of this book. Harry then slowly walked around the table and started to think about the things he had just read. The Power of Hogwarts had been setup by Godric Gryffindor not only to protect Hogwarts from Salazar Slytherin but also gave its wielders the option to...

"Oh...Harry" the familiar voice of Dumbledore broke the train of thoughts going through Harry's mind. "I absolutely forgot about our meeting"

"No problem Sir" Harry replied as he cast a quick glance at his watch. It was 11:10 AM. "Is it something very important?"

"Now that I think of it..." Dumbledore's eyes twinkled slightly as he spoke again. "...it isn't that important. I hope Remus talked to you about things?"

"Yes sir" Harry said. "Do you know..."

"He is fine" Dumbledore's words reassured Harry regarding Remus's

safety. If Dumbledore said he was fine then he had to be fine. "Oh my..."

Dumbledore said as he cast a glance outside. "I have completely forgotten that I am to meet Cornelius in 5 minutes time". Harry looked outside and saw the figure of Cornelius Fudge crossing the grounds along with four or five aurors.

"I guess I should be going then" Harry said as he stood up.

"Maybe we can talk again some other day" Dumbledore said as he held the door open for Harry to go through. Harry gave an acknowledging nod and climbed down the stairs and out into the corridor. Somewhere deep down he had a feeling that Dumbledore had achieved the target of their "meeting". "Clever old man" Harry said to himself as he looked back at the gargoyle before turning into another corridor.

Harry started thinking of what he had read. The powers of the Power of Hogwarts mentioned in the book were more or less similar to what Simon Potter had written in the parchment accompanying the glove. Still, he had learnt about a few more things, some of which were easy to interpret whilst others made no sense to him. How could he describe "listen to your inner voice and decide the path you will walk after the source of your strength is gone". It seemed like a cryptic message to Harry along with the many others present there. In any case, Harry decided that he will have to think about this a lot along with all the information he had just gathered.

Harry entered the Gryffindor common room and into his dormitory. He had hoped to talk to Neville regarding the happenings in Hogwarts in the past two days but he found Neville in deep discussion with Ron and Seamus. Not wanting to disturb them, he quietly climbed in his trunk and made himself a small snack. Try as he might, he just couldn't take his mind off the things he had just read. Add to that a list of questions as to why Fudge had come to Hogwarts, it seemed a lot of headache to him.

Well, Harry thought, it would have been much simpler if it had been just a fight between him and Voldemort. He wouldn't have to think...

"Damn!" Harry jumped up from his seat, his eyes wide in surprise. Even he had not expected to pick up such information on his spy gadgets so soon.

"I need a parchment...I need a parchment" Harry started to think and the room produced one instantly. He quickly jotted down a message and called out to Hedwig even as he kept listening on his spy gadgets intently. As he was tying the message to Hedwig's leg, he said "Deliver this to Remus. And if you cannot find him in one hour's time then don't search for him. Come back and wait for me". Hedwig gave an acknowledging hoot before taking off for her destination.

As soon as he saw Hedwig vanish from her perch, Harry took out a portkey.

"St. Mungo's...here I come" with that, Harry portkeyed right into a bathroom on the second floor of St. Mungo's. Even as he opened the door, he saw a jet of green light fly past him and a subsequent thud. A wand cluttered down to the ground and came to a stop right in front of the door behind which Harry was present. Peeking outside Harry couldn't help but gulp at the sight. He had never estimated that so many death eaters would attack St. Mungo's.

"Here goes nothing" Harry said to himself as he jumped outside and picked up the wand from the ground.

Two wands in two hands, Harry Potter stood up to his full height to face the death eaters in front of him!

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A/N:Fifth chapter here guys. Sorry to leave you people hanging like this but it has become my habit ;). I will try to update as soon as possible.

Thanks for all those reviews. Every review which you people made is very much appreciated.

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6. St Mungo's Patients

Ok. Everyone knows the drill. Still here goes nothing -

Harry Potter and the other characters of J.K. Rowling are strictly hers. I am not the original writer (though I wish I could be J) and I do not wish to make money from this. Most Importantly, I DO NOT want to get sued. So if anyone has any problems with anything I write, then just tell me.

There's plenty more...blah blah blah...forget it and let the story begin :).

Note: US English has been used here.

Note: This is the sequel to Harry Potter & The Power Of Hogwarts. Please read it before moving on with this story.

HARRY POTTER & THE NEW DAWN

Chapter 6 - St. Mungo's Patients

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"Who's there?" Fleur thought to herself as she heard footsteps near her door as if someone had just passed by. Looking at the clock on the wall, she saw that it was two in the night. With a wave of her wand, the papers on the desk in front of her were cleared. Grabbing her cloak, she quickly stepped out in the corridor and tried to find the person who had just passed by.

Looking around, Fleur found the corridor to be deserted. However, the sound of the dying footsteps was enough to lead her in the right way. She

quickly started to follow the sound, her wand gripped tightly in her right hand. As she turned a corner, she heard the footsteps stop for a moment. Instantly Fleur came to a stop too. It was almost as if the other person was trying to hear whether someone was following him...or her. The whole atmosphere in the passage seemed to have become eerie in nature with a single ray of moonlight shining in through a high window. Fleur could almost feel herself starting to sweat when the footsteps started again. The person was on the move again but the quick sound of falling feet suggested that he or she was in a hurry. Fleur too quickened her pace.

"Who?" this was the only word going through Fleur's mind right now.

"Not Harry I hope" Fleur thought as she was reminded of the rumors about the adventures of Harry and his friends. She surely didn't want him to be getting into any more trouble at this moment. Also, another thing which concerned her was what she would do if it was indeed Harry. She might not be able to bring herself to put him in detention...or report to the headmaster...

"What if it is a death eater?" this spine-chilling question almost made Fleur stop in her tracks. What if this was indeed a repetition of what had happened on 31st December? Not finding any confident answer to this, Fleur decided she would have to take the risk and she started walking even faster. If this was indeed a death eater, then she would have to track the person down before any harm was done. As she turned another corner, she heard the footsteps stop...and then start again. Fleur slowed down her movement because the footsteps seemed to be slowing down and moving away...coming back...moving away...someone was pacing along the corridor! Slowly, Fleur peeked around the corner just as the footsteps came to a halt. This time, she heard hushed voices too.

As Fleur glanced at the figure, she saw part of the body of the speaker

leaning out of the window on the corridor. It was as if that person was talking to someone outside. Fleur quickly tip-toed towards the place where the person was standing. When she was about ten steps away, she heard a sudden rustle...as if a broomstick end had grazed the outside of the castle wall and instantly the figure looked around.

"Rowena!" Fleur looked at the little first year old in surprise. How could such a little girl be flouting school rules like that? Fleur quickly moved over to the window where Rowena had been and peered outside. Even though she didn't see anyone, she knew that someone had been there. She quickly looked both above and below to see whether someone on a broomstick was present or not but couldn't see anyone. Her eyes blazing in anger at having missed the intruder, Fleur turned around to face the first year Slytherin.

"So?" Fleur said after she waited for over a minute for an explanation which had not been forthcoming.

"Ma'am...it's not what..." the voice of the little girl quavered as she looked at one of the professors. Gone was the steely exterior which everyone associated with Rowena. It had been replaced by an expression of fear and helplessness. Finally, with tears welling up in her eyes, she held out her left hand. Looking at the thing which Rowena had in her hand, Fleur seemed to calm down.

"You should be more careful with that" she said as she slowly closed the palm of the little girl who was shaking from head to toe at the moment.

Drawing her closer to her, Fleur gave her a tight hug.

"From now on, tell me the time, ok?"

"Yes...Professor" the little girl replied with a sniff as Fleur led her towards her the Slytherin tower.

&&&&

Harry looked around at the mayhem which had been caused by the death eater's arrival. The hospital beds were overturned and everything was scattered around. Just as he was taking in the scene, a curse came flying towards him. In a split second, he set up a shield with his glove which absorbed the spell.

"Never greet a stranger like this" Harry said as he looked at the death eater. The death eater looked slightly stunned at seeing the spell vanish into thin air. However, he didn't have too long to think about it. The next instant, a powerful stunning spell threw him unconscious.

Harry looked around and saw more death eaters rushing in through the open entrance of the second floor. The first floor of St. Mungo's was more like a general reception while the second floor was for treatment to minor injuries. The patients admitted to St. Mungo's were mainly present in the third and the fourth floors. And, as far as Harry could tell, that was the exact place where the death eaters were heading.

Harry quickly ran over towards one of the staircases leading up to the third floor. As he was climbing the staircase, he saw a jet of green light out of the corner of his left eye. In an instant he fell flat on his stomach and heard the curse crash into the wall in front of him. Not willing to take any chances, Harry got up and jumped three stairs at a time to reach the top and vanished from the view of the death eaters.

&&&&

"Where is everyone?" one of the death eaters asked in a gruff voice.

"No one comes here for first aids anymore sir" a new death eater replied.

"Only the long term patients remain here nowadays"

"That reminds me..." another death eater said as he came up to the couple. "...I have a few scores to settle with a particular person named Longbottom"

"We will get him alive for you Mr. Malfoy" the other gruff voiced death eater replied and started marshalling the other death eaters, leaving a smirking Lucius Malfoy behind.

&&&&

"Sir...uh...sir..." one of the death eaters shouted out to the gruff voiced death eater.

"What is it?" the man asked in an annoyed voice.

"The top..." the death eater said as he pointed towards the third floor. "...it's..." the man's voice trailed off as he seemed to be lost in thought.

"It's what?" his immediate senior asked impatiently.

"It's...nothing" the man said with an apologetic voice as he cast an uneasy glance upwards. "I just thought..."

"You are not here to think" his boss said in an angry, hissing voice. "You are here to follow orders"

"Yes sir" the death eater replied meekly. Without another word, he slowly started to climb the stairs. As the death eaters came upon the landing of the third floor, they found it completely still. Pity, they had come upon the patients when they were asleep. After all, what was the enjoyment of killing people unless one could see the terror in their eyes...unless one could feel the fear in their voices...unless one could feel the satisfaction that their job had been well done. With these thoughts on their minds, the death eaters slowly moved across the vast span of the third floor.

&&&&

Lucius Malfoy looked on at the third floor span in great anticipation. His initial estimate was that more than 300 beds were present there. With so many people dead in a single assault, it would be a devastating blow to the light side. His eyes gleamed with pleasure as he viewed the beds in which the occupants were sleeping. It was going to be a good day for

them. He slowly raised his wand and the other death eaters followed suit. "Crucio" Lucius Malfoy said in a whisper. Before it even hit its target, the other death eaters had also cast their spells.

&&&&

Harry looked on from his hiding spot inside a cupboard as he saw the huge number of death eaters slowly moving amongst the occupants of the third floor of St. Mungo's. Never in his wildest dreams did he think that around a hundred death eaters would have cared to attack this place. It seemed like Voldemort was leaving no stone unturned in trying to ensure the success of each of his plans.

In the middle of all the death eaters, Harry spotted one who seemed to be moving much faster yet his movements seemed cautious. He seemed to be an experienced death eater to Harry. Harry gulped as he saw the death eater glance around and then raise his wand at his nearest "victim". Harry couldn't do anything from there alone! He couldn't fight so many death eaters. All he could do was watch as the man started to mouth the words Cruc...

The next few things happened in a split second. Harry knew he couldn't defeat so many death eaters but he could not stand back and watch what was going to happen. Taking a firm grip on the two wands in either hand, he watched as almost everyone cast their curses. It was time!

&&&&

"What the hell!" Lucius Malfoy broke off his curse as feathers appeared out of nowhere. Looking around him, he saw feathers and cushions flying all around. Not a single yell or scream had ensued when the "patients" had been hit. All they had managed to hit was a pile of dummy figures that were made of foam and feathers. As he looked at the puzzled expression of the others, he saw a hint of movement from a corner. It was

almost as if a shadow had moved...almost as if just a stone of a wall had moved. It was then that it dawned on him. They had walked into a trap! "GET DOWN" Lucius Malfoy was barely able to shout this warning when stunning spells appeared out of nowhere. He had barely managed to get out of the way himself as many a spell crashed into the walls near him. He rolled over quickly and turned over one of the beds which acted as a shield. From behind it, he saw about ten aurors shooting spells at them. Furious at being trapped in such a fashion and mad at himself for not understanding it sooner, Lucius Malfoy stood up and started shooting spells at speeds not many had seen before. He was not a member of Voldemort's inner circle only for his money...he was a pure blooded wizard too. And today he wanted to make a lesson out of those who had tried to trap him.

&&&&

Harry saw the dark curses crash harmlessly in the cushions which had been piled on each of the beds. For a millionth of a second he thought of the time he had explained his plan to Fudge...as to how he wanted all of St. Mungo's patients moved to Godric's Hollow and how he wanted aurors to wait for the death eaters to show up. A lot of complex magic had gone in projecting an image of the patients inside of St. Mungo's. If someone had walked in through the door on the first floor on any day, then they would see lots of patients being moved around or patients talking to other patients. As far as interaction went, only a single healer was stationed at the front desk. Any interactions with the others were not possible as the reception area had been turned into a small cubicle from where the entrants could only view the patients. This was in fact a projection of the memory of one of the oldest healers at St. Mungo's. She had willingly given this memory to the aurors so that they could make a

"virtual reality" trap using it.

Harry almost laughed at seeing the puzzled look on the death eater's faces. They had just anticipated that the third floor would be packed with patients. What they didn't know was that it was packed with life-sized dolls made using feathers, foam and clothing. It didn't matter to him whether they would have cursed or poked any one patient to see if the situation was "under control" or not. What mattered was the fact that the death eaters had arrived to the third floor where aurors were hiding. Even though the death eater to auror ration was about 10:1 or 11:1, Harry didn't care too much. These aurors had been picked by Moody himself and they could easily take out 5 or 6 death eaters each. The rest should be taken care of by the surprise factor.

Harry watched as one of the death eaters seemed to recover from the shock faster than the others. He was the same fellow who had a bossy atmosphere about him. Harry wondered whether he knew this guy or not but it was impossible to tell under his mask. He saw the death eater's face snap up for a second before he yelled a warning to the others. Alas, it was too late for many a death eater as they got stunned by the aurors. Harry didn't move from his place though. Only the aurors knew that "someone" was hiding in the cupboard and he was sure that they knew he was on their side. He knew he had to keep his urge to capture these death eaters on hold for a few more moments. If anything, the aurors might need some help real soon but he had to time it to perfection. He just had to hold on for a little bit of more time.

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Mad-Eye Moody was crouching low in a corner when the death eaters started cursing. The spells stopped with a second as everyone tried to understand what had really happened. Moody's magical eye saw Harry

smirk inside the cupboard. He couldn't help but smirk himself...after all, not always do you get to see the sight of so many confused death eaters. However, Moody knew they didn't have much time. As he started to take aim, he saw the eyes of one of the death eaters looking directly at him. He immediately knew that his smallest movement had been detected. Not wanting to let the death eater to warn the others, he immediately pressed the medallion which he had in his left hand. Instantly each of the ten aurors in the room felt their medallions grow hot. It was time to attack. Instantly, eleven rays of lights stunned eleven death eaters. Moody's magical eyes kept track on the unharmed death eaters. He saw one of the death eaters about to curse him. Quickly Moody rolled over on his back and fired a spell at the death eater. The death eater's eyes went wide in shock as he saw the speed with which the body-binder spell came towards him. Try as he might, he couldn't move out of the way fast enough.

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"Lambert...cover me" Harry could clearly hear the voice of a woman shouting to her colleague. Peeking just a bit, he saw a woman slightly older than Tonks jumping and dodging behind the hospital beds while a broad-chested wizard, whose name must have been Lambert, covered her movements. Curiosity peaked, Harry kept on looking and saw the woman come to a stop behind one of the pillars as an array of curses crashed all around her.

Peeking from behind the pillar, the woman fired a couple of spells at the death eaters. For a moment Harry wondered why the woman had run over to the pillar? After all she could have just apparated...unless there were anti-apparation wards set! As the thought passed through his mind, Harry had the urge to kick himself for being so stupid. Of course the

aurors would have set up anti apparation wards to stop the death eaters from apparating away.

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"Fools...get organized" Malfoy shouted at the other death eaters.

Instantly, the ones who had been standing like idiots till then, crouched down and awaited their next command. Malfoy couldn't help but roll his eyes in anger and frustration. Why did he have to get the worst lot?

"There are only 10 of them" Malfoy said to his immediate sub-ordinate.

"Take them out while I take out their leader". His sub-ordinate nodded his head in reply and gave out a few commands. The death eaters immediately spread out in a battle arrangement and took up their respective positions.

"Oh no..." Malfoy said to himself as he eyed the "leader" of the opposition. Even at such a distance, there was no mistaking Mad-Eye Moody. "...we are not going to run away Mad-Eye. Today, I take my revenge"

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"Thanks Lambert" the woman mouthed these words at her colleague who gave an acknowledging nod. Lambert was the kind of guy who let his actions to the talking and one on whom any auror could depend on with his or her life.

"Congeries Confusio" the woman cast a spell at the group of death eaters in front of her which was supposed to make its victims confused. To her dismay it hit one of the beds and became ineffective. However, she didn't have much time to be sad about her miss as 7-8 spells came towards her. She barely had time to move behind the pillar as the spells passed her harmlessly.

"That was close" the woman named Samantha said to herself as she heaved a sigh of relief. However, the next moment the pillar behind

which she was hiding was blasted apart by some very strong "Reducto" spells. She barely had time to register the shock when she saw a green light heading towards her.

"Uh oh" these couple of words barely passed her mind as she jumped out of the way. The spell missed her alright but she now was fully exposed to the death eaters. Looking on in shock for a moment, she saw a "lot" of wands being aimed at her.

"Oh no...I am not going down so easily" Samantha said a bit loudly as she jumped to her feet in one fluid motion and smiled. The death eaters looked slightly shocked at seeing a prospective victim smile at them and lost a couple of precious seconds in recovering from the shock. In that time, Samantha had armed herself with the required items. An auror shield on her left arm and her wand gripped tightly in her right hand, she was ready for the competition on hand!

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"John...take the right flank. I will take the left" Lambert said as he moved into position. The auror named John gave an acknowledging nod and moved behind a few beds and started aiming at his targets.

"Damn it" Lambert said as he looked at the number of death eaters taking up battle positions. These death eaters seemed to have been trained to work in groups and that was not a very encouraging sign for the light forces. Looking around, Lambert saw Moody battling a group of death eaters. They were no match for Moody who used great strategy to gain the upper hand over his lesser experienced rivals. Lambert also saw Samantha out in the open with her auror shield open. That could only mean that she was going for a major battle and going to give her all.

Cringing a bit at the idea of having to face an auror like Samantha in full flow, Lambert moved on his focus to the other members. Not all of them

were doing well however as Lambert could see a couple of aurors almost defeated by a group of thirty odd death eaters.

"Got to help them" Lambert said to himself as if it was the most normal thing to go and help a couple of aurors fight thirty death eaters. Without thinking any more, Lambert summoned his auror shield and stood up to his full height of 6 feet 7 inches.

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"FervensAqua" one of the aurors shouted as a jet of boiling water shot out from his wand. However, to his dismay, only one death eater got hit by it.

"Lamnias" his partner, a lady in her late thirties, cast the spell which generated a hundred knives. The knives flew at great speed towards their target only to be blocked by a combined shield by a couple of death eaters. In the meantime the other death eaters of that particular group aimed at the aurors.

"Look out!" the lady shouted to her partner as a jet of grey light and a couple of red lights came hurtling towards him. Her partner successfully evaded the first one while the second one was blocked by his shield. However, his efforts got nullified when the third curse hit him on his left shoulder.

"Peter!" the lady shouted in concern as her partner slid down to the floor, bleeding heavily from the wound on his shoulder. Looking at the oncoming death eaters, she quickly conjured a heavy iron block and sent it hurtling towards the death eaters. However it was blown away by a "Reducto" curse almost instantly.

"Peter!" the lady shouted once more as she glanced over to the spot where her best friend had been standing. Not getting any answer from him, she rolled underneath a couple of hospital beds even as spells flew

past her. She just got to her friend as another spell hit the area where she had been a split second before.

"Peter...get up" the lady shouted as she ducked under a cruciatus. As she looked over, she saw about thirty odd death eaters approaching them in a umbrella shaped attack formation.

"Pam..." Peter said in a very heavy voice. "Get out"

"Only with you" Pam replied to her friend. Quickly she looked up and cast a couple of quick spells at the oncoming death eaters which they evaded easily.

"This is no place to get emotional" Peter said through gritted teeth. "Take them down"

"But I have to take you to a safe place first" Pam said even as one spell crashed on the pillar behind which she and her friend were. Splinters of concrete flew everywhere.

"Take them down" Peter insisted as he muttered a few first aid spells on himself. The wound was a grave one and if it didn't get treated within the required time by a specialist healer then it would turn fatal. "For me..." the man said in a hardened voice as he slowly picked up his wand again.

"...For Damien" he added and saw the look on Pam's face change. She turned a ghastly white at being reminded of her late husband who had been killed by death eaters a few days earlier. However, in a split second, her features had changed back. She looked at Peter as if he had done a grave mistake by reminding her of her dead husband but she also knew that Peter always put his work before everything else. They had to do what they had come to do.

"For Damien" Pam said in a whisper as she activated her auror armor.

Peter took it as a sign of the determination of Pam to win this battle.

After all, an elite group of eight people had earned the auror armor

which was awarded once every five years.

"For Damien" Peter said in a whisper as he remembered the manner in which his best friend had been killed. With that, both Pam and Peter stood up to face the challenge posed by the thirty odd death eaters.

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Moody was caught up in a fight with four death eaters. If it wasn't for his advanced age, he would have taken care of these "tiny bugs" within a few seconds. However, with a wooden leg hampering his agility, he had to rely more on strategy to defeat these death eaters. Even as he kept fighting the death eater's on hand, Moody's magical eye surveyed the battle scene. From what he saw, a bloody battle was just about to start.

Samantha had taken up a battle stance and had her shield in place. She seldom used a shield unless the situation was almost beyond impossible. Seeing her twelve odd opponents, Moody understood her decision.

John and his group were doing ok under the circumstances. Their group of four aurors had successfully taken out about twenty death eaters and was fighting seven more. The advantage this group had was their positioning. They were in a location where there were some beams attached to the ceiling and which, if they were blasted away, would bring a huge part of the ceiling down on everyone. The death eaters leader had noticed this promptly and had asked them not to hit the beams. This, in turn, had helped the aurors there.

Even as Moody's magical eye shifted to a group of three aurors, four jets of green light raced towards him. However, just by looking at the power and speed of the killing curses, he knew that these death eaters had a long way to go before becoming professionals at killing. Moody skillfully side-stepped the first curse while he turned around on his side to let the second and third curse pass on either side of him. The fourth curse was

the one which troubled his mind the most since it was coming directly towards him. Moody quickly summoned one of the nearest hospital beds into a vertical position and saw the fourth curse blast the thing apart a few meters from his face.

"Want to kill me?" Moody asked in a gruff voice. He seemed unfazed by the fact that he had narrowly avoided getting killed. "Avoid this". With that, Moody cast a spell several times in the direction of the death eaters so he wouldn't miss any of the four. The death eaters looked a bit baffled as Moody cast his spell...after all, they couldn't see any light ray streaking towards them. However, within a split second, each of the four fell to the ground in a frozen state.

"Latest spell to enter the auror books" Moody said in a way which suggested he was half smirking and half angered. "The freezer" Moody said before adding "It's transparent!"

"Damn" Moody said to himself as he saw the leader of the death eaters looking at him. As he focused his magical eye on him, he knew the identity of the man behind the death eater mask. The main reason for Moody's dismay had been the fact that the four death eaters had made him reveal the latest weapon of the aurors, the freezing spell which was transparent in nature. There was no doubt that Lucius Malfoy would report to Voldemort that the aurors had some new kind of spell up their sleeves. Even though just this information wouldn't stop the aurors from using the spell, it would make the dark lord's forces more alert. Moody's thoughts, however, were interrupted by a scream from someone.

Looking around, Moody saw that the first auror had been taken down by the death eaters. A group of three aurors had only two left now. The other auror had vanished from sight and was most probably lying on the ground. Moody's magical eye scanned the area and confirmed his

assumption that the auror was indeed lying in a heavily injured state in the middle of a pool of his own blood. Just then, he heard another scream. Looking around once again, even as he dived to avoid getting hit by a dark spell, Moody saw another auror go down.

Moody saw Pam rush over to the auror and assumed it was Peter. Within a few seconds however, both Peter and Pam were back on their feet and ready to face thirty odd death eaters. This was too great a number even by Pam's standards who had been Moody's best student ever. Avoiding another spell, Moody contemplated whether he should go over to help Pam and Peter but changed his mind when he saw the huge figure of Lambert rushing over to help them. Knowing that the situation was better than before, Moody turned his attention to the group of three aurors of whom one had been hit. The remaining two aurors didn't have the skill to take on twenty five death eaters on their own. Making up his mind, Moody decided it was time to take the battle to the enemy.

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Harry stood stock still inside his cupboard. He didn't know what to think or what to do. A part of him wanted to rush out and help the others but another part told him that he would do more harm than good if he went out now of all times. It seemed to him that the major blood bath was about to start. One female auror was about to take on ten death eaters or so while another group of death eaters had attacked a couple of aurors. The two aurors must have decided that enough was enough because they seemed to come out of their hiding in a second and seemed ready to take on the death eaters.

The dark skinned auror named Lambert seemed to be rushing over to them. The third group of aurors seemed to be having a better time than the rest. That left the fourth and the final group of three aurors. One of

them had been badly injured while the others kept on fighting valiantly.

Harry wanted to rush out and help them but he saw Moody moving

towards the couple of aurors, intent on helping them. For a split second,

the whole hall seemed to have calmed down...silence seemed to reign all

over. It seemed like the silence before the storm. However it wasn't to

last. The next instant, all hell broke loose on the third floor of St. Mungo's

hospital.

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"Let's dance" Samantha said as her mouth curled up in a wicked smile as

she saw the death eaters aiming their wands at her. The next instant,

eleven streaks of different colored light rays started to make their way

towards her.

Samantha started to move in a peculiar manner...almost as if she was

dancing! Since the death eaters had blasted apart the beds in between,

they had had a clear shot at her. Still, they had aimed for her upper

body. She dropped down to the floor on all fours giving the illusion of a

big cat about to jump on its prey. She looked on at the death eaters as the

curse flew harmlessly over her and cast a couple of quick spells in the

middle of the group. No sooner had she cast her spells, she jerked her

auror shield. Two boomerang kinds of blades got released which were

about a foot wide each.

A couple of death eaters in the front setup a shield to repel the spells of

Samantha. However, what they had not counted on was that two

boomerang blades would be heading their way. The blades seemed to

have a mind of their own as they crisscrossed each other. All the death

eaters' eyes were fixed on the blades as they came nearer and nearer. At

the last instant, the blades went on a different direction and went straight

for the throats of a couple of death eaters who barely managed to avoid

them. However their relief was short lived as they saw the blades turn in mid-air and head straight for another pair of death eaters. But these two death eaters didn't have to go into the trouble of avoiding the blades.

They were stunned unconscious by a couple of spells from behind just as the blades were about to hit them.

"Never look behind when your enemy is in the front" Samantha said with the same wicked smile plastered on her face. She had not moved an inch from her position on the floor till now and, as the blades came in, she extended her shield and they immaculately went back into their slots.

The death eaters looked at two of their fallen comrades and knew they would have a slight bit of trouble handling this auror. However, a 9-to-1 was still a no-match in any fight...unless of course either Dumbledore or Voldemort were involved! Without thinking anything else, the death eaters started shooting spells at random at their target.

Samantha knew that she would have a tougher challenge now that one element of surprise had been dealt with. From now on, the death eaters would be more prepared. This time it was her turn to act faster. She noticed nine curses heading her way and jumped to her feet. This time however, the curses were aimed both at her upper and lower body. She knew she couldn't avoid the curses this time by just dropping to the floor. Also, she knew that setting up any kind of shield against nine curses was not what she should be attempting. Instead, she had to play by her strength's.

Samantha muttered a quick shield spell which repulsed one of the spells. Having decided what to do, she started moving agilely on her feet even as the death eaters cast more spells. The curses aimed at her upper body got repulsed by the auror shield while she stepped between the curses aimed at her legs. Her legs crisscrossed themselves elegantly as she

avoided all the spells coming at her. If it had not been such a life threatening situation, someone would have thought she was just dancing to a beat of music playing in her mind. She didn't try to cast any spell at the moment. Rather, she had decided to use the tactics which had gained her a lot of reputation amongst aurors...avoid spells by "dancing" through them till your enemy is tired and attack them when it is the right time.

Samantha knew she had more on her plate than she had normally handled in all the mock duels and training sessions at the ministry. As an array of spells came directly at her chest and legs, she performed one of her most skilled acts. She cast a levitating spell on the shield and did a twirl like a ballet dancer on one leg. She had positioned herself in such a manner that her legs were in the space between the two of the closest spells. Even as she turned backwards, five spells hit the shield and got destroyed and numerous others passed around her grounded leg.

Samantha, in the middle of her twirl, took out a boomerang blade from the back of her auror pants and, as she came around, threw it towards the death eaters.

In the midst of all the action and with Samantha moving so fast, the death eaters failed to notice the throwing of the blade. Samantha finished her 360 degree rotation and caught hold of the shield which was now badly damaged after stopping twenty consecutive dark spells. Even as she caught hold of the shield, Samantha saw the blade pass high above the head of the nearest death eater. It was her sudden steady gaze that gave it away. One of the death eaters stopped to look around and, much to his horror, saw the blade coming back towards him, moving around its own central axis. He ducked at the last second to see the blade pass centimeters above his head. His elation was however short lived as he heard a blood chilling scream the very next instant. As the death eater

turned round, the body of another beheaded death eater slumped down to the ground. Looking on, he saw the blade making its way back to its owner who caught it cleanly and without any complications since no one had cast a spell in the last couple of seconds.

Samantha knew that these death eaters were slightly frustrated now. It was the right time...for her to launch her attack.

"Want to dance some more?" asked Samantha as she gave another wicked smile and got into action.

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"Lambert's coming" Pam thought as she saw the approaching figure of Lambert from the corner of her eye. She knew that even with her auror armor in an activated state, she and Peter would not be able to take care of the thirty odd death eaters. 1:15 was too great a ratio for anyone for that matter...even for her mentor Moody. But with Lambert coming to help them, she knew they had a fair chance.

"Peter...look out!" Pam shouted as the death eaters simultaneously cast their spells at the aurors. Thankfully none of them was the killing curse but the ten to fifteen cruciatus's were enough to raise anyone's hair on their necks. Peter just about managed to jump out of the way of the curses coming at him while Pam somersaulted to her right as the curses passed through the spot where they had been. The fact one of the properties of the auror armor was to make its wearer light weighted always helped Pam make these moves. As Pam completed her somersault, she aimed her wand at the death eaters in the middle and fired a couple of stunners. No sooner had she fired off the stunners that she saw another array of curses heading towards her. This time she jumped behind the nearest pillar and heard the curses collide with the bricks, throwing splinters around.

As Pam stood she saw a unique formation. There were four pillars in an adjacent manner. Lambert was behind the pillar on her left while Peter was to her right. Even as more spells hit the area near her, she came up with a plan. As soon as she made eye contact with Lambert, she explained her plan to him using the sign language common to all aurors. Lambert nodded in agreement as he understood the plan. Pam next turned to Peter and explained her plan to him while Lambert fired a few rapid spells at the death eaters to divert their attention. Once Lambert saw that Pam had explained the plan to Peter, he turned around to face the pillar. If the pillar had not been between him and the death eaters, then he would have been directly facing them. Simultaneously he saw Pam and Peter do the same. Pam held her three fingers of her left hand up and started counting down. As she closed the final finger, the plan was put into action.

The death eaters had just started moving a little closer when, all of a sudden, the figures of the three aurors came into view. The three aurors seemed to move in a synchronized manner as they moved from one pillar to the adjacent one. Lambert rolled over on his back to move into the position where Pam had been a split second before while Pam somersaulted twice in quick succession to move to the location where Peter had been. Peter also rolled over to move to the pillar on his left. And in the midst of all their movements, the three aurors sent a hail of spells into the midst of the death eaters!

For a split second none of the death eaters knew what had just happened. They had thought that they had successfully cornered the three aurors separately and just had to get a bit nearer to them to have a clean shot at them. But all of a sudden, they found six of their group lying on the floor in a petrified manner. No one had expected the aurors to be able to cast

spells at them while they were moving. Before the death eaters could come to a conclusion as to how to deal with the problem, the aurors were at it again. However, this time their movement was in the reverse direction. Peter rolled back to his old position while Pam somersaulted back to her respective position. Lambert seemed to have decided that running sideways gave him a much better chance of aiming properly and hence did just that. All this while, the aurors kept shooting spells in a hurry...almost as if three machine guns were at work. It resulted in the conscious death eater population going down by a further seven.

"Damn it" the leader of the group said as he saw that their number had come down from thirty to a mere seventeen. He couldn't let this go on!

"Spread out" the commander shouted to his sub-ordinates. Instantly the death eaters spread out over a larger area. As they were moving, the three aurors carried out their act for the third successive time. The death eaters fired many spells at them but couldn't hit the aurors. The aurors, however, were successful in taking out four more death eaters.

"Thirteen more" Pam mouthed at Lambert and got ready to jump for the fourth time. But this time Lambert shook his head in a negative response. All his experience told him that at most they would be able to take a couple of more death eaters out since they were now spread over a greater area. Also, since the region covered by the death eaters was larger, they risked getting hit by one of their curses. The risk was not worth taking in his opinion.

"Now what?" Pam mouthed this question at Lambert who seemed to be thinking. Suddenly his head snapped up as he came up with a plan. But before Lambert was able to specify his plan to Pam, Pam saw a hint of movement out of the corner of her eye. Before she had the time to say anything, one of the death eaters appeared about 30 feet behind Lambert

who had no idea about the situation.

"Lambert!" Pam shouted, her eyes wide in fear, as the death eater shot off the cruciatus towards Lambert.

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"Let's see what you are made of" Moody said in a loud, grumpy voice as he walked towards the group of aurors whom he had decided to bail out. The other death eaters seemed to take notice of him and started throwing curses at Moody.

"You need more than that to take me out" Moody growled as he side stepped a couple of curses and stopped the others by setting up shields. His wand movements and spell casting was so swift that Harry couldn't help but appreciate what he saw from his hiding place.

"Take this" Moody said as he cast several strong body binder curses at the group of death eaters. However, they didn't have to worry much as someone or the other in the group managed to set up a "Protego" shield to stop the spell.

"Think you can stop me like this?" Moody said as another barrage of spells came his way. Suddenly the death eaters seemed intent on taking him out before the other two aurors. Moody just moved enough to let all the spells go past him. However, one of the spells grazed a part of his left sleeve and left a hole in his shirt.

Moody had one look at it and growled. "You will pay for this". With that, he cast a couple of strong spells towards the middle of the death eaters. Just as soon as the spells were cast, he conjured up a heavy block of metal and "threw" it towards another part of the group. No sooner had he done that, he conjured up a block of stone in front of him as he saw a couple of spells coming at him. The next instant there were a couple of huge blasts. The two stunners had effectively taken out a couple of death

eaters but the other death eaters had blown apart Moody's conjured block to smithereens. Simultaneously, the conjured block of stone covering Moody was shattered by the spells which were heading in his direction. Moody growled a bit as a few splinters hit him on his wand arm. He quickly cast a spell to remove them but saw a quartet of spells almost about to hit him. He just about managed to set up a strong shield but that was not enough. Three spells got stopped by the shield while the fourth was enough to break the weakened shield and hit Moody who was thrown off his feet. He landed in a heap a few meters away. However, this time had been enough for the other two aurors to utilize. They had quickly taken the advantage of Moody's diversion had magically stunned and bound fourteen death eaters using a barrage of spells randomly into the group.

"Well well well..." an all too mocking tone spoke up as Moody ducked another spell. "Seems like the old auror isn't as quick as he was in the past". Lucius Malfoy had stepped aside from his group of death eaters who had shifted their focus back to the couple of death eaters.

"Seems like someone is still a fool" Moody growled as he slowly got up... his eyes focused on Malfoy and his fellow death eaters.

"Shall we?" Malfoy asked in a mocking tone as he bowed slightly.

"Anytime" Moody said, without bowing. He knew these death eaters couldn't be trusted at all, least of all Lucius Malfoy. Hence it was much better to be constantly vigilant. Malfoy waited a bit longer for Moody to bow but when it didn't come, he seemed slightly affronted. He and Moody slowly started to move around in a circular path while Moody's magical eye keeping a lookout for any death eater attacking him from the back. However, it seemed no one had the audacity to interfere Lucius Malfoy's duel. Realizing this, Moody focused both his eyes on Malfoy. He

knew it would come soon...and it did!

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"What's the matter boys?" Samantha asked in a mocking tone. "Having trouble hitting me?". At this, a few of the death eaters got very frustrated and launched a vociferous attack at Samantha. Samantha saw the number of spells approaching her was far too great than it had been previously but she knew she had to take care of it.

She ducked under the first spell even as she raised her left leg slightly to let a curse pass below it. She bended her right knee as another curse passed along that area and snapped her head to the left as a curse passed just beside her right ear. As she saw another curse approaching her midriff, she fell down on all fours to avoid it. At this, the death eaters started directing their attack at the figure on the ground. As Samantha looked on, she saw several more spells approaching her. She quickly activated an automated shield charm which was a common feature of all auror shields and protected the owner from splinters. Just as it was done, Samantha raised her right hand from the ground and one curse crashed into the ground right where her hand had been a split second ago. The shield charm stopped the splinters from hitting her all over. The next second she had to raise her left hand as another curse was about to hit it. She quickly balanced herself on her right hand again.

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Harry watched in amazement at how fast Samantha could move. If he had not read about a special kind of power of some witches then he would have thought that he was watching some kind of a muggle movie. Remembering what he had read from one of the books he had brought back from the Black Vault, he was easily able to categorize Samantha as a Hyperperor witch. These witches had a magnificent eye-body co-

ordination and they could move their body muscles with seemingly no reaction time at all. This was due to the fact that their nerve impulses were faster than normal and it resulted into an anomaly causing them to be very flexible and fast.

To Harry's knowledge, there had been only four Hyperperor witches till date. No one knew why this phenomenon was not found in wizards. As Harry looked on, he found his eyesight getting dazed trying to follow every one of Samantha's moves. They were so fast and yet so elegant. He wondered whether all such witches choose to "dance" but then thought there was no point in wondering about that now. He decided to stand back and watch the "show" for the moment.

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Samantha moved her body in a snake like manner as she avoided getting hit by a curse in her hips. She saw a few curses aimed right at her back and knew she just couldn't move out of the way unless she rolled away. She did roll away and came to her feet in one smooth motion. At this, another spell raced towards her which was directly aimed at her chest. She curved the upper part of her body and saw it pass harmless below her right armpit. This left her in an awkward situation as the next spell was coming right at her left shoulder which was awkwardly positioned upwards like someone who had just finished a disco move. She elegantly moved her left shoulder back as the spell passed inches above and brought her body back into the correct position so elegantly that it would have done any professional dancer proud.

The next moment she twisted her head to the left and then right in quick succession as two spells passed through the area where either side of her head would have been. Then she raised her left shoulder and dropped her right as one curse passed near her right shoulder and did the vice versa

when another passed near her left shoulder. For one instant, she thought she would end up break-dancing through the spells.

As another spell came towards her midriff, Samantha could feel her body getting tired from this constant movement. She blocked in plainly with her shield and avoided a few more spells. At long last, she could see no more spells coming her way. As she looked on, she could see the exasperation in the eyes of the faces behind the masks. She knew she had to act now...and it had to be real fast too.

"Drop your wands...or he dies" this chilling sentence stopped Samantha dead in her tracks.

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"FervensAqua" a jet of boiling water sped its way towards Moody.

"Nidor" Moody quickly muttered the counter curse which hit the other streak of light and evaporated the whole water stream. Even though Moody had not heard what Malfoy had said, still the color of the spell had been enough for him to know which spell Malfoy had cast.

"YmberPalmula" Malfoy said the spell a bit louder as twenty knives sped their way towards Moody over an area 4 meters wide. Malfoy knew that even if Moody jumped out of the way then also he would risk getting hit by at least one knife.

"ConvertoCorollarium" Moody moved his wand in front of him and a wide jet of orange light sped their way to meet the curse. No sooner had the knives hit the orange light they turned into flowers.

"Thanks for the flower shower Malfoy" Moody said sarcastically as the flowers collided gently with his body. Malfoy was incensed due to the manner in which Moody had turned his poisoned knives into flowers. It was humiliating to say the least.

"Flamma" a jet of fire sped towards Moody.

"Verto" Moody cast a spell at the last moment and redirected the spells back towards Malfoy. Malfoy had to jump away hastily to avoid the flames of his own spell.

"ElaborSolum" this time Moody was the one to cast a spell. The jet of light from Moody's wand hit the floor near Malfoy's feet and turned the floor into a slippery one. Malfoy quickly muttered a spell which broke the whole tiling of the floor and the slipperiness was gone.

"Crucio" Malfoy cast the painful unforgivable at Moody who calmly side stepped it. After so many years, the cruciatus was just another curse to him. The only thing which he kept in mind when dealing with the cruciatus was to always get out of the way rather than try anything funny with it.

"FerrumFerratilis"

"Multiensis"

"Magus Funis" Moody muttered these three spells very fast. Malfoy's eyes went wide as he saw iron wires punctuated by large pins coming towards him followed by an array of swords which were revolving around their axis. He quickly muttered a few "Reducto" spells and destroyed the initial objects. However, the swords seemed to have come too close for his comfort. Malfoy's arms and lips moved frantically as he blasted out each sword in mid-air...one as close as a foot away from him. However, before he could breath a sigh of relief, the conjured magical ropes from Moody's third spell bound him from top to bottom. He fell to the ground with a thud.

"Don't have any smart comments to make now, huh?" Moody asked as he agilely moved over to the fallen death eater and disarmed him. Malfoy had been stunned both by the agility of Moody and his ability to cast spells so fast even at such an advanced age. However, the only emotion

which seemed to be filling his mind now was the one he seemed to have for everyone - hate.

"Let's take care of you now" Moody said as he raised his wand. However Moody couldn't bring himself to curse Malfoy...not after what he heard right then.

"Drop your wands...or he dies" this chilling sentence stopped Moody in his tracks.

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Pam stood there, too stunned to do anything. As she looked on, everything seemed to happen in slow motion. Lambert, on seeing the look on her face, knew that some death eater was near him and probably going to curse him. Not knowing which curse to expect he tried to throw his body out of the way, not knowing whether he was jumping into the curse or away from it. All he knew was that he had to make an effort to move out of the way and hope for the best. However, his best was not enough this time. The death eater had too great a time advantage over him to let him get out of this unscathed. The cruciatus hit him flush on the upper right part of his body and the next moment he was lying on the floor, writhing in pain like he had seldom felt.

Pam stood motionless as she saw the figure of Lambert fall to the ground and start quavering under the effects of the cruciatus. Though the aurors knew all about the unforgivables, only a few had ever felt the real blast of an unforgivable. After all, aurors were trained to avoid getting hit by unforgivables. The few who had been hit by an unforgivable, apart from the Avada Kedavra, would always say that it was one of the worst things imaginable. And right now, seeing the withering body of Lambert, Pam could feel a little bit as to why she had been always told to avoid the cruciatus.

The wizard cursing Lambert seemed to be a powerful one judging by the way Lambert was struggling to cope with the pain. If he was a youngster, then he would surely rise quickly amongst the ranks of the death eaters...only if Pam let him live to see that day. As Pam saw the expression on Lambert's face, her inner self got out of control. She knew she had to do something to stop the spell. However, she intended to do more than that. She wanted revenge!

Yes, she had a hard time believing it but suddenly this man seemed to symbolize everything she had hated for these past few years and especially these past few days. She wanted to do something which would take her pain away...which would make that death eater feel the pain which she was feeling. Without caring to think anything else, she launched her attack.

"ElectrianoClaustrum" a bolt of electricity caught the death eater flush in the middle of his chest and threw him off balance. Even as he was falling and had gone out of sight, Pam started running towards him. Lambert seemed to groan slightly as the pain seemed to go away a bit and he didn't see the body of Pam jumping over him. The other death eaters, seeing that they had a clean shot at Pam, started throwing spells as rapidly as they could but Pam seemed to outpace them. As Pam reached near the spot where the death eater had fallen, she saw a jet of green light moving right towards the spot where she would be in a couple of steps. Instead of stopping, she did a clean somersault over the spell. As her body was turning in mid-air, she aimed her wand to curse the fallen death eater. Just as her body came to a upside-down position, the killing curse passed inches below her. At the same moment she found herself right over the position of the death eater. Without caring for what was going to happen to him, she sent another bolt of lightning crashing into

his body. As her body had started to straighten back to its normal position, her eyes met the death eaters for a millionth of a second. She saw fear in them...and this satisfied her immensely.

As Pam landed cleanly on her feet, a few more curses crashed into the area near her. She quickly ducked behind one of the cupboards holding herbs and looked around. Peter seemed to be looking at her in an astonished manner...as if he had seen a ghost. In reality, he had seldom seen such an acrobatic move. Lambert seemed to be exercising great control over his body and trying to get up. However, she knew that the number of death eaters were still more than these two could handle in their injured state. As she was the only uninjured member, she had to somehow help them take care of the death eaters. Pam got mentally ready to carry out an assault on her own...even if it was her final one forever.

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Harry looked around at the tremendous fighting going on around him. He couldn't help but appreciate the aurors at the work and his determination to become an auror in the future seemed to grow even more. The dedication with which these people were fighting was just incredible. However, in the midst of all this, Harry could see that they were only able to weaken the dark forces temporarily. He knew that the aurors would never be able to kill someone. At most, they would be able to stun them with some of the most advanced spells...some which won't let concurrent "Enervate" spells be of any good. Still, Harry knew that if there were any brilliant death eaters present here at the moment, then they would be able to enervate their partners using ancient spells. The only thing which Harry was able to draw some satisfaction from was the fact that the fight was going on too fast for any death eater to look out for

their partners. Also, the fact that the number of death eaters forces had come down from eighty odd to only about fifty odd gave him some relief. The fight till now had not been without casualties on the aurors sides. From what Harry could see, three aurors were not battle worthy anymore along with another heavily injured auror. That left six aurors and Moody but still the auror to death eater ratio seemed to be about 1:7. Even though it was not the most healthy ratio, it was better than what had been a few minutes previously.

Harry looked on in wonder as Pam truly executed one of the most acrobatic spells he would probably see in his lifetime. He didn't know how she did it but it sure was special. He watched Pam move behind one of the other cup boards present and, from his location, he saw a change in the expression on her face. He could see it had set into a grim determined look...one which was not present even a few minutes before. As he looked at her, he had the feeling that she was going to go for an all out attack. However, just as he saw Pam about to rush out to launch an attack, she became frozen in her spot. Her eyes went wide in horror as a single spine chilling sentence was said.

"Drop your wands...or he dies"

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Everyone turned around to see what had happened. Even the death eaters seemed to have stopped fighting. Unseen to everyone, one death eater had managed to crawl under the beds and had reached the spot just behind where Peter was. Pam had been the first to see the death eater but it was too late. Her eyes went wide in horror as she thought of the prospect of losing her best friend inside a few days of her husband. No, she thought, this couldn't be happening to her. Lambert, on the other hand, had raised himself to a seated position and was now aiming

straight from the partially visible head of the death eater. Moody didn't make a move from the position he was in...his wand pointed at a fallen and bound Lucius Malfoy. However, his magical eye was focused straight at the death eater who had muttered the words. Samantha had also turned at her spot and was looking on, a heavy stone seemed to be crushing her heart. This couldn't be happening to her colleague Pam. "Drop it!" the death eater gave another warning, poking his wand in the back of Peter.

"Don't!" Peter shouted. "Take him out" he said to his colleagues.

"Lambert..." he turned to the fellow he knew he could always trust to do the right thing. "Take him out...don't worry about me".

"Stop that drama and drop your wands" the death eater shouted again.

The other death eaters had stopped fighting thinking they had won the battle. All that was needed was to take away their wands.

"Oh well..." the gruff voiced deputy of Lucius Malfoy gave a sigh at the antics of his sub-ordinates. Why the hell did he get a group of blood thirsty death eaters who didn't seem to use their common-sense? With another sigh, he waved his wand and said "Expelliarmus Aurors". Instantly, all the aurors wands got sucked away from their hands. And...

All of a sudden a jet of light sped out from nowhere and stunned the death eater behind Peter even as the wands were in mid-air. Almost simultaneously, another shout was heard "Reditus Wands Erus". This was an advanced spell which returned the wands to their true owners. All the airborne wands reversed their direction and headed straight for the aurors who caught them cleanly. Lucius Malfoy's deputy was left standing with his left hand extended...the auror's wands never came.

"Hello everyone" a smiling Harry Potter said. He was standing a couple of feet in front of the now ajar cupboard in which he had been hiding. Even

though he was smiling, there was a look in his eyes which suggested he was watching every death eater's movement as closely as possible. The death eaters looked on in shock at the new entrant. Out of nowhere, a slender boy who seemed to be about 19 years old had popped up and seemingly taken away the taste of victory from their mouths...at least for the time being. He seemed unaffected by all the death eaters...didn't seem nervous at all. Also, the wind blowing across the hall made his hair and clothes start to fly. It gave him an eerie and almost formidable appearance. They didn't know who this boy was but...

"Harry Potter?" the deputy death eater spoke, his voice in slight awe as he saw the famous scar behind the flying hair. The aurors eyes went wide as they heard the name and their eyes shifted to Harry's forehead. Even though these were very experienced aurors, seeing Harry Potter in flesh and blood was a rare experience. Samantha gulped, Peter shifted his weight from one foot to another, and Pam tried to see beyond the scar while Lambert looked on keenly. The other aurors also looked slightly shocked. Only Moody was cursing under his breath as he remembered what had happened at Azkaban.

"Yours truly" Harry said with a smile and the next second a fresh battle started, albeit a final one.

&&&&

Samantha was taking on her opponents in a much calmer manner. After all, Harry Potter was there for them. Initially it had seemed like he would be mince meat for the death eaters but his first couple of spells were enough to assure everyone of his skill. She had heard tales about how he had fought at Azkaban and today she had seen him fighting in front of her. No wonder she was assured by his company.

Moody too looked happy to see Harry in action...if the expression on his

face could be called one of happiness. He knew Harry had been very sad ever since the demise of Tonks and finally hoped Harry would take some revenge and calm down a bit. Of course, no revenge would be complete without killing Ginny Weasley and Snape but at least this could help him temporarily.

The others looked on as Harry started to fight. All they knew was he was the Boy-Who-Lived and was still a student of Hogwarts but how in heaven's name could he fight so well? A couple of aurors exchanged astonished looks as they saw Harry take on many a death eater on his own and were presently surprised at how fast and flexible he was. Well... they had a job to do and they started doing it. After all, Harry Potter was doing his part well.

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"CrurisContorqueo" Harry said in a low voice and a jet of jelly colored light sped towards its target. The death eater got barely out of the way of the spell which would have twisted his leg until he fell to the ground. No sooner had Harry cast one spell, he saw eight other spells coming at him. At this, he smirked.

Harry let all the spells get absorbed by his shield and he let forth a very powerful stunning spell at the group of death eaters fighting him. One of the death eaters was blasted twenty feet into the air as he got hit by the stunner. Harry then took out the second wand he had picked up just as he had arrived at St. Mungo's. Two wands in two hands, he knew the others would have to work a lot to defeat him.

"ObfirmoMala" Harry shot off one spell at the death eaters on the right side of the group. Almost simultaneously, he aimed at some of the death eaters slightly on the left of the group. "SomniumFama". The first spell was supposed to lock the jaws of anyone who got hit and hence prevent

him from casting a spell while the second one made the wizard say nonsense words...or for that matter any random combination of words. To his dismay, Harry saw both his spells getting blocked by shields.

As Harry was about to say a third spell, a further array of curses came his way. Spreading his arms wide, he said "Accio Cubile". Instantly a couple of beds lying on the floor flew from either side of him and, on his wand movement, sped towards the spells. All the spells crashed into the beds and blasted them apart.

"Crucio" this dreaded word was said quite loudly by one of the angered death eaters. Harry side stepped the spell but not before sending a stunner in the direction of the death eater. However, it was too obvious and the man easily moved out of the way.

"CongruensIgnis Claustum" one of the death eaters shouted as a jet of fire seemed to come out of his wand.

"CongruensIgnis Claustum" Harry repeated the same spell. He was ready to meet fire with fire. Both the spells collided in mid air and caused a huge blast but the spells were not broken. Each seemed to be pushing at the other to gain the upper hand as a tiny thread of fire linked both the wands.

"CongruensIgnis Claustum" another four death eaters seemed to think it was a very good spell and sent a jet of fire towards Harry. Harry raised his other wand and said "Congruens Aqua Claustum". A wide spray of water crashed into the spells and started to hold them off. Harry felt a tremendous pressure on his magical reserves as he fended off five spells at once. He was not some kind of a super hero after all! The only thing which kept him going was his mental strength.

Some of the aurors and death eaters had stopped fighting for a few milliseconds to see the scene at hand. It was a unique and a fascinating

one to say the least. Harry was standing with both his wands aimed at the death eaters...one wand spraying water to douse the persistent fire attack while the other fighting fire with fire. In the midst of this, the other death eaters could see a wide opening to hit Harry.

"Crucio" a death eater aimed at Harry but Harry just about managed to move out of the way without breaking his spells. He was already sweating heavily at having to hold off so many attacks at once, one which he had never tried. His eyes went wide in fear for a second as he saw four death eaters aiming directly for him. However, as soon as they sent the curses on their way, Harry smiled inwardly. Harry did not try to move out of the way this time and let the shield absorb the spells.

Effectively he felt his magical energy go a notch higher. This was it, Harry thought.

"CongruensIgnis Claustum". "Congruens Aqua Claustum". Harry said this spells in quick succession. To his right a large ball of fire went out rapidly to meet its opponent. No sooner had it reached the spot, there was a tremendous noise as it literally tore away the other spell. But it didn't stop there and followed the connecting line of fire up to the holder of the wand. The death eater was unable to do anything in the split second and the next thing he knew was a burning feeling before darkness overcame him.

On his left side, a huge jet of water made its way to meet the balls of fire. Instantly they were literally washed out of existence right up to the tip of the wands of the death eaters who looked on in disbelief. They looked on in disbelief at the sudden power behind the spells. Harry knew he had the upper hand at the moment because the death eaters seemed to be slightly dazed at this sudden change. He took this opportunity with both hands as he sent a couple of stunners at the death eaters. One missed...the other

didn't.

"AvadaKedavra" finally one of the death eaters sent out the killing curse at Harry. Simultaneously, the rest of the group sent other curses at Harry's direction. Harry quickly evaded the killing curse and rolled over to his left as the other curses passed by. Harry quickly moved to behind one of the many pillars on the third floor while panting in slight exhaustion at having to take on so many death eaters.

As Harry stood there, he could hear a lot of movement going on around him. Just then a hail of spells hit the area near him. It seemed like more death eaters had joined this group to capture him. After all, who wouldn't like to be the one to hand over Harry Potter to the dark lord? Harry quickly thought of a spell and looked around. As he saw more spells out of the corner of his eye, he cast a spell on himself and rolled out from behind the pillar. The death eaters looked at each others in wonder, anger and god knows what else.

Instead of seeing one Harry Potter, a dozen Harry Potter's had rolled out from behind the pillar and was standing in front of them. Harry had performed an illusion charm on himself which cast a mirror image of oneself within a given perimeter. The death eaters, instead of surrounding Harry, now found themselves surrounded by him. As Harry raised his wand, 11 other Harry's did the same.

"Expelliarmus" the twelve Harry's said this spell simultaneously but the only one real spell hit the death eaters. All the other spells were just illusions of what the real Harry was doing. Fifteen odd wands came flying towards the real Harry when...

"WE WILL MEET ANOTHER DAY MAD-EYE"

Harry looked around just in time to see Moody trying to curse Malfoy who had somehow got free. Much to his dismay, he saw Malfoy touching

something on his left wrist and immediately all the death eaters vanished except for those who had been hit by anti-portkey spells. Everyone's mouth was hanging in disbelief!

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Harry sat quietly in his room thinking about the events of the past few hours which were basically days in the trunk. He felt slightly stressed out at all that had happened. The fact that Malfoy had got away with the help of some of the other death eaters was not helping his mood a lot. Still, in the past, he had been happy whenever they had been able to defeat or capture death eaters but today seemed to be different. Even though he didn't know exactly how many death eaters had been captured because he had left as soon as the fight had been over, Harry didn't feel happy about it. Today only the skill of the aurors had been the factor behind them being alive. If it had been the common wizarding public, then it would have resulted in a massacre. For every win they had over the death eaters, Harry knew that hundreds of thousands of general wizarding people were losing a battle. The only way to stop this was to stop the source...stop Voldemort.

Not knowing exactly what to do, Harry decided he would meditate a little. Maybe meditation would help calm his nerves a bit...would help him see things in a better light. Slowly Harry drifted off into his meditation. In his meditation, he saw the battle at St. Mungo's from different point of views...as to the difference in the reactions between Pam, Peter, Lambert to Moody's own reactions. He could see how a life full of hardships had turned Moody into what he was today. He could understand that the feelings he saw on Pam's face meant a lot. And the look on Malfoy's face when Moody had him cornered...

His thoughts then drifted off to what he had read in Dumbledore's office

regarding the Power of Hogwarts. A lot of things had been written in there which made absolutely no meaning to him whatsoever. However, he kept on thinking about what he had read and tried to understand it from different perspectives. His thoughts then shifted to Remus telling him how Dumbledore was worried about them being stuck in the past... allowing their sorrows to dictate what they did next. He thought of how Nearly Headless Nick had told him that he had to let go of the past to help his friends...to look out for...Harry's thoughts went haywire at this point. He suddenly remembered how Dumbledore had said during Tonks's funeral that the power was still with him. The images of the pages of the book in Dumbledore's office came into his view once again only to be replaced by what Nearly Headless Nick had told him.

And then it stuck him! As if someone had suddenly opened a floodgate of reasoning in his mind. He now knew why he felt so comfortable walking around the corridors of Hogwarts, alone and walking endlessly and touching the walls. It was as if someone had just shown him that he was caught in a maze when he had never known he had been in a maze. If someone never knew that they were in a maze then they couldn't get out of it because they wouldn't be making an effort. But now he realized just how important it was for him to move on with his life...how important it had been to read the pages regarding the history of the Power of Hogwarts. If he had not read it then...

Harry's eyes snapped open and he fell to the floor clutching his chest. It seemed as if someone had just lifted a heavy weight from his heart and he could breathe freely once more. Mentally he thanked Dumbledore for showing him what he did. He knew Dumbledore was sneaky in his own way but this time he had truly helped Harry in a manner like never before. With a smile on his face, Harry got up to his feet.

"Lord Voldemort..." Harry shouted at the top of his lungs with his arms spread out. "...the Power of Hogwarts will be resurrected again!"

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A/N: Sixth chapter here guys. I really have no idea how you people would take to the action scenes here. I decided to go with more auror fighting as there will be major auror battles at the end. But still, I don't know if it was one of my worst fight scenes ever written or not because I have gone for some unconventional fights in my opinion.

I also had to snip away a lot of what I wanted to include in this chapter because this got way out of control. I ended up with 11k words of just the fight scene!

Anyway, thanks for all those reviews. Every review which you people made is much appreciated. And to everyone who didn't review, thanks for taking time to read up to here at least.

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7. A Decision

Ok. Everyone knows the drill. Still here goes nothing - Harry Potter and the other characters of J.K. Rowling are strictly hers. I am not the original writer (though I wish I could be J) and I do not wish to make money from this. Most importantly, I DO NOT want to get sued. So if anyone has any problems with anything I write, then just tell me. There's plenty more...blah blah blah...forget it and let the story begin :).

Note: US English has been used here.

Note: This is the sequel to Harry Potter & The Power Of Hogwarts. Please read it before moving on with this story.

HARRY POTTER & THE NEW DAWN

Chapter 7 - A Decision

"Lord Voldemort..." Harry shouted at the top of his lungs with his arms

spread out. "...the Power of Hogwarts will be resurrected again!"

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"I have to revive it" Harry thought for what must have been the millionth time as he kept thinking of the Power of Hogwarts. He had finally been able to piece together a lot of the information which he had gathered over the past few weeks. Most of this information had come his way unwittingly...like the chat he had had with Nearly Headless Nick.

However, the key to the puzzle lay in what he had read in the book in Dumbledore's office.

In the past Harry would have guessed that Dumbledore had purposely left the book there for him to have a peek. However, since he was quite familiar with Dumbledore's ways, he knew for a certainty that Dumbledore had done it on purpose. It was almost as if Dumbledore had immaculately made moves on a chess board and Harry had been check mated. However, in this case Harry was very happy to have fallen for Dumbledore's trick...not as if he could have avoided it. And he knew that Dumbledore had taken quite a risk with his tricky behavior. After all, the happenings of the Department of Mysteries had not been forgotten by anyone. Dumbledore knew that tricking Harry into seeing something might have resulted in a violent reaction from Harry. But now, Harry mentally thanked Dumbledore for taking the risk. It seemed Dumbledore had finally learned to appreciate what Harry really wanted in his life and was trying his best to help him out.

Harry's mind was torn away from the thoughts of gratitude towards Dumbledore as he started thinking of what he had read in the book. As he mentally recited every verse he had read, he tried to somehow make the consequences seem improbable. Try as he might, he couldn't see an change in the outcome if he followed a series of steps. Harry desperately

wanted to believe that the outcome would be different...it was just too painful for him to think of it in that way. What if it didn't happen? What if he ended up paying too high a price to achieve his goal? What if the price he paid might cost the wizarding world dearly? His mind entangled in these thoughts, Harry sat down on his bed next to a pile of books and opened the largest of them all. If he had to do something about all the things he was planning, he had to get ready for something big...maybe the biggest thing since the rebirth of Lord Voldemort.

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St. Mungo's Attacked

Our special correspondent reports that St. Mungo's was attacked by over a hundred death eaters in the late hours of yesterday. However, it is still unclear as to what had exactly happened there.

"I saw a big group of hooded figures entering the building and I ran away like hell" said John Abraham who was going to the hospital for some first aid.

"Everyone is still alive?" asked a witch who did not want to be named. "We saw flashes coming out from all sides of the third floor for over 10 minutes.

How could the patients fight so many death eaters?"

Everyone is astonished and shocked at what has happened at the hospital yesterday. Early investigation by our correspondent revealed that a number of aurors were present there for guarding the patients. Apparently their presence saved a lot of lives yesterday.

For those who don't know, St. Mungo's is the home of many renowned people who had fought against the dark forces in the period which is now known as the "First War". Many of the patients there are recovering from both physical and mental injuries suffered during that period. Many renowned people in the wizarding world have relatives recuperating from such injuries. If some rumors of the past are to be believed, then a previous muggle prime minister was also

admitted to this hospital after he was caught in a fight between the light and the dark forces in the early nineties.

Our correspondent reports that the ministry had been anticipating such an attack and hence had posted the aurors there. This information came from an unnamed ministry official after Minister Fudge refused to comment on the attack. However, the fate of the patients inside is still unknown to many.

Rumors have it that Albus Dumbledore had moved the patients to an unnamed location only a few days ago. We would not put such an action past the man who is the only wizard whom He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is said to be still afraid of. If this is not the case, then it is a cause of grave concern for the wizarding world.

"I came to meet my aunt" a wizard in his early twenties said. "Now I don't know what to do. They won't give me any information about her. They won't even tell me if she is dead or not".

Such is the behavior of the arrogant and high-handed ministry aurors that the common man is the worst sufferer. We have seen such high handedness in the past too but since the return of many old aurors, the bar seems to have gone up a notch.

"I don't have time for you lot" Alastor 'Mad-Eye' Moody replied when asked to comment on the issue at hand. It is quite obvious that Mad-Eye has become mentally retarded after so many fights with the dark forces and is not fit to serve the auror team. Still, people like him are being given the roles of team leaders of aurors. We really don't know what Cornelius Fudge is thinking.

After yet another crippling attack, the million galleon question is now which will be the next target. There are not too many high profile targets left, none bigger than Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Will it be the next one?

Page 3 - Where really happened? An insider's report.

Page 4 - Has Dumbledore really shifted everyone from St. Mungo's?

Page 5 - Should people like Mad-Eye be trusted to keep us safe?

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"I think we should talk to Dumbledore" Ron said.

"It won't help" Hermione said with a shake of her head. "We all know he has a weak spot for Harry"

"That's why I am saying we should talk to him" Ron said indignantly. "He is the only one who can stop Harry from throwing away his life because he cares about him a lot"

"But what can Dumbledore do?" Neville, the last of the group, asked.

They had been arguing for the past half an hour as to how they could get Harry back to his normal life...or as close to normal as his life had been once upon a time.

"Nothing" Hermione said. Ron, frustrated at Hermione's stubbornness, rolled his eyes at this.

"For starters..." Ron argued. "...Dumbledore could talk to Remus and they could figure something out"

"Remus also lost a loved one if I am not wrong" Hermione pointed out. "If I am right then the three of them had been like family until..." Hermione gave an involuntary shudder as she remembered all those horrible rumors of Tonks dieing a very painful death.

"But she wouldn't have wanted him to be like this, would she?" Ron snapped back. Neville was the only one who had not committed himself to any side till now.

"We..." Hermione hissed angrily as she looked around the empty classroom they were in. In a lower voice she continued. "...we are just assuming they were a couple. It's not for sure"

"Maybe not for you!" Ron kicked hard at the bench opposite to him. "Did

you see his face when we came back? He looked like he was..." Ron seemed to be having an internal tussle with himself. "...dying" he finally managed to say with great difficulty.

"Don't talk about Harry like that" Hermione snapped at Ron even as her voice became quite emotional. She couldn't think of Harry dying!

"Hermione..." Ron looked at his girlfriend with pleading eyes. "...I have watched from the sidelines for too long. If he doesn't do anything then I will have to break the barrier he has created"

"It will be almost impossible" Neville said very thoughtfully. Ron and Hermione both gave him questioning glances. Seeing their expressions, Neville explained. "Somewhere something has changed the very core of Harry's thinking. He thinks he is a danger to all of us and he has almost brainwashed himself". Neville looked down at his palms as he said this.

"And if my assumption is true then it will be very hard to change his thoughts...almost impossible until this war is over"

"It's only an assumption" Ron said after a long moment's silence. He had to admit that Neville's logic was very convincing but he didn't want to be convinced. He still wanted to think of Harry as the person he had known even a few months back. Hermione did not say anything and kept grasping and un-grasping her hands. It was quite obvious that her mind was trying to somehow prove that Neville's assumption was the most illogical thing she had ever heard but she just couldn't find any answer to it.

"Let's talk to Professor McGonagall" Hermione said at last. She knew they had to talk to someone at the very least...someone whose words Harry would listen to. Apart from Dumbledore, only Professor McGonagall had the sort of personality to command unparalleled respect from both teachers and students alike. And if Harry didn't listen to her then he

would listen to no one.

"Something's better than nothing" Ron said with a shrug as he jumped to his feet. Hermione and Neville followed suit and started the long walk to McGonagall's office.

"Do you really think they were together?" Hermione asked as they turned the last corridor leading to McGonagall's office. The three of them had walked on for 10 minutes in complete silence till then.

"I hope not" Ron replied. "If it is true then..." Ron sighed thinking about the dreadful feeling he had had when he had seen Hermione trying to save him in the battle with the giants and death eaters. He remembered how his heart had almost stopped beating and the relief afterwards to find Hermione safe. "I remember him telling me once that they were very close friends"

"Even that is very tough" Hermione blinked hard to fight the moistness in her eyes. The three of them walked the last few steps in complete silence. Hermione paused slightly in front of McGonagall's office, took a deep breath and knocked.

"Come in" came the tired voice of Professor McGonagall. Upon entering her office, it was very clear to everyone present that McGonagall had been working non-stop for well over 2-3 days and seemed deprived of sleep.

"Ms. Granger, Mr. Weasley and Mr. Longbottom...what can I do for you?" McGonagall queried in her usual quite manner. Ron couldn't help but appreciate the character of this lady who was under so much stress but could still maintain her composure. He could understand slightly why Hermione had chosen Professor McGonagall as her role model.

"It's Harry" Hermione burst out. The emotions which had been building up in her for the past few days seemed to be too great to bear anymore.

"You have to help him somehow". Hearing this, Professor McGonagall stood up in a flash.

"Has something happened to Mr. Potter?" McGonagall leaned forward on her desk with a very concerned look on her face.

"NO!" Hermione couldn't stop herself from shouting. The last thing she wanted to do was to cause Professor McGonagall undue stress by giving the impression that Harry had got into some kind of trouble with death eaters or Voldemort for that matter. After all, Harry had never got into a minor fracas till now unless one counted the silly confrontations with Malfoy.

"Then?" Professor McGonagall seemed to relax slightly at this but she still looked very concerned. For a second Hermione felt slightly jealous that maybe...just maybe McGonagall was more concerned about Harry than she had ever been for her but she quickly overcame those feelings. After all, Harry Potter meant a lot to almost everyone in the wizarding world.

"Ma'am...he is..." Hermione struggled to put her feelings in words. "...he has become very strange nowadays" she finally said. "He is...not the Harry we knew". Hermione looked at McGonagall and could see the feelings on her face quite clearly. It was all too apparent to her that Professor McGonagall shared her opinion.

"Ms. Granger..." Professor McGonagall said with a strange expression on her face. "...sometimes people change because they have to change. We cannot dictate the way a person moulds himself"

"You are right professor" Hermione couldn't help but agree. "And we..." she pointed to herself and Ron and Neville. "...had similar thoughts till now but..."

"But what?" McGonagall asked in a neutral tone. She knew Harry's friend's missed him a lot but the truth was none of the professors could

do anything. If Dumbledore didn't try to question Harry's decisions then it was only wise that others didn't do so unless they really felt the need for it.

"Let me speak" Ron stepped forward after seeing that Hermione was having trouble expressing her feelings. McGonagall shifted her gaze towards him.

"Professor..." Ron paused and took a deep breath as if to calm himself. He closed his eyes for a moment and then opened them and started to speak.

"I have known Harry for a long time. He has gone through a lot of things these past six and a half years. The main thing about him which struck me was that he came out of each problem as a stronger person...as a more understanding person...someone on whom we could rely with our lives if required". Professor McGonagall nodded her head slightly as Ron paused. She knew that Ron was having trouble keeping his emotions under control as he was mentally reliving many of the precious happy moments he had shared with Harry.

"However..." Ron choked slightly but quickly cleared his throat. "...since the beginning...rather from the start of the summer holidays, he had become very different. You know it as well as we do". McGonagall did not say anything and remained non-committal. "On my part..." Ron continued. "...I gave Harry as much space as anyone could need. I didn't meddle in his affairs and let him sort out things for himself. After all, we are now old enough to understand a few things ourselves". Both Neville and Hermione, whose eyes were fixed on the floor, nodded at this.

"But when I came back from the Christmas holidays..." Ron's voice quavered slightly at this point. "...Harry seemed to have changed a lot. He seemed like a ghost of what he had been even ten days back. A lot of things had happened in those few days...lot of regrettable things..." Ron's

voice started shaking with anger as his thoughts wandered to those about Ginny. He stood silent for a few seconds and was brought back to reality only when the reassuring hand of Neville rested on his shoulders.

"Ma'am..." Ron spoke up again. "...the thing is that Harry has gone from bad to worse and we can take it no longer. He had become independent which is a very good thing but right now, we don't think he is emotionally stable. I mean, I am also having trouble coping with the things which have happened recently but I have my family, Her...er...my friends..." Ron stammered slightly and blushed a bit as Hermione's name almost slipped through. Hermione, on the other hand, smiled inwardly as she could feel just how valuable she was to Ron.

"But does Harry have anyone? The answer is no!" Ron said emphatically.

"And we think either Professor Dumbledore or you can make him see the reality...make him feel that he needs some kind of support from us. No one can live alone in this world". With this, Ron finished his statement.

Professor McGonagall pondered for quite a while on what Ron had just said to her. Her eyes were shut tight as she seemed to contemplate on her actions and their consequences. There was no denying that what Ron had said was the truth but there was also no denying that controlling Harry or trying to influence him might have grave consequences. After a couple of minutes of pin drop silence, Professor McGonagall stood up from her seat once again.

"Mr. Weasley..." she looked straight into Ron's eyes. "You have said words of such wisdom that would do your parents proud. To tell the truth, I had thought I would not be able to hear you speak like this until a couple of more years had passed by". McGonagall smiled slightly at this. Both Neville and Hermione beamed at Ron on hearing such high praise from McGonagall. However, Ron's expression remained as grim as it had been

for the past hour or so.

"I fully understand your concerns regarding Mr. Potter" McGonagall continued. "He is going through a lot of mental stress and does need someone beside him even though he might not think so. As far as we know Mr. Lupin is trying to help him overcome his problems"

"But that is not enough" Ron replied, his eyes wide in surprise. How could someone expect Remus to do his work for the Order as well as have werewolf transformations and still support Harry? "He needs you or the headmaster to knock some sense into his brain. Then only can he see that he needs some other people too...even if it means only sitting around the fireplace in complete silence"

"I understand your reasoning Mr. Weasley" Professor McGonagall could feel that Ron was almost at his snapping point. "However, I will not do anything which might cause Mr. Potter more concerns. However, I can talk to Mr. Lupin if you want that"

"We would like that but..." Hermione had just begun to speak when Ron spoke again.

"We didn't come to you so that you could talk to Mr. Lupin Professor" Ron said in a sarcastic voice. Professor McGonagall, knowing fully well how much Ron was concerned about Harry, decided to overlook the sarcasm. "I want you to talk to Harry"

"I am sorry but I can't keep your request" McGonagall replied as briefly as possible.

"Sorry for wasting your time Professor". With that, Ron stormed out of the office of their transfiguration teacher.

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"How could she give up so easily?" Ron asked out of sheer frustration. Hermione and Neville had been quick to join him on the way back as

they had nothing else to say to McGonagall and Ron had effectively closed the subject for discussion.

"She explained her reasons" Hermione replied though the disappointment in her voice was pretty much evident.

"Human life is not always governed by reasons" Neville said in a somber voice. "Sometimes we need to try even when all reasoning fails"

"Then why don't you guys try yourselves?" Hermione said sarcastically.

"Why are we running around after the teachers? You are his room mates...sort out the stuff yourself"

"So we can't even criticize your dear professor anymore?" Ron replied in a venomous voice. "More valuable to you than Harry, isn't she?"

"No!" Hermione stopped walking for a split second. Ron, however, didn't stop. From the tone of Hermione's voice, he knew he had touched a raw nerve and most probably she had tears in her eyes. If Hermione hated anything, that was becoming too emotional. If she hated anything more, that was anyone seeing her crying, even Ron. Hence Ron decided to walk on knowing that Hermione would soon be with them...if she was not too mad at him, that is.

"How could you say something like that?" Hermione hissed at Ron when she had rejoined them. She had been a second late to regain her composure.

"I said what I felt" Ron replied bluntly, knowing fully well that Hermione would be hurt at this. However, he just couldn't help it. He cared too much for Harry and didn't like the manner in which the professors seemed to have given up on him.

"And you know you are wrong, don't you?" Hermione spat at him.

Neville, seeing a storm brewing up, quickened his pace and moved ahead of the couple.

"You know what..." Ron stopped and turned round to face Hermione. "... this time around, you and all your professors might be the wrong ones". Hermione could see that Ron had become very angry but she wouldn't back away either. "At least..." Ron continued "...I will not give up on Harry by saying he is living his choices anymore because I know he is not"

"And how would you know about his choices?" Hermione couldn't help keeping her sarcastic voice down. "You of all people!" she added before she could even stop herself.

Ron looked furiously at Hermione for a second before his face softened. But to Hermione's surprise, his anger seemed to make way for a look of complete amusement.

"After all these years you ask me how I know about him?" Ron asked, his voice sounding slightly disappointed as well as amused. "You people are so naïve"

"We are naïve?" Hermione had thought she couldn't get angrier but she had been proved wrong. Her anger seemed to have gone up a hundred notches and her eyes seemed like they were on fire. "You are the naïve one Ronald Weasley...always the naïve one". Ron just looked at her for a few moments and shook his head in apparent disappointment.

"Maybe..." Ron said finally and started to walk away on his own without seeing whether Hermione was following him or not. "...Maybe not".

Hermione stood alone in the corridor and watched the back of Ron disappear round the corner. She couldn't help stop the only thought coming to her mind at that moment.

"Was Ron right this time around?"

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"Can we come in?"

"Hi Angelina" Cho said with a smile as she saw the figure of Angelina Johnson standing in the doorway of the Room of Requirements. The D.A. had been meeting there for the past 30 minutes and discussing the happenings of the war when Angelina had entered. "You know you can always come in here" Cho added.

"Well...yeah" Angelina said a bit warily as she entered. Another figure entered right after her, Alicia.

"Hi Alicia" Cho and Neville chorused coincidentally. Alicia gave an acknowledging nod to them and turned to wave at many others who had greeted her. After all, no one could so easily forget one of the best chasers Gryffindor and Hogwarts had seen in a long, long time.

"We need to talk about something" Angelina said in a distressed voice. Alicia nodded at this. Seeing the expression on the faces of these girls, the whole of the D.A. became very attentive knowing something important had happened.

"Please go on" Cho said, the friendly voice replaced by a serious tone. Angelina and Alicia quickly exchanged a glance as if to confirm that they were doing the right thing. Angelina gave a slight nod to Alicia who gave a sigh.

"We can't find Katie" Alicia said as bluntly as possible.

"What?" Hermione shot up from her seat. "What do you mean you can't find Katie? She's at your tent all the time since you came here"

"Yes" Angelina replied in a meek voice. She didn't know why she was being afraid but for some reason she felt guilty about everything that had happened. Understanding the feelings of her friend, Alicia took a step forward and started explaining.

"She was with us till yesterday afternoon" Alicia stated. "Then she told us she had to leave for a couple of hours to meet her grandfather. She never

came back"

"She can't leave the castle like that" Hermione said in a bewildered voice.

"Every student must take Dumbledore's permission..."

"She had his permission" Alicia said. "I saw the permission slip myself"

"Did you try to contact her grandfather?" Anthony Goldstein asked from one of the back rows.

"That's the main problem" Alicia said in a gloomy voice. "We talked to the headmaster today and he said her grandfather had been admitted to St. Mungo's. Apparently she had gone to visit him there"

"St. Mungo's!" Cho exclaimed. "Yesterday?". Alicia nodded slightly at this. The whole of the D.A. was thunderstruck at this. After all, yesterday had been the day that St. Mungo's had been attacked.

An uneasy silence fell in the whole Room of Requirements. The senior members of the D.A. seemed to be lost in their own thoughts while the junior members exchanged concerned glances. A few people of the D.A., mainly the first years, didn't know Angelina or Alicia but by the way they had been greeted by the others, they could see that these were a couple of much respected members of Hogwarts. Hence even they were feeling sympathetic and concerned about the feelings of the two girls in front of them.

"What do we do?" Cho asked after a couple of minutes of silence. Her question seemed to be posed to the senior members of the D.A.

"What did Dumbledore say?" Neville asked Alicia.

"He said he would get a couple of aurors to look into the matter"

Angelina was the one who replied. "Also said that her grandfather was fine"

"And he asked us to talk to you people" Alicia added. "He said that if Katie was somewhere around Hogwarts...maybe in Hogsmead or

somewhere...then the D.A. would be better placed to find them"

"Why would Katie be in Hogwarts and not contacting anyone?" Soha asked in a surprised tone.

"Maybe because she could have been kidnapped?" the voice of Ron Weasley could be clearly heard from the back of the room. At hearing this, another bout of silence gripped the room.

"Well..." Neville said after what seemed to be like an eternity. "If we have to search for Katie then I think we should make a plan as to how to conduct the search". Everyone around him nodded at hearing this.

"Let's get going" Cho said in a grim but determined voice. She knew they had to find Katie at all costs. Whether she had been hurt in the castle or had been kidnapped outside Hogwarts or had been somehow captured during the fight at St. Mungo's was up to anyone's imagination. Even though they couldn't rule out any of the options, it was better to hope for the best. Whatever might have happened to Katie, they just had to find her. The D.A. couldn't let students go missing just like that. With the prospect of a couple of days of thorough search operations in front of them, the senior members of the D.A. started to plan the best way to proceed on the situation at hand.

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"I feel so terrible" Angelina said to Alicia once they were back in her tent. Her parents had tried to convince her that it was not her fault but had not been able to do so. At last they had left her with Alicia hoping that she would be able to convince Angelina in some way or the other.

"It's not your fault Angie" Alicia said in a soothing voice.

"It's my fault alright" Angelina said in an aggressive voice. "I told her to visit her grandfather as soon as possible so that we could all hang out at Hogsmead for the weekend. Only if I had not pressured her to go there

before she had planned it..."

"No...no..." Alicia patted her friend's head softly as Angelina broke into tears. "It's not your fault Angie. It was a coincidence"

"It's my fault" Angelina said in between her sniff while Alicia kept saying it was not. A few moments of silence passed as both the girls were lost in their own thoughts.

"Ali?"

"Yes Angie?"

"What if we don't find Katie?" Angelina looked fearfully at her friend as she said this. "What if she is lost forever?"

"She is not lost forever" Alicia said in an angry voice as her eyes seemed to fill up with tears too. "And don't you dare ever say a thing like that"

"Sorry" Angelina replied meekly.

"Good" Alicia said in return as both the girls fell silent again.

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"Hello Mr. Potter"

"Hello Mr. Tevrid" Harry said as he shook hands with the goblin. "And like I had said in our previous meeting, please call me Harry"

"Yes...yes..." Tevrid said with what seemed like a mischievous smile. "I keep forgetting that part". Harry smiled at this. It was quite obvious that Tevrid had not forgotten it. Rather, he must have thought that maybe Harry had forgotten that he had asked Tevrid to call him by his first name. For that reason, he had maintained the formality. However, he seemed very pleased now to see that Harry had actually remembered their last meeting.

"So..." Harry broke the silence between them. "Today is the day for the big press release of your prototype wallet, is it?"

"Yes" Tevrid replied. "We have had a great response from you. Also, it has

prospect of being the top seller for Gringotts. After all, no one seems to want to come here anymore"

"Times are tough" Harry said in understanding.

"Yes" Tevrid agreed. "That's why we want to launch it now so we can get the maximum benefit. Not to mention the fact that this will generate quite a lot of revenue for you too"

"I don't know what to do with so much money" Harry said in a wary voice.

"Better keep it for your future" Tevrid said in a very serious voice. "You will need it". After a slight pause, he added "Everyone will need their savings for the rebuilding after everything is over"

"Why don't you join Dumbledore?" Harry asked in a very blunt manner. Tevrid seemed slightly taken aback at the direct reference to the topic they had been discussing.

"It's not my decision to make" Tevrid replied after a few seconds of silence. If anyone other than Harry Potter had made such a suggestion, then any goblin would have thought that he was trying to undermine the goblins by asking them to join the wizards. Rather, if the wizards needed their help then they should come to the goblins. However Tevrid knew that Harry had not meant it in that way.

"We need to be united in this time of distress" Harry said in a low voice.

"And nothing will be more valuable to the wizarding community than to have the co-operation of your respected goblin community"

Tevrid smiled at hearing these words from Harry. This young wizard was both humble and also knew that every community should be respected. It was very uncommon in wizards, even rarer in the newer generation.

Somehow, maybe due to the influence of Dumbledore or maybe due to his own thinking patterns, Harry seemed to be an exception.

"We understand your concerns Harry" Tevrid said. "However there are certain things which have happened in the past of which you have no knowledge...things which have had terrible consequences". Tevrid paused at this before continuing. "I, personally, wouldn't be able to forget what had happened"

"Sometimes we have to forget the past to hold on to the present and build the future" Harry said. "However, you are much senior to me and hence are much wiser. I shouldn't be speaking in these matters"

"We know you are an important person in this war Harry Potter" Tevrid used Harry's full name to signify his importance. "And we will keep your offer in mind. It has been a long time since anyone other than Albus Dumbledore has spoken to us like this"

"Thank you" Harry said. Just by saying that the goblins would keep his request in mind was a great compliment in itself.

"Now we should go down to the press conference" Tevrid said as he looked at the watch in his chamber. Harry nodded and followed the goblin to the press conference.

The press conference went off very well in Harry's opinion. Initially no one in the press knew that Harry Potter was going to personally endorse the product and had been pleasantly surprised at his entrance. Word spread fast and, before the end of the press conference, many more reporters had come in to cover the event.

Everyone seemed to be very excited about the prospects of the new product launched by Gringotts. Some of the more well off reporters even placed an order for themselves before leaving. However, towards the end of the press conference, the questions posed at Harry shifted from his association with Gringotts to that related to death eaters. He responded with a "No comments" to all those questions and said that at that moment

he was concerned with promoting Gringotts's products only and would talk about other matters at a different time and place. It was no wonder that all the goblins present at that time took very kindly to such a professional approach from Harry.

"Thank god it is over" Harry said once he was back in Mr. Tevrid's chamber once again.

"You handled it very well" Tevrid said with a smile. "Have you thought of becoming a permanent "face" of all of Gringotts products?"

"I had explained the last time also that I was neither interested in any money and didn't want more publicity" Harry replied in a firm tone. "I am doing this because this product has really been helpful to me in these past few months"

"But you are a shareholder of the profits Gringotts will make from the wallet sales" Tevrid reasoned. "You bargained on that"

"It was business" Harry replied with a smile. "I couldn't let Gringotts get away with all the money they would be generating from the wallet sales just because I got a 275 galleon rebate, could I? But I really don't need any further amounts of money coming in"

"As you wish Harry" Tevrid knew he couldn't make Harry change his opinion. "If only you could sign these papers then we would be done for the day"

Harry went on to sign a few documents and soon found himself outside Mr. Tevrid's office. Wishing Mr. Tevrid well, Harry went on to find the other goblin he had come to meet today.

"Come in please" the goblin sitting in his cabin said when he heard a knock on the door. As Harry entered, the goblin rose from his chair with a smile on his face.

"Hello Mr. Potter"

"Hello Mr. Larynth" Harry reiterated with a smile on his face. "How are you doing?". Larynth was the same goblin who was in charge of all legal matters related to Gringotts and whom Harry had met about seven to eight months back.

"Oh...I am fine...thank you" Larynth seemed slightly taken aback at being asked such a question. Usually people only talked about legal matters only without going out of the way to be polite. "So, what can I do for you Mr. Potter?"

"I have come here today to complete the formalities". Harry said. Larynth invited him to have a seat and started talking only after Harry was comfortably seated.

"Are you sure you want to do this Mr. Potter?" Larynth said in a concerned voice. "I had thought you had forgotten about our discussion"

"I don't forget things so easily nowadays" Harry replied back with a smile which was polite yet firm. "And I am sure I want to do this"

"Then I don't think I have anything else to do but go ahead" Larynth didn't sound like himself at all. "Do you have the details worked out?"

"Yes" Harry said and held forward a piece of parchment. "Here it is". The goblin went through the list quickly and nodded his head.

"It is very clear" he replied finally and looked back at Harry.

"That's all then" Harry said as he rose from his chair. "And I hope you remember my request from the last time"

"Yes" Larynth replied. "This will remain between us only"

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Harry came back to Hogwarts from the meeting with the goblins in a relatively happier frame of mind. He had finished a couple of long awaited tasks and he knew he didn't have to worry about any publicity campaign for another month or so. Needless to say, he hated everything

in which he might have to deal with the press and being free for a month or two was very good news for him.

As Harry made the way to his dormitory, a number of swishing noises filled up the air around him. Looking around, he saw hundreds of owls sweeping down into the Great Hall. One of the owls spotted him and landed on his shoulder and held out one of her legs which had a newspaper tied to it. He quickly paid the owl the 5 knuts it wanted and started unfolding the newspaper which he had taken from her.

The Daily Prophet - Special Edition

Giants Appear At The Ministry

Today, at exactly 11 am in the morning, the ministry building was attacked by a couple of giants. Apparently the ministry aurors had gone out on some urgent work and most of the building was unprotected when the attack occurred.

Eyewitnesses say that a huge hole opened up in the sky near the ministry building and the giants are said to have stepped through it. The observations suggest the opening of a teleportation passage which, if confirmed, will be the first case of giant teleportation in more than a century.

The giants destroyed a couple of towers of the ministry building before they went back through the passage which closed automatically as reported by eyewitnesses. Few of the ministry officials were said to have put up a brave fight in front of the giants but to no avail. However, no casualties have been reported though an unnamed source revealed that a couple of ministry officials were being treated for minor injuries sustained during the fight.

Giant teleportation is yet another development which has started to worry the senior members of the Wizengamot. Many of them see this incident as an experiment whereby the dark forces tried to see whether giant teleportation was possible or not. If that is the case, then they have succeeded in it and that

is a cause of grave concern for the entire wizarding world.

We have seen attacks by death eaters and werewolves in the past. This attack by the giants seems to be a show of strength of the dark forces who seem to have garnered the support of all the species whom the ministry has neglected for years. In the hindsight we are forced to think as to whether we did the right thing by shunning these species. The whole prospect of fighting death eaters supported by giants and werewolves seems to be a task too great for all the ministries aurors.

"Was it all worth it?" was the sentiment echoed by a few senior aurors of the ministry who had opposed the movement against the giants and werewolves. It seems now that they will be the ones to pay first for the blunders our ministry has committed...yet again.

Page 3 - Cornelius Fudge says "No Comments" to all queries.

Page 4 - Can even Dumbledore take out one giant on his own?

Page 5 & 6 - Giants: A guide to beating them in their own game.

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"Hi Harry" Fred said as Harry entered the empty shop of "Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes". Upon seeing the dark shadow playing on his face, he quickly said "Seems like you heard about it too"

"Yeah" Harry replied as he thought of the article he had read just a couple of minutes ago. Without thinking more, he had portkeyed right into Diagon Alley to get as much information on the incident as possible.

And who else would be better to go than the twins. "Do you guys know what happened?"

"Nothing in particular" George replied from one of the rooms in back.

"Just tit-bits we are hearing from our customers"

"Anything of importance?" Harry seemed quite quirky. "The prophet mentioned giants"

"Yes" Fred replied. "We feel their arrival...through the shaking of the ground, that is. But it were the smaller ones only"

"Smaller ones?" Harry looked confused for a second before saying. "Oh... you mean small giants?"

"Yes" Fred replied. George wasn't making too many comments and Harry guessed he must be very busy. "Some death eaters attacked a couple of shops at the far end of Diagon Alley"

"And the ministry asked it's aurors to move in to save them" George said from inside. He wasn't so busy after all.

"And after a few minutes of fight everybody heard a huge thumping noise" Fred continued from where George had let go.

"We rushed out to see the aurors in a state of confusion" George said.

"And then some auror heard something over their communication system and he shouted 'Giants'"

"The prophet never mentioned an attack on any of the Diagon Alley shops" Harry said thoughtfully.

"Maybe they didn't have enough space on their front page" George shouted from inside, his voice dripping with sarcasm.

"You seemed more worried than usual mate" Fred said in a concerned voice.

"And that is saying a lot" George commented from inside. Harry heard a huge bang and a smiling George emerged from their experiment room. "I finally managed to enlarge the bottom of a cauldron to the extent of the whole room. It bursts only if it's four sides hit the walls...otherwise it continues expanding"

"Great to hear that" Harry didn't shared George's enthusiasm who didn't seem to mind at all. He knew Harry had much larger things on his mind that Ever Expanding Cauldrons.

"Giants being teleported is a very serious matter" Harry contemplated loudly.

"Yes" George said in a serious tone. "I bet it was an insider job"

"What do you mean?" Harry asked in alarm.

"You can't create a teleportation path from one side" Fred said. "One person has to be present at the source and the other at the destination"

"And both have to open up the teleportation portal at the same time"

George continued. "Once the connection is opened, then the wizards can leave but they have to be there till the connection is fully opened"

"So..." Harry said. "You mean to say that someone was..."

"Near the ministry and cast a teleportation spell...yes" Fred finished the sentence.

"But why did you say it is an insider job?" Harry asked curiously. "They attacked a Diagon Alley shop to distract the aurors...so why would they need an insider?"

"Mate..." George said. "Security at the ministry is so high now that anyone with the dark mark on his arm will trigger off a load of alarms"

"So either someone cast a strong confundus spell..." Fred said

"Or they cast a spell to switch off the complete magical security system"

George continued. Looking at Harry's disbelieving look, Fred said "It's not a powerful object like the Goblet of Fire which stops burning by itself after the tournament is over. It's almost like a muggle system which can be shut off"

"How do you think the death eaters got into the Department of Mysteries without anyone knowing?" George asked. "Our ministry is not that inefficient either"

"Like we had found in our fifth year when we had tried to apparate to our father's office" Fred had a faraway look on his face.

"And ended up in the ministry prison for a couple of hours before dad came" George said with the same look on his face.

"The shame..."

"...of failing"

"Understood" Harry said loudly so as to cut the flow of unnecessary information coming from the twins at the moment. It made sense after all.

"So someone had switched off the alarms at the Department of Mysteries?" Harry asked to confirm. The twins nodded in unison.

"There are spies everywhere" Fred said.

"And it will be impossible to get rid of them" George added.

"Unless the ministry uses our Spy Wry Potion" Fred smiled.

"Which makes all the spies thirsty" George continued.

"And the thirst goes away only when they drink..." Fred gave a knowing look to his brother who smiled back mischievously.

"Drink what?" Harry asked curiously. In the midst of all the ramblings, the twins always packed some credible information.

"Veritaserum" the twins said in a loud cheerful voice. It was very obvious that they were very proud of their product and since Harry had not heard about it on his previous meetings with the twins, he guessed it was a relatively new development.

"That's an interesting potion" Harry said with genuine appreciation.

"Anyway, thanks for all the information. You aren't missing anything, are you? Do you guys have any idea why I didn't pick up anything on the spying devices?"

"Told you all we thought was important" Fred replied.

"And everything which we can remember" George added. "As for the spying devices, must be that the death eaters behind this were not

wearing anything which was bugged"

"Thanks...I also had a similar thought". With that, a thoughtful Harry walked out of the shop thinking about the information he had gathered from the twins. According to Harry's reasoning, something did not fit in the whole thing. Voldemort was not the type of person who would be "experimenting" with giant teleportation near the ministry building.

Taking into the account that there had been an attack at one of the shops near the end of Diagon Alley, Harry knew something was wrong somewhere in this whole thing. As to what was wrong...to that he had no answer at the moment.

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"How can you expect us not to panic?" one of the refugees shouted from the back of the Great Hall. All the refugees had come over to meet Albus Dumbledore after reading the special edition of The Daily Prophet.

"What if the giants turn up here next?" another woman asked. "And where is Professor Dumbledore?"

"He is right now at the ministry" Professor McGonagall replied calmly.

"And like I said before, you are not under any kind of threat from giants being teleported"

"I saw some giants in the forest" one man shouted above the rest.

"WHAT!" a woman asked in a shrill voice and pulled her kids as close to herself as possible. A lot of people looked shocked at the statement and were about to voice their concerns when McGonagall spoke again.

"Yes..." Professor McGonagall said. "There are giants in the forbidden forest but they are on our side. And if you all are wondering, they have been here before you all turned up". Some of the people looked at each other curiously as they were consumed in their thoughts. Having giants on their side was slightly comforting in the face of all the bad news

which they had been getting lately.

"What if more giants turned up in the forest and they are against us?" one woman asked.

"No giant can come here by themselves" Professor Flitwick explained. The whole of Hogwarts seemed to be packed into the Great Hall at the moment. "We guided these giants to the forests...otherwise they would never have been there"

"And..." Professor McGonagall said sternly. "...for all those who go on little adventures in the forest, please remember it is named the Forbidden Forest for a purpose". A few people squirmed under the gaze of their partners. "There are all sorts of animals in there including spiders as big as Hogwarts itself". Hermione's head snapped towards her mentor at this. She knew that this was a blatant lie but then saw a slight smirk on McGonagall's face if that was possible. Looking at the reaction of the refugees, she could understand the motive of McGonagall's lie. Everyone was looking at McGonagall with their eyes wide open in absolute horror. "WHAT?" the guy who had said he had seen giants in the forest looked as if he had just heard the worst horror story of his life.

"You mean...spiders...Hogwarts...eeeeeeeeek" one woman collapsed as the meaning of McGonagall's words sunk in. Though she was instantly enervated by her friend, her face seemed to be drained of all color.

"You are literally playing with your lives when you are entering the forest" McGonagall said after a couple of minutes of silence for effect. "It seems that you are doing more to harm yourselves than the death eaters at the moment"

"We did not know" one woman said in a hoarse voice. "No one will ever go there". A murmur of consent went through the crowd. Professor McGonagall couldn't help but feel slightly satisfied with herself. She

knew that only three of the students knew the truth behind the spiders but she couldn't care less about the topic at the moment.

"Still..." another woman said in a choked voice. "We don't feel safe at all. We know we are at Hogwarts and everything but please do something. We beg you...I beg you". The emotion in her voice seemed to touch every person present in the room as she fell to her knees flanked by two kids aged around three. This made the sight even more sentimental.

"Please remain calm" McGonagall said in a composed manner. "Please let us discuss the options for a moment and we will let you know". With this, all the professors moved to the room next to the great hall to hold an emergency meeting. After a couple minutes had passed, Fleur came out and asked Cho and Neville to accompany her inside. The students looked slightly bewildered but followed nevertheless. Soon after, everyone emerged from the meeting and Cho and Neville went back to their respective groups.

Professor McGonagall cleared her throat to gain everyone's attention and said "We have come to the conclusion of holding round the clock flying patrols around Hogwarts and its surrounding areas". Instantly, enthusiastic claps could be heard all around. These died down as soon as McGonagall cleared her throat for a second time.

"However..." McGonagall continued. "...we will need your co-operation. We will be forming a group of students who will patrol the area and will alert us if anything suspicious is noted. I assure you that these students are well equipped for the duty we will trust them with". This sentence effectively ended any chance of anyone objecting to 'students' patrolling 'elders'.

"During nighttime, some of you may be needed to patrol the areas since the students will be in their beds". McGonagall paused for a second to see

how everyone was taking the news before she continued. "We will need some volunteers"

"I am ready" one boy in his mid-teens raised his arm. Several more arms went up, a few a bit hesitant initially but gaining in confidence later.

Soon almost everyone who could fly well was ready to volunteer.

"Please give your names to Professor Flitwick present here and he will arrange the schedule and contact you". With that, McGonagall left the Great Hall which was soon filled with great activity.

&&&&

"Hi"

"Oh...hello Rowena" Harry said as he saw the face of Rowena over the top of the book he was reading in the library. "What brings you here?"

"Well..." Rowena looked around in discomfort. Harry knew it was always hard for a kid so young to take so much pressure from her house mates but sometimes some people come out stronger because of that.

"Want to go somewhere else?" Harry suggested. Rowena instantly nodded her head in agreement. Harry quietly replaced the book at its right place and asked Rowena to meet him in the room. Rowena nodded her head again and vanished from Harry's sight very quickly.

"So, what is it?" Harry asked once he had also entered the Room of Requirements and found Rowena sitting on a chair, awaiting his arrival.

"Can you come to my home sometime?" Rowena asked innocently, her face losing some of the steely appearance which everyone had come to associate with her.

"Your home?" Harry asked in a puzzled manner. The question had come out of the blue. "I...don't know"

"Oh" Rowena said with a downfallen look on her face which was quickly replaced by the steely expression. Harry saw that the girl was feeling very

down and hence decided to do something about it.

"I have to ask the headmaster" Harry said. At this Rowena looked up at him again with a hint of expectation in her eyes. "But he will ask me as to the reason of my visit. Why do you want me to visit your home?"

"Actually my father wanted to meet you" Rowena replied.

"Your father wants to meet me?" Harry looked even more perplexed.

"Why? I mean...I don't want to sound rude but I am getting a bit afraid. Maybe he wants to beat up a Gryffindor" Harry finished the sentence in a much lighter tone. It helped because he saw Rowena smile at his comments.

"No...it is not that" Rowena replied, the smile still lingering on her face.

"He just wants to meet you"

"C'mon" Harry said in mock exasperation. "Please tell me the reason"

"He wants to thank you" Rowena replied after a couple of minutes of contemplation. Seeing the look on Harry's face, she continued. "For saving my life"

"Saving your...oh" Suddenly Harry remembered how he had saved her life during the battle at Hogwarts. "But that was a long time ago and anyone in my place would have done the same"

"No...not everyone would do the same" Rowena said in a slightly fierce voice. "And my father had been away for quite a few months that's why he had not been able to ask you to come over"

"I see" Harry looked slightly thoughtful. The gesture by Rowena's father was really appreciable and he did not think turning it down would be a good idea. Also, not every Slytherin's parent invited a Gryffindor to their home, least of all Harry Potter.

"Ok then..." Harry replied at last. "...Lets go to your home the next weekend". Rowena seemed very happy at this. "But I have to ask the

headmaster first"

"I have already talked to him" Rowena said enthusiastically. "He said he had no problems with this arrangement"

"That's good then" Harry replied. "But still it is my duty to ask him personally"

"Of course" Rowena replied and got up from her seat. "I will tell my father about your decision then"

"As you wish Rowena" Harry replied as a smiling Rowena left the room.

&&&&

"Where does Neville keep going every morning?" Hermione said this a bit more loudly than she would have liked to. Ron, who was sitting opposite to Hermione, just looked at Neville walking out of the portrait hole before returning back to Quidditch through the ages. She and Ron were still not on full fledged talking terms but they managed to get along for the time being. They had been having the minimum possible conversation ever since their fight over the "Harry-McGonagall issue".

"I am going to see where he is going" Hermione said as she cast a glance at Ron. Ron didn't say anything and kept on reading. "You can come if you want to" Hermione said in an expectant voice as she stood up and started walking towards the portrait hole. To her dismay, Ron didn't make a move to get up from his place near the fire. With a sigh, Hermione walked out of the portrait hole and into the corridor just in time to see Neville's back vanishing around the corner. As she started hurrying after him, she heard footsteps behind her. Looking back, she saw Ron trying to catch up with her. Smiling inwardly, she turned the corner to see Neville walking towards the Great Hall.

Ron soon joined Hermione and fell in step with her. They crossed the Great Hall in silence and followed Neville. Even though they didn't say a

word to each other, both knew that the other was curious as to where Neville would vanish to every day. After all, old habits die hard. Soon they found themselves outside the Herbology classroom. Exchanging a quick glance, they sneaked inside.

"Thank god you are here" they heard Madam Sprout saying. Peeking over the top of a few plants, they saw Neville putting on ear-muffs.

"Mandrakes" Hermione quickly came to a conclusion and conjured up a couple of ear-muffs. She handed one of them to Ron who put it on quickly. No sooner had they put on their ear-muffs that the deadly shrieking of Mandrakes could be heard all around the place. It was a few minutes before Neville spoke.

"Professor Sprout...Do you think these Mandrakes will be worthwhile if the death eaters attack Hogwarts?" Neville asked.

"Yes dear" Madam Sprout replied. It was no secret that she was very fond of Neville. "I hope we don't have to face a situation where we might need to use them"

"Me too" Neville replied in a grim voice before going back to work. Ron and Hermione knew they had gathered enough evidence as to what Neville was up to and they left the classroom quietly.

"So Madam Sprout is growing Mandrakes to fight the dark forces" Ron said thoughtfully as they walked across the grounds of Hogwarts. In the face of the new information, he seemed to forget he had had an argument with Hermione.

"Not only Mandrakes..." Hermione said. "...lots of other plants are being grown there which are categorized as dangerous by the ministry"

"I never thought that these could be used as weapons against death eaters" Ron said in an awe filled voice. "It was always before my eyes and yet..."

"It's a very novel idea" Hermione agreed. "And I bet it was Neville who came up with this. He really has a thing for Herbology"

"He sure does" Ron agreed. "The classroom is full of plants and god knows what. Do you think there are fatal plants there?"

"If you count the Mandrakes and the Acid Spitters and the Hallucinatory Gas Emitting Plants section in the extreme end of the classroom, then there are some pretty fight worthy plants in there" Hermione replied. "Of course, these have to be used as projectiles or something so that we can land them in the middle of death eaters if an attack occurs here"

"They will attack Hogwarts sooner or later" Ron said grimly. "They will be satisfied only when both Dumbledore and Harry are dead"

"Why do you keep saying that?" Hermione shrieked at Ron. "Why do you keep speaking of death?"

"So that I can remember that I have to be there for him when he needs me" Ron replied with a sad but non-repentant expression on his face. He didn't want to hurt Hermione but he had to make her realize that they had to do something to bring Harry into their midst. Now that so many attacks were taking place everywhere, someone needed to be with Harry...or at least remain in contact with him. At the moment, no one knew where Harry was.

"He matters to all of us" Hermione said as tears streaked down her face. She didn't care about Ron seeing her crying anymore. All she wanted was for him to stop speaking as if Harry was going to die the very next day.

"He matters to us just as much he does to you" she said in between her sniffs.

"Then it would be better for all of us if we started acting that way and did something" Ron said and started walking back to the castle. If no one did anything, then he would surely do something.

&&&&

"Hello sir"

"Winky!" Harry was surprised when the tiny elf popped with a crack right beside him as he was returning from the library.

"You is remembering bad Winky" Winky seemed slightly surprised and ashamed at the same time. As Harry looked at Winky, he noticed that she seemed much cleaner now. He guessed she had most probably given up her drinking habits.

"What can I do to help you Winky?" Harry asked politely. Winky looked absolutely scandalized at this. A human, more so Harry Potter, was asking her how he could help her. She decided that if she had to escape more torture then she would have to finish her work here quickly.

"Is Sir wanting Winky to come and work for Sir?" Winky asked hastily.

"Winky know Sir doing work himself". It was then that Harry understood the purpose of Winky appearing in the middle of a corridor and talking to him. He looked carefully at Winky for a moment and contemplated the offer. He didn't need an elf working for him, at least not now when all he had to do was just cook his food. Apart from that, he couldn't bear the thought of another elf taking up the position of Dobby. No, he definitely didn't need an elf.

What amused Harry slightly was the timing of this offer from Winky.

Every elf was sure to have known about what happened to Dobby. A couple of months had gone by before Winky came today and made this offer. Everything would have been fine unless this offer had come only a few days after Harry had read the history behind the Power of Hogwarts. He smiled inwardly as he came to the conclusion that Dumbledore had asked Winky to come to Harry. He doubted that Dumbledore would want to spy on him but he didn't rule it out altogether. Maybe Dumbledore just

wanted an elf to be near Harry. After all, elf magic had saved the Delacours from certain death.

"No Winky..." Harry replied. "...I don't need any help". Winky seemed very disappointed at hearing this to say the least. However, from the look on Harry's face, she knew that it was a final decision.

"But..." this word from Harry raised Winky's hopes slightly and she looked up again. "If I need any help, will you help me?" Harry asked. He didn't want to close all options just yet.

"Yes Sir..." Winky said brightly. "Winky will always be happy to work for Sir. All Sir is doing is calling for Winky"

"Thank you" Harry said before adding "And please let Headmaster Dumbledore know about my request, will you?" With that, Harry turned around and started walking back to the Gryffindor tower as he vaguely imagined Dumbledore chuckling at receiving the message.

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Ron was seated near the fire when he heard the sound of familiar footsteps. Looking around, he saw Harry climbing up the staircase to the boys dormitory.

"Harry..." Ron shouted as he got up from his chair. "...Wait for me in the room". Harry nodded his head and saw Ron quickly arranging some parchments before following him up the staircase. Hermione and Neville looked on warily as Ron vanished inside the dormitory.

"What is it?" Harry asked once both were in their room. Ron sat down on the bed opposite to Harry's. Harry, taking this as an indication that Ron had something important to discuss, sat down on the end of his bed.

"Hmmm..." Ron seemed to be having slight trouble as to where to begin from. "I have been thinking about some things these past few days".

Harry gave an acknowledging nod and waited for Ron to continue.

"I think you should do something about the situation you have created"

Ron said as frankly as he possibly could. Harry frowned on hearing these words and remained silent since he could make neither head nor tail of what "situation" Ron was talking about.

"The situation..." Ron clarified. "...is that you have isolated yourself from all of us...maybe you think you are a threat to us or whatever...". Harry's frowned even more at this but then tried to make his expression as neutral as possible since he now knew what "situation" Ron was talking about.

"Anyway..." Ron continued. "...I don't care what you have thought in the past or what has happened or what you...whatever...it is very confusing for me". Harry almost smiled at this comment. "What I want is that you return back to the old Harry everyone of us knew. We want our Harry back". Harry felt very guilty at hearing these words and knew that these words had come after months of suffering of his friends. He knew he was the cause of the pain but he couldn't help it, could he? How could he live if someone else was killed because of him?

"And I want our relation back" Ron finished in a low tone. "I don't care what you think of me...maybe you are sick of me or something else... maybe you don't want me to be near you but..." Ron paused for breath before continuing. "...but just tell me what it is and I will go away forever. However, if you can't tell me that you hate me, then I want our old friendship back"

This time Harry really smiled, one of great gratitude. He did not have words to express just how much he had been touched...just what it meant to hear all this from Ron...just how much it was so like Ron to say things like these. Taking a deep breath, and nodding to himself as if he was coming to a conclusion himself, Harry spoke.

"I will try" was all Harry said in return. Harry had been thinking on a similar thing for the past few days himself and now he knew that his friends also missed him a lot. Harry knew he needed some help in resurrecting the Power of Hogwarts and now that he was all alone, he needed his friends. Even though he hated to admit it, he needed their help. The emotional part would never be back to normal but in the present time, co-operation was needed between himself and the others. He knew he would have to make a decision soon enough.

Ron looked slightly disappointed at this reply but was satisfied that at least Harry had said he would try. And if Harry said he would try then he would definitely try. Ron watched as Harry opened the top of the trunk and started to climb inside. As he was climbing down, Harry stopped for a moment and turned around to face Ron.

"I don't think our friendship ever went anywhere" Harry smiled slightly as he said this and climbed inside the trunk and closed the cover. A smiling Ron remained seated in his spot until it was dinner time.

&&&&

"What are we going to do now?" Hermione asked Neville in an edgy voice. All of the D.A. seemed to have gathered and mounting fear could be detected even in many of the fifth year students, leave alone the younger ones.

"I don't know" Neville said in a helpless tone. "They seem to be getting more frightened by the day"

"Who wouldn't be if they read the gruesome details of the killings" Cho said in a disgusted voice. "The way they wrote about the McNealy family being torn apart by werewolves...god". She put her hand on her mouth in disgust as she remembered what she had read. It had really been like reading the details of a horror movie; the only difference was that it was

the reality.

"But it is not happening here" Neville said. "I don't get it as to why they are getting so fearful"

"It is not happening here but..." Hermione paused slightly. "...here is not where everyone's family is. And there is also the possibility of the Slytherins telling the death eaters the names of those who are in the D.A. In that case their families might be endangered". Hermione seemed slightly frightened herself and Neville guessed she was thinking of her own family at the moment.

"Well...yeah...you got a point" Neville said. "But what can be done?"

"We have to decide on that Neville" Cho said as she put a hand on his shoulder. "We have to instill confidence in them"

"It's not so easy" Neville said. "I don't feel so confident myself after the attack on St. Mungo's". Cho looked slightly curious but didn't ask as to why Neville was so concerned regarding St. Mungo's. She also noticed that Hermione's face had a sympathetic look on it but thought it was better not to ask anything.

"But it has to be done, isn't it?" Cho said. "I mean, look at them". Indeed, as Neville looked at the D.A. members, they seemed to be fully concentrated on the trio. It was almost as if they expected someone to come forward and convince them that their families were indeed safe and they could help others without fearing that their names might end up on some death eaters hit list.

"Yes" Neville said as his face set in a grim determination. Quietly he stepped forward and looked at the occupants. Some of the senior members, including Ron, were seated in the back of the room while the juniors were in the front. Even as Neville was about to address them, a few of the occupants started asking questions.

"Some Slytherins stopped me today on the way here" one second year boy said. "I don't know if I should be here or not"

"Me too" a third year said in a tentative voice. "My dad's a muggle"

"My mom's a muggle too" another third year said. "That doesn't mean You-Know-Who will go after them. And even if they are attacked, my dad will protect her". This show of determination gave Neville some hope but the negative opinions far outweighed the positive ones.

"My mom and dad are not good wizards" one Hufflepuff girl said in an emotional voice. "If someone attacks them then they wouldn't... wouldn't...". She broke down completely as her voice seemed to desert her. Hermione rushed over and started comforting her.

"And my dad was at St. Mungo's" a fourth year boy said, biting his lip to avoid crying. "I haven't heard from him ever since"

"I am very afraid Mr. Longbottom sir" a tiny first year old said from her seat. If it had not been such a tense situation, then Neville would have laughed at being addressed as 'Mr. Longbottom sir'. However, things seemed to be going from bad to worse in the Room of Requirements at the moment.

"Me too" a similar aged boy said. "I don't know what to do. We couldn't even find Ms. Katie. What if someone takes us too?". Neville looked at the seniors for some support but he could see that many were quite afraid themselves. It seemed like weeks of bad news was finally starting to take its toll on the members of the D.A.

"We don't have to fear anyone". Neville looked around in surprise as a single voice spoke out. He wasn't able to detect the source of the voice at first but then decided to follow Ron's gaze. Ron was staring straight at a dark corner of the room behind himself.

"Your families are safe...don't worry about it". As everyone looked

around, a figure stepped out of the shadows. The look of fear slowly seemed to vanish from the faces of everyone looking on, slowly to be replaced by one of complete awe.

"We have all tolerated enough. From now on, it's payback time". The look of awe on everyone's face slowly turned into a confident smile. Yes, there was hope for everyone yet.

Harry Potter was back to lead the D.A.

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A/N: Seventh chapter here guys.

This had initially become a 14k words chapter as I did not have MS-Word on my Vaio. I kept typing in wordpad and when I finally installed MS-Word, I was like "What the hell!". I moved a couple of scenes to chapter 8 to bring this down to 12k+ words. Seems like if I keep typing in wordpad I will be able to give you guys longer chapters to read.

Anyway, thanks for all those reviews. Every review which you people made is much appreciated. And to everyone who didn't review, thanks for taking time to read up to here at least.

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8. Meetings

Ok. Everyone knows the drill. Still here goes nothing -

Harry Potter and the other characters of J.K. Rowling are strictly hers. I am not the original writer (though I wish I could be J) and I do not wish to make money from this. Most Importantly, I DO NOT want to get sued. So if anyone has any problems with anything I write, then just tell me.

There's plenty more...blah blah blah...forget it and let the story begin :).

Note: US English has been used here.

Note: This is the sequel to Harry Potter & The Power Of Hogwarts. Please read it before moving on with this story.

HARRY POTTER & THE NEW DAWN

Chapter 8 - Meetings

"We have all tolerated enough. From now on, it's payback time". The look of awe on everyone's face slowly turned into a confident smile. Yes, there was hope for everyone yet.

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Simon, or rather Harry, sat beside Tonk's grave and looked on at the people milling around in Godric's Hollow. As always, Harry had selected his location underneath the tree nearest to Tonks's grave. For a split second he wondered what Tonks would have done if she had heard about his fight at St. Mungo's...about how he had dared to come out and had fought off so many death eaters and helped the aurors. Tonks would have been mad at him...maybe would have even gone to the extent of beating him up. However, she would have known that Harry had Gryffindor's glove with him and he knew about the risks which he had to take and the one's which he had to avoid.

Harry's thoughts wandered away from Tonks when he saw an old man come into the view. It was the same old man whom he had seen previously sitting in front of the stone house which had only a single door leading inside. He saw the man walk up to the stone house and knock in the same unusual pattern as before. Within a few seconds, the door opened up and the man had vanished from Harry's view.

"I think I owe you a visit" Harry said aloud to himself as he got up from his position. He cast a disillusionment charm on himself and slowly started making his way towards the stone house. He selected a difficult path downhill so that he wouldn't have to pass anyone on the way. After a few tiny hardships, he found himself at the door of the stone cottage.

Taking a deep breath, he knocked on the door in the pattern the old man had done before. Presently it opened.

"May I help you?" an old lady opened the door and enquired.

"Please tell the old man that a well wisher is here" Harry replied in a voice which conveyed he knew everything about this place. The lady looked at him for a moment with narrowed eyes.

"Please wait for a moment" she said finally and closed the door. Soon it was opened again. "Please follow me" the lady said as she led Harry inside. As soon as Harry entered the corridor, the door behind him closed automatically. In a split second he saw a wand vanishing in the robe the lady was wearing and smiled inwardly as he came to his conclusion. For an old lady, she was pretty quick after all.

"He is in here" the lady said as she held open a door to Harry. Harry walked in and the door was closed behind him. Looking around, Harry saw the room was well decorated with wooden furniture. The corridors had looked quite cold with the stone walls but this room seemed to be very warm. Taking in the details of the room in one major sweeping glance, Harry's eyes came to rest on the person sitting behind a medium sized but quite decorated desk. A pile of parchments were stacked in front of him.

"How can I help you?" the man asked politely but there was no mistaking the quivering in his voice. The man looked slightly more confident than the day Harry had seen him putting a piece of parchment near the gate of the cemetery.

"I got your note the other day ..." Harry paused for a moment before continuing. "...Fudge". At this a groan ensued from the mouth of the old man. He quickly cast a locking charm on the door and reverted to his true self.

"Don't say that name here" Fudge hissed through gritted teeth. Harry gave an amused laugh at this which seemed to anger Fudge even more. "Why are you here?" Fudge asked angrily. "I am always leaving notes for you where you asked me to. Why are you bothering me then?"

Harry's smile faded at this and he became serious at once. "What happened at the ministry?" he asked in a quiet business like manner.

"I don't know" Fudge replied with a helpless expression on his face. "I heard about it when I was in Poland, meeting their minister". Harry's eyes seemed to pierce the very soul of the man in front of him, trying to judge whether he was lying or not. By now, Harry was familiar with every symptom of Fudge when he lied. But none of the symptoms seemed to surface at the moment. Deciding to give Fudge the benefit of doubt, Harry started pacing the room.

"Is anything missing from the ministry building?" Harry asked. The last time Voldemort had attacked the ministry, he had stolen the veil from there. This was still a secret to the general public.

"N...no" Fudge stammered slightly. On seeing Harry's dreaded gaze coming to rest on him again, he continued. "The staff members told me nothing was stolen"

"And you believed it?" Harry asked in a slow voice. Was this man that dumb?

"Of course!" Fudge replied emphatically. "They are all very trusted and loyal people"

"Trusted by whom and loyal to whom?" Harry continued in the same voice. Fudge gulped a bit at this but did not reply.

"Tell me the truth, will you?" Harry said at last, not making any attempt to hide his impatience.

"Well..." Fudge seemed to be trying to make up a believable story before

seemingly giving up. He knew Simon would find out the truth sooner or later.

"I am waiting" Harry said in a sing-song tone and started tapping the desk in front of him.

"The truth is..." Fudge sat down on a nearby chair with a deep sigh. "The truth is I did not check if anything was stolen or not. And the truth is that I no longer know exactly what artifacts or documents all the different departments keep. If they tell me something then I have to believe it".

Harry's eyes narrowed dangerously at hearing this.

"You mean to say you have no idea what is kept in the ministry building?" he asked in a voice which seemed to be a mixture of anger and surprise.

"No...no...I did not mean that" Fudge said hastily, realizing too late that Simon didn't seem to buy any of it. "What I meant was that I don't know what newer items are there in the ministry building. Everyone knows the older artifacts and things like that..." Fudge gave an uneasy laugh as he tried to give the situation a less critical look. However, seeing the look on Simon's face, it was clear that he had failed.

"So you really have no idea what things are kept in there, huh?" the sentence was more of a statement than a question. Harry looked at the man with open disgust and, maybe for the first time, thought that if he had been the master of Nagini, he would most probably have fed Fudge to her. Shaking off this thought, Harry looked at Fudge with a curious expression.

"Why didn't you keep a track of the things present in the ministry?" Harry asked, his voice matching his expression. "You are not the type who trusts others!"

"Oh yes I am" Fudge replied in anger. "Look mister..." he said with his

finger pointed at Harry. "...if I don't know what items are in the ministry building...if I don't know this...if I don't know that...whatever...I am not committing a crime by not knowing it. You can't do anything about it, can you?" his eyes seemed to light up because he knew that, indeed, Simon couldn't threaten him over not knowing something.

Harry too realized the same thing. Plus, he realized it was immaterial to pursue this conversation any longer. He would have to put up with this man and his shortcomings for a while longer. But until the war was over, he would have to tolerate some of this man's foolishness and manipulate him when needed.

"Ok" Harry gave a sigh and got up. "You did not commit a crime by not knowing what happened at the ministry. Maybe..." Harry's eyes had a dangerous glint to them as he continued. "...maybe your bodyguards will not do a crime by not knowing when their minister was...". At this, Harry's voice trailed off.

"Was?" Fudge's eyes grew wide in horror. Was this kid in front of him suggesting that something might happen to him?

"Let's leave that for another day" Harry said with an evil smirk as he turned to leave. He cast an unlocking spell on the door and stepped out leaving behind a very nervous looking Minister of Magic who turned back into the old man again with the help of a transfiguration spell. Just as Harry thought of walking back the way he had come, another thought stuck him. He had never seen it yet!

"Sir" Harry called out in a mocking tone from outside Fudge's room.

"What now?" Fudge asked grumpily as he walked out to see a smiling Harry. "What do you want now?"

"I want to see it" Harry said with a genuine smile. Fudge seemed confused for a second before he realized what Harry meant.

"Ok" he said at last and started to lead Harry down another passage of the "small stone hut". Presently they came upon another door, albeit one which seemed to be guarded heavily by two huge men. Harry assumed they were aurors. The men got up from their seats when they saw the approaching people and made way for Fudge and Harry. Fudge pushed open the door and they entered another room.

As Harry followed behind Fudge, his smile grew even broader. He couldn't help but appreciate the amount of magic which had gone into making his plan work out perfectly. Right in front of his eyes were all the patients of St. Mungo's and the healers going about their work in normal fashion.

"St. Mungo's shifted to Godric's Hollow" Harry thought to himself as he turned around and started to walk back the way he had come. He smiled as he wondered about the reaction of the wizarding world if they ever learnt about the truth.

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"What have you got for us this time around Remus?" one of the werewolves said in a taunting voice. About forty odd werewolves had gathered in a meeting place arranged by Frank who had said Remus had a new and more concrete offer this time around.

"Please go through this" Remus said and waved his wand over the parchment in front of him. Instantly forty copies of the parchment were conjured and they flew towards each of the occupants in the room each of whom caught it cleanly.

Remus watched the reactions of the various occupants of the room very minutely. He knew that the offer might have had come a bit too late but still he had to take a shot. He saw as his eyes fell on a werewolf he didn't know too well but whose whole shirt was smudged with a red colored

stain. He shivered at the thought as to how the werewolf had stained his shirt. As Remus was looking, the werewolf looked right at him and smiled a sickly smile. It was almost as if he had been able to read Remus's thoughts and was very happy about what he had done a few nights before. Remus felt sick inwardly and looked away at the other occupants. Remus saw that Frank was also looking on at the others with great anticipation in his eyes. Apparently he had gone to great lengths to bring all these werewolves under one roof for one peaceful discussion with "Dumbledore's agent". Frank had longed for getting recognition in the wizarding world. If it had not been for the fear of other's discovering his being a werewolf, Frank's parents might well have left him to study at Hogwarts. If that had been the case, then Frank would easily have gone on to become one of the great wizards of modern times. Alas, that had not happened and Frank did not want another werewolf to suffer the same fate. He wanted equal treatment and this was the only chance for him to get it.

"So?" Frank asked as most of the werewolves finished reading the parchments in their hands. It was quite noticeable that he was slightly nervous. Remus could only assume that maybe it was for the reason that the other werewolves might reject the proposal.

"So what?" one of the more nasty looking werewolves queried back. Even though he was wearing very formal clothes, the freshness of the deep gash on the side of his head could have come only from the recent events.

"We have chosen our side Frank" another werewolf said. "We know who our real well wisher is"

"Yeah" another werewolf agreed. "These ministry wizards are full of double standards. Soon they will come up with another law banning us

or maybe they will pass a law allowing anyone and everyone to try to kill us"

"That will never happen" Remus said before anyone could agree or disagree with the person. "If you see the line at the bottom, it clearly states that this resolution will be upheld by every succeeding Minister or else he will have to resign from his post"

"Really?" the werewolf wearing the stained shirt asked in a mocking tone.

"And who will elect the minister once we have destroyed the ministry building and that old fool you all call headmaster?" At this, the other werewolves burst into guffaws.

"I have high hopes that situation will not arise" Remus said in a determined voice. Some of the werewolves stopped laughing and turned their attention to Remus who continued speaking. "We have quite a number of allies on our side. Our strength is not something to be taken lightly". The room fell into absolute silence as Remus finished his statement. A few glances were exchanged between the werewolves before someone spoke again.

"How do we know what you are telling us is true?" the werewolf asked.

"If you don't believe me you can ask either Minister Fudge or Dumbledore himself" Remus replied.

"It's a trap" the werewolf in the stained shirt spoke up again. "He wants us to go and talk to Dumbledore so that the old man can order the aurors to capture us". A slight murmur of approval went through the crowd present.

"I hope you all know Dumbledore to do something better than that"

Remus said with slight disgust in his voice. He may not have agreed with all of Dumbledore's policies of late but the last thing he was going to let happen was someone criticize his headmaster without any proof. "And as

for Dumbledore trying to capture us..." Remus paused slightly before continuing. "...I hope you all know that he can take out all of us with a single spell of his if he wanted. Just because he doesn't do that doesn't mean he cannot do that if required"

The room fell into pin-drop silence once again. No one dared to counter Remus on this point. They knew very well that Dumbledore's power was too great to be challenged by some mere wizard or werewolf. Only the dark lord could even think of fighting Dumbledore on an even footing.

"Are you threatening us?" a shrewd looking werewolf asked Remus.

"I do not go about threatening other people" Remus replied. "All I am saying is that we have a decent option available at the moment..."

"Decent for you!" one of the werewolves said in a venomous voice.

"Let's...let's hear Remus out" Frank said in a shaky voice. This was not going as well as he had expected it would.

"Why should we hear him out?" the werewolf continued in the same tone, his blood shot eyes fixed on Frank. "He is a bloody agent of Dumbledore...he isn't worth talking to"

"One second Frank" Remus said before Frank could reply. He then turned his focus onto the person who had just made the accusations. "Firstly, I am not an agent of Dumbledore. I am an agent of the light side". A few of the werewolves snickered at this but Remus continued talking undeterred. "Secondly, I have come to you with a solid proposal this time and not with a rough draft. This..." Remus held up the original document. "...is something which is a first for the whole wizarding world. Hence it should not be taken lightly"

"Lastly..." Remus paused for a while. Everyone, including the nasty looking werewolves, was listening with the utmost attention. "...this war is coming to its climax. Someone will win...someone will lose. People

who don't take sides might be doing the correct thing but..." Remus paused again, this time for effect. "...but if we do take sides, we should be very careful about our choices". With that, Remus got up from his seat and started to leave. No one said a word as he opened the door. Frank looked slightly confused as to what to do but then decided he would stay back and try to persuade the others to join Dumbledore.

"This..." Remus paused at the door and held up the original ministry document again. "...is a ministry resolution giving us a status like never before. It should not be taken lightly. No one...not even your dark lord perceives us as equivalent. We should not throw away this opportunity. I have 24 hours to let the ministry know of our decision and I will be back tomorrow to listen to your decisions". With that, Remus Lupin left the meeting.

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Harry was walking thoughtfully across the grounds of Hogwarts from his recent meeting with Fudge. The cause of Harry's concern was the thought of what would be the death eater's next target.

The surprise element which had been present during St. Mungo's fight was no longer there. He knew that any new attack planned by Voldemort would be much more organized from now on. Also, the thing which worried him was the decreasing number of attacks on the people of England. It seemed to him that Voldemort was not that keen anymore to give his recruits some shooting practice. And the only reason why Voldemort would do that would be because the death eater's were now being readied for some major attacks...like the one on St. Mungo's. That, in turn, meant that every death eater had now been sufficiently trained which was not a very pleasant thought.

Harry was lost in his thoughts when he walked up the stairs of the castle.

He didn't notice the glances being cast his way by the refugees who had still been unable to find a decent place in Godric's Hollow or didn't have the resources to build a home. It seemed to Harry that his troubles were somehow, incredible as it may seem, on the rise. He knew he had to resurrect the Power of Hogwarts once again to have a shot at weakening Voldemort and seeing whether his other assumption was correct or not. Also, he wasn't able to divert his mind from the troubling thought that Diagon Alley or Hogwarts could be the place which would be attacked next.

Deep down Harry knew that he required the support of his friends to carry out the tasks in front of him but somewhere down the line, he knew he had created a barrier so thick that he wasn't able to break through it. He didn't know if it was his intention to keep his friends away from him for their safety or whether it was his ego which was stopping him from approaching them. But one thing was sure that he had not been able to approach either Ron or Hermione for some help. And with Remus absent, he felt slightly lost.

Lost...Harry hated to admit it but he did feel slightly lost at times. He didn't know if what he was doing was right or wrong. He also didn't know if it was just his luck which helped him survive Azkaban or St. Mungo's. After all, he couldn't expect himself to win against loads of death eaters all the time. He might be destined to fight a dark lord... maybe somehow even defeat him...but no prophecy had been made which said he might not lose an arm or a leg during a fight with other death eaters. He knew he had made the right decisions till now but still, somewhere down the line, his luck might desert him one day. He didn't want to get stuck in...

"The day comes..."

Harry looked around in bewilderment as he sought the source of the harsh sounding voice. His legs seemed to know every corridor by now and seemed to have taken him quite near to the Gryffindor tower when he had suddenly heard the voice.

"...when the choice will have to be made..."

Harry detected the source of the voice coming from the end of the corridor. He quickened his pace but didn't start running since he didn't want to drown the voice in the sound of his footsteps.

"...and the burden of a hundred years, hundred months and hundred days..."

Harry quickened his pace even more. He was almost there.

"...will be lifted at the cost of tremendous pain and suffering"

Harry turned round the corner and could only watch as the figure of Professor Trelawney collapsed on the floor.

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The next few days passed quickly for Harry as he got tangled up in trying to solve the mystery at hand. Still, even after hours of meditation and effort, he was nowhere near solving the puzzle provided by Professor Trelawney's prophecy. Also, the professor seemed to have no clue about her prophecy when Harry had met her in the hospital wing. She thanked him profusely for bringing her to the hospital wing after her sudden headache but that was all she could remember. A disheartened Harry could do nothing but leave the hospital wing saying he had only done his duty, like any other student in Hogwarts would have done.

"What is it with her making a prophecy every time I am nearby?" Harry thought to himself as he made his way to the library. For a moment he thought he should let Ron and Hermione in on the secret but then again, what could they find out? All Hermione would do was try to figure out every date of significance which was a hundred years, hundred months

and hundred days before now. That would mean she would be constantly in the library trying to get her facts right.

"It's not a bad idea" a voice from inside Harry spoke up.

"I know...but I have bigger plans at the moment" another voice replied back.

"You know that this could be more important than what you are planning" the first voice said.

"No! It can never be bigger than what I am planning to do" the second voice seemed to snap back.

"But letting our emotions guide us in times of war can be disastrous" the first voice said.

"If we did not have emotions, we would have been mere zombies" the second voice countered. "After all, aren't most people fighting the second war just to keep their families safe...to live happily?"

"Most people are not named Harry Potter" the first voice reasoned.

"Sometimes I just have to do some things I have to do" the first voice retorted. "You might try as hard as you want but I will have to follow my instincts on this one"

"As you wish" the first voice surrendered. "Now, if I am not wrong, then we have to meet Hermione, Ron, Neville, Cho and Luna, isn't that so?"

Soon Harry found himself in the Room of Requirements surrounded by the people he trusted the most in the D.A. Harry had been planning this meeting for quite some time now as he knew he needed the help of these five people to carry out a few tasks. He was still contemplating whether he would disclose all the details to them or not when Hermione spoke up.

"Harry...why did you ask us to meet you today?" she asked. "Is it something important?"

"It is" Harry said in a serious tone. Ron and Neville exchanged a glance as Harry stood up from his seat and started pacing around.

"Mate..." Ron said. "...spit it out and you will feel slightly better". Harry looked at Ron for a second as a thought flashed in his mind. The way Ron was speaking, it seemed as if he had forgotten everything that had happened in the past 8-9 months. He couldn't let himself get drawn into the same old emotions once again. Somewhere down the line, he had to let the others know that his interactions with them for the time being were strictly related to the business of fighting Voldemort and not to revive old friendships. Well...reviving friendships could happen after the war was over but for now it was not a priority.

"Let me clear up a few things before I get to the matter on hand" Harry said in a no-nonsense tone. Everyone shifted slightly in their chairs because they had seldom had Harry address them like that.

"First and foremost, I have come back with the intention of helping everyone fight whatever is coming" Harry said. "This is something which we cannot compromise on...we cannot let our feelings stop us from doing what is needed now. If tomorrow there is a fight at Hogwarts and a person X is about to be killed then..." Harry paused for a second to look at the emotions on the various faces. "...then we come to a quick decision. Can that person be saved? If the answer is yes then we do the needful. If the answer is no then we carry on fighting instead of mourning in the middle of the battle"

Everyone looked at Harry with their eyes wide open in shock. This person didn't sound like the Harry they had known previously. What Harry had said was true but still, putting it as bluntly as he had just done required a certain bit of cold-bloodedness which they had never associated with Harry.

"I might sound cold blooded..." Harry said as if he could almost read the minds of the people in front of him. "...but the fact is I have experienced

these things and I know what I am saying is true. Trust me, you don't want to come to the same conclusion after the death of a few of your nearest and dearest ones". No one said anything in reply. There was nothing to be said after all!

"Secondly..." Harry continued after clearing his throat. "...the situation has come to a life and death one. We have to be mentally ready to be in a potentially mortal situation and if required..." Harry paused once again. "...if required, we might be forced to use some spells which are not...". Harry's voice trailed off in a slightly tentative manner. Was he pushing his friends too much?

"Which are not what Harry?" Hermione asked in an unfamiliar voice.

"You surely aren't talking about using dark spells, are you?"

Harry looked at his friend for a long moment before saying "Hermione, what if Ron is in mortal danger and the only way to save him would be to use a dark spell? I am not talking about the unforgivables but the others spells categorized as dark"

Hermione looked slightly taken aback at this question. She had expected a yes or a no in answer but the answer had been a question which she did not want to answer. However, by the look in Harry's eyes, she knew she just had to answer the question. And looking at the curious eyes of the others, she could not afford to not answer.

"I will use the dark curse" Hermione said in a low voice before hastily adding. "It's not like I want to use a dark curse...if there is any other curse available..."

"Thank you Hermione" Harry said in a cold voice while Ron seemed lost in thought. He did not know whether he should feel happy or sad. Well... he felt happy alright but after the recent arguments with Hermione, he didn't know whether their relationship would work out alright in the end

or not. But judging by Hermione's reply, she obviously had strong feelings for him. He smiled slightly...there was hope for their relationship after all.

"I did not want to put you in a spot..." Harry said with an apologetic look on his face. "...but the thing is that we will be faced with these questions in the middle of the battle. We won't have time to think about our decisions at that moment"

"You talk as if Hogwarts can be attacked at any moment" Cho said in a voice which seemed to have a touch of fear in them.

"Actually he is telling the truth" Luna said in her usual dreamy voice. "I like to be prepared for the battle from now on itself". Turning to Ron, Luna continued in her dreamy voice "Don't worry Ron, if required, I will use a dark curse to save you from death eaters". The casualness with which Luna said this left Cho gaping for a moment.

"Thank you Luna" Harry said, a clear indication that he wanted this meeting to move forward. "Like I was saying, we will have to make decisions...a lot of important ones. Therefore I ask every one of you to think about what you will be doing once we find ourselves in the middle of a fight. I..." Harry continued. "...will not hesitate to use any curse to protect the innocent people"

"Any curse?" Hermione asked in a rather hoarse voice.

"Hermione..." Harry said a bit sternly. "I will take my decisions when the time comes. Just be sure you are able to take your decision when it is your time. Don't worry about what I will be doing". Harry felt his statement was a bit blunter than he had intended it to be but it was better for Hermione and the others to be clear about his thinking.

"Last but not the least..." Harry continued. "...in spite of all of what I have said till now, remember that you alone will have to live with your

decisions. So, be very careful about what you do or do not do". The room fell into a silence as Harry drank a glass of water. Neville and Ron seemed to be lost deep in thought while Hermione kept glancing nervously at Harry from time to time. Cho and Luna seemed to have understood that Harry was just passing on some of his recent "experiences" and they did not try to counter him. After all, there was no arguing against facts.

"Now..." Harry said after a few seconds of silence had passed. "...I want to discuss something of utmost importance with you". With that, Harry quickly went over a few events of the past few months which were known to very few people. He mentioned about how the veil was stolen and then went on to mention that the Goblet of Fire was the object that Voldemort had been trying to destroy as it was somehow preventing him from carrying out an all out attack. He finished with how Ginny, Snape and Wormtail had stolen the Goblet.

"Hold on a second..." Hermione said. "A huge tremor affected the whole world on the first day of this year. And you say that the Goblet was stolen on that day. These two are linked, aren't they?"

"Yes Hermione" Harry gave an affirmative reply, not at all surprised at the quickness of his friend. "It was because the Goblet was destroyed"

"What!" Hermione jumped up. "The Goblet of Fire is one of the most powerful magical objects still existing. Even Dumbledore cannot destroy it"

"I know" Harry replied in a calm voice. "But you seemed to have forgotten one thing. I had earlier said that the veil was stolen from the ministry. Apparently, the veil had been created with the intention of destroying powerful objects such as the Goblet of Fire"

"Wha..." Hermione seemed lost for words as she tried to digest all the

information coming to her. Somehow whatever Harry was saying seemed to have a logical link but it just didn't seem possible. How could someone have made something like the veil to destroy powerful magical objects?

"I knew about this" Luna said all of a sudden. "Dad said that the goose which laid golden eggs had also been killed after someone threw her behind the veil". Harry blinked hard at hearing this. He was sure his face showed his confusion but Luna did not seem to notice anything. Ron and the others, except for Hermione, were looking at Luna with amused expressions on their faces.

"Whatever" Harry said in a low voice which was heard only by Ron.

"Anyway, as I was saying, the veil can be used to destroy many powerful magical objects, if not all. You can confirm this with Dumbledore himself if you don't believe me". This statement from Harry put to rest any queries arising in other's minds. "And now..." Harry took a deep breath as he prepared to say the thing which he had been the main purpose of this meeting. "...we have to retrieve the veil"

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The rest of the week seemed to pass away in a blur. After returning to lead the D.A., Harry conducted the first meeting on the weekend. Taking care of some formalities, he went on to specify a line of action for the D.A. The D.A. was categorized into three different groups namely the senior, junior and the amateur group respectively. The senior group consisted of the most experienced and talented people in the D.A. with the likes of Hermione, Cho, Ron and others. Amongst the newcomers, only Soha was included in the senior group. This group would be responsible for any of the major planning's of the D.A. in the future.

The junior group consisted of people with average skills. These included a few of the earliest members of the D.A. whose learning curve had not

been as fast as that of some of the others. Also, some of the more talented and promising new members of the D.A. had been included in the junior group. The main responsibility of this group was to act as a backup to the senior group and patrol Hogwarts. These people were talented enough to hold their own in a fight until backup arrived. Also, their responsibility consisted of teaching newer recruits.

Harry had formed a third group which presently had only one member, a first year Ravenclaw. This group had been named the amateur group and would consist of newer recruits. The junior member was given the task of bolstering the overall strength of the D.A. and to build up a really strong pool of talent. The target set for the junior members was to bring in at least 30 members into the amateur group every month. Though it was a tough target to meet, Harry knew there was no other way to proceed.

Targets had to be set and they had to be met. This message was clearly conveyed to everyone who seemed to take it in their strides. Earlier the D.A. meetings would revolve around topics of how to defend the people of Hogwarts but now the topics of discussions had changed. Now people were discussing how to attack death eaters if needed, either inside Hogwarts or outside. This had bolstered the morale of many and seemed to take off their minds from the daily news of attacks by death eaters.

Now all everyone wanted to do was work according to the plan which Harry had made so that when the right time came, they would have their fair share of death eaters to deal with and to give back better than what they would get.

The next week also passed away in a hurry as all the planning's were being put into practice. Everyone found out that it was a much tougher job to implement the things which were required but they did not get discouraged. Harry worked very hard to help everyone out in the initial

stages. It was not until the next weekend that he was finally able to get some rest.

"Harry" Ron said after the weekend meeting of the D.A. had finished at 4 in the afternoon. He knew that they had nothing to do this weekend and was slightly happy that Harry would be getting some rest after all.

"Yes?" Harry said as he looked up from the pile of papers in front of him. Everyone except Ron, Cho, Soha, Neville, Hermione and Luna had left.

"We were wondering what you are doing on the weekend" Ron said a bit hesitantly.

"I have some work to finish" Harry said and went back to re-organizing the parchments which had the latest strategies and reports of the D.A.

"Harry..." Hermione said, casting a glance at Ron who gave a reassuring nod. "...we...we were wondering if you could come flying with us today"

"Sorry...but I have some work to do" Harry said firmly as he finished organizing all the parchments. He was about to leave the room when Ron stepped in front of him.

"C'mon Harry..." Ron said pleadingly. "...you can spare one hour for us, can't you? I haven't flown in a long time with you. It's been almost 9 or 10 months since we have spent any time together. Surely your work can wait for one hour more!". Harry looked from Ron to Hermione to the other people in the room. Everyone's eyes seemed to plead him to say yes. He wanted to say no and leave the room but just couldn't bring himself to do so. If Ron had asked him to go to Hogsmeade then it would have been a definite no but flying was an altogether different matter. He loved flying and he knew that somewhere deep down, he longed to fly again. He had not flown since coming back from France. Three long months without once taking to the broom was a tough ask for anyone who loved to fly. With an inwardly sigh, Harry agreed.

"Great" Ron said, his face showing the delight he felt. "We will meet you in the quidditch pitch in 15 minutes, ok?". Harry gave a nod and went out of the room. Depositing his things in the trunk, Harry soon found himself in the quidditch pitch with his Firebolt in his right hand. He saw that Hermione, Soha and Neville had taken their seats in the stands while Cho and Ron had their broomsticks ready. Luna had also brought her broomstick to the quidditch field but, instead of flying, she had laid it down on the center of the pitch and was walking around it with a peculiar glass in her hand. From time to time she looked at her broomstick through the glass and said something to herself. Harry's eyes went wide for a second before coming back to normal. Luna never failed to come up with surprises!

"Ready Harry?" Ron asked with a smile. Harry nodded in reply and gave a small smile in return. That seemed enough for Ron who zoomed up in the air in a flash. Harry too followed suit with the smile lingering on his face while he kept thinking of his chats with Ron in the past few days. Ron had not called him mate ever since their first meeting and this was a good sign for Harry in many ways. However, soon all thoughts left Harry as he felt the air pass through his hair. He was back where he belonged. It was after an hour of flying that the two boys and the lone girl touched down. Exhausted but happy, they went over to the stands where Luna had joined Hermione, Soha and Neville. Soha thanked both Harry and Cho for the wonderful display of flying they had shown. Hermione had filled her up with information about Harry's flying exploits in the quidditch matches and how Cho was a very good flyer too. After another 15 minutes of chatting, Harry did not speak too much, they all started to make their way towards the castle.

"By the way Harry..." Luna said. "Just when you did that last turn, one

Slasmagamagot passed you"

"One what?" Harry asked in a thunderstruck voice.

"Slasmagamagot" Luna replied. "They are lucky charms you know. People say that if one such creature passes by you then you are blessed with a long happy life"

"Right" Harry said, making a mental note of questioning Luna about anything like this ever again. A long happy life due to some slasmagot or something was the last thing Harry would expect.

"Hey...isn't that Charlie?" Hermione asked in a curious voice as she saw a hurrying figure.

"Yeah" Ron said slowly. "What is he doing...is he going into the forest?"

"Seems so" Harry said in a calculated voice.

"What is he up to?" Ron wondered aloud. He turned to look at Harry and then Hermione. Both gave a slight nod as they came to an agreement.

They had to follow Charlie and find out.

"Let's go" Harry said and quickened his pace.

"Go where?" Soha and Neville chorused.

"To see what Charlie is up to" Cho answered the question. "So this is how you three had all those adventures in the past. And we all thought that the Gryffindors made up those stories"

"No they did not" Hermione replied in what seemed to be an angry voice but there was no mistaking the pride in it. After all, very few people could boast of such adventures as they had had. Harry led the way to a particular part of the ground where the a few trees of the forest obstructed a direct view from the castle. Since he did not want anyone from the castle seeing so many students disappearing into the forest, he had thought that this would be the best place to enter. The others followed his lead and soon they were a hundred meters inside the forest.

"Where did he go?" Ron whispered when Harry stopped and started looking around. Suddenly Hermione tapped Harry on the shoulder and pointed to a vanishing beam of light. Harry quickly cast a silencing charm on everyone's feet and hurried after the source of light followed by the others. It was only after they had followed Charlie for over twenty minutes that he started to slow down. Charlie pushed aside a few more shrubs and branches away and then disappeared from the view. Harry motioned everyone to slow down and led the way slowly as he reached the area where Charlie had vanished. Moving away a few of the branches, he looked on to see a wonderful and yet potentially destructive scene in front of him.

The huge area in front of him was cleared of all trees. And in the midst of the clearing stood nine of the most ferocious looking dragons Harry had ever seen. A few of the trainers of the dragons seemed to be having a hard time keeping them in control but the more experienced ones were well at home with their dragons. One of the more experienced trainers seemed to have cast a flame repelling spell on himself and was happily feeding the dragon under his supervision. The dragon seemed to be busy in eating the food offered to him and didn't notice that the fire from his nostrils seemed to be frequently engulfing the person.

"Oh god!" Hermione said after a minute of spellbound silence. "Let's get out of here before they spot us". Harry and the others nodded in agreement and quickly started to walk back the way they had come.

After hurrying through the forest and then across the grounds, the group made their way through various hidden passages before entering the Room of Requirements.

"Tell me what I saw was an illusion" Cho said with an involuntary shudder. "So many dragons here and..." she couldn't finish her sentence as

her mind wandered to thoughts of the dragons.

"At last Dumbledore is doing something right" Harry said in a thoughtful voice.

"How can this be right?" Soha asked, her eyebrows knitted in a deep frown.

"What Harry meant..." Neville said. "...was that the headmaster has already started bolstering the security of Hogwarts. Even if one thousand death eaters attack us, those dragons will be able to take out quite a lot of them"

"I don't know if this is right" Hermione said in a slow, unsure voice.

"What if they get out of control?"

"They won't" Ron said firmly. "As long as Charlie is alive every one of those dragons can be controlled"

"I agree with him" Harry said. "But we should keep this thing to ourselves only. No other person should know about it, ok?". Everyone present there nodded in agreement and soon returned to their towers, their minds still fascinated by the scene they had just seen.

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"Hello" Rowena said to Harry in a nervous voice as she met Harry inside the Room of Requirements. Today was the day Harry would be meeting her father. Harry had been given the permission by Dumbledore to meet the parents of Rowena and the headmaster had said that Rowena would tell him the exact method of getting to her home. Even though Harry was slightly surprised, he decided to rely on the judgment of the headmaster.

"So how are we getting to your home?" Harry asked curiously.

"Using this" Rowena replied and held up a piece of old parchment. "A portkey" she explained when she saw the blank look on Harry's face. "But we can use this only from inside the forbidden forest"

"Why?" Harry asked a bit suspiciously. Why did they need to enter the forbidden forest to use a portkey.

"Because no one can reach my home directly from within Hogwarts"

Rowena explained calmly. "Daddy has some spells against it"

"I see" Harry said wondering whether this kind of a spell was really possible where the source area of a portkey could be blocked. He would find it out in due time, he thought.

"C'mon...we need to get there before anyone else can see me with you"

Rowena's voice sounded slightly embarrassed at this but Harry knew that she would really have a hard time from her house mates if he was seen with her. Feeling a bit sorry for her, he quickly followed her out of the Room of Requirements and down the various corridors. It seemed as if Rowena also knew quite a lot of the hidden passageways and Harry attributed this to the fact that she must be using these to attend the D.A. meetings. After 10 minutes of walking, they were finally out of the castle. In two more minutes, they had entered the forbidden forest and Rowena came to a stop. Both Harry and Rowena tightly held on to the the parchment as Rowena activated the portkey. Within a split second, they were portkeyed away to their destination.

"Welcome to...eiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii" Rowena screamed out as a couple of hooded figures grabbed hold of her while a couple more stood on the sides, looking menacingly at Harry.

"Leave - the - girl - alone" Harry said very slowly as he watched the four figures. He was angry. For a second he felt that Rowena had betrayed him but looking at the frightened look on the girl's face, he was sure she did not know a thing of what was happening.

"And what if we don't?" one of the hooded figures asked in a hissing voice.

"Then you will have to kill me before you can do lay a hand on her". With that, Harry flicked his wand and cast a mild pain curse on the two figures holding Rowena. He then cast a strong summoning charm on Rowena as the two figures released their grips. In a split second, Rowena was standing behind Harry who had his wand aimed at the hooded figures.

"BRAVO" a booming male voice echoed throughout the area where they were standing. It was now that Harry noticed he was just outside what looked like a huge castle. As he looked around, the four hooded figures bowed their heads low and parted to reveal a very handsome looking man with a lady, probably his wife, on his side. Both were wearing clothes which had a regal touch to them and they really looked as if they were from a royal family. Harry's tight grip on his wand relaxed as he saw the warm smile on the faces of the two people's as they came to a stop in front of him. At this moment, Rowena ran from behind Harry and hugged the man who had bent down to hug her back.

"Welcome Harry Potter" the woman said in a silky, warm voice. "We had heard a lot of things about you but Rowena's father..." the woman pointed at the contended looking man and the little girl in his arms.

"...wanted to see for himself whether you really are willing to risk your life to save Rowena"

"It was not the welcome I had expected" Harry replied quite coldly. "And I have not come here to be judged"

"I apologize for the ordeal I put you through in these past few minutes" Rowena's father said in an authorative voice. The reactions of the hooded figures and Rowena herself suggested that they had almost never heard this man apologize to someone. Everyone seemed very surprised, except for the woman by his side.

"Let me introduce myself" the man continued. "I am Arturus Horatio and

this is my wife Isabella. And for the ordeal I put you through, I would like to extend a hand of friendship to you as compensation". With that, he extended his hand towards Harry still looked on suspiciously. However, slowly he accepted the offer and took the man's hand in his own. He was quite shocked at the coldness and the strength of the grip of the man. However, his shock was nothing compared to what he felt at hearing the next statement.

"I offer you the friendship of the Vampire nation"

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Harry sat in his trunk, lost deep in thought. No sooner had he come back from the meeting with Rowena's parents that Dumbledore had summoned him to his office. There Dumbledore had talked to Harry about the latest news of the death eaters and the assumptions he had about Voldemort's next intentions. In the midst of the meeting Harry had thought whether he should tell Dumbledore about Professor Trewalny's prophecy but he held himself back. He would tell Dumbledore when he thought the moment was right. However, it was Dumbledore's parting statement which had caught him unawares.

"Harry..." Dumbledore had said when he was leaving. "Times are tough so accept any extended hand of friendship which might help us all"

Harry thought long and hard about his meeting with Rowena's parents. It had been an experience which he would remember for a long time. As he started meditating, his mind invariably wandered off to what he had seen.

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"Vampire Nation?" Harry sounded puzzled as he shook the hand of Rowena's father. It was now that he could understand the reason for the coldness of the man's hand. He was a vampire.

"I see that Rowena has not told you anything" Mr. Horatio said with an amused look on his face as he looked at his daughter standing beside him. Rowena, on the other hand, was looking at her feet.

"It is nothing to be ashamed of sweetheart" Mr. Horatio said affectionately to his daughter.

"So Rowena is a vampire? And so are you two and the others here?" Harry asked curiously. Of course he knew the answer to these couple of questions but hearing it from the actual people he was addressing was much better than just assuming.

"Yes" Mrs. Horatio replied in an uncertain manner. They had assumed that Rowena had told Harry about her background but apparently she had not been able to draw the courage to do so. Now, both of Rowena's parents looked distinctively uncertain as to what Harry's stand would be. It was no secret that most wizards loathed vampires...calling them half-breeds and animals. It remained to be seen how Harry Potter would react to the situation.

"Interesting" Harry said thoughtfully. "How could Rowena have kept it a secret from all the people at Hogwarts?"

"Albus Dumbledore knows" Mr. Horatio replied.

"Also Professor Delacour" Rowena added meekly. At the questioning look from her mother, she explained "She caught me the other day when I was taking the...the...blo...blood pill from Rano"

"I see" Rowena's mother did not look too happy at learning about this.

"Rano is our special friend" she explained to Harry. "He is the person who is entrusted with delivering pills to Rowena at Hogwarts". Harry just nodded his head in acknowledgement. "But I think he has not lived up to our expectations"

"No!" Rowena said instantly. "Professor Delacour followed me at night

one day. She does not know about Rano. I made the mistake". Tears started streaming down the face of the little girl.

"It's not your mistake dear" Mr. Horatio comforted his daughter. "I will talk to Professor Delacour about this"

"You don't have to" Rowena said in between her sniff's. "After that time, she has helped me get the pills without anyone noticing. Also, she said she know that I am a vampire". The last sentence was said in a very low voice. Mrs. Horatio seemed slightly surprised as to how a teacher would know that her daughter was a vampire when Harry clarified the matter.

"Of course she would know" Harry exclaimed a bit more enthusiastically than he had intended. Calming down, he said "She became a professor at Hogwarts after completing a very detailed thesis...on vampires"

"I see" Mr. Horatio said in an interested voice. In the meantime Harry's mind got lost in a whirlpool of thoughts. So this was why the Slytherins hated one of their own...because Rowena was a vampire. They did not want to be associated with her. Maybe if they knew she was the vampire princess then it might have been different but Harry assumed that this information was known only to Dumbledore.

Also, it also explained why Rowena had been over-cautious when joining the D.A. Harry remembered how Cho had explained that Rowena seemed a little different than the rest. Of course it all made sense now. So did the occasion when Rowena had asked Harry if he would protect her if such a situation arose. All this had been different pieces of a puzzle Harry had failed to notice the whole time. However, now he knew.

"Mr. Potter?" Mr. Horatio's voice brought Harry back to reality. As Harry looked around, he asked. "Anything wrong?"

"No" Harry replied with a warm smile. "Everything is just fine. As for Rowena..." Harry's eyes narrowed slightly which made Rowena nervous.

However, the next instant Harry's smile made her smile too. "Don't worry...I wouldn't be friends with you in any other way".

"Really?" Rowena squeaked in delight before blushing.

"Yes" Harry replied, much to the delight of her parents.

"Should we proceed inside then?" Mr. Horatio asked. Harry nodded and they were soon entering the great castle. As Harry looked around, he saw that every part of the castle seemed to be made of black emerald giving it an eerie and yet majestic look. The corridors of the castle were lined with interesting artifacts while one had the whole lineage of the Vampire rulers. Mr. Horatio explained that he was the king of the vampires for the past two hundred and forty three years which was when his father had finally died. Harry looked slightly flabbergasted to learn a vampire died as his idea was that they were immortal in a way. Mr. Horatio explained that there was a decaying in the vampires too as they had to consume all kinds of blood to survive. This decaying occurred over a period of a thousand years which would span about six generations of a wizarding family. Hence they were led to believe that vampires did not die.

"So how old are you?" Harry asked when they had finally settled down in the dining room of the castle. To say it was huge would be an understatement.

"I am three hundred and ninety three only" Mr. Horatio said.

"That's...hmmm..." Harry looked quite stunned. "...it's quite a long time"

"It is" Mr. Horatio said. "But I do have a lot of things to worry about"

"Of course" Harry said in understanding. "By the way, what did you mean when you said you were extending the hand of friendship of the vampire nation?"

"What do you think I meant Mr. Potter?" Mr. Horatio asked in return.

"I am not one to judge your wisdom, Mr. Horatio" Harry replied

modestly. After all, he knew he was talking to the king of one of the most powerful beings on the face of the earth.

"Powerful yet modest" Mr. Horatio said with a smile. Rowena was beaming at Harry while Mrs. Horatio seemed a little taken aback at the highly diplomatic reply from a person as young as Harry.

"If I may take the liberty to rectify what you have just said..." Harry said a bit hesitantly. "...I am not at all a powerful wizard. Just a lucky one"

"And a brave one" Rowena said loudly before her mother tapped her on the shoulder and mouthed the word "Behave". Rowena bit her tongue and nodded. After all, she was a vampire princess!

"I appreciate your honesty" Mr. Horatio resumed. "Back to the topic, I had meant that if you ever want our help in your fight against Lord Voldemort, then we will be ready to help you". Harry was pleasantly surprised to notice that no one had any reaction to the name of Voldemort. Most of the vampires were bound to have some reaction to the name but Harry concluded that Mr. Horatio was too powerful a person to be afraid of Voldemort.

"Thank you for your generous offer" Harry replied. "However, I have heard many vampires are willingly following Lord Voldemort's commands"

"You are right" Mr. Horatio sighed. "It is very sad for us that some of our own have decided to tread such a path. But..." Mr. Horatio continued.

"...you will find that they are the exceptions"

"I understand" Harry said.

"Remember one thing Mr. Potter..." Mr. Horatio said. "...I am offering this help only because you had saved my little child. In the past there have been numerous cases where we have been hunted down by wizards and vice versa. It is very hard for us to forget that but I am willing to forget

it"

"I can understand your feelings, Mr. Horatio" Harry replied. "But I cannot speak on behalf of the entire wizarding world"

"I know" Mr. Horatio replied. "Just promise me that you will look after Rowena while she gets her education at Hogwarts"

"I promise" Harry replied. Rowena's parents exchanged a glance at this and smiled. They were delighted at having a brave person like Harry protecting their daughter. Also, from what they had heard from Rowena, Harry was the leader of a group of students who were equally brave and respected all kinds of beings. This could only be helpful for Rowena.

"Also Mr. Potter..." Mr. Horatio continued. "...as a gift for saving my daughter, I would like to place ten of my best warrior vampires at your service"

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Harry's meditation broke at this moment. He had initially denied the gift because he had said he would have done the same for any person. He could not take a gift for doing something which had to be done. He could not take a gift for standing up to death eaters! It was at this point that Mrs. Horatio had intervened. She said her husband did not mean to put a valuation on Harry's actions. For them, Rowena was priceless. All her husband wanted to do was provide a few vampires as guardians who would help Harry protect Rowena if required. Of course, if Harry wanted he could ask them to help him in other tasks too. It was entirely up to him as to how he wanted them to help him. However, she insisted on the offer her husband had made. It was only after a prolonged debate that Harry had finally accepted the offer.

Harry got up and went to the kitchen as he recollected how they had left by portkey and how, from the time he had arrived at Hogwarts, he felt as

if ten shadows were following him. He knew the vampires were there but could not locate them. After a lot of uneasiness, Harry had called on the vampires and had told them that they could just stay around Rowena for the time being and, if required, he would call on them. They obliged just as Mrs. Horatio had said. From then on, Harry had felt more comfortable. Harry finished making his dinner and ate in silence. Dumbledore had indirectly hinted him to use the offer of help from the vampire king in this war. He felt a strange burden on his shoulder. He knew all he had to do was to ask the vampire king for full assistance and he would do so readily but then again, it felt like he would be taking advantage of the whole series of events. It was something which he knew he couldn't do at the moment. He hated him for admitting it but he did admit the truth at last. He wasn't mature enough at the moment to deal with a scenario which could affect the relations between vampires and wizards. After all, everyone would have a hard time forgetting the past. What would he do if somehow relations got soured even more?

Harry knew he could not take the risk at the moment. He had to wait for Remus to come back. Maybe Remus would be able to guide him...maybe not. Maybe he would have to make the final decision after all. Still, that could wait for now. Finally making up his mind not to do anything right now, Harry went to sleep after a long hard day.

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"So what do you propose we should do?" Hermione asked Harry. The senior members of the D.A. had gathered for a meeting in the Room of Requirements to discuss how to retrieve the veil.

"We have to get some information as to where Voldemort might be hiding it". Everyone flinched at the name of Voldemort but Harry could not care less.

"But that is impossible" Ron said. "How can we know anything about You-Know-Who?"

"Maybe if we had a spy in his ranks..." Neville wondered for a moment but instantly stopped. It was a stupid suggestion after all considering that Dumbledore himself did not have any spy's in Voldemort's ranks.

"Even if we had a spy in there..." Cho said. "...it's not like You-Know-Who will go around telling everyone where the veil is kept"

"Unless it is the person who cleans it" Luna commented in her dreamy voice while trying to convert a pair of spectacles into a giant mammoth.

"Yeah...right" Hermione dismissed it in a sarcastic voice. "Anyway, if..."

"What did you say Luna?" Harry suddenly seemed very interested in Luna's comment which angered Hermione slightly.

"Well..." Luna said as she looked closely through the spectacles in her right hand. "...someone needs to keep the doorway clean so he should know the location"

"Even if someone wipes the veil clean everyday..." Hermione countered.

"...how are we going to get hold of that death eater and why would he tell us where it is?". Hermione had a triumphant look on her face but Luna seemed unaffected by it.

"It is not the task of a death eater to keep things clean" she said in a dreamy voice as she looked up at the others.

"An elf!" Ron exclaimed as realization dawned on him. "A house elf"

"I am so proud of you Ronald. You are so intelligent that you should have been in Ravenclaw" Luna said with a dreamy smile which almost choked Ron. Harry had a hard time suppressing a bout of laughter while Hermione looked downright furious.

"But how...?" Harry started thinking desperately once he had got over the last sentence said by Luna. It was then that it stuck him.

"Winky" Harry called out.

"Yes sir" Winky said as she appeared beside him with a crack.

"Find out where the house elf named Kreacher is and tell me it's exact location". Winky seemed to tremble slightly at the mention of Kreacher but nodded her head affirmatively nonetheless. She vanished again with a loud crack.

"Kreacher is with Bellatrix and Bellatrix is with Voldemort" Harry explained enthusiastically ignoring the shudders at the mention of Voldemort's name.

"But how will that help us?" Soha asked with a completely blank look on her face.

"I am an heir to the Black family" Harry explained. "That would make me a part owner of Kreacher too. And that makes Kreacher answerable to me". Harry finished with a smile. At that moment Winky appeared beside them. She quickly explained that she had located Kreacher. Harry asked if the dark lord was present there too but Winky replied in the negative saying that the house was inhabited by some death eaters and not the dark lord himself. Finally, specifying the location of the house, Winky vanished from the view but not before Harry had made her promise not to tell Dumbledore about this at the moment.

"Ladies and gentlemen..." Harry said with a hardened look on his face as he stood up. "...let's get ready for our first adventure"

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A/N: Eighth chapter here guys. And for those of you who are curious...yes, dragons and vampires will be involved in the battle near the end of this fic. Their combined fight scenes might go over 10k words. Well...only time will tell.

I know a lot of people want me to update faster (including myself). But I

get too caught up with everything else. I know you guys understand that and I appreciate that very much. Thanks for sticking around.

Thanks for all those reviews. Every review which you people made is much appreciated. And to everyone who didn't review, thanks for taking time to read up to here at least.

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9. The Power of Hogwarts

Resurrected

Ok. Everyone knows the drill. Still here goes nothing -

Harry Potter and the other characters of J.K. Rowling are strictly hers. I am not the original writer (though I wish I could be J) and I do not wish to make money from this. Most Importantly, I DO NOT want to get sued. So if anyone has any problems with anything I write, then just tell me.

There's plenty more...blah blah blah...forget it and let the story begin :).

Note: US English has been used here.

Note: This is the sequel to Harry Potter & The Power Of Hogwarts. Please read it before moving on with this story.

HARRY POTTER & THE NEW DAWN

Chapter 9 - The Power of Hogwarts Resurrected

Finally, specifying the location of the house, Winky vanished from the view but not before Harry had made her promise not to tell Dumbledore about this at the moment.

"Ladies and gentlemen..." Harry said with a hardened look on his face as he stood up. "...let's get ready for our first adventure"

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"Harry Potter" a grave voice spoke up. "You are not welcome here". Harry turned around slowly to look at the centaur standing behind him. The centaur's bow was held tightly in his left hand which gave Harry the

impression that he might have been aiming at Harry initially. Harry inwardly shivered at the prospect of what would have happened if something like that had happened by now.

"I come as a friend" Harry said in a determined voice as he shook away the other thoughts from his mind. Right now, he had to focus on getting the centaurs to back the light side as Firenze had asked him to.

"We are not friends of any humans" another centaur said as he came into a clearing illuminated by the moonlight.

"Then be a friend of the light side" Harry said. "In this war..."

"This is your war Harry Potter" the first centaur said in the same grave voice as before. "We did not ask for it and have nothing to do with it"

"Neither did I ask for this stupid scar" Harry seemed to lose his patience for a split second before he recovered. The centaurs exchanged a glance as Harry continued. "Look...wizards and centaurs might not have been on the best of terms in the past but we have a common enemy at the moment"

"We don't" the second centaur said this time as another centaur came into view. "You have an enemy, not us"

"Surely you don't think Lord Voldemort wants to be friends with anyone other than pure-blooded wizards and witches!" Harry exclaimed. "He wants to reign supreme and..."

"We do not wish to discuss these things" the third centaur, seemingly an elderly one, said from behind. The first two centaurs, on hearing the voice of the third one, bowed their heads in a show of respect and cleared the way for the elderly centaur. "We only wish to live in peace"

"But sir..." Harry's wording's seemed to catch the centaur a bit off guard.

"...everyone knows Lord Voldemort is hell bent on ruling the whole world as he wishes. Of course you don't see a peaceful future if that happens"

"The stars decide the ways, we walk them" the elderly centaur replied.

His voice seemed more polite than those of the others but the weight in them was hundred times more.

"What do the stars predict about the outcome of this war?" Harry asked defiantly. The elderly centaur seemed to weigh Harry's words carefully before replying.

"It is not for us to tell" he replied. "It is for you to fulfill and find out for yourself"

"But of course you have to take a side" Harry continued. "If you are not with us..."

"We are neither with you nor with anyone else" the elderly centaur corrected Harry in a sharp voice. In a much calmer voice, and what Harry thought was a sympathetic look, he continued. "We will take no sides in this war. Follow your destiny Harry Potter".

With that, the elderly centaur turned around and left. Taking this as a signal, the other two centaurs also left leaving behind a frustrated Harry. As Harry made his way back towards the castle, he comforted himself by thinking that the centaurs would take no one's side. At least something was better than nothing!

Harry absent-mindedly cursed the centaurs ability to read the stars as he made his way back. Of course he did not believe in "predicting the future" kind of things but still, he could not ignore the fact that the centaurs had some powers of their own. Maybe they knew what the outcome of the war would be...maybe not. "Follow your destiny". This was what the elderly centaur had said to Harry just before leaving. Well, it seemed like his destiny had been following him ever since his birth than the other way around. He did not...

"Ouch" Harry cried out as he walked into something. He had been so lost

in thoughts that his mind had not registered the fact that a small blinking light had been steadily growing brighter and larger. It had been a matter of a further two or three minutes before the collision took place and made him realize his surroundings. Harry stepped back and looked closely at the thing in which he had bumped. Slowly a smile covered his face as he started to camouflage the object in front of him.

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"The right time to attack is in the night" Harry thought as he lay on his bed, his mind planning the attack in which he wanted to retrieve the veil.

Harry had gone straight to a meeting of the senior members of the D.A. on his way back from the meeting with the centaurs. The D.A. meeting had been a long one and they had made a rough outline as to how to plan their attack. However, something did not seem right to Harry.

Firstly, they had no idea as to who was with Kreacher in the same house.

It was logical to expect that Bellatrix Lestrange was also living in the same house but it was also possible that the house was a strong hold of the death eaters. There was an equal probability of an attack ending up in disastrous results which made Harry very nervous. What if they attacked the place and ran into a fifty odd death eaters? It was illogical to even dream that the D.A. members and Harry could take on so many.

Harry knew he could depend on himself to take on more than one skilled death eater but he couldn't expect the same from the others. The others would most probably be able to take on one skilled death eater each.

After all, not all death eaters were like Wormtail. In fact, according to Harry, Wormtail was an exception and most of the death eaters were quite skilled.

However, the single 'what if there are loads of death eaters?' query was making Harry think like mad. Was he doing the right thing by bringing in

his friends in the fray? What if something happened to someone? Harry shook his head to clear his thoughts. He did not want to doubt his friends at the moment. After all, the fight would come to the door of Hogwarts one day or the other. There was nothing to be gained by thinking that his friends would be safe forever. Just like he had not been able to keep Tonks...

Harry got up from his bed as the thought of Tonks came searing back. No, he said to himself, he couldn't let himself get distracted at this moment. With this thought, he meditated for a few minutes and cleared his mind. Once again, he started to think about the mission and started to weigh the prospects of their coming out unscathed. With a deep sigh, Harry accepted that if there were too many death eaters present, then they might not come back alive. Unless...

Harry almost kicked himself for not seeing this option previously. Of course, he had a very good chance of knowing exactly how many death eaters frequented that place. With a smirk on his face, Harry got up from his room and fixed himself an early dinner. He had a meeting to attend, one which had been just scheduled in his mind.

Soon Harry found himself walking down the corridors of Hogwarts in the direction of the Slytherin tower. He made sure that he did not run into Malfoy or his goons. Coming to think of it, Harry had not faced Malfoy's childish tricks in a long time. All for the greater good, Harry thought and smiled as he applied Dumbledore's words to such a small thing.

Harry quickly turned the second last corner when he suddenly felt as if someone else was present. It was as if the very shadows of the castle corridor was alive and waiting to lunge at him. Slowly Harry stepped back and the feeling went away. Even the other corridors seemed less darker than the one in which he had just been. He opened his wizard

radar and checked if anyone was around or not. He saw many dots around the castle but this area seemed quite deserted. Quickly closing the wizard radar, Harry turned the corner again and, as he felt the same thing again, he said in a slight whisper "Rano, I summon you".

Instantly some of the darkness in the corridor seemed to fade away and a figure appeared from the darkest corner of the corridor.

"Harry Potter" the vampire named Rano bowed slightly as he acknowledged Harry's presence. Though vampires never bowed in front of wizards, Rowena's father had been very clear that he wanted all the vampires to treat Harry as if he was a part of the Horatio family. Just this sentence from Mr. Horatio had been enough for the warrior vampires.

"Rano..." Harry looked slightly uncomfortable at seeing the vampire bow slightly but decided not to say anything. "...I need your help in something"

"I am here to follow your commands" Rano said, emphasizing on the last word very clearly. Harry sighed inwardly and decided to continue.

"I want two or three of you to keep a watch over a certain house". With that, Harry specified the location of the house to Rano. He explained that he did not want any of the vampires seen since the residents of the house might not be "friendly". Rano just nodded his head when Harry had finished giving his instructions.

"It will be done" Rano said. "In another 48 hours, we will give you the complete information of what happens in that house and who all live in it". With that, Rano gave a slight bow and vanished from Harry's sight.

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"Hi Harry" Fleur said as she looked up and saw Harry standing outside the potions classroom. She had been very busy these past few weeks working on various potions and had not seen Harry for quite some time.

Harry looked quite tired but his eyes seemed to be burning with a sense of unreal energy. He was wearing muggle clothes and had a red diary in his hand.

"Hello Fleur" Harry returned the greeting. "May I come in?". It had been a day since Harry had sent the warrior vampires to watch the place where Kreacher was supposed to be.

"Yes...sure" Fleur replied, wondering why Harry was being so formal. As Harry entered, she noticed that he looked more serious than normal and that was saying something.

"I need to talk to you about something" Harry said as he cast his glance around. Fleur got the hint and quickly cast a spell to lock all doors. Still seeing the look on Harry's face, she went on to cast a silencing spell.

"Thanks" Harry said in a relieved tone. He could have done the same things himself but it would have been rude for him to do so in someone else's office. Fleur brushed off the comment and conjured up a chair for Harry on the opposite side of the desk at which she was seated.

"Anything important?" Fleur prompted Harry who nodded back. "You are not going to make notes about our conversation, are you?" Fleur tried to make the mood a bit light as she made a reference to the diary in Harry's hand. Harry looked once at the diary and then, with a sad smile on his face, gave a negative reply.

"I know about Rowena" Harry said after a couple of seconds. There was a slight look of confusion on Fleur's face before she understood what Harry meant. But just as quickly, her face became expressionless again. After all, Harry could be implying something else that what was on her mind even though it did not seem likely.

"And I know that you know about her too". This sentence from Harry laid to rest any doubts in Fleur's mind. Harry knew that Rowena was a

vampire.

"How long?" was all Fleur could ask. She had no idea how long Harry had known about Rowena.

"Not too long" Harry said. "I wanted to ask you about a few things though"

"Like?" Fleur queried.

"She mentioned she takes some...blood pills?" Harry seemed slightly skeptical as he said this.

"Yes" Fleur answered but did not say anything more.

"What are these things?" Harry asked after a short pause. "Human..." his voice trailed off at this. Now that he came to think of it, he could not imagine Rowena drinking a humans blood. But then again, she had to drink blood to live.

"A little bit" Fleur replied. Seeing the look on Harry's face, she decided to clarify a little more. "These pills are made with special ingredients which contain most of the characteristics and properties of human blood.

However, they can never replace human blood completely which is what is these species need to survive healthily"

After a short moment's silence, Fleur continued. "Though the pill is almost like human blood, however, to make the pill have any effect, we need to add a small amount of humans blood to it. These pills contain only about 5 human blood"

"I see" Harry said, nodding his head in acknowledgment. "And how many pills does one have to take in a day?" he queried.

"Two..." Fleur replied before adding. "...in a month"

"What?" Harry sounded amazed at this. How can 2 pills in a month replace a person's daily 'food'?

"I know it is an amazing thing" Fleur replied. "Some of the ingredients in

the potion have a long lasting effect. However, when Rowena grows up, she will need a pill every week. The rest of their food needs are taken care of by normal food. To understand how this happens, you will have to understand the exact anatomy of a vampire's body and how this potion works"

"Not interested!" Harry threw up his arms in surrender. Fleur smiled as she saw the tension on Harry's face diminish slightly. It was hard to suddenly know that someone you know might be drinking a humans blood to live.

"Anything else I should know?" Harry asked in a serious manner once again.

"Why do you want to know all this Harry?" this time it was Fleur who made the query. Harry was not the kind of person who poked his nose into other people's lives and yet here he was trying to know more about Rowena's life.

"I don't know exactly" Harry replied with a deep sigh. "It's just that I feel I could have done something for her...something so that she wouldn't have to be what she is"

"Don't say that!" Fleur replied a bit angrily. "It's not her fault that she is a vampire!"

"Sorry" Harry instantly apologized. "I should not have said something like that"

"Of course you shouldn't" Fleur's angry tone was still in place.

"She is not happy about what she is" Harry said thoughtfully. "She is almost ashamed. Maybe that's why I thought..."

"She is a kid" Fleur replied, her voice calming down slightly. Fleur could understand part of Harry's psychology. He was human after all. She had a similar psychology before she had done her thesis on vampires.

"I am really sorry". There was genuine regret in Harry's voice this time and he looked truly ashamed. "I just wanted to know something about her...so that I can understand her and help her when she needs some help. Like you said, she is a kid"

"Well..." Fleur looked slightly tense as he contemplated something.

Finally, seeing the regret on Harry's face and understanding his genuine feeling in wanting to help Rowena, she seemed to come to a conclusion.

"One more thing which you might want to know is that the blood we put in the ingredient...it comes from a child"

"A child?" Harry choked for a moment.

"Yes" Fleur replied. "A child below the age of 5". Harry looked aghast at listening this. How could someone take a child's blood for a potion?

"I know it sounds terrible..." Fleur continued. "...but it is the only way the potion has been working till now"

"What does that mean?" Harry asked. "Till now?"

"In a couple of months a newer potion will be available" Fleur's cheeks seemed to redden slightly as she said this. "Only the blood of an adult will be able to complete the potion and it will work for a slightly more time than now"

"How do you know that?" Harry asked curiously.

"Because I made that potion" Fleur lowered her head and Harry thought her face had turned red in embarrassment. "That was the thesis which I had submitted. That's how I got a job as a professor!"

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Harry sat in the Gryffindor common room going over The Daily Prophet.

The day had started well with Rano giving his detailed report to Harry about the happenings in the Bellatrix Manor as it was known. He had given his report at 3 am in the morning and Harry had not been able to

sleep since then. It seemed that the vampires had not been able to get too many details because the area was heavily frequented by death eaters but still, Harry seemed pleased with the information he had got.

However, the morning did not seem to bring good news with it...at least not the The Daily Prophet. It seemed to contain the same stories of more killings all over the country. What was new was that these kinds of acts had now started to happen in many other countries, that too with increased frequency.

As Harry turned over the pages, his eyes came to a stop on a heading titled "Werewolves - A war within a war". The report continued to specify how there had been heavy infighting reported within the werewolf community over a supposed treaty by the ministry. Harry felt his insides shiver as he read that a fight had broken out in the middle of the night in a little town in the northern part of England. He knew Remus must have gone there and maybe, just maybe, Remus had been involved in the fight too.

Harry could not imagine Remus getting into a fierce fight since he was normally such a controlled person. However, he knew that beneath the cool exterior Remus was still as human as anyone else could be. He had seen a glimpse of Remus's cold, ruthless self when Wormtail had escaped and but he had no idea how strong Remus was compared to other werewolves. After all, he had never known more than one werewolf in his life, least of all someone who might actually love biting or killing others. Harry did not doubt Remus's ability to fight back but, somewhere deep down, he felt afraid for his adopted godfather.

The report went on to mention that the fight had only been stopped after aurors had apparated and captured a couple of werewolves. One of them had went on to claim that they wouldn't be able to hold him for much

longer as the dark lord's forces were going to sweep over the whole nation. Most of the dark werewolves had escaped. About ten werewolves had stayed behind from an estimated group of forty fighting werewolves and many were said to be in critical state. Harry's face hardened as he thought just how the werewolves might have hurt each other. They would most probably have ripped off pieces of flesh from each other's body, must have bitten their opponents as hard as they could, must have mutilated their bodies...

Harry put down the paper as he saw a picture of the captured werewolf screaming at the aurors. The wounds on his face and body seemed really deep and if they were any indication, then Harry's mental image of werewolves fighting was not far off.

After a long moment, Harry sighed and said in a whisper to himself. "I hope you are ok Remus"

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"So..." Harry said after a long pause. "...this is it"

"Don't you think we should go over the plan once more?" Hermione seemed slightly skeptical about the whole thing. "We can try to get the veil tomorrow instead of today" she added hesitantly.

"Hermione, are you afraid?" Ron was the one who asked the question.

Hermione shook her head to give a negative reply but it was clear for all those present to see that she was slightly afraid...if not more. In fact, everyone present looked afraid.

Even though Ron gave Hermione a reassuring hug, he seemed slightly pale himself. Cho and Luna were going over the plan repeatedly and in the process they were not thinking what was about to happen. Soha looked distinctly white. She was now inwardly questioning Harry's wisdom in inducting her in the senior group of the D.A. but then she too

joined in the discussion Cho and Luna were having. Neville was the quietest one. Apart from one or two suggestions, he did not say anything throughout the meeting which was the last one before they attacked the Bellatrix Manor...that night itself.

As Harry saw everyone's distinct way of dealing with the pressure, he himself felt slightly hesitant about the whole mission. But then again, he knew that everyone would have to face this situation sooner or later.

Also, he told himself to stop this habit of doubting his friends. Though it would take a long time for the relationships to mend, they were friends after all and he could not change that.

"Let's go" Harry said as he checked everything one last time. As they moved out of the Room of Requirements, Luna asked.

"How did you get all this information Harry?"

"I have my sources Luna" Harry said curtly as he led them down a hidden corridor. No one said anything else during the whole journey to the edge of the forbidden forest. As Harry started walking into the forest, Hermione gripped his right arm.

"In to the forest?" she queried. Harry just nodded in reply. He saw the frightened look on Ron's face and figured out that Ron was thinking of the time they had almost been eaten alive by Aragog's offspring's.

"We go inside the forest?" Hermione asked again. "But how do we get to the mansion? I had thought we would go to Hogsmeade and..."

"Threstals again?" Luna asked in her dreamy voice. Harry gave a negative answer and instead asked them to follow him as quietly as possible. At last, he came to stop in front of a large growth of shrubbery and bushes.

"If..." Harry said and paused as everyone turned their attention back towards him. "...If anyone wants to opt out then this is the time". Harry gave a few seconds to the others to digest the news and understand that

they had a choice to not go on the mission.

"If we want to opt out then we will let you know the next time" the determined voice of Neville Longbottom was heard. As Harry looked around, he saw the fear on the faces of the others getting replaced by an expression of grim determination. With renewed respect for his friends he turned around and aimed his wand at the bushes in front of him.

"I had thought that we might have to use Threstals again but then I found this". With that, he cast an uncovering spell to reveal the item in which he had bumped a couple of nights ago. The Weasley family car.

"Whoa" Ron jumped in joy as he saw the car.

"This time we let Hermione drive" Harry said with a smile and hopped inside. The others followed suit as Hermione seated herself behind the drivers seat. If someone had been looking out of their castle window at that time, then they would have seen a car coming flying out of the forbidden forest with a girl driving it while a red haired boy was telling others the story of what had gone down in the history of Hogwarts as one of the finest entrances ever made on the grounds. Little did the occupants know what was lying ahead for them.

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"Pumpkin Pimples" a grave voice said the password to the gargoyle guarding Albus Dumbledore's office. The gargoyle leapt back and the figure proceeded on to the spiraling staircase and, coming to a stop on the landing of the office. Taking a deep breath, the person knocked on the door.

"Come in" the familiar voice of the headmaster came from inside and the person entered the room and closed the door behind him.

"Good morning headmaster" Remus Lupin said once the door had closed behind him.

"Good morning Remus" Dumbledore replied as he minutely studied the appearance of his one-time pupil. Remus seemed to have been badly injured and Dumbledore attributed this to the report he had read in The Daily Prophet.

"I have recovered sufficiently headmaster" Remus replied as he felt Dumbledore's concern for him. Even though this was quite true, only Remus knew how lucky he had been to escape the clutches of death in that dreadful night. He still couldn't help but shiver inwardly when he thought how he had counter-attacked the other werewolves and had nearly taken apart a couple of them, literally.

"I see" Dumbledore said, not wanting to pursue a topic which might put Remus in discomfort. He motioned for Remus to take a seat which he did.

"A few people have come on to the light side" Remus came to the point instantly as he explained the division in the werewolf community of late.

"That is good news" Dumbledore said with a genuine smile before continuing. "I am really grateful for the way you undertook this perilous mission"

"But there are many on the dark side" Remus did not seem to be affected by the gratefulness of the person sitting opposite to him. "Too many..." his voice trailed off at this.

"I would like to disagree with you on this point Remus" Dumbledore said in a soothing voice. He could understand that Remus was very affected by what he had seen and done and he could not let Remus get disheartened so easily.

"You forget one thing" Dumbledore continued as Remus looked up at him. "The few who are with us have the courage to defend the innocent and this fills them up with a strange power. These few have defeated many an army in the past"

"But these are not people we are dealing with" Remus said, shaking his head in disagreement. "These are...beasts" the last word was said in a barely audible whisper.

"Everyone becomes a beast when they are blinded by greed and power" Dumbledore replied. "Better people than us have fallen prey for power. What you saw..."

"...was something I wish I never see again" Remus said in a horror-stricken voice. Dumbledore did not reply to this and waited patiently for Remus to speak again. After a few silent minutes, Remus spoke again.

"I have asked them to stay in the Shrieking Shack for the moment" Remus said, clarifying where his "guests" were.

"Do they like it?" Dumbledore asked in a slightly humorous voice.

"Did you put the spells in place?" Remus asked in a very concerned voice and did not seem to be interested in Dumbledore's question. "I still don't trust all of them and if they get out in Hogsmeade during full moon..."

Remus could not finish the sentence and kept looking at Dumbledore for an answer.

"Don't worry Remus" Dumbledore said as he looked through his glasses at the grounds overlooking the area towards Hogsmeade. "Professor Flitwick has personally cast all the charms and Minerva has tested them thoroughly"

"How about you?" Remus asked tentatively. "Did you check them? There are a lot of people in Hogsmeade!"

Dumbledore turned to face his one time pupil and saw the concern in his face. "Yes" Dumbledore replied. "I checked them personally too". At this, Remus relaxed visibly.

"I think you should go and rest for some time" Dumbledore said sympathetically. "Maybe spend some time with Harry"

"Yes" Remus agreed and got up from his seat. "By the way, how is Harry doing?"

"I think he is doing ok" Dumbledore said. "But I really haven't seen a lot of him lately"

"I see" Remus said. "Good night headmaster"

"Good night Remus"

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"Harry...I am back" Remus shouted in a cheery voice as he portkeyed into his room in the trunk. However, the very next instant he knew something was wrong. He could hear many voices outside and someone was crying too. Harry never brought any of his friends inside. Then what could have happened?

"Harry?" Remus queried in a slightly nervous voice as he looked out of his room. The scene which met his eyes sent shock waves down his spine. Ron and Hermione were standing there, covered in sweat and blood. Soha was sitting on a chair and trembling uncontrollably. Cho was trying to comfort Soha. And there was Fleur who was bending over something. As she turned to see who had called out Harry's name, the face of the person in front of her was revealed. Harry was lying in front of Fleur. Beside him lay Neville.

"Wha...?" Remus stumbled as he saw the body of Harry lying there. He rushed towards Harry and, to his great relief, saw him breathing.

However, his breathing was slightly irregular. Remus's eyes moved on to Neville next and he saw that the son of his friend was also injured.

However, Neville seemed to be stirring somewhat.

"Anything serious?" Remus asked Fleur in a very emotional voice.

"No" Fleur replied in a choked voice herself. "But these are not minor wounds either" she said pointing to some of the burns and scars on both

Harry's and Neville's bodies.

"How did you people get in here?" was the next query by Remus.

"Harry helped us using portkeys" Ron replied from behind him. "He said we would find everything we needed here. On the way we met Professor Delacour and she joined us"

"What is this place Professor Lupin?" Hermione asked curiously.

"Why do you want to know?" Remus queried back as he started to think of some story to tell them. It was quite apparent that they had no idea they were inside Harry's trunk.

"I did not mean to ask something private" Hermione said apologetically. She knew Remus and Harry had become quite close and it was logical for Remus to tell Harry what his friends had said. If he learnt that she had tried to get some information which he considered private, then the reaction could be undesirable.

"It's not mine to tell" Remus said truthfully. He did not want to lie and decided that if Harry wanted to tell his friends about his new home then it was up to him. "But this is where I and Harry live"

"I see" Hermione said. She had guessed that much herself.

"Now can someone please tell me what happened?" Remus asked in an impatient, almost irritated voice. Trust Harry to fight the dark forces when he was not present!

"You tell him" Hermione nudged Ron with her elbow. Ron nodded and started to say what had happened.

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"Switch off the lights Hermione" Harry said as the car took off from the forbidden forest. Hermione did as specified and continued to guide the car in the direction Harry specified. Harry had chosen a moonless night to attack the Bellatrix mansion which helped them to dive under the

clouds from time to time to check their direction. After almost getting lost twice, they finally came to the part of London where the Bellatrix mansion was present.

"Where is it exactly?" Ron asked as he kept looking out of the windows. He had finally finished the story of how they had flown the car into Hogwarts and was now alert to the surroundings.

"Checking" Harry replied as his eyes hovered on the map for a while before checking the landscape below. Soon his gaze became fixed at a section of the area in front of them.

"That place?" Ron asked in a slightly nervous voice. Harry nodded and pointed out a large mansion to all those present in the car. The mansion looked every bit as if it was from some horror movie. Most of the mansion was plunged into darkness except for a couple of windows. A shadow could be seen moving across one of the windows from time to time which gave an even more eerie feeling to the overall situation. As Hermione guided the car to a landing near the mansion, Harry and company saw a couple of figures converging hurriedly near the other lighted window and then departing just as suddenly as they had appeared. The bushes and overgrowth on the grounds of the mansion made up the whole chilling scenario.

"I think we should stop here" Hermione said as they approached a turning from where the mansion was clearly visible. Harry agreed and they came to a stop a few meters before the turning on the road.

"Ok...lets go" Harry said as he got off the car and cast a disillusionmentcharm on himself. The others followed suit and reached the corner of the street as Harry peeked around it. Seeing that the road was deserted, Harry ran across the dimly lit street and came to a stop in the shadows of the walls of a house. As the others crossed the street

hurriedly, Harry started to make his way quietly towards the mansion which was looming at the next corner of the road.

"Where is the veil?" Neville asked Harry in a whisper as they came to a standstill near one of buildings adjoining the grounds of the mansion.

"We will need to find it out" Harry whispered back. "This way" Harry motioned the others to follow him as he ducked below the walls of the grounds of the mansion. In about 10 more seconds, they came to a slight opening in the brick walls which was covered by thick bushes and trees.

"How did you know there was a opening here?" Hermione asked curiously as she followed Harry inside the grounds. Harry held up his index finger to silence her and started surveying the whole scene. He saw that the mansion was just like what he had visualized from Rano's descriptions. From the place where he stood, which was one of the corners of the ground, he could spot two entrances. The large oak door was obviously the main entrance which the smaller iron door at the far end of the building looked to be an emergency exit or a back door.

"That door should open in about 8 minutes from now" Harry said as he checked his watch.

"How do you know?" Hermione asked, curiosity dripping from her voice.

"Read the stars" Harry said in a slightly irritated voice. He was obviously not going to tell his friends about Rano or the vampires at Hogwarts.

It was only a couple of seconds later that Hermione understood that Harry had referred to the centaurs ability of reading the stars and predicting the future. Blushing in embarrassment as Ron stifled a bout of laughter, Hermione made a promised to herself that she will not query Harry about every minor thing unless it was really important.

"C'mon Hermione...are you not going to give Harry points for answering your questions, are you?" Ron said in an apparent attempt to lighten up

the issue. Hermione did not reply and Ron let the issue drop.

"What do we do now?" Cho asked tentatively.

"I thought we were reading the stars" Luna said in her usual dreamy voice. Even Hermione couldn't resist a smile at this.

"We wait for a few minutes" Harry said in a whisper. It was quite evident that even though his eyes weren't leaving the grounds, his other senses were quite on the alert. In the same voice, Harry continued. "For those who know apparating...no one is going to apparate here. We don't know how many people are inside at the moment and we cannot risk apparating right in front of someone".

"Now, when the door opens..." Harry continued. "...two people will come out. We will have to stun them and then we have to move inside. From there..." Harry paused slightly. Here came the difficult part. After a few seconds, he continued "...from there we will divide into groups of two each and search for the veil. However, we will search one floor at a time so that even if there are a large number of death eaters, we can still fight our way out"

"Large number of death eaters?" Ron asked in a slightly hesitant voice.

"Just be on your toes and do not make a sound" Harry said reassuringly.

"I am sure everything will turn out fine". As everyone nodded their heads, there remained no doubt as to who their leader was. The manner in which Harry spoke gave everyone a confidence to believe...that they were going to make it.

"Aren't there any wards around this place?" Soha asked.

"I don't think so" Harry said. After all, Rano had not reported feeling any wards around the mansion.

"Weird how someone wouldn't put a ward where the veil is" Soha stated.

"I bet they never thought someone might locate them in the middle of

muggle London" Neville reasoned before adding. "Anyway, we don't know for sure yet"

"One more minute left" Harry said as he glanced at his watch. He moved a little ahead so that no one could see his actions. He quickly took out the wizard radar and surveyed the scene around. There were some wards present after all since he could not see anything inside the mansion walls. However, he was satisfied to see that there were no death eaters on the outside. Putting the wizard radar back in its place, Harry motioned the other's to follow him.

As quietly as possible, six figures darted across the grounds of the mansion and came to a stop only after they had reached the safety of the shadows of mansion walls. Taking a few seconds to regain their breath, Harry and company moved quietly until they came to the far end door of the mansion.

"20 seconds more" Harry whispered these words to Neville who whispered it to the person behind him. With baited breath they waited for the door to open.

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"What happened next?" Remus asked as Ron seemed to have stopped talking. He looked as if he had seen a ghost. Remus looked from Ron to Hermione and back again as he sought an explanation.

"I will explain from here on" Hermione said as she saw that Ron did not seem likely to proceed. "Two death eaters came out as Harry said and we stunned them. Just as the door was about to close, Harry stopped it with a spell. We then moved inside..."

"It was Percy" Ron said in a half angry and half stunned voice. Hermione stopped her narration and looked at Ron with a sad expression. As Remus turned to face Ron, he continued. "One of the death eaters we had

stunned was Percy. His hood fell and I saw him for the first time in almost a year". After saying this, Ron collapsed in a chair with his head between his hands.

"Then?" Remus asked quietly. He did not want to ask anything about what Ron's reaction had been but knowing the Weasley's, he would most probably have been too shocked to do anything against a family member.

"We all went in after hiding the unconscious death eaters in the bushes and..." Hermione paused again even though this time Ron had not interrupted her.

"And?" Remus prompted.

"An alarm went off" Hermione said with a sigh. "Some wards were set off I think"

"What!" Remus jumped up from his seat. "You people could have been dead. Setting off wards like that. This whole thing was one crazy idea".

He exclaimed as he resumed his seat. "What happened next?"

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"Line up against the wall and stay still" Harry said as he activated the invisibility feature of his glove over himself and his friends. He was relieved to see that everyone had made it inside and Neville slowly closed the door.

"What the hell?" one bellowing voice boomed from down the hallway where Harry and co. were standing still. Harry slowly started to move sideways as he saw a wooden staircase to his right. If he could get themselves underneath the staircase then they might have a chance.

'Intruders?' another death eater made a query as he opened one of the many doors in the corridor. Without even waiting for a reply, he shot off a spell in the direction of the door. The spell passed narrowly past Neville, the last member in the group to enter, and hit the wall beside

him. Harry, on seeing the close shave, walked even faster and in 3-4 seconds everyone was under the wooden staircase.

"What happened?" a few more voices could be heard approaching the corridor.

"The intruder ward went off" the man who had shot the spell at the door shouted back. At that moment, around twenty death eaters came into view.

"Oh god" Harry thought to himself as he saw the death eaters. If this was an indication, then many more death eaters had to be around.

"Where's the intruder?" one of the approaching death eaters queried.

"No one was there when I looked out" the death eater who had shot the spell replied. "I cast a spell but no one was there"

"Hold on...we have to be sure" the other death eater replied. He took out his wand and asked everyone to move aside. Harry knew what was going to happen and he activated the glove's shield too. He put all his mental energy into keeping both the shield and the invisibility features active. As he saw the death eater raise his wand, he motioned the others to get ready for action.

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"I don't know how the others couldn't see us" Hermione continued her explanation. "I think Harry cast some kind of a confundus spell or invisibility spell on all of us. He must have done it really fast..."

"What happened next?" Remus said a bit impatiently as he saw Hermione getting carried away in her observations. Hermione seemed slightly unhappy at the way Remus had talked to her just now but she gave him the benefit of doubt. After all, seeing Harry the way he was, he was doing a great job in maintaining his composure.

"We all got ready to fight the death eaters when Harry motioned towards

us" Hermione said. "The next think I knew was..."

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"FunditusInternecio" the death eater said as a jet of deep grey light erupted from his wand. A couple of doors which lay open were shattered to pieces as were a few barrels of water. As the death eater moved the spell towards the staircase, Harry identified the spell as one which tore apart any object which lay in it's path. He smiled inwardly as he saw the power of the spell coming towards them. The amount of energy which the shield would be absorbing was going to be more than sufficient in taking out a few death eaters in one blow.

At that moment, the rays of the spell passed through the gaps in the wooden staircase and hit the shield. The wooden staircase was blown to smithereens but the very next moment, the death eaters eyes widened as they saw the spell vanish into thin air just a few feet from the wall. In fact, the death eater casting the spell was so stunned that his concentration broke and so did the spell.

"Somebody's here" the death eater said in a low voice. However, since pin drop silence had fallen in the corridor, his words carried clearly to Harry and the others. It were his next words which took Harry by surprise.

"Protect it!" the death eater said in the same low voice but there was no mistaken the seriousness behind his words. Harry knew that he had given the instruction to protect the veil. This was it!

"Hello everyone" Harry said as he deactivated the invisibility feature while keeping the shield active. The death eaters froze as they saw six figures appearing out of nowhere but recovered quickly.

"We come in peace" Harry said in a mocking tone as he aimed his wand.

"And the veil". The next instant, a huge bolt of bluish light burst out of his wand tip and hit a large number of death eaters. The power of the

spell was greatly enhanced by the amount of energy the shield had absorbed. As the spell died out, seven death eaters lay unconscious on the floor in front of them. The others who had managed to jump out of the way were beginning to regroup quite fast. They knew they had a job on their hands.

"Cover me" Harry shouted as he started sprinting. "I am going after them" he said as four death eaters vanished from sight. The others could only assume that they had gone to wherever the veil was being kept.

"I am coming with you" Ron said as he started following Harry. The remaining members were shooting spells at high speeds so as to stop the death eaters from aiming at Harry. They succeeded in covering Harry...but only till the place where the corridor ended. In a span of a three to four seconds, Harry Potter and Ronald Weasley had vanished from their sight.

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"Ron knows what happened next" Hermione said as she finished her narrative. Remus turned towards Ron who seemed to have recovered from the shock of having to think about Percy again.

"Ron?" Remus said in a slightly sympathetic voice.

"Uh...oh...yeah...I followed Harry" Ron said in a strange tone.

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"Wait for me Harry" Ron said as he made to the corner and vanished from the sight of the others.

"Go back and help them" Harry said as he made another turn. He activated the wizard radar and was relieved to find it worked inside the house. Also, he saw that there weren't as many death eaters in the house as he had initially feared. There were a couple of death eaters right near...

"Reducto" Harry aimed at the wall near another corner and heard two screams. He ran past the room without looking. However Ron did not do the same. Upon peeking inside, he found two death eaters badly injured from the collapse of the walls behind which they were hiding.

"Bloody hell" Ron said inwardly as he thought how Harry had caused this. He could not even begin to fathom what had changed his friend so much that he would be willing to gravely injure, maybe even kill, death eaters. He knew he would kill one death eater if he had the chance and that was Ginny. But...

"Stupefy" Ron's thoughts were interrupted by the sound of Harry's voice down the corridor. He quickly took off at full speed only to see the retreating back of Harry down the length of the corridor they were in. As he followed, he saw a death eater open a door just after Harry had passed that area. As the guy aimed for Harry, Ron quickly aimed his wand and disarmed the death eater. In a split second, the death eater had been stunned by Ron who jumped over the slumped body.

"Don't think you are all alone, Harry" Ron said as he jumped over the stunned body of the death eater.

As Ron turned round the corner, he saw Harry engaged in a fierce fight with a couple of death eaters. Just as Ron rushed up to help him, he saw Harry take out a muggle gun and fire at the death eater on his left. The other death eater seemed slightly speechless as he stood staring at the collapsing body of his mate with blood pouring out of his right shoulder. This second of indifference was enough for Harry to disarm him and stun him.

"Bloody good move mate" Ron exclaimed as he caught up with Harry.

"Always be ready to pounce when your enemy is surprised" Harry said in a McGonagall-like voice to Ron. Ron looked slightly confused but then

understood that Harry wanted him to learn from what had just happened.

He nodded his head as they stood in front of an oak door.

"Behind this..." Harry said as he looked at the wizard radar without Ron noticing. "...is the veil"

"We haven't come this far to go back with nothing" Ron stated grimly, his gaze fixed on the oak door.

"There are thirty odd death eaters in there" Harry said, his gaze fixed on the door too. "We cannot defeat them all...we have to take them out with strategy"

"Which strategy?" Ron asked curiously. "The ones we learnt..."

"We need to improvise slightly on them" Harry said before Ron could finish his statement. "Take this" Harry said as he gave Ron a small piece of parchment.

"What is this?" Ron queried. "You were doing something with this when we were in the grounds of this mansion"

"This is a portkey" Harry said. Knowing what Ron's reaction would be, he continued quickly. "We will talk later about this. Just remember this, there is a room at the end of the hall in front of us. You will go straight for it and grab the veil on the side and activate the portkey"

Keeping his growing curiosity in check, Ron asked. "How do you know that a portkey will work in there?"

"Instinct" Harry replied monotonously as he felt the throbbing of the wizard radar growing against his chest. More death eaters were arriving here and that could only be possible through portkeys. Also, it meant they did not have too much time on hand.

"Are we late?" a female voice shouted down the corridor and Harry looked up to see Hermione and the rest of the group running towards them.

"No" Harry said as he took a step forward and checked the wizard radar. 40 odd spots were present and the number kept growing. Thankfully only a couple were powerful death eaters.

"What do we do?" Cho asked impatiently as she saw Ron's gaze fixed on the oak door in front of them.

"Cover Ron" Harry said grimly. "There are about 40 death eaters inside. We distract them until Ron gets the veil"

"Ron...veil...40 deat..." Hermione stammered as she looked from Ron to Harry and back to Ron. Harry could understand her nervousness but knew there was no way out.

"Nothing will happen to Ron" Harry said. "Trust me". The tone of Harry's voice was such that it calmed down Hermione instantly.

"Take these" Harry held out a piece of parchment for everyone. "These are portkeys and will take us to the car. Activate the portkey the moment you see Ron is gone". Everyone nodded their head in grim determination. Hermione moved in and kissed Ron on his lips quickly before backing away with a slight blush.

"Ready?" Harry asked but did not turn to see everyone's reaction. He knew they were ready. "Ron, you go in last". With that, Harry took another wand out of his back pocket. Ron assumed Harry had pocketed this wand from one of the death eaters he had stunned. His suspicion was proved right when Harry tested a Lumos spell. Seeing the results were up to his satisfaction, he gripped the wand tightly. The others had lined up on either side of him except for Ron who was standing behind him. His features displaying an extraordinary level of concentration, Harry aimed both the wands at the oak door in front of him.

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"Then?" Remus asked as Ron stopped speaking. He sneaked a quick

glance at Harry as Fleur kept mixing some potions and forcing them down his throat. She was doing the same with Neville too who was now trying to sit up.

Though Remus was very concerned about both the lads in front of him, he couldn't help but be curious about what had happened. It was like an adventure on which he would have gone...almost like the days when the marauders used to pick up fights for fun with other groups. The only thing different was that the fight about which he was about to learn had not been for fun.

"Well..." Hermione took over from Ron and continued.

&&&

The next moment, a couple of powerful spells blasted open the oak door in front of the senior D.A. members. As if on cue, the death eaters inside started casting spells at random some of which, to Harry's alarm, were the unforgivables. However, Harry knew that these kinds of situations could not be avoided any more. Taking a deep breath, he ran inside the great hall followed by the others. No one tried to setup shields to block the curses but rather evaded everything that came their way. Within a couple of seconds, everyone was behind some pillar or the other.

Everyone except Harry and Ron.

"Drop to the ground whenever you see me do so" Harry whispered to Ron before they joined in the action.

Harry ran straight in and said "AmplusSpeculum Flatus". He side stepped a few spells even as the gray-colored ray, which had been emitted from his wand, seemed to vanish into this air. The next moment, Harry dropped on his chest as some more spells came towards him. It was not until too late that many people realized the main reason for Harry dropping to the ground. He had not tried to avoid the spells cast by the death eaters.

Rather, he was trying to avoid the affect of his own spell.

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"What is that!" Cho exclaimed when she heard a low rumble like thunder in the room. As she peeked around the corner of the pillar behind which she was hiding, she heard swishing noises starting to fill up the room.

Her eyes scanned the hall quickly and she saw Harry and Ron lying flat on the stomach. Harry's eyes seemed to be focused on something when Cho heard the first swishing noise coming from the middle of the hall.

The next moment she heard hundreds of thousands of swishing noises fill up the room. It was only her quick thinking which made her draw herself back to her hiding place as huge pieces of glass ripped through the room, tearing everything in it's path.

"Holy god!" Cho clapped her hand to her mouth as she recognized the spell, and the power behind it. It was know as the Glass Effect spell in the wizarding world. It was a very hard spell to perform since it had a very complex wand movement and required immense mental power. The spell caused a huge sphere of glass to be formed in the place where the caster wanted it to be formed and then it would then blow up in another second by itself. It was like a time bomb as the magically enhanced pieces of glass would tear apart anything which came in it's path in a radius of a hundred feet.

&&

"Oh - my - god" Hermione said as she too recognized the spell. "Harry performed THAT!" she almost screamed out but controlled herself in the last second. She could not believe that Harry could have performed such an advanced spell which, nowadays, was not even taught to aurors because of it's devastating nature. It was only when Hermione saw the devastation around them that she stopped admiring the level of

knowledge Harry had gained.

There were bodies lying everywhere around her. Apparently the death eaters had been taken by surprise by the spell. Only a handful had escaped the attack unhurt. Many were crying out for help which some did not move. Hermione herself felt sick when she saw one man's arm lying a few feet from body.

&&

"Go now Ron" Harry whispered to a thunder struck Ron. Ron gave a shake of his head as if to get rid of his bad memories of the past few seconds and jumped over a crouched Harry. As Ron jumped over Harry, Harry came up to one knee and started firing spells at random. Most were above average spells which kept the death eaters busy. Getting the hint, the other D.A. members came out from behind their hiding places and began firing spells at the ten odd death eaters who had been untouched by the glass pieces.

"C'mon Ron" Harry muttered to himself as he saw Ron getting nearer and nearer to the door on the other side of the room. This door led to a smaller room which had the veil in it. Harry saw a couple of death eaters turning to aim at Ron and he started shooting spells at them. He set up the glove-shield and started running towards Ron who seemed concentrating only on the door in front of him.

"I will be true to my words, Hermione" Harry said as he ran after Ron and shot a disarming spell at one of the death eaters aiming for Ron. Out of the corner of his eye, Harry saw a dark spell coming towards him. He did not care. He kept running after Ron and covering him. Two very powerful dark spells hit his shield and cracked it. Harry saw a third and a fourth one being aimed at him from the front. The moment the curses started to made their way towards him, Harry knew he had to make a

choice as to which one he had to avoid. Avoiding any one spell would put him directly in line of the other spell and he knew he would have to take a hit. The choice was not hard. One was the Cruciatus, the other was the AvadaKedavra.

Harry moved out of the way of the green light and into the path of the cruciatus. The next moment his senses were overcome by extreme pain. However, Harry's mental strength caused him to push on. Putting every bit of energy, he rolled over very quickly. The death eater could not adjust his aim fast enough and the spell was broken. However, Harry need not have worried. The next second, a couple of spells came from behind and stunned the couple of death eaters. Knowing that the D.A. members were holding their own and looking out for him too, Harry turned his focus on to Ron.

Ron had stopped a few feet in front of the door and tried to blast it open. However, the spell seemed to make only a small dent on the door.

Obviously, a very powerful spell seemed to be holding the door in its place. Ron cast the spell the second time when, to his astonishment, two more rays of light hit the door with a huge magical power behind them.

He looked back and saw Harry standing about ten feet behind him and casting spells on the door with the two wands he had in his either hand.

With renewed enthusiasm, Ron cast the spell for a third time. This time, the door seemed to budge quite a lot but not enough for it to open.

At this moment, Ron felt a renewed magical surge coming through Harry's spells. He was quite astonished to see that Harry's spell seemed to grow in power. Breaking his spell for a split second, he saw a struggling Harry trying to keep up the magical force behind his spells. Ron could clearly see that Harry was using every bit of his magical strength to push open the door. Deciding that this was a now-or-never moment, Ron

concentrated and, to his surprise, cast quite a powerful destructor spell.

The door swayed for a second but the moment it seemed that it would open, it seemed to come back to its original position. At that very instant, a fourth ray of light hit the door...along with a fifth ray.

Hermione and Neville had joined in. Everyone concentrated one more time and, at last, the door was blasted open.

"C'mon Ron" Harry shouted from behind as the sinister looking veil came into view. Harry felt the wizard radar starting to vibrate rapidly and he could only assume that more death eaters had arrived. They had to get out now!

"Accioveil" Ron said as he pointed his cast the spell at the veil. The veil came racing to a stop in front of him. Ron grabbed the side of the veil and turned round to face Harry and the others. Just as his eyes met those of the others, about fifty death eaters portkeyed right into the room while more entered the room from the doorway. Without waiting a second longer, the D.A. members activated the portkey even as eighty odd curses were cast.

&&&

"We portkeyed to just beside the car and then took off as fast as we could" Hermione finished her narration. Remus's features were a mixture of worry, anger, bewilderment and god-knew-what. However, the top most concern for him now was the safety of his godson.

"Where is the veil now?" Remus asked as his eyes fell on Neville. The boy seemed to be trying to sit up and looked slightly better than before.

"Harry asked Winky to do something about it" Hermione replied. "I do not..."

"REMUS" a scream from behind Remus startled everyone present. Fleur dropped a vial of potion in her hand while Ron staggered back. Hermione

clutched her chest in shock.

"Go to Dumbledore" Harry said as he somehow managed to stand up.

"Tell him that it is time"

"Harry..." Remus took a couple of steps to grab the falling body. "You don't have enough strength"

"Tonight, I have". With that, Harry Potter pushed away Remus Lupin and slowly, but surely, stood up to his full height. "Please go to Dumbledore now and meet me on the second floor girls bathroom" Harry said in a voice quite unlike himself. It seemed to Remus that Harry was desperate and that only meant more trouble. However, he did not dare to argue with Harry. Without saying another word, Remus portkeyed away to one of the corridors of Hogwarts.

&&&&

"This is a bit odd" Hermione said as they were walking down a corridor on the second floor.

"What's odd?" Soha asked as she looked at Neville. He was the last one in their group as he was still feeling slightly dizzy

"The castle" Hermione said cryptically. However, soon everyone could make out what was "odd". The castle walls seemed to be emitting a slight glow.

"Don't worry" Harry said in a monotonous voice. "The Power of Hogwarts has been resurrected". Just as Harry finished saying the sentence, the glow in the walls brightened for one more second before vanishing. At that moment, everyone felt the surge of magical force throughout the castle and a feeling of warmth flooded their bodies and minds.

"So this is how it feels" Neville said as he looked around in awe. The others followed Harry in silence as they entered the girls bathroom on the second floor.

"What are we doing here Harry" Ron asked in a quivering voice as he remembered the last time he had been there. It had been one of the most frightful moments of his life. However, now he wished Harry had been unsuccessful that night in saving Ginny.

"We will be going down" Harry said as turned around to face the others.

"Why?" Ron asked, his eyes growing larger by the second.

"Trust me" Harry said and looked at his watch. Remus should have been here by now according to him. It seemed to him that this night just didn't seem to end.

"What is this place?" Fleur asked as she looked around. "This is just a bathroom"

"It is not" Ron clarified. "It is the entrance"

"Entrance?" Soha asked in confusion.

"To the Chamber of Secrets" Hermione said in a voice which suggested that she wasn't feeling too well. Cho looked at Hermione as if to suggest that she was out of her mind but when she saw the look on Hermione's face combined with that on Ron's face, she understood that she was indeed speaking the truth. That meant that the stories they had heard four years ago were not at all unfounded. As the enormousness of the words sank in, her heart rate picked up and she felt as if something inside her had turned. Looking around, she saw a look of horror on the faces of everyone except Soha who did not know about the Chamber.

"Harry?" a voice called out in the corridor outside the bathroom.

"Come in Remus" Harry said out loud enough for Remus to hear it. Remus entered the bathroom with a big bag on his shoulder and a grim look on his face.

"So, this is the place, is it?" he asked in the voice of one who had just heard something disastrous and was trying to match the facts with what

he had heard.

"Yes" Harry said as he looked at his watch once again and started pacing around impatiently.

"Are we waiting for anyone else?" Hermione asked curiously.

"Yes" Harry replied. "We will have to wait for another few minutes..."

"We are here" a couple of voices chorused from the entrance of the bathroom.

"Right on time" Harry said as he extended his hand. "Fred. George."

"How are you Harry?" George asked.

"Doing ok" Harry replied.

"Why did you floo us earlier today that you wanted us to be here tonight?" Fred asked. "We thought you were joking"

"We have to enter the Chamber of Secrets today" Harry replied promptly.

Fred and George's eyes went wide with surprise before a smile spread over their lips.

"We owe you another one Harry" George said as he punched Harry lightly on his shoulder.

"After you have helped me out tonight, everything will be balanced out"

Harry said without showing any kind of emotion. With that, he cast a spell to close the door of bathroom. He also cast an advanced locking charm on the door so that nobody could invade their privacy.

"Oh Harry...I did not know you would be here" a girlish voice called out from one of the corners of the bathroom.

"Not now Mrtyle" Harry said in a no-nonsense tone. "If you want to come to the Chamber with me then..."

"No!" Moaning Mrtyle gave a scream and vanished down one of the broken toilets in a flash.

"Ghosts are afraid of the Chamber too?" Fleur asked in a curious voice.

"Seems odd...but yes, Mrtyle's death has everything to do with it so it is normal I assume" Harry replied as he turned to face the sinks. He stopped once he found the tap with the sign of the snake carved on it's side.

"Open up" Harry said in parseltongue.

"He can speak parseltongue?" Soha asked Luna with a crazy look in her eyes.

"Yes" Luna replied as if it was the most normal thing on the earth. The others, however, seemed enthralled at the spectacle of the Chamber entrance opening in front of them.

"Please follow me" with that, Harry jumped inside the opening. In a few seconds time, everyone were reunited at the bottom of the pipelines.

Also, none of the girls seemed too happy with the dirt they were covered in.

Harry started walking down the trail which he had walked on so long ago. After a few minutes of walking through the trail, which had been made treacherous by the cave-in caused previously, they stood in front of the door of the Chamber.

"Open" Harry said in parseltongue again and the door in front of everyone opened up revealing the Chamber. Hermione rushed in to see as much as she could. She was followed by an enthusiastic Fred and George and the others. Ron was the only one who seemed to be entering the chamber reluctantly.

"There it is" Harry said in an almost bored voice as he pointed out the dead basilisk still lying in the chamber. Cho shivered, Soha screamed, Ron turned a ghastly white, Luna, surprisingly, smiled while Fred, George and Hermione rushed over to get a closer look at the basilisk. Remus looked at the basilisk and wondered at Harry's courage to have fought it at the age of 12.

"Now we have to do what we have come here to do" Harry said and held out his left hand towards Remus. Remus handed over the bag on his shoulder to Harry as Harry lit up a portion of the Chamber to reveal the veil.

"You asked Winky to bring the veil here?" Cho asked in a bewildered voice.

"Yes" Harry replied as he started emptying the the contents of the bag Remus had handed over to him. He carefully laid out the items on the ground in front of him.

"What is the meaning of this?" Hermione asked as she looked at the items in front of her. There lay Godric Gryffindor's sword and the sorting hat.

"It means that the school will need a new sorting hat from the next year onwards" Harry said as he crossed his arms and got ready to do some explanation.

"These items..." Harry said pointing at the items in front of him. "...were part of the Power of Hogwarts. It was an ancient power created to protect Hogwarts. Unfortunately the Goblet of Fire was destroyed using this veil and so was the Power of Hogwarts. What we have activated right now is a diminished Power of Hogwarts"

"So what do you plan to do?"

"I plan to destroy these items along with another item" Harry said.

Remus's eyes widened as he understood that the other item was Gryffindor's glove which Harry was wearing at the moment.

"You want to destroy the Power of Hogwarts!" Hermione screamed. "This could save us all...this is one of the biggest magical inventions...this is..."

"Hermione" Ron interrupted Hermione's ramblings. "I think we should ask Harry about why he wants to destroy the Power firstly". Reluctantly, Hermione agreed.

"As I was saying, we need to destroy the Power of Hogwarts" Harry stated. "I cannot give you my reason behind it right now. I have read something about it and all facts seem to match my assumptions..."

"Hold on Harry" Remus interrupted. "You want to destroy these magical objects based on your assumptions?"

"Yes" Harry replied bluntly which caused Hermione to draw her breath in sharply. "I hope you will draw assurance from the fact that Headmaster Dumbledore agrees with me which is why he handed over these items to you"

"Well...yeah" Remus agreed. "He said something about wanting to come here too but said he would stay outside because that is where he would be needed most"

"Yes" Harry said. "He will have to strengthen Hogwarts to withstand the magical out-ashing from this destruction"

"I am confused" Hermione stated. "Dumbledore also agrees with your assumption?"

"Yes" Harry said. "So, to continue, we have come here to destroy the Power of Hogwarts. I have asked you all to join me so that you can help me control the magical energy which will erupt when the Power of Hogwarts is destroyed. In fact, the veil will also be destroyed once the Power is destroyed and I could not have possibly controlled such a large amount of energy"

"What do you want to control the magical energy for?" Fred asked.

"First of all, I want to stop Hogwarts from getting destroyed" Harry exclaimed. "And secondly, I want to focus the magical energy into one other item which I have with me". No one spoke after Harry stopped speaking. Harry took this as a sign that they agreed to go on with what was going to happen. "Well, lets get started".

With that, Harry touched a green colored pimple on the inside of his left forearm and, with a golden glow, the glove came off. Everyone stared in amazement as Harry placed the glove on the floor too before walking over to another area. There, he took out something from his left pocket and placed it on the floor. It was then that Fleur noticed that it was the same diary which Harry had been carrying around with him previously.

"Harry..." Fleur began but Harry stopped her.

"Later Fleur" Harry said. Fleur nodded her head in acknowledgment. "By the way, I hope you guys remember the spell I displayed to you a few days ago? The one which is used to control magical energies?". The D.A. members gave a positive nod of their heads.

"Now, line up and keep your wands aimed" Harry said. As everyone lined up, Harry's eyes flickered on the glove for a moment. It had saved his life many times. As he looked at the other items, he wondered whether they would be able to control the magical outburst or not. If they couldn't, then it could have disastrous effects. However, he had not come this far to fail. This was going to be one of his toughest tests and if they succeeded then he knew the reward would be beyond anything he could have asked for.

"Harry?" Remus's voice brought Harry out of his thoughts.

"Oh...yeah" Harry said with a slightly embarrassed look on his face. The next moment, that look was replaced by one of sheer concentration.

"ClaxRes" Harry said. The spell hit the sorting hat and it flew behind the veil. Instantly a huge magical spurt erupted from the veil.

"ImperiumNavitas". A chorus of nine voices was heard as the a ray of magical force from the veil threatened to go out of control. Nine rays struck the ray of light being emitted from the veil and started controlling it and stopped it from hitting out at the chamber walls.

"ClaxRes" Harry said once again and the spell hit Gryffindor's sword. As soon as it flew behind the veil, a huge amount of magical energy burst out. The veil seemed like a small sun as rays of light started to come out from all the sides. Harry watched as the D.A. members, along with Fred, George, Fleur and Remus, were having a lot of trouble controlling the magical energy being emitted.

"Focus on the diary" Harry said and pointed out the diary to them. The others followed his instruction and slowly, but surely, moved the main strand of energy into the diary. Instantly, it started to glow brightly.

Harry knew that destroying the glove will result into the maximum energy emission since it was the item which triggered off the Power in the first place. Also, the moment the four items merged behind the veil, they would combine into a single object and would be destroyed. That would result in a huge amount of energy being emitted. Harry closed his eyes and took a deep breath and...

"ClaxRes" Harry said once again and the spell hit the glove. Harry watched the glove fly towards the veil in slow motion. No sooner had the glove reached the entrance to the veil, Harry shouted "Imperium Navitas". He cast the energy control spell fully on instinct. As if to vindicate his judgment, a massive amount of energy was emitted from the veil.

"Harry!" Fred shouted as a huge ball of energy seemed to be speeding towards Harry. Harry's energy control spell had hit the energy beam alright, but it had redirected the energy beam towards himself. Harry cast the energy controlling spell once again. The D.A. members watched in horror as the beam of bright white light seemed to engulf Harry.

However, in a split second more, they saw that Harry had pushed back the energy beam.

The energy beam threatened to destroy everything in it's path. Harry's

wand swayed dangerously as the beam threatened to break the spell but Harry held on tight.

"Hold on" Harry shouted to the others as he tried to redirect the energy beam towards the diary. With great effort, Harry moved the energy beam towards the existing beam of energy the others were controlling. Harry was already feeling the strains of his previous efforts of the night and this one seemed to be taking it's toll on him. He sank to one knee as he concentrated on bringing the beam to merge with the existing one.

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"What is that?" Hermione asked as the diary began to glow brightly.

"No idea" Soha and Neville chorused back. The diary seemed to be glowing more brightly with every passing second. All of a sudden, rays of light seemed to converge from all sides into the diary. It was almost as if Hogwarts itself was supplying energy to the diary or whatever it was.

"Bloody hell" Ron said as something which he had never imagined started to happen.

&&&&

"Harry!" this time it was Remus.

"Hold on" Harry shouted back. "This will hit you like a huge blast". Harry was sweating profusely and he grabbed his wand with both hands to stop it from quavering. The energy beam seemed to grow in power as the veil started to collapse under it's intensity. Harry knew that very soon the energy would reach it's peak and that he could not let that moment pass by. This kind of energy was something which someone could control only once in their lifetime if they had the luck to find it. As Harry collapsed on his second knee too, he saw the energy flow from Hogwarts into the diary. Every bit of his instincts told him that the time was now or never.

"ImperiumNavitas" Harry shouted out with one more great effort. A huge

magical energy flowed into Harry's spell and successfully directed the massive energy flow into the existing beam which the D.A. members were controlling. At that moment, the veil collapsed under the tremendous magical energy which led to an unbelievable amount of energy being emitted. What happened next was nothing short of a miracle.

As Harry saw the final amount of energy being emitted, he cast the spell one more time. This time, he put everything into it. He did not care if he lived or died. All he knew was he had to finish what he had started off tonight. The energy beam collided with his spell which seemed to be of great magical energy itself. It was with great relief that Harry saw that he had been able to keep the flow of the energy beam intact. The enormous amount of energy was channeled into the beam which the other people were controlling. If anyone had seen the scene at that moment, they would have thought that ten odd people were trying to control the energy of the sun itself. The room was glowing so brightly that no one could see anything. However, everyone's instinct told them they had to hold on for just a second longer. Just that bit longer...

At that moment, the whole room seemed to burst into a fireball of energy. White light spread to every part of the Chamber. Harry was thrown off his feet along with the other people. Harry's vision became dazed as he landed with a crash into one of the walls behind him. He forced himself to open his eyes and saw that all the other people in the room also seemed to have been thrown off their feet in various directions. Just when Harry's mind threatened to slip into a state of unconsciousness, he saw a familiar figure walking or rather running towards him. He tried to keep himself awake...to stop himself from thinking that he was hallucinating. He tried not to hope too much. After

all, in all probability he had not succeeded.

Harry slowly started slipping into unconsciousness. However, he knew he had to keep on fighting. For what, to that he had no answer. But he knew he had to hold on for just a moment longer...just one moment longer...

"Don't worry Harry" the familiar figure said as it reached Harry and lifted his head. "I won't let you die on me"

Harry forcibly opened his eyes for one last time that night. No, he was not hallucinating. He had succeeded and felt like the happiest man on earth. With a smile on his lips, he could only say one last word before he slipped into the depths of unconsciousness.

"Tonks"

&&&&

A/N: Ninth chapter here. I did not concentrate too much on the fight scene in this chapter as, according to me, it was not the most important part and the D.A. Members could not have possibly defeated all the death eaters.

Now, all you Honks people - What say you?

Explanations will come in the next chapter obviously.

Thanks for all those reviews. Every review which you people made is much appreciated. And to everyone who didn't review, thanks for taking time to read up to here at least.

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10. Explanations

Ok. Everyone knows the drill. Still here goes nothing -

Harry Potter and the other characters of J.K. Rowling are strictly hers. I am not the original writer (though I wish I could be J) and I do not wish to make money from this. Most Importantly, I DO NOT want to get sued. So if anyone has any problems with anything I write, then just tell me.

There's plenty more...blah blah blah...forget it and let the story begin :).

Note: US English has been used here.

Note: This is the sequel to Harry Potter & The Power Of Hogwarts. Please read it before moving on with this story.

HARRY POTTER & THE NEW DAWN

Chapter 10 - Explanations

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"Tonks"

&&&&

"This cannot have happened" the hissing voice of Lord Voldemort seemed to be laced with venom.

"McNair". The trembling figure of the death eater stepped forward.

"My Lord" McNair said as he bowed in front of Lord Voldemort.

"Crucio". The other death eaters trembled as they saw the ferocity with which the dark lord was torturing one of their own. After a prolonged torture, Voldemort broke the spell.

"Do you fools know what you have let happen?" Voldemort asked as his eyes surveyed the members of the inner circle of the death eaters. "You will pay for this failure". With that, Voldemort cast the cruciatus on each of the death eaters present. Finally, after 5 minutes had passed, which seemed to be 5 years

to many, Voldemort's anger seemed to shift from his own men to the person he hated the most in his life at the moment.

"Harry Potter" Voldemort said in the same venomous voice. "You have destroyed the veil. Now I will destroy Hogwarts"

"Harry...Harry" a feminine voice seemed to be calling Harry from somewhere far beyond. "GET UP". Finally Harry seemed to stir slightly and opened his eyes a little bit.

"Tonks" Harry said with a weak smile as he saw the concerned face of Nymphadora Tonks in front of him. He felt Tonks clearing the sweat from his face. After all, it had been a long time since he had had a vision of Voldemort. However, before he could even mutter a word of thanks to Tonks for waking him up from the terrible vision, his weakness got the better of him and he fell into a deep sleep once again.

&&&&

"Hi"

"Hello Tonks" Remus said as he looked up from the book in his hand.

"How are you doing now?" Tonks asked. Dumbledore had asked Madam Pomfrey to see to it that Fred, George and the rest of the D.A. members recovered fully from their magical exhaustion and injuries. Remus had insisted that he would be able to take care of himself.

"Better" Remus said somberly.

"Don't worry...he will be up soon" Tonks reassured Remus who was eyeing Harry lying on the couch. Harry had been lying there for the past three days without much movement.

"How did all this happen?" Remus asked for the first time since Tonks had been back. "You..." Remus looked lost for words.

"I don't know" Tonks said, looking just as confused as Remus.

"You have to know something!" Remus said. "We saw you...die" Remus's

voice choked slightly as the memory of Tonks's painful death resurfaced.

"I know that" Tonks said. "After I died, I kind of expected to see Sirius"

Tonks said in a faraway voice. "But my soul could not move on to the next world. Every time I tried to go, something seemed to hold me back.

It was almost as if someone was holding me on a lease"

"How do you try to move on to the next world?" Remus looked even more puzzled than before.

"I can't explain it" Tonks replied. "It was just a feeling that I had...something I knew I had to do"

"And you don't feel like that now?"

"Of course not!" Tonks replied. "I can't even remember the feeling now. I just know that I had this feeling to move on to the next world and that I could do it if I wanted"

"And you could not" Remus added.

"No, I could not" Tonks said. "Like I said, it felt as if someone was holding me back. After a while I gave up and started moving around Hogwarts"

"Hold on a second" Remus interrupted. "You mean..." he gave a disbelieving laugh. "You mean you were haunting Hogwarts like Peeves?"

"Haunting? No!" Tonks looked shocked, her eyes growing bigger.

"Peeves...yikes...NO. He is so disgusting. He does all sorts of...yuck" Tonks made a face to suggest it was really disgusting and followed it up with an involuntary shudder.

"Anything bad?" Remus poked Tonks with a twinkle in his eye.

"You wouldn't believe it..." Tonks started explaining when she saw the glint in Remus's eye. "Hold on old man, you are trying to make fun of me"

"No" Remus said innocently. "I was just querying as to what happens when a female ghost meets a male ghost"

"Argh" Tonks gritted her teeth in mock anger and her eyes narrowed

sharply. "If you had not been recovering..."

"Then what?" Remus said in a challenging voice.

"I will show you one day what I am capable of, Remus Lupin" Tonks said, sticking her nose high up in the air.

"Anyway, what were you saying?" Remus turned serious once again.

"Well..." Tonks also regained her explanatory look. "I started moving around Hogwarts. Not like Peeves or Nearly Headless Nick but I could move through the walls"

"What do you mean?" Remus queried.

"I mean, I could not assume a shape like Nick or Peeves" Tonks explained.

"But I could move through the walls of Hogwarts. However, astonishingly enough, I could not move through any other inanimate object"

"Like?" Remus asked again.

"I tried to move into an armor one night when Harry was walking down the corridor. I couldn't do it" Tonks said.

"I see" Remus said. "Strange"

"Very much so" Tonks agreed. "It was as if I was tied to the castle in some way". A minute of silence passed as both of them got lost in their own thoughts.

"Tell me something" Remus said suddenly. "You said you wanted to move into an armor suit when Harry was passing by". Tonks gave an affirmative nod. "That means you could see everything?" Remus queried.

"Yes" Tonks said. "Only if I was present there, that is". Her voice trailed off at this point as she remembered the times when Harry would walk listlessly through the corridors of Hogwarts. She could feel the sadness he was feeling. It was almost as if they had kept sharing the bond between them even after her death. She had suffered with him during those times and once she tried to reach out to him mentally. It had not worked.

However, she had noticed that Harry had this habit of touching the walls of the corridors whenever he walked alone. Since she was able to move through the walls, once she had tried to touch him when he was in contact with the wall. And to her great surprise, she had been able to feel him!

On that day, Tonks had also seen the reaction of Harry and knew that he had also felt something. He had seemed very frustrated and sad but once he had unknowingly made contact with Tonks, he seemed to calm down. By the look on his face Tonks could tell Harry did not know why he had suddenly felt much calmer. However, he seemed to notice that the contact with the walls made him feel better because he made a regular habit of touching the walls of Hogwarts whenever he was alone.

"Tonks"

"Uh?" Tonks was brought out of her thoughts by the voice of Remus.

"You seemed lost in your thoughts" Remus said. "I called your name twice but you did not respond"

"Oh" Tonks understood. "I was just thinking of something. Why were you calling me?"

"Your Harry seems to be moving" Remus said.

"I se...my Harry!" Tonks shot up to her feet so suddenly that the chair was thrown backwards. She quickly covered her mouth with her hands as the chair clattered loudly on the floor because she thought Harry would most probably be disturbed by the noise. To her relief, she saw that Harry had not reacted much and was just murmuring something deliriously. Tonks quickly went over to pick up the chair but managed to trip over it.

"Oh well" Remus said as he saw Tonks's antics and rolled his eyes. Even death had not been able to change Tonks.

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"KATIE!" Angelina, who was chatting with Alicia, couldn't help but scream out when she recognized the heckled face of the girl coming towards them. Alicia looked around to see Katie barely managing to walk towards them. Both the girls rushed towards their friend and caught hold of her just as she seemed to be about to collapse. They led her the rest of the way inside Angelina's tent.

"What happened? We have been worried mad about you" Angelina asked, her eyes wide in fear. However, Katie did not respond. Katie's face seemed to be bruised along with her wrists. It seemed like she had been beaten up.

"Seems like someone beat her up" Alicia said thoughtfully as she scanned the limp figure of their friend. "But why would someone physically beat up a person in the wizarding world?"

"I don't know" Angelina said before adding "And I don't care about it now. We need to get her to the hospital wing quickly. God knows where she was for the past so many days"

"Let me check her once" Alicia said as she took out her wand. Looking at the puzzled look on her friend's face, she explained. "Not everyone has the luck to make it to a quidditch professional squad"

"Why don't I like that explanation?" Angelina asked shrewdly as Alicia scanned Katie's body with her wand. Angelina knew that Alicia was not the type of girl who would give a straightforward answer so easily. She was always known to play with her friends a bit before letting them on in the truth. It was one of the irritating bits about Alicia but it also was the fun part about her. Whenever they would get bored, Katie and Angelina would try to guess what Alicia was trying to hide from them.

"Well..." Alicia replied in her trademark voice which meant that she had been caught again by her friend. "...I took some healer's lessons in these

past few months. I thought it would be better to become a healer in these times than a quidditch player"

"That's more like my Alicia" Angelina beamed at her friend. Her respect for her Alicia went a notch higher because she knew how much quidditch meant to her and how tough it must have been to even think of some other profession just for the sake of helping people in the times of a war.

"Our Alicia" a groggy voice corrected Angelina.

"Katie...thank god you are ok" Angelina said with a huge sigh of relief at seeing her friend speak again.

"She's only bruised" Alicia said in a very professional manner. "A couple of charms hit her but nothing more"

"My...hands" Katie said in a pained voice. "What happened?" she asked in a bewildered manner as her gaze shifted from her bruised wrists to her friends concerned faces.

"We were going to ask you that very question. You have been missing for around a month now" Alicia replied as she cast a few healing charms on Katie. The bruises looked sufficiently better once she was finished.

"What on earth happened to you?" Angelina queried, her face contorted in a very concerned look.

"I don't know" Katie said as she got up and looked around. She saw that she was in Angelina's tent. She guessed she had somehow come to that place. But how?

"What do you mean you don't know?" Alicia asked. "You came here looking as if you had just taken the beating of your life from someone and you say you don't know anything?"

"I seriously don't know" Katie replied as she flexed her body slightly to see if she felt any pain or not. "Last thing I remember I was walking towards the library...hmmm..." Katie looked slightly confused as she

thought harder. "No" she said finally. "I was going to meet Dumbledore"

"You sure?" Alicia asked. "You look confused"

"Actually I am slightly confused" Katie admitted. "I was going to Dumbledore's office when...hmmm...a group of first years came up and asked me for the directions to the library. I gave them the directions..." Katie's voice trailed off at this as she seemed to be lost in her thoughts again.

"And then?" Alicia prompted Katie after a few seconds.

"I don't remember correctly" Katie said in a confused manner. "For some reason I decided to visit my grandfather at St. Mungo's and..." she looked at her two friends in a helpless manner.

"St. Mungo's?" Angelina's eyes went wide in fear.

"What?" Katie asked in surprise as she saw the same fearful look on Alicia's face as well. However, her surprise turned into fear very soon as she got no answer from her friends.

"No" Katie shook her head in disbelief. "Don't tell me that they destroyed it too". Her gaze shifted from Alicia to Angelina and back to Alicia. At last Angelina gave a slight nod of her head.

"It can't be" Katie was shaking her head in shock. "It's not possible. I mean...there were aurors there..."

"There was a big fight" Alicia said. "But I don't think anything happened to the patients"

"You sure?" Katie asked with a renewed vigor even though she was not willing to believe her friends this time. "Everyone's safe?"

"That's what Dumbledore said to us all later on" Angelina said.

"Dumbledore said that?" Katie looked sufficiently relieved at this. If anyone at Hogwarts could trust anyone's word without questioning twice, it was the word of Albus Dumbledore.

"Yes" Alicia confirmed. "Apparently many people had relatives at St. Mungo's. So he made this announcement just before the prophet came in that day"

"How long have I been gone? What did the prophet say?" Katie asked curiously. Though she knew that the prophet made things look bigger than they actually were, still they had some truth to it.

"You have been gone for about a month now" Angelina said. Katie looked astonished at hearing this and she mouthed the word 'WHAT!'. Alicia took on the responsibility of answering her second query.

"The prophet said that there was a fight between something like about a hundred death eaters versus ten aurors" Alicia said with a smirk on her face. "Can you believe the extent of their lies? I mean, how can someone win against hundred death eaters?"

"I don't know" Angelina said with a shrug. "It could be true"

"Are you mad?" Katie looked back to her old self, completely oblivious that she had been almost dead on her feet a few minutes ago. "A 1:10 ratio is a no-win situation"

"Not unless you put in Harry in it" Angelina said calmly.

"Harry?" Katie looked stunned for a minute. "Our Harry?"

"Don't tell me you believe that story!" Alicia said to Angelina. "There is no way Harry could have reached that place, least of all fight off so many death eaters"

"Our Harry?" Katie asked again.

"C'mon Alicia!" Angelina said. "You know how many times he has sneaked out of the castle"

"And landed at St. Mungo's inside a minute or so?" Alicia retorted. "No way!"

"Our Harry?"

"He could have apparated there" Angelina argued. "After all, everyone knows where St. Mungo's is. And knowing Harry, he must have already learnt to apparate"

"C'mon Angie" Alicia argued back. "Even if he has learnt to apparate he couldn't possibly fight so many death eaters. These are just rumors"

"Our Harry?" the voice asking this question was starting to sound a bit groggy again.

"Well...I wouldn't put it past him" Angelina said. "I remember the D.A. training in the summer. If Moody made us do all that stuff, then Harry must know them all too if not more"

"Oh c'mon!" Alicia threw up her arms in despair. "It's a rumor"

"Our Harry?"

"Yes!" snapped two angry voices.

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"Hello Harry" Tonks said sweetly as Harry seemed to wake up finally. He had been delirious for the past few days due to a fever caused by magical exhaustion but had recovered quite quickly. Today he looked much better and seemed to have been refreshed by the prolonged rest.

"Hello...sweetie" Harry said in an off-handed manner and started searching for something fictitious so as to avoid Tonks. Tonks was looking in a bewildered manner at Harry, trying to decide whether she should be angry or happy at being called sweetie. Her eyebrows were knit together as she found that she was unable to decide on the matter.

However, when she saw Harry stealing a glance and snickering at her apparent indecision, she became furious.

"How dare you call me something like that?" Tonks thundered. Remus was not present at that moment and hence only Harry's ear-drums were affected by the high-pitched voice of Tonks.

"Called you what sweetie?" Harry asked innocently.

"THAT!" Tonks shouted again, pointing her finger. "Sweetie...you called me sweetie. I don't want to be called sweetie"

"Ok" Harry said in a resigned manner. "I will call someone else sweetie"

"What!" Tonks looked aghast. "Someone else? Sweetie? Are you mad Harry Potter?"

"No" Harry replied as he sat up. "I just want to call someone sweetie. Since you don't want to be called sweetie...hmmm...maybe Hermione won't mind"

"Hold On!" Tonks said. "Hermione?"

"Yeah" Harry said with a shrug. "Hermione's quite nice and..."

"Yeah, yeah" Tonks nodded her head. "Hermione's nice. She's intelligent unlike dumb Tonks"

"Dumb Tonks?" Harry queried. "Did you change your first name?"

"No" Tonks replied without thinking much. "I..." her voice trailed off as she understood what Harry had said. She looked angrily at Harry for one long minute.

"What is the matter?" Harry asked a bit nervously since Tonks did not stay silent for too long if she knew someone was just making a little fun of her.

"You have been pulling my leg for many a month now" Tonks said slowly.

"Which leg?" Harry asked instantly.

"Which leg? Hmmm?" Tonks wondered aloud before realizing she had said more than was required once again. By now, Harry was laughing like a mad man.

"You have gone mad Harry Potter" Tonks said in mock sadness though there was no mistaking the smile which seemed to light up her eyes.

"I have" Harry said as he got control over himself and caught hold of

Tonks hand. "Your love has made me mad"

"Wh..." Tonks choked as Harry kept a firm grip on her hand. For some reason, her heart started pounding against her chest with the power of a sledgehammer. Many times in the past year she had wondered how she would react if a situation of this type of a situation popped up and she had always been convinced that she would have some witty remark ready which would put Harry in an uncomfortable position. But now no witty remark came to her mind. Rather, nothing came to her mind. It seemed as if she had forgotten everything she had ever known and Harry's words were the only thing she had heard in her entire life.

"I...uh..." Tonks muttered something incomprehensible under her breath as she tried to regain her composure.

"Some dinner please" a voice said from somewhere behind Tonks. Tonks looked around to see Remus standing there with a smile playing on his lips. Though she was mentally cursing Remus for his supposed naughty thoughts, she could not help but think that he had just saved her from an embarrassing situation.

"I will get you something" Tonks said as she hurriedly got up from her seat beside Harry's bed and rushed away, pulling her hand out of his grip. Once in the kitchen, she touched the portion of her hand where Harry had gripped her. Touching it, she smiled shyly before starting to fix dinner for everyone.

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"Better now Harry?" Remus asked once dinner was underway. The uneasiness of Tonks seemed to have passed away though she kept stealing glances at Harry from time to time who was also doing the same.

"Yeah" Harry said. He looked to be deep in thought which seemed to trouble Tonks.

"A couple of days back you were delirious" Tonks said hesitantly. "You were sweating...as if you were..."

"I had a vision" Harry explained before Tonks had a chance to raise the topic. Tonks gave a deep sigh and waited for Harry to continue. Harry gulped down a part of the sandwich on his plate with the help of some pumpkin juice before looking up to meet Tonks and Remus's gaze.

"Nothing to worry about" Harry said as he saw the look on their faces. "I think I saw him because I was injured and, because I had not been able to meditate, my mental shields were down"

"Did he break into your mind?" Remus asked in a concerned voice. Even though Tonks herself was very concerned, she did not dare to ask Harry anything at the moment. Remus was much better at this since he was able to maintain a calm exterior.

"I don't think so" Harry said thoughtfully. "He didn't try to show me anything. I think he was too angry with the death eaters to notice my presence"

"What did you see?" Remus queried, all the while keeping a straight face drained of all emotions.

"Lord Voldemort was angry because he somehow knew that the Power had been destroyed" Harry said as the face of an angry Voldemort came to his mind.

"We all know how powerful Voldemort is" Remus said. "All of us are bound to every magical object on this earth. Since Voldemort is more powerful than us, he is able to sense the linkage between himself and the more powerful magical objects. That could be the way he might have felt the Power of Hogwarts being destroyed"

"You mean to say we are all linked to all the magical objects on this planet?" Tonks asked in slight bewilderment.

"Yes" Remus clarified. "However, we are unable to detect that linkage.

Only wizards like Dumbledore or Voldemort are able to feel them in a particular manner. They can just feel their existence or destruction and nothing else. They cannot wield that object"

"I see" Harry said, trying to understand as much as possible. It made sense in a way. "Does that mean they can pin-point their locations?"

Harry queried.

"No" Remus replied as he drank some pumpkin from the glass in front of him. "They can just feel the existence of the objects and nothing, I repeat, nothing else"

"Got your point" Tonks said on behalf of both herself and Harry. Harry just nodded his head.

"So, Voldemort is just angry?" Remus said with a look in his eyes suggesting that Harry knew more than he was letting on. Harry knew that look well enough and thought it best to share the last bit of information he had about his dream.

"He is coming to attack Hogwarts soon". Tonks breathed in sharply at hearing this. Remus, on the other hand, looked thoughtful.

"This is going to happen sooner or later" Remus said. "We have to be ready for him". Harry nodded his head in acknowledgement. He knew that he had to fulfill his destiny and it seemed that that time was going to come sooner than he had thought.

"Harry" Tonks said in a tentative voice. As Harry looked up, she asked.

"What did you do?".

Harry looked at Tonks for a moment and smiled. He knew this question was going to come sooner or later. He would have to explain how he had brought Tonks back to life. This would mean going over in detail as to how he had formulated his theories. This was going to be a lengthy

explanation which he would have to repeat to the D.A. members as well.

"I will be back in a minute" Harry said as he got up and started to proceed towards the fourth compartment.

"Where are you going?" Tonks asked.

"To bring Ron, Hermione and the others here" Harry said. "I don't want to explain the same thing twice". With that, he vanished into the fourth compartment.

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"He destroyed the Power of Hogwarts for god's sake!" Hermione was having trouble controlling her emotions ever since she had got better. It had been a couple of days since the event at the Chamber and they had been released from the medical wing.

"C'mon Hermione" Ron said, throwing his hands up in the air. "He did it for Tonks. We all now know how much Tonks means to him". At this, Cho, who was present along with Soha and Neville, sighed. Soha looked sympathetically at Cho.

"How did he bring back Tonks after all?" Hermione asked curiously. "I guess that does not matter. The thing is he destroyed..."

"...the Power of Hogwarts" Ron completed her sentence. "Yes...we all know that and I think you are making a big fuss about it"

"Oh, now I am making a fuss" Hermione said angrily as she shot up from her seat in the Room of Requirements. "Do you know what a great magical achievement it was? From what I could dig up in the past 8 hours, Godric Gryffindor and Rowena Ravenclaw themselves created it"

"So?" Ron asked calmly. Neville, Soha and Cho squirmed in their seats as they could feel a storm brewing up.

"So?" Hermione eyes went wide in surprise. Was Ron never going to understand anything at all? "This could have defeated all the death eaters

in one shot. This could have saved us all"

"And what about Tonks?" Ron continued in the same calm voice.

"Harry could have found some other way" Hermione shot back.

"Maybe by destroying Hogwarts and using it's magical energy?" Ron suggested.

"I didn't mean that" Hermione looked slightly uncomfortable. "What I meant is that..."

"Tonks is not worth the Power of Hogwarts?" Ron continued. "Maybe the Power of Hogwarts is more important to you than Tonks"

"Yes" Hermione said vehemently. "It is more important than one single person. It could have saved many lives if it was not destroyed. But now...now we have one dead person back and one of the greatest magical inventions destroyed"

"Hermione, tell me something" Ron said with a sad look on his face.

"Does Harry's happiness mean something to you?"

"What kind of question is that Ronald Weasley?" Hermione asked in a stone-cold voice. "You know how much his feelings matter to me"

"Then why are you not happy that he has Tonks back?" Ron said in an almost pleading voice.

"Because this is not the time where a single person's life becomes more valuable than that of the refugees at Hogwarts" Hermione replied stubbornly. "At this time, I believe we should let our brain take the decisions, rather than our hearts"

"So, if you had been in Tonks's place and I knew that the Power of Hogwarts could bring you back, I should have done nothing?" Ron asked with a curious look on his face. At this, Hermione looked stunned for a moment and started muttering something under her breath.

"Ron" Cho spoke when she saw Hermione muttering uncomfortably under

her breath. "What Hermione is saying is that maybe, just maybe, we paid too big a prize for bringing back Tonks"

"I see" Ron said. "I beg to differ. I think that after all these years, the guy named Harry Potter needs a break from all the sadness and tragedy he has been through. He needs someone who he can love". Ron paused as he looked at the expressions of the others. Neville was nodding his head in a gesture which suggested he agreed with Ron while Cho and Hermione remained non-committal, each due to their own personal reasons. Soha squirmed uncomfortably in her seat when Ron looked at her. She did not know how to react because she did not know much about Harry's past. She had heard things but had never seen them in person. Hence she felt it was best to remain neutral.

"I hope you all have not forgotten the pains he had gone through to save so many lives in his first five years" Ron continued. "If You-Know-Who had got to the philosopher's stone, then god knows what might have happened till now. I just..."

"I am sorry" Hermione said abruptly.

"What?" Ron asked with a slightly puzzled look on his face.

"I am sorry I said all those things about Tonks and Harry" Hermione said in a low voice. "I guess I was just thinking too much in my own interests".

No one said anything for a moment. Seldom was there a moment in Hogwarts over the last six odd years that Hermione Granger had done something wrong. Even rarer was her acknowledging her mistake in front of so many people.

"Thank you for opening my eyes Ron" Hermione looked at Ron appreciatively.

"Oh...you guys are here". The door of the Room of Requirements had opened at exactly that moment and Harry Potter was standing there.

"Hi Harry" everyone in the room chorused in unison by accident. Cho, Soha and Hermione broke into giggles at this. Even Neville could not hide a smile.

"I need you guys to be with Remus and Tonks" Harry said. Seeing the curious looks, he continued. "I don't want to explain twice how Tonks came back. Take this and you will find yourself at the required place. I will be there in a minute or two more after I find Professor Delacour".

The others took the portkey Harry had handed to them and he vanished from sight. Almost instantly they found themselves in the same room they had been in a couple of days ago. All they could do now was to wait for Harry to come back with Fleur and clear the mystery about how Tonks came back.

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"So?" Remus said once Harry had joined everyone there. Everyone who had been there when Tonks had come back was present in the fifth compartment of the trunk which now resembled a small conference room.

"Yeah...I am just thinking where I should start from" Harry said as he started pacing the room. He looked once at Tonks as he tried to arrange his thoughts.

"Well...hmmm..." was all Harry said as he kept pacing around. After a few moments, he said. "I will just start randomly, ok?". No one said anything in reply because they knew Harry was not waiting for one. "Let's see, you guys know what the Power of Hogwarts is. Let me point out what I had found out about it". Casting his mind back to what he had read in Dumbledore's office, Harry started his explanation of the Power of Hogwarts.

"The Power of Hogwarts was created by Godric Gryffindor and the other

founders to protect Hogwarts from Slytherin" Harry said as he sat down.

"He created the Power after one of the most tragic happenings he had seen. It was after Salazar Slytherin had split from the group. He had created a small army to take over Hogwarts. He had spent many a year in hand-picking the candidates. When they were ready, he declared war on Hogwarts"

"At that time, Hogwarts did not have enough security measures against wizarding attacks. There were charms to safe-guard it against muggles but no one had expected some wizard, least of all a small army, to attack Hogwarts". Harry paused for a moment to drink some water and then continued again. "Well...Slytherin's plan of taking over Hogwarts would have succeeded but one of his recruits betrayed him"

"This guy came from a decent family. Salazar had spotted him during a wizarding duel championship and recruited him. This guy was one of his best guys. However, he defected to the other side a few days before the actual attack. Later it was learnt that Rowena Ravenclaw had been the one who had been responsible for the whole thing". Seeing a few raised eyebrows, Harry continued his explanation.

"Basically, Rowena Ravenclaw had anticipated that Slytherin might try to take revenge someday for his being asked to leave Hogwarts. She was also the person who had the job of approaching families of students for enlisting at Hogwarts. During these times, she had come across three to four families whose sons and daughters had mysteriously disappeared. Acting on a hunch, she setup the wizarding duel championship"

"As the tournament progressed, Rowena approached a seventeen year old wizard who looked certain to win the tournament. She mentioned Hogwarts to him and he seemed very excited. He wanted to come and learn whatever he could. However, Rowena told him that he would only

be accepted if he worked for her on a particular mission"

"There were rumors that a highly trained wizard was at the tournament and recruiting wizards and witches for training. Rowena told him that this wizard would in all probability approach him and he was to accept the offer and spy on him on her behalf. He agreed"

Harry stood up and started pacing the room again. At that moment the room was so quiet that he could hear the breathing of quite a few people.

"As he was instructed, he spied upon Slytherin for over a year and passed on the information to Hogwarts. This person was Simon Potter"

"WHAT!" Hermione stood up in shock. "Simon Potter? The first leader of the Order of Phoenix?"

"What?" This time it was Harry's turn to be shocked. "I did not know that. What do you know of him?"

"I found about him in these past few months when looking up some stuff on the Order" Hermione said with an embarrassed look on her face. It was always so typical of her digging up stuff most people did not know about. "Simon Potter is one of the first in the line of Potter's, which is your family, whose life was well documented. Godric Gryffindor was said to have created a secret society and had handed over its reins in the hands of Simon Potter who, though he was quite young, had been able to gain Gryffindor's trust"

"Must have been the spying part which earned him the trust" Harry commented.

"It was also said that Simon Potter had been given possession of many powerful magical objects though no one could ever find out anything about them" Hermione concluded.

"Thanks Hermione" Harry said as Hermione resumed her seat. "A couple of things have been cleared up then. It seems now we know more about

the Order of Phoenix. To continue from where I had left off, based on Simon Potter's reports, the remaining three founders had decided that they would have to create something to protect Hogwarts if a war came upon it. It was then that they got together to create the Power of Hogwarts"

"Rowena Ravenclaw created the spell work and started creating the Goblet of Fire. The Hat and Sword were to be created by Gryffindor. It required a mighty amount of magical energy to be put into place. Anyway, the founders started creating the Power. However, mid-way through, Slytherin attacked Hogwarts. Mind you, Simon Potter had already declared his loyalty to Hogwarts. It was then that a great battle took place".

Harry stopped for a few moments as he tried to think of how to phrase his next sentences. "The founders and their apprentices fought long and hard to protect Hogwarts and continue creating the Power. The war went on for many days in which time the Power was almost ready and a last amount of spell work was needed from Gryffindor. It was at this moment that Slytherin learnt that a magical object was being prepared"

"That fateful night, Slytherin attacked Hogwarts with all his forces. There was a fierce fight before Slytherin came face to face with Gryffindor himself" Harry's voice trailed off at this moment as he felt some emotions welling up inside him.

"What happened next?" Fleur asked in a hesitant voice.

"Oh...sorry" Harry said. "In that fight, Slytherin trapped Gryffindor using treachery. He was about to kill Gryffindor when Rowena Ravenclaw appeared and saved Godric"

"What happened next?" Tonks was the one who posed the question this time. She had a feeling she already knew what happened but she wanted

to hear it from Harry himself.

"Rowena Ravenclaw died trying to save Godric Gryffindor, the love of her life" Harry said with a sigh. Complete pin-drop silence ensued. It was after a couple of minutes that Harry spoke again.

"The death of Rowena Ravenclaw stunned even Slytherin who had a weak spot for her. He was said to have left the fight in a dazed state and did not return to Hogwarts again" Harry said.

"But the Power of Hogwarts was still not finished at that point, was it?" Neville asked.

"It wasn't" Harry confirmed. "It was at that time that Godric Gryffindor, overcome by rage and sorrow at losing his love, tried to perform a ritual to bring back Rowena Ravenclaw which almost led to his own death. He did not succeed...Simon stopping him before it was too late. After that Simon convinced him that Rowena would have loved nothing more than to see the Power working since she had created most of the spells behind it. You see, Simon had come to love her almost as if she was his elder sister"

"Godric Gryffindor acknowledged Simon's statement and started working on finishing the spells. However, he secretly modified a few of the spells and added some new ones which led to the creation process to carry on for a further eight years"

"Eight years?" Hermione looked stunned again. "It is a long time"

"Yes" Harry said. "It is a long time to create a few additional spells. But the spells he created was beyond anything the wizarding world had seen. Maybe Rowena Ravenclaw would have been able to create them in half the time..."

"What were the spells?" Hermione asked slightly impatiently. After all, if Harry estimated that creating the same spells would have taken Rowena

Ravenclaw four years, then those spells ought to have been very complex.

"Those spells are known as the Binder of Spirit". At this, Hermione looked confused. Somehow, this piece of information was not documented anywhere.

"These spells were created by Gryffindor in an attempt to bring back Rowena" Harry continued. "He couldn't bring her back since she had moved on to the next world and her spirit was gone. Hence he created a spell which would refuse to release a spirit even if it wanted to move on. This spell would work only in a special case where one person gave his or her life to save that of the other person they loved. And this spell would activate itself automatically if the wielder of the Power of Hogwarts lived while the other died"

"I am getting confused" Neville said. "You mean the person who wields the Power can bring back anyone they want?"

"No Neville" Harry said. "They can only stop the spirit of the one they loved from moving on to the next world, that too if the person had died trying to save the wielder of the Power. This was exactly what happened with Tonks"

"So, if I had died a normal death..." Tonks said.

"...then you would have moved on" Harry completed the sentence. "If you had died during some other fight, then also you would have moved on"

"So Godric Gryffindor made this a special clause to avoid a repeat of what happened to Rowena?" Remus asked.

"Yes" Harry replied. "That is the reason Tonks's spirit could not leave Hogwarts. Also, she could not be seen because she was not a normal ghost, but rather held on here due to a spell"

"And you knew she was here from the start?" Cho asked. She felt slightly envious of Tonks.

"No, I did not know because the spell auto-activated itself" Harry said. "I could somehow feel that something was out there but I could never relate it with Tonks. That's why I wandered off in the corridors...trying to think what it was"

"Then how did you know that I am still here?" Tonks looked puzzled.

"Some luck and some deductions" Harry said. "One evening Nearly Headless Nick told me to let go. I got the same message from a few other people too". Harry looked meaningfully at Remus who nodded his head slightly as he remembered his conversation with Dumbledore.

"I did not know why people were telling me to let go" Harry said in an angry manner. "I was obviously not letting go of Tonks's memory and certainly I was not going to forget her all my life". Tonks silently looked at the floor to hide her misty eyes. "Godric Gryffindor had made the spell into such that if I had let gone of my feelings, then the spirit, in this case that of Tonks, would have been able to move on. I couldn't let go of my feelings...so Tonks got stuck. Sorry for that Tonks, about keeping you stuck here"

"No...ok" Tonks said in a choked voice. She did not dare to say anything more lest she should burst into tears.

"What about the diary then? And how did you know how to bring her back?" Luna asked these questions in a serious tone which was quite unlike her.

"Everything started off when I accidentally found this diary" Harry explained. "Somehow, whenever I was near it, I felt calmer, more composed. Then one day I found all the information about the Power of Hogwarts and putting 2 and 2 together was not that hard. I started searching for the counter spell. I found the counter spell information right in the middle of the text describing the Power of Hogwarts. It said

that Gryffindor had created a fourth object with the help of Helga Hufflepuff. This was the veil"

"Initially I had thought that I would just need to resurrect the Power and would be able to bring back Tonks. I had overlooked the significance of the veil. But then I remembered something I had read somewhere...that the veil was created to allow the destruction of the powerful objects like the Goblet"

"But why would Godric Gryffindor create something which could destroy the Power?" Cho asked.

"Maybe because he was afraid that if Slytherin or his followers got hold of the Power, then they might modify its spells and use its magical power for some evil purpose?" Remus suggested.

"Exactly" Harry agreed. "I came to the same conclusion too. This was one of my assumptions. Even though the Power was made to protect against Slytherin, if he ever took over Hogwarts, he could make it into an unpenetrable fortress. And we did see how the fake Moody used a powerful confundus charm during the tournament, didn't we?"

"I could not find any exact information on how to perform the counter-spell" Harry continued. "The only thing mentioned was that a person could only be brought back if the wielder was ready to make the ultimate sacrifice. I could not make any sense of what the ultimate sacrifice could be. If I died in trying to bring back Tonks, then it would mean that Gryffindor created a spell which would be unable to re-unite two people. Somehow this seemed improbable to me. I was very frustrated...angry...as to what it was that I was missing. I was so angry that one day I even thought of destroying Gryffindor's glove which I wore on my arm but somehow I found that I revolted as soon as my adrenalin went away"

"That was it" Harry said as he stood up in his excitement. "Destroying the

glove was something which I could not think of easily. It was then that I understood what Gryffindor had meant by the ultimate sacrifice. For him, the ultimate sacrifice at that moment would have been to destroy the Power if he could get back Rowena. That's when I knew what had to be done...that the Power had to be destroyed"

"As for the diary..." Harry continued. "...Tonks, did you somehow feel a part of yourself missing when your spirit was wandering in Hogwarts?"

"Now that you mention it, yes" Tonks said with furrowed eyebrows. "I could not remember a few things and felt a bit odd in some places. It was as if a part of me was not there" Tonks looked very thoughtful as she tried to remember what she exactly felt like. "At that time, I thought it was due to my being dead"

"Right" Harry said. "You see Tonks, you had somehow found a diary quite similar to one created by Tom Riddle"

"That can't be" Ron looked aghast. "Don't tell me You-Know-Who left behind more of those"

"I don't think so Ron" Harry said. "But Tonks found something similar". Harry explained to others the information he had about Tom Riddle's diary and how he had saved Ginny from it.

"So Tonks got a similar diary?" Hermione asked when Harry had finished explaining to the others. "But how is that possible?"

"I think Tonks knows the answer to that one" Harry said as he looked at Tonks. Tonks, in return, gave him a blank look. "Tonks..." Harry said.

"...you ever wrote anything in a diary? A separate diary for that matter?"

"Yes, I maintained a diary" Tonks said. "And...hmmm...yes, I had written in a separate diary for once. It looked very similar to mine and I had mistaken it for my diary. I found it at my office"

"Anything else?" Harry queried. Tonks shook her head negatively.

"Someone then placed the diary on your table intentionally and you started writing into it" Harry continued but was interrupted by George.

"Intentionally? Who could do so and why?"

"Yes George...or is it Fred?" Harry said. "Anyway, I say intentionally because this diary was needed to bring Tonks back and whichever person did it knew about what he or she was doing. I don't know who that person could have been but this is the only logic coming to my mind"

"Why would a diary be needed when Godric Gryffindor created all those spells?" Hermione asked. "Was it some sort of a focal point?"

"Right as you always are Hermione" Harry said which made Hermione go turn slightly red in embarrassment. "The spell which Gryffindor had created stopped a spirit from moving on but how could he stop the spirit from moving away to different parts of the world? And if the spirit of the person moved off to someplace else, how was he going to perform the spell to bring that person back to life?"

"Unable to find a solution to these issues, Gryffindor's spell required a part of the person's spirit to be stored in something which he could get hold of" Harry explained. "In this way, he could focus his counter-spell on the item and the rest of the person's spirit would automatically be drawn towards it. As to how this happens, I have no idea"

"Hence, when Tonks wrote in that diary, an infinitesimally small part of her spirit was transferred to it" Harry said. "Hence I used the diary as the focal point and the whole of Tonks spirit knew where she was needed"

"But how did you know that the energy had to be channeled through the focal point?" Hermione asked, slightly astounded at Harry's logical reasoning.

"I did not" Harry said. "Rather, I remembered how we had an earth quake when the Goblet was destroyed. My thinking was, would Gryffindor want

to cause a catastrophe in trying to bring back Rowena? No. Also, he had mentioned that a huge amount of energy had to be channeled through the focal point. So, since a huge amount of energy would be radiated when the Power was destroyed, it was logical that this had to be channeled through the focal point"

"Well...this is what had happened in my mind from the starting of this year and thankfully, some of my assumptions proved correct"

"Wow" was all the Ron could manage. The others still seemed to be digesting this whole flood of information.

"But..." Hermione was the one who spoke up. "...how did you know that Dumbledore agreed with you?"

Harry smiled at Hermione. "Let's say I assumed he knew what was happening and since he did not stop me, I took it as a positive sign"

&&&&

"Come in" Albus Dumbledore was seated in his office when somebody knocked on the door. The door opened to reveal the towering figure of Rubeus Hagrid.

"Good morn' Sir" Hagrid said as he entered the office.

"Hello Hagrid" Dumbledore said with a pleasant smile. "Please have a seat". As Hagrid sat down, Dumbledore conjured up two glasses of pumpkin juice for either of them.

"t was not needed" Hagrid said as he gulped down the whole glass in one shot. Dumbledore just smiled at him and refilled the glass.

"So, how are you?" Dumbledore asked after Hagrid seemed to have had his fill. "All of us missed you very much"

"I cou' not bring many" Hagrid said dejectedly. "Only 15 of my fellow men decided to join to 'ur side"

"But that is very good news" Dumbledore said in obvious delight. "The

fact that you got 15 giants to shun Lord Voldemort's offer is a great diplomatic victory for us"

"He has 'bout 40 giants wit' 'im" Hagrid said in a slightly irritated voice.

"'t is no diplomatic victory Sir"

"You are wrong Hagrid" Dumbledore said as he sensed Hagrid's disappointment with his own self. "If you had not gone and communicated with them, then we would not have had a single giant on our side. You have just made us fifteen times more stronger". Hagrid seemed slightly happier at listening to this but his face turned grave again.

"Do 'u think we will win 'tis war Sir?" Hagrid asked in a tentative voice.

"Harry 'on't get hurt, right?". Dumbledore looked sympathetically at the half-giant in front of him.

"Hagrid, this is a war" Dumbledore said at last. "Everyone is going to take some decisions...including Harry. All we can do is fight Lord Voldemort's army and hope Harry will be able to save us all"

"u really think Harry can kill Riddle?" Hagrid asked as he shivered visibly. Somehow, even the human face of Tom Riddle struck fear in his heart.

"I don't know Hagrid" Dumbledore replied. "Lord Voldemort tried to kill Harry. That could mean something". Dumbledore knew that Harry's secret was not for him to reveal.

"But the prophecy!" Hagrid said quite enthusiastically. "Tis Prophet says Harry is 'posed to kill Riddle"

"They also say I am an old man who has lost his mind" Dumbledore said with chuckle. "Do you believe that too Hagrid?"

"No sir" Hagrid said in a slightly embarrassed voice and looked away so that he would not have to meet Dumbledore's gaze. However, he could

not stop himself from blurting out his query once again.

"Sir, do 'u think Harry defeat Riddle?"

"To tell the truth Hagrid, I don't know" Dumbledore said. "We can only hope someone is able to defeat Lord Voldemort and hopefully it will be Harry"

"Why don't 'u take care of Riddle, Sir?" Hagrid asked as Dumbledore looked at him with a twinkle in his eye. "You are more powerful than him and can easily defeat him if you wanted"

"I am flattered by all this praise" Dumbledore said after a few seconds.

"No, I am not joking" Dumbledore said when he saw Hagrid's face fall slightly. Knowing Hagrid's nature, Dumbledore knew that Hagrid thought that he was just trying to be nice but that was not the case. "As to why I cannot defeat Lord Voldemort, I think that story will have to wait for another day" Dumbledore said, giving Hagrid an indication that he would not be able to make any progress on this issue.

"opefully I will be alive to listen to it Sir" Hagrid said as he stood up to leave.

"Hopefully I will be alive to tell it to you" Dumbledore said as his eyes seemed to twinkle madly as he saw Hagrid's shocked reaction.

&&&&

"WAKE UP"

"Oh no" Harry said groggily even as he covered his head with his pillow. However, Tonks pulled it away in a split second.

"You know you should not be in my room" Harry said as he wished for a new pillow and the room provided one.

"And why can't I be in your room?" Tonks asked in a playful tone. "Let me just fold up your blanket for..."

"NO!" Harry said with a start. "Stay away from me"

"Oh dear" Tonks said as she scanned Harry's face and her eyes traveled downwards. Instantly Harry doubled up.

"You can't see through these" Harry said, blushing madly.

"Who said I couldn't?" Tonks queried as her eyes came to a stop at an area which Harry least preferred. "All I have to do is make a wish and this room will allow me to see through everything"

"Right" Harry said in a playful tone himself. "Now that you mention it, I see you are wearing some nice muggle clothes"

"You - would - not - dare" Tonks said as her narrowed eyes shifted their focus to Harry's face.

"Why not?" Harry continued in the same teasing tone but he seemed to be having second thoughts seeing the look on Tonks's face.

"Try me" Tonks said as she took a step forward. Harry looked at her face for a second before his eyes traveled below her neck and a naughty smile came on his lip. The next thing he knew was Tonks had jumped on him on the bed and was strangling him.

"Help" Harry said in a choked voice.

"Today, you die" Tonks said in a venomous voice.

"Why? What did I do wrong?" Harry asked as innocently as possible with Tonks on top of him. He slowly managed to loosen her grip to the extent that it was not the least bit painful for him but Tonks still thought she had him in trouble.

"You should be ashamed of yourself Potter" Tonks said angrily even though it was quite apparent that she was making up her expressions.

"Why should I be the only one ashamed?" Harry asked. "You don't seem to be ashamed at the way you are positioned right now?". Tonks's eyes went wide as she realized the way she was sitting on top of Harry with her legs on either side of him. Try as she might, she could not hide her

blushing.

"That's not the issue here" Tonks tried to divert the attention.

"Ok" Harry said, a smile spreading on his lips. "I am quite comfortable.

So, you were saying I should be ashamed?" Harry queried in a conversational tone. "Yes, I should be. What else do you think I should or should not be doing? I am all ears". It was quite clear to Tonks now that Harry was trying to prolong the conversation and get her to stay the way she was at the moment.

"I don't know" Tonks said with a shake of her head. "I think I should be going"

"As you wish" Harry said. However, as Tonks tried to move away, Harry held on firmly to her. The more Tonks tried to loosen herself, the tighter Harry gripped her.

"Let me go" Tonks said in a whisper.

"I won't" Harry said. Tonks looked deep into Harry's eyes and knew he meant it. He just wasn't going to let go of her anytime soon. As she looked on, she noticed that the sixteen year old Harry had now become a young man of twenty and was everything she could have wished for.

Well, not everything considering he was still skinny compared to some of the other guys but she knew more than to fall for physical beauty. Harry had grown up to be a man which many a woman dreamed to have as their chosen one and Tonks felt really lucky to be his chosen one.

"What are you looking at?" Harry asked, his naughty look being replaced by a warm smile.

"Nothing" Tonks said as she found looked away shyfully.

"You look beautiful" Harry said as he released one of Tonks's hands and turned her face towards him. "Tonks, thank you for choosing me"

"You are welcome Harry" Tonks said. "But I would like to thank you for

choosing me"

"No, I don't think so" Harry said. "I am the lucky guy here and don't you dare take away that from me"

"What about me?" Tonks pouted her lips in a childish manner. "Can't I be the lucky girl?"

"Do you want to be the lucky number one here?" Harry asked. Tonks, her childish pout still in place, nodded her head in an affirmative gesture.

"You got your wish". With that, Harry pulled her towards him, cupped her face and kissed her flush on the lips. Initially Tonks's eyes went wide in surprise but soon she started kissing him back. They broke their kiss after what seemed like ages.

"That was nice" Tonks said, a smile playing on her lips. "Not a bad kisser"

"Thank you" Harry said. "All the girls at Hogwarts think the same"

"What!" Tonks said as she got hold of the pillow and stuck Harry a seemingly fierce blow. All the while, she remained seated on Harry.

Initially it had seemed awkward but now it seemed quite natural to both of them.

"I also had a reputation of being a great kisser at school" Tonks said, her nose held high in a superior gesture.

"Maybe" Harry said. "But it is always difficult to maintain one's reputation outside of school"

"Oh, I can prove it if you want" Tonks said as she licked her lips. "Would you like that Mr. Potter?"

"Of course" Harry said, his grin getting broader. "I do have to certify you after all"

"Ok. But close your eyes." Tonks said as she brought herself closer to Harry's face. Harry closed his eyes and moved upwards to meet her lips when...

WHAM! A pillow hit him with great force as Tonks rolled over and stood up on her feet.

"That was for all the embarrassment you caused me" Tonks said as she rubbed her hands in glee. For a second she had been worried she had hit Harry too hard but seeing the look on his face she knew he was quite amused with the whole thing, and slightly irritated at not getting a kiss.

"Hey, I deserved that kiss" Harry said.

"Just you wait Potter. You will have to earn it" Tonks said as she walked out of the room with a smile plastered all over her face. Harry groaned at this. He knew he was in for a long, long wait. As he got up and proceeded towards the shower, he couldn't help but smile. After all, it was going to be a lot of fun wooing Tonks and he certainly wouldn't miss this for the entire world.

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"What is it now Potter?" Tonks asked as she saw Harry entering the kitchen behind her. She had seen him practicing hard in the training area and had decided not to disturb him. However, for some reason, he had stopped his spell training the moment he had seen her and had followed her to the kitchen.

"How are you Tonks?" Harry asked quite normally but Tonks could feel some strain in the voice. His voice sounded like this at times when he spent a lot of time thinking of something.

"What is it Harry?" Tonks said as she looked at him. From the thoughtful look on his face, she knew that her assumption had been correct.

However, she could see his eyes burning brightly in their sockets. They seemed to have a new life in them ever since Tonks had come back and she felt quite flattered that she could make Harry feel so happy.

However, she could not help but feel concerned at the moment.

"Nothing serious" Harry said in a reassuring voice. "It is something I had been thinking for quite a while now. I have a small request for you"

"Like what?" Tonks asked. From the look on Harry's face, she knew that he was not playing with her and was certainly not about to say anything romantic at the moment. She waited as Harry explained what he needed.

"You sure about this?" Tonks asked when Harry had finished his query request.

"I could have asked someone else to do it" Harry said thoughtfully. "But now, I would not dare to think of anyone else doing this but you"

"I will do it" Tonks said in a very emotional voice. She knew that Harry was showing great respect to her by making his request. There was no way she would say no to such a request.

"Thanks" Harry said with a smile and went back to his training.

&&&&

"How are you Harry?" Hermione asked when she arrived in the Room of Requirements and found Harry, Tonks and Remus waiting. She was still feeling guilty by the way she had protested Harry's destruction of the Power of Hogwarts. Though Harry did not know of this, she felt that it was her responsibility to be nice to him so that she could somehow compensate for her words. She knew it was an illogical thing but still couldn't help it.

"I am fine Hermione" Harry said in a friendly manner. His mannerisms had undergone a total change ever since Tonks had been back and he seemed much friendlier now. "Where are the others?"

"They are on their way" Hermione replied as she took one of the empty seats. Harry had called an urgent meeting of the senior D.A. members and had asked Tonks, Remus, the twins and Fleur to be present. Soon everyone started coming in and in another ten minutes all the invitees

were seated and waiting for Harry to begin.

"Thank you for coming here" Harry started off formally. "I will get right down to the topic I wanted to discuss and that is Lord Voldemort".

Ignoring the shivers of most in the room, Harry continued.

"I know certain people who have sent me some information about Lord Voldemort's movements and I am afraid to say that we are now approaching the period when he will attack Hogwarts itself"

"What?" Fleur shot up from her chair. "Are you sure about this?"

"Yes Fleur" Harry said in a calm voice.

"How did you know?" Ron asked in a rather cold voice. The coldness in his voice was rather discomfoting and chilling in a manner.

"Some friends told me". Harry replied with tact. He did not want to mention that Rano and one more vampire had brought him the news.

"So what do we do now?" Cho asked. "The headmaster must be told"

"I have already spoken to him" Harry said. "He knows the situation and is taking the necessary steps on his behalf. What I was thinking was that what are we supposed to do?"

"You are the one who decides what to do" Hermione stated. "We are ready to do what you want us to do"

"I don't think so" Harry replied with a shake of his head. "We now need to make some collective decisions because I do believe that two brains are better than one"

"But you are better equipped than us in understanding how You-Know-Who might attack Hogwarts" Cho said. "After all, you are the only one who has faced him so many times"

"Then maybe I should go out and face him alone without the help of you people" Harry stated with a sigh. Why did everyone always have to make a big deal of how he had faced Lord Voldemort so many times and had

come out of it alive?

"Can I say something?" Tonks asked with her right hand raised. Harry nodded, giving her the green signal to say what she had on her mind.

"I suggest we look at what we can do in a collective manner and then take Harry's opinion on certain issues" Tonks said. "For example, Harry would have no idea of how many aurors are there. We cannot expect him to know everything"

"Agreed" the twins chorused. "Harry mate, do you want us to start?"

"The floor is all yours" Harry said.

"We did some research of our own" George started off. "My assumption is we are outnumbered very badly unless we involve more people"

"Maybe we could ask the people of Hogsmeade to join us" Fred suggested.

"Individually they don't stand a chance but if they come and work with us then we can defend Hogwarts better"

"Are we looking only at defending Hogwarts?" Fleur asked.

"I think we should concentrate on defending initially" George said. It was quite unusual of the twins thinking of defense. After all, for them, offence had been the best defense throughout their Hogwarts years. "Once Hogwarts is secure..."

"Hogwarts won't be secure until Lord Voldemort is defeated" Remus said before George could finish. "But I think we should concentrate on security first and the best people to ensure security within the castle are the D.A."

"You don't mean to say that we are just going to sit in here and see aurors getting killed by death eaters, do you?" Ron asked.

"No" Remus said. "From what I know of your group, most of you are inexperienced. Only some of you can take on a death eater, the majority cannot". Hermione and the others had no option but to agree with

Remus. "However, since this is war time, everyone should be prepared to do attack. If someone loses his or her life, then that life lost will not be wasted". There was pin-drop silence in the room by now. "But this does not mean that you have to go head on first. Make sure most of the D.A. is protecting the people inside the castle. The few of you who are able to fight on par with death eaters should only think of attacking. And you can attack well only if you don't have to worry about saving others back in the castle"

"I agree" Ron said. "But we have to do something to let them know that we are not going to sit and watch them attack us"

"That's right" Soha said. "But can someone please clarify how many people are on our side?"

"Good question Soha" Tonks said. "I think I will be able to clarify some of them. We have a few giants, some vampires and werewolves on our side. Add to that the aurors and other wizards and witches..."

"Also veela warriors" Fleur said.

"Really?" Tonks looked at Fleur with her eyes wide open. Fleur smiled in return. "That's great" Tonks said on getting the confirmation from Fleur.

"Veela warriors have quite a reputation and having them on our side is a definite plus. Plus from what Harry told me, there are some dragons also. Well, this is basically it"

"This is it?" Soha said looking quite crestfallen.

"What did you expect, an army of thousands?" Luna spoke for the first time. "You can only get that if you can please the god of Hanabbaratis"

"What?" Ron looked at Luna with a puzzled expression. Tonks, who had never heard Luna's comments previously, was looking intently at her and trying to ascertain whether she was joking or was serious.

"We don't have time for that at the moment Luna" Harry said before Ron

or anyone else could say anything else. "Thanks for the suggestion though"

"You are welcome Harry" Luna replied. "But I do think we have enough to protect Hogwarts" Luna continued. "Vampires and werewolves can protect it at night while we can protect it at daytime"

"Right on the point Luna" Harry said with a smile at the girl and wondering for the millionth time how she could come up with such a simple answer in the middle of such a complex and serious discussion. Tonks, on the other hand, seemed stunned by the simplicity of the answer from the same girl who had said something about some god of Hana-something. She gave a shake of her head as if to clear it of any misunderstandings.

"I think we have a temporary solution for now" Harry continued. "We have to instruct the D.A. members to protect the castle corridors. They are to work in groups". Hermione, who had been quite silent throughout the meeting, nodded her head along with the others. "Some of us here might have to go on the offence along with the aurors. Of course we will know when the time is right". Another round of nods followed. "Plus we have some hope of protection at night-time due to the vampires and werewolves"

"But we are far outnumbered" Cho said in a low voice. "If we have one vampire on our side, I can bet You-Know-Who has ten on his side. Same for all others". Everyone knew in their hearts that Cho was correct. They turned to look in the direction of Harry for an answer.

"Yes, you are correct" Harry said. "But we have something on our side which they don't have. We know we are fighting for the right thing. We are fighting to save our loved ones. We are fighting to keep the world from falling into darkness". Harry's voice rose and there was no mistaking

the zeal behind it.

"We are not trying to destroy anything. Rather, we are trying to make the world a more secure one so that our next generations don't have to face the menace named Lord Voldemort. This in itself gives us a reason to fight and win". Cho nodded her head as some of Harry's confidence and hope seemed to flow into her and the others. "And this is the reason why we will win!"

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"The situation is graver than we had initially estimated" Albus Dumbledore addressed the small gathering of Hogwarts professors in his office.

"What do you mean Albus?" Professor McGonagall queried.

"Lord Voldemort has started to call in all his death eaters" Dumbledore clarified. "We have come to know that a huge number of death eaters have started gathering at a hidden location"

"That would mean the Tom Riddle is getting ready to attack Hogwarts" little Professor Flitwick commented. "That boy had so much potential and yet..."

"I agree with you" Dumbledore said. "And yes, it would mean that Lord Voldemort has set his sights firmly on Hogwarts"

"Do we have any information as to how big his force is?" McGonagall asked, her eyes showing that she was hoping for the best but prepared to hear the worst.

"I don't know the exact figure but reports suggest that around a thousand death eaters along with giants, werewolves and other dark creatures are assembling". Dumbledore said in a grim voice.

"Oh - my - god" McGonagall said as Madam Pomfrey just opened and closed her mouth without a single sound ensuing. The others looked too

stunned to comment.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we need to organize our gathered forces as soon as possible" Dumbledore said as he stood up from his seat. "We can hope for the best but preparation for the worst is my recommended suggestion". Most of those present did not even utter a word as they filed out of the office. Even McGonagall did not say a word before leaving. After everyone had left, Dumbledore removed his glasses and cleaned them with a simple spell. He turned and looked out of the window of his room to see the setting sun and the horizon which seemed to be blood-red that evening. All the signs seemed to be pointing to the worst happening.

"I hope you can fulfill your destiny Harry Potter" Dumbledore said under his breath as he turned back to his desk and started working out issues required to get the light forces mobilized.

&&&&

A/N: Tenth chapter here. Hopefully my explanation of Harry not letting go of Tonks's memory justifies the angst in the first six chapters. If he had moved on, then there would have been no Tonks. I hope my explanation is not too bad though there might be some loopholes which I missed out on. Some parts might not make sense if you don't remember PoH.

Sorry about Hagrid's accent. I always get messed up there! Also, I am not good at writing romance. So please forgive me if the scenes were not up to what you were expecting. Just for the record, there will not be too many romantic scenes.

One more chapter to go before full scale war starts :)

Thanks for all those reviews. Every review which you people made is much appreciated. And to everyone who didn't review, thanks for taking time to read up to here at least.

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11. The Symbol Of Life

Ok. Everyone knows the drill. Still here goes nothing -

Harry Potter and the other characters of J.K. Rowling are strictly hers. I am not the original writer (though I wish I could be J) and I do not wish to make money from this. Most Importantly, I DO NOT want to get sued. So if anyone has any problems with anything I write, then just tell me. There's plenty more...blah blah blah...forget it and let the story begin :).

Note: US English has been used here.

Note: This is the sequel to Harry Potter & The Power Of Hogwarts. Please read it before moving on with this story.

HARRY POTTER & THE NEW DAWN

Chapter 11 - The Symbol Of Life

"I hope you can fulfill your destiny Harry Potter" Dumbledore said under his breath as he turned back to his desk and started working out issues required to get the light forces mobilized.

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"Good morning Harry" Dumbledore greeted his favorite pupil entering into his office. It had been just over 12 hours since Dumbledore had sent out notices to the light forces to get ready for an attack.

"Good morning Headmaster" Harry said and took the seat offered to him.

"What brings you here so early?" Dumbledore asked as he looked outside.

It was 8 in the morning and there was still some fog outside.

"I have been thinking" Harry said. "The time is coming nearer and nearer"

"So it seems" Dumbledore agreed.

"But I still have no clue as to what extra-ordinary power I have" Harry said. "I cannot defeat Lord Voldemort using a jelly-legs spell, can I?".

"Of course not" Dumbledore chuckled at this but did not comment any

further.

"What can it be?" Harry queried with an impatient look on his face. "I have a feeling you know what needs to be done"

"It is for you to find out Harry" Dumbledore replied.

"But this is something in which I need your help" Harry explained. "I cannot be expected to come up with something which will defeat Lord Voldemort. Unless I have 10 more years experience"

"I don't think you have 10 more years on hand" Dumbledore replied.

"What is the thing which I am missing Sir?" Harry asked again, this time very slowly. "What would you have done if you had been in my place?"

"I would have tried harder and looked deep within myself"

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"Yeah, yeah...try harder" Harry muttered underneath his breath as he made his way towards the dormitory. He was not satisfied with the headmaster's advice, that is, if you could call it an advice. It was not Harry's nature nowadays to go to Dumbledore with his problems but he was not stupid enough to think that he could manage to defeat Lord Voldemort all by his own. He knew he needed help from someone elderly. He needed someone to show him part of the way and then he would do the rest. As of now, he had no clue as to what he needed to do to defeat his foe.

Still, he could not get Dumbledore's words out of his mind. Why did the headmaster tell him to try harder? He was trying hard enough, wasn't he? Or did the headmaster mean he was trying hard in the wrong direction? After all, if he tried with all his might on the wrong path then he would have no chance of success. And then it would be a waste of time and effort. But he couldn't be doing anything wrong by learning new and advanced magic spells!

As Harry turned around another corner, more questions started popping up in his head. What did the headmaster mean by "looking deep inside himself"? Was the answer to Harry's question somewhere inside him? Did he already know the answer but was unaware of its existence? Did he...

Harry stopped dead in mid-step as his mind started registering some voices. It had been a long time since he had last heard something on the stealth spy devices he had planted on Percy. Without even thinking, Harry touched his invisible ear-ring which doubled up as a listening device. He could not believe what he was hearing at the moment.

Something terrible was going to happen.

Harry sprang into action just as quickly as he had stopped. He did not have a moment to lose. Forgetting all about the portkey which he had in his back pocket, he took the old fashioned way and started running at full speed towards the Gryffindor house room which was now in his sights.

He dashed inside, inviting quite a few curious looks, and jumped three steps at a time towards the boys section of the dormitory. Once inside his dormitory room, he opened the trunk and vanished inside in a flash.

Luckily for him, none of the D.A. members had been present at that time in the Gryffindor room. Otherwise, his actions would have surely caused concern amongst all of them.

"TONKS, REMUS!" Harry shouted as he entered the fifth compartment of the trunk.

"What is the matter Harry?" Tonks rushed out of her room at hearing Harry's high-pitched voice. Remus also appeared from the training area which he sometimes used for his own spell-casting.

"Are you guys ready?" Harry said as he went into his room and started reloading his guns with new bullets. Both the guns were almost empty of cartridges and Harry blamed his laziness for not reloading them earlier.

"For what?" Tonks asked curiously as she too entered his room. Her eyes went wide in fear as she saw Harry reloading his guns and cursing under his breath. This could mean only one thing.

"You mean you did not hear anything on your spy devices?" Harry asked in exasperation. "Oh sorry...I forgot" he added quickly once he realized that all three of them had previously decided to divide which section of spy devices they would be listening to. Hence Tonks, Remus and Harry always listened to independent set of voices most of the time.

"Gringotts is going to be attacked" Harry said as he stood up straight and put his fully loaded guns in their holsters.

"And surely you don't mean to go there, do you?" Tonks said hesitantly.

"Of course I do" Harry said as he started to move towards the door only to find Remus blocking his way.

"No Harry, you are not going" Remus said with such firmness that even Tonks looked slightly astonished.

"And why am I not going?" Harry asked slowly. He knew Remus was concerned about him but it was really foolish for him to try and stop Harry from going.

"Because this is not your destiny" Remus said. "You are our only chance against Lord Voldemort. You cannot let yourself get involved in each of these situations"

"And you expect to convince me by just saying that?" Harry asked in a surprised voice. "You expect me to stay indoors while innocent people get murdered and you expect me to say to myself that I have to live to fight Lord Voldemort? Just like that?". Even though Harry was losing time in the trunk arguing with Remus, he was not too bothered. After all, compared to the time outside, he had lost only a few seconds till now.

"Yes" Remus said. "Earlier I could not stop you because I did not have a

backup plan but this time I am ready with a backup plan"

"What plan?" Harry asked in a confused voice. Tonks, who had been silent during the whole conversation, also looked curious.

"You want to help at the fight at Gringotts, right?" Remus queried. Harry remained silent and Remus continued. "Then I would suggest you send your vampire friends to their help"

"What?" Harry looked utterly surprised at this suggestion.

"Well..." Remus explained. "...I think Mr. Horatio and his vampires will be able to fight better than a single person"

"How about Mr. Horatio and his vampires plus one more wizard?" Harry commented.

"Look Harry" Remus said. "I am just trying to emphasize that you have some resources in hand and you should utilize them fully. If you start taking all the risks and then get injured or something...how will we be able to defend Hogwarts if Lord Voldemort attacks us then?". Harry looked thoughtful at this. What Remus was saying made sense in a way but he had never seen himself as a leader of sorts in this war. He had never thought he could order others to go to a fight without him. Rather, he viewed himself as a fellow warrior in this fight against the dark forces. Wherever they went, he thought he should go with them.

"It's not like you are superior to them or they are inferior to you" Tonks commented in a low voice. This comment took Harry by surprise. He wondered just how much Tonks knew him to make such an accurate comment about what he was thinking at that moment. "It's about what strategy you use in this war" Tonks continued. "We have to keep in mind that you won't be able to fight every single death eater"

"Also, if you send the vampires to help, then it could result into a great change of relationships" Remus said.

"Like?" Harry queried again.

"Vampires and goblins have hated each other ever since the goblin revolution ended" Remus explained. "Vampires had killed a lot of goblins in that war on the behest of the wizarding community. But if we could get them to co-operate..."

"What if they don't?" Harry asked before Remus could finish his sentence.

"They have to" Remus said. "If not, then everyone dies"

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"I want to meet Rowena...now!" Harry told Rano in the same corridor where they had previously met once. Ten minutes had passed since he had initially heard that death eaters were going to attack Gringotts. From what he had heard, all the death eaters had been getting ready for the attack and, according to his estimates, he had a maximum of another five minutes in hand. Even then, he knew he was being too optimistic to assume he had another five minutes.

"Ok" Rano said and disappeared. Within a few seconds, he had appeared with Rowena.

"What is it Harry?" Rowena asked in a low whisper. The look on Rano's face had been enough to tell her that something was up. And the moment she saw Harry she knew that something grave had happened.

"Rowena, I need to meet your dad" Harry said after he had cast around them all kinds of security and anti-eavesdropping charms he knew.

"Is it important?" Rowena asked, knowing fully well what the answer would be.

"It is a matter of life and death" Harry replied. Harry knew that the only way he could persuade Mr. Horatio to help the goblins was to keep Rowena by his side. She was his weak point and he would not refuse her request. Harry knew he was taking advantage of the situation but,

according to him, if his manipulation saved lives then he would not regret his actions.

"Hold me" Rowena said and held out her hand. Harry grabbed her hand and instantly felt a tug behind his navel. He assumed Rowena had some kind of an emergency portkey with her all the time. After a split second, he found himself in the familiar surroundings of the vampire king's dining hall.

"FATHER" Rowena shouted at the top of her lungs as soon as they landed. In the blink of an eyelid, the Vampire king was in front of them along with his wife. Both looked surprised and astonished.

"Rowena!" Mrs. Horatio rushed towards her daughter but stopped on seeing Harry. "Harry?"

"Hello Your Highness" Harry replied. "I come here for help"

"Please go on" Mr. Horatio said at hearing this. If Harry Potter came asking for his help then it had to be a serious situation indeed. Harry then went on to explain that he had some information that Gringotts was going to be attacked. Upon hearing the name of Gringotts, a cold mask covered the face of Mr. Horatio. His wife glanced tentatively from Harry to her husband and back to Harry again. After Harry finished his narrative, he asked for help in saving Gringotts.

"So you are asking for our help in saving those goblins?" Mr. Horatio's voice was so cold that all of Harry's senses told him he was really upset at the request. However, he could not back off now.

"Yes Sir" Harry said confidently. On not getting an instant reply from Rowena's father, he added "I come to you as my second last option"

"Then I would suggest you try your last option" Mr. Horatio said immediately. "I am sorry Harry but we cannot help you" Mr. Horatio said and turned his back at him.

"Thank you for your time" Harry said and turned away.

"What is your last option Harry?" It was Rowena who posed the question to him just when he was about to walk away to the exit.

"I am" Harry said and walked away.

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"Will they be alright?" Rowena asked meekly to the person sitting next to her in one of the empty classrooms of Hogwarts which offered a nice view of the Hogwarts grounds and its entrance gate.

"Yes" replied Harry Potter. Just when he was apparate away from the exit point of the castle of Rowena's father, Mr. Horatio had stopped him and had said that he would help the goblins. Mr. Horatio knew that if Harry went alone to fight god-knew-how-many death eaters and somehow got injured, then Rowena would be the one who would get hurt the most. He could not allow his daughter to get hurt even if it meant swallowing his pride and going to help goblins.

"Why is father angry with goblins?" Rowena asked curiously.

"You will know in due course of time" Harry replied as he checked his watch. It had been an hour since Mr. Horatio had left along with thirty of his best vampire warriors.

"I have heard the goblins killed a lot of our people a long time back"

Rowena said to Harry.

"Maybe you will like to hear the other part of the story too" Harry said.

"Is it correct to assume whatever you have heard is true unless you know all the facts?"

"No" Rowena replied. Harry smiled in return. It was at this moment that his eyes fell on a group of people entering Hogwarts's gates. Harry squinted his eyes and jumped up to his feet. A group of vampires and goblins were approaching them.

"There they are" Rowena's keen eyes had detected their presence a split second earlier than Harry. She took off to a running start in an attempt to get to her father who seemed to be leading the way. Suddenly she found herself unable to move. Looking back, she saw Harry had cast a spell on her and stopped her from moving. She was about to yell at him in frustration when Harry came up to her and placed his hand on her mouth to prevent her from saying anything.

"Don't go to him now" Harry whispered sharply. "No one knows you are his daughter and it would be better if we kept it that way". Rowena's eyes went wide as she realized what a big mistake she had almost made and nodded her head in acknowledgement. She did not want to create any trouble for herself or her father. Harry released her from the spell and moved nearer to the window once more along with Rowena.

Most of the people who had been in the grounds were now running helter-skelter. And the reason behind this was the appearance of the group of person's approaching the castle. As they came nearer, Harry could see why most people were scared out of their wits.

The group was being led by Mr. Horatio and an elderly looking goblin. Mr. Horatio's robes were blood red and it was only after seeing a black area on the robe that Harry understood the truth - the robe had been black in color and was now red because of blood on it! Mr. Horatio's teeth were elongated as were claws on either of his hands. His handsome face had a cold expression in it and his eyes were blood red.

The goblin on his left side was not much better off. His hands were covered in patches of blood along with the front of his clothes. His face was set in such a ferocious expression that even Harry, who knew that they were coming back from a battle, felt somewhat uneasy. The goblins bow and arrow were ready in his hands and he seemed ready to shoot

anyone who might seem a threat to him.

The others following them seemed to be in a much worse condition. One of the vampires seemed to have lost a leg while one goblin's arm was missing. Another goblin seemed to have lost both his forearms. The others all seemed to be injured in some way or the other. Some of the goblins and vampires had been elevated in stretchers while the rear of the group was being brought up by about ten ferocious vampires. All in all, Harry estimated twenty five odd vampires and forty odd goblins were present.

As Harry took in the sight of the group, screams and yells could be heard all over Hogwarts. Many people collapsed at the scene of so many deadly looking vampires and goblins approaching Hogwarts. Many were shouting that Hogwarts had been attacked. Some had their wands out but none dared to cast a spell at the oncoming group. Nearer and nearer they came to the great hall, more the panic started to set in.

To Harry's relief, Dumbledore appeared at that exact moment and greeted the newcomers. Most of the people in Hogwarts looked astonished and surprised at seeing Dumbledore greet them normally. In a matter of seconds, Dumbledore and his guests had vanished inside and, according to Harry's guess, were most probably heading towards the headmaster's office.

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"Who are those guys?" one of the fifth year students asked as the newcomers vanished inside the castle. He was a new D.A. recruit.

"Those were vampires" another boy, who was his classmate, said. "And if I am not wrong, something big has happened. You do not get to see bloodied vampires and goblins walking side by side"

"Agreed" the previous boy replied. "I don't think we are going to live

much longer"

"Neither do I" the second boy said again. They did not see a bushy haired girl pass behind them. She could see that pessimism was starting to creep into a lot of students and hoped the war would come to the gates of Hogwarts as soon as possible. At least, in such a scenario, people would not be living every day in fear of what was going to happen. The war had to happen and, at this moment, it seemed that the sooner it happened, the better it would be for everyone.

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It had been about an hour since the goblins and vampires had entered Dumbledore's office when a person entered the library.

"Mr. Potter, the headmaster wishes to see you in his office now". It was Professor McGonagall who said the words to Harry as he was sitting in the library with Rowena. They were positioned in such a way that if any Slytherin came in, then Rowena could easily slip away behind one of the countless book shelves. "You are needed too" this time Professor McGonagall's words were directed at Rowena. Harry and Rowena nodded their heads in acknowledgement.

"Rowena, go ahead" Harry said. "I will meet you in a minute in front of the Headmaster's room". Rowena said a quick 'ok' and followed Professor McGonagall out of the library. Harry followed her as promised and soon found himself in front of the gargoyle. He said the password and the gargoyle leapt aside. In another ten odd seconds, he found himself standing outside Dumbledore's office. Rowena was not there and Harry assumed she had entered the office. He was about to knock when the all too familiar voice was heard again.

"Come in"

Upon entering the room, the first impression which Harry got was that it

had been magically expanded to almost the size of the great hall. From the way everyone was seated around a large table, Harry got the distinct impression that a meeting was going on. His eyes wandered to where Mr. Horatio was sitting, talking to Rowena who seemed scared. It was quite possible that Rowena had never seen her father in this state and hence Mr. Horatio felt the need to soothe her nerves.

"You wanted to see me Sir?" Harry said once he was finished with his observations. He had also noticed that the more gravely wounded vampires and goblins were not there. They were obviously in the hospital wing of Hogwarts.

"Yes Harry" Albus Dumbledore said from where he was standing. "Please have a seat" Dumbledore said and waved his wand. The table expanded ever so slightly without disturbing the others and a chair appeared. Harry stepped forward and seated himself.

"Mr. Horatio here tells us that you knew about the attack beforehand" Dumbledore said with a twinkle in his eye. Harry felt sure that Dumbledore had an idea as to how he knew about this attack but Dumbledore wanted him to explain it to the others present.

"Yes sir" Harry said.

"Can you please tell us how you knew about this Mr. Potter?" the question came from the elderly looking goblin who had been in the front along with Mr. Horatio.

"Well..." Harry looked around while turning and tossing the question in his mind. He could not dare to reveal the fact that he had implanted spy gadgets in wizarding clothes. "I had a vision" Harry said as it was the next best thing he could think of.

"Vision?" Dumbledore asked in a tone symbolizing that Harry needed to explain further. Also, by the twinkling in his eyes, Harry could tell that

Dumbledore was quite happy with the story presented.

Harry went on to explain how he used to have visions in his previous years and how he still sometimes could see a few things which were about to happen. Of course, all this had to do with Lord Voldemort and his death eaters. Finally, when Harry finished, he waited for the others to ask whatever they might want to.

"We accept your explanation Mr. Potter" the elderly goblin said at last.

"And we see you, with your gifts, as a strong ally in this war against the dark forces". At this, Harry felt as if he could jump for joy. It seemed like the goblins had finally decided that they would take a side and, in all probability, their decision had been influenced by today's attack.

"We would also like to thank the respected King of the Vampire nation for helping us in our darkest hour" the elderly goblin continued. "We think that we can use today's events for laying the foundation for a brighter future between our people". Mr. Horatio acknowledged these words with a small, yet majestic, bow.

"Headmaster Dumbledore" the elderly goblin, who was clearly the head, said and stood up. "We would like a place to store all of ours and Gringotts possessions"

"It will be taken care of" Dumbledore said in a very humble manner. To Harry, it seemed that Dumbledore did not want to let go of the opportunity of getting the goblins on their side.

"And we would like to extend our hand of friendship to you in this war" the goblin head said as he extended his hand towards Dumbledore.

Dumbledore shook his hand with a grateful smile on his lips. At that moment, under the stare of his daughter, Mr. Horatio too came forward.

"This child of mine has made me see past the anger and ego of hundreds of years" he said in a voice which had a hint of emotion in it. This in

itself was an unheard of thing in the Vampire world. "And it would be a grave wrong if mistake if we allowed that same anger to cloud our vision in this war. I too would like to offer the friendship of the vampire nation to you in this war"

"Thank you Your Highness" Dumbledore said with a warm smile on his face as he took the cold hand of the Vampire king in his. He looked around and smiled at Harry who seemed to have little idea just how well Remus's suggestion had gone.

"Sir" Harry said as he rose from his seat.

"Yes Harry?" Dumbledore asked. The others also stopped and started looking at the boy.

"I have an inkling that Hogwarts could be attacked soon" Harry said.

"I see" Dumbledore said thoughtfully. "What do you propose?". Harry was slightly taken aback by Dumbledore's question. He had expected Dumbledore to just say he would 'take care of it' but now he had to say something.

"I think we need tighter security around the castle 24 hours a day" Harry said.

"My men will take care of patrolling the castle at night" Mr. Horatio said.

"That would be a great help" Dumbledore replied. "I think I can arrange something for the daytime"

"Thank you sir" Harry said. "May I go now?"

"You may" Dumbledore replied. "Thank you Harry". With that, Harry left the room.

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The day following the attack on Gringotts seemed to go very quickly as Harry spent a lot of time meditating. His morning had been spent debating with Tonks on what the Daily Prophet had written about the

attack in which only three goblins and one vampire had died. From afternoon onwards, based on Dumbledore's comments, he had literally decided to look deeper into his thoughts. Soon the darkness started to cover the grounds as the sun set.

"Where are you going now?" Remus asked as he saw Harry getting ready to go out in the evening after his marathon meditation session. Remus did not like Harry wandering alone in the evenings and he had made it clear on a lot of occasions. Still it seemed to have no affect on Harry.

"To Fleur's house" Harry said as he pocketed his wand. Tonks, who was sitting on the sofa near the kitchen, sat up a bit straighter at hearing this.

"Any problems?" Remus asked as Harry came out of his room.

"No" Harry replied as he went over to the kitchen to get himself a glass of water. "Fleur had told me that Mr. and Mrs. Delacour wanted to talk to me about something". Tonks raised an eyebrow at this but did not say anything as Harry continued. "I am a bit free today and hence decided to meet with them."

"I see" Remus said. "Any idea when you will be back?"

"Soon I think" Harry said as he started off towards the door of the fifth chamber. "Bye Tonks, Remus"

"Be careful" Remus and Tonks said in unison as Harry vanished from sight.

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"Why do Fleur's parents want to meet with Harry?" Tonks thought once Harry had left.

"Maybe they want to talk about Fleur and Harry's life" a voice spoke up from deep down inside her.

"Who are you and what do you mean?" her brain asked the other voice.

"You know what I mean" the other voice said. "As to who I am, I am your

fear and insecurity"

"I am not insecure" her brain responded.

"Then why am I talking?" the other voice responded. "Rather, why do I even exist?"

"I am hallucinating" her brain replied.

"You are not and you very well know that you are insecure about Harry and Fleur"

"No I am not" Tonks almost shouted out these words. "I am just a bit concerned"

"About what?"

"It does not matter you" her brain responded.

"It matters" the other voice said. "It matters because it is the reason for my existence"

"Look, it is true I am a little bit concerned about Harry and Fleur..."

"Little bit? Are you sure it is not more than that?" the other voice questioned her brain.

"Maybe a little more than that" her brain grumbled. "It's just that Fleur is so beautiful and attractive but...but I trust Harry"

"You sure?" the other voice said. "Men cannot be trusted with beautiful women"

"Harry is different"

"He is a man after all" the other voice said. "And Fleur is a veela. You know what veela's can do if they set their eyes on someone. And you know Fleur likes Harry"

"Will you shut up!" her brain yelled out in frustration. "I trust Harry and that's it. No more arguments please"

"We will wait and see who is right" the other voice replied before dying out.

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Harry had to toil hard to get out of Hogwarts as vampire guards had spotted him. They had stopped and told him that no one was to leave Hogwarts without a pass from the Albus Dumbledore. They let him go only when Rano came and told the guards that Harry had special permission from Mr. Horatio to travel anywhere he needed that they let him leave.

As Harry entered Godric's Hollow, he saw many figures moving from one place to another. People seemed to be moving in groups of three or more. Pulling his hood up, Harry started walking towards the direction where Fleur's parents lived when a voice stopped him.

"Who goes there?". The coldness in the voice was unmistakable. Harry looked to his right side and saw a couple of wizards standing with their wands pointed at him. Behind them seemed to be an area which was like a guard post and two more wizards seemed to be aiming at Harry from there.

"A friend" Harry replied and pulled back his hood. One of the wizards cast a Lumos spell and Harry's face could be clearly seen in the light. Their eyes traveled across his face and came to a stop at his scar. Instantly they stopped the spell and gave a nod at Harry.

"How do we know you are the real one?" one of the wizards from behind queried. It was obvious he was not as trusting as the couple in front of him. At this point, Harry uttered the pass phrase which was known to a very select group of people.

"You may proceed now" the last wizard who had been at the back said in a low but firm voice. Harry gave a nod of his head and, after pulling up his cloak, continued towards Fleur's parent's home. He reached their home without any further hindrances and knocked on their door. It was

opened by Mrs. Delacour.

"Oh...hi Harry" Mrs. Delacour said on recognizing the person standing in front of her. "You have grown a lot in this past month or so"

"I hope I have not grown too old" Harry said with a smile. Mrs. Delacour smiled back and stood back to let him enter. Soon, Harry was sitting in their living room.

"We will be with you in a minute Harry" Mrs. Delacour said with a warm smile as Gabrielle came bounding in. "Till then I think Gabrielle would like to give you some company"

"Yes" Gabrielle said as she slumped into the chair opposite to Harry and started talking about all sorts of things related to the war.

"Flu talks a lot about you" Gabrielle said once her mother was out of sight. "She says you are getting ready to fight You-Know-Who"

"All of the elders have to fight him Gabrielle" Harry said.

"I believe you can defeat him" the little girl said so confidently that Harry was touched by her faith in him.

"Thank you Gabrielle" Harry said as he heard footsteps. Within a few more moments, Mr. and Mrs. Delacour entered the living room.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting Harry" Mr. Delacour said as he sat down beside Harry. Both of them exchanged a quick handshake.

"Gabrielle ensured I did not get bored". Gabrielle looked away shyly at Harry's words. It was quite clear to her parents that she was yet to get over her crush on Harry.

"I bet she made you want to go mad" Mrs. Delacour said. "Don't you have any homework to do Gabrielle?". This was a clear indication to her that her parents wanted to discuss something important Harry and her presence was not required. Gabrielle slowly got off her chair, said a quick 'Bye' to Harry and went up to her room.

"Something important Mrs. Delacour?" Harry said as Gabrielle's figure went out of view.

"Yes" Mrs. Delacour said as she took out her wand. Quickly she cast a silencing charm around them along with an anti-eavesdropping spell. Only after both the spells were in place, did she look slightly more relaxed.

"Now, we have something important to tell you" Mrs. Delacour said. "In fact, Fleur told us that it would be better if you knew about the recent developments here"

"I see" Harry replied calmly.

"I think it would be better if you showed him the place dear" Mr. Delacour suggested to his wife.

"But what if?" Mrs. Delacour seemed hesitant but a reassuring nod from Mr. Delacour seemed to satisfy her.

"Come with me Harry" Mrs. Delacour said as she got up and started to lead the way towards the back of the house. Harry followed her. Mr. Delacour stayed behind in the living room.

"What is it Mrs. Delacour?" Harry said as he followed the lady quietly.

"I would like you to meet some people who are interested in our fight against You-Know-Who" Mrs. Delacour said as she came to a stop in front of a broom cupboard.

"I see" Harry said and waited for Mrs. Delacour's next action. The lady aimed her wand at the broom cupboard and cast a silent spell. The door opened to reveal just what Harry expected - broomsticks. Mrs. Delacour then picked up one of the broomsticks and poked it against the back of the broom cupboard three times. Nothing happened for a few moments after which the back of the broom cupboard started to part. Slowly but surely, another room came into view.

"Come on in" Mrs. Delacour said as the broomsticks moved out of the way themselves to open up a clear entry passage to the other room. Unseen by Mrs. Delacour, Harry drew his wand and entered the next room. The very second he entered the room Harry got hit by a huge blast of veela charm.

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"What are you doing?" Ron asked as he walked into the library to find Hermione pouring over tons of books in front of her. Hermione had been concentrating so much that she had not noticed Ron walking over to her desk.

"Nothing" Hermione said as she hurriedly closed the book. "Where's Harry?"

"I saw him walk out of the common room about ten minutes ago. C'mon, what are you reading?" Ron said and took the book from Hermione who gave it away quite reluctantly. He quickly found out what Hermione was reading - "Can people be brought back from the dead?"

"Why are you reading this?" Ron asked curiously. He had seen the image on the side of the page when Hermione was reading it and that had helped him recognize the topic.

"Reading what?" Hermione asked as she purposefully opened another book and gave the impression that she was extremely busy.

"You are trying to find out the spells behind the Power of Hogwarts, aren't you?" Ron asked in a probing voice.

"Hmmm...what?" Hermione looked up to see Ron. Upon seeing his piercing gaze, she knew it was better to admit the truth. "So what if I am?"

"Why?" Ron asked in a bewildered voice.

"Why?" Hermione looked at Ron as if he had just asked the most stupid question. Casting a silencing spell around them, she continued "Did you

see how she came back? Wasn't it the most absurd and yet magically wonderful thing to happen?"

"It was kind of unique I think" Ron said. "I also never knew you could bring back people from the dead"

"Exactly!" Hermione's voice was filled with excitement. "No one knew it was possible. No one knows it can be done. A few people know but that is immaterial. This shows that magic is boundless"

"I don't think so" Ron countered. "There have to be limits to magic"

"Like what?" Hermione queried back.

"I don't know" Ron replied. "I just think there are boundaries to magic. There have to be some things which can be done and some things which are impossible"

"You know what Ron" Hermione said. "I used to believe in that too. But from what I saw that day, I feel like I was ignoring something. Almost as if we all are turning a blind eye towards the un-limited capabilities of magic"

"So you now plan to bring back people from the dead?" Ron asked after a slight pause.

"No" Hermione said. "I plan to understand how it was made possible. Maybe I could end up learning some things more but I surely do not plan to try something like that. At least not now"

"Great" Ron said as he rolled his eyes and gave back the book to Hermione. He did not know if there was a limit to magic or not but one thing he knew for sure was that there was no limit to Hermione's enthusiasm and quest for knowledge.

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Harry stood still, his wand aimed at the direction from which the veela charm blast had come. He could feel that something was not right

here...almost as if someone was trying to control his mind. He had to fight it. He just had too...

"What in heaven's name was that?" Harry said as he shook the cobwebs away. All his senses were on alert and he could feel a strong veela charm in the room. Looking around, he saw the apologetic expression on Mrs. Delacour's face.

"I am so sorry Harry" Harry heard Mrs. Delacour's faint apologetic sentence as he scanned the room. It was a giant hall in itself with many doors leading to small rooms. And looking around slightly longer, Harry noticed that there was a living area as well along with the occupants of this hall and its smaller rooms. These were the most beautiful women he had ever laid his eyes upon. These were the ones about whom he had read about in one of the books he had brought from the Black family vault. These were warrior veela's...a whole contingent of them.

"Are you feeling ok now?" Mrs. Delacour asked as she laid a reassuring arm over Harry's shoulder. "They did not know you were coming...otherwise they would have lowered the veela charm they were emitting. I should have entered first and warned them"

"It's ok" Harry said as he lowered his wand. However, he did not loosen his grip.

"Amazing" one of the warrior veela's rose from her seat and walked towards them slowly. Harry saw that she almost had a kind of white glow emitting from her body. It was so dense that her body outline looked slightly hazy. Also, Harry noticed that her dress was quite unlike what he had normally seen any veela wear. She had battle robes on in a way which reminded Harry of a glimpse he had seen on television. Dudley had been watching a serial on some Hena or Sena or Xena or whatever and he had just had one look at the main character wearing a similar

dress like the veela in front of him.

"Ladies" Mrs. Delacour said as she stepped forward in a formal way. "This is..."

"Harry Potter" the veela, who had come towards them, finished off the sentence. For a moment Harry saw temper flaring on Mrs. Delacour's face but it vanished just as quickly.

"Right Susie" Mrs. Delacour said but there was no missing the sarcasm in her words. At the same time, Harry couldn't help but be uncomfortable as the veela named Susie seemed to be taking a 'close' look at Harry.

"Can you always resist a veela's charm, Mr. Potter?" Susie asked in a sultry voice. All the veela's in the room started looking at Harry with a curious expression on their faces. They had lowered their charms, at least all except Susie, but still very few men were capable of standing in the presence of thirty odd warrior veela's and not drooling or begging.

"To a certain extent, yes" Harry replied quite normally as the Veela started to circle him. Harry did not move his head but kept his gaze on her for as long as possible. Also, he kept on calming his hormones by doing using some meditating tricks he had picked up.

"Interesting" Susie commented in the same voice.

"Yes indeed" another Veela said from where she was seated. However, her voice was pretty normal. "You are a rare one Mr. Potter"

"He is" Mrs. Delacour said as she kept an eye on Susie. It was quite apparent that Mrs. Delacour did not trust Susie in 'certain' matters. "Now Harry" Mrs. Delacour said as she moved towards the group of veelas "This is Martha, this is..." and a list of introductions followed. Harry kept nodding his head mechanically as he tried to remember all the names. But in a few seconds he gave up. Remembering names seemed just as hard as remembering the ingredients of a potion!

"So" Mrs. Delacour said once everyone was introduced. "We, that is including me, are all Warrior Veelas"

"You too?" Harry's voice carried the shock he had just experienced.

Warrior Veelas were one of a kind. They were very fierce and, once upon a time, they had even taken out many highly trained groups of wizards and witches. It was impossible to think of Mrs. Delacour as a person who might rip apart someone's throat with her claws.

"Yes" Mrs. Delacour said as she started pacing around the room slowly.

"Hundreds of years ago, veelas used to be very fierce. But times have changed now. We were given due recognition by all wizarding governments..."

"To hell with them" Susie said in a small hissing voice which caused Harry to look at her in surprise. He couldn't help but notice the look in her eyes towards him seemed just too friendly and inviting. Mrs. Delacour, on the other hand, ignored her comments and continued.

"...and we were given our due respect. However, we formed a secret society of Warrior Veela's"

"Why a secret society?" Harry queried.

"Because my dear..." one of the Veela's spoke up. "...they just wanted to disband us and then put us into dungeons and cut us into tiny..."

"Thanks Maggie" Mrs. Delacour, who did not share her friend's suspicions, cut in curtly. "To summarize, there was an indication that there might be an attempt to kill us once veelas became quieter"

"I don't understand" Harry said.

"Look at it in this way" Mrs. Delacour explained. "Our great-great-great fore-mothers were a very strong group. People shuddered in their boots when they went on a rampage. They attacked the wizarding people because they were not treated as magical beings and were sometimes

hunted down. Then the governments, maybe fed up by their inability to defeat veelas and influenced by many wizards and witches pressing for equal rights, gave them due recognition as magical beings"

Mrs. Delacour paused for a short while before continuing "That's all we had wanted. But...but some of the wizards and witches...they had some devious plans. They wanted to slowly get rid of Veelas. Many were killed because veela's had started to live alone amongst normal wizarding folks. It was then that our ancestors decided to form a society which protected all veela's. These protector veela's were named as Warrior Veela's whose existence is not known to many"

"I see" Harry said as he understood the issue.

"This is what remains of the society as of today" Mrs. Delacour continued.

"Thirty Warrior Veela's protecting all the veela's in the world?" Harry said with an apprehensive look on his face. The ratio seemed disproportionate to say the least.

"Thirty three" one of the Veela's said.

"Want to try your skills against any one of us Mr. Potter?" Susie, who had been standing a few steps in front of Harry and looking at him, said.

"Veela's nowadays are more independent and can take good care of themselves" Mrs. Delacour seemed to ignore Susie's comments completely. "Also, any one of us is quite a handful. So, we are not too worried"

"But I must say..." a slightly elderly looking veela said from behind. "...we need to train up the kids. We cannot let the society dissolve"

"All in good time Judy, all in good time" Mrs. Delacour said calmly.

"Does the headmaster know you people are here?" Harry asked.

"He arranged for this tiny bit of magic" Mrs. Delacour smiled as she waved her hand at the accommodation provisions present in the room.

"So?" Harry looked lost for words as an uneasy silence befell the room.

"The thing is..." Mrs. Delacour continued. "...we have converged from all parts of the world and have taken a decision. We have decided that we will support the cause of the light side in this war"

"That's great" Harry sounded elated.

"Also..." Mrs. Delacour said. "...we have decided that if you require our support anytime, you can summon us using this". Mrs. Delacour gave Harry a small ring which seemed to be just right for his small finger.

"Anytime you need us, all you have to do is tap your wand on the ring and say Adveho and you will find us beside you"

&&&&

After his meeting with Mrs. Delacour, Harry, as he made his way back, decided that he needed to get the D.A. into a mentality so that they would expect an attack at any moment. Also, some instinct of his told him that the attack was going to happen sooner rather than later. Hence, using the galleon he had on himself, he called a meeting of the D.A. in another 30 minutes time.

"Today we have gathered for one of our more important meetings in recent times" Harry said as the last of the D.A. members entered the Room of Requirements. "Hogwarts can be attacked any day". As Harry said these words, an uneasy silence filled the room. It was only after a few seconds that the silence was broken, albeit by the sniffing sound made by a second year girl.

"What is the matter Ele?" Hermione said as she rushed over to the girl who seemed to be crying uncontrollably. Hermione gave a knowing look to Harry and started calming down the little girl.

"I could have hidden this fact from the younger members" Harry said.

"But, even if I had done so, it would not have stopped the events from

unfolding. It is better to know that we are facing danger so that we can get ready for it"

"What do you plan to do?" a fifth year Hufflepuff asked from the back.

"Just what we had been practicing these past few months" Harry replied.

"As long as we stick to our plan, we will succeed in achieving our objective. Remember, all I am asking you people to do is protect others in Hogwarts"

"We are ready for whatever is going to happen" the girl who had been crying stood up and said in a tiny but confident voice. Almost instantly all the other members voiced their agreement. They knew they had to face the truth and, in this case, offense was their best defense.

&&&&

"What is the matter Katie?" Hermione asked as she was walking alongside Katie back to their dormitory.

"Nothing" Katie said as she gave a jerk of her head as if to clear it of cobwebs.

"What nothing?" Hermione asked with a concerned look on her face. "You seem to be having delusions ever since you have been back from wherever you had vanished to. You were muttering something weird before the meeting started"

"Yeah" Katie agreed thoughtfully. "I am having some dreams lately. Confusing dreams but..."

"What kind of dreams?" Hermione stopped dead in her tracks. Was Katie having dreams like Harry?

"Nothing important I guess" Katie replied as she also came to a stop and she looked very uncomfortable.

"Tell me" Hermione insisted.

"Well...hmmm..." Katie seemed unsure but, seeing the look on Hermione's

face, she knew there was no way out. "I am having these dreams of being in a room with a lot of boys"

"Just that?" Hermione asked curiously. If it was just that then it did not sound too odd.

"Umm..."

"What else?" Hermione asked forcibly again.

"I don't know" Katie said as she lowered her voice and started looking at her feet.

"C'mon Katie" Hermione said impatiently. "This may be important"

"Well...I don't know..." Katie said as she squirmed around. "I suddenly see a boy tying me up and then everything's black". Katie's cheeks went flush red as she said this. It was obvious that she was very uncomfortable talking about all this.

"Anything else?" Hermione asked in a very serious tone.

"What else do you want to hear?" Katie's eyes flashed in anger at Hermione's curiosity.

"I did not mean to offend you" Hermione said hastily. "I think I can help you out with these dreams"

"Really?" Katie asked in a hopeful voice. "Are you serious?"

"I am" Hermione said. "I will brew you a potion in a few days and it will let us know why you are having these dreams"

"Is it really important to know why I am having these dreams?" Katie asked as her cheeks went slightly red again. "Can't we just get rid of them?"

"I don't think it would be wise to just get rid of them without knowing the cause behind them" Hermione said firmly. "I think there is a link between this and your disappearance and I am going to find out what it is"

&&&&

"Hey Charlie" Harry said as Charlie Weasley entered his dormitory room.

Ever since the D.A. meeting of the previous night, Harry was feeling a lot better mentally and it seemed to be getting reflected on his face.

"Hi Harry. Seen Ron around?"

"No" Harry said from where he was lying on his bed, reading a charms book. "Anything important?"

"Nothing much" Charlie said as he cleared some of the perspiration on his forehead. "Just wanted to check up how he was doing"

"He's doing ok" Harry said. "He is a tough guy". By this time, Charlie had sat down on the bed opposite to Harry. Harry had also pushed himself up to a seating position.

"I guess so" Charlie said with a sigh. Charlie couldn't say how bad he felt for not being there for Ron all these years. After all, his work had always kept him away from his family. And now that Ron was going through the most difficult phase of his life, all these thoughts were starting to bother Charlie's conscience.

"You look worried" Harry commented.

"No" Charlie said with a forced smile. "Just daily life issues"

"I see" Harry said. He could understand that Charlie did not want to say anything about what was bothering him and Harry did not want to push him either. "By the way, if you don't mind, I have something to ask of you"

"Go on" Charlie said with an alert look on his face. Harry quietly cast a silencing spell on the room at this.

"With all the death eaters gathering, I think we should be prepared to protect Hogwarts with our lives" Harry said. Charlie looked on without any change in his expression as he was not sure what Harry was getting

to.

"I have been thinking a lot of how we should counter Voldemort" Harry said without taking notice of the Charlie's flinching at the mention of Voldemort's name. "Of course, you guys have things sorted out but I just like to do some extra thinking on my part"

"And?" Charlie prompted in a manner to suggest that Harry could directly come to the point. Charlie assumed that since Harry did not know him too much in a personal manner, hence he was being extra formal.

"And some of us know that you have dragons in the forest in order to protect Hogwarts". Charlie looked slightly astonished at hearing this. How could anyone know that there were dragons at Hogwarts? But then again, he reminded himself of the number of adventures Harry and Ron had got into and it was no wonder that they would be among the first to find out about the dragons.

"I see" Charlie said slowly. "So?"

"So..." Harry continued. "...I just want to ask you for a favor. If we ever need any kind of help then can we call upon you and your dragons?"

"Help?" Charlie had a puzzled look on his face. "What are you planning to do which might require help from dragons?"

"Something like killing Lord Voldemort and his death eaters!" Harry said in such a calm tone that Charlie found it to be quite un-nerving.

"I think Dumbledore will take care of You-Know-Who" Charlie replied after a pause. "I don't think you will be required to go to that level"

"Hopefully not" Harry said as he did not want Charlie to think that there was more to this than was meeting his eye. "Still, I just wanted to know your thoughts about helping us out if we are in such a situation"

"Are you kidding?" Charlie replied with a smile on his face. "You are family. Just give me a call and I will be here to help you with all the

dragons I can muster"

"Thanks" Harry said with a relaxed smile himself. He now had one more weapon in his bag.

&&&&

"Hello Harry" Tonks said as Harry entered the fifth compartment. "Let me get you some lunch". As Tonks got up to go towards the kitchen, she stumbled on a bag Harry lying on the floor.

"Ouch" Tonks cried out as she clutched her left foot.

"Don't worry Tonks" Harry said as he saw Tonks's plight. "I will fix something myself"

"No...no...I will get it for you" Tonks said as she started to limp towards the kitchen only to hit her right knee at the edge of the sofa. "OH MY GOD" she shouted as she collapsed on the floor. "Somebody save me!"

"Tonks, you are fine" Harry said as he rushed to her side as she lay on the floor.

"I am not" Tonks replied in between her cries. "There is a conspiracy to murder me. Someone has cursed me. Someone..."

"Shut up, ok?" Harry said as he placed his hand on her mouth. "You are doing quite fine"

"Really?" Tonks said as she looked around. "I am not dying?"

"No, you are not" Harry said as he rolled his eyes. Tonks really had a knack for the dramatics.

"Great" Tonks said as she pushed herself up. "I will just fix you something"

"No thanks" Harry said quickly as he did not want a repeat of the previous couple of minutes of drama. "I will get something myself. Why don't you wait for me at the dining table?"

"Ok" Tonks looked back in her high spirits as she nimbly got up to her

feet and moved away. Harry walked into the kitchen and started to pile up some food on a plate. In between, he heard a couple of crashing sounds, a curse followed by a blast. He quickly ran out to see a smiling Tonks with her wand drawn. A few feet from her lay the remains of what had been one of the chairs of the table.

"Just cleaning up". Even Harry could not resist a smile at seeing the elated look on Tonks face as she said those words. He went back into the kitchen and came on in another minute with food on a plate.

"How is your day going?" Tonks asked once Harry had started eating.

"Sort of ok" Harry replied. He then proceeded to tell Tonks about his chat with Charlie. Tonks looked slightly relieved at hearing that Charlie had agreed to help them out if needed.

"I just hope things work out fine in the end" Tonks said in a hesitant voice as she cast a glance at Harry. Harry knew that Tonks was very worried about what would happen when he and Voldemort finally met face to face but he did not want Tonks to be too nervous. Hence he gave a reassuring nod of his head.

"By the way" Tonks said as she remembered something. "I finished it"

"Really?" Harry said as he sprang up from his chair, his lunch forgotten.

"Show me"

"Only after you finish your lunch" Tonks said. Harry then proceeded to eat at a frantic pace and was finished in ninety seconds flat.

"Ready" Harry said as he stood up once again and almost dragged Tonks to the training area. There Tonks showed him the results of the work which he had given her a few days ago.

"Wow" was the only thing Harry could say at the end.

&&&&

The rest of the day passed away quickly for Harry once again. Harry had

been in the library studying for the past six hours and really wanted to get back and discuss some things with Hermione. Just as he was about to enter the Gryffindor common room, a squeaky voice said "Harry Potter Sir"

"Winky" Harry said on recognizing the tiny elf.

"Winky is wanting to talk to Harry Potter Sir in private" Winky said. She looked much calmer than when Harry had seen her the last time which was the day Winky had come to offer her services to Harry on the behest of the headmaster.

"Is it important?" Harry asked warily. He did not want to get into another conversation where Winky might try to persuade him to let her work for him.

"Winky think it is very important" Winky said confidently.

"Ok" Harry said and looked around. "Can we talk here?"

"Winky liking empty room at end of corridor" Winky said and motioned towards Harry to follow her. Seeing no other option, Harry gave a shrug of his shoulders and followed Winky to the room which she had specified. Once inside, she snapped her fingers and instantly Harry could feel a surge of magical energy surrounding the room. In a couple of seconds, he felt the energy stabilize and his body felt quite warm.

"Winky is using magic to make room secure" Winky said as she saw a curious look appear on Harry's face. "No one can now hear what Winky tell Friend Harry"

"I had told you before that I don't want anyone working for me" Harry replied with a sigh. It was what he had expected.

"Harry Potter Sir is not understanding" Winky said as she started jumping around in nervousness. "Winky is knowing Harry Potter Sir not know but other elves tell Winky that Harry Potter Sir is understanding"

"What?" Harry said in puzzlement. He could not make either head or tail of what Winky was saying.

"Harry Potter Sir is Friend of Elves" Winky stated and started popping around like mad. She could barely contain herself.

"What?" Harry exclaimed. "Yes...I am your friend"

"No!" Winky said in between her pops. "Harry Potter Sir is still not understanding"

"Can you please stop and tell me what you are saying?" Harry said quite sternly. Winky instantly stopped and popped right next to Harry.

"Harry Potter Sir is holding out his left hand to Winky" Winky said. Harry raised one eyebrow in curiosity but did not ask anything. He simply held out his left hand. Winky held Harry's hand and slowly made it to a fist. She then turned Harry's fist so that the backside was visible to both of them.

"Now Winky showing Harry Potter Sir" Winky said and snapped her fingers. A small white glow started appearing on the back of Harry's hand. It grew brighter and brighter before suddenly vanishing, leaving in it's place a small white colored elf head. The elf head was the whitest white Harry had ever seen. However, what interested Harry more was the shape of the elf's head. It was an exact replica of Dobby's face!

&&&&

"What happened next?" Tonks asked, her eyes wide in anticipation at hearing what Winky had told Harry.

"Well..." Harry had an expression on his face indicating he did not believe a single word he was saying. "...the next moment Dobby's face appeared on the back of my hand"

"Dobby's face?" Remus looked curious. "What did Winky say?"

"Winky told me this" Harry said as he continued his narration. "Once in

every thousand years, a special bond is created between an elf and a human. It might happen anytime at anyplace. This bond supposedly leads the elves to treat the human as their friend instead of their master. They call this person 'Friend of Elves'. This person is always recognizable by the mark of the elf on his or her left hand"

"Any idea how you got that mark?" Remus asked. "Or when did you get it?"

"I am not sure" Harry said thoughtfully. "But when Dobby was...you know...dying..." Harry paused for a moment before continuing. "...he had held my hand very tightly. I remember that a pain shot through my arm but I had thought that it was because Dobby was clutching me so hard. So..."

"Oh...so maybe he put that mark on you at that time" Tonks looked quite thoughtful at this. But Tonks knew better than to keep talking to Harry about Dobby. She knew she had to change the topic fast which she did.

"So you are this friend guy?" Tonks asked.

"It seems I am" Harry said dejectedly. He did not want these titles! If only he could trade his title for the life of Dobby...

"So what happens next?" Tonks asked.

"It seems that the elves of Hogwarts could see the mark right from the time we came back from France" Harry gulped slightly at having to remember the happenings of that period of time. "They thought I would know but I obviously had no idea about this". Tonks shook her head vigorously to show her agreement. "Now, it seems word has spread throughout the elves that the opponent of the dark lord is the Friend of Elves"

"Wow" Tonks's eyes went wider.

"And they have had a meeting amongst themselves" Harry said in a

lowered voice.

"About what?"

"This war" Harry's continued in the same tone. "They have decided they will fight in this war by our side"

"Oh - my - god" Tonks exclaimed in a loud voice. Remus's mouth was hanging open. It was quite a well known fact that elf magic was very powerful. To have elves join their side was nothing short of a miracle.

"But elves cannot attack their masters" Remus said once his senses started working normally again. There were bound to be some issues in this new development and he now felt that this offer was not something to be overjoyed about.

"Yes" Harry said. "I clarified these things. Winky said they were free to attack anyone other than their master and their families. So unless their master tells them not to attack death eaters, they can do so"

"But what if their masters tell them to stay at home during war? If they get an explicit instruction, they have to follow it" Remus reasoned.

"You are right" Harry said. "In such a case, those elves won't be able to take part. However, we would still have the full support of the house elves of Hogwarts"

"That's a bonus alright" Tonks said as she tried to understand all the possibilities and their implications.

"Maybe" Harry said as he looked at the back of his hand. He could still see the calm face of Dobby on the back of his hand even though it was invisible to the others. He did not want the elves to join this war if it meant that more of them might die. All he wanted was to have Dobby back. Alas, he knew that there was nothing he could do to bring back Dobby. At least, he now had a mark of Dobby on his hand. Something was better than nothing after all!

&&&&

It had been the three days since the goblins and vampires had arrived at Hogwarts and the hours seemed to pass in a haze of preparations.

Everywhere around Hogwarts security restrictions seemed to have been put into place. Goblin guards had been placed at many a location around the castle. Aurors and volunteers seemed to be moving around the castle all the time. A flying patrol was also running round the clock. All in all, the people in Hogwarts were pretty satisfied with what they were seeing. "Harry" Ron shouted at the retreating back of his best friend who seemed to be going to the library. Harry stopped and turned around.

"Hey" Ron said as he caught up with his friend.

"Hi Ron" Harry said. "What is the matter?"

"I might be a little late for the D.A. meeting for tonight" Ron said.

"How late?" Harry asked.

"Twenty minutes maximum" Ron replied. "Mom is supposed to come at that time"

"Ok, we will wait for you" Harry replied. "See you then"

Harry spent most of the time that day in the library. Finally, at 8:45 PM, he started to make his way towards the Room of Requirements.

"We will have to wait for Ron" Harry said once he had entered the room.

They had to wait for fifteen minutes for Ron to arrive. But the moment he entered everyone knew something had happened.

"Harry" Ron said as he looked directly at his friend. His face wore a very frightened look. "Something's wrong"

"What's wrong?" Harry asked curiously.

"I don't know" Ron replied. "The people outside are..."

"C'mon...let me see" Harry said and rushed outside and almost crashed into a running figure. Everyone seemed to be running in one direction.

Some screams could be heard from far away.

"Death eaters?" Hermione whispered in Ron's ears.

"I don't think so" Ron replied. "If death eaters were here then why would people be running towards them?"

"Look...Harry is following them" Hermione said and started to follow Harry. Harry was making his way through the maze of corridors before he darted into one of the many shortcuts he knew. Almost the whole of the D.A. seemed to be following him. They followed him from one floor to another, down a few more corridors and finally into a corridor leading to the great hall. That corridor seemed to be jammed with people and the screaming seemed to grow louder by the moment.

"WHAT DO WE DO NOW?" Ron shouted at Harry. Harry looked slightly surprised at seeing almost the whole D.A. behind him but he did not waste time.

"FOLLOW ME" Harry shouted his response. He doubled back through one of the corridors and then through a couple of other shortcuts which he had discovered during his endless walking expeditions through Hogwarts. Finally he came to a hidden passage which came out near to the door of the great hall.

"Slowly" Harry whispered to the others behind him and started to make his way towards the exit. He could see something flashy...something which was glowing...something which seemed to dance like flames on the faces of the many people who seemed to be looking at something. He finally exited the passage and started to push his way towards the doorway of the great hall. Once people saw who it was, they started to make way to let him pass.

"Harry Potter" one of the women standing near the doorway caught hold of him. "Save us" she said in a desperate voice. Harry was too affected by

her voice to say anything in reply. He only gave a small nod and made his way to the outside. As he got there, the same glowing light got reflected on his face as he looked up to see what everyone was seeing. A gigantic dark mark was looming over the grounds of Hogwarts.

"They are here" an old lady whispered from beside him. Two small children held her hands and were crying inconsolably.

A shiver passed down Harry's spine. The moment everyone had thought would come had come. The time had come which would decide if the wizarding world was going to fall in its darkest age. It was time for Harry to step forward to meet his destiny.

"There they are" someone from the crowd pointed towards the Hogwarts gates. A large number of people wearing the blackest black robes had gathered quite some way off on the other side of gate. Some had even setup tents which gave Harry the impression that they were getting ready for a final war even if it meant that it might stretch over a period of time.

"GET INSIDE" a booming voice was heard from behind. Albus Dumbledore had arrived on the scene along with the other Order members. The people started to move inside the castle gates quickly. In a way, the gathering of the people had been an unusual occurrence because generally people fled on seeing the dark mark. But today, Harry drew heart by seeing their attitude. These people were now ready to face their worst fear!

Harry did not move on hearing Dumbledore's orders. He stood still on the steps of Hogwarts and his gaze seemed to be fixed on the death eaters on the other side. From time to time the earth seemed to rumble which meant that giants had also arrived. Flashes of fire indicated dragons were also present. By this time, Tonks had come up to Harry and was standing on his right side.

"What do we do now Harry?" Ron said as he strode up to Harry.

"We fight" Harry said and took out his wand. He looked at Tonks and smiled at her. "Thanks for the spell" he whispered in her ears. Pointing the wand towards the dark mark, he shouted "Typicus Aevum" and a jet of red light streaked towards the sky.

Tonks followed suit almost instantaneously. She did not need to spell out the incantation loudly and neither was she worried about the wand movement. It was a very easy spell for her to cast. After all, she had created the spell. Her ray of red light met up with Harry's. It was then followed by another ray of red light...this time from Remus. Hermione followed suit as did Ron. Cho, Neville, Soha, Anthony Goldstein, Alicia, Angelina, the twins, Charlie and the rest of the D.A. members joined in and a unique pattern could be seen - that of two red light rays being followed by twenty others.

All the rays showed their effect almost simultaneously, with maybe a split second's interval between them. The next moment, a blazing red colored Ankh symbol, which was the symbol of life, was formed.

Harry's eyes turned back on the death eaters who seemed to be looking toward the new symbol over Hogwarts. Harry couldn't help but smirk. This was going to be one hell of a fight.

"Come inside Harry" a familiar voice sounded from behind. It was Mr. Horatio's voice. Harry looked around to see most of the people had retreated. Only the D.A. members and the other spell casters were outside. Harry and the others quickly made their way inside and the door was shut.

"You all go to your rooms" Mr. Horatio said. Some of the sixth year D.A. members started to lead their juniors to their respective house towers.

"What is happening?" Harry asked Mr. Horatio who looked to have

changed into battle robes. As Harry looked around, the very shadows of Hogwarts seemed to be moving. Vampires were all around them.

"Look up" he said and pointed towards a great bank of cloud starting to cover the moon. Slowly but surely the area seemed to get flooded by darkness. Harry turned to stare once again at Mr. Horatio who smiled in return.

"Tonight is the night of the vampires"

&&&&

A/N: Eleventh chapter here. Those who thought I was dead - no, I am still alive and writing from time to time. And the war has started :)

As for those who flamed me over killing Dobby...no, I did not come up with the Dobby's-face-left-hand-mark all of a sudden to make you guys happy. If you go back and re-read PoH (chapter 22), then you will see that I had clearly mentioned this. It was too small to be noticed then.

Thanks for all those reviews. Every review which you people made is much appreciated. And to everyone who didn't review, thanks for taking time to read up to here at least.

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12. The Night Of The Vampires

OK. Everyone knows the drill. Still here goes nothing -

Harry Potter and the other characters of J.K. Rowling are strictly hers. I am not the original writer (though I wish I could be J) and I do not wish to make money from this. Most Importantly, I DO NOT want to get sued. So if anyone has any problems with anything I write, then just tell me.

There's plenty more...blah blah blah...forget it and let the story begin :).

Note: US English has been used here.

Note: This is the sequel to Harry Potter & The Power Of Hogwarts. Please read it before moving on with this story.

HARRY POTTER & THE NEW DAWN

Chapter 12 - The Night Of The Vampires

"What is happening?" Harry asked Mr. Horatio who looked to have changed into battle robes. As Harry looked around, the very shadows of Hogwarts seemed to be moving. Vampires were all around them.

"Look up" he said and pointed towards a great bank of cloud starting to cover the moon. Slowly but surely the area seemed to get flooded by darkness. Harry turned to stare once again at Mr. Horatio who smiled in return.

"Tonight is the night of the vampires"

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"Harry, we should hurry back" Hermione Granger whispered in the dark. She was with Ron and Harry and they were on their way to the Gryffindor tower.

"I suggest we get back and fight those vampires" Ron said in an angry whisper. They did not dare to raise their voices because of the vampires moving along near them.

"Don't be a fool Ron" Hermione replied in a similar tone. "You will only get yourself killed". Harry did not make any comments and continued leading the way. They were coming to the end of the secret corridor they were in and it was necessary for them to be on their highest alert. Harry paused a couple of meters from the opening and motioned his two other friends to stop as well. He took out the wizard radar and activated it.

Once it was activated, Harry sucked his breath in sharply in astonishment. If the radar was to be believed, there were innumerable vampires in Hogwarts...probably in the region of a thousand.

"What is the matter Harry?" Hermione asked with a puzzled look on his face. The wizard radar was only visible to Harry and not to the others

ever since he had activated its privacy feature at the time of purchase.

Hence, Hermione had no idea as to what Harry was looking at.

"Nothing" Harry said absent-mindedly. Harry was more concerned with what he had seen. The wizard radar had shown that there were about twenty vampires just near the exit of the hidden passage they were in and Harry couldn't help but believe the radar.

"We should keep moving" Hermione insisted.

"We should wait a bit here" Harry said to her. "I have a hunch that it might be dangerous to move out right now". Harry did not want to mention the wizard radar to his friends and hence this was the best excuse he could come up with.

"You sure?" Hermione asked hesitantly. "Maybe I should have a peek to see if all is clear or not"

"No" Harry said urgently. "Don't do something absurd"

"Don't worry Harry" Hermione said. "No one will be able to see me. Remember, we are in the invisibility tunnel"

"Yeah" Ron agreed. "No one will be able to see her. Go and have a look Hermione and see if you can find some vampires to kill or not"

"Shut up Ron" Hermione told her boyfriend and proceeded towards the opening. Moving her head ever so slightly, she peeked out at the corridor at an angle. What she saw almost left her speechless.

"I think you guys should see this" Hermione said in a low whisper, all the while keeping her gaze fixed at what was going on in the corridor. There was something in her voice and the way in which she was looking outside which made both Harry and Ron alert. Both of them edged forward slowly and positioned themselves around Hermione. Harry peeked out from beneath her while Ron, the tallest of them all, looked out from above. For the next few minutes, no one dared to say even a

single word.

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"Everyone here?" Professor McGonagall asked once the counting had been completed. In the rush, Colin Creevy had been given the job to see that everyone had returned safely to the Gryffindor tower.

"Hmmm...Professor..." Colin Creevy looked slightly uncertain as he checked his list and looked over towards the back of the common room. He glanced at the dormitory stairs also before looking back at McGonagall.

"What is the matter Mr. Creevy?" McGonagall asked.

"I can't seem to find three students Professor" Colin said as he looked at the dormitory stairs again.

"What?!" Professor McGonagall looked thunderstruck at this news. "Who are missing?"

"Harry Potter, Ronald Weasley and..."

"Hermione Granger" Professor McGonagall finished off in a hoarse voice as she started to understand the meaning of what she had just heard. She quickly took out a piece of parchment and wrote down something on it. Minerva McGonagall then cast a spell on it and the parchment vanished.

"What was that Professor?" one of the students asked curiously.

"I just asked one of Harry's friends if Harry is with them or not"

McGonagall said. She did not mention the name of Tonks in front of the students but those who knew about the couple could understand very well who the 'friend' was. McGonagall stood there clasping and unclasping her hands as the seconds passed. After what seemed like an eternity, a golden sparkle appeared in front of her and a parchment slowly floated down. The golden sparkle vanished as the Professor caught hold of the parchment and read it's contents. After finishing reading it,

she crushed the parchment in her hand in frustration.

"What is the matter Ma'am?" a little girl asked. "Is Harry Potter there?"

"No dear" McGonagall said in a quavering voice. "He is not with his friend"

"Are you going to go and look for him?" Katie asked from the top of the girls staircase. "I will come with you". Many other voices voiced their opinions about starting a search but Professor McGonagall would hear none of it.

"There are vampires out there" Professor McGonagall said in a very strict voice. "If you want to live then we all have to remain here. This is the only place where you all will be safe"

"What about you Professor?" Katie asked again.

"Headmaster Dumbledore asked me to keep you all safe" McGonagall said. "I will have to wait too". With that everyone turned their eyes towards the potrait hole. Maybe Harry and his friends would walk in any moment now...maybe not. Right now, all the Gryffindor house members could do was wait and hope!

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A young teenaged girl was out in the corridors of Hogwarts all on her own. As she came to a stop in one of the shadowed corners of a corridor, thoughts flashed through her mind and she remembered that evening which changed her life forever.

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"Mom, I am going out to play"

"Not now, it's getting dark outside" a lady in her late twenties told her six year old daughter.

"But mom!" her daughter looked very upset. "You promised I can play after I finished my home work"

"I know" her mom replied. "But you took a long time in finishing your home work. I had told you you had to finish it before dark"

"It's not dark yet" the little girl said as she ran towards the nearest window and saw all the little boys and girls playing in the nearby fields. Turning around, she saw the back of her mom vanishing through the door. Quickly she ran behind her. "Mom, it is not dark yet!"

"It is getting darker" her mom said as she kept gathering clothes in the laundry basket. She did not like washing clothes in the evenings but her hectic schedule had left her no choice today. If she did not do the laundry now, she would have nothing to wear to her office tomorrow.

"I will be back before it gets dark" the little girl said. "Please let me go...please". Her mother turned to look at her daughter's pleading. If she ever wanted her to give her something, all she had to do was plead for it in her most innocent voice and her mother always let her have it. Her mother tried to project herself as a strict mom but the reality was she would do anything to keep her daughter happy.

"Ok" the little girl's mom said much to her delight. "I expect you to be back in thirty minutes"

"Ok" the girl said as she ran outside. She did not dare to wait a second longer in case her mother changed her mind.

The girl had a great time with her friends. She played many a game with them and seemed very happy. But, as it was every day, her fun time had to come to an end. As soon as the sun started setting, she knew she had to leave.

"Hey Jimmy, I am going home" the girl said to her closest friend.

"Can't you stay for five more minutes?" Jimmy asked.

"No" the girl replied. "Mom will be angry"

"Ok, go on then"

"Bye bye everyone". With that, the little girl started skipping her way towards home. As she got nearer to her home, she saw a number of people dressed in black suits entering her home. She did not like the look of them and hence she decided to enter via the back entrance. As she entered through the back door, she heard some raised voices.

"I don't know what you are talking about" her mother seemed to be shouting. In the past, every time she had heard his mother's angry voice it had been due to her breaking some item or not doing her home work properly. This time, she was relieved that her mother was not shouting at her since she seemed really angry.

"Look, we require shelter for a few days" a deep booming voice said.

"This is not a guest house. You leave my house right now" her mother shouted again. For the first time, the girl thought her mother sounded slightly...afraid. It was like the times when she knew something was about to go wrong.

"It is not really an option for you" the booming voice said again. The girl slowly crept inside till she could see the people in the living room clearly from behind a cupboard. The guy with the booming voice seemed to be the bearded guy in the front. He was accompanied by four men and a couple of women. One of the women was now looking outside as if she was searching for something.

"What do you mean it is not an option?" the girl's mother asked in panic.

"This is my husband's house...my house!"

"I think I see him" the woman near the window said, her gaze fixed on something outside. Hearing this, the others became very alert. One of the men waved his hand and all the window curtains got drawn by themselves.

"How...how did you do that?" the girl's mother looked frightened as her

gaze fell on the curtains. She was now trembling from head to toe. The girl wanted to rush out and help her mother but somehow she felt she had no strength in herself. Something inside her said that these men and women were very bad people...just like the people her mom had warned her to stay away from. As her eyes fell on her mother, she saw that her mother had turned a ghastly white.

"HELP" all of a sudden the girl's mother made a rush for the door but was caught by the second woman.

"You muggle, keep your mouth shut" the woman said fiercely and pushed her against the wall behind. She raised a stick-like-thing at the girl's mother and ropes flew out and bound her. The little girl in the corner could only watch in horror as her mother started crying inconsolably.

"Everyone keep quiet" the bearded man with the booming voice said again. He cast a silencing charm around the woman they were holding captive. A tense silence fell upon the room as a group of people passed outside led by a tall, frail looking man in a black hooded dress. After the man was fully out of the view the occupants of this room visibly relaxed.

"We have to be careful from now on" one of the men said. The bearded looking man agreed. It was then that one of the women said the words which changed the life of the kid forever.

"I am hungry"

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"Today I will have my revenge" the teenaged girl said to herself, her body still hidden in the shadows of the corridor she was in. She could not forget the scene she had seen that un-fateful evening. The woman who had said she was hungry...she opened her mouth and bit one of the men present there and drank blood. Soon everyone had turned wild and absolute mayhem had prevailed. Her mother had started screaming but

due to the silencing charm no one could hear her. At last, one of the men had said he wanted to taste some fresh, warm blood. What followed next had remained embedded in the girl's mind to this day and would remain so for the rest of her life.

As the girl made her way out of the shadows, she remembered the promise she had made on her mother's grave. She had promised her that she would kill any dark vampire she could find and, if she found any of her killers, she would take care of them too. The final moments of her mother's life flashed in front of her eyes as she started running towards the pack of vampires fighting. She knew which were the good one's and which were the bad ones. The only thing which she cared about right now was to kill as many rogue vampires as possible. With a deafening shriek, she jumped into the fray and started blasting her way into the maze of vampires.

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Harry, Ron and Hermione kept looking in wonder at the fight going on between the vampires. It was something they had never seen. The vampires seemed to use the darkness to their advantage. The lights on the walls of the castle was not enough to lift the dark blanket covering the castle. Yes, the lights were able to provide visibility in the corridors but still there were lots of dark areas in them for cover.

It was while Harry was watching two vampires fighting each other that he first noticed something moving in one of the dark corridors. Initially he thought it was one of the vampires but then the movement stopped. He stopped giving it importance after the movement did not happen over the next five minutes. What he did not know was that the person in the shadows was biding time to launch an attack.

"Do you think we should still remain here?" Hermione asked in a tense

whisper.

"Let's wait till those guys finish" Harry said as he pointed out the group fighting nearest to them. "Once they move away a bit, we can sneak in..."

Harry could not finish his sentence. All of a sudden he noticed the movement again out of the corner of his eyes. Before he could turn his head around to have a clear look, a person rushed past him. The back of the person seemed known. It was only when the person passed the next torchlight that Harry recognize the hair, the robe, the back of the head...everything. He did not expect this...he did not expect her.

"Soha!" was all Harry could whisper.

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Soha Mentieva knew no limits today. No one at Hogwarts knew that her mother had been killed by vampires. This was because she did not like all the attention it had got her back in Russia. But that had not changed the truth. She had been waiting for the day when she would have completed her studies so that she could go out to hunt down vampires. Today's opportunity was something she had not anticipated and she was not going to let go of this opportunity.

"Phoebus Coma" a concentrated jet of sunlight emitted from Soha's wand and flew towards two vampires advancing from the far end of the corridor. They scampered to safety as the light crashed into the wall and fizzled out.

"Get out of here" one of Mr. Horatio's royal guard vampires shouted at Soha.

"I will fight" Soha shouted back. "I want revenge for my mother's murder"

Soha added so that there was no further interruptions from the royal guard vampires. However, she was mistaken.

"Girl, you will get killed. Take your revenge some other time" the

vampire said as he avoided a blow from one of his opponents.

"Shut up and fight your own fight. I will fight mine" Soha said and turned towards another group of vampires approaching.

"Stupid girl" the royal guard vampire said and turned his full attention to the fight on his hand.

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"We need to do something" Harry said as he saw Soha shouting at one of the royal guard vampires.

"You should stay here" Hermione said. "It is too risky for you out there"

"She is my friend" Harry said through gritted teeth.

"You are too precious to the light side" Hermione commented back, her eyes fixed on Soha. "You cannot sacrifice everything for one person"

"She has a point Harry" Ron said hesitantly. He did not want to back Hermione fully in case Harry got upset with him again.

"I don't care" Harry said and jumped up straight. He said the magic words and his pants and jacket revealed the many hidden pockets they had. He took out the largest knife he had and jumped out in the open. Wand in right hand and a knife almost as big as a butcher's in the left, Harry was ready for battle.

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The royal guard vampires had quite a task on their hand. The number of vampires on the opposite side was more than they had anticipated. There were over eight hundred vampires on the dark side compared to three hundred odd on their side. The royal guard knew that if Hogwarts was to survive then they had to defeat the dark vampires. Their king had given his word that Hogwarts would survive to see another day and the royal guard had pledged to keep their king's word.

One group of royal guard vampires moved towards a group of dark

vampires. Both the groups moved through the shadows of Hogwarts in such a manner that it seemed that the very shadows of Hogwarts was moving. Two very dark shadows moved at each other at high speeds before the vampires separated. To Ron and Hermione, it looked as if a huge shadow had broken into many small shadows.

Finally, in their battle stances, the royal guard vampires stood in front of the dark vampires, waiting for them to make the first move. Hermione and Ron saw that the vampires were spread out over numerous corridors. Because the corridors were next to the staircases, they could see each other from one corridor to another. Everyone waited with bated breath to see what was going to happen.

"We don't want to kill you Supa" one of the royal guard vampires said to his opponent.

"But we want to kill you Gurap" the dark vampire named Supa replied with an evil grin on his face. He drew his favorite weapon - a feet long shiny knife. To muggles, it would look like an oversized knife similar to the one used in the Rambo movies. Seeing this, the other vampires drew their weapons too. Each of them now had a knife in one hand. Vampires were said to be the most skillful beings with knives and today Hogwarts was about to get it's proof.

"Are you ready to die Gurap?" Supa asked as he positioned himself in an attacking position, his knife in his right hand. Others followed suit.

"We are ready to defeat you Supa" Gurap said and drew an eight inch long knife in his right hand.

"Let's begin" Supa said and gave a battle shriek. Next moment, a fight between the two biggest vampire groups broke out.

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Soha had not seen the groups of vampires starting their clash near her.

She had been busy taking on a lone vampire on her own. Soha knew vampires fought with knives and sometimes with swords and had come prepared. She did not know sword fight. What she knew was to how to use a knife efficiently. Harry had taught the older members of the D.A. as to how to fight using knives and she had given special attention to it. Today she just could not afford to forget those lessons.

"Phoebus Coma" Soha said the sunlight spell again which was the only universal defense wizards and witches had against vampires. The vampire opposite to her dodged the spell and leapt towards her. Just when it seemed like the vampire would pounce on her, Soha moved aside and moved her left hand in the vampire's path. The vampire just about managed to move out of the way but could not avoid the long knife in Soha's left hand. The vampire let out a squeal as a deep gash became visible on its left shoulder. Before Soha could do anything more, the vampire vanished into the shadows of the castle.

Soha cursed under her breath as the vampire raced away. She thought about following it but was stopped by a deep voice from behind.

"Hey kid, looking for someone?". Looking around, Soha found herself facing five full grown vampires.

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The two largest groups of vampires clashed with each other like two dark clouds merging. Knives flashed everywhere as one strike was followed by another, as one strike was blocked by another. The agility of the vampires was what separated the better warriors than the others as one vampire strived to strike the other down. And when it came to agility, the royal guard was proving more than a handful for the dark vampires. After all, they were not the royal guard for nothing!

Gurap was leading his own group of eight vampires against Supa and his

group of twenty odd vampires. Gurap went head to head with Supa and an enthralling fight started. Gurap knew that Supa was a really powerful dark vampire, one whose powers even his king respected. However, he was not going to let the powers of Supa win this night.

Gurap and Supa crossed knives with hatred for each other in their eyes. Gurap had his royal guard shield on his left arm while Supa had a knife in each hand. Supa's left hand aimed for Gurap's left shoulder only for Gurap to block it with his shield at the last moment. Gurap jumped back and aimed for Supa's chest but the dark vampire turned sideways at the last moment and the blade missed him by centimeters. At the same time, he slashed his blade at Gurap only to find the light vampire's shield in the way again.

"You have learnt fast Gurap. I am impressed" Supa said with hatred lacing each word carefully. He had moved back a few steps and both the vampires were circling each other, waiting for the other to make a move.

"Give up Supa" the royal guard vampire said again. "Be on the king's side"

"Never" said Supa and attacked Gurap with a renewed sense of hatred.

Even as Supa and Gurap continued fighting, different groups of vampires were carrying on their own fights. Groups of eight to ten light vampires clashed with groups of twenty odd dark vampires. In some places the light vampires were winning but in most places the dark forces were having the upper hand. Slowly but surely, the fight was turning one sided due to the sheer number of dark vampires.

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"What are we going to do now?" Hermione looked frightened as she saw Harry rush off into the corridor after Soha.

"We can't wait here" Ron said in a determined voice. One thing he knew for sure was that he was not going to waste time thinking. Harry did not

think before going to help his friend, and neither was he going to think before going to help Harry. "I will fight". Ron turned around to look at Hermione who looked quiet nervous. He then saw Hermione close her eyes for a couple of seconds and then, when she opened her eyes again, there was a fire in them.

"OK, this is what we need then" Hermione said as she started conjuring up a couple of knives which had a slight blackish glow to them. "These are poison tipped" Hermione explained to Ron the reason for the blackish glow. "One for you, one for me". Both of them took one knife each and took a deep breath. Fighting vampires was scarier than fighting wizards and witches. However, they had no choice. Taking a final deep breath, they stepped out in the open, a knife in one hand and a wand in the other.

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Soha had not heard the five vampires close in on her. Then again, you could not hear vampires moving. Now, faced with five vampires in front of her, Soha knew that the time had come for her to take down as many as possible, even if it meant that she might die in the process.

"Looking for someone?" one of the vampires asked again.

"Yes. I was looking for vampires to kill" Soha replied in a strangely calm voice. This made the five vampires in front of her chuckle.

"And we are looking for fresh human blood" one of the vampires from the group stepped forward menacingly. Soha spread her legs wide and took a battle stance. No sooner had she done that, the vampires broke up. One vampire moved almost vanished into the shadows of the wall on her left side while the other vanished in the shadows of the wall on the right. The other three came straight towards her.

Since the corridor was small, Soha knew her only chance was to get more

space. She remembered a spell Harry had told them. "Andron Prolixus".

No sooner has Soha uttered the spell that the section of the corridor they were in expanded tenfold times. The vampires looked slightly taken aback at this but continued to proceed in any case.

"Phoebus Coma" Soha said and a jet of sunlight shot towards the oncoming vampires from the front. They easily managed to dodge it. However, Soha was prepared. She conjured up a mirror behind the vampires and the sunlight ray bounced back. A grim smile spread on her lips as she saw one of the vampires about to be hit from behind. Next moment, the vampire vanished in a ball of flame.

"One down, four to go" Soha said to the other vampires who had stopped in their tracks. Everything had happened too quickly but there was no denying that one of them was dead. One of the vampires got enraged and rushed at Soha at full speed. Soha shot off another jet of sunlight towards the oncoming vampire which he dodged easily and leaped towards her. However, with still a feet left to go, his teeth brandishing in a devilish sort of way, the vampire disappeared in a ball of flame. Someone had shot off the sun ray spell from behind Soha and had come up to join her.

"Four on one is not right, is it?" Harry Potter said as lightning tore apart the sky outside and made him look like an eerie figure. However, the vampires did not recognize him as his scar was hidden.

"Three on two is more equal" Soha said as a grim smile spread on her lips. She knew now that there was a chance...a hope. Harry gave everyone hope...all the time.

"Let's fight" Harry said as he rushed towards the vampires with Soha beside him!

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Ron and Hermione had a split second's time before the scene in front of

them exploded. They had seen how Soha had just been saved by Harry and how both of them had then rushed forward to fight the vampires. It looked fascinating and horrifying at the same time since, if either Soha or Harry got bit, their fate would be worse than that of the dead! As they looked on for a couple of seconds, many things happened in a flash!

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Harry rushed straight for the vampires. One of the vampires jumped on Harry from the front while another came in from the side. Harry shot off a spell at vampire in front of him and rolled over. Even as that vampire disappeared in a ball of flame, Harry slashed his left hand across the other vampire's front, ripping his flesh. The vampire fell to the floor squealing in pain. Harry did not wait for him to recover. Instead, the vampire's body started burning as a huge ray of sunlight hit him squarely in the chest from Harry's wand.

Harry did not wait after killing the two vampires. He turned around to see Soha wrestling the remaining vampire. The vampire had got hold of her wand arm and hence she could not aim at him. The vampire tried to bite her but he had overlooked the knife in Soha's left hand. As he lurched towards her to bite her, Soha drove the poison tipped knife deep into his body and the vampire stumbled back. Soha took this opportunity to aim her wand at the vampire and blast him with a ray of sunlight.

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Hermione was shocked to see Harry act so ruthlessly. Yes, she knew this was war but it seemed like a lot had changed in Harry. What she did not know was that Harry did not want any of his friends hurt. He did not want to see more deaths. And he knew that now it was a choice between his life and that of the fighters of the dark side. And if the light side was to win, he would have to be ruthless.

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"Thanks for coming Harry" Soha said upon regaining her composure.

"The night is not over yet" Harry said in a grim voice as he viewed the scene around him. Hordes of dark shadows were moving around all over the castle and he knew better than to think of them as just shadows. He could not cast a phoebus coma charm on the whole castle because then he would end up killing all the light vampires too. Also, it would require a level of magical energy which he didn't think he had reached yet. All he could hope for is that the light vampires would be able to defeat the dark ones tonight.

"Yes" Soha agreed. "The night is not over yet and I have more vampires to kill"

"You should go back to the Ravenclaw tower Soha" Harry said in a grim voice as some of the dark vampires looked at them. He knew it was going to get messy soon.

"Don't stop me tonight Harry" Soha said in a determined voice. There was a finality in her tone which Harry did not dare challenge. He knew that tone. One could be so sure of something only when they were desperate to have their revenge. And if luck was on his side, he would have his revenge on Voldemort, not only for killing his parents but also for all the pain he had caused to so many innocent people.

"Then we are in this together" Harry said as he took a battle stance. A group of about thirty vampires was starting to approach them. They seemed to have defeated a group of light vampires and now needed a fresh prey. Soha nodded her head in agreement and got ready.

"Count us in too!" Harry heard a nervous voice from behind, closing up on them. He knew who it was from. Hermione and Ron had come up to fight with them. Harry was not going to stop anyone now. This was war

and they had to win.

"Best of luck" he whispered under his breath for his friends. If they were to survive this night, they really did need all the luck they could get.

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In most places the dark vampires were winning. Many light vampires had been literally torn into pieces by the dark vampires. The situation was starting to look bleak for the light vampires and their main source of inspiration right now was Gurap who was fighting Supa bravely.

However, everyone could see that Supa was superior to Gurap and it was only a matter of time before the fittest survived. And when it happened, it happened in the cruellest possible manner.

After a fight lasting almost ten minutes, Supa had at last been able to strike down Gurap with his knife. But that was not enough for him. He proceeded to drive the knife into Gurap again and again and again until his rage was satisfied. After that, he drank all the remaining blood in Gurap's body. The scene looked so terrifying that if there had been wizards or witches present, then they would surely have run away. But to the credit of the royal guard vampires, they kept fighting on.

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"What are we going to do now?" Hermione asked Harry in a small whisper as the group of vampires came to a stop about twenty feet from them. It seemed like they were contemplating something. A group of sixteen vampires broke away from the group and started approaching Harry and his friends. Suddenly, without any warning the group of vampires divided into four separate groups of four vampires each and rushed towards Soha, Harry, Ron and Hermione respectively.

Harry and his friends were prepared for the attack and set up shields in front of them. Hermione set up a shield which had strains of sunlight

flowing through them. With that she covered both herself and Ron. A couple of vampires jumped towards Hermione and Ron without noticing the shield and paid the price. The moment they hit the shield their bodies started melting and they died before they could do any harm. This caused the other vampires to stop in their tracks and both Ron and Hermione instinctively backed away a few paces. They shot off a couple of spells at the vampires which they dodged easily. As the vampire pack kept approaching, Ron and Hermione kept backing off slowly but surely and the distance between them and their friends kept growing.

Harry was doing his best to ward off the four vampires and keep an eye on his friends at the same time. As a vampire jumped towards him from the side, Harry rolled over and moved back. He also setup a shield similar to Hermione's but the vampires were watchful this time around. Even as Harry kept throwing spells at them and kept the vampires at bay, he saw first Hermione and Ron vanish from his view and then Soha. Even though he wanted to rush to their aid and see whether they were ok or not, he couldn't. He already had four vampires to take care of at the very least, not counting the others standing there and watching the "show". As he was contemplating his next move, he could see the slight indecision on the face of the vampires all around him. They seemed to be bothered by a fight going on near them and from the looks of it they were not happy with the way it was going. Harry felt the vibrations of the battle going on somewhere near to him when, all of a sudden, the scream of a girl rang out in the night.

"Hermione" Harry's voice got caught in his throat as he feared for the worst before an ear shattering scream was heard throughout the corridors of Hogwarts. The vampires attacking him backed away upon hearing the scream. It was unmistakable. The king of vampires was angry and ready

to fight till death if needed. Mr. Horatio had joined the fight.

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Mr. Horatio was late! Too late to save an innocent girl from getting bitten. He had been busy marshaling his forces elsewhere and he never knew that humans had got involved in this fight! When he saw the girl lying near the feet of Supa, his anger knew no bounds. He gave out a shriek which rang throughout the castle. Even Dumbledore's face bore a sign of concern when he heard that roar of a shriek.

"Supa, you have just written your death sentence" the vampire king said in a loathing voice, his cape flying behind him. He held a long sword in his right hand which gave off an eerie shine. Also he noticed that the girl lying near Supa's feet had regained consciousness and was slowly dragging herself away from the battleground and he was thankful for that.

"My king...at last we meet" Supa replied in a mocking voice, followed with a slight bow. The next moment he jumped towards Mr. Horatio with a fierce scream, his knives aiming for the vampire king's chest.

The two vampires clashed with each other in the middle of the corridor with Mr. Horatio easily brushing off the initial challenge. The corridor was the same one which Soha had enlarged previously and hence there was a lot of room in it. Mr. Horatio and Supa were in the middle, locked in a fight which was going to last till death.

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Harry, angry at himself for being unable to save whoever was bitten, blasted away a couple of vampires and entered the corridor where Mr. Horatio and Supa were fighting. Even as he entered, he could feel the shivers of two might forces colliding, hitting out at each other. However, he could not move in too close as another couple of vampires lunged

towards him. Harry backed away quickly, and started shooting off spells at the vampires. He had no idea what was happening in that main corridor, and from the looks of it he would have to wait for a while to know what was going on.

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The corridor in which Mr. Horatio and Supa were fighting had turned darker than usual. It looked as if the very clouds on the sky had become denser over that section of the castle. As the vampire king and Supa collided, ripples of energy could be felt coming off them. Many of the vampires stood still, knowing this fight was going to be one which would go down in the history books of the magical world.

Supa's initial attack was easily stopped by Mr. Horatio but the rest was not so easy. Supa's left knife flashed at the king who blocked it with his sword. At the same moment, he swung his right knife at the king. Mr. Horatio got a hold of Supa's right wrist with his left hand and, in a flash, dug his teeth into Supa's wrist and started sucking off blood. Supa tried to break free...and started struggling but the grip of the king was too much for him. Seeing no other way Supa bent down a bit and did a back flip, kicking the king on his chest as he turned in mid air. The king was thrown back by a few paces as Supa landed on his feet. Blood was dripping from the king's elongated vampire teeth, and an eerie smile was on his lips.

"You have forgotten the old ways Supa" Mr. Horatio smirked. "Not all wars were won with knives". Supa said nothing but it was for all to see that he was still recovering from the shock. The king had really drained off a lot of blood from his body in those three to four seconds and Supa knew he couldn't allow such a thing to happen again. With a war cry, Supa made another attack, but this time he used his full array of tricks

and strengths.

Supa took a couple of steps towards the king and then vanished in a puff of black smoke! Mr. Horatio knew this was an ancient battle trick used by vampires and was not unnerved. Rather, he let his senses do the work for him. Being the vampire king, he could "feel" the presence of each of his subjects. And this is what he was going to use against Supa.

Supa vanished from the king's front to appear behind him. He thrust his knife into the back of the king but all he could do was penetrate black smoke. The king had vanished from his spot only to reappear behind Supa. And the next moment Supa felt a thunder like force hit him the back. Mr. Horatio had punched Supa with his free hand - a punch so powerful that it sent Supa crashing half way along the corridor!

Even as Supa was sliding down the corridor, he threw the knife in his left hand towards his opponent. Mr. Horatio had not expected the speed of the attack, and was slightly late in his reaction. The knife grazed his shoulders as he moved at the last second possible. In the meantime, Supa had vanished in a puff of black smoke and appeared right in front of Mr. Horatio. He thrust his right knife into the stomach of the king, but Mr. Horatio had vanished from his position. The next moment a sharp pain cut through the side of Supa and he stumbled for a millisecond. Mr. Horatio had appeared on his right side and slashed his sword across Supa's arm. However, Supa recovered quickly and threw the knife in his right arm towards Mr. Horatio. Mr. Horatio evaded it easily and the knife passed him harmlessly. He stood with a smirk on his face, only to see Supa smirking too. The next moment the knife, which was a boomerang knife, dug itself deep into the king's back.

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At other places the light vampires were falling thick and fast. Even

though the royal guard were highly skilled, they were losing out due to the sheer number of the opposition strength. Groups of three to four dark vampires were taking down each tired royal guard vampire in an unfair fight. At times, groups of ten to fifteen vampires would savagely tear apart one single royal guard vampire. There was no question of taking a prisoner. It was a fight till death.

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Harry watched as more and more royal guard vampires were getting killed. The two vampires who had attacked him had left the fight midway. They seemed more interested in bringing down the light vampires down. After all, a lone wizard would be no match for all the dark vampires once they had won.

As Harry moved along the shadows of the empty corridor he was in, he saw a couple of shadows coming nearer and nearer from across the turning in front of him. His wand ready in one hand, and the knife in the other, he took a battle stance. With a spell ready on his lips, Harry waited for the right moment to strike a fatal blow.

& & &

The smile faltered on the face of the king as he felt a sharp pain in his back. He had not expected the knife to be of the boomerang variety. With a grimace, he pulled out the knife from his back with his left hand. His gaze shifted from the knife to the astonished look on Supa's face and he laughed. Supa had no idea how strong he really was!

"Do you really think your toys are going to hurt me Supa?" the vampire king said as he threw away the knife in disdain. The poison tipped knife would have been enough to kill a normal vampire right away, but he had undergone many rituals to enhance his tolerance to such poisons. He could feel the poison was strong...but if treated in time, he would be able

to recover from it.

"You have hidden strengths" Supa conceded, looking thoughtful. For the first time Supa knew that he could not defeat the king. His brain was fast at work. The king had to lose, by hook or by crook. "But my king, your strength diminishes your thinking" Supa shouted out with a renewed energy. "You forget that you are one...and we are hundreds". King Horatio looked around as a roar went up amongst the dark vampires. He could feel about thirty odd royal guard vampires still alive, fighting with their opponents nearby. He knew that they wouldn't be able to hold on much longer and it would be up to him to finish this fight.

Supa gave a fiercer shriek and the other dark vampires screamed out in delight. They were going to take down the great Horatio themselves, and then put in place a new king. This new king would never stop them from feeding on warm blood whenever they needed. This new king would allow them to go on a rampage. This new king would be Supa.

However, they knew that the fight was far from over as the thirty odd royal guard vampires were summoned by Mr. Horatio. No word was spoken between anyone, but they knew what had to be done. They had come to protect their king, and give him a chance to draw on all remaining power of the vampire world. The king raised his sword towards the sky, and Hogwarts parted in the middle. Even Hogwarts dared not come between the king and his powers at this time.

The dark vampires looked on in amazement at the sky above, and the massive hole in the middle of the great castle. And then a battle cry from Supa brought them back to the present. He recognized what the king was doing. He was drawing on the power of the elders, the last source of power in the vampiring world. This was accessible only to the king, and now he was drawing on it. It had been said that kings in the past had

used it only in dire circumstances, and Mr. Horatio was no different. He was going to give it his all.

Even as Mr. Horatio started concentrating on the power with all his might, humming an ancient chant, the dark vampires descended on the royal guard. The royal guard had formed two circular rings around their king. They knew they would not survive, but they also knew that if the dark forces were defeated today then their names would be remembered throughout ages. They held their positions as the dark vampires literally tore into them. They fought with all their might, till the last drop of blood left their bodies. The outer circle fell even as the king had almost finished his chant. The inner circle moved ahead and started fighting. They were too few in number...fifteen against five hundred. They were taken apart into pieces within a few seconds. Even as the last of the royal guard fell, an eerie power could be felt all around as Hogwarts rejoined itself. As all eyes fell on the lone figure in the middle, there was no mistaking a dark glow of the blackest black which had appeared around him. There was something scary about the calmness on his face. There was something scary about the power which was emitting from him. There was something scary about the king of the vampiring nation who had finished his chant, and had drawn on all the powers of the elders. Mr. Horatio opened his eyes, which had turned completely black, and took a battle stance. He looked around and saw his friends, the royal guard, had fallen. He was ready to avenge them. With a calm energy surging through him, he gave a battle cry and launched the final attack, one which was going to decide the fate of Hogwarts that night.

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"Albus!" Professor McGonagall was relieved to see the head of the Headmaster appear in the fire. She had been really tense ever since she

found Harry and his friends were missing.

"Minerva, I need you in my office right now". Dumbledore's voice seemed very serious and he almost seemed pained.

"What is it Albus?" McGonagall could feel that Dumbledore had something on his mind. However, the head of the headmaster vanished from the fireplace at that instant. McGonagall knew something really bad had happened for Dumbledore to act like this and she quickly turned to face the students.

"Everyone stay inside. No one, and I mean no one, will leave this room, is that understood?" the graveness in McGonagall's voice was reciprocated only by the stillness in the room. She knew that her message had been properly conveyed.

"Katie, you are in charge here". With that, Professor McGonagall went out of the room and proceeded towards the headmaster's room. It was when she turned a corner that she heard something chilling.

"Can you believe it..." one painting said to it's neighboring one. "One of the students got bit by a vampire!"

& & &

"OH MY GOD!" Harry gasped as Ron emerged supporting a limp figure on his shoulders. Harry rushed forward...he could not believe all this was happening. He knew one of his friends was bitten...but seeing her in that manner just threw his guts in a twist. The neck was ravaged! There had been only one bite, but then the teeth had been dragged right across to the back of the neck. Someone had done this intentionally to cause pain. Someone had been savage with a sixteen year old girl. And from the battle cry of the vampire king, that someone was going to pay for that with his life.

"Thank god I found her just in time" Ron said even as their remaining

friend joined them. She looked horrified at the scene on hand! "Let's take her to the hospital wing". Ron said and started moving. Harry agreed since he knew that Mr. Horatio would end the battle on his own terms rather than the dark side's. It was now all in his hands.

& & &

The king of vampires rushed into his subjects who had turned to the dark side. The first wave of dark vampires had about hundred of them coming from all sides, and from above too. He swung his sword to kill the vampires nearest to him, and thrust his left palm outward at another group of vampires approaching him from the left side. A surge of energy emitted from his left hand and ripped right through them, killing all vampires in it's path, finally dissipating in the walls of Hogwarts. More vampires attacked him from behind. He rolled over and swung his sword at them and killed them. Even as he finished killing them, he saw ten odd vampires descend on him from the ceiling. He knew he could not move out and hence let a surge of power out of his left palm again which ripped them into tiny pieces.

The circle of vampires was closing in on the king. He skillfully swung his sword with one hand while letting out energy beams with the other.

Every beam left him weaker than before. Even as he killed his hundredth vampire of that final fight, he knew he was down to his half strength.

Also, the posion was beginning to affect him more and more. Through all this he could see Supa standing back and enjoying this fight. Mr. Horatio knew he had to stop Supa at all costs!

Without caring for which vampires were attacking him, Mr. Horatio started to fight his way towards Supa. The smirk on Supa's face started to falter as he saw vampire after vampire fall as their king started to clear up a path towards him. He saw a couple of vampire finally reach Mr.

Horatio and bite him, but Mr. Horatio did not care. His sword slashed them away in a split second and another beam of power shot out of his left hand. At the same time, a vampire landed just in front of him.

Without waiting, Mr. Horatio bit him on the neck and pushed him away. The vampire stumbled back, and was dead before one whole second had passed. The other vampires looked on in astonishment and then understood the meaning - even Mr. Horatio's fangs were poisoned now. The powers of the vampire king never ceased.

Mr. Horatio's sword cut through seven more vampires in one swipe, and he bit three who were nearest to him, but more and more were closing in on him. He felt ten pairs of fangs go through his back, as well as a couple of stab wounds. Without even looking behind, he swung his sword behind his back as much as he could and let out an energy blast at the same time. The vampires behind him were dead before they even knew what hit them.

Mr. Horatio had lost count as to how many vampires he had killed. But he knew he had halved their strength at least even though the remaining ones had really closed in on him. He knew it was only moments before he would be unable to protect all his sides. Even as more and more vampires bit and stabbed him, he kept on moving towards Supa. As he let out another beam from his left hand, he screamed out in agony. Around hundred pairs of knives had been driven into his back and side by his opponents!

Mr. Horatio turned around with blazing eyes and swung his sword at his attackers. Many fell, many screamed, and he screamed too as more and more poison tipped knives went deep into him. One vampire had climbed onto his back and bit him. Mr. Horatio did not care. His sword took out many vampires to his right, while the power beam took out several on his

left. At the same time, he bit whoever he could. He then grabbed the vampire on his back with his left hand and pulled it off. Even as the vampire's body was flying in the air, the king drove his sword right through the vampire's body and killed him.

By this time Mr. Horatio knew he had to act soon. Even as some more vampires lunged at him, he let out a ray of energy and killed more of them. At the same time, he let go of his sword with careful aim. The attack was so sudden that most vampires were taken off guard as they had not thought that he would let go of the sword. The sword, rotating in a circular manner, killed everything in its path before it reached its target - Supa. Supa had not seen the sword released due to the many vampires in front of him...and it was too late when he finally saw the sword. The next moment, his body had been sliced into two!

Most of the vampires had not seen Supa fall. All they knew was that the vampire king was at their mercy and they wanted to kill him. But the vampire king had seen the look of astonishment on Supa's face, and his death. He was finally satisfied that Supa would not be able to win. As more and more vampires stabbed him and bit him he closed his eyes and said a final short chant. As he finished it the dark glow from around his body glowed white for a while, before it exploded! The energy spread to all corners of that corridor which had all the dark vampires present in it at that moment...and the energy cut right through them! Vampire after vampire was disseminated by that power which finally died out at the edge of the corridor all of a sudden. The fight was over, the dark forces had fallen, as had the light forces. And the king lay in the middle of the huge enlarged corridor in a sprawled position, encircled by the dead bodies of friends and foes alike.

Mr. Horatio closed his eyes with a smile on his lips. That final chant was

the last weapon a vampire king had but alas, it was only possible to call upon that power at the very last. The power had the ability to wipe out the entire vampiring population, and it was a testimony to Mr. Horatio's control that he had limited it to the occupants of that corridor only. Mr. Horatio slipped into unconsciousness as silence fell on the castle. He did not notice the teachers peeking around tentatively after the fight had been over for fifteen minutes. He did not notice Fluer putting him on a stretcher and taking him to the hospital ward. But what everyone noticed was that he had a look of calm on his face, and an unmistakable smile.

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"Albus!" Professor McGonagall looked very flustered as she entered the headmaster's office. "Is it true?"

"It is" Albus Dumbledore said in a grave voice. Seldom had Professor McGonagall seen failure written all over Dumbledore's face. At this moment, he looked an aged man, one who had been unable to protect one of his student's safety.

"Who is it?" McGonagall asked in a trembling voice. She had no idea who could have been bitten and she feared for the worst.

"It is Ms. Mentieva, our transfer student". Hearing these words Professor McGonagall did not know how to react. On one side she was happy that it had not been one of either Harry, Ron or Hermione. However, there was no denying the pain she felt for the Russian girl who had become very dear to all the teachers in the past few months.

"Oh my god" Professor McGonagall put her hands over her mouth. A seventeen year old girl had been condemned forever to being a vampire and there was no one who could help her. Unable to stand any longer, Professor McGonagall sat down on one of the many chairs in the headmaster's office.

"I will take up the responsibility for the this accident" Dumbledore said from his chair. He looked very tired at this moment.

"This is war Albus" McGonagall tried to counter. "You cannot take responsibility for everything that happens"

"But this happening could have been prevented" Dumbledore said.

"Anyway, Ms. Mentieva is in the next room and I want you and Poppy to look after her"

"Poppy knows about this?" McGonagall was still trying to stabilize her voice but was failing miserably.

"She is already in the next room, tending to Ms. Mentieva's wounds"

Dumbledore said as he took out a parchment and began writing

something in it. "She has already given first aid to Mr. Potter, Mr.

Weasley and Ms. Granger and released them"

"I will take care of this situation" McGonagall said in a slightly more controlled voice before proceeding to ask "What about the vampires?"

"We have managed to hold on to Hogwarts for tonight" Dumbledore said in a grim voice. "Many lives have been lost but King Horatio has kept his word"

"Thank god" McGonagall said in a relieved voice. "I had thought they would have attacked the towers also"

"They had tried to but Professor Flitwick and I managed to keep them away from the towers" Dumbledore clarified. McGonagall nodded her

head in understanding and, without saying anything more, proceeded

into the attached room where the bloodied, unconcious body of Soha

Mentieva was being treated by a teary eyed Poppy Pomfrey. Outside, the

rays of the rising sun slowly started to penetrate the windows of

Hogwarts, bringing to a close the bloodiest night Hogwarts had ever seen.

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"Hello Ginny"

"Bellatrix" Ginny Weasley acknowledged the person who had entered her tent. They knew the battle had started but they were not really interested in knowing what was going on at the moment. Ginny did not like to have any visitors apart from Bellatrix Lestrange because they both had one common factor - Harry.

"How are you doing Ginny?" Bellatrix asked in a soft voice which was seldom heard by anyone.

"I am fine" Ginny sighed and turned her attention back to what she was doing - polishing her wand.

"Let's hope he comes around this time" Bellatrix said in obvious reference to Harry.

"I don't think he will" Ginny replied. "He is a very stubborn person"

"He is" Bellatrix replied as she remembered her fight at the Ministry of Magic building. "But you know that I always hoped for the best for you"

"Yes Bella" Ginny replied. "The first time I met you, I thought you were a bad woman"

"What do you think about me now?" Bellatrix asked with an evil smile on her lips.

"You had your reasons" Ginny replied without looking up.

"You never shared your reasons with me" Bellatrix said with a hopeful look in her eyes. She had always wanted to know what turned Ginny towards the dark side but Ginny had always been quiet about it.

"Come on Ginny, I really want to know" Bellatrix insisted once again.

"Well..." Ginny stopped her polishing and looked up at Bellatrix. "...it was Harry"

"How?" Bellatrix asked.

"I loved him...he knows that" Ginny continued. "I tried to make him

jealous by going out with other guys. He did not respond. I fought with him in the Ministry of Magic building. Still he did not change his attitude towards me"

"Then?" Bellatrix asked again.

"Sirius died and Harry went into a shell. At that time, I decided that I would make my intentions clear to him. But first, I needed to get my own place to stay...someplace where there would be no Ron, no mum, no dad, no one. It may sound stupid but I wanted to have Harry all to myself"

"It's not stupid" Bellatrix said. "Who would want to live with so many brothers and parents?"

"Yeah" Ginny agreed. "But I did not have money. One day I found some items of my dad's and sold them at Knockturn Alley. It was there that I met Ade"

"I see" Bellatrix nodded her head in understand. Ade, or Ademaire, was the biggest black market trader in the whole of Knockturn Alley. He used to rope in young wizards and witches to sell smuggled materials in the muggle world and in return gave them a 30 profit. He had recruited many people in this manner.

"Ade told me how I could earn more money without too many risks"

Ginny said. "Soon I started making a lot of money. I even opened my Gringotts account. Now I had money. I thought I could have Harry but...but..."

"But what?"

"The next time I saw him was with Tonks" her eyes were blazing as Ginny said this. "He shouted at others for Tonks. Initially I was not sure if they had a thing going on between them or not"

"When did you find out?" Bellatrix asked in a dramatic manner.

"I just assumed it. After all, two plus two is always four". Bellatrix nodded

her head in agreement.

"From that day on, I decided I would have Harry, by hook or by crook.

Alas, I failed" Ginny said in a downfallen manner.

"You will have your day dear" Bellatrix said with a pat on her head.

"Otherwise, we will make each of them pay for hurting you"

"Yeah!" Ginny said through gritted teeth. "I am going to make them pay alright. If I can't have him, he cannot have anyone else either!"

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"Mr. Potter, how can I help you?" Madam Pomfrey asked as Harry visited the hospital ward for the second time in ten minutes. The first time he had come was at around 7 AM to visit Soha.

"The Headmaster told me Mr. Horatio is here" Harry said as he glanced around. Harry had "felt" the intense battle Mr. Horatio had fought and he was worried about how critically the vampire king had been injured.

"He is here. Please follow me" Madam Pomfrey said to Harry as she cast a locking charm on the hospital ward entrance door. "I have permission to only allow Rowena and you to visit King Horatio"

"How is he doing?" Harry asked tentatively.

"Not too well" Madam Pomfrey replied in a tense voice.

"He will live, won't he?" Harry asked as a feeling of sudden panic started to surface within him.

"I don't know" Madam Pomfrey said as they entered another room. "I have given him some medication but I am afraid I don't know how to treat some of the wounds. He is in a better position to know what might happen to him because, technically, he is already dead". Even though this sounded weird, it was the truth. Harry followed Madam Pomfrey into another room which seemed to be shrouded in darkness except for one torchlight. Madam Pomfrey pointed out to a bed in the corner and

headed out. As Harry slowly made his way towards the bed, he saw that Mrs. Horatio and Rowena were seated on either side of the bed while Rano was standing a couple of feet away from the edge of the bed.

"Harry, my friend" Mr. Horatio said in a hoarse voice as soon as he saw Harry. "Come closer"

"How are you doing Mr. Horatio?" Harry asked as he moved closer.

"Not too good Harry" Mr. Horatio said in a sad voice. "I am afraid I won't make it"

"Don't say that daddy" Rowena said in an angry but emotional voice. Her face seemed devoid of any expression at the moment.

"You can't die!" Harry said in an unbelieving voice. "You are the vampire king"

"Oh yes Harry, I can die" Mr. Horatio said. "Look at this". With that, Mr. Horatio lifted the cover off his left arm and Harry saw a purplish liquid flowing from it. Seeing Harry's questioning look, Mrs. Horatio clarified.

"He has been injected with a poison which makes the blood warm. We are cold blooded. We cannot live in this condition as the cut does not heal...ever. If he had been able to come back sooner then we may have had a chance. But alas!" with that, Mrs. Horatio started cleaning the wound but more and more purplish liquid started flowing.

"This cannot be happening" Harry said in a hoarse voice.

"Don't worry Harry, I have worked out everything" Mr. Horatio said with a pained look on his face. After all, at this moment, he was as susceptible to pain as any other person. "My wife will take over as the queen and rule. And you, my friend, you have to promise me that you will take care of my little girl while she studies here". Hearing this, Rowena could hold back her tears no longer. She ran over to her mom who consoled her.

Harry spent most of the day beside Mr. Horatio's deathbed. The Goblin

King, the Hogwarts teachers, Headmaster Dumbledore and many other dignitaries residing at Hogwarts paid visits. After a while, Harry was left with Mr. Horatio, his family and Rano. Rano had suffered major injuries himself but Madam Pomfrey could not keep him in bed. He was one stubborn and loyal vampire. His family had served the vampire royal family through ages and he was not going to lie in the bed while his king died. He had to be there.

Slowly Mr. Horatio's strength started to diminish. In the late afternoon, he made a couple of final wishes to his wife who promised to carry them out. Rowena's eyes had dried by then. Harry wondered at the strength of this little first year old and thought what he would have done if he had been in her place. He could not even begin to fathom her feelings! At last, at about 4 PM in the afternoon, the vampire king was freed of all his pain. Harry stayed there for a while longer before leaving the royal family and Rano to grieve over their loss.

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"He can't be dead" Remus said in astonishment when he heard the news from Harry. Remus had been busy getting the werewolves ready and hence he had not heard of how bravely Mr. Horatio had fought the previous night. Harry, who was standing in a corner of his trunk, did not say anything. Somehow, he could not believe that Mr. Horatio was dead and yet there could be no denying what he had seen.

"Oh god" Tonks, who was looking at Harry for some sort of a response, said after a few moments of silence. "I am so sorry Harry". Tonks walked quickly to Harry's side and took his right hand in her left and gave it a reassuring squeeze.

Silence fell in the trunk for quite a while. At last Harry said "This is just the start". There was a certain emotion in his voice which told Remus

that Harry was hardening himself. Harry knew this war would have losses and the sooner he accepted it, and did not blame himself for the deaths, the better.

"He died for a cause" Tonks said in a grave voice. "And we will fight for that cause...and win"

"We will" Remus agreed. "There is too much at stake". Another few minutes of silence passed between the trio only to be interrupted by their breathing sounds.

"They are waiting for the nightfall" Remus said after a while.

"What?" Tonks looked around with a questioning look on her face.

"They are waiting for the nightfall" Remus repeated the sentence in the same grave tone as he looked down at his hands. A cloud of deathly silence seemed to blanket the room as they looked at each other. The look on Remus's face told the whole story to the others. This fight was inevitable!

& & &

"Harry" Tonks looked concernedly at her boyfriend. "Harry...what's wrong with you?". Harry had been trying hard to hide his discomfort from all those with whom he had been interacting with lately but he had not been able to get past Tonks. She had detected that there was something wrong with him.

"Nothing Tonks" Harry said as he started to butter a toast near him. It was around 5 in the evening and they had come down into the trunk to get something to eat.

"What are you hiding Harry?" Tonks said as she slowly followed Harry. She was not about to give up.

"Nothing" Harry repeated once again, all the while avoiding his girlfriend's penetrating gaze.

"So you don't want to share something with me, correct?" Tonks asked in a voice which showed the amount of anguish she was going through.

"It's nothing important Tonks" Harry said as he looked at Tonks for the first time that evening. He saw the expression in her eyes and felt his insides turn. "I am sorry if I have hurt you"

"You should be" Tonks said in the same low voice. "There is something important going on and you are not telling me about it"

"Oh well" Harry said as he took Tonks by her arm and seated her at the dining table. He then proceeded to take on the chair next to her. "It isn't anything too bad"

"I still want to know" Tonks said slowly. "I don't want to be nosy about your affairs but right now, I think I have a right to know what is going on"

"Yeah...maybe" Harry said. He slowly took Tonks's left hand in his hands and gave them a reassuring squeeze. "I am...just..."

"Just what?" Tonks asked as she placed her other hand on Harry's hand.

"It's...well..." Harry seemed to be struggling to say what was on his mind.

It all came forth in a wave the next second "I feel Lord Voldemort's connection"

"What do you mean?" Tonks asked curiously, a hint of fear in her eyes.

Now that the dark forces were just outside Hogwarts, anything to do with Lord Voldemort directly had to be given the highest level of concern.

"Here" Harry said as he pointed out his scar to Tonks. "I can feel his presence in my mind".

"WHAT!" Tonks shot up from her seat in panic. "It can't be. He can't be controlling you now!"

"Relax Tonks" Harry said as he got up and caught hold of Tonks left shoulder. "It's not that bad"

"Oh it's bad enough" Tonks's eyes grew bigger and rounder as she said this.

"Let me explain" Harry said as he slowly forced Tonks to sit down again.

"I can feel his presence. It's not like he is controlling me"

"How do you know?" Tonks said in an apprehensive voice. "You might be having visions right now..."

"I am not having visions" Harry interrupted Tonks. Seeing the look on her face, he continued. "Trust me, I know what visions feel like now"

"But..." Tonks could not decide whether she could trust Harry on this or not. She knew she could trust Harry with her life but she was unsure as to whether she could trust Harry with his life or not.

"Look, the link was never closed permanently, right?" Harry queried. As Tonks nodded, he continued "When I practiced occlumency I was able to block out Lord Voldemort because he was so far away from me. But now, he is nearby. I can still block him out but that does not mean I can't feel him. If I let my shields down..."

"...then you could get possessed by him" Tonks ended off the sentence in a shivering voice. If she thought she could not feel anything more frightening then she was wrong. The look on Harry's face sent shivers through her spine.

"What are you thinking Harry?" Tonks asked in an unsure voice.

"What if I let my shields down?" Harry wondered aloud in a slow manner.

"What do you mean?" Tonks said in a panic stricken voice. "Are you mad?"

"No" Harry said. "But still, maybe I can view what Lord Voldemort is planning...maybe I can..."

"It's stupid!" Tonks said in a strict voice. "You won't do anything of the sort"

"I have to give in a try Tonks. I have to see his mind" Harry continued in the same slow, calm voice.

"No!"

"Listen Tonks" Harry said as he looked at her. "I will give it a try. It is up to you to decide whether you want to be there to help me out or whether I am forced to try it out alone". There was a tone of finality in Harry's voice which suggested that his mind was made up. For some reason, his eyes had a sparkle in them just like Dumbledore's.

"It's not correct" Tonks's voice was barely above a whisper.

"Trust me Tonks" Harry said as he took her hands in his. "We can't go wrong together". Tonks looked at Harry for a long minute before she finally nodded her head. She knew that Harry would try it once and it was better for her to stay beside him rather than no one at all.

"Good" Harry said as he slowly lifted his hand. "I will try it out now"

"What do I do if you go in a trance?" Tonks asked in a fearful voice.

"Talk to me about my parents, about Sirius, about us...and I will come back" Harry said with a smile on his lips. He moved towards the sofa and sat down in a meditating position. Tonks walked over to sit near him. She saw him close his eyes. Nothing happened for a minute or so. Tonks estimated that by this time Harry's mental shields were down and he was most probably trying to enter Voldemort's mind. She knew it was a stupid thing that Harry was doing but she knew Harry would have no other way. She watched him carefully for any signs of trouble.

A couple of minutes passed and nothing happened. Suddenly an odd expression appeared on Harry's face. It seemed like he was tense...and happy at the same time. Tonks watched even more closely now. She knew Harry had managed to identify Voldemort's mental link and was most probably trying out something to find more about it. As she

watched, Harry's eyelids started to flicker, slowly at first but gaining in momentum with every passing second. He started to sweat as the flickering increased. A look of intensity appeared on Harry's face as he seemed to be trying to fight something inside himself. Tonks was on the edge of her seat by now, biting her nails in anticipation. She did not know what to do now. What if Harry could not come out of his meditation? What if...

"Tonks" Harry said in a faint voice as he opened his eyelids in a feeble manner. He seemed to be frightened and happy at the same time. "I saw him...and he knew I was there"

Tonks looked frightened at this. However, her first question to him was the most obvious one "Are you OK?"

"Never better" Harry said with a smile as he slowly stood up on his feet. Now that Lord Voldemort knew that the connection was still active, he would definitely try to show him visions again. Or maybe, he would try to find out more about Harry's plans. For now, Harry had managed to set up his mental shields to stop the dark lord from accessing any important information. Also, as long as he was in the premises of Hogwarts, he would have a certain amount of Hogwarts's magic to protect him. But beyond that, it would be a cat and mouse game between Lord Voldemort and Harry, one whose rules had not been set this time around since Harry was more in control of his mind.

"Never better" Harry repeated slowly once more as he smiled at Tonks once more before turning to finish his food.

Somewhere nearby, a set of thin lips curled up in a horrendous smile. Lord Voldemort had felt his and Harry's connection stronger than ever and he planned to use this knowledge to reap the maximum benefit possible.

& & &

As the evening descended a sense of gloom approached the castle and it's inhabitants. All the doors and windows were closed tightly and the security enhanced by the teachers. As the final door was closed, a howl went up in the distance, the sound of which sent shivers down the body of all the students and teachers alike. More howls were heard both from both the outside and from the inside of the castle.

It was the night of the full moon and the werewolves were on the prowl.

& & &

A/N: Twelve'th chapter here. I know it has been around 17 months since my last chapter...and I am really sorry for taking so long. Lots of things happened in my professional and private life...including me meeting the one I always dreamt of :). And I got addicted to SecondLife in between :). Anyway, I am now getting my fanfic writing back on track and I would like to thank EVERYONE who has tolerated my absence for so long. I have not abandoned this fic, and never will :)

Also, I hope this chapter is up to the mark. Length wise I know it is 13K + (3K more than my normal chapters). Quality wise, you guys have to let me know :). If some stuff is mismatched, it is because I have restarted after SO long!

Thanks for all those reviews. Every review which you people made is much appreciated. And to everyone who didn't review, thanks for taking time to read up to here at least.

Внимание! Этот перевод, возможно, ещё не готов.

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