

Інформація

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New-Start

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A Brand New Start

By: Fairywm

Rita spouting lies, branded as a Dark wizard and goblins in a rage; Harry's had enough. So, he seeks to jump back in time to save himself from a life of misery and fickle loyalty, maybe a little revenge and mysteries along the way. Time Travel! A Harry raises himself fic. Non-epilogue compliant, non-slash.

Rated: Fiction T - English - Family/Drama - [Harry P., OC] Sirius B., Remus L. - Chapters: 26 - Words: 152,491 - Reviews: 1,950 - Favs: 9,378 - Follows: 5,399 - Updated: 21.05.2020, 18:30:57 - Published: 08.08.2015, 10:37:13 - Status: Complete - id: 11434139

1. The Tide Turned Again

Chapter 1 The Tide Turned Again

AN: a quick thanks to The 5h15 Spaceman for the opening and helping me with the story. Also thanks to Constellation Temptation for helping me in fleshing out the outline. And thanks to my two favorite betas, darrelldeam and alix33, who spellcheck all my fics, even when they don't have to. All mistakes are my own, since I have a nasty habit of adding more and not sending it back.

AN: I know time-travel fics have been done to death; however there are only a few where Harry goes back in time to raise himself, and the ones I've read have all been abandoned (or so it seems). So I figured I would see it I can get one up and running, even though I'm making this up as a go I do plan on seeing it to the end. He isn't going to be super powerful, he is just going to

study hard and have powerful tools. As to him being Master of Death, it simply means that he's immortal and when he temporarily dies, he can demand Death to appear.

Also remember this is fanfiction, so of course some of it isn't true, like Rita being a spy or the Ice Cream Parlour being open again or the Burrow still standing.

I just reread this and realized that the first three chapters are a little angsty, where Harry is suffering from survivor's guilt. I just want to say, he gets over that, so bear with me, please. One other thing, he is going to be remaining in this timeline until chapter seven; it will be a bit slow and then pick up when he gets to the past.

Warnings: there is a bit of cussing. This is a little more aggressive than my normal stuff.

Disclaimer: anything you recognize doesn't belong to me. I've read a lot of time travel fics, so there might be somethings similar to others, but I'll try not to do that. J.K Rowling owns Harry Potter.

Hphphp

HARRY POTTER: SAVIOUR OR DEVIL IN DISGUISE

By Rita Skeeter

I met a young Harry Potter several years ago, full of ambition and talent much like the Dark Lord. Though reports say You-Know-Who was destroyed by the Expelliarmus charm, many doubt that. How could a simple charm taught to first year students bring down someone so evil? Maybe, to kill someone as powerful as the Dark Lord, you have to become a Dark Lord—

Harry crushed the newspaper in frustration and tossed it aside. He really hated that woman. Now everyone was going to think he had fallen from the Light. Well, he bloody well wasn't going to put up with this shite

again. It was only a month after the final battle, and he had been hiding out in his godfather's old house from the fans, now this. He had planned on going back to Hogwarts and finish out his schooling, but thanks to this article, that option was gone. It would be a repeat of his first, second, fourth and fifth years, and there was no way he was going to go through that again. It also put to rest his plans on being an Auror.

He couldn't even blackmail the bitch anymore; during Voldemort's control of the Ministry she had registered her Animagus form and set herself up as a spy for them. How she reclaimed her place as top reporter, the dark-haired wizard didn't know. She had probably bribed them or blackmailed them or whatever.

He grabbed his hair and banged his head on the table in front of him. What was he going to do now? The only people who had stood by him before had their own problems to deal with.

The curly-haired witch still had to get her parents from Australia. Ron was still mourning Fred's death and trying to woo her. George was a shadow of his old self, not that he blamed him. Luna was trying to get her schooling done, as was Ginny (and he still didn't know what he was going to do about the youngest redhead). Neville was hiding from the public too, after the Prophet ran the story of all his heroics during Hogwarts last year. The youngest Potter hoped that the sandy-haired teen didn't fall to Rita's vicious quill.

Andromeda was doing what she could to take care of Teddy. He wasn't even allowed to visit his godson. His grandmother blamed Him for dragging the now dead parents back into battle, causing her to lose the rest of her family, bar Teddy, so she wasn't taking any chances. She made it very clear that he was not welcome at her house.

Harry sat up and grabbed a piece of parchment and writing instruments.

He needed to figure out what to do now. The first thing on his list was to clear his debt to the goblins, so he could get his money. For that he needed the Sword of Gryffindor. Just as he thought about it, Fawkes flamed in with the very scorched and war-torn Sorting Hat.

"You look like shite," the dark-haired boy blurted out as he took in the hat's appearance. The Sorting Hat had always looked battered and old, but now the rim was burnt and the tip of the cone was being held there by a few threads. "Why hasn't Professor McGonagall fixed you?"

"Oh, and I'm sure you look better, Mr. Potter," the sarcastic hat replied.

"Minerva said that I am now an icon of the war. I tried to change her mind, but she is stubborn," the poor hat grumbled. He had argued for days with the headmistress, to no avail. She said as long as he can perform his duty then he was to stay as he was to remind students of his part in winning the battle.

"That sucks," commiserated Harry. He would have to see if he could talk to the cat Animagus into changing her mind. The school didn't need any more reminders of what they lost. "How did Fawkes know I needed you here?" He looked at the firebird that had all but disappeared after Dumbledore's death. The phoenix gave a mournful trill and tucked his head under his wing.

"The sword always comes to true Gryffindors in need. Fawkes has always been tuned in to the students of Hogwarts, you and Longbottom especially. While you are not in a near death situation, you are still in need of the sword." And if a hat could shrug, this one would, as it was the frayed rim lifted off the table in parody. "I always knew some hero type person would try and return it one day. It's back where it was the first time you found it."

"Alright, I guess," the teenager said. He lifted the hat and felt inside, the

sword came into his hand and he pulled it out.

"It will be quite the joke on the goblins," the hat chuckled as the dark-haired wizard put it back on the table.

"What do you mean?" The youngest Potter asked as he placed the sword next to the hat.

"That sword is enchanted; they can reclaim it all they want. However, like I stated before, it'll always come to a true Gryffindor." The hat busted into full blown laughter at the thought. He soon joined him, remembering Griphook taking off with it after betraying them, and it showing up in Neville's hand when he needed it.

"Serves those greedy turncoats right," Harry snorted when he calmed down. There was no love lost between him and the goblins, and if he didn't need his money, he would be shot of them.

"Well, I'm off," the hat said suddenly. And the phoenix took a hold of it again and flamed out.

After sending a glare to the crumpled up newspaper, the young man decided that he needed to be disguised. Taking out his wand, he changed his hair to light brown and his eyes dark brown, his famous scar had faded after his aborted death. Picking up the Sword of Gryffindor, careful not to touch the venom imbued blade, he sheathed it in a conjured scabbard and strapped it to his back. He swiped one of Sirius' hooded robes and made his way out of Grimmauld Place. He then Disapparated to an alley next to the Leaky Cauldron, he lifted the hood to cover his face and made his way to Diagon Alley.

The dark-haired wizard could already hear the gossip among the witches in the marketplace. Once again the tide had turned and not in his favor. Scowling under the hood, he quickly walked down the mostly deserted street, not even looking over the damages that were still being repaired.

He made his way to the bank and up the stairs, not seeing the guards signal inside. He hadn't even stepped one foot inside the lobby when he was surrounded by ten spear points.

"What do you want here, thief?" one of the larger goblins snarled. "Do you think a mere glamor spell could fool us? Why would you come here under disguise if you aren't trying to steal from the Goblin Nation once again?"

"I came to keep my promise to Griphook," he said in a neutral tone. Great, this isn't going to help my reputation. He flitted his eyes around the lobby to see who was watching, which was everyone. However, most didn't recognize him, so maybe it would be okay.

"And what of the damages and losses to Gringotts?" the goblin asked, bringing the teen's focus back to him.

"I want to make amends if possible," came the short reply.

"Take him to Sharpclaw," the same goblin ordered. "Don't lower your weapons and keep an eye on the thief." Whispers started among the customers and Harry was thankful the surly goblin never mentioned his name.

So completely circled by vicious warrior goblins, the youngest Potter was hustled to an office in one of the many tunnels. He was pushed through an open door and shoved into a chair. The spears never dropped.

"Well, well, well, if it isn't Mr. Potter," the oldest goblin Harry has ever seen drawled. His thin and gnarly hands clasped on the desk, his beady eyes narrowed in contempt.

"Right," the teen said abruptly as he nodded decisively. Wanting to get this over with he started to reach over his shoulder when one of the sharp spearheads dug into his neck. "I have the Gryffindor Sword," he explained, his jaw tightened as he felt the line of blood move down his

neck.

Sharpclaw nodded to the guard and it backed off. The dark-haired wizard once again reached over his shoulder and pulled the sword to the front. He held it out in both hands, flat and harmless, inwardly smirking as he remembered what the hat had told him. The goblin manager reached over with his spindly hands and snatched it from the human.

"This still does not make amends for all the damages and one dragon," Sharpclaw said in a condescending voice as his greedy eyes took in the most valued weapon. He placed it next to his chair and turned his attention back to the crook. "Not to mention Gringotts' ruined reputation."

"And what, pray tell, would cover those costs?" Harry's voice dripped in anger. He wasn't even going to warn them about the venom. It would serve them right for treating him this way. After all, he was here doing what he promised, even after Griphook almost got them killed.

The goblin smiled a nasty smile and held out a piece of parchment, listed on it was everything Gringotts felt was owed to them. He noted that it was quite a bit of money they were demanding. However, he had a plan.

"Fine," Harry snapped, "but I want a blood test done so I can claim every vault I own." He threw the demands back on the desk. He knew that he still hadn't claimed Sirius' vault and with that he should be able to cover these cost, plus, leave him some money.

The smile disappeared from the old goblin's face and he snarled.

"Longtooth, get the bowl," he told one of the guards.

A younger goblin lowered his weapon and went to get the tools needed for the test. They all sat quietly and waited for his return, though not without hateful looks being passed. Longtooth returned with a black bowl and a rune covered dagger.

Sharpclaw reached over the desk, roughly grabbed Harry's hand and sliced the palm without care. The youngest Potter hissed as he watched the blood flow into the bowl. He quickly tore his shirt and wrapped the wound when his hand was thrust away. The old goblin dipped a yellow quill into the bowl and then placed it on a parchment. The quill vibrated and then started to write. A list of five vaults showed, with more than enough money to cover what the goblins were demanding and then some.

Sharpclaw growled and sneered, "We will take what is due us, and then we want you to clear out every single bit of your money and valuables. You can tell your two friends, Mr. Ronald Weasley and Ms. Hermione Granger, they are no longer welcome in Gringotts and they have one week to clear their accounts. We are done with you." He pointedly turned his back on the dark-haired teen.

"Fine," he said, not the least bit surprised, but still angry at these nasty beings. "I'll be back the day after tomorrow to clear my vaults. If you haven't settled the debt by then it's not my fault." He got up abruptly, snatched up both lists and stormed out of the room, holding his wounded hand tightly against his chest.

The angry teen made his way back to Grimmauld Place unmolested.

Harry had Kreacher bring some healing potions for his hand and hoped he was in time to keep it from scarring. He took the potion, applied the Dittany and was relieved when the wound healed unblemished.

He used the Floo to call the Burrow; Mrs. Weasley was the one to answer.

"Hello, Mrs. Weasley," The dark-haired wizard said politely. "Are Ron and Hermione around?"

"Oh, Harry dear, why haven't you been coming to dinner? We haven't seen you in over a week," the Weasley mother asked sadly. She had lost a

lot of weight, and her eyes were swollen and red, like she never stopped crying. Her usual motherly demeanor was accented with grief, making her more of a mother hen than she had been.

"I've been rather busy, Mrs. Weasley. As a matter of fact, I have much to do now. Sorry for being rude, but I really need to talk to Ron and Hermione." He didn't want to have to explain himself to the kindly woman, not when he was in such a foul mood.

"I'll just go and get them, dear. You come to dinner sometime soon. Do you understand, young man?" Molly demanded gently yet firm. She missed the boy she thought of as her seventh son.

"I'll try, Mrs. Weasley," He hedged. The few times he had been to the Burrow were awkward and unpleasant. Harry wasn't sure if it was just their grieving or if they subconsciously blamed him for the losses. After the way Andromeda treated him, he wouldn't be surprised if it was the latter. Merlin knew, he blamed himself.

She left the room and a few minutes later his friends appeared.

"Hello, Harry, how are you doing?" the curly-haired witch asked. She looked frazzled, her hair was wild and her eyes were bloodshot. He knew she was studying hard to find a way to get her parents' memories back. He wasn't sure if she would find a way before Hogwarts started, or if she was going to have to put it off. He knew that that was eating at her.

"Alright, Harry?" was Ron's greeting. He actually looked rather well. He gained back all the weight he lost when they were on the run.

"I'm fine, thanks," came Harry's standard reply. "I wanted to warn you that Gringotts is threatening to close your accounts. You need to go and clear anything you own out of there, soon."

"Well, that's fine," Ron shrugged. "I don't have a vault."

"No, but, they might fine your parents," the green-eyed teen warned. He

didn't know if it was true or not, but he wasn't going to take that chance.

"Alright, I'll warn them, it's not like there's a lot there," the redhead mumbled. Money was always a sore spot for Ron.

"I only just opened the account, right before we started hunting the you-know-what's," Hermione said thoughtfully. "There is very little there, so it will be easy to get it out. It is a shame that human/goblin relations are so bitter. Maybe there is something I... "

"Hermione," The youngest Potter interrupted her spiel, knowing any attempt for better relations would be futile. Especially if they came from any of the Golden Trio, the goblins made their views very clear. "Do you think you can show me the spell you used on your bag? I don't see myself lugging a bunch of trunks full of gold down Diagon Alley."

"Honestly, Harry, don't you read? I showed you the book it was in when we were camping, just so you would know," she answered back, a bit harsh.

"I know, Hermione, but you have that book in your bag," he defended himself. "Plus, I had a bit more to worry about at that time."

"Oh, right, sorry," she stuttered. "I'll go get it." And with that she left the room, leaving Ron and Harry with little to talk about. The two teen boys had a simple conversation on Quidditch until their female friend returned. A few minutes later she returned and handed the book through the Floo.

"Oh, before I forget, don't let those greedy bastards—"Language, Harry," snapped Hermione— try and make you pay for the damages. I've already paid them. I wouldn't put it passed those... goblins to try and get more," he spat in disgust.

"Harry, I can't believe you did that," the curly-haired witch chastised. "I would have been more than happy to pay my part. As a matter of fact, as

soon as I can I'm paying you back." You could see the calculations running through her brain as her eyes moved back and forth, like they were reading something in front of them only she could see.

"You don't have to do that, Hermione, I've got plenty of money left," the youngest teen shrugged. Ron scoffed in the background and was ignored.

"What with Rita's latest article it's a good thing too. I mean, I can't go back to Hogwarts and the Ministry is out of the picture as well. I might as well live in the Muggle world, for all the rumors that have already started," he said bitterly.

"Oh, Harry, why is it always you?" his best friend asked. With the way she always stuck by him, that is exactly what Hermione was, his best friend.

"Don't know, don't care." To him it was par for the course, and he was tired of it. "I can tell you right now; I'm not going to put myself through all that again."

"What are you going to do about your NEWT's?" she asked giving him a sharp glare. Education was very important to her, and she didn't want to see Him lose the edge he'd get if he completed his seventh year.

Ron just stood to the side not offering his views, he'd let her try and talk Him back to Hogwarts.

"I'll figure out something. Look, I have to go," The youngest Potter said cutting off that argument before it started and pulled his head from the fire and closed the Floo.

The dark-haired wizard spent some of his time that night trying to recreate Hermione's bag. After dozens of failed attempts, in a fit of frustration, he yelled the spell at the bag he was using. He mispronounced a word and it backfired on him and hit a spot directly above his left shoulder. He tried to see what it could have possible hit,

but there was nothing there. However, he felt the air move in displacement when he turned his head in that direction. As an experiment he took a piece of crumpled up paper and tossed it over his shoulder. It disappeared. He tried again and the same thing happened. This could work, he thought. He held his right hand in front of the area and said, "Crumpled piece of parchment." Both pieces of paper came flying out to his hand. He spent the rest of the night experimenting and found it just like her bag. Bigger items just shrank into the invisible space and expanded when they were called out. He found out he had to be careful not to say certain words out loud, like 'empty', or everything would dump on to his foot, which was painful. He was delighted that he now had a way to store his gold and whatever else was in those vaults. It was a tired young man that sat at the table and ate dinner. He finally looked at the blood test and noted there were three vaults with names he'd never heard of that now belonged to him. He did wonder how they came to be his, but he'd be damned if he asked the goblins. All five vaults added up to over a few million galleons, so Harry wouldn't have to worry about working anytime soon, which was good. He did notice that the demands of Gringotts would have wiped out his Potter account, which he was sure was the point. But the other four vaults more than made up for that.

The next day, Harry took everything he held valuable and placed them in, what he dubbed, his pocket-space. Making sure the Deathly Hallows were in there. No one was more surprised than he was when the three items appeared on his bed the day after the final battle. He tried to rid himself of them, but they kept coming back. He had no idea what that meant, but at least now he had a way to hide them.

On the day he said he'd be at Gringotts, The dark-haired wizard walked

down Diagon Alley to complete his task. This time he looked around and saw all of the buildings that were in disrepair. There were still Muggle-borns lining the street begging for money. He felt sorry for them and was glad that toad of a woman was now in Azkaban for all her crimes.

If he had his way he'd just kill the sadistic bigoted bitch, she was a bigger blemish on the wizarding world than Voldemort. Her death count was higher than any Death Eaters. Those camps were responsible for hundreds of deaths. Now that they were disbanded, what was going to happen to those that lost everything? Families torn apart, children orphaned and wands snapped. Was the Ministry going to help? Could they? He didn't know the answer to those questions.

With Diagon Alley in such a state, no one seemed to be able to help anyone. It'll take a lot of money and time to get the marketplace back to the bustling wonder it use to be. He remembered well the awe his ten year old self had when he first entered the Alley all those years ago. It saddened him to see it in the shambles it was.

Ollivander's shop was ruined, the windows gone, the display that adorned the shop since its opening was broken and all of the wands snapped. The poor wand maker was going to be hard-pressed to get enough wands for the new first years and all the Muggle-borns. That was if he wasn't too mentally scarred from his time in Voldemort's hands.

Floean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour seemed to be up and running, even though the tables that used to litter the front were fewer. Harry recalled that Mr. Floean had a daughter, maybe she was running it. He felt sad that the man had died; he was always kind to the youngest Potter.

Weasleys Wizarding Wheezes was open and appeared to be doing well.

The dark-haired wizard made a mental note to visit George when he was done with the bank. He'd need to tell him about all that anyway, if Ron

hadn't already passed that message on. Well, he would just make sure.

About every third shop was open, the rest were boarded up or abandoned. Patrons were hustling quickly through their shopping, like Death Eaters were going to come and snatch them any minute. He had enough with the depressing sights and hurried his way to the bank.

This time as he made his way up the marble stairs two guards flanked him. Their weapons were poised to strike should He do anything funny.

The trio was met in the lobby by that traitor Griphook. Spiteful looks passed between human and goblin, but neither spoke. The cart goblin took them to the tunnels in an uncomfortable silence. When they arrived at the first vault, Harry waited for the goblin to open it, not taking the chance that they'd trap him and leave him there. He remembered well the warning this goblin told him the first time he visited Gringotts.

Griphook sneered at the young man and a flash of disappointment flew across his face, confirming the youngest Potter's paranoia.

The vault had the name Frostwell posted over the doorway, He never heard of that family, so they probably didn't have children in Hogwarts. He still didn't understand how this vault came into his possession. When the door opened the teen only stepped far enough in that he could get out if the door started to close. He lifted his wand and levitated all the money then directed it to just over his left shoulder. After all the coins were sucked into the pocket-space, he then turned to the jewels, the trunks, the books and the armor. There were also gizmos the dark-haired wizard couldn't identify, but he placed them in the pocket-space as well. Soon enough the vault was empty. He took great pleasure in making sure the goblins didn't get any of the goblin made items in the vault.

It took about an hour for Him to clear out the other three non-family vaults; the Black vault took a half an hour alone. He didn't even take time

to look at what he was putting in the expanded space, he'd go through it all at Gringotts Place, maybe even invite his friends over to help. The dark-haired young man then turned to Griphook and broke the silence.

"Take me to the Potter vault," he demanded.

"There is no money left in the Potter vault," snarled the greedy goblin, a healthy dose of pleasure coated his words.

"But there are artifacts and books, now take me to the Potter vault." He stood firm; he wasn't going to let these bastards take anything more from him.

"Fine," the cart goblin spat.

Soon Harry was in front of his family vault and once again waited until Griphook opened the door. The vault was mostly empty, there were some books and trunks, but there was little else. So He levitated what was left into his pocket space and turned away with moist eyes. He took a deep breath and firmed his face; he wasn't going to show any remorse in front of these beings who took great pleasure in his pain.

The silence descended again, not that Harry cared, he was done with this place. He was escorted to the doors and was told in no uncertain terms that he would never be welcome back, and neither would anyone with the name Potter. He gave them the two finger salute and swept down the Alley with his head high. Unfortunately, now the whole place knew that Harry Potter had been banned from Gringotts. Rita was going to have a field day with that bit of news.

The dark-haired teen made his way to WWW, with people pointing at him and calling him the next Dark Lord. Thanks to the goblins, his glamor was shot so he dispelled it. He went into the back room and waited for George, knowing the single twin would come back there eventually. About forty-five minutes later he was proven correct.

"Hey George," The dark-haired wizard said softly, taking in the lonely man's appearance. George was in bad shape, he had lost a lot of weight he couldn't afford. There were dark circles under his misty brown eyes. His clothes were in good repair though. He figured George was still trying to live out his and Fred's dream.

George turned, startled, and then plastered a fake smile on his lips.

"Harry!" he cried, you could tell he was happy to see his younger friend; it was just hard for him to express it. "What are you doing here? Not that I'm not glad to see you, but with the rumors going around I didn't think you'd come to the Alley."

"How could I not come and visit my favorite Weasley?" He asked cheerfully, trying to make the grieving young man less sad.

"Right," George scoffed. "I thought that was Ron or Ginny."

"They don't make me laugh like you do," explained the green-eyed teen.

"Enough of me stroking your ego, I only came to warn you to get your money out of Gringotts. They're up in arms over anyone named Potter, Granger or Weasley. So it might be better if you cleared out your vault and put a Muggle safe in your office, or something. Oh and you better warn Bill. He might want to look for a new job."

"That's all we need," the redhead sighed. "Thanks for the warning though. What are you doing with yourself these days? We hardly ever see you at the Burrow anymore."

"Sorry, I just feel uncomfortable there now. Your mum is still grieving, as are you, and it's hard not to blame myself for your loss." The youngest Potter shrugged his shoulders as if to say, what else could I think.

"Don't be stupid," snapped George. "We knew what we were getting into from the start. Don't you remember us fighting Mum to be in the Order? None of this is your fault."

"I know, but it's still hard to look at you and your mum. It doesn't help that Andromeda is blaming me for Remus' and Tonks' death," He said sadly. "Anyway, that's all I came to say. I'd better get out of your store before you're labeled Dark for being seen with me."

"You come and visit me soon, Harry. Do you hear me? I don't give a rat's ass what people think," George said as he pulled the younger boy into a tight hug. He returned the show of affection and then pulled away.

"Yeah, but, I care," he stated, and then he whipped out the Invisibility Cloak and pulled it on. He once again made his way down the Alley and listened to the gossip. It was worse than he thought. These people were going to condemn him and there were only a few that protested. Thank Merlin they didn't know where he lived.

Harry got angry. He came to the decision that he was tired of the whole wizarding world. He did his job and got nothing for it. It only took one article in the Prophet, —from a reporter that was a spy for the Dark Lord — and one incident at the bank, — run by greedy goblins that wizards didn't even trust— and everyone turned on him. All the good he had done before was now pushed to the side. All the pain and suffering he endured throughout the years for them meant nothing now. Every single person he called family died for these people and the public wouldn't even remember them.

He was going to find a way to get back at them if it was the last thing he did.

## 2. Changes and Plans

### Chapter 2 Changes and Plans

AN: thanks to my betas, the 5h51 Spaceman, darrelldeam and alix33. All mistakes are my own.

AN: I have to say, I'm overjoyed at how many of you like this story. I've never

received so many favs or follows on a first chapter before; I just pray I don't let you down.

Ron is a bit out of character in this story.

I took Dungs accent off a translator, giving him a cockney accent, because I suck and trying to do my own. I apologize if you can't work through it, but I think I covered it with Hydrus' responses.

Disclaimer: anything you recognize doesn't belong to me.

Hphphp

It had been a month since the scene at the bank and Rita did run an article on how the Golden Trio was banned from Gringotts. Only Harry was accused of using Dark magic to break into the bank and steal from the goblins, which was true, but she didn't know that. The fact that it had to be done to stop the war was conveniently not mentioned, Skeeter more than likely knew exactly why the Golden Trio robbed Gringotts. She wrote that Ron was probably threatened or controlled by the new Dark Lord rising. The vindictive bitch called Hermione a useless Muggle-born who was easily swayed by Harry Potter and brushed her off as unimportant. The goblins covered their arses by not mentioning exactly how Harry had accomplished the heist, which was good because he didn't want to spend the rest of his life in Azkaban for using the Imperius Curse. The dark-haired teen now faced a problem; he had a bit of Muggle money, and loads of wizarding. But he would soon run out of pounds and had no way of exchanging galleons. The goblins knew who Kreacher belonged to, so that was out. His friends were still in the same plights they were a month ago. He'd have to figure out how to get money soon. He knew the galleons were enchanted so you could not melt them down. Besides, flooding the market with gold would only reduce its value. In the past month he went to dinner at the Burrow, one time. Molly cried

the entire time and George's false happiness was grating, even if Harry understood it was for Mrs. Weasley's sake. Ginny took Harry aside and informed him that she was seeing Dean Thomas again, because she felt he needed her more after what he suffered the past year. Harry was conflicted on how that made him feel, but nodded his understanding because it was her life. He left that dinner feeling worse than when he had arrived, and declined all invitations that followed.

Harry had invited Ron and Hermione to help him sort everything he got from the vaults. Hermione was busy trying to find a way to get her parents back and catching up on a year of missed school, so she declined, but stated she wanted to know what was there when he was done. Ron came over once, but an argument ensued about Harry's newfound wealth, which ended with the redhead storming out in a fit of jealousy. So Harry was left with only Kreacher for help.

There were many interesting things to be found in his pocket space. There were books on subjects Harry had never even heard of. Like Dimensional Travel or Time Warping, and others on wards and inventions. Gizmos and trinkets were aplenty, though Harry was going to have to research on exactly what they did. Thank Merlin, there were hundreds of books and journals to explain it all.

One of the families— the Frostwells— were inventors. They came up with a way to get Muggle electronics to not only work with magic, but to excel. The last member of that family left a journal on his inventions: it listed all of his discoveries and that he was about to publish when the second war with Voldemort broke out. Since he was a Half-blood, he was scared that he wouldn't survive the second coming of the Dark Lord. He noted in the journal that he was going to leave his vault to the Boy Who Lived, in hopes that Harry could use his inventions and theories to make

the wizarding world a better place. The teen was disappointed that he couldn't make the man's last wish come true, at least not in this time.

Harry damned Rita to the deepest pits of hell, but then a smirk came over his face. If he read some of this correctly then it might be useful for his revenge.

Harry didn't understand much of the inventions, so he would have to take himself to a bookstore and get every idiot's guide to electronics he could find. He was thankful that all the magical books were found among the inventory.

Another family— the Stonewalls— were the ones looking into traveling outside this world into the next or back in time. That's where Harry started making his plans, they were only tentative now, but it was a start. When he went to the Muggle bookstore he'd make sure to load up on fantasy novels that depicted those subjects. He figured it wouldn't hurt to get more perspectives.

The last vault left to him, by the Moreovers, contained only coins and a few family heirlooms. It saddened Harry that he couldn't return them to anyone, since the family had been wiped out during the last two wars.

The stuff from the Black vault was Dark; there were no ifs, ands or buts about it. Harry made sure to scan each and every item before he touched it, all the while thanking Hermione for teaching him the spells when they were on the run. Anything that was too Dark, he had Kreacher sell in Knockturn Alley. The rest he set aside to look at later as they might be useful. He did find a letter addressed to him with a vial of blood. The letter read:

Hey Pup,

I left this to you in case I didn't make it. The vial of blood is to be used with a potion to make you a closer member of the Black family. You

can find the receipt for the potion in the book titled 'Blood Magic, Make It Work For You', which is in Grimmauld Place's Library. You'd still be a Potter, but since your grandmother was a Black this'll bring your heritage closer to be the head of the Black family, so you will be more of a brother or first cousin. I don't want the Malfoys to inherit the family name. So take the vial and use it. I was going to explain all of this to you this summer, but since you're reading this that didn't happen. Talk to Moony, he'll know my plans and help you make the adoption potion. I know your grades in that subject (probably Snivellus' fault) and you're going to need help. Do this as quickly as you can, so that you don't lose the inheritance.

If you decide not to do this, I'm declaring the Black name dead. It is stipulated in my will; the Malfoys will try and fight for the name either way. I hope you do the adoption and not let my family name die. The choice is yours.

I hope that I went out with a bang, but I am sorry to have left you alone. Take care, Pup, and remember the good times.

Padfoot

Well, that didn't work. But, I think this will help my plans nicely, Harry thought as he reread the short letter. He still missed his godfather, and now reading this he realized just how much that man was doing behind the scenes. The teen vowed to do this request as soon as he could get the ingredients. Maybe he'd have Kreacher buy them in Knockturn Alley. It was a good thing that the goblins made him clear out the vault before the Malfoys could recover their place in society and try and take it from him. He doubted they would fight for the name now that there was no money attached to it, though there was still power behind it. Who knows, Harry didn't care either way, he would do this because it was the last wish of

his godfather.

The Potter vault yielded things from past Potters, like journals and old schoolbooks, some with notes in the margins. Harry had spent a few mournful days reading the diaries. He learned a lot about his parents and their school days. He was pissed that such a great family was now fallen. He was the last Potter and felt he had let his family down. He had been tempted to call the shades of his parents to apologize to them. However, he was worried they might berate him for letting the family name be ruined, even if they had praised him the last time he summoned them. A few days later, Harry was spending the last of his Muggle money at a bookstore. He was on his way home and was just completing his Disapparition when he was hit with a killing curse. His body landed right outside the house. Kreacher seeing his Master's corpse quickly levitated it into the parlor. The poor house elf grieved over his kind Master. No one since Master Regulus had ever treated Kreacher with kindness, until this teen came along. It was the destruction of the horcrux that brought the two to an understanding. Now Kreacher was alone again.

Harry, meanwhile, was in an empty grey space. He had the feeling that he was dead and was remorseful that he couldn't carry out his plans to make the wizarding world pay or help those loved ones that he could. He was wondering why he wasn't moving on, when a dark cloaked being appeared. The figure in front of Harry wore a black hooded cloak that covered all but his face and hands, as it was the hood of the cloak cast shadow on that very gaunt and pale face. Its hands were ghostly white and very thin. It was tall, very tall, and skinny. Harry was kind of glad it wasn't the skeletal being that was depicted in the books—just a very dead looking man, like a centuries old vampire.

"Master," the cloaked man rasped, "I was not expecting to see you so

soon." The entity waved his hand and two chairs appeared.

"Let me guess, you're Death," Harry said calmly, "and I'm dead. I do have to wonder if it was a Death Eater or one of the wizarding sheep bent on destroying the new Dark Lord. I guess it really doesn't matter, I knew it was going to happen sooner or later. I was hoping for later, but, here I am, maybe I can finally rest. Don't you have a book or something that tells you when people are going to die?" He took one of the chairs and waited for the being to explain.

"Yes, I am Death. No, I do not have such an item," were the succinct answers, and the deity took the other chair. "However, you cannot die. You will rejoin your body in a few minutes. I brought you here, because I would like to explain the Hallows and what they can do to further assist your plans. Yes, I know all about them, and I agree to what must be done. I feel you can do wonders, for you, your lost loved ones and your family, should you complete them."

"That is upsetting, but at least I can still get my revenge," the dark-haired teen said, he didn't seem to feel emotions here; he'd have to look into that when he got back. He settled back on his chair and then waited quietly for Death to finish.

"I cannot give you all of the answers; however, I can tell you that you are headed in the correct direction. Use the wand to complete your final task. It has properties that you will need. Use the ring to get answers from those that have passed on. Use the cloak to hide from your enemies, so that we will not meet again anytime soon. You have these tools; you should utilize them to help you along." Death chastised, not understanding why the young man in front of him didn't use the Deathly Hallows to their fullest extent.

Harry nodded his head, and berated himself for putting the most

powerful magical objects away and forgetting about them. "Can you talk to me anytime, or do I have to die to see you?" he inquired.

"I cannot interact with the living," Death answered. "I belong in the Land of the Dead."

"So I'd have to die, figures," the teen nodded in understanding, nothing in his life was ever easy. He would have to get some philosophy books on death, since it seemed the being in front of him was limited in what it could tell him.

"It will also do you well to reflect on your life thus far, and note who did and didn't do the things you required as a child in their care," Death evasively hinted.

"I've been doing that, kinda. I mean, I know that most of the crap that I was put through at Hogwarts should've never happened. I'll think more on it, but it makes me mad when I do, so I try and forget all that shite," Harry said with a shake of his head.

Death nodded in understanding. "One last thing, if you do not want to create a paradox you will need to use the vial your godfather left you," the deity reminded his young master.

"Yeah," Harry said sheepishly, he hadn't so much as forgotten about it, he just got caught up in making his plans. "I'll get to that first thing," he said decisively.

"It is time for you to return, Master," Death said as he stood. "Though you are the Master of the Hallows, you do not belong in this realm. Read my tale again and research all you can. We will meet again."

"I'd say it was nice to meet you, but I'm kinda disappointed that I'll never join my family," Harry said as he too stood. The chairs disappeared and Harry had one more question to ask. "Speaking of my family, do you have any idea how they're reacting to what's going on now?"

"I can tell you that should you wish to talk to them, they will come joyfully," Death answered with a bow, and then with a sweeping motion of his arm, he flung Harry's soul back into his body.

Harry sat up with a gasp, making Kreacher scream and topple over.

"Sorry, Kreacher, looks like you're stuck with me until I either leave or you die," Harry said to the scared house elf. He wondered if he could bring the loyal house elf with him when he left. He would have to experiment on a few things first. Then again having two Kreachers in the same timeline would cause a paradox and he didn't know if he could change a house elf enough to not cause one.

Harry sat the elf down and explained the experience he just had, and Kreacher was soon calmed and was overjoyed that his Master couldn't die. Hopefully that meant he would never be alone.

"Did you grab the bags I had when you brought me in?" Harry asked bringing the house elf's attention back to him.

"Yes, Master Harry, Kreacher is not leaving Master's things on the sidewalk," the old house elf answered. He then pointed to the bags on side table.

"Thanks, Kreacher, you're the best." Harry patted the tiny being on the back. He too was glad they had put their differences aside and now worked together. It was only after he went over the times that the necklace horcrux affected him and his friends that he realized it probably did the same for the house elf.

"Kreacher, did you get the ingredients for the adoption potion?" Harry asked as he looked through the bags to make sure everything was there.

"Yes, Master Harry, Kreacher is getting them this morning," the house elf said and scurried away to get them.

Harry watched him go and started defining his plans. He still needed to

find a way to get his money switched over. He ran all of his friends and acquaintances through his mind and came up short on who was in a position to help. Most of the Half-bloods and Muggle-borns were still struggling to find a foothold in the war-torn society. Maybe he could ask Kingsley, then again since the man was Minister now he might be a bit busy. McGonagall was working hard to get Hogwarts repaired and staffed so it could be ready for the new school year. As much as he loved Hagrid, he couldn't be trusted to keep his mouth shut on who he would be doing the errand for. Mundungus was a tempting thought, though that man would want a hefty fee. He'd have to think on that one, and if he couldn't find anyone else there were loads of things from the vaults that thief would want.

Kreacher popped back into the room, breaking Harry from his musing. "Kreacher had Master's things," the old being said as he handed a bag to the young man.

"Thanks. Why don't you take the rest of the day off?" Harry suggested to the tired house elf. Kreacher had been working hard to get Grimmauld Place back to the beauty it once was, even taking that portrait of Mrs. Black off the wall. That took a bit of convincing, but Harry finally used the fact that he was master of the house and it was done. That and the old house elf had been helping him sort through the vault items. Now the poor creature looked drained.

"As Master orders," Kreacher said and popped away.

Harry went to the kitchen and summoned the vial, the book and his cauldron from his pocket space. He then set about making the potion. It was as difficult as Sirius warned, but what his godfather didn't know is that Harry had studied potions on his own, knowing that that greasy git of a Potions Master would never teach or grade him fairly. The Half-

blood Prince's book helped a lot. He had retrieved it after making his friends think it was hidden. There was no way he was going to let go of such a valuable resource.

After hours of chopping, stewing and stirring – grimacing the entire time knowing he was going to have to drink the vile concoction— the potion was done. Taking a deep breath he swallowed it in one go. He was right, it was awful and it took every bit of willpower to not throw up.

According to the instructions, Harry now needed to go to bed, so that the changes could take place in his sleep. So he cleaned up his mess and took himself up the stairs to Sirius' old room. He changed into pajamas and put aside his glasses. Laid down on the bed and went right to sleep.

During the night he dreamed a very vivid dream. He saw his parents and Sirius waving at him from across a raging river. They were making motions for him to join them. The teen wanted to comply, so he attempted to build a bridge, but the water swept it away. He tried to fly over on his broom, but the wind kept blowing him back. He attempted to Apparate, but landed in the middle of the river. The currents pulled him away from his family.

Harry woke with tears streaming down his face and his shoulders shaking with grief. He realized just what being the Master of Death meant. Oh, he understood before, but with this dream it was more of a reality. He would never join anyone in the afterlife. Because he would never die, all his friends would be taking from him in time. He now had a choice to make, either relish the time he had with them or seclude himself even further and save himself the pain. He wasn't about to make that decision after waking up from such a traumatic dream.

After taking many deep breaths, to calm himself and wake up more, Harry remembered what he did the night before and rushed to the mirror

to see the changes. His hair was darker, before it had been black with red highlights, now it was a shade of black that reflected blue in the light. It was silkier, yet still had that just mussed look, just not as bad. His eyes were the same, and now he could see without his glasses. His face was leaner, the cheekbones were higher and the chin more pointed, making his jaw less square. His body was the same, he didn't gain any height. He looked a lot like Sirius, but with his dad's ears and his mother's eyes. He was thankful that there were still Potter traits.

The now darker-haired teen felt a bit more powerful, like something was added to his magic. Not overly so, but it could be the Black family magic. Harry wasn't sure how he felt about that, knowing the Blacks point of view he had to wonder if this could affect him negatively. He remembered the Potter family magic coming to him when he turned of age, it didn't seem to affect his thinking, so he shrugged off the new magic as unimportant and went back to his appearance.

The changes were enough that he could probably walk down Diagon Alley and no one would know who he was (not that he wanted to test that theory on Gringotts), but to do that he would need a name. So he took himself to the library and researched star names, wanting to keep the Black tradition. It only took a half an hour to come up with the name Hydrus Black, he felt a water snake was a good description (He found out after his first death that he was still a parselmouth). The young man figured that when he completed his plans, he could pass himself off as Sirius' cousin. He would need to get some paperwork for his new identity, maybe Mundungus would come in handy after all. The petty thief would know shady characters.

With that thought in mind, the now named Hydrus, sent out a letter to the man. In it he asked that Fletcher come to Grimmauld Place and that

the rewards would be worth it, if he agreed to do what was asked of him. Hydrus had Kreacher deliver the letter, as he had not replaced Hedwig, and probably never would.

Hydrus then set about going through the rest of his inventory, shifting what he needed first and putting the rest in his pocket space. Two hours later Mundungus appeared at the door, Kreacher showed him to the parlor.

"Hello, Mundungus," the dark-haired wizard said as he stood to greet the thief. The man was just as vile looking and smelly as he had always been. Hydrus wondered if he ever took a bath.

"Who are ya? And where is 'arry Potter?" the bedraggled man asked as he pulled his wand.

"I'm shocked you don't recognize me, Fletcher. After all, your negligence almost had my soul sucked out," the immortal said in a mocking tone.

"Something about cauldrons, if I remember correctly."

"'arry?" the astounded man exclaimed, his eyes widening as he took in the teen's new look. His hand that held his wand dropped to his side.

"In the flesh, so to speak," the new Black stated. He then waved to an empty chair and invited the man to sit.

"What 'appened ter you? Thee look like Sirius, but yew still 'ave yaaaah mum's eyes," the confused man stated after he took the offered chair, all but flopping down in his shock. He pulled his pipe from his battered coat, but didn't light it after Hydrus shot him a warning look.

"That's kinda what I wanted to talk to you about. First I need a vow from you, not to say anything that we discuss and that you'll do the things I ask— without trickery or questions," the new Black demanded. His piercing eyes boring into the not so trustworthy man in front of him. If Mundungus didn't give the vow, Hydrus had no problem wiping the

memory from him.

"Why?" Fletcher asked, now wary of the teen he always thought of as a pushover.

"Don't be stupid, I know you read the Prophet and keep up on gossip, so you know that I need someone to run some errands for me, and possibly do some not quite legal things," he snapped. "Why else would I invite you into my home, after everything you did to me and Sirius?"

"Alright, 'arry, I'll take yaaahr vow, but i' is gon'a cost you," the greedy man said, holding up his hands in compliance. He then placed his unlit pipe back in his jacket.

"First your vow, then I'll explain what I need from you and then we'll talk about your pay," the dark-haired teen explained as he settled back into his chair.

"I, Mundungus Arabus Fletcher, do hereby swear on my life and magic that I will keep the secrets of Harry James Potter until such time as he relieves me of said vow. I also vow to run his errands without deceit, and to comply with our agreement," the dumpy man incanted without his normal lazy accent, holding his wand up near his head. When the last word was spoken there was a blue light that surrounded him and sealed his promise to his magic.

Hydrus nodded and then explained what he needed from the thief. It took about twenty minutes of talking to go over the things that were necessary.

Fletcher listened; his eyes alight with greed at the payments the young man was offering. "Alright... 'ydrus, I'll see what I can do. Which do yew wan' first, da paperwork awer yaaahr money switched?" he asked when the teen finished.

"Money first, I think," the dark-haired wizard said rubbing his chin in

thought. He really needed to get some more books from the Muggle world if he was going to study what he needed to know. The paperwork wasn't really needed right away, besides, it was for after his plans took effect. With magic he could live off the grid, so to speak.

"Sure, give me what yew wan' ter exchange, plus me fee, an' I'll be back in an 'aaahr."

The teen nodded an hour was reasonable. "I have to go and get it, stay here and keep your greedy hands off my stuff. Kreacher is watching you," Hydrus warned as he got up to leave the room, nodding to his house elf. The thief grumbled, but the teen ignored him. He went to the kitchen, closed the door and put a warning ward over it. He summoned 1,030 galleons out of his pocket space. It piled on the table in front of him. He took a bag, which he finally got extended, and spelled the gold to it. The teen then took down his ward and joined his new partner in crime. "Here, remember you only get three percent," he said as he handed the man the bag.

"I remember. I'll be back soon." Mundungus took the bag and left the house.

The younger wizard went back to the kitchen and took out his list that he started a month ago. He looked over what he needed to do now. With the conversation with Death and his new face, he could put more ideas into action. While he waited for Fletcher, he did as Death had suggested and reread the tale of the Deathly Hallows. More plans of revenge came from that.

After he finished the tale, he looked at his list once again. First he needed to research electronics, if the books he got from the Frostwell vault were correct he could have a computer set up here in no time. Not only that, but it could be spelled to receive information straight from books.

However, it took more than just knowing the words; you had to know Runes and Arithmancy.

Hydrus resigned himself to a lot of studying, mourning the fact that Hermione was going back to Hogwarts and wouldn't be able to help him. That and he was still unsure as to whether or not to include his friends in his plans, they would try and stop him. If he had Hermione do the research for him, she'd figure out what he was up to pretty damn quick. No, if he was going to pull this off he needed to do his own work. The books he got, just before his second death, were going to help with that. The young man let his mind drift for a minute, everyone Hydrus knew would be returning to the school, except him. He had already talked to McGonagall about it a week ago, and informed her there was no way in hell he was going through all the gossip and mistrust again. And since she never helped in the past he damn sure didn't trust her to help now. She was quite put out that one of her favorite students thought so lowly of her, but she had to admit the entire Hogwarts staff had let their Savior down. Blast Dumbledore and his orders.

During that talk, he did convince the Headmistress to fix the Sorting Hat. Now the hat looked like it had when it was first designed. The patches and frays were gone, and the grateful relic stood tall and proud. With the encrusted dirt gone the original colors now came through. Its cone was a dark purple, while the rim was a muted black. The hat thanked the teen profusely.

Shaking himself out of his musings, he went back to his list. The second thing he had to do was figure out how to make money. He had plenty in his pocket, but he also wanted to make sure it never ran out. If he was going to live forever, then he was going to need more. So he noted down that research was needed for the stock markets and sporting events

for the last twenty years. He was also going to have to come up with a way to appear to age, fake his death, and then come back as a cousin or son or something. Maybe he could talk to a friendly vampire; he remembered the one from Slughorn's party, Sanguini. He might write to him or his human companion, Eldred Worple.

Another thing he needed to do was to get to WWW's and buy five of everything George had in stock. If he was going to go back in time then he needed to make sure that there was fun involved. And WWW products were the best for that, plus, there were items that could confuse an enemy so you could get away.

Next item in his plan was to study the books on time travel, the ones from the vaults were all theory, he figured with those and the Muggle fantasy books, and he would understand how it worked. That was for a later time though.

The last thing on his list was to understand how to overcome his battered emotions. If he was going to do any good he needed to be in more control. Self-help books can only take you so far, maybe he would need to seek professional help.

With all of this in mind, Hydrus went to the library and set up an area to get started. Now that he thought about it he was glad that everyone would be returning to Hogwarts, it would give him time to deal with all that Death told him and come to a decision on how to make them understand what he didn't completely understand. Since there were only a few weeks left until Hogwarts reopened, he would need to invite Ron and Hermione over. However, was he willing to let them know about his new look, or should he glamor himself back to the old one? Given the fact that they would not be joining him on his journey it might be best to lie.

Fletcher showed up an hour later with good amount of Muggle money.

The younger wizard thanked him for his service and showed him the door. He told the petty thief that he should return with the paperwork within the month.

Taking himself back to the library, he pulled all books on electronics and the Frostwell journals, from his pocket space and started reading and taking notes. He would get that computer up and running soon. Hydrus knew he wasn't a quick study, so it will probably take years to implement his plans, but he was determined to make sure they came to pass. Time was on his side.

### 3. A Talk With Friends and More

#### Research

#### Chapter 3 A Talk With Friends and More Research

Once again a big thanks to my many betas, the 5h51 Spaceman, darrelldeam and alix33. Without their help the story wouldn't flow as nicely. As usual all mistakes are my own, since I have a nasty habit of adding more and not sending it back to them.

#### Hphphp

Hydrus invited Ron and Hermione to the house, the week before Hogwarts was to start. He was sitting in the parlor, his face glamored to look like his old self with his glasses in place, waiting for them to Floo in. He made sure to put all of his research in his pocket space, so Hermione wouldn't ask questions, knowing how inquisitive the bookworm was. The fireplace flashed green and his curly-haired friend came through, followed by the youngest male Weasley.

The former Potter got up and engulfed Hermione in a hug. "It's good to see you, Hermione," he said when he pulled back. He took in her appearance and noted that her eyes were still rimmed with red, but her

face looked like she had been resting a little. So he had to wonder if she was still researching or crying. She look like she was taking better care of herself, her hair was styled and she had applied either non-magical make-up or charms.

"It is good to finally see you too, Harry," Hermione said as she looked him over as well. He looked the same, just healthier. "You're looking well. Have you been working out?" she asked, seeing he was a bit more toned. "They've missed at the Burrow, you're making Molly upset. You should at least visit once in a while," she whispered so that Ron wouldn't start a fight.

The dark-haired wizard rubbed the back of his head in embarrassment.

"Yeah, I've done a little exercise. Does it really show?" he asked, ignoring the chastisement for now. He had read that doing even a basic workout program helped to clear the mind and steady your magical core. So he had gone to the nearest gym and got a fitness coach. It was nice to hear it was paying off.

"You do look better," she complimented, letting his evasiveness go for now and with one more roaming look she stepped aside so the two males could acknowledge each other.

"Alright, Harry?" was Ron's standard greeting. He clapped the shorter man on the back as he went past him to sit on one of the chairs. Tension was still tight with these two after the argument they had over Hydrus' money. The younger man didn't understand the redhead's stance; if he offered money to the Weasley he would be ridiculed for think that Weasleys accepted charity. If he kept his wealth to himself; his friend would state that he was being greedy. He just couldn't win.

"Alright," the new Black said, he then guided Hermione to a chair and then took a seat on the sofa.

Kreacher popped in and asked if anyone wanted anything to drink.

Hydrus asked for some tea, Ron wanted a butterbeer. Hermione glared at the both of them for making the old house elf work, and declined the offer. The old elf popped away and was back in seconds with the request. He then went back to his cleaning.

"I can't believe you still have Kreacher," the curly-haired girl started, "you should have set him free the second you inherited him." She shot her friend a piercing glare.

"Hermione, at his age if I set him free he'll die from the shock. You really should do more research on the giving of clothes, because to a house elf it is the worst thing you could ever do to them," the young man defended himself. "Let's not argue, you guys are going back to school soon and I want to spend a nice day with my friends."

"Alright, Harry, but we will be talking about this again," Hermione conceded, for the moment.

The immortal shook his head, that girl will always have a blind spot on this subject. He really couldn't blame her it was her upbringing; non-magical history was riddled with people fighting slavery, after all. He took a sip of his tea and looked at his two friends, they seemed to be uncomfortable. "What's got you two so bent out of shape?" he asked. Hermione sighed and her eyes watered. "I can't find a way to get my parents back. I went to Australia to see how they were doing. They are so happy, I almost want to leave them be," she said and the tears poured down her face.

The younger man set his cup down, got up and sat on the arm of her chair. He pulled her into a tight one armed hug. "Oh, Hermione, I'm so sorry," he commiserated. "What are you going to do now? I mean, are you going to keep researching, or are you going to let it be? Whichever

you choose I'll support you," the young man said.

Ron sat back with a huff, he had been listening to his girlfriend go on and on about it since they came back from Australia. She would make plans, research and then suddenly change her mind. The redhead tried to understand, but, it was hard for him, since he had the emotional range of a teaspoon. To his way of thinking if her parents were happy with their new life then the girl should just let it go and spend more time with him. He never understood why she got angry when he said that.

Hermione wiped her tears with a handkerchief she got from her bag, pulled back from the hug and gave her friend a watery smile. "I'm going to put off a decision for a few months. I want my parents back, however, if they are happy then who am I to take that from them. Besides, they might never forgive me for what I did. I just don't know what to do, so I'm going to take some time and think about the pros and cons."

He gave a small chuckle and said, "I'm sure you already have a list started."

"Oh, you," she said as she thumped his arm playfully, causing the young man to laugh and move back to the sofa.

The dark-haired wizard then turned his attention to Ron. "So, what's got you so unhappy?" he asked.

"You," the redhead snapped. "With you gone, Gryffindor might as well just hand the Quidditch Cup over to one of the other Houses and be done with it."

Hydrus sighed; leave it to Ron to only think about the Cup. "So you want me to go back to Hogwarts and face all those people who think I'm the new Dark Lord just so Gryffindor can win at Quidditch?"

"You did it before," came the defensive comeback.

"And I was miserable," he retorted.

"Well, yeah, but you survived."

"Ron, I'm not going back to Hogwarts. Ginny is a good seeker, so you guys will be okay," the dark-haired teen said with a tone of finality.

"Whatever," Ron said with a sulk. If it hadn't been for his mum's and Hermione's nagging he wouldn't be going back.

"Harry, are you sure you won't come back? Education is really important," Hermione asked in a worried tone. She wondered how Harry was going to get a job if he didn't have his school credentials.

"I'm sure," Hydrus said as he glanced her way. "I've already talked to McGonagall and she said as long as I'm of age and I have my OWLs then I don't need to go back." That tidbit of information had been nice to learn. Not that he planned on getting a job, but he didn't want the Ministry breathing down his neck either.

"I could talk to her and see if she can't get everyone else to leave you alone..." Hermione said with a determined look in her eye.

"No," the younger wizard interrupted, "that won't work. It'll actually make it worse. Besides, the teachers can't be everywhere." He knew Hogwarts was extremely understaffed compared to other schools. "And even if the students were caught, what would happen? They'd lose points and further blame me for that. No, it is better that I do my own studies." And awkward silence filled the room as each young adult mulled that over. Hermione, after a few minutes, nodded her head in understanding, while Ron was still lamenting about the Quidditch Cup.

"What are you going to do about your NEWTs?" Hermione questioned, once again.

"I'm planning on self-study. When the time comes I can take the test privately."

"That's wonderful," the curly-haired girl replied. "If you need any help,

just owl me and I will do my best," she offered.

"I think I'll be okay. But if I need you I'll let you know, I promise," the dark-haired man said sincerely.

"So, what was in the vaults? And did you ever find out why they left them to you?" Hermione inquired, changing the subject. Not realizing it was a sore topic for the other two in the room, Ron having not told her about the disagreement.

"There were some knick-knacks and gizmos in three of them. The Black vault was filled with Dark stuff, so I had Kreacher get rid of them,"

Hydrus hedged, he knew if he told her everything she would figure out his plans. "There were some journals in my family vault. I got to read about my parents' hijinks in school. Mum's diary talked a lot about Snape, while Dad's was mostly about the Marauders. They were pretty cool," he said in what he hoped was a casual voice. "I only found out how one of the vaults came to me. The last Frostwell wrote that he wanted me to have his stuff, so it wouldn't be confiscated by the goblins," he lied. He didn't mention the gold, because he didn't want to fight with the still sulking redhead.

"I guess that's understandable, the others probably felt the same way. Can I see some of the devices? There might be something useful," Hermione asked excitedly.

"Sure," he said fondly. "I'll go and get a few. Wait right here, and I'll be back in a minute." With that he rose from his seat and went to the kitchen, once again erecting warning wards. He summoned a few of the lesser inventions out of his pocket. These were simple things, like a calculator that worked on magic and a battery operated thingamajig that twirled when there was more magic in the air. He felt that by giving these to his bookworm friend, she might be able to understand them and

start her own research. It would keep her mind off her woes and hopefully give her a better perspective on what to do about her parents if she wasn't fretting over the dilemma constantly.

Having done that he pulled down the ward and went back into the parlor, he then handed them over to his ever inquisitive friends.

"Oh, Harry, these are amazing!" she exclaimed when she noted the calculator was charged by magic, there were small grey squares at the top, like tiny solar powered panels. "Think of the things we could do with this. If I can get more to work Arithmancy would be so much easier."

"Well, I'm sure you can understand them better than I can. So they're yours to do with what you want," he said with a wave of his hand.

"Oh, thank you, Harry," the young woman said sincerely, and then she turned her focus back on the items in her hand.

"What'd you go and do that for?" Ron asked. "Now all she's going to be doing is studying," he pouted.

"It's what makes her happy," Hydrus replied with a casual lift of his shoulder. "Don't you want her to be happy?" His piercing eyes looked at his so called best mate, warning him to answer correctly. His thoughts turned to the fact that maybe these two shouldn't be a couple. Hermione will only be repressed by the lazy boy.

"Of course I want her happy, but why can't she be happy with just being with me?" came the wrong answer.

"Honestly, Ronald, I thought you knew me better than that," huffed the girl in question as she put the two trinkets in her expanded purse that she carried with her everywhere. You never know when you need something in that bag, even if it is just a pepper-up potion.

"Yeah, I thought so too," the confused young man replied.

Again an awkward silence filled the room. Hermione broke it with a sigh

and said, "I think Ronald and I need to talk, so we'll see you later, Harry."

And with that she got up and pulled the pouting boy towards the fireplace.

"Yeah, see ya," the former Potter said to the disappearing couple. He truly hoped that those two came to an understanding, whichever way it went. He still felt Hermione could do better. There were times he didn't even know why he stayed friends with the youngest male Weasley. Maybe it was because he didn't want to let go of his first real friend, who was his age anyway —can't forget Hagrid. He made a mental note to write the gentle half-giant. Well, it was something to think about later; now that they were gone he could remove his glamor and get back to research.

With that thought in mind the dark-haired teen went back into the library and pulled the idiot's guides to electronics from his pocket-space and set about researching. A few hours of that mindboggling subject and he put those books away, it wasn't that he was stupid, it was just his lack of knowledge that made it harder. He then summoned his Rune and Arithmancy books, these particular subjects came easier and with them the inventions would start rolling soon. After a few more hours of studying Hydrus finally put everything away and went to make himself dinner.

He and Kreacher came to an understanding early in their relationship. The former Potter used cooking as a way to wind down after a busy day. However, the human was never allowed to do any cleaning. It worked for both of them.

The new Black went about making a quick chicken stir-fry, which he enjoyed immensely. He put the dirty dishes in the sink for Kreacher, settled at the table with a dish of chocolate ice cream, and brought out his list. He decided that tomorrow he was going to Diagon Alley to visit

George; he had been putting it off after that disastrous dinner at the Burrow. He noted the parchment, rinsed his bowl and went to bed. He woke early the next morning, hoping to avoid the crowds, got dressed and ate. He once again pulled on Sirius' hooded cloak, making a mental note to get some robes of his own. He Disapparated to the same alley by the Cauldron and made his way to the marketplace. In the weeks that he had been avoiding the area, there had been some remarkable changes. More stores were open and less Muggle-borns were on the cobbled streets. The few that were there looked healthier, like they were getting what they needed to survive. It made him wonder if the Ministry opened a homeless shelter. He was hoping that they had, at least until these poor people could get back on their feet. As he went by he handed out a bit of money to each person he passed. Not much, but enough for a meal and maybe a room at the Cauldron, so they could shower and rest for a night. He did note that very few children were with the beggars, Hogwarts must be footing tuition.

The dark-haired teen made his way to WWW with nobody recognizing him. He did warrant a few wary glances, since he was an unknown wizard, but since he had a casual look about him and was giving to the beggars, those looks went from suspicious to disgust.

Upon entering WWW the young man looked around for his favorite redhead. Spotting him on that weird contraption, which overlooked the store, he waved and motioned for George to join him. The grieving man looked better, he had put back on some of his weight and the bags under his eyes were not as dark. You could still make out the sadness in those eyes, but the smile on his face wasn't as forced.

The single twin nodded and came down. A curious look on his face, since the man waving him down wasn't someone he knew. There was

something in the way he moved that George recognized though. The young man in question made his way to the back room and waited by the closed door.

"Hi, George. It's me, Harry," the cloaked man whispered, causing the red head's eyes to widen. "Let's go in the back, I have a business proposition for you."

George nodded and unlocked the door. The two made their way inside and took a chair each. Hydrus put up the Muffliato Charm and George broke the silence. "So, what's with the different look?" he asked as he settled on one of the stools that lined the workbench.

"Something Sirius came up with, I'd rather not go into it," he answered. He then pulled some of his notes from his pocket, causing a gasp of surprise from the other man. He handed them to the twin and explained, "These are a few notes on how to make electronics work with magic. I reckoned you could use them for prank items."

George took the notes and looked them over. "Why me? Why not Hermione? She's much better at this kind of thing."

"I love Hermione to death, but I have plans that she'll interfere with. You, on the other hand, won't. Though, I did give her some stuff to get her started, just not any of the notes, so she's going to have to start from scratch. It'll keep her busy," he said with a soft voice as he recalled the excited look on his best friend's face.

"Are you going to tell me what you're planning?" the tall redhead asked with a quirk of his eyebrows.

"Later, when I get more of the wrinkles worked out," the younger man promised. "Anyway, these are just little things I thought you could use."

"So, how did you pull these from the air?" George asked as he peered at the space over Hydrus' left shoulder.

The dark-haired wizard ran his hand through his hair and smiled sheepishly. "Not sure how that happened. I'd explain, but it was a bit of an accident. Misfired spell."

"Alright, Harry, I'll let it go for now. But I'm holding you to your promise, you will tell me everything," the stocky redhead demanded.

"Thanks."

George took a closer look at the notes and you could see his mind working over exactly how they could be useful.

"There's something else," Hydrus said bringing George's attention back to him. "I want to purchase five of every item you have in stock and be put on the list for future things."

"Harry, you know your money is no good here," the twin chastised.

"No," came the semi-harsh reply, "for an order this big, you will be paid. Besides, now that I don't have a vault you can't give it back." He folded his arms defensively.

"Alright, Harry, but anything I come up with from these notes, you get for free, plus, a bit of the profit."

"Fine," he compromised, not really wanting to fight. The two shook on it and the younger boy's face softened. "Sorry about what happened last time we met."

"I understand. Mum's hard to deal with lately. Ginny told us she broke up with you that night, so I kinda get why you didn't stick around and why you haven't been back," George said with a sad shake of his head.

Sometime his family was a bit overbearing.

"Yeah, that came as a bit of a shock," he said as he rubbed the back of his neck. "So how are you coping?" he asked, changing the subject.

"Better. The more money the shop brings in, the closer I feel to Fred. It was our dream to bring smiles to children's faces. Every time that

happens, my heart heals a bit more," George answered with a brittle, yet fond smile. His brown eyes took on a vacant look, like he was remembering something good.

"I'm glad," Hydrus said sincerely, bringing the redhead's attention back to him. "I only want the best for you. It does me good to see you, well, not happy, but better." He gave a smile of his own.

George nodded and then went to the door. He called one of his employees to get the younger man's order started, handing his helper an extendable bag. When he sat back down the two talked over the notes for a while. Then he had a thought.

"Hey, George, what happened with Bill?" he asked hoping the oldest Weasley had not suffered for what they had done.

"Well, you were right, he got fired, but, Fleur moved them to France and he's now working for the Unspeakables there," George answered with a bright smile. He was happy for his brother. Then a frown marred his brow. "Mum was right gutted when that happened. She complains that she was losing more of her family. She puts all the blame on Fleur, which is stupid, since the goblins made Dad close their vault too."

"Oh, well, I'm glad Bill got away, but saddened that your Mum has more to deal with."

George waved it away. "Not your fault," he said firmly, "Mum has always hated it when one of her chicks flies on their own. She'll always blame someone and usually not the right person."

"Still, if we hadn't stolen from Gringotts your family wouldn't be suffering," he complained.

"Don't be daft, you had no choice. I understand that and so does Bill.

Remember, he was there when you made your plans. He's right chuffed that you didn't heed his warning about trusting goblins, still he knew it

was something that needed to be done," George said firmly. Bill had told him the whole story before he moved. George was thankful to his older brother for trying to make everyone realize Harry wasn't at fault. Bill couldn't tell them why the Golden Trio had to steal from the goblins, only that it was needed to end the war.

"Fine, I didn't come here to fight. We'll just have to disagree on this," the younger man said, still feeling like he was to blame. Maybe he should look into getting professional help; all these guilty feelings can't be healthy. That and his nightmares about the war were getting worse. He almost hurt Kreacher the one time the old house elf tried to wake him. He was having flashbacks of all the times someone died due to his negligence or the many times his life had been in danger at Hogwarts.

"One of these days, Harry James Potter, you are going to see that you have nothing to feel sorry for, but you're right, so I'll let it go for now." It was about that time that the worker came back with the order and the total. Magic summoning was a wonderful thing, making everything take less time. The employee left and George handed the feather light bag to his friend. "The total comes to 1,565 galleons," he said.

"Okay," Hydrus said with a shrug and called for the money from over his shoulder. "I better go," he said after the transaction was complete. "I've got stuff to do. You get a hold of me when you've got new inventions," he politely reminded the other man, he got up and went to the door.

"Harry," George said, "don't be a stranger, okay?"

"I won't," he promised, "you don't be either. If you need a place to get away, call Kreacher. I'll give him permission to tell you the secret." And with that he made his way out of the shop, feeling a little better about his friend. He did some shopping, getting robes, books and potion ingredients. Not spending too much time in the Alley, since he was still

hearing gossip about Harry Potter being a Dark Lord.

Some witches were speculating that since he wasn't returning to Hogwarts it only confirmed their beliefs. The young man had no clue how that information got to the populace, but he knew they were grasping at straws. Anything he did would be seen in a bad light, making the young man more determined to be shot of these stupid people.

Oh, not everyone thought he was the new Voldemort, most of the Muggle-born beggars felt that he was their savior, but since the camps killed a lot of them, they were the minority. Hydrus made a mental note to do what he could for them, before he completed his plans. Maybe offering up one of his houses as a sanctuary, or leaving money to charity in the will he was going to write. Not that he could leave much, as he needed his fortune with him. But he could part with a few thousand galleons.

Shaking himself out of those thoughts, the new Black left the Alley. He made his way back to Grimmauld Place and started his research once again. He was determined that the absurdity of the wizarding world wasn't going to put him off his path.

Hermione and Ron didn't come to see him before they went back to Hogwarts. They did send him a joint letter explaining that they made up and were still together. Hydrus shook his head and washed his hands of that particular bit of news. Hermione was a big girl and could make her own decisions. He did have a feeling that it was Ron's whining that kept the two away. Molly owed him and invited him to the Burrow again, and this time had Arthur state that Harry was welcome anytime. He turned down the offer, stating he needed to keep up with his studies.

George was a constant visitor. He used Grimmauld Place as a refuge from his Mum, who was trying to get him to move back to the Burrow. The

two men spent a lot of time on the inventions, going over the notes and getting a better understanding on how it was done. It only took days for them to make a magical joy buzzer that was based off the research. It was a small, yet useful start.

The weeks went by quickly, with the research and the planning. Finally Hydrus got a laptop to work in the house. He hadn't figured out how to upload books into it, but he did get it to work on the Internet, by having the non-magicals come and hook him up. He had had to put illusions all over the house to make it look normal. After they put the lines in, he took it from there, by casting a Confundus charm on them, making them think they had finished the job. Having access to the World Wide Web made his research go much faster, with search engines and mass webpages on theory, he had more information.

It was during those weeks that he decided that he would seek a mental health specialist. The counselor he was seeing diagnosed him with survivor's guilt and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. They were slowly, but surely, making progress on his nightmares and flashbacks. He, of course, didn't tell her everything, just that most of the people he loved died due to a serial killer that was after him and that he had escaped from the man many times.

He told her about the Dursleys and how they blamed everything on him, plus, the abuse they did to him as a child; the isolation, the cupboard, the constant put-downs and the meager food rations. It took a few sessions to make Hydrus understand that it was actual abuse, and that it wasn't his fault. When she asked where the Dursleys were now, he just shrugged and said he didn't know and didn't care as long as they were out of his life.

The counselor made sure the young man knew that it would take years of

sessions to get him over his trauma. The young man sighed and made sure he had enough money to pay for them, if he was going to do what he needed to do then he couldn't go off halfcocked.

These sittings also made him do some deep meditation on his past. He came to the conclusion that everything that happened in Hogwarts was a test, maybe not set up for that purpose, after all how would Dumbledore know that Sirius was going to break out of prison. However, the headmaster and the staff, never once stood up for him, letting the then Harry weather the storms with only a few people standing by him. It also made him realize that Dumbledore was working behind the scenes to make those trials harder than they had to be, why else would the staff treat him so different than other students.

Those deep thought sessions did make him appreciate the times Ron and Hermione came to his rescue. He knew that were it not for those two he would have failed any challenge put before him. However, it also made him angrier at the times Ron deserted him or Hermione over petty things. Conflicting emotions of the redhead made sleeping harder, but, he was working his way through them.

The more he went into his past the steadier he came to an understanding with himself. Now the anger could be channeled to more useful things, like his studies. Oh, he was still going to get his revenge, but if he was in control then it would be sweeter.

The counselor suggested that he rid himself of anyone stress inducing and to work on improving himself and let others move on without him. It was a work in progress, because he didn't want to lose Hermione, but he wanted to cut his ties with her boyfriend.

Fletcher had come back during that time and handed his employer the paperwork he ordered. The dark-haired teen had the petty thief do some

more running for him in Diagon and Knockturn Alleys, getting the things he ran out of. He didn't want Kreacher to be in those places anymore, for fear the little guy would be hurt. Mundungus was more than happy to take up the errands, since it meant more money for him. He didn't care if Hydrus was the new big bad or not, as long as he got paid.

All in all, the planning going smoothly. The young man was hopeful that he could save all of his loved ones, if he could get the calculations correct and his story straight. Reams and reams of parchment littered the floor as he made plans and discarded them. Everything he read had different points of view, theory after theory was offered, but nothing was concrete. One idea suggested that if he went back, this timeline would still move forward, but, the new timeline he would create would be a new start. Leaving him and the younger Harry in the new branch, this was what he was hoping for, since his revenge would be felt for years and the new branch would fresh.

Another theory implied that there wouldn't be a new timeline that he would merge with his younger self and change history. This would also work, if his pocket-space came with him, however, the adoption would be undone and he would return to being Harry Potter and have to go through his life again.

Yet another said that he couldn't go into the past of this reality. He had to go to a different one. This one he was unsure of, since everything he knew would be useless, like what the horcruxes were and where they were hidden. A new reality meant the people could be different, Voldemort might be the good guy and Dumbledore could be the evil one, too many possibilities. Hydrus hoped this wasn't the way.

More and more definitions popped up the more he researched and it was confusing to him, so he put those calculations aside, for now, and went

back to his basic studies, which were coming along well. He had to make sure what he was doing before he did it. The last thing he wanted to do was go in blind.

#### 4. A Little Help and a Bit of

#### Payback

#### Chapter 4 A Little Help and a Bit of Payback

A big thanks to my betas, the 5h51 Spaceman, darrelldeam and alix33. Mistakes are, as always, my own.

I know some of this is unrealistic, but I'll remind you that this is fanfiction, and reality need not apply. However, I did try and make it a bit believable.

Again, anything you recognize is not mine.

#### Hphphp

Only a month passed and with Mundungus as his source of information, Hydrus learned that there were still Muggle-borns, and poorer Half-bloods, begging in Diagon Alley. It seemed that the homeless shelter folded under the Pure-Bloods' demands. So the young immortal looked over his holdings and found three houses that were empty. He had Kreacher go and see if they were habitable. They were, so he visited them and set up the same magical electronics he had at Grimmauld Place; lights, outlets, and kitchen appliances (he had new rune arrays that worked better than Frostwell's for bigger items). He made sure they were furnished— nothing fancy, since this would be more of a halfway house and not a permanent residence. He stocked the pantries.

Hydrus then sent off letters to the contacts he had in foreign countries, like Fleur and Viktor, letting them know that he had homeless wizards and witches that needed help; he made sure to include what had and hadn't been done by the British Magical Government. He also sent a very polite business letter to the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, saying that there

were repressed wizards that desired a new start.

He was going to do his best to get everyone who stood up for him out of the control of this country's Magical Ministry. Not like they had improved all that much, even with Kingsley in charge. New laws and such had to go through the Wizengamot, and those old bastards will never change their ways. Even with Death Eaters in Azkaban, the 'wise old men' were still stubborn corruptible bigots, who wanted to cling to tradition.

When that was complete he hired Fletcher to hand out notes to the homeless with enough non-magical money for bus or train fare. These missives said:

If you want shot of these ignorant people, come to one of the addresses listed below, directions are on the maps in the bus and train stations. Use the money for the ride. If one house is full go to the next on the list. You will have to share rooms to fit everyone.

Please work together. Food and a place to rest are included. Destroy this note when you have it memorized, so that the Pure-bloods can't stop you. Be here within the next week, and I'll help you in any way I can.

Harry Potter

23 Lilyputten Way or 6 Starlight Road or 85 Contrary Street.

The week flew by with many letters and talks. The Prime Minister was very helpful, since he held a grudge against the British branch of the Magical Government for the way they waved off the deaths of the non-magicals as unimportant. Any help that had been offered the last two magical civil wars was ignored as useless. Needless to say Millicent Bagnold, Cornelius Fudge and Rufus Scrimgeour had made very bad impressions on the former PMs, who left records of their dealing with them. Pius Thicknesse never communicated with Muggles.

The current PM conceded that Kingsley tried to make an effort, but no matter how kind he was, you could tell he still felt Muggles should stay separate from wizards. So given the past dealings with his office, Blair made sure he knew that there were many charities that could help the Muggle-born get the education they needed to succeed in the non-magical world. He couldn't do anything about their magic, but he could help get started in a new life.

Fleur and Viktor had pleaded their case to their Ministries and France agreed that they could take a few dozen people who wanted to continue living in the magical world. The Bulgarians were reluctant, but since it was something that would hurt Britain's Magical Ministry, they decided to take a few of the homeless. This was a relief to him, since there were bound to be those who didn't want to live as non-magicals.

The ICW was also contacted and some open-minded countries were willing to open their doors to England's magical homeless. Their representatives would be coming a few days later to see who was left that required help. There were many countries that didn't want the beggars to come to them, fearing they would not be useful and would sponge off their governments.

Representatives from all three governments agreed to come to the houses Hydrus set up to talk to the people. He had used the Harry Potter name in his correspondence, but informed them that since he was in hiding Hydrus Black would be his spokesperson. On the day mentioned in the note, the new Black and the three men met on the lawn of the house on Lilyputten Way.

It was a big house, not overly large, but big enough that a few small families could bunk down for a while without mishap. They could see the people milling around through the windows and some were in the back

yard.

Hydrus turned and put up wards to keep anyone not present from noticing what was going on. He then cast a Sonorus charm and called to the house, "Hello, in the house. Please come and listen to what we have to say. We have propositions to help you to start over. Meet us in the front yard; bring something to sit on if you must." He uncast the spell and conjured chairs for the four of them.

Slowly, but surely, the wary people made their way to the area. Some were dragging chairs, others were carrying blankets. They formed a half circle and settled to see what was being presented. Not many had their hopes up, as the Ministry had promised to help, but what little they did was soon taken away.

A medium height, portly man, with balding black hair, dressed in a casual suit, stood and addressed them in a very businesslike tone. "My name is Mr. Roberts, I am here with a proposal for those who want to stay in England and live as non-magical people. We have talked to Mr. Potter and he has agreed that anyone who takes us up on our offer can use this house, and the other homes, as a temporary refuge. We will educate you to your A-levels, since you are mostly adults you will have to enroll in a further education college. We will pay for this, if you vow to get a job and make yourself a useful part of society. If this is something you want to do see me after everyone else has given their offers." He gave a short bow and returned to his seat.

The next speaker was a tall man, with a face like granite, dressed in what appeared to be a military uniform, he stood at attention and addressed the crowd, "I am Mr. Kobay and I represent the Bulgarian Magical Ministry. Our offer is simple, work for our government for a few years to establish yourselves and we will supply your wands and a wardrobe. You

will be paid the standard pay rate." Then he gave a curt nod and sat. He glared at the audience, like he was daring them to come forward, making the younger wizard cautious of the man's intentions.

The next presenter was a short pale man, with longish blond hair. Unlike the other two, he was a cheery man, with a smile that never seemed to leave his face. His clothes were a little flamboyant. He stood and bowed to the whispering crowd and spoke, "My name is Monsieur Leveille, my Minister ez so very un'appy with what ez 'appening to you. 'E wants to welcome anyone who would like to get away from Britain to France. We will make sure you 'ave work, a place to stay, and food. We will 'elp any way we can to make you feel at 'ome in our beautiful country. If you agree, zen like the other gentlemen, please see me when ze speeches are over." He gave a jaunty wave and settled back in his chair. There were the whispering turned to excitement after he sat, causing the man to beam.

The former Potter stood and gave his prepared statement. "I'm Hydrus, I represent Harry Potter. He would like to welcome you to his home and apologize that he could not be here. It was he that contacted the others to make sure you get the help you needed. You are free to choose any of these offers or none at all. There will be more people coming in the next few days for those who will be left behind. As gracious as the gentlemen behind me are, there are only a dozen spots in each country, barring non-magical England, so others have agreed to give you sanctuary—if you make yourselves useful. This house will be used for those staying here; anyone not going non-magical must go elsewhere. It is not that Mr. Potter doesn't care, but contrary to popular belief, he is not made of money. The ones choosing to stay will have to supply their own resources and eventually find their own house or flat. This is all he can offer. Thank

you for your time." He turned and joined the others.

When it was obvious that the speeches were over, the listeners started breaking off into five groups and went to the person they wanted to talk to, or those that chose to wait for the others countries went back to the house. Only two sturdy men approached the Bulgarian, which seemed to please the man. Hydrus could only hope they were treated fairly, and weren't giving up one repressed country for another. The teen listened in for a few minutes and heard they were Half-bloods, which made him feel better. Bulgaria was more lenient for Half-bloods than Muggle-born. One small contingent wanted him to thank Harry Potter for everything, before they too went their way.

The four men made the same speeches to the other houses. After plans were made to get whoever was taking the offers, the three other men left and a weary Hydrus made his way home, thankful that the ICW didn't need him around when they made their proposals.

As good as it made him feel to help those that stood by him; there was an alternate reason for him doing this. Without the Muggle-borns, and a good part of the Half-bloods, Magical Britain would be without new blood. Inbreeding would be more predominant than it already was. It would take years for them to learn their mistakes, but since this was only phase one of his revenge, he was happy with his start.

Now he needed to warn the others that he was going to make the sheep pay and they might want to pull out. He wrote a quick note to Neville, Luna, Hermione and a few others that suffered under Voldemort's reign. Each note was different, like the one to Hermione was vague and unsigned. It said:

Miss Granger it has come to my attention that you want better rights for magical creatures. While you have good intentions, I can

tell you now that your home country will never allow it. You would do better to take your ideas to the International Confederation of Wizards. There you will be heard and can start your plans in a more adaptable country.

The notes to Neville and Luna were more straightforward. They stated that Harry Potter was going to get his revenge on the goblins and it might be best if they pulled all of their valuables out of Gringotts. It also suggested that Britain might not be a good place to live in a few years, and they should let their friends know. The one to Neville suggested that maybe he could find a cure for his parents, if he asked abroad.

The only family he couldn't help was the Weasleys. He knew that they would never leave, no matter how bad England got. They would stay and fight whatever was to come. However, Hydrus also understood that this loving family would not suffer too much, and they would take in anyone they could help. Like Ginny's boyfriend, Dean Thomas, or Hermione, if she chose to stay. This family would not die out.

Unknown to Hydrus his notes started a cascade of people emptying their vaults, because if their new boy hero, Neville Longbottom, said Gringotts was untrustworthy, then it must be true— stupid sheep. Some went to the Muggle-raised that were still around and got a basic understanding of non-magical banking. Well, those that were smart did. More and more people took this route and soon the goblins were in a panic. Some families fled Britain. The bigoted Pure-Bloods were happy to see this; they actually invited those of like minds to come to England, boasting that even though Voldemort was dead his quest for a Pure-blood society lived on.

It was a conversation with Mundungus, which brought it to Hydrus' attention. "Hydrus," the dumpy man said after he returned from an errand,

"do ya know what's 'appenin' in Diagon Alley?"

The dark-haired young man looked at the petty thief in confusion. "No, is there something going on?" Since he hadn't been to Diagon Alley in weeks, he had no idea what the latest rumor was. He did wonder why George hadn't said anything; maybe the redhead didn't know either.

"Well, there seems ter be a bi' ov bad news. Gringotts might be closing; da goblins say i' is da work ov 'arry Potter," Fletcher said carefully, not wanting the young wizard to be angry at him for bringing that bit of gossip. To his surprise the young wizard broke out in a fit of laughter. Several minutes passed before the teen got himself under control. "Oh, Merlin, I needed that," he wheezed. "Serves those bastards right. Any idea why they're blaming me?"

"Summat abaaaht vengeance," Mundungus answered.

A malicious smile crossed Hydrus' face. "Well, I didn't think it would happen so fast, but good." He rubbed his hands together in satisfaction. Now he could implement his next plan.

"Right, well, I'm off. If yew need me, let me know." And with that Fletcher hurried away from the house, not spilling the rest of the gossip he knew.

The former Potter let the thief go and decided he needed to visit the Alley and see how bad the damage was. The next morning, using his Invisibility Cloak, he made his way to the Leaky Cauldron. Even with his new look he didn't want anyone to see him, because he had plans. He crept behind a few patrons and listened to them talk. Fletcher had been right, the gossip was that even though no one had seen hide or hair of Harry Potter in months, it was all his fault, which was true, but they couldn't prove it.

He picked up a copy of the Prophet and pulled it under his Cloak. The

headline was thus:

The Boy-Who-Lived-To-Be-The-Next-Dark-Lord out to ruin Magical Britain

By Rita Skeeter

The article that followed was the same as the gossip. Harry Potter was seeking revenge on the goblins and at the same time was taking away money from society by causing good people to flee, so they must be scared of his wrath. It indicated that Harry used a dark curse on the public to make them fear the goblins, after that were suggestions that no one should empty their vaults. Hydrus read the paper and scoffed, not once did it give any proof only quotes from the angry goblins. He smiled when he realized that this was truly helping his plans. It would cause more people to panic and leave.

He thanked Merlin that he recast the Fidelius Charm with Kreacher as the Secret Keeper. Now only Ron, Hermione, Dung and George could visit him.

Discretely putting the paper back on the table he found it, Hydrus made his way into the Alley. A satisfied smirk played at his lips when he saw that there were no beggars. More shops were open and repaired, though there were fewer shoppers. Judging by their robes, the young man concluded they were the richer people of society. Good, he thought, let's see how they like this. He then summoned the Resurrection Stone and whispered, "Anyone who died in the last two wars in Britain, come and take your vengeance. Anyone who feels the need to defend Harry Potter, come if you want."

Hundreds of spirits flooded the Alley. Echoing calls of revenge and accusations were heard throughout. The people who had been shopping froze at the sight, causing him to smirk. Let's see them try and banish those

vengeful spirits— not bloody likely. It's good to be the Master of Death, he thought as he watched the shades descend.

Those ghosts that saw Harry Potter as their savior started yelling at the gossipers, chasing them through the cobblestone street. Reminding them about all the times Harry Potter saved their arses. Many converged on the Daily Prophet's building. The Master of Death had to hold back his laughter when a much frazzled Rita Skeeter ran from the building screaming for help, being pursued by no less than a dozen spirits. Other spirits that were killed by Death Eaters, vowed they would haunt their murderers for years to come, many of them spirited away to find soon to be victims.

The Muggle-borns that died in the camps drifted to the Ministry and Azkaban.

Chuckling quietly to himself, the young immortal made his way to WWW, to check up on George. He was concerned that with so many people fleeing the area that the shop would have a drop in business. He removed his Cloak in the alley next to the store and made his way inside. Tapping the occupied redhead on the shoulder, he jerked his head toward the back room. George nodded and held up a finger, suggesting that he would join him in a minute. He nodded his understanding and went to the indicated room. He looked around and noted the new trinkets and smiled at his friend's innovations. He leaned against the workbench when he heard the door open and cast the Muffliato Charm.

"Harry," George said as he closed the door, "what brings you here today? I thought we were going to meet up tomorrow." He then joined his younger friend at the counter.

"Hello, George. Well, I wanted to see if you knew anything about the rumors going around. Do you know anyone who emptied their vaults?"

And if you do, did they tell you why?" Hydrus asked with a small smile.

George, being the quick man he was, turned to face his friend with an accusing glare. "You did something, didn't you? Don't deny it, I know you did, if what people are saying is true, you started this whole thing," he said, jabbing his finger in the other man's chest. "Not that I'm upset about what's happening, but you could've invited me."

"Trust me when I say, it was something that escalated without me knowing." The younger man held up his hands defensively. "All I did was warn a few people that they might not be able to trust the goblins, and they might want to move elsewhere." He shrugged, rubbing the sore spot.

"So you didn't mean for this to happen?"

"Oh, I meant for it to happen, I just didn't think it would be this soon."

The dark-haired teen smirked in satisfaction.

"Still, you should have told me, I could've helped."

"How is business?" Hydrus asked, changing the subject.

A wicked grin spread across George's face. "Oh, we are making a good profit. Those joy buzzers are a hot seller, and the calculators are flying off the shelf. Those idiots don't get that what they're buying is based off Muggle technology. They just think that I'm a genius, which I am, but that's beside the point." He puffed his chest out in mock pride.

"That you are, my friend," he said sincerely, clapping the older man on the back. "I'm glad to hear you're not losing customers, with so many people leaving."

"The Pure-bloods have more money anyway, plus, now I can jack up the prices," the redhead shrugged, though he did miss some of the people that had left, like Katie Bell and his other former teammates. "By the way, Kingsley came to see me. Wanted to know if I knew where you were. Thank Merlin, I couldn't tell him anything," he informed his friend.

"Any idea why he wants to find me?" the green-eyed teen asked, thinking of quite a few things the Ministry would want him for.

"He didn't say, just that he wanted to talk to you," George answered. He was concerned about Harry, what with the talks of him being a Dark Lord, even if there was no proof of any wrong doing. The redhead was glad the younger man did the adoption ritual, now he would be harder to find.

"Look, George, come by my house later tonight. There are a few things I want to tell you," Hydrus requested.

"Alright, Harry, I'll pop by after the store is closed."

"Thanks. Oh, by the way, you might want to take a gander at what's happening in the Alley. Before you ask, yes I did it and I'll tell you how tonight," the immortal suggested. Then he donned his Invisibility Cloak and left the store. He didn't want to explain this anywhere they could be overheard, and with the Minister trying to track him down, he wouldn't put it past him to put listening charms up at WWW. Even though the silencing charm worked well, he didn't want to chance it.

A vindictive smile was plastered to his face while he watched the ghosts take their revenge. The street was emptier than it had been when he went into George's shop. It looked like the few that were left were either too scared to run, or hadn't been haunted and were simply watching those that were with thoughtful looks on their faces. It made Hydrus feel a little better that not all of the Pure-Bloods thought he had turned evil.

When he got to the house, he wrote another note to Neville, asking him to inform any neutral family, who didn't support the people persecuting Harry or just didn't care about gossip, to get their gold out of Gringotts and look to moving. The more people he got to leave this backwards society the better for his plans. He had Kreacher deliver it, knowing that

his friend would not recognize the house elf as his.

He then went to the kitchen to make a light supper of fish and salad along with a hearty dessert of chocolate cake, for him and George. When he was done he put it under a stasis charm and settled down with a fantasy book to wait for his business partner.

It was seven-thirty when George popped in.

"Come on, I've made supper," was the younger man's greeting as he put his book down, stood and waved the redhead to the kitchen.

"Thanks, it seems like forever since I've eaten," George replied and followed his friend.

The two talked of business over the meal and through dessert. When they were done, Hydrus levitated the dishes into the sink and guided his friend into the study.

The study was orderly and comfortable. The furniture was old, but in good shape, magic was wonderful. There was a sofa and three chairs that surrounded a large antique coffee table. An unlit fireplace was along one wall, not a Floo. Pictures of the ocean adorn parts of the walls, the new Black had had Kreacher take down all the portraits of the Blacks and put them in the attic. He'd put them back up when he left. A medium sized desk was on the opposite wall from the fireplace with scattered pieces of used parchments on its surface. There were three bookcases taking up the rest of the wall space, with some books and a few trinkets. All in all, it was a cozy room and it looked completely different then when the Order was occupying the house.

George took a seat in one of the old-fashioned chairs. "So, what did you want to tell me, Harry?"

"First off, I don't go by Harry Potter anymore. I've taken up the name, Hydrus Black. You might do better calling me by my new first name in

public, it'll get less attention," he said nervously as he sat on the sofa.

"Hydrus? The water snake? Suits you," George said smiling, causing the young wizard to relax a little. He should have known George would take this in stride. "However, if you're gonna pass yourself off as a Black you better think of a middle name," he added.

"Yeah, I thought it was fitting. I'll see if I can find something that works with Hydrus, something meaningful." he shrugged and then straightened.

"I want to explain what happened in the Alley today. Did you see the ghosts?"

George nodded and said, "I saw, can't figure out how you did that though. Saw lots of people trying to banish them, but nothing worked."

The dark-haired teen summoned the Resurrection Stone and showed it to the redhead. "Dumbledore left this to me in his will. It's the same stone that Beedle the Bard wrote about in the Tale of the Three Brothers," he explained. "I did a bit more research and found a way to bring vengeful ghost back."

"The Deathly Hallows," whispered George as he looked hungrily at the stone.

"George," Hydrus said loudly, snapping the redhead's attention back to him. "Look, I can call Fred's spirit for a short while. Only if you promise to never ask me again. He doesn't have any unfinished business, since the Death Eater that fired the spell is dead, so the time he's here will be painful for him."

"I solemnly swear that I will never ask to see my twin after this," George immediately said, he would promise anything just to see his brother once more.

"I'm going to keep the stone. I'll ask Fred to join us and then go to the other side of the room, so you can have a few moments alone. But,

remember it's only for a minute, so get what you need to say done quickly." When George nodded, the Master of Death called for Fred and moved away after the deceased twin's ghost appeared.

"Gred," George said sadly as he took in his twin's appearance. Fred looked just like he did when he died. There was what appeared to be blood all over his torso and his clothes were in bad shape. It caused the living twin despair to see his brother that way.

"Forge," his twin replied, a bright smile on his translucent face. "I came to tell you how proud I am. You've made our dream a reality and didn't let my death hold you back long."

"I miss you, Fred. Are you happy where you are?" the live twin asked hopefully.

"Yeah, and I don't want to see you there anytime soon, okay? Live your life, find a girl, prank the world and be free," the spirit said joyfully.

"Don't let anyone hold you back, you hear?" Fred demanded. Then a look of pain ghosted across his face.

The immortal joined them. "I miss you too, Fred. I'll make sure this one keeps in trouble," he promised. "It's time for you to go back now." He glanced between the two and stepped back again so they could say their goodbyes.

"You keep up what you're doing, Forge," Fred said forcefully. "No moping about and letting our dream fail. You continue to prank those asshats."

"I will, Gred, I promise," George said, wishing he could touch his brother.

But, before he could attempt it, Fred was gone. Tears of sadness and wistfulness streaked their way down the redhead's face. He firmed his jaw and steeled himself to do as his brother demanded.

Hydrus put his hand on the grieving man's shoulder; tears marred his face as well. "Alright, George? Sorry, stupid question," he said as he guided

the other man to sit.

"No, it's not stupid. Thank you..., Hydrus, for giving me my goodbyes. I think it'll help in the long run." The two sat in comfortable silence, until George broke it by asking, "Have you used that stone for yourself?"

"No," he confessed. "With all I've done, I'm too scared to." Even with Death's assurances to him that his parents would be happy to see him, he was still suffering from survivor's guilt. His counselor said he was working his way through his issues, but he couldn't shake the fact that his parents and Sirius died for him. It was something everyone told him, so to his way of thinking, had he not been around they would've survived. The dreams he still had about never being able to cross the river didn't help.

"You should," George said breaking him from his thoughts. "It might help."

"I'll think about it," he conceded.

"So, how come the ghosts in the Alley get to stay longer?"

"They have unfinished business. Well, except the ones that were defending me, those spirits had their say and left. The ones that were killed because of their blood status can stay as long as they want."

"I guess, I can understand that, I wouldn't want Fred to be a vengeful spirit," George said thoughtfully and then shrugged. "So, any more surprises?"

"A few," was the answer as the younger man brought out his list and handed it to his friend.

The redhead took the list and read it over. He then looked at Hydrus and stated, "You're planning to go back in time."

"Yeah."

"Are you taking anyone with you? Ron, Hermione or anyone?"

"No."

"Why?" the confused man asked.

"Because anyone else would cause a paradox, unless they can be adopted into another family. Besides, I've done all I can to get them out of the country or make their way in the non-magical world. Well except for your family, but I reckon that the Weasleys will survive anything, being as stubborn as you lot are," the young immortal explained. "You can try to get your mum and dad to move, but I doubt they will. They'll want to stay and help others."

"You're probably right, though Hermione would be helpful, think about it a bit more, yeah," George said with a shrug. "If you had shown me this list an hour ago I'd've begged to go with you, now..." he trailed off, then cleared his throat and looked over the plans. "Well, after the recent events, I'd say you're getting a good start on these."

"Yeah," Hydrus said with a beaming smile. "So, do you want to help?"

"Yeah, let me hire another worker for the shop and clear out the back room and I'll join you here," George said distractedly, as his own ideas formed. The two troublemakers put their heads together and refined Hydrus' ideas. They talked into the night, until George left stating he had things to do in the morning.

It was a content Hydrus who went to bed that night. His studies were coming along nicely, it was as if a great pressure had been taken off his mind, and now he was learning things at a faster rate. Oh, he wasn't super-smart, just... smarter. He was also happy with the things that happened in the Alley today. He only hoped that very few innocents got caught in the backlash, but he couldn't plan for everyone.

## 5. The Break Up of the Golden

Trio

## Chapter 5 The Break Up of the Golden Trio

AN: thanks to my betas, the 5h15 Spaceman, darrelldeam and alix33. All mistakes are my own.

Warning: Hydrus isn't going to be super-smart; he is going to learn faster (mostly because I can't pull off writing genius people).

Someone pointed out that Hogwarts was a Ministry funded school, well not for this story. There is tuition.

Hphphp

The fallout from Hydrus releasing the spirits was funny—well, to him and George anyway. Every time Rita wrote an article calling him Dark Lord, the Quibbler would print the exact opposite. The owner of the Quibbler even pointed out that Skeeter had been a spy for Voldemort. He had to wonder why Xenophilius was defending him, after the man turned him and his friends in to the Snatchers. Maybe he was trying to get back into his and Luna's good books. Oh, the immortal teen understood why the man did what he did, but still it was one more person that stabbed him in the back.

These conflicting reporters caused the people to split even further. Rita made the public scared by calling Harry Potter a necromancer. She stated that it was only a matter of time before he took over Diagon Alley with an army of Inferi. Mr. Lovegood reacted by saying that there had been no proof the young hero did anything, and quoted some of the ghost that they were brought here by someone else. The young immortal just let the two reporters battle and went about his business, safe with his new looks. December came and Hydrus's research was paying off. He kept up his studies and was now proficient in Arithmancy and Runes. He also bought more books to get his A-levels, and was going through those at a pretty fast rate. Self-help books were also bought, on the advice of his

counselor, but they were put aside for later.

After a few months of catching up on his studies, he now had the laptop charmed to take books into its database. There were also magical/electronic devices that stored books, but couldn't get on the internet. The teen was shocked at this discovery, since he hadn't seen anything like it in the non-magical market. Frostwell must have been a great inventor.

Hydrus spent many hours downloading books to one of the book-readers and was going to start on the laptop after Christmas break. He'd leave the others for a later date. The charm was simple all you had to do was touch top of the device to the center of the book (or in case of the laptop, touch the book to the top of the screen), incant the spell, and after a few moments the information was stored. It was a relief that he wouldn't have to store all those books in his pocket space, and with these devices he wouldn't have to look very hard to find any information he needed.

Ron and Hermione were coming to visit him during the break. He had written to Hermione often and was concerned about how she was being treated at Hogwarts, though it did make him feel better about the staff that they seemed to be stepping in more often than they ever had with him. Hermione had told him the many confrontations she had with Pure-bloods, she came out on top, but they were still cause for concern.

The day came for the visit and Hydrus was once again in his Harry Potter persona. He made sure to only keep school books out for their visit.

When the Floo flared Ron stepped out and Hermione wasn't far behind.

The only reason the redhead was welcome in his house was because he and Hermione were still a couple, much to his displeasure.

"Alright, Harry?" Ron asked as he took one of the empty chairs.

"Alright," he answered as he went to hug his best friend. "How are you, Hermione?"

"Better, thanks," she said returning the hug. She then made her way to the chair next to Ron's and Hydrus took the sofa.

"Have you figured out what to do about your parents?" the younger wizard asked.

"No, I'm still undecided," she answered with a sad tone.

"Oh, sorry, well, whatever you decide, I'll help as much as I can," he offered and then turned to Ron. "How is Quidditch going? Ginny doing alright?"

"She's doing okay, we'd be doing better if you came back," the redhead said with a glare. "Still don't understand why you're hiding."

"Good to hear Ginny's doing a good job," he said sincerely, ignoring the rest, trying his best not to get angry and ruin the visit.

"How are your studies coming along?" Hermione asked quickly sending a pointed look to her boyfriend. They had talked about it before they came, and it was understood that Ron wouldn't harass Harry about returning to the castle.

"Pretty good, actually. George got another calculator to work so that helps a lot." He smiled at her to show he was actually happy that his schoolwork was getting done.

"That's a relief," she sighed and then brightened. "I showed the calculator to Professor Vector, she was very excited about it. I researched it and made a few more for use in classes, I hope you don't mind." She was practically bouncing in her seat.

"Of course I don't mind, that's why I gave it to you in the first place. However, George is selling them in the shop, so you may want to stop making them and point customers his way. There's a patent on them now."

"I'm still mad at you about giving her one. She spends all her time with

the Professor or working on her researcher and no time with me," Ron grouched, causing the other two to frown at him. The couple had had a few arguments about all her time away from him, until she made it perfectly clear that if he didn't stop she would dump him.

"Oh, hey, I got you two a present," the young immortal said, hoping to lighten the mood.

"Really? I'm sending yours by owl. You should get it sometime next week," Hermione said.

"You didn't have to get me anything," grumbled Ron, since the war money had been tighter, what with the repairs of the Burrow, and the Weasleys didn't buy gifts this year. Everything was supposed to be handmade and this redhead hadn't gotten around to making anything yet. Hydrus remembered George saying that he had tried to give his parents money; they turned him down, so he made sure to buy them things for the house.

"Don't worry, I didn't buy them. I found them in stuff from the vaults," Harry explained as he took two wrapped gifts he had placed by the fireplace. He handed a thin square like package to Hermione and a squishy one to Ron.

Hermione opened her gift, neatly. She looked at the obvious electronic device. It was about the size of both of her hands, thin, black with a blank panel on the front. "What is this?"

"Well, I found it in Frostwell's vault; it's kind of like a book. This one is only a prototype, but it has several spell books in it already. There are also some notes and if you can figure them out, you can add more books," the younger teen explained. Since there were better book-readers in his pocket-space, he had no problem giving one up. "Here, let me show you how to turn it on," he offered and got up to do just that. The two excited

teens played with it for a while, until the dark-haired wizard nudged Hermione and jerked his head to Ron, who was staring at them with venom in his eyes. His gift lay, still wrapped, by the chair next to him. Hermione put the book-reader in her bag and looked at Ron. "Aren't you going to open it?"

"No, I think, I'll hold off on that," came the churlish response.

An uncomfortable silence filled the room. No one knew what to say that wouldn't cause an argument. Kreacher popped in and asked if anyone wanted refreshments. Hydrus asked for a tea service with cakes and biscuits before anyone could answer. Kreacher popped away to do as he was asked.

There was much fidgeting from all three teens, which made Hydrus and Hermione sad. When the tea tray appeared the immortal poured and handed out the cups. Ron grabbed the sweets.

"Oh, this is absolutely ridiculous," Hermione huffed as she set down her tea cup. "There has to be something we can talk about. We used to be so close, and I, for one, find it appalling that we can't simply talk to each other anymore."

"It's his fault," Ron accused, pointing a finger at his former roommate, bits of biscuit fly from his mouth. "If he'd just come back to Hogwarts, then we'd be the same as before. That and the fact that he shouldn't be flaunting his wealth around; giving you an obviously expensive present. I've heard the rumors about you paying off the Muggle-raised into abandoning us. Percy told me that the Ministry had everything under control until you stuck your nose into things that don't concern you. I wouldn't be surprised if the Prophet was right and you are trying to ruin everything, just to get your revenge."

"Oh, you reckon so, do you? I told you, I didn't buy your gifts. But it's

nice to finally hear your thoughts on the matter. Do you think I'm the new Dark Lord as well? Never mind, it doesn't really matter what you think. You lost my trust ages ago. The only reason I let you in my house is because of Hermione, but now even that isn't enough. Get out," the younger man snarled as he got up from the sofa and pointed to the Floo. "Fine," the traitor snapped, throwing down the half-eaten food he had taken, and leaving the package by the chair. "Come on, Hermione, we're out of here." He went to grab Hermione's arm, but she pushed his hand away, forcefully.

"I can't believe you said that!" the shocked girl shouted as she stood and put some distance between her and her soon to be ex. She made her way over to her younger friend. "After everything Harry did to end the war, you go and accuse him of being Dark. He died for us, or don't you remember that?"

"And he probably used Dark Magic to come back," Ron stated, throwing his hands in the air. "How else could he have risen from the dead? Skeeter said only a Dark Lord could have done the things he did. Or don't you remember he use the Imperius Curse on the goblins?" he yelled back, very upset that she would defend Harry. "It's all his fault my family can't go into Gringotts. Bill lost his job and had to move away because of him."

"You agreed with what we had to do at Gringotts," Hydrus snarled in defense, folding his arms across his chest. "You said it was the only way. Now you're denying it."

"It's still Dark Magic and you were the only one that was able to pull it off, making you a Dark Wizard," Ron snapped. He rounded on Hermione, his face red with rage, spittle flying. "I can't believe you're taking his side over mine. Makes me wonder if I wasn't right all along, that you two were sneaking behind my back getting up to no good."

The angry redhead then turned back to Hydrus. His face morphed into scorn, much like Malfoy's. "Harry Bloody Potter always has to get everything," he sneered, "the fame, the gold and now my girl. Poor little orphan had to live without his parents, boohoo. Stupid wanker can't be happy with what he's got, no he has to cry and whine that he doesn't have a family. I know you're trying to take mine, why else would George come here more often than he comes to the Burrow?" he accused. "Guess what, asshole, you can't have them. I think, I'll just go and tell Kingsley all about what happened in Gringotts. I know he's looking for you, he'll listen to me. I'm a war hero after all." Conveniently forget his vow, it would serve the idiot right if Hydrus let him do just that, but he really didn't need Kingsley hunting him as a criminal.

"Right," the former Potter said decisively when Ron finished yelling.

"Sorry, Hermione," he said quietly. He pulled out the Elder Wand and clearly said, "Obliviate," taking all the information of the break-in, this fight and where Hydrus lived from the backstabbing bastard's mind.

"Stupefy," he said, causing the idiot to fall. He again apologized to his best friend. "I took all his memories about Gringotts— even the planning we did at Shell Cottage— the last hour and also where I live. I left everything else, so he'll probably still be mad at me for not going back to school, but he'll no longer have reason to think I've gone Dark. His jealousy isn't something I can take from him without wiping everything," he explained.

If Ron hadn't been the youngest male member of the Weasleys, he would of. It was only his respect for the others in that family that stayed his hand. There was no way they could afford to take care of someone like Lockhart.

"No, I understand why you did that," Hermione said, causing the tense

young man to relax. "Remember I did the same to my parents, if on a grander scale, and even though I regret it now, I'd probably do it again to protect them," she sighed. "I'll take him back to the Burrow and when the break is over, I'll be breaking up with him. I never knew he was thinking all those things about you. He only ever complained about Quidditch. It is a good thing we took the vow to never talk to anyone about what happened last year."

She shook her head sadly, running reasons for a break-up through her mind. Harry couldn't be mentioned at all. She could use Ron's lack of compassion about retrieving her parents as an excuse to dump him.

"Still, it's sad that this had to happen," he said as he discreetly stowed the wand away, hoping Hermione was too stunned to realize what it was.

"Give me a few minutes to get him back to the Burrow, and I'll come back and we can talk about why you still have the Elder Wand," she said, shooting him a knowing look. "I'm going to wake Ron, you better hide."

Hydrus sighed; he should have known he couldn't get much past her. He nodded and moved out of sight.

After a few minutes contemplation, Hermione hit the downed boy on the forehead with the heel of her shoe, making a lump. She put her shoe back on and then woke Ron up.

"What happened? Where are we?" the groggy teen asked as he rubbed the sore spot, not recognizing the clean room.

"I can't tell you where we are, it's under a Fidelius, don't you remember?"

You had a bad reaction to the tea, or it could have been the biscuits, since neither me nor Harry ate any. You started to sway and then fell forward and hit your head on the table," she said, pointing to the disarrayed tea service.

"What happened to Harry? Aren't we supposed to be visiting him?"

"He was rather upset that you might have been potioned, so he went to ask his... help how something like that could happen. You know there are people out to kill him," she explained rather quickly. "We should go and see your mum; she might be able to diagnose what the potion was." She then guided the redhead to the Floo and they went back to the Burrow.

After they left, Hydrus pondered on just how much he should confide to Hermione. This latest spat with Ron showed that she was going to stand by the dark-haired immortal, no matter what. But he also knew that she'd be disappointed about his plans for revenge. There was no telling how she would react to him going back in time. She was very forceful about paradoxes when they used the time turner in third year. He concluded he'd tell her about the ghosts, and see how she reacted to that. He was still thinking it over when the Floo activated and Hermione stepped out.

"Did Molly buy your story?"

"Yeah, she knows that there are people out to hurt you," Hermione answered as she retook her seat. "She's more determined to get you to come to the Burrow. It is a good thing wizards and witches don't have a lick of common sense."

Molly had taken one look at the bump on Ron's forehead and declared it the reason for his short term memory loss, in addition to whatever potion had been used. Of course, she had no idea that he had forgotten more than an hour. She had sent Ron to bed right away, and gave him a flushing potion. The git was in for a long night.

He groaned. As much as he cared for Mrs. Weasley, her mothering ways were suffocating. Hermione gave him a commiserating smile. The two sat in comfortable silence, simply drinking their tea and letting the quiet calm their nerves and let them organize their thoughts.

"Harry, tell me how it is that you now have the Elder Wand? I know for a fact you put it back into Dumbledore's crypt. And why didn't you tell me sooner?" A hurt look crossed her face.

Hydrus sighed and looked at her apologetically. "Hermione, I'm sorry, but as long as you were dating Ron, I couldn't tell you. I simply didn't trust him to keep his big mouth shut."

"I know, I guess, it is just so frustrating to not realize just how hateful and shallow he still is. I mean, I thought he had matured, but I guess he just hid it better." She shook her head to clear those thoughts for now.

"Back to the subject, how did you get the wand? Why do you still have it? How come you haven't gotten rid of it like we agreed?" she fired off rapidly. With the fight that had just occurred she realized there were things she hadn't been paying attention to.

"It just showed up the day after the battle of Hogwarts. I went to sleep and woke up the next morning with the Deathly Hallows on my pillow. Believe me when I say I did everything I could think of to rid myself of them. I threw the stone down a well, broke the wand and burned it. They showed back up the next day. I reckon, I became the Master of Death when I disarmed Draco at Malfoy Manor," he explained. At the time he hadn't even thought about what that meant.

"Honestly, Harry, you are so stupid sometimes. You could have told me, and I would have helped. After all we went through you should have realized I will always make time for you," she all but snapped.

"And you should know that I don't burden my friends," he retorted.

"What's done is done, we should move on to something else. Before you ask, yes it was me that set the shades on the Pure-Bloods, especially the ones who got out of punishment— again. There were some that went to Azkaban to torture Umbridge and her co-conspirators. I think there are

three that are haunting Rita, because it was her that let Umbridge know where they were hiding. If she hadn't squealed on them, they would have made it out of the country. That's what Mr. Lovegood says anyway."

It tickled the Master of Death that the odd man was interviewing the ghost and reporting why they were around. The spirits couldn't tell him who called them only that the person was the Master of the Deathly Hallows. Old Xenos was ecstatic that the Hallows had been united.

"Oh, Harry, how could you? According to the Tale of the Three Brothers, those spirits will be in pain," Hermione said, breaking him from his amusing thoughts.

"Not if they have unfinished business, I looked it up and did the research, I promise, they only feel the need for revenge. Besides, I didn't command them to roam the earth; I asked politely if they wanted to come," he said in half-truths, he had asked the ones that wanted to defend him.

"Are you sure, I don't mean to accuse you, but are you really sure? You do have a nasty habit of just jumping into things without a plan; I only want what's best for you, Harry."

"Yes, I'm positive," he said a bit hurt. The two sat in silence again, this time it wasn't as comfortable.

"I got a note, a few weeks ago, saying that I should leave England," Hermione said, grabbing a hold of the first thought that came to her. "If I can't get my parents back, I might just do that or I could go to Australia and be near them. With what just happened there is little left for me here, only you."

"Well if it puts your mind at ease, I don't plan on staying in Britain long. I can't tell you where I'm going yet, I'm still making plans. So you should think about it a bit more," Hydrus said evasively. "Any idea on who sent it?"

"No, it was unsigned and it looked to be printed from a computer. If it's true, then I can make some of my ideas reality and get more freedom for magical creatures," she said excitedly, now that she knew she wouldn't be abandoning her friend to this backwards society. They'd still keep in contact no matter where he went. She was just happy he wouldn't be here. Maybe she could drag him along with her if she left. She made a mental note to ask him about his plans, later. "I'll do a bit more research and ask around, maybe Neville will have a few things to say. He said he had received a similar note."

"Yeah, I heard about that," he hedged. He was still unsure how much to tell his best friend, her reaction to the shades didn't give him much hope in her understanding why he wanted to go and save himself. He did have plans to leave her a letter explaining everything, plus, ensure that she had a bit of money or he could tell her his idea right before he left and give her the option to join him. "Do you want to see what I've been doing over the last few months?" he asked veering the conversation to a safer topic.

"Yes, please, I've been worried about you being holed up in this house."

"If it makes you feel better, I've been getting counseling."

"That does take a load off my mind. I'm so very proud that you got help,"

she sighed in relief. "Show me how well you're doing in your studies."

The two teens settled with talking about schoolwork, Hydrus showed Hermione his self-made tests and let her look them over. He explained that George came by a lot and helped him. She praised him for doing such a fine job. She made sure to thank him for his gift, again. Much too soon she had to leave; she promised that if she was going to take the note's advice she would let him know first.

A mentally exhausted young man cooked dinner that night. He was very

upset about what happened with Ron, even if he wasn't overly surprised. He was glad to finally rid himself of that stress-inducing hindrance. It was a good thing he still had Hermione, though he did feel bad for keeping secrets. That girl was one of the two people he'd miss when he left. However, judging from her reaction to the little bit he did tell her he'd have to keep her in the dark, for now, besides, if she wanted to go on to greener pastures then who was he to stop her. He'd just have to wait and see if she succeeded.

George would be visiting tomorrow, so Hydrus would ask his opinion, though he was a bit nervous about how the older Weasley would react to what he had to do to Ron. Knowing his older friend, he decided that George would understand, then again, Ron was family and the Weasleys always tried to protect one another. With his thoughts going in circles, he had a fretful night's sleep.

Ron's gift, of a dragonhide cloak, was put away by a smirking Kreacher. The house elf never trusted that particular redhead. Kreacher would sneak it back into Master's things the next time he went through them. When George showed up the next afternoon with a very thoughtful look on his face, and his young friend got more worried. He showed the redhead into the study and perched on the edge of one of the chairs. "So what's up?" he asked.

"What happened yesterday? And don't give me that bullshit about poisoned tea and head injuries. Mum might've bought it, but Hermione was acting very out of character when she came back to the Burrow. I want the truth," the single twin said with a piercing look.

"Before you get too angry, let me explain. I only did what I had to do to protect myself," Hydrus all but begged.

"Explain," came the curt demand.

So the new Black told the older Weasley exactly what happened the day before, leaving nothing out. "So, you see, I had to do it. He threatened to go to Kingsley and the last thing I need is the Ministry breathing down my neck more than they already are," the worried teen finished, still perched to run if his friend didn't understand.

Throughout the retelling, George's face contorted through many different expressions; from appalled, angry, sadness and finally settled on regret. "I think... I'd better leave for a while, until I can calm down. I know you only did what you felt you had to do, but that's my brother you're talking about," George said as he stood to leave.

"George, please try and understand, I'd never hurt you intentionally. However, I get where you're coming from," Hydrus said sadly. He only hoped he wouldn't lose his only confidant.

"I'll try and keep an open mind. I know how Ron gets, but I know how you jump blindly into things. I'll think it over and we'll see what happens, but right now I have to go," the redhead said. He gave a brisk nod and left.

George came back the next day, much to his relief. After they settled in the study, George looked Hydrus straight in the eye and said, "Okay, I understand, but I think you should stay away from Ron. His jealousy is strong and if you get around him, he might remember what the fight was about. I don't want that to happen"

"I don't either, so, I promise to not seek out your brother for any reason," the younger man swore.

"That also means you can't go to the Burrow when he is there. We owe you a lot, and I, for one want to make sure you're repaid. I just don't want any fighting at home; Mum is all stressed out over money. So for me, could you not go there?" he asked. The entire Weasley family owed

Harry for saving the lives of many of their members. He just wanted peace at the Burrow and if Ron was still jealous that wouldn't happen.

"I try and stay away from there anyway." The immortal shrugged. "I love your mum to death, but she is quite smothering. I'm glad you came back, George."

"Yeah, me too. Let's go over some of those notes," George suggested.

The two inventors got together over the phone and worked on it until they came up with a conclusion. They discovered that with another Rune array they would be able to get coverage anywhere. George went out and purchased another phone and a service plan. Now they had a new way to communicate.

George took the finished notes and started building cheaper phones to sell in the shop, for when they finished the research on getting service or setting up a magical equivalent. Hydrus started working on a VCR, so he would have more entertainment here at home. They had gotten a telly to work earlier that month and he got cable service, once again confusing the installers when they were done.

The young inventor already had one of the book-readers taken apart, and he would work on that later. The two decided that they would sell these as well. These breakthroughs were going to make a big profit and at the same time thumb their noses at the sheep that bought them.

The next day Mundungus came by with some news. "'ydrus, yer gon'a 'ave ter give me mawer money fer yaaahr supplies," the petty thief said.

"Why?" the new Black snapped, the last thing he needed was bad news.

His money wasn't limitless, and he hoped the thief wasn't trying to swindle him.

"Prices are up all over da 'lley," Fletcher explained. "Seems that since da Muggle-raised left, da shops cost wen' up. Gringotts 'as also increased

in'ereest rates, just so they can stay in business."

"Oh, sorry that I snapped. That's actually good news. Maybe I can get better deals on the continent, would you be able to go to France or somewhere? I'll make sure you're well compensated." This was wonderful news. Soon enough the rich will be poorer. It had taken many counseling sessions to keep Hydrus from hunting down the Death Eaters that escaped Azkaban, so if he wasn't going to kill them, he was going to do the next best thing and bleed their money dry. He was still unsure if he would let them live when he went back in time, but that was a worry for later.

"Yeah, I've got connecshuns over there."

Hydrus nodded and then had a thought. "Any rumors on how Hogwarts is coping? I'm sure with so many students going elsewhere; they have to be hurting for funds." This thought caused a bit of turmoil. On one hand, the castle had been his home for many years, on the other hand, every year was blackened with attempts on his life. Not to mention all the times the student body turned their backs on him.

"Word on da street is what da Board ov Governors are 'rying' ter refawm da school ter one like Durmstrang. That's got ole Minerva in a right tiff. The Wizengamot ain't doin' much be'er, since da Pure-bloods wan' ter invite fawerigners." The scruffy man laughed.

"Hmmm," he hummed after he worked his way around the accent, not wanting to express his opinion to the other man. He knew it was only the vow that kept the thief silent and someone as sneaky as Dung would know how to work around such vows. It was only because Hydrus paid the man that he hadn't already, but the teen was going to play his cards close to his chest around the petty thief. "Thanks for telling me," he said instead. "You go and talk to your connections and see if they can set you

up with better prices."

"Right, I'll check in with you when I know," Mundungus said as he got up to leave. He knew a dismissal when he heard one.

"Right," the teen said distractedly, still mulling over his feelings. He waved his hand in the general direction of the door and wandered out of the room. He knew Kreacher would make sure the other man left. He went to the workroom he and George set up, there was a bit of new technology that he wanted to play with. It would keep his mind off all the things that happened in the last few days.

While he was happy to learn that prices were up in Diagon Alley, and probably Knockturn, it saddened him that Hogwarts might turn into a Pure-blood school. He would have to talk to the Prime Minister to see if one of the Muggle-born could figure out a way to detect accidental magic. That way they could set up a school for the new wizards and witches in Britain. He would write a letter later.

Shaking his head from those thoughts, he picked up the bulky cell phone and tried to see how he could use it. The Rune array to power it was easy enough, but that didn't give him coverage. Since it was a new item on the market, there wasn't much to it. He had purchased one of the plans to get him service, even though it confused the hell out of him, with long distance charges and roaming fees and other strange charges, very little of it made sense. But, if what he and George had discovered was correct, then he would soon have a phone that bypassed all of that.

He worked on the phone for the rest of the day, making notes on investments for the future. He could see the great potential in this device. He'd have to go to a brokerage firm tomorrow and do just that. He would also have to see if he could put some money in Microsoft and other upcoming computer businesses. Since it will take more time to get the

time travel equations down, he would need more funds.

The next day, Hydrus set up a non-magical bank account with 5,000 pounds and asked them who they recommended for a brokerage firm.

They suggested Smith and Anderson, which is where the young man went. He bought stock in Motorola, Apple and Microsoft, as well as a few smaller technological businesses.

## 6. Finally Some Headway

### Chapter 6 Finally Some Headway

AN: thanks again to my betas, darreldeam, alix33 and The 5h15 spaceman (who helped me with the fight scene). As usual all mistakes are my own.

Warning: there is a time skip, which means an information dump. Sorry, but I want to get to where Hydrus goes to the past in the next chapter.

One more thing then I'll stop; the quickness of the falling of the magical Britain is unrealistic. I point out once again this is Fanfiction

Anything you recognized isn't mine.

Hphphp

A medium narrative

June came quickly and those months were full of surprising events.

Hydrus and George were making loads of money with their inventions.

They had calculators, and poorly made cell phones with expensive service plans, mini radios, and crappy computers that weren't connected to the Internet. Not to mention all of the prank items. They were working on how to get non-magical entertainment like video cameras (with VHS tape), VCRs, gaming consoles and tellies. After much debating they decided to keep the book-readers out of the shop.

George had his own inventory of better made devices, and was still trying to work out how he made his pocket-space. The redhead still felt it was a

huge prank on the Pure-bloods, getting them hooked on non-magical entertainment. He was saving up money for when the idiots realized they were using Muggle technology. He knew those traditionalists would stop buying them, even if they were useful and addictive, and that he might have to start up his business elsewhere. He would keep close to Britain, most likely France, so he didn't hurt his mum— much. Hydrus let George get the patents. That way if a new timeline branch was created then George would have sole ownership and he wouldn't have worry about leaving them to the redhead in his fake will.

He sent off a few letters to Sanguini, and the vampire talked to other vampires that liked to live in the non-magical world. He gave the immortal teen a potion recipe that would cause him to age, though he would have to take it monthly. As thanks, the young immortal gifted him with a book-reader, which he had downloaded romance novels to. It struck him as funny that a Dark being would read such sappy books, but to each his own. Sanguini was thrilled with the present and promised that if he had any more advice to offer he'd write to him.

Hydrus only left his house to go to non-magical London, except when he was raining misery on the Alleys. He was now doing the shopping, since Kreacher was getting too old to leave the house. He also kept his membership at the gym; he had even convinced George to join him once a week. There was a Muggle-born that tutored him for his A-levels, he was doing well at self-study, but with the advances in Math and Science, he needed a bit of verbal instruction.

He had to remain under his boy hero persona during those lessons, since Black had such a Dark Pure-blood reputation. The lessons were held in a library far away from his home, because he didn't want any more people to know where he lived. He would get to the library, duck into an alley

and cast his glamor, then when lessons were over, reverse the process. His mental illnesses were getting better and he was feeling happier. The angst and guilt that plagued him for so long were becoming things of the past. Because he wasn't so emotional, he worked out everything that happened to him in his childhood and his years at Hogwarts and could now see that it was imperative that he rescue his younger self, well, in his opinion. That and he wanted a new start, so why not protect who he could in the process. He had finally called up his parents and Sirius and talked to them as long as they were able. They told him they were proud and they approved of his plans. He had to promise he wouldn't call them again, unless it was important.

Therapy gave him another problem, which was the fact that the past wasn't the same as the present. His revenge on this timeline had sedated his need for it. However, it was people like the Dursleys, Skeeter, Snape, Death Eaters, and Umbridge, who caused so many deaths, not to mention made his childhood a living hell. Those people would need to be dealt with somehow. It was something he would have to meditate on. His thoughts on Dumbledore were conflicting; he still felt the man was a good man, just misguided in his attempts to bring about his 'Greater Good'.

Fudge was just a simple idiot and without Lucius and Dolores he should be easy to control. The Dursleys were simple, just never meet them and they won't be a problem. The last war had them on the run, and yeah, it was petty, but, Hydrus didn't let them know it was over. So they were still moving from place to place, hoping the wizards didn't catch them. Hermione wrote often, she told him how she broke up with Ron and now they didn't talk to one another. She lamented on the fact that more and more Muggle-raised were leaving Hogwarts, and that tuition would be

raised next year. It was a good thing this was her final year, since there was no way she would be able to afford it. She came to the conclusion that she would take the note's advice and try the Australian Ministry.

Ron had flunked out of Hogwarts right before Easter break. He was now being taught by his family. They were very strict on him, according to George, and punished him if he slacked. It was going to be a long time before the youngest male Weasley could take his NEWTs.

Ginny was being pulled from Hogwarts the following school year, due to the bullying and lack of funds. She and a few of her friends were going to be homeschooled with Ron. They were treated better than Ron, since they actually wanted to learn.

The youngest Weasley was still dating Dean Thomas, who, with her compassion and understanding, was doing much better. He now lived at the Burrow, bunking with Ron, since he parents died in the war. Dean was taking advantage of the non-magical education programs, and was hopeful in getting employment to help with the bills at the Burrow.

Molly had taken in several orphans. When the cost went up she allowed her older children to buy food and books, and sometimes letting them take her new charges to get second-hand clothes. Arthur still had his job at the Ministry, since no one wanted to take over his department.

Because he was such an unassuming character, he was mostly overlooked.

Neville was taking his parents to America; he had heard they might be able to bring them out of their... illness. Augusta was reluctantly going with him. She could see the writing on the wall, but, she didn't want to leave her home country. It had taken many arguments between her and her grandson to get her to understand it was what was needed. Neville finally put his foot down and told her he was leaving with or without

her, and he was taking his parents with him.

Luna was transferring to Beauxbatons for her final year of schooling. She made arrangements with Bill and Fleur to stay with them during her summer. They had gotten close during her stay at Shell Cottage, and she made sure to write them often. She would start her own newspaper when she graduated. Her father was staying in Britain for the time being. He would look into relocating if things got too bad for him. However, he wanted his little girl to be happy, so he reluctantly let her go.

It was with great pleasure that the young immortal received the news that Britain's Gringotts was closing. Even with the hike in interest they couldn't keep their doors open. They were threatening war if the Ministry didn't produce Harry Potter. He made sure there was no price on his head, if one should show, then he'd have to Obliviate Dung, he wasn't going to take the chance that the man would keep his secrets—vow or not.

With the local bank closing and their prejudice on foreigners, the Pure-bloods had to take their chances in keeping their fortunes in their homes. This gave the dark-haired wizard a thought on maybe stealing some of those riches, which meant more research. Thank Merlin for the World Wide Web, where you can find almost anything, even illegal stuff. He'd have to get George on these plans. He didn't trust his thief enough to bring him in, but, he might pick his brain for ideas.

Diagon and Knockturn Alleys were going to be hurting with this bit of news. Only places like the Leaky Cauldron and Ollivander's would survive, because they were one of a kind. On the other hand, shops like Madam Malkin's and Twilfitt and Tattings' it was more than likely that only one would stay open. Hydrus guessed it all depended on who could offer the better price or who would bow down to the Pure-bloods better.

He hoped that Madam Malkin got a fresh start elsewhere, but then again, she was a main source of gossip in Diagon Alley, so maybe not.

The spirits that he had called were still haunting their murderers. You would see them tagging along after their victims in the Alleys. Hydrus still chuckled every time George or Fletcher told him the things those spirits would do and say. The Quibbler was still posting their stories.

The Wizengamot had dwindled down to thirty members as many of the neutral and light families washed their hands of the bigots and moved on to more understanding societies. Even Kingsley had resigned, since everything he tried was voted against. He moved to Africa to get closer to his roots. He was hoping to help the diseased and war-torn continent.

Water, which was sorely needed, was easy for him to conjure.

The Pure-bloods made a fatal mistake. The like-minded people, that had been asked to come to Britain, went back to their home countries since the British looked down their noses at foreigners. Inbreeding will soon be more common and more squibs will be born. When they would finally realize they were dying out, it would be too late. Oh, Hydrus knew it would take years for the population to dwindle, but, he was satisfied that it would happen eventually. Let them be their own downfall.

Magical creatures were also leaving in droves. The centaurs knew, from reading the stars, that they would soon be hunted. They let other creatures know, and it cascaded from there. Even Hagrid left to join Madame Maxime and obtained a position in Beauxbaton as the grounds keeper. The gentle half-giant had given a note to Hermione to give to Harry Potter, explaining that he would always think of him as a hero, and to not let that Skeeter woman keep him down.

The only half-breeds who stayed were the werewolves, who were under the impression that since they fought on Voldemort's side they'd be

welcome. He knew better, but he wasn't going to inform them.

The thing that had the young immortal tickled pink was all the pranks that were being played on both Alleys. The Aurors tried to blame George, but he had alibis every time and could truthfully say he didn't do a thing. Hydrus, under his Invisibility Cloak, would take products from WWW and sneak them into meals at the Leaky Cauldron or use non-edible ones to cause chaos.

Canaries and other animals would run around the Alleys at busy times.

The Peruvian Instant Darkness Powder would blanket Knockturn Alley at noon, causing people to run into one another. New electronic mines were laid out on the cobblestone streets of both Alleys giving passersby a shock when they stepped on them. The foolish wizard would then look around for whoever spelled him and start a fight with someone. St Mungo's was busy those days. Wizards and witches would leave their shopping day with multi-colored hair and animal appendages.

To say Hydrus Black had a blast pranking these idiots was an understatement.

Present time

Hogwarts seventh years graduated the day before, and Hermione was coming to visit today. So Hydrus made sure everything was put away and that he was glamored. The Floo flared green and his best friend exited.

"Hello, Hermione," he said as he examined her appearance. "You seem to be doing well." She looked good, her hair was tame, her body was fit, and there were no circles under her eyes. "I heard you graduated top of the class, like there was any doubt." He gave her a hug and led her to a chair.

"Oh, you," she said playfully as she smacked his arm when he moved away. "How are your studies going? Will you be taking your NEWTs soon? What about your A-levels? How are those coming along?" she

questioned rapidly.

"Whoa, slow down," the young immortal said, holding his hand up to stop her rambling. "I've taken my NEWTs and will be taking my A-levels soon, probably by the end of summer."

"That's wonderful, Harry, how did you do?" she asked excitedly. "I always knew you were smarter than you let on."

"I passed with ten NEWTs," he answered and then changed the subject.

"When are you leaving?"

"Tomorrow, I'm going to be staying in a hotel tonight," she answered sadly. "My plane leaves first thing in the morning."

"Why are you taking a plane? Can't you get a portkey?" the confused man asked. "You can always stay here tonight," he offered, knowing his friend was limited on money.

"Not if you're Muggle-born, even Half-bloods have to use non-magical ways to leave Britain nowadays," she explained, disheartened that there was no way she could help England's Muggle-raised, though she was happy that Harry had rescued most of them from poverty and oppression.

"The hotel is closer to the airport, I don't want to Apparate in Britain; I heard they were tracking it now."

"Huh, I didn't know that about the portkeys or the Apparition, though with all that's going on I guess it was bound to happen," he said, rubbing the back of his head. "Do you need any money, I've got a bit extra?" he asked.

"No, Neville made sure I had enough, and I'm paying him back when I start my new position," she said, somewhat sharply.

Dropping that topic, the dark-haired wizard stood and made his way towards the door. "Come on, let's go to the kitchen and get some tea."

"What happened to Kreacher?" she asked in concern. She still was upset

about Harry keeping Kreacher as a slave, but now she was more worried that he had been right and that freedom would kill the old elf

"He's getting too old to pop, so I've restricted him to dusting. I'm not sure how much longer he has, but he is content doing what little he can," he said sadly as he led them to the kitchen and put the kettle on.

"That's awful, is he in pain?" she asked as she settled at the table.

"No, he's just old and tired. I'm hoping that when he passes away it will be in his sleep."

"What a morbid thing to say, but I guess you're right," Hermione said as she watched him make the tea, glad to see he wasn't relying on his magic to do something so simple.

"Have you decided what to do about your parents?" Hydrus asked as he pulled out some biscuits.

"Yes," she answered with resolve coating her tone, "I weighed the pros and cons and decided that it would only be selfish of me to try and give them their memories back. They are happy as they are and their practice is doing well. However, I am going to try and get to know them as a friend." She said, determined.

"That being said, I have a confession to make," he said sheepishly. He put the tea and biscuits on the table and sat opposite of her. "I've been keeping secrets from you. Not that I didn't trust you," he said hurriedly at her affronted look, "I just didn't want my plans to influence your decision. I'm letting you know now, because I will be disappearing and I don't want you to think I'm dead. You're my best friend and I'd never do that to you."

"Harry James Potter, you tell me right now what foolish thing you have brewing in your brain. What do you mean "disappear"? Where are you going?" she scowled as she placed her hands on the table, leaning

forward getting as far into his personal space as the table allowed.

"Alright, Hermione, calm down, when I've explained, hopefully you'll understand why I didn't tell you earlier."

"This better be good," she huffed as she sat back in her chair, arms folded and a piercing glare on her face.

He dropped his glamor, removed his fake glasses, and started to explain. He told her everything about the time travel and the adoption. He spilled how much money was in the vault, what he and George had invented so far, and how they were pranking the bigots. He enthusiastically told her about his counseling and why he felt he had to save his younger self. He only glossed over some of the plans for revenge, since he knew for a fact that she would stop him. He excluded the fact that he had actually talked to Death. He never once asked if she wanted to come.

Her face morphed as different feelings crossed it; first hurt, then denial, then hurt again, then anger, and finally frustration. "I don't ever want to hear you complain about Dumbledore again, do you hear me? You did the exact same thing he did, withholding important information," she snapped, standing up violently and placing her hands on her hips. "How dare you drop something like this in my lap, right before I'm about to leave, that's just like Dumbledore telling you the prophecy right after Sirius died."

"What? No, this is different; I'm not fighting a war. Besides, you were busy with your own problems, what I withheld wasn't life or death information," the immortal teen defended himself.

"That is bullshit, and you know it," she snarled, causing the young immortal to flinch at her uncharacteristic cursing.

Oops, she's really mad was the fearful thought. "Honestly, Hermione, I was only trying to make it easier for you. I was going to tell you before I

went, promise."

Silence was his answer, her glare didn't diminish, however you could see her brain working overtime. She dropped back into her chair and folded her arms to her chest. After about ten minutes of uncomfortable quiet, Hermione said, "I can't back out of my job now. When did you plan on going back in time? How sure are you that a new branch will start? I am not happy with you, Harry, but I'll help."

"We're still working out the math for the time travel, there are loads of theories, but I'll give you the notes and book titles we've used so far. We've narrowed it down to two, and with your help we should be able to get it down to one in no time," he said hoping that by letting her think she was helping it would calm her down, but, judging from the growl that emanated from her throat that didn't work, so he hurried on. "I don't plan on leaving until all our inventions are done, with the progress being made in the non-magical world, maybe in a few years."

"Were you even going to invite me along?" she asked, still upset.

"Honestly, Hermione, after how you went on about paradoxes in third year, I didn't think you'd want to." he confessed. "Besides, my equations are for one person, any more than that might cause problems. Now, with your new life, why would you want to? I mean, you get to see your parents again. And live your dream. I don't want to pull you away from that." Given her reaction, he was glad he hadn't invited her along. While she was his best friend, her morals would disrupt his plans.

"Fine, but don't think for one minute I am letting this drop," she snapped, not a bit mollified by his excuses. "Give me everything you have so far, and when I've calmed down, I'll look it over. Know this, Harry, Hydrus, whatever you damn name is, I am very upset with you, however that doesn't mean I love you any less, as a friend, so don't get any stupid

ideas. I'll look it over and help, but, if I think for one moment that it will cause a paradox, I will do everything in my power to try and stop you."

And by the determined look on her face, he could tell she was serious.

"I get it," Hydrus said, and he started to pull the notes from his pocketspace. "Give me your book-reader and I'll download these." And he then called the books on time travel. He was a bit worried that she would try and come with him anyway, but he would stand firm and go without her. He would just have to be evasive as to when he departed. Maybe it had been a mistake telling her, but like he explained he didn't want to just disappear on her.

"Here," she said when she brought it from her purse. "I don't want the notes on the inventions, but, I want first dibs on anything you two morons create. I'll look those over later, but, for right now I want to make sure you don't go and get yourself killed or worse destroy the world."

"Hermione, I'm hurt that you would even think that," he said with a sad smile. He knew what she meant and was hoping to lighten the mood.

"Oh, don't be stupid," she snapped, "that's not how I meant it. I just want to make sure your equations are correct, not that you're heartless." She then gave her own smile to take the bite out of her words.

He relaxed and downloaded everything she asked for. He even gave her one of the working laptops and showed her how to transfer information from the reader to the computer. He produced a list of everything George and he had completed and said he would let her choose what she wanted.

When she left she gave Hydrus a warm hug, which made him very hopeful for the future of their friendship.

A week later, on his way home from his tutoring session, the young immortal spotted white blond hair coming around the corner to Grimmauld Place. He turned to see one Draco Malfoy glaring hatefully at

him. He called himself all sorts of stupid for having his glamor still up, but he had been distracted on what he learned that day and how it was going to help him.

"Thought you could hide forever, did you, Potter? How dare you steal my inheritance!" Malfoy shouted as he raised his wand, pointing at his enemy's head.

He quickly ducked down an alley to keep the fight away from the non-magicals. "I didn't steal anything, you inbred moron. Sirius left everything to me in his will," he yelled back as he cast a Muggle-repelling ward and then the strongest shielding charm he knew, hoping the git didn't use any Unforgivables.

He did have fleeting thoughts as to how the runt had found him; Did he get the information from his mum? But the Fidelius should have blocked that.

Did he follow me from the library, if so, what was the Pure-blood doing in non-magical England? These thoughts flew from his mind as he ducked a Dark curse.

"Liar!" screamed Draco. "The Black fortune was mine and you stole it from me." Then his voice took on a condescending quality and he sneered, "The goblins will spill anything for the right price, and with you their number one enemy, it was easy to learn what you did to trick them into taking the gold."

Hydrus peeked around the alley corner. Draco looked mental with rage, his face splotchy red; his eyes wild as they looked for where the dark-haired wizard had hidden. It gave Hydrus the faint reminder of Uncle Vernon.

"It is entirely your fault that my family is now poorer. Not that it matters anymore, when you're dead, I'll reclaim what is my rightfully mine."

Seeing where his opponent was Draco's jugular popped as he swung his

wand and shouted, "Avada Kedavra!"

He ducked and fired the Entrail Spilling Curse back. Shite, he's playing for keeps.

The two fought viciously in that alley, Draco with self-righteous rage, and Hydrus in defense. The rage made Malfoy stupid, causing most of his curses to miss, and the immortal's studies made him the better opponent, his spells were accurate and Draco was soon a bleeding mess. It was too bad the blond man didn't fall. His anger must be keeping him standing, the young immortal thought as he ducked one more wildly cast spell.

Minutes passed with deadly curses being thrown from both sides. The alleyway was looking like a battle zone. Scorch marks were defacing the brick walls. Trash containers and debris were used as obstacles, causing them to explode; making it look like a whirlwind had passed through.

Neither boy was backing down.

Then the dark-haired teen had a thought, he wanted to ask Death some questions about what had him so distracted that he was caught in this fight in the first place. So, maybe he should let the idiot strike him with the Killing Curse. With that in mind, he started taunting his childhood enemy.

"Poor little Draco, his family is losing money. You should be kissing my feet for making you and your father's dreams reality." He ducked another Dark spell and sent a non-deadly curse back; now that he waited the ferret to throw the Unforgivable his spells were less aggressive. "You and your kind now have everything they ever wanted. Aren't you afraid that rumors are true and I'm the new Dark Lord? Do you think you can kill someone as powerful as me?" he asked in a haughty voice, knowing that Malfoy would never believe him.

"You, a Dark Lord, don't make me laugh," the blond scoffed as he threw

another curse.

Hydrus, seeing that it wasn't the Killing Curse, spelled a trash can in its path. He didn't want his body damaged.

"What's the matter, Malfoy, not powerful enough for more than one Killing Curse? Here, I'll even stand still long enough for you to try again," he mocked as he lowered his wand and came from behind the dumpster he was using as a shield.

Enraged at the derisions, Malfoy threw the curse and the young immortal fell. That scared Draco enough to flee the scene, coward that he was.

He was once again in the grey space; he called out to Death to come to him. The tall thin deathly pale man joined his Master. The two sat rigidly in conjured chairs. Death not wanting a Master and Hydrus knowing that the deity was limited on what he could say, neither one was comfortable. So, the conversation that followed was stilted.

"You wished to see me, Master?"

"Yeah, I wanted ask a few questions. Will you be able to answer them if I ask in the right way?"

"There is much I cannot tell you," was the vague reply.

"Right, so I'll just ask and you answer anything you can. I was going over the sums and have come to the conclusion that a new branch will start. Is this correct?" the dark-haired wizard asked.

"You are on the correct path."

"So, will all the deceased souls be copied over, or will they just leave this realm into the new one?"

"No one leaves my realm."

He nodded at that, it was one of his conclusions. "This isn't your realm?"

"No, this is simply a middle ground between the two."

"Wait, you told me this was the Land of the Dead," the young immortal

accused.

"It is."

Giving up on that line of questioning, he asked, "If the Hallows follow me to the new path, then will they disappear or will there be doubles?" that was something that bugged the teen.

"They are the only Hallows."

The Master of Death was not sure how he felt about that, so he put it to the side to mull over later. "Can the control of the Hallows be transferred or taken away?"

"You are my Master."

"So, the horcruxes," he started, hoping to get a better answer this time, "can they be taken care of without destroying the container?"

A wicked grin crossed the other man's face, like Hydrus finally asked the right question. "Oh, yes, Master, you will find the book you need in your inventory. You would do well to read every book you own," he added the grin only widening at the groan that came from the young immortal.

"Right, that was all I wanted to know, for now. Can you send me back, please?" he asked as stood and waited for the deity to just that, thankful for the few answers he got.

Death also stood and said, "Until I see you again." He waved his arm and forced the soul to return to the body.

Hydrus gasped, sat up and looked around. He was still in the alley, thank Merlin. He made sure Draco was gone and there were no more threats around and then dropped his glamor. Picking himself up off the disgusting side street, he pulled down the ward and made his way home. He was glad Kreacher didn't see what had happened. The poor old elf might have died of shock. Going into Grimmauld Place, he settled in the study he wrote a letter to Hermione explaining his new theory and how

he reached it. He called George with the same information and his conversation with Death. He invited the redhead to come and visit him as soon as he was able. George said he'd be over in a few hours.

George came when he said he would, and the two started reevaluating the research. Their answer was that a new branch would start and Hydrus wouldn't cause a paradox. Now they were going over plans to steal from the Pure-bloods. George commented that he should either get a new vow from Fletcher or Obliviate him. Not that the redhead didn't like Mundungus, he just knew the man would do anything for money. He said he'd think about it, the thief had outlived his usefulness anyway.

They decided that Hydrus should stay a few more years, to make sure that he had every bit of research done before he went back. There were things the young man was going to need to know and plan for. They had a huge debate on what to do with the people that the dark-haired wizard wanted to make sure were out of his life. They went back and forth for hours, not coming to any understanding. He made a promise that he would think about it carefully, and try not to let his emotions guide him.

After that George had to leave.

After seeing his friend off, Hydrus relaxed with a good non-magical mystery novel. He would think about horcruxes, manipulative and vindictive people, and Death Eaters another time. He just wanted to unwind for the night.

Hphphp

Thanks for all the reviews, favs and follows. Just to let you know updates are going to be slower, as it is harder for me to write this story and this is the last of my prewritten chapters.

The next chapter will have a major time skip and Hydrus will be going back in time.

Also for those who are reading my Practical Magic story. I haven't abandoned it, it's just at a standstill for the moment.

## 7. It Is Time

### Chapter 7 It Is Time

AN: thanks to my betas, The 5h15 Spaceman, darreldeam and alix33. All mistakes are my own.

AN: This chapter is mostly narration, but, to get to where Hydrus meets Harry it is needed. Also I don't think you can purchase a house in one day, but for the sake of the story we'll say you can.

It was recommended that I warn you that Hydrus is a little darker than Harry Potter from canon, so here is that warning.

Anything you recognize isn't mine

Hphphp

A larger narration— mostly

The huge technological advancements in the non-magical world caused Hydrus to stay longer than he had planned. With this boom, his investments were paying off big time and his inventory was growing. The Rune arrays he and George invented made making the magical equivalence easy. The two inventors were also using the devices as stepping stones to create better ones. With magic many of the parts in the devices were unnecessary, so their laptops, readers, and TVs were smaller and thinner.

They created a security system and sold it to the Muggle-born still in England. It had a camera and was wirelessly tuned in to one of the flat screen televisions. It looked like a non-magical system, but would knock an intruder out if the code was not added to the keypad.

For as long as WWW stayed open in England the prank items were hot sellers, like; the joy buzzers, shocking tea cups, phony cell phones, and

many more. Non-magical Halloween items (powered by the array) also flew off the shelves as daily pranks; cauldrons with animated hag hands, mics that emanated a cackle when someone passed by, a moaning ghost that appeared before an unsuspecting person when a mine was stepped on and much more. George and Hydrus thought it was hysterical that the magical folk were buying the non-magical versions of what they thought wizards were.

The reason the magicals still didn't have any idea they were buying things based off of non-magical items is because they had secluded themselves even more from that world. The new Minister of Magic, a Pure-blood named Wilimar Greenhand, even stopped talking to the Prime Minister's office, which suited them just fine.

Tony Blair told Gordon Brown exactly what had happened and what was being done to prevent it happening again. He made sure to warn him about that blasted painting they couldn't get off the wall, the one that magically appeared whenever he changed offices.

With the educational programs that had been set up, the Muggle-born were thriving. They had come up with a spell to find the new wizards and witches, and visited them as soon as the first magical outburst appeared. They let the parents know all about the Pure-blood world and how their children would be treated there. They told tales of their trials and how so many had been killed.

Most of the parents agreed to have a spell cast upon their house to keep England's Magical Ministry from finding the kids and trying to force them to go to Hogwarts, not that the Pure-bloods were doing that right now, but they might in the future. They would send their children to the new school for non-magical raised. The ones that didn't join either moved to a more adaptable country or took their chances with the Pure-bloods

(usually Half-bloods who wanted power). Those that took the second option were Obliviated of the meetings.

During these years Hydrus finished the University and took up acting classes. There he learned the fine art of makeup and how to pull off an upper-class personality. He was going to need these lessons when he went back. He got some grey contacts, grew his hair long and had a nice goatee; he looked a lot like Sirius.

He also made sure he knew how to drive, even if he didn't buy a car or get a license.

McGonagall had left the school in a fit of fury. When the Board of Governors declared that no Muggle-raised was allowed to attend, she stormed out of the only home she had known for years. The former transfiguration teacher didn't leave Scotland; she bought a little cottage and kept mostly to herself. Most of the other teachers had left ages ago, since most of them were half-breeds or Muggle-borns.

Flitwick had left the year the public called Harry the next Dark Lord. His contacts with the goblins caused him to find work outside of Britain, since he didn't agree with the British goblins that Harry Potter was the reason for their plight.

The friends of Hydrus's that had left, all those years ago, wrote occasionally. He knew Luna had started the newspaper that she wanted, though it only did as well as the Quibbler. Her father stayed in Britain and was considered a mild annoyance for his constant rebuttals of the Prophet.

Hermione's letters had thinned out after her research concluded that Hydrus had to go alone. When she realized that, she decided to put some distance between Harry and herself, so threw herself into her job and getting to know her parents better. It had been a shock to her, that by

taking away their memories, she had changed their personalities. She was content in her new life.

Neville's parents were cured and very put out with their family for the treatment their son received. They were shocked that all the things they had been fighting for were lost causes in Britain; however, they didn't blame Neville for leaving. He only wanted to make them better, after all. The Weasleys did just what Hydrus thought they would. They opened their doors to the oppressed. Ron, after three years, got his NEWTs and now played for his Quidditch team, the Chudley Cannons. He moved into his own flat when he got his first paycheck. Molly let him go since she needed his bed. Ginny and Dean married and moved to London. Dean was working on bringing his wife's non-magical education up to A-levels, so she could find work. Mrs. Weasley was more reluctant to let her little girl go, but after many arguments had little choice. Arthur was still an underpaid employee at the Ministry. The older Weasley boys made sure to send money every month to keep the Burrow afloat.

George's shop survived for five more years and then it closed. He still thought everything they pulled was a great prank. He reopened in France like he planned and was doing well. This time the wizards that bought things in the store knew exactly what they were purchasing.

Before the single twin left the country, he and Hydrus took great pleasure in relieving many of the Pure-bloods of their money. They used a sort of overpowered shock gun that nullified wards and curses, the Invisibility Cloak and a Disillusion charm to sneak in and rob the idiots blind. They were surprised how easy it was. The Pure-bloods didn't even bother with safes or locks; they used hidden rooms spelled to the gills. Knocking on the walls and soon enough they found the rooms. The gun made child's play out of the spells.

When they were doing Malfoy Manor, Draco wandered into the room.

Which was a bit of a surprise, one would think the man would have moved out by now. Hydrus thought about just killing the ferret, but decided that the Malfoys made their bed, they could lay in it. With that in mind he figured it was time for a little payback. Hydrus reverted to his Harry Potter persona, making sure he was as pale as possible, and removed the Cloak.

"Hello, murderer," he said eerily from behind the blond.

Draco jumped and twisted around so fast that he fell. "No, you're dead! I saw you die!" the scared teen shouted.

Hydrus heard footsteps coming their way, and reckoned he would have to hurry. "Like you could cast an Unforgivable," he scoffed. "You have to have power for that and your family's inbreeding put that to rest."

Draco sneered, "Liar, my father did..." realizing what he was saying and who he was saying to he stopped and scrambled to his feet and ran screaming from the room. "Mother, Harry Potter is haunting me!" was heard throughout the Manor.

"Draco, what have I told you about yelling in the house? What nonsense are you spouting; there are wards up to prevent ghosts." Hydrus knew that the wards didn't stop the ghosts from following the Malfoys whenever they left the house though.

"No, you have to beli..." the voice trailed off as the footsteps receded.

Hydrus quickly donned his Cloak and the two thieves, suppressing their mirth, finished their business and made haste out of the Manor. When they got back to Grimmauld Place, they laughed their arses off. Of course, the next day Rita wrote an article claiming that Harry Potter was now a vengeful ghost, which suited him just fine. The newspaper didn't report how the ex-hero died, just that he was haunting upstanding

citizens.

The two friends also made sure to ransack the houses of those still in Azkaban. Hydrus took extra delight in burning Umbridge's family house to the ground. The two split the booty fifty-fifty. Keeping Dark items to go over later, the books were downloaded quickly and left to rot on the shelves, now that the preservation spells were gone. Oh, they didn't get everyone before the Pure-bloods got a clue, but they did get most of the Death Eaters. House elves, which were now treated worse than before, turned away from the happenings since they were never told to guard the treasures.

Mundungus Fletcher had been killed by his vow when he tried to kidnap Hydrus for the goblins to get the bounty on his head.

Kreacher had passed away in his sleep, shortly after Hermione left.

Hydrus grieved for the old house elf, but was thankful he passed peacefully. He made sure to bury him in the back yard with the locket and a picture of Regulus Black. The immortal man decided that he wouldn't bond another house elf, thought he might hire a free one.

In the years that passed Hydrus went to the University and studied electronics and computers more thoroughly. He also received the credentials to teach non-magical children, thinking of homeschooling his younger self. That was something he was still thinking on, because the books he read all said that children needed to be around those of their age. However, play dates and parks could fill that need.

Sometime during the years passing, he snuck his way into Hogwarts, and went to the Room of Hidden things and cleared it out. He then asked the room for every book in the library and downloaded them on to his book-readers. He also made sure to hit the London Library.

It was 2010 when Hydrus decided enough was enough and he wasn't

going to be any better prepared than he was now. So he looked around for an abandoned house, which would have been on the market in 1981 so that he could purchase it when he went back.

After a week of looking he found the one he wanted. It was a good size with five bedrooms, three baths, two studies, a kitchen/dining room, and a living room. There were overgrown back, front and side yards, with plenty of trees in the back. These yards were surrounded by a surprisingly intact cast iron fence. He wasn't put off by the broken windows or the peeling wallpaper. He could see that it was only time that caused it. The foundation was in good repair and that was all he needed to know. It was set far back from the road and secluded because of the trees. It was just what he was looking for.

After finding the house he wanted, he needed to figure out what to do with Grimmauld Place. After a few weeks consideration, he decided to put his education to use and make the house non-magical. So he wired it up and banished anything that was even the slightest bit magical. Even the portraits he had stored oh so long ago. It was with a lot of laughter that he told Mrs. Black what he was doing. Her screams of denial and vengeance were music to his ears, and then he sent her to wherever it was that banished items went.

He put the house on the market with the profits going to Hermione. He sent her a bag of inventions and a small note. He wanted to do a huge letter, but felt that if he kept it short, maybe she wouldn't be hurt as bad, since they had drifted apart.

Hermione,

It is time for me to go. I wanted you to have these things that me and George invented. I am sure you will find them useful. Make sure you tell people that they can be found at Weasley's Wizarding

Wheezes in France. Also in the bag is a small fortune of 50,000 galleons. I am also putting Grimmauld Place up for sale on the non-magical market. You should have heard Mrs. Black when I told her. Anyway, I am having the money sent to you, because you are my best friend.

I am glad to hear that you are now friends with your parents.

Do me a favor and keep in contact with George, at least until he marries.

I am so sorry you can't come with me, please know that I will miss you and I'll do my best to make sure your younger self is friends with my younger self.

Harry Potter (Hydrus Black)

His plan didn't work, because the letter he received in reply was long, sad and full of advice—usually things he already thought of. She thanked him for the gifts and said they would be put to good use. She also said that she would make sure George was married soon, even if she had to set him up with every unmarried witch in France.

He sent an 'it's time' letter to George with 'goodbyes' and 'thank yous'. The letter he received in return was filled with 'you're welcomes and good lucks'.

He sent off one last missive to Andromeda, leaving Teddy Lupin a huge amount of non-magical money and a few of his stocks (Since Hydrus never claimed the title, the Black name died). He was glad that she had taken his godson and ran at the first sign that the British wizards wouldn't change. They were located in America, she never told him where, since he was still unwelcome around her family. They had however exchanged formal letters and Hydrus always made sure she had money. Now in this last missive, he told her he was disappearing and

asked that she tell Teddy the truth about him and not what history said.

He closed all of his accounts and sold off the rest of his investments, which took longer than he liked. He made sure the money he received in return was mostly put into gold bullion. Between what his investments brought in, WWW's proceeds and what they stole from the Pure-bloods, Hydrus had a fortune of over sixty-five million pounds and thirty million galleons. A nice amount of money in 2010 but unheard of in 1981, if he pulled it off right then he would be the richest wizard in Britain.

Thanks to the robbing of the Pure-Bloods, the British Government had fallen. According to the Prophet, the wizards that were left were trying to petition the ICW for help. From the evasive responses they were receiving that looked like a lost cause. Hydrus didn't feel any sympathy for them.

Present time

It was September 1, 2010 and he was standing in the abandoned house. By his calculations he would return to the same date in 1981 at the same spot. He found out that he couldn't go back further than Harry Potter's birth, and he didn't know when his parents went into hiding. So he chose a few months before that fateful night. He hoped to save his parents, or at least take down Voldemort when he appeared in Godric's Hollow. He had contingency plans in case that didn't happen, but he was going to do his best.

It was closing in on Midnight so Hydrus stood in the empty living room and faced the north wall. When his watch chimed the time he used the Elder Wand to slash at the barren wall and incanted, "Novi temporis ramus," keeping the year he wanted to go to running through his mind. Thunder clapped and lightning struck one of the trees outside, the wind picked up in the neighborhood. Paper debris flew in the broken window, the remaining glass fell, and the winds picked up speed ruffling his hair.

But Hydrus ignored all of this as he watched a long, near-blinding, white rip was forming on the wall. It started out small and then widened enough to allow a man to walk through.

When the portal was large enough, Hydrus entered. It felt like moving through a swamp, only one with an electrical storm happening. Every bit of hair on his body stood on end and he had an almost overwhelming desire to turn back. In seconds, that felt like hours, he exited and after emerging out the other side he groggily turned, squared his shoulders and firmly said, "Finite Incantatem," and with another slash of his wand the opening shrank back to nothing. He thanked Merlin for the Elder Wand; his normal phoenix wand would have failed to dispel the time warp.

The world blinked and a new branch was formed. Several things happened all at once. Every soul on earth was copied over (except Hydrus') and some more sensitive people felt the change in the air. An immortal collapsed. An old man's wand mutated into a useless stick. An Invisibility Cloak became a normal one that would fade with time. A heavily spelled ring turned non-magical, causing the curses to disperse and a soul fragment to wither, soon to die. The centaurs noted that Mars lost some of its brightness.

When Hydrus awoke the next morning, he smiled at what he saw. The wallpaper was in good repair, the windows weren't broken and the floor was only mildly dusty. It was a bright, if somewhat cold, day and the now neatly trimmed yards hosted singing birds. All of this gave the time-traveler reason to believe he was in the correct time. So, he took himself out of the house and noted the seller's name on the placard in the front of the house. The house was being sold by the owner, which will make it much easier to buy.

The first thing he needed to do was get some of his money into a bank.

No, the first thing I need to do is check to see if my pocket space came with me.

Hydrus ducked into the back yard and called forth his book-reader. When it came he let out a huge sigh of relief. Now, he could get things done. So he walked down the long pathway, went to the nearest bus stop and made his way to London.

There he hunted down Barclays Bank and after hours of signing papers he had an account. He made sure it was relatively small, only £500,000. It was a good thing that Fletcher had come through with those papers; he now had a birth certificate that stated he was born in 1956, a driver's license and other important documents for both worlds. He made a mental note to insert himself into the system as soon as he purchased the house. Though he was technically thirty, his paperwork stated he was twenty-five, easier to pull off.

The next place he went was to the newly opened Smith and Anderson. He reviewed the investments he wanted to make. They were unsure about some of them because the firm thought they would only be trends, but Hydrus was insistent.

He used a public phone to call the number of the owner and made arrangements with the man to meet him at the house the next day. Now, he needed food and shelter for the night. Thank Merlin, jeans and T-shirts were a fashion in this time. He really didn't want to buy a whole new wardrobe, though he would need to stick to solid shirts.

The next day at noon he met with Ralph Jerkins, the owner of the house.

He was an older normal looking man, one that you could lose in any crowd, with sandy hair and brown eyes. He was dressed the same as Hydrus in clean jeans and a T-shirt.

"Mr. Jerkins?" Hydrus asked as he approached.

"Yup, are you Mr. Black? You're kinda young to be buying a house," the man replied, though he did hold out his hand in greeting.

"I know I look young, but I'm twenty-five and my godfather left me a small fortune," he explained as he shook the hand. He pulled out his driver's license to prove his age. Thank goodness he had taken his aging potion.

"So, what's a young man like you need with a house this big? It's an old family home and I don't want to see it destroyed by a bunch of hooligans," Jerkins said, giving Hydrus a hairy eyeball. "The only reason we're selling is because me and the missus are the only ones left, and the house was getting too costly. However, we want to make sure the buyer would care for it. One of the reasons we didn't go through a realtor, they'd sell it to the first person who met the price."

No wonder the house has been on the market so long, Hydrus thought. "Not to worry, I'm just thinking about my future. I plan on having a big family and your house is perfect for that," he answered sincerely. "You see, I'm an orphan, so it is my dream to have a house such as this one and fill it with children. Like you, I am the last of my family."

It took a bit longer and a few more sob stories, until finally the older man caved. "Alright then, I'll take you at your word. Now, the house had been on the market for a few years. We've tried to keep it up, but the costs are getting out of hand. So we lowered the price to £ 120,000."

Hydrus didn't really care about whether this was a good price or not.

"Sounds good, shall we go and see your solicitor?"

"You're not going to haggle?" Ralph asked with a lifting of an eyebrow.

Most of the people he talked to wanted him to lower the price more, even if it was already below market value.

"Nope, I really want this house, and I have the funds."

"Right, let's go and see if Charlie is available," Jenkins said with a bit of relief. So the two made their way to his lorry and drove to the lawyer's office.

Hours of paperwork and two bank checks later and Hydrus was now the new owner. All three men shook hands and parted ways. Thank goodness that buying in cash made this go a lot faster, though it did cause the lawyer to ask a lot of questions. To which, Hydrus gave the same stories he had told Mr. Jenkins.

The second thing that Hydrus did was buy a new car. His eyes sparkled when he saw the Ferrari, but his brain kicked in. If he couldn't save his parents then he needed a car that could hold four people comfortably. So he turned his attention to the Mercedes Benz. In the end he purchased a 1981 Mercedes-Benz 240D 4 Door Sedan. Once again it took hours of paperwork; boy was he going to be glad when the internet boomed again. It was now night, so he drove to the nearest restaurant and ordered the fish and chips. Then he took himself home. He pulled bits of junk out of his pocket space, making a mental note to empty it and sort through everything. Then he used the junk to make a bed and blanket and promptly fell on to it, clothes and all, and fell asleep.

He woke the next morning and used a cleansing charm on himself and his clothes. He went to the empty living room, stood in the doorway, made the floor soft and said "Empty pocket space." As things flew out of the pocket and expanded to their normal size he moved back, quickly. There were hundreds of devices, pranks, clothes, furniture and appliances.

Some of these things were broken or unknown, because he never sorted out what he got from Hogwarts' secret room. Soon enough the room was full, which is when the young man stopped the flow. Hydrus had backed himself into a window, so he climbed out and went back around to the

living room.

It took the rest of the week to get everything sorted and in place, thank Merlin for magic. He re-added things to his storage space, banished or repaired broken things and moved everything to its proper room. He was glad that he had planned and had the magical equivalence of kitchen appliances and entertainment centers, which looked non-magical, though futuristic. He wasn't planning on inviting many people over, so it didn't matter. He only stopped to go get groceries after the kitchen was set up. And take care of his needs.

Every night an exhausted immortal fell into his bed. He woke the morning after everything was sorted, and after getting clean and dressed for the day, he ventured into the upstairs study. He went to the desk where a laptop was set up and used his hacking spell to find the current computer language and learn it.

He went to town and looked up where Government offices were, so he could break in and insert himself in the system. He would go that night. Security systems were a joke to get around in this time. The Invisibility Cloak, silencing charms and a good copy of his records and he would be free and clear in the non-magical world.

Now that all of that was done, he needed to plan on getting into Hogwarts, and get the diadem. He pondered if he should try and get it now or wait until winter break. He went over what he knew about the horcruxes and was frustrated that many were out of his reach for now. Since Mrs. Black was still alive, that one was out. Now, that he thought about it he wasn't even sure it was in Grimmauld Place. He never knew when Regulus died. No it has to be there, because it is close to the time Voldemort was vanquished, he reasoned.

He went to check on the ring, using the shock gun to blast the wards to

smithereens he found the ring was now free of all magic. So he chucked it over his left shoulder and went back home.

With the necklace and the cup out of his reach and the snake not created yet, he decided to take his chance on the diadem. Using what he hoped to be a Hogsmeade weekend, he made his way to Honeydukes and snuck to the cellar. The tunnel was dark and you could tell it had been a few years since it was last used. Putting on his Cloak and casting silencing charm, he crept out from behind the statue. He slowly made his way to the Room of Requirements. Pacing in front of the wall, he called up the Room of Hidden Things.

It took him only a short time to find the old crown. He picked up a random piece of junk and held it over the priceless heirloom, and incanted, "Repel aliena anima," moving the soul piece to the broken item. Calling up a ceramic bowl, he dropped some very potent acid on the new horcrux, held his breath and watched it blacken and listened to the screaming of the soul piece as died. Letting out a sigh of relief, he then tucked the diadem in his pocket and debated on whether or not to go into the Chamber of Secrets and kill the basilisk. He decided to wait until summer, just in case he was caught. He didn't want his new identity to have any more notoriety than the name Black already carried. He also debated on clearing out the room he stood in, but decided against it. He would send a letter to the Board of Governors, who weren't overly corrupt, yet, and let them decide what to do with this treasure.

He was going to attempt to fix this timeline. So that meant getting rid of a few bad eggs. He just had to figure out how and who. His meditations made him realize that some people could change and some could not. Those like Malfoy, Umbridge, Skeeter and the Lestranges would never change. Those like Snape would behave with the right... motivation.

Fudge and the Dursleys were a non-issue at the moment. He needed to get to Diagon Alley and establish himself. Bribes and corruption were the name of the game in politics.

He spent every night looking for the Potters, but they must be behind the Fidelius because he couldn't find hide or hair of them. It was getting frustrating and he cursed his lack of knowledge. He knew with the charm up he would have a difficult time, but he continued the search. He wrote letters to the Order, warning them that Pettigrew was a traitor, those letters went unanswered, though he did receive one from Sirius stating that he'd better quit defaming his friend. He had no idea how the man sent the letter, since he didn't sign his name. So, that avenue was out. Oh well, he'd just keep looking.

He thought about going straight to Dumbledore, but he had issues with the man and didn't want to argue with him. He would also have to prove how he knew, and he had no idea how to do that.

So, every night he spent going around Godric's Hollow looking for the Potter. He was even stopped by the Bobbies, they asked him what he was doing and he said he was looking for his family and they were unlisted.

When he gave the Potters name, of course the man didn't know where they were. He even had the fleeting thought of getting a bullhorn and announcing that they would be betrayed, but after the incident with the police he nixed it.

He also had plans on opening a household appliances and entertainment business. For that he would need a barrister and to have a go between for him and Hellströms (a dwarf run bank in Sweden). If he had it his way he would never set foot in Gringotts. The next morning saw him in Diagon Alley looking for business offices. He found a solicitor's office named Jasper and Jones.

After entering the building the secretary told him to wait and she'd see if either one was available. Twenty minutes later he was escorted into Mr. Jasper's office.

"Mr. Black, pleasure to meet you. I am Anthony Jasper," the short dark-haired man said as he came around his desk. "Funny that I've never heard of you, I thought I knew about all the Blacks." He held his hand out for Hydrus to take.

"Pleasure's mine, Mr. Jasper. I've been around; just don't draw attention to myself, since I was raised Muggle. My squib godfather died a few years ago and left me a huge amount of money. He invested a lot in the non-magical world," Hydrus said as he shook the man's hand. He then leaned over and whispered, "He was a bit of a gambler, if you know what I mean."

"Sorry for your loss," Mr. Jasper said sincerely. He then pointed to the chairs off to the side and the two settled. "So tell me, Mr. Black, what can Jasper and Jones do for you?"

"A few things actually," Hydrus answered. "First of all, can one open an account in Hellströms through your firm? I've had a bit of a bad experience with goblins and I really don't want to use Gringotts if I don't have to."

Mr. Jasper rubbed his chin in thought. "I believe so," he finally answered. "You will need to prove who you are, papers and such, then we can set up a vault for you."

Hydrus was relieved that blood verification wasn't needed; then again blood magic was against the law. "Right, second thing I need is an empty store to be purchased. I have the money to pay in cash so I'd like that done as soon as possible." He then gave the general outline as to what he needed. "I also need to patent my inventions, believe me they will

revolutionize the wizarding world."

Mr. Jasper made some notes and nodded, he waved his hand for the young man to continue.

"The last thing I need is for a separate vault to be set up for... political purposes," Hydrus said, trying to be casual.

This caused the lawyer to narrow his eyes at the young man in front of him. "I do hope that you do not expect this firm to... buy votes," he bit out.

"No, of course not," the young immortal said quickly.

"As long as we understand one another," Mr. Jasper said as he turned back to his notes.

The two men ironed out the plans for the vaults and the business. Hydrus said he would come the next day to pay the firm and give Mr. Jasper the money to open the vaults. While he was there he bought a house elf named Tippy, who he was going to free and hire on.

He then made plans to advertise for someone to run the store, so he could hunt down Death Eaters or find the Order of the Phoenix. He wanted to do all he could to help. Unfortunately he had no idea where the Order met. He did however know where most of the Death Eaters lived. But, he would have to be more careful, since most of them had innocent children. He also wanted to see if the rumors were true and Voldemort had placed a taboo on his name. If so he could set up traps for the Death Eaters and maybe catch the Dark Lord and finish this off without his parents dying or Harry becoming the Boy Who Lived.

The weeks flew by, his accounts and business was set up. The appliances and entertainment centers he was selling weren't too outlandish, though some of the Muggle-raised seem to find them fascinating. He made sure that they didn't outdate the non-magical equivalents—much. He hired a

manager, a clerk and a squib bookkeeper (since the only magical bookkeepers in Britain were goblins) so he had little to do with the store. Hydrus found out there was a taboo on the name, and when he wasn't busy with setting up the store, he used it to capture fifteen Death Eaters. He would trap them, bind them and then feed them the Draught of the Living Dead. He then put them in very old non-magical crypts in abandoned cemeteries. He'd figure out what to do with them later.

He was ecstatic to get Bella, Lucius and Crouch Jr., now, hopefully, the Longbottoms would be okay. He had thought to just kill them; however, he didn't want Voldemort to feel their deaths. Let that twisted bastard think they were captured. He'll leave them here where they can't harm anyone. Until after Halloween, he'd ignore them, maybe then he would kill them. He put up wards so no one would find them and walked away. After he captured Malfoy, he broke in to Malfoy Manor and destroyed the diary. There was a close call, when Dobby popped in to clean the room. It took every bit of willpower Hydrus had not to call out to his old friend. Hopefully with Lucius gone, the house elf will be treated better. It was with a bit of remorse that the young man realized that his plans would make it unnecessary for Dobby to befriend young Harry.

Now it was Halloween night, and Hydrus was looking for his parents' house in Godric's Hollow, he had been searching every spare moment he had since he came back, but never found it. The problem was he couldn't get past the Fidelius Charm. He must have been too young to remember the secret and he only visited the house once, at night. He never went back in his timeline, since Umbridge had razed the cottage when he was enemy number one. So he was searching for out of place numbers.

He was on the other side of the village when he felt the explosion of magic. His cry of "Noooo!" scared some of the locals as they watched the

distraught young man run down the street.

## 8. The Plans That Didn't Survive

First Cont

Chapter 8 The Plans That Didn't Survive First Contact

AN: thanks to my betas, The 5h15 Spaceman, darreldeam and alix33. All mistakes are my own.

AN: once again I will point out that I am not good with accents. So if Hagrid's is off, my apologies. Also there is a bit of cussing. Sirius may be a bit OOC, but we really never knew him before Azkaban, so this is my take on that. One more thing, Hydrus is a bit aggressive in this chapter.

Anything you recognize isn't mine.

Hphphp

Running down the cold streets of Godric's Hollow, Hydrus prayed he wasn't too late. He could now see the smoke coming from the house and noted that no one else seemed to, but that was a question for another time. He had a feeling that that magical blast was the rebounding Killing Curse. He cursed all the people in his life that kept him in the dark. If he had known when they went into hiding he could have prevented this whole night. He thought he had come back early enough to thwart his parents' death, but his planning was futile, they were already hidden when he came back in time.

He Apparated to where the smoke was, maybe he could catch Pettigrew.

Hydrus arrived just in time to see the rat come out of the house. He fired off a Sectumsempra Curse catching the traitor on his chest, but it didn't kill Peter and the rat Disapparated. Once more the distraught immortal yelled his frustrations in the sky.

He hurried inside and saw his dad, dead on the floor. It looked like James had put up a one hell of a fight. Furniture was overturn and spell marks

marred the walls. His wand was still clutched in his fist, though it was broken, like someone had stepped on it. Hydrus took a moment and closed his father's eyes. He was remorseful that he couldn't save him and knew that his mum was also gone.

Tears ran down his cheeks as he took the stairs two at a time and when he came to the nursery he saw that little Harry crying in the crib, he quickly cast a sleeping charm in the child and looked over the scene. The wall behind the cot was gone; every bit of furniture was damaged. The immortal disregarded the empty robes of the temporarily vanquished Dark Idiot. He cried over his mother for a moment until he heard a noise. Hydrus picked up Harry, pulled on his Cloak and looked around not wanting to stand in the middle of the room. He could just Apparate out, but he really wanted to catch Sirius before the dogman went after the rat. If he remembered correctly many people came here this night, the stories were conflicting as to in what order everyone appeared. He continued to look around and found what he was looking for. In the ruins of the nursery there was a large old-fashioned wardrobe. The doors were broken, but it looked like he could safely stay in there with Harry and attack if it was an enemy.

Must be from Dad's side of the family, it has the Potter crest on the front, Hydrus thought in relief. Thank Merlin for Pure-blood traditions. He quickly hid in the closet and hunkered down, keeping the still out cold Harry pressed to his shoulder.

From a crack in the door, he saw a dark shadow fill the doorway, and to Hydrus's surprise Severus Snape shakily walked in the room. It had been so long since he viewed those memories that he had forgotten that the man was the first to appear in the ruined house. His emotions about that man were still conflicting, he didn't want to kill him, but he wanted the

Potions Master out of Harry's life. However, now was not the time for that confrontation. So, for now all he could do was sit and wait. He leaned back in the closet to rest; he wanted to be alert when Sirius showed.

After what felt like hours of listening to the other man cry through his anguish, heavy footsteps were heard. Snape stood and Disapparated out of the room. A larger shadow filled the doorway and the huge form of Hagrid came into the room. Tears were rolling down the gentle half-giant's face and wetting his scraggly beard. A large handkerchief was being utilized.

After he cried more of the body of Lily, Hagrid went to the crib and when he didn't see young Harry he got confused. He started his search and spotted the wardrobe was partly open. Hydrus held his breath, he didn't want to tangle with Hagrid; he would lose, since he was leery about hurting his first friend. Hagrid's only sin was that he trusted Dumbledore too much.

Harry started to wake, squirming to get comfortable. No, no, no, not right now, Hydrus thought as he gently rocked the child, causing his Cloak to shift.

The large man made his way to the closet, opened the door and noted the shoe peeking out of the Cloak. "Who 're ya, and what 're ye doin' with 'arry?" he asked as grabbed where he thought an arm would be, the Cloak slipped off and he pulled Hydrus out.

Hydrus quickly removed himself from that huge hand. "I'm not here to hurt anyone. I tried to find them and warn them, but I couldn't," he rambled, the tears were now dried track marks. He was hoping that Hagrid wouldn't question how he knew the Potters were in trouble. "I looked everywhere for the house. I just wanted them to be safe."

"Ya look like ya've been cryin', 'ow did ya know the Potters?"

"I didn't really, I just feel bad that I couldn't help them. I overheard some Death Eaters in a pub that some bloke named Pettigrew gave up the secret and that they were in trouble," Hydrus said, thinking of the first thing that came to mind.

"Why didna tell Dumbledore?" Hagrid asked.

"I had not time to send an owl, and I have no idea where he is."

"Well, I reckon that makes sense. So who are ya? Ya look like Sirius. Ya need to give me 'arry," the taller man demanded and went to grab Hydrus again.

The young immortal darted around the crib. Harry started to cry, and Hydrus did his best to comfort him. "Stop, you're going to hurt Harry and neither one of us what that. Really, I'm only trying to help. Look, here, I'll swear to it." Adjusting his hold on Harry, he called his wand and said, "I, Hydrus Williamsford Black, hereby swear on my life and magic I only want to help Harry James Potter." A blue light sealed his vow. "Lumos, Nox"

"iffin ya really want to 'elp then give me 'arry. I've gotta take 'im to Dumbledore," Hagrid said as he held out his large hands for the baby.

Hydrus relented, he knew where was Harry going and he really didn't want to take on Hagrid. So he handed the baby over and moved back.

Running footsteps were heard entering the house and tormented cries of Sirius Black filled the air.

Hagrid turned and left the room and went down the stairs, carrying Harry. Hydrus decided to remain until the large man left and then he would talk to Sirius. He listened to his godfather demand Harry and Hagrid deny him, stating he was following orders. He then heard Hagrid tell him there was a cousin of his in the nursery, and that he had given a

vow to help. Then Hydrus heard Sirius give his motorcycle to the large man. Sirius then climbed the stairs to see who this mysterious person was.

Sirius whipped out his wand when he spotted Hydrus. "Who the hell are you? You look like a Black, but I don't recognize you. What are you doing here? If I find out you had anything to do with the death of my friends, I'll kill you," he snarled. His grey eyes were crazed and his face was menacing.

Hydrus thanked Merlin that the Order members were taught to be non-lethal. He held up his empty hands and quickly said, "My name is Hydrus Black, we're cousins... my grandfather was blasted off the tree. I've been raised by a squib in the Muggle world. Look, I tried to prevent this. I heard that ole' Voldy was going to be here tonight, so I came to stop him," he said when the wand rose to his head. "Didn't you hear Hagrid? I gave a vow to help Harry. Listen to me, if you want to see your godson again you need to stop threatening me and just listen."

"What do you mean? Hagrid is taking Harry somewhere safe," was the confused response. Then that face turned thunderous, "What are you planning to do to my godson?" he shouted, lifting his wand again, this time casting a stunning curse.

Hydrus ducked and started to yell at the other man. "Nothing, but Dumbledore is placing him with Petunia. You know how she is," he defended himself. "Look, I have a plan, but you need to get to the lawyers the Potters used and get the will read. You need to clear your name or you're going to wind up in Azkaban."

"No, Dumbledore will take care of Harry, so what I need to do is hunt down the rat," Sirius snarled and turned to leave the room, dismissing the unarmed man as unimportant. Obviously the man wasn't thinking

straight.

Hydrus called up his wand and yelled, "Petrificus Totalus. Silencio." The spells hit the stubborn man in the back. The time traveler sighed, he had been hoping to talk sense into the other man, but that wasn't happening. He had time to think about his Sirius's actions and the talks they had had, it had given him hope that by threatening this Sirius with never seeing Harry, then the emotional man would stop and think. Looks like plan B. "Listen to me, you hotheaded moron. Do you want to spend the rest of your life in Azkaban? Leaving Harry to the gentle care of the Dursleys? Think for a minute, you idiot," he said as he advanced on the frozen man. "You go after Peter and you lose, everyone will think you were the Secret Keeper and that you gave up your friends to the Dark Lord. If you don't want that to happen, you will do as I say and get to the lawyers, clear your name, and meet me at this address," he continued and pulled the written address from his pocket.

Hydrus could tell from the defiant look in the other man's eyes it wasn't going to be that easy. With a sigh he Accioed his Cloak, grabbed Sirius and departed to his house. He would leave him here while he went and got Harry. So he put him on a bed, took Sirius's wand and conjured up rope to keep the volatile man bound for when the body bind wore off.

"I'll be back as soon as I have Harry. You think about what I said while I'm gone. It shouldn't be more than a few hours. Tippy," he called.

"Master Hydrus wants Tippy?" the house elf said when she popped in.

"Can you look after this idiot and make sure he doesn't hurt himself?" he asked, sending a glare at the bound man. He was having second thoughts on keeping Sirius here, but he would give him a chance to redeem himself to Harry.

"Tippy can be doing this," Tippy said with a firm nod of her head. She

would do anything for this man. After he bought her; he sat her down and explained that he wanted a free elf. It took a lot of convincing, but they finally came to an agreement. She would be free and be paid two sickles a week with one day off a month, and he would keep her on until she died.

Giving the elf a grateful smile Hydrus donned his Invisibility Cloak and made his way to an alley near Privet Drive. It was close to dawn and the time traveler was a bit confused, there was no baby on the doorstep. He was just about to go and knock on the door when he heard the sound of Apparition. Melting into the shadows and putting the Cloak back on, he saw Minerva McGonagall transform into a cat and sit on a wall. The longer the two magicals stayed in the neighborhood the more muddled Hydrus got. According to Hagrid he had come here right away, so where was he? All day the two sat and watched the house and the Dursleys. The young man chuckled when Vernon tried to shoo the transfigured teacher. Night finally fell and then something happened, Dumbledore appeared, now everything was playing out like he had been told, but what happened to Harry during the day? How did people know about Voldemort's defeat? Judging from the news reports he overheard on one of the neighborhood tellies about the owls and fireworks, Hydrus concluded that word got out, he just didn't know how or who. He kept far back from the house, making sure he was out of sight of the all-seeing Headmaster. He waited for the scene to play out and after the other magicals left, he crept to number four and gently lifted the sleeping baby. He felt the blood wards bond to him. That was unexpected, but I guess, reasonable. After all, I have Lily's blood in me and I'm technically a closer relation to Harry than Petunia. This will make taking care of him much easier. Holding Harry tight, he popped back to his house. Once there he could

feel the wards settle on the house and bond with the wards he already had set. Harry had woken and was fussing. His tired face screwed up in confusion as he looked around the unfamiliar room and big person and he said, "Mummy?"

"Mummy is sleeping right now, Harry. You should be a good boy and try and get more sleep. Uncle Hydrus will wake you up for breakfast," Hydrus said, making sure the baby was still clean.

"Mummy sleep?" the tiny tot asked as he rubbed his eyes.

"Yes, Harry, she will be sleeping for a very long time."

"Tay," was the tired response as Harry leaned his head on Hydrus's shoulder and went back to sleep.

Hydrus was actually pretty impressed with his younger self's vocabulary, must be because he had only been around adults. Shaking those thoughts away for now, he took the tyke into the nursery and laid him down in the crib and made sure the baby monitor was on. He gently drew a finger over the wound on Harry's forehead, the famous lightning bolt scar. The dreaded horcrux. It was a good thing he prepared for this. Shaking himself from his musings, he then went to see how Sirius was doing.

The other man was asleep, judging from the tear tracks on his face, he must have cried himself to that state. Sirius was tossing and turning, as much as the ropes allowed, so that sleep wasn't peaceful. Hydrus felt bad for leaving the older — Oops, theoretically I'm older, and isn't that weird— younger man alone for so long. He still didn't understand what had happened since he was at Godric's Hollow. He waved his wand and undid the ropes, removed the silencing charm and left Sirius to sleep.

He was exhausted; the adrenaline was gone. He called up some Pepper-up potion, put the letter that was with Harry aside and decided to meditate on everything that went wrong this evening. The same

questions popped into his mind. How did everyone know? Where was Harry all day? Come to think of it, how did Snape and Hagrid know to be there? Snape might have been told by Voldemort, but how did Dumbledore know to tell Hagrid? Around and around these questions chased one another, but no answers came. Once again he cursed everyone for his lack of knowledge.

The sounds of Harry waking drew him out of his meditation. He made his way to the nursery and picked up the toddler. "Ready for breakfast, Harry?" he asked as he checked the nappy. Seeing it needed to be changed, he headed to the changing table and took care of it. He grabbed some clothes he had purchased, just in case, and put them on the silent baby.

Harry during all of this was looking around with wide eyes. Once the big person finished cleaning him he asked, "Mummy?"

"Your mummy is still sleeping," Hydrus said sadly. "I am Uncle Hydrus; I'll be taking care of you now."

"Daddy?" the toddler asked as tears started to well up in his eyes as he got more confused.

"Daddy is with Mummy."

"Pa'fut?"

"He'll be up soon. Let's go see him and then get something to eat while we wait for him to wake up." And with that he carried Harry to the room Sirius was still sleeping in and showed the scared boy that someone he knew was there. That seemed to relax the toddler so they went to the kitchen.

Harry was sitting in a high chair and eating away at some bananas and dry cereal. Hydrus settled on a bowl of the same cereal only with milk. Tippy was puttering around the kitchen. The toddler was quiet as he

munched on his breakfast, not really understanding what was going on.

He was sure his mummy and daddy would come soon.

It wasn't long until they heard someone barreling down the stairs. A very unkempt Sirius came running in to the kitchen. He skidded to a halt when he saw the other occupants. He reached for the wand that wasn't there and yelled at the only adult, "Who the fuck are you? Why do you have Harry? Where the hell are we?"

That started Harry crying, causing Tippy to do her best to soothe him.

Seeing Harry was in good hands, Hydrus got up and grabbed Sirius by his robes and slammed him into the wall in the hallway, out of the view of the child. "If you don't calm the fuck down, then by Merlin's beard, I'll feed you the Draught of the Living Death and keep you in the cellar," he snarled furiously and slammed the other man into the wall again. The deadly look in his eyes showed that he had no problem doing just that. Sirius tried to break free, but the stranger was stronger than him. He looked at the other man's angry face and roared, "Who do you think you are? That is my godson and I won't let you keep me from him."

"Yes, and you've done such a great job so far," sneered Hydrus. "You abandoned him to Hagrid to hunt the rat. You had no idea where he was being taken, even when I tried to warn you, you were more intent on your vengeance. Now, you've scared the living daylight out of him with your yelling. Yes, such a wonderful godfather you've been in his time of need." He shoved the man once again. "His parents died, and the only person you're thinking of is yourself. Merlin, why did I think bringing you in was a good idea? So, what's it going to be? Are you going to shut the hell up and listen to me? Or am I going to let you go and have you run off after Peter? I can tell you right now if you do then you will never see Harry again."

"Why? That traitor deserves to die," Sirius asked vengefully.

"Because, you inbred moron, if you go after him then you'll wind up in Azkaban." Another slamming into the wall.

"How the hell would you know that?"

"Look, if you stop yelling, calm down, and let me take care of Harry, I'll tell you everything you need to know," was the gentler response. Harry was still wailing at all the angry voices. So Hydrus let go of the robes and returned to his younger self. "Shhh, it's okay, shhh," he cooed as he picked up the scared baby from where Tippy was trying to calm him.

"Uncle Padfoot is just sad; he didn't mean to scare you. Did you, Padfoot?" sending a piercing glare to the other man.

Sirius visibly wilted and moved to pat Harry on the back. "It's alright, Prongslet, Uncle Padfoot is sorry he yelled."

Harry hiccupped and looked to his godfather, seeing the man was not yelling any more he snuggled into Hydrus's shoulder, feeling safe with the big person. Hydrus continued to rock him and soothe his fears with meaningless noises.

Hydrus jerked his head to the living room and moved to go there.

Settling a now quiet Harry in a playpen that had a few toys, he nodded for Sirius to take a seat in one of the chairs.

"How did you know my nickname? No one knows it except me and my friends," the now calmer, but still frazzled man asked.

Hydrus sighed and ran a hand down his face. "I didn't want to say anything at the cottage, there are too many questions on what happened that night. For all I know the place was bugged... listening charms," he explained at the confused look. "How did anyone know what happened? Two people showed up before you did, so how did they know? One was a Death Eater, the other Hagrid. Now correct me if I'm wrong, but Hagrid

had orders from Dumbledore to take Harry to the Dursleys. So how did the headmaster know the Potters were dead? I was there right after it happened and your esteemed leader of the Light never showed his face. Too many unanswered questions. Ones you should be thinking about."

"That explanation leads to the question on how you knew," Sirius accused loudly, once more looking for his wand.

"If you start yelling again, so help me, I'll Obliviate you of the last week and let you suffer your own fate," Hydrus growled softly as he looked to make sure Harry was unaware of the tension. Seeing that the toddler was occupied he shot a threatening scowl at the hothead.

"Fine, tell me how you knew," Sirius huffed, and defiantly folded his arms. He didn't have a wand so he was hindered for the moment.

Hydrus thought about it for a few minutes, going over the pros and cons on telling this ill-tempered man who he was and how he got here.

Azkaban must have done a number on his Sirius, because while he had a temper, he thought things out better than this Sirius. This guy was hard to deal with, with his constantly jumping emotions. Then again, maybe he was being too hard on the guy; after all he did just lost his best friend and if Hydrus remembered correctly Sirius was feeling a lot of guilt. The immortal knew the feeling well, years of therapy had helped, but he still felt like he failed. Both men were running on pure emotions.

Coming to a tentative decision he drew the Elder Wand and pointed it at the man, in case Sirius decided to snatch Harry and run. He then called Sirius's wand and threw it at him. "I'll give you one chance to be in Harry's life. You make a vow to me, here and now, that you will keep my secrets and I'll tell you everything. If you don't I will do as I threatened and wipe your memory of me, Harry and the last few days. Make your choice, vengeance or Harry?" he demanded, never lowering his wand.

You could see the war being fought in Sirius's head. His eyes would flit to Harry in sad thoughtfulness, then to Hydrus in confusion and then to the front door in anger. It was a long battle and Hydrus kept his wand pointed at the other man's head. Ten stressful minutes went by and finally Sirius's shoulders sagged in defeat.

"What do you want me to say?"

"Just vow that you will keep mine and Harry's secrets until such time as I release you," Hydrus said, still aiming his wand. He didn't trust the man; he was just so different than the Sirius he remembered. "If you still want Peter after you hear me out, I won't stop you."

"I need your full name."

"Hydrus Williamsford Black," was the succinct response. Hydrus hated that name, but George thought it up; said it sounded posh. So he kept it to remember his brother in all but blood.

That caused an eyebrow to rise. "I, Sirius Orion Black, do hereby swear on my life and magic to keep the secrets of Hydrus Williamsford Black and Harry James Potter, until such time as I am released of said vow," Sirius incanted, a blue light sealing the vow. "Now, tell me who you are and how you know everything."

Hydrus put his wand away in his pocket; causing Sirius's other eyebrow to rise. "To put it bluntly, I'm from the future."

"Right, everyone knows time travel is impossible," was the doubtful reply.

"Not if you are the Master of Death and wield the Deathstick."

"That's a myth. Look, if you're not going to tell me the truth, then why did you make me take a vow of silence?"

"Listen, you inbred moron—"

"Will you stop calling me that?"

"—I am telling you the truth." He pulled a book-reader from his storage

and handed it to the disbelieving man. "This is a book-reader, invented in 1995 by a man named Frostwell. He left me his vault when there was only a rumor of the Dark Wanker rising again and a second war breaking out," he explained, ignoring the snort of disbelief. "On this device there are thousands of books, both magical and Muggle," he said, using the hated word.

Sirius took the device, but had no idea what to do with it. His knowledge of Muggle things was limited. Lily tried to educate him and James, but since they were in hiding most of the time, there was little she could teach. Sirius looked around the living room for the first time. There were weird items scattered everywhere. Over on the opposite wall from where he sat; there something he thought it was called a telly, only it didn't fit Lily's description. This box was large and flat, not big and bulky. There as a clock on the wall that appeared to be showing the time and the weather outside with numbers instead of hands. A very funny looking radio sat on the shelf, and a box he had no clue what was for, sat on the floor in front of the telly. All in all, it was bizarre, but it didn't prove the other man was from the future.

"This proves nothing, I need something more. I have no idea what Muggles do nowadays." He handed the book-reader back to Hydrus and folded his arms.

"Okay, I'll tell you a bit about your past," Hydrus nodded, he should've known it wouldn't be that easy. "You, James and the traitor are Animagi. You're a dog, James was a stag and Pettigrew is a rat. Remus is a werewolf. The four of you were known as the Marauders. Also I was the one who sent the letter warning you about Pettigrew. How did you send one back, anyway?"

Sirius growled at the mention of Peter, but remained in his seat. "You

sent those letters? Damn we should have listened to you. I sent it back with the same owl you sent mine with, just told him to return to sender."

He waved it away as unimportant. "What else do I need to know?" he asked, thinking the guy must be barmy.

"My birth name is Harry James Potter."

"What?!" the other man shouted and fell out of his chair, causing little Harry to start crying again.

"Dammit, Sirius, will you stop that?" Hydrus snapped as he got up to calm the toddler.

While Hydrus was rocking Harry, Sirius picked himself up and looked at the other man. He didn't look anything like James; though he had Lily's eyes (Hydrus never used his contacts at home). Looking harder he could see some of his friend's features, he still looked like a Black though. He settled back down in his chair and waited.

Hydrus joined him, with Harry on his lap. "Quit yelling," he said softly, but with a threatening look.

"Sorry," Sirius replied as he looked at young Harry's tear-filled eyes.

Harry was chewing on the ear of a stuffed bear and looking at Sirius like he was going to start using his loud voice again. He burrowed back into Hydrus's chest and kept watching his godfather.

"Now as I was saying, my birth name is Harry James Potter, but I changed it legally and magically. You helped with that, by the way. In order for me to not create a paradox, I had to change who I am," the time traveler explained, keeping his voice normal.

"But... Why did you come back? Was the future so horrible? You mentioned a second war, was that why? Did everyone die?" the rapid fire questions came.

"Not exactly," hedged Hydrus. "Yes, a lot of people died, everyone I called

family, but my only reason for this venture is to save Harry. No one should go through what I went through. I did try and save Mum and Dad, but the Fidelius kept me from them. By the time I got there they were gone," he said sadly, stroking the tot's back.

"Alright, tell me everything."

So Hydrus firmed his hold on Harry and started talking. He told about his life with the Dursleys, ignoring the vengeful noises of the other man, but shooting a glare to remind him to be silent. He went on about all of his trials in Hogwarts and how the populace would revere him and then vilify him at the drop of a hat. He went on about all his confrontations with the Dark Lord. The second war and what happened after; Sirius chuckled softly when he got to the revenge bits. He explained all of the preparations that he made to come back and finished with him appearing here and what he had done since he had been back. All this was recanted in monotone as to not wake the child that had fallen asleep partway through.

Not the bedtime story I had planned, Hydrus mentally groaned.

"What I didn't count on is you still being a hotheaded arsehole," he added at the end. When he said "arsehole," the half-awake Harry mimicked him, then the baby snuggled down and went back to sleep. — Oops I'm going to have to stop cussing, Hydrus chuckled to himself. "I guess I should've realized that Azkaban changed you. The Sirius I knew was more serious." The gobsmacked Sirius didn't even take up the old joke, his mind was reeling with everything he had just been told. He was now starting to doubt people he trusted most of his life. The three sat in silence while Sirius mulled everything over.

"You have Death Eaters in a coma, in crypts, in a Muggle cemetery?" he finally settled on. "So you meant it when you threatened to do the same

to me?"

"Yeah," was the cautious answer.

"I'm not sure if that is a great prank or if you're a sadistic bastard," Sirius said just as warily.

"Tell you the truth, I'm not sure either." Hydrus shrugged. He looked at the toddler sleeping in his arms and wondered if he wasn't being a little overzealous in protecting him.

Hphphp

Okay, so both men are feeling emotional and guilty and yeah Hydrus took it out on Sirius. I hemmed and hawed about this chapter, but finally settled on this version.

As for Harry taking to Hydrus so quickly, I have four children, and I can tell you that one would go to any stranger and demand to be picked up (which scared me to death), while another would scream bloody murder if anyone other than me went anywhere near her. The other two were indifferent, but would cuddle with those they felt safe with. Harry really doesn't understand where his mummy is, he only knows she is sleeping, so it is not that far-fetched.

## 9. Calmer Conversations

### Chapter 9 Calmer Conversations

AN: thanks again to my betas, darreldeam, alix33 and The 5h15 spaceman (who helped me with the fight scene). As usual all mistakes are my own.

This chapter has a lot of dialog, which is necessary; some of it will seem ridiculous, but again necessary. Sirius is going to come off as confused, but unlike Hydrus he hasn't had time to deal with his losses from the war, nor has he had any professional help, so yeah he is a bit unbalanced. It won't last long. Snape has to go, I can't write him, and so I'm getting rid of him as quickly as I

can. Also this story will have confrontations with Dumbledore, but I'm not going to bash him if I can help it.

Hphphp

Hydrus slowly stood, balancing a still sleeping Harry. "I'm going to settle him in his cot. You stay here and think on what you want to ask me. You can call Tippy, but you should know there is no alcohol in the house."

Sirius was still deep in thought and just waved the other man away. So Hydrus took Harry to his room. "Tippy?"

"Master Hydrus is calling Tippy?" the excitable elf asked when she popped in.

"Yeah, can you watch over Harry for a bit? We adults need to talk. He should stay asleep for a little while, but see to his needs when he wakes up, please," Hydrus said as he watched the sleeping tot.

"Tippy can do," the free elf said.

"Thank you, Tippy, you're the best," the time traveler said, with a small smile, and then he left the room to go and join his godfather/cousin. He settled back on the sofa and waited the other man out.

"If I had run off after Peter, I would've spent over twelve years in Azkaban?" a dawning horror coming over Sirius's face. As if he was just now realizing what Hydrus's timeline had held. "No trial, just chucked into prison? Dumbledore didn't try and get me out? Why? I was a good soldier to him," his voice started to rise.

"Sirius," Hydrus snapped, looking to the ceiling, "I get that you're angry, but Harry needs to sleep. I think he's suffering from magical exhaustion. I don't want to keep fighting you, so keep your voice down."

"Why don't you just throw up a silencing charm?" the confused man asked.

"Why don't you just control your temper? I don't use magic for

everything," the immortal snapped, one thing he had learned in his self-exile was that magic wasn't the cure-all. "Look," he said, running a hand through his hair, "if you are going to be part of Harry's life I need you to learn to control yourself. I don't want him exposed to a lot of anger."

"Okay, okay, I understand," Sirius said taking a few deep breaths. He still needed to process everything he had been told, plus grieve over all the deaths that happened recently.

"Sirius," Hydrus said, bringing the other man's attention back to him, "I wanted to apologize about accusing you of abandoning Harry, it was a bit hypocritical of me. And I said it in anger."

The other man waved it off as unimportant, there were a lot of things said that were in the heat of the moment. "Can you answer my questions? How did I wind up in Azkaban? Why didn't anyone stand up for me?"

"From what I understand, in what little information I could gather about this whole week, everyone thinks you're the Secret Keeper. When you went after Peter you caught up with him and he killed twelve non-magicals and framed you for his death. Crouch Sr. and Bagnold wanted a scapegoat and you were it. Dumbledore either believes you're the Secret Keeper or was content to have you out of Harry's life, for the Greater Good. I don't know which," Hydrus answered as best he could. He had researched everything he could. Even called up spirits of the dead, but all of the stories conflicted, even his parents couldn't answer some of his questions, like they had been Obliviated, and death hadn't cured them of that. The only way that could be explained was if the spell was cast with the Elder Wand, leaving Hydrus to have more doubts about the Headmaster.

"So what do I do now? I don't want to go to Azkaban," the now desperate man asked.

"First answer a few questions. Did the Potters use a lawyer to write a will?"

"Yeah, Lily insisted."

"Do you know which firm?"

"Yeah."

"Okay, that's good," Hydrus said with a nod of his head, plans forming. He called up a watch like gizmo and handed it to the other man. "This is a sorta glamor/Polyjuice device. It will only change you enough to look like a family member, but not yourself. George invented it, it takes a bit of your blood and combined with the glamor spell morphs your face," he explained. "I don't think that Dumbledore has had time to call the Wizengamot to have the wills sealed. Even with his pull, it would take a few days."

Sirius took the watch with trepidation, he really didn't know the man in front of him; however, Hydrus had stopped him from making the biggest mistake of his life. So taking a leap of faith he put the watch on. His cheekbones lowered, his mouth thinned and his hair shrank to ear length with his facial hair vanishing. It was a weird sensation. He conjured a mirror and looked at his new features.

"Now," Hydrus said, snapping Sirius's attention away from the mirror, "you need to get to the lawyer, have the will read, hire them to represent you and get custody of Harry."

"You don't want custody?"

"No, I have no legal ground; you, on the other hand, are his godfather. However, I do want all of us to live here, where the blood wards are."

"What blood wards?" Sirius asked, vaguely remembering Hydrus saying something about them in his narration earlier.

"Whatever Mum did to protect me and Harry, created a blood ward."

That's the whole reason Dumbledore wants Harry at the Dursleys. When I picked him up those protections bonded to me. So the house is now under those wards," Hydrus explained calmly. "The ones from my timeline were weak from the lack of love in the house. I plan on making these as strong as I can."

"We should do something about those people," Sirius growled, getting fired up once again.

"Stop, look, I understand the need for vengeance, but these Dursleys haven't done anything. So, no, I will not do anything to them. I plan on letting them live their pathetically normal life. Without me as a fall guy, that normalness will fade soon enough. The only Dursley I plan on ruining is Marge. That sadistic bitch needs to be taken down, but that's for later." By the time Hydrus had gotten around to Marge in his timeline, she had disappeared, so his need to get back at her was still strong.

"What? After everything they did to you?" was the shocked response. Even after all these years, he still wanted to torture his parents for the way they treated him as a child. So it was hard to understand why Hydrus didn't feel the same.

"I got my vengeance in my timeline. When I left they were still running from wizards. George said he'd track them down every now and then to keep that fear alive," the immortal shrugged. "Years of therapy helped not to want to get it in this timeline. Your constant need to get revenge is unhealthy, so you will see a therapist if you're going to stay here with Harry." It was a demand and not a suggestion.

"What?! I'm not crazy," Sirius yelled in defense.

"If you wake Harry, we're going to have words again," Hydrus threatened, shutting the other man up. "I didn't say you were crazy, I said your emotions were unhealthy. Besides, I know a bit about your past and what

you got up to at Hogwarts. What you find funny; I consider bullying. I will not have Harry raised a bully. Pranks are all well and good, if they don't hurt anyone. If you try and make him like you guys were in school, I erase your memory of us and dump you in London," the older man vowed.

"Wait, you're confusing me. One minute you want me to get custody, the next you're threatening to send me away. Make up your damn mind, for Merlin's sake," Sirius said, shaking his head and grabbing his hair.

"I do want you to get custody, and I want you in Harry's life, but there are going to be rules," Hydrus said in a much gentler voice, trying to get the man to see reason.

"How are you going to stop me from just grabbing Harry and running?"

"There you go again, not thinking of Harry," Hydrus accused. "There is no safer place on earth than in this house. No one can find him here, not even Dumbledore."

"Right, blood wards, forgot about them," the Animagus said with a shake of his head. He still wasn't thinking clearly, too much had happened to him in the last month and now this.

"Okay, look, you have to get to the lawyers before they close for the day.

The watch changed you enough that you should be able to get there unmolested. Don't go to the Ministry until you talked to the solicitor.

Don't forget your vow to keep mine and Harry's secrets."

Sirius looked at his new watch, which surprisingly told time, and noted it was three in the afternoon. He got up, cast a cleansing charm, righted his robes and said, "Right, I best get to it then. I'll be back in a few hours, hopefully."

"Since that huge scene with Peter never happened, you should be okay," Hydrus said confidently, even though he was a bit nervous for the man.

"You'll have to go to the fence, only I can Apparate to and from the house. Good luck and keep your temper."

"Right," Sirius said with a determined look on his new face. He then left the house with his Gryffindor courage wrapped around him like a shroud and went to face his fate.

After the other man left Hydrus called Tippy. When she appeared he asked, "How is Harry doing? Is he awake yet?"

"Little Master is being up for a while. Tippy is giving him peanut butter sandwiches in itsy-bitsy pieces and juiceys. Then Tippy is making sure Little Master is playing in his room."

"That's good. Has he asked for his mummy?" he asked, knowing it would be some time before Harry stopped, but the amount of times he did ask would show how well he is dealing with his parents not being here.

Hydrus wanted Harry to feel safe and not abandoned.

"It is being very sad, Little Master asks for his mummy when he is waking up and Tippy is telling him she is still sleeping. Little Master is wanting to be waking her, but Tippy is telling him that she is sleeping somewhere else. It is taking a while, but Tippy is calming him down," the little elf explained, with tears rimming her huge eyes.

"You did the right thing, Tippy." Hydrus said, kneeling down to her level and rubbing the sad elf's back.

"Tippy is only doing what Master Hydrus is telling her to be doing. She is understanding why Master Hydrus is telling Little Master lies, but Tippy is wondering when we can be telling the Little Master the truths," she asked shyly, still not use to being able to question the person in charge.

"When he is old enough to understand better, until then, I think I'll go to the cottage and see if I can salvage anything that might help him keep their memory," he said, rubbing his chin in thoughtfulness. He also

needed to find out what happened to Peter. Hydrus may not have been an Auror, but that didn't stop him from training as one. So he knew the correct investigative spells to hunt down the traitor. "Hey, I have to go out for a few hours. Are you okay with Harry?"

"Yes, Master Hydrus, sir, Tippy knows how to take care of babies," the little house elf said.

"Great, I shouldn't be long." And with that he donned his Cloak and popped to the ruins in Godric's Hollow. The place was swarming with people, wizard and non-magical alike. Carefully threading his way to where he had seen the rat last, Hydrus cast a spell to locate where the traitor had Apparated to. Trying to keep as quiet as possible, he popped to that location. Keeping his Cloak on in case the Aurors were also on the trail, Hydrus looked around. There was no more magical signature, but there was a blood trail.

Following that, he came upon a scene where there was a lot of blood. He cast again to see who had been there and found Snape's signature. The only reason he knew the Potions Master's magic was because of the many times he had been exposed to it in his timeline, like when Snape had used the very spell that Hydrus saw the remnants of on Draco to cure the same wound.

Damn, he must have doubled back and followed the trail as well, which means that Pettigrew is alive, he fumed silently. Or, Snape cured Peter enough to question him. Knowing Snape he used Legilimency and got the truth. That means he either took the rat to Dumbledore or he killed him and is disposing of the body.

Casting once more for Disapparition, he found only one trail. That path was blocked from being followed. Cursing the fact that Snape got to him first, Hydrus went back to Godric's Hollow. Once again weaving through

the crowd, he made his way to the door. There were a few Aurors doing crowd control, but they had put up some kind of ward to keep the public out. Since Hydrus was still technically a Potter, he got in with no problem. Looking around the shambles of the once nice living room, he saw no one was there. The bodies of his parents were gone, and Hydrus had a fleeting thought as to who took care of that, probably Dumbledore. He knew they were going to be buried in the local cemetery, he'd visit them later.

He silently made his way around the house, picking up pictures and heirlooms and tucked them in his pocket. He didn't worry about kitchen items, since he had stocked up on those, but Harry might want things he was used to around, so Hydrus made his way quietly up the stairs and started collecting Harry's things. The Aurors present were so intent on studying the robes on the floor that they didn't even notice that items were disappearing in midair. Thank goodness Mad-eye isn't here. After gathering all he needed: clothes and toys and such, he shook his head at their lack of attention and popped away home.

The rest of the day was spent arranging the things he brought and playing with Harry. The tot asked about his mum a few more times, and Hydrus gave him the same answer. He felt bad for the little guy, who was confused, but knew from his research that Harry just wouldn't understand that his parents were dead. So he continued to tell him they were going to be gone a long time. Hydrus was thankful that Harry had taken to him so well.

After Harry went down for the night, Hydrus also went to bed. Sirius would have to wait until morning. He hadn't slept in three days and Pepper-up potion only took you so far. So an emotionally and physically exhausted immortal fell to his bed, completely clothed, and was asleep

before his head hit the pillow.

Either Harry hadn't woken through the night, or Tippy took care of him, either way Hydrus woke up refreshed and much calmer. He did his morning rituals and went to see if Harry was still asleep. When he didn't see the toddler in the cot, Hydrus figured he was with Tippy. So he made his way to the room Sirius used the other night, seeing the man asleep on the bed, he sighed in relief and went to the kitchen.

Harry was sitting in his chair, munching away on his breakfast. So, Hydrus ruffled his hair as he went by and made himself some scrambled eggs and toast. When Sirius joined them this time it was without fanfare. They talked about non-important things, both having been taught the dining room table was not a place for heavy conversation. Hydrus once again asked Tippy to tend to Harry, hoping that when everything was settled better, he could spend more time with his younger self.

The two men made their way to the living room, this time the atmosphere was much more relaxed.

"So how did it go with the lawyer?"

"Well, I got to tell you, we cut it close. I just got the will read, when the summons to the Wizengamot was owled in," Sirius answered, with a shrug. "They were too late, of course. I hired the lawyer, Mr. Greenway, to represent me; I even gave him the memory of the switch. He said it would take a few days and to hide out until I heard from him."

"That's good," Hydrus sighed and then changed the subject. "I went to try and find Peter after you left. But the trail grew cold and I have no idea if he is alive or dead. I have my suspicions that Snape saw him last, but if he found out the rat was the one who got Mum killed, I don't hold much hope of Pettigrew coming out alive." He could try summoning the shade, but he didn't think that would be good for his frayed nerves.

"Snivellus," Sirius snarled.

"I know, I know, but there are a few things you don't know about the man. I'm not going to defend him right now. We have other things to worry about," Hydrus said firmly.

"Like what?"

"Harry, Death Eaters, Dumbledore, Remus, Gringotts, your anger, the whole Boy Who Lived thing or loads of other things," the older man listed, ticking his fingers for each item. "Plus I have my shop and accounts to maintain."

"Let's start with Remus," Sirius said, wondering what happened to the werewolf in Hydrus's timeline. "As far as we knew, until Peter betrayed James, he was under suspicion as going Dark. I didn't want to believe it, but the evidence was overwhelming. He was hardly ever coming to meetings and when he was there he was distant. Now, I don't know what to think."

"Well, I can tell you here and now, that Remus is not and never will be drawn to the Dark. I think you guys were so worried about a spy you grabbed a hold of the first bit of gossip and ran with it. I, for one, think it is disgusting the way people will listen to rumors before listening to fact," Hydrus said with a curl of his lip. Yeah, he still had issues about that.

"What? No, Peter said... Dumbledore was worried..."

"That's another thing, why do you blindly follow that man? Yeah, I get that he stopped a war, and that he should be honored for that. However, one fight does not a leader make," Hydrus interrupted him. "Dumbledore does his best, but you can't fight a war with stunners. Leaving an enemy at your back is suicide."

"But, he is in charge of so many political positions," the confused man said.

"Those were all thrust on him. He never asked to be in charge, the wizarding world simply took it upon themselves to put him on a pedestal and leave him there. Like I said, he does his best, but no one, and I mean no one, should have that much power."

"Dumbledore is a great man!" Sirius yelled in defense, leaping from his chair.

"Don't you bloody well start yelling," Hydrus snapped and waited for the man to sit back down. "I never said he wasn't. I only said he shouldn't have that much control. People with that much political power either wind up hubristic or Dark. And if you look back on his actions you will see that once he sets his mind to something, there is very little that can change it. I put the blame directly on the wizarding public. If the common witch or wizard would just think for themselves, Dumbledore wouldn't have to do all their thinking for them," the immortal said exasperated. It was going to be something he was going to try and fix with his and George's inventions. Not to mention the people that would try and stop him. He might get a few that would be angry enough to try and kill him, as well. He was going to have to be careful.

Sirius was thinking back on all the times he and James had defended Remus, and how the headmaster wouldn't be swayed from his misgivings. Taking a few minutes to go over other meetings and looking at them with new eyes, he did note that everything was argued away by the headmaster in that I-know-better-than-you voice, or looked upon with disappointment in those ever twinkling eyes. He would always look up to the man, but he could see Hydrus's point. He sighed and brought the conversation back to Remus. "So, did you want to bring Remus in to help raise Harry? He is really smart and could be very helpful."

Hydrus let the talk about Dumbledore fade for now. "I am thinking about

it. I know he is a good man. He was the only teacher that didn't talk down to me, mostly. So after you're cleared, yeah I think we should find him and ask."

Sirius nodded in agreement and moved on to another topic. "So, Death Eaters, from what you told me a lot of them got away scot free. Knowing you have Lucius and Bella on ice, so to speak, do you think that's going to happen again?"

"Only if Narcissa gets involved, it was the Malfoy money that bought their freedom," Hydrus shook his head. "I have enough money to counter that, only I need you to do it, since you have some pull with your name. You won't get your title until your grandpa passes, but the Black name still gets doors open, especially for the only male heir. I'll be known as an outcast Black, so my name won't have as much pull. My story is I'm descendant of Marius Black, since he is a squib. All of my paperwork shows this, in my timeline he was already dead, and so it was easy. I think he is living in London somewhere."

Sirius grimaced, he really didn't want that title, but the man had a point. So he nodded and said, "I'll write to Cissy and warn her to keep her hands clean. Yeah, Marius was one of the last blasted off the tapestry, so his line won't show. I'll write him as well, to keep the story, if he is still alive that is. He would think it a great prank to the people who turned on him."

"That's a start," the immortal said and the two sat in comfortable silence, thinking over where to go next. Tippy popped in with morning tea.

Breaking the quiet, Sirius asked, "What next?"

"I need to go find Snape; I only have a general idea where he lives, so it might take a minute. But I need to keep him out of Harry's life, so I'm going to offer him freedom," Hydrus answered then looked at the other man. "That means you stay here and watch Harry. Tippy will help, but I

need your word that you won't run off. We'll look for Remus after your name is cleared." He knew Tippy would intervene if anything happened. Since she was a free elf, she could defend herself and Harry, if need be. "You have it," Sirius said, raising his hands in compliance.

"Right," the older man said and called up his book-reader. He looked up Spinner's End on the maps he had downloaded. The only problem was he had no idea of the house number. He would have to search for wards, because knowing Snape there would be some nasty ones. "I don't know how long I'll be so don't wait dinner on me." And then he stood, went to his room, put in his contacts, pulled on his Cloak and Disapparated.

He appeared in a deserted park, it seemed to be a dividing line between two neighborhoods. On one side was a well-cared for middle class street, on the other side was the exact opposite. Now it made more sense as to how his mum and Snape met. He knew from the memories that Snape was from a lower class family, but his mum's family was never poor, at least according to Petunia.

He cast the spell that indicated the presence of magic in the shabby street. Walking down the road, still under the Cloak, he finally came upon a house that was warded to the gills. Calling up his shock gun he blasted those wards, not caring if the man inside knew he was there. He kept his wand in hand and walked closer to the door.

When Hydrus got five feet to the threshold, Snape came out wand a blazing. Hydrus ducked and moved forward quickly, his Cloak flying off. Using his empty hand, Hydrus made a fist and slammed it into the hated teacher's jaw, before kneeing him in the groin.

Snape stumbled back and doubled over in pain, vulnerable from the unexpected attack.

Hydrus used that to his advantage and shoved the man into the house. He

Accioed his Cloak to him. When he was out of the public eye he threw the still dazed Snape on to a chair, snatched his wand and roped him down.

"Hello, Snivellus," the time traveler said as he sat on a surprisingly clean chair.

"Who are you?" Snape sneered, glaring hatefully at the man in front of him. "You look just like a Black," he spat the name.

"That's not important right now," Hydrus said, waving away the question.

"I am actually here to make you an offer you shouldn't refuse."

"You attacked me," the bound man said in disbelief.

"You attacked me first. That's not the point; the point is I can offer you freedom. You take me up on it, and you'll never have to worry about serving anyone again. If you listen to Dumbledore, you'll be spending the rest of your life in a job you hate. Listen to me and you leave the country tonight and you'll never have to look back," Hydrus explained with a slightly mischievous gleam in his eye. Snape may never serve anyone again, but he would always be on the run. Being the Slytherin he was, Hydrus was sure that the Potions Master would be fine, just very paranoid.

Snape shot him a distrustful look and then barked, "Explain."

"I can remove the Dark Mark, give you enough non-magical money to get out of the country as well as give you a device that will hide who you are. The rest is up to you, you're smart enough to support yourself, youngest Potions Master of the age," Hydrus shrugged as if it was not big deal.

"How did you know about the Headmaster's offer?"

"Sorry, can't tell ya, vow you know. I can tell you that your conversations weren't as private as you thought," he lied.

"And what of my vow to protect the Potter brat?" Snape asked, as his dark eyes flitted around the room. You could see he was honestly thinking about getting out of Britain. There were no good memories for him here, and if they ever found out what he did to Pettigrew...

"He's well protected, thanks to his mum. Besides, Dumbledore didn't keep his side of the bargain, so the vow is worthless."

A look of anguish crossed his face for a moment at the thought of his dead friend. He had trusted Dumbledore to protect her, this man was correct, the vow was void. Then his face firmed into his usual sneer. His well-kept mind was going over the possibilities. "How do you know I'll keep my word?"

"Easy enough, you take a vow to never step foot in the country again."

"And if I am captured?"

"Not my problem."

"My position as a spy?" was the greasy-haired man's final question.

"If I have it my way, Voldemort will never return," Hydrus said in a steely voice. There was a murderous glare in his eyes.

Mulling it over for a few minutes, Snape finally nodded. Hydrus lifted the Elder Wand and pointed it at the man's head. He unbound him and threw him his wand. "Simply say that you will never willingly come back to the United Kingdom."

Taking his wand, Snape incanted the vow and waited. Hydrus pulled out a glamor watch, explained what it did and then gave the Potions Master an expanded Mokeskin bag filled with pounds.

Severus's face changed in drastic ways. His greasy hair turned dark brown and messy, which made Hydrus giggle internally. His eyes went from fathomless black to pale brown. His nose shortened, it still looked like it had been broken a time or two it was just smaller. He crooked

teeth straightened a little, so it didn't look like he ate metal on a regular basis, but just didn't care for them. His skin went from shallow to just plain pale. Oh, the Potions Master would never win a beauty contest, but he might not be tracked down so fast with this face. The immortal was surprised at the major differences; usually the watch was far more subtle. Snape conjured a mirror and sneered at his new face. Hydrus said he might want to change his distinctive style of clothing, which caused the man to snarl. He then indicated for the ex-Death Eater to show the tattoo on his arm. He grabbed the wrist and said in parseltongue, "Finite Incantatem." The mark disappeared, the skin was unmarred. Snape almost showed signs of relief.

It had been a shock to realize that he still had the snake tongue. After a lot of research on the mark he figured out why no one could remove it and was surprised when it was so simple. Voldemort must have thought it a great amusement that so many had tried and failed.

"It is all up to you now. I do have one question though. Did you kill Pettigrew?" Hydrus inquired casually.

Snape shot him a fleeting wary glare, which of course gave the immortal the answer. The younger man's face smoothed and he said snidely, "I have no idea what you are talking about."

"I really don't care; I just want to know if I have to watch out for the traitor in the future."

"As far as I know Pettigrew will never darken your doorstep," Snape said in that silky voice he had. Then he turned and dismissed the intruder and started packing up his house, putting everything in the Mokeskin bag.

Seeing the snub for what it was Hydrus shrugged and left. He had done what he came for and got a bit of extra information in return. So he popped back to the house, scaring Sirius, who was trying to figure out the

telly. "What are you doing?" Hydrus asked in amusement.

"This one isn't like the one Lily showed me and James. There is no on button," the Animagus said sheepishly.

"Sit, I'll turn it on. Where's Harry?" the older man said as he pushed the button at the bottom of the telly and turned it to the local news.

"Sleeping again. He's been down for about an hour, so he should be up soon. We had a really good time; Harry is such a bright kid. He seems to be adjusting well. Thanks for getting his stuff, I think that helped," Sirius answered and then looked at the other man's content face. "You got him to leave?"

"Yup," Hydrus said happily, "it was easier than I thought. Then again he all but confessed to killing Peter. Not even the headmaster can help him if that gets out."

Sirius's brow wrinkled in a frustrated frown. He wanted to kill Peter, now Snivellus took that from him.

Seeing that look Hydrus said, "He's gone, there's nothing you can do now. Live with it."

The two men sat and watched the news; there were more reports on fireworks and owls, but nothing important. So, Hydrus introduced Sirius to the wonderful world of video games. With the more important things out of the way, they could talk over the rest tomorrow.

## 10. Bringing in Remus

### Chapter 10 Bringing in Remus

AN: thanks to my betas, The 5h15 Spaceman, darrelldream and alix33. All mistakes are my own. Thank you all for viewing, reviewing, favoriting and following my story. A quick thanks to all of those who point out my errors, some are on purpose and some are mistakes. So thanks.

A big thanks to, Danneyland, for the help with the new summary.

Hphphp

It was two days later when the owl came; Sirius was not a wanted man.

Mr. Greenway said that since he had the Potter will and the memory, it was easy to prove that Sirius was not the Secret Keeper and to watch for the Prophet headline. Those two days were spent in a flurry of letter writing.

Sirius wrote to his grandfather, Arcturus, to ask about his place in the family; Narcissa, to warn her to keep the Malfoy money out of other people's pockets; and Marius, to let him know what was going on. He didn't want to write to his grandfather, but Hydrus insisted.

Hydrus wrote three letters with his laptop, one was to the Longbottoms warning them to keep watch for vengeful Death Eaters; he signed it 'a friend'. He also sent a letter to the Dursleys warning them to move if they didn't want freaks watching their house; this one unsigned. The last letter was to Frostwell, telling him he had heard about his inventions and asking him if he wanted to combine their efforts. He gave the address to the shop and told the man he could leave an answer for him there.

That evening the paper was delivered as a special addition. The first headline read:

**Peter Pettigrew Wanted for Questioning in the Potter Murders**

The article that followed described what might have happened on Halloween and the details of Sirius's memory of the switch. It also told that Pettigrew was a rat Animagus and might be in hiding and to consider him dangerous.

The second headline was:

**Many Purebloods Missing; Presumed Death Eaters**

This article said that many prominent members of society were missing

and after the Aurors found many Dark items in their houses while searching for clues the absent Purebloods were thought to be in league with He Who Must Not Be Named. Lucius, Bellatrix and the others that Hydrus rendered useless were listed as Dark (except Crouch Jr. who in a smaller article was only listed as missing and it was also mentioned his father would give a hefty reward for any viable information on him).

The last headline said:

Lestrangle Brothers Caught Attempting to Assassinate Longbottoms

This one said that the two brothers tried to break into Longbottom manor. When they were caught trying to take down the wards by Mad-eye Moody, Frank and Alice Longbottom. It was Alastor that dragged them to a cell. When the brothers were questioned under Veritaserum they stated that they were looking for Bellatrix and their Master's whereabouts. They thought since Neville was on the Dark Lord's hit list that the Longbottoms would know. Frank made sure to thank the anonymous informant for the warning, had it not been for that missive they would have not been as vigilant.

Hydrus was quite content with the stories. Now that the Ministry didn't have Sirius as a scapegoat they had to actually do their job and hunt down the remaining Death Eaters. Hydrus made a promise to himself to keep an eye on each future article to make sure no innocent was charged.

"Sirius," Hydrus said as they were finishing up their breakfast the next morning, "we need to get you to the Ministry, so you can sign custody papers for Harry."

"Right," Sirius agreed, looking more like himself. He had slept better and now the bags under his grey eyes weren't as pronounced and without the glamor watch on his goatee and mustache were neatly trimmed, and his long black hair was loosely curled. All in all, he looked well rested and

closer to the aristocrat he was supposed to be. "Then can we find Moony?" he asked almost childlike. He had wanted to write him the last couple of days, but Hydrus suggested he wait until his name was cleared, because in the last timeline, Moony thought him guilty. There would be apologies between both men, but they were all that was left of the Marauders.

Hydrus's eyes softened at the near pleading request. The last couple of days had been cathartic for the other man. With his grieving at night, reading some self-help books, playing with Harry and his talent for violent video games, he seemed to have vented a lot of emotion; however, he was feeling keenly alone without his friends. "Yeah, with that Prophet headline about Pettigrew, it should be safe. You should write him now; let him know we can meet him tonight, and maybe there'll be an answer when we get back?"

"Right, I'll pop off a quick letter. Where should we meet him?" he asked. Some more life came back into that face. Being around Harry helped, but he needed someone to talk to and as much as Hydrus came through for him, he was not yet close enough to the man.

"There's a diner in London called John's Eatery, it has the best chocolate cake in all of England and if your Remus is anything like mine that'll suit. It's on the bus route and if I remember correctly, Remus can't drive, so it is easier to meet him there and bring him back." He had no problem erasing the werewolf's memory of the house, him, and Harry if things went bad. However, Remus seemed to forgive Sirius easily enough last time, so he wasn't overly worried. "Besides, I want some of that cake." Sirius barked with laughter and nodded. He then headed up the stairs to his room to write his request. Twenty minutes later he came back down dressed in some semi-formal dark blue robes. Hydrus wore plainer dark

green ones. After letting Tippy know they'd be back in a few hours, the two men left.

Coming to the visitor's entrance, they dialed the number in the out of order phone booth, got their nametags, and enjoyed the trip down. They made their way to the check in, handed over their wands (Hydrus's holly phoenix wand), and got directions to the Department of Family Services. The office was unimpressive, just a counter with cubbyholes lining the back wall behind it. A doorway that looked like it would lead to the archives. There were chairs along the front wall and a table in the far corner. You could tell this was an underfunded department of the Ministry. Then again there was very little use for the office, since magicals tended to cherish their children, and Muggle-raised were not a priority. The department was mostly used to place squibs in non-magical orphanages, and the occasional adoption.

You would think that since the war was just over the office would see more traffic, but it looked like families were tending their orphans without the help of the Ministry, such as Susan Bones. Harry should have gone through here, if for nothing else to make sure he had all the correct paperwork to live with his non-magical aunt.

A very bored clerk looked up from his book and asked, "What can I do for you gentlemen today?" Jacob Winifred liked his job, as long as he didn't have to do anything.

Sirius pulled out his copy of the will and handed to the man behind the desk. "I recently obtained custody of my godson. I need to fill out the appropriate forms," he said in a jovial voice. "I also need his documents for the Muggle World."

The rather dumpy clerk took the will and started to read. The more he read the wider his eyes got. "This is the will of James Potter! That means

you're going to raise Harry Potter! The Boy Who Lived! It's a pleasure to meet you, Sirius Black," he shouted cheerfully as he reached over the counter and started pumping Sirius's hand.

The other two men groaned. They had been hoping that title wasn't well known yet. Sirius glared at the clerk, jerked his hand away and barked, "Don't call him that. His name is Harry. Just do your job and get me the forms I need."

Jacob paled at the order and started scurrying around to get the paperwork. After gathering all that was required, he handed them to Sirius and the two Blacks took themselves to the visitors' tables to fill them out. While they did that, the clerk worked on the Muggle papers. Most of it was easy enough, simply calling records from the archive and spelling them with a small charm to list a Muggle hospital as a place of birth.

Thirty minutes later, Sirius finished and went back to the desk and handed the completed forms to the employee. The pudgy man looked them over, nodded every now and then as he flipped through, and stamped where needed. After the last page was stamped, the bundle flashed white, duplicated twice, and the originals disappeared.

"Here you go, Mr. Black. This is your copy, his Muggle papers, and you are all done," the happy clerk said as he handed Sirius the papers. "Tell Mr. Potter thank you for me, would ya?"

Sirius took the bundle, folded it and put it in his robe pocket. "Harry is a one year old," he sneered, "I doubt he would understand your thanks. Besides, you should be thanking Lily." And with that he spun away and led Hydrus out of the office, satisfied that they were there before Dumbledore could convince the Wizengamot to make him magical guardian.

"How are we going to stop that name?" Sirius asked as they walked down the hall.

"Now that you're his guardian, the second someone prints the title, you go and talk to them. When those dreaded books hit the shelf you sue the pants off the authors," Hydrus answered. "We might want to see about buying up shares of the Prophet."

Sirius nodded and they continued their way. They were halfway through the atrium when they both caught sight of purple and pink robes and heard Sirius's name being called. They glanced at each other, sighed and turned to the approaching headmaster.

"Ah, Sirius, my boy, I had heard you were here finishing up on the final paperwork. I wanted to talk to you about young Harry," Dumbledore said when he caught up with the two men.

"Albus, how good to see you. This is my cousin, Hydrus Black," Sirius said, waving his hand at Hydrus, who simply nodded his head to the old man.

"Ah, yes, Hagrid told me about you. He said you had taken a vow to help Harry. May I ask why you did such a thing?" Albus asked as he stroked his beard, his twinkling eyes looking over his half-moon spectacles.

"I heard the family was in trouble and thought I could help. I was too late and felt a bit guilty," Hydrus said, with sadness in his voice. "That man... Hagrid, was huge and I didn't want the baby to get hurt, so I made the vow so there wouldn't be any fighting. Seemed like the thing to do at the time." His guised grey eyes were sincere.

"That was a very serious thing to do, young man. You have no idea how it could affect your future," came the reprimand, though he was pleased to have seen the true remorse in the young man's face.

"Whatever," the immortal said. He wanted the headmaster to think he

was unimportant and not a threat, that vow will go a long way with that.

"Albus," Sirius said, bringing the conversation back to him, "you said you wanted to talk about Harry, not chastise my cousin."

"Forgive an old man his meanderings, Sirius. As to young Harry, I wanted to inquire if you were planning on removing him from his aunt's house. I must warn you that should you do that, he will be most vulnerable," the headmaster said in his I'm-older-and-wiser voice.

"Why? Why shouldn't I raise my godson? Lily and James left me custody!" Sirius raised his voice. He was acting confused and riled.

"When Lily died to protect young Harry she established a blood protection around him. That protection can only be maintained if Harry calls the place where his mother's blood dwells home," Albus explained.

Sirius waved it off. "I can hire Gringotts' employees to put up wards."

"Yet they will still not be as strong as a mother's love," came the gentle argument.

Sirius scoffed and said, "Like I'd know anything about that."

He shot a side look to Hydrus to see how he was taking Sirius's acting.

Hydrus gave him a subtle thumbs-up and a wink.

"And I, for one, am very sorry for your upbringing. It always saddens me when I hear of families who cannot love," the old man said remorsefully and then his face morphed back into the calm grandfather visage. "Now, back to Harry, I must insist that you leave him at the Dursleys. He will be protected there like nowhere else. I am sure his new family will take excellent care of him. He will grow up away from the growing fame and have a happy childhood." That twinkle was going full force.

This time Hydrus scoffed, causing the Headmaster to glance at him. The immortal put on a look of innocence.

"Can you promise me that those wards are the best? Would you swear on

it?" Sirius decided it was time to get home and stop playing with Albus.

"You have my word," came the slightly triumphant response. A beaming smile broke across Albus's face.

"Then you have mine. I will not take Harry away from the blood wards," Sirius promised sincerely.

"That is good news indeed, my boy. Thank you for considering an old man's opinion," Dumbledore said jovially. "I must bid you good day, gentlemen. I have much to do." He then gave a nod to the two men and walked away knowing his mission was complete. It didn't even register in his mind that Sirius should have fought harder.

Sirius and Hydrus shared a look and chuckled. "Let's go see if Remus wrote back yet," Hydrus said as he clapped the other man on the back.

"Yes, let's."

Back at the house, Hydrus went to check on Harry, while Sirius read the missive that was indeed there. It was full of guilty rambling and apologies, and said that he would be happy to meet Sirius at the eatery, sharply at five in the evening.

The rest of the day was spent with Harry. They wanted to make sure the tot knew there were adults there for him. Harry was adapting surprisingly well, with only a few times where he cried for his parents, mostly when he was tired. At four all three males, dressed as non-magicals, buckled safely into Hydrus's car and drove to the restaurant. They were early, so they sat at a window table to wait. The two adults ordered a small dinner of Shepherd's pie. Harry had a cheese sandwich and a sippy cup of milk, making quite a mess of it, but some got into his mouth.

Remus came directly at five, spotted Sirius and wove his way to the table, a confused look plastered on his face. "Hello, Padfoot," he said as he sat

down. He looked haggard, like he hadn't slept since Halloween. His trousers were faded and his jumper was rumpled. The jacket he took off was tweed and patched, it also looked like it had been taken off the floor and thrown on.

"Unca Mooy, Unca Mooy," Harry said bouncing in his highchair waving his torn apart sandwich. Remus smiled and ruffled the toddler's ever messy hair. Harry went back to his meal, and turned over his cup shaking milk onto the tray. Hydrus sighed and mopped it up with a napkin; he gently removed the cup and gave Harry the rest of his sandwich.

"Moony, old boy, great to see you," Sirius said sincerely. He then waved to the other occupant and introduced him. "Did you want dinner?"

"No, I ate already, you only mentioned cake," Remus said after the introductions, sparing only a curious look at Hydrus. "Now, I must confess that I am confused. I got a Floo call from Albus earlier. He wanted me to make sure you kept your promise not to take Harry away from the Dursleys. Yet, here he is. Did you lie to the headmaster?" his amber eyes showed disapproval.

"Nope, I told Albus I wouldn't take Harry away from the blood wards, and I haven't. However, I can't explain that to you here, so let's have some of that delicious smelling chocolate cake and we'll take you home and explain everything," Sirius said with a pointed look around the crowded eatery.

"There better be a good explanation, Padfoot," Remus grumbled with a firm glare.

"Oh, there will be."

The next twenty minutes was spent in casual conversation and the consumption of divine cake. Hydrus cleaned Harry as well as he could before they piled back into the car, making sure everyone was secure,

and drove back to the house. Handing the food wearing, chocolate covered Harry off to Tippy, who glared at them, the men moved to the living room. They settled on the chairs and sofa, and looked at one another. Sirius broke the silence. "Why did Albus call you?"

"Well," Remus said as he ran a hand through his hair, "you know how you behaved in school?" He waited for the nod. "He was worried you would run off and do the wrong thing. He said that I was the only one who could talk you down."

"Little good that did in Hogwarts, I remember you pranking right along with us."

"Yeah, but, I have matured a bit more than you," the werewolf said jokingly. "Besides, with Harry here are you not you proving him correct? He told me about the blood wards, and I have to say I am disappointed in you for removing Harry from the Dursleys."

"I can swear that Harry is under the blood wards right this minute and I've never been to the Dursleys," Sirius answered. He was a bit hurt that the Headmaster and Remus thought he needed a babysitter.

"What? How?" came the confused questions.

Sirius looked at Hydrus who had been quiet up till now. "You want to explain?"

"I need a vow first," was the firm answer.

Remus looked at the other man and asked, "Who exactly are you? And what do you have to do with all of this? Not to be rude or anything, but I don't know you."

"Like Sirius told you, I'm his cousin and I'm the one who rescued Harry from the Dursleys. I can give you my word that I only want what's best for Harry. I've already given a vow to that effect."

"I only have your word on that," Remus said skeptically.

"No, you have mine as well," Sirius piped up in defense. "I made a vow to protect his and Harry's secrets and he told me his story. I promise you, Remus, you're going to want to hear this."

The werewolf looked at his only remaining friend, looked at Hydrus and then looked at the ceiling as if he could see Harry. This went on for five or so minutes. He then ran his hand through his hair and sighed. "What do you want me to say?" he finally asked.

"Just say you'll keep the secrets of Hydrus Williamsford Black and Harry James Potter," the immortal said in relief.

"Williamsford isn't a star name," Sirius said suddenly as if just realizing that. He hadn't paid attention to the name when he made his vow. "If you're supposed to be a Black you should have star names; both first and middle."

"Not that it is important right now, Padfoot, but the name was given to me by a very good friend. We figured since I'm supposed to be raised non-magical we could wave it off," Hydrus said with a small smile of remembrance.

"Yeah, I suppose, but..." Sirius trailed off, thinking about how his grandfather will react to him living with a Muggle-raised. Then again, he had no idea what the man was thinking anymore, his grandfather had been in self-imposed exile for years now. He hoped to get a letter for the old man soon, so he could tell him what was happening, well most of it. If he could get his approval the political backing would be very helpful.

"Like I said, not important, it is my legal and magical name," Hydrus snapped, drawing Sirius out of his thoughts.

Remus brought everyone's attention to him when he said, "I owe Albus a lot for getting me my education. You two are asking me to withhold some vital information from him," Remus said, running his hand through his

hair again. It must be a nervous habit.

"I get that and I wouldn't ask it of you if it weren't so important. Albus Dumbledore really has no say in where Harry should be raised, that decision is Sirius's and he agrees with me that this is the safest place for that. None of the Headmaster's positions give him that right," Hydrus said firmly. "I won't ask you to turn on the man, just keep mine and Harry's secrets. You can report to him that Harry is still within the blood wards and with his family. We're thinking of putting up a Fidelius as well, only so you won't be able to tell anybody where. Once Mrs. Figg is stationed in Little Whinging, he'll know Harry is not at number 4 Privet Drive."

Hydrus hoped his relatives would heed his warning and move. If he was correct then the Headmaster had monitors on the blood wards. If the Dursleys moved and the old man couldn't find them, he would only know the blood wards were strong and, hopefully, be content with that. Hydrus thanked Merlin, that most magicals couldn't navigate the non-magical world. In addition, if the Dursleys listened to his missive then they would be unlisted and squibs like Mrs. Figg wouldn't be able to help locate Harry.

"Wait, Arabella Figg?" Sirius asked.

"Yup, she was sent there to keep tabs on Harry, though I'm not exactly sure when," the immortal said thoughtfully.

Meanwhile, Remus mulled over what he had been told so far for a few minutes and then he pulled his wand and gave the vow. "Now, will you, please, tell me what the hell is going on?"

"Let me call for tea. It's going to take a while," Hydrus said and called Tippy, "Hey, Tippy, first how is Harry?" he asked as she popped in.

"Little Master is not liking his bath, but he was very messy. Master Hydrus should not let Little Master get that dirty," she said wagging her

finger at the man.

"But he was having fun," Hydrus defended himself, much to the amusement of the other two men.

"Hmmm," the free elf replied, giving Hydrus a look, making him squirm.

"Is Master wanting something? Tippy is trying to put Little Master to sleep and yous is giving him too much sugar," she said with another look.

"Never mind, Tippy, you go and take care of Harry. We'll fend for ourselves," Hydrus said quickly, feeling a bit guilty.

The little elf nodded her head and popped away.

"Let's go to the kitchen. I'll put the kettle on," the immortal said as he got up and led the way.

While waiting for the water to boil, Sirius and Remus caught up with what had been going on with the two of them in the last month. Hydrus listened in and added a comment here and there. When the tea was made, they settled back into their seats in the living room.

The next three hours were spent in commentary, Hydrus talked and the other two listened. Remus cycled through a wide range of emotions such as disbelief at Hydrus being Harry from the future, awe at some of the inventions, horror at the extent that Voldemort went through to gain immortality, anger at the populace and the Dursleys, laughter on the revenges and finally bewilderment and resignation on what Hydrus had done since he returned. He now understood why Harry was in this house, though he was worried about the young baby being raised by three emotional men, even if the time traveler was more balanced. He was leery about the stories of what Hydrus did to the Death Eaters, like Sirius, he didn't know if it was a great prank or the work of a sadistic man.

"So, now what?" Remus asked cautiously, after Hydrus finished and there were a few minutes silence for him to take it all in.

"I'd like you to move in here with me and Sirius and help me raise Harry.

He'll benefit from all of us here," Hydrus said.

"What about the full moon? Do you have plans for that?" ever fearful of killing someone or worse — infecting them.

"Of course, I know how to brew the Wolfsbane potion and there's a cellar we can ward."

"Plus, I can still help as Padfoot," Sirius said as he joined the conversation, never one to be left out for long.

"I am also worried about our mental state," Remus said, pointing his finger back and forth between him and Sirius. "I know I am still grieving the loss of three friends, even if Pettigrew was a traitor, he was at one time our friend."

"Well, I've already started Sirius on some self-help books and I can give you the same. There is also the mandatory counseling that we all need to attend. In my timeline, I was down to only checkups once every three months. But you guys will probably have to go weekly, if not daily,"

Hydrus said as he pulled a book-reader from his pocket. "You can either use one of these, or regular books like Sirius. We had to go out and buy those, because I didn't bring books back with me and Padfoot would rather read normal books."

"What is that?" Remus asked as he looked at the strange object.

Hydrus showed him what it was and what it did, the closet Ravenclaw's eyes lit with the fact that he had so much knowledge in his hands. The two bent over the book-reader, while Sirius got bored and started playing video games. Around midnight Hydrus showed Remus where he was sleeping for the night and they all went to bed.

The next morning the immortal got up with the toddler. He decided to let the dog and the wolf sleep. He carried Harry to the kitchen and after

putting the tot in his highchair and giving him some milk, he proceeded to make a huge breakfast. The smell of bacon and Scotch eggs woke Remus, and the smell of coffee got Sirius. A few minutes later the two men tumbled into the dining room and they ate as a family.

The rest of the morning was spent outdoors; Harry waddled around and pulled up flowers and grass, and chased Sirius, who ran around as Padfoot. The other two just let them play and sat in chairs on the porch sipping tea. After lunch, Hydrus put Harry down for his nap, and they decided to stay outside.

"You said that You Know Who made horcruxes," Remus said as he set his empty cup down, wanting to get to some plans. "How are we going to get them and what about the one in Harry? We cannot leave that there."

"Well," Hydrus answered, rubbing his forehead in thought, "the ring was destroyed when I came through the portal, I got the diadem and the diary. Now, the only ones left are the necklace and the cup. I'm going to need Sirius's help with both of those, since they are both in the hands of the Black family. I can drop the wards on Grimmauld Place, but I'm not sure where in the house the necklace is. It might be with Kreacher or the elf could have hidden it, so it would be easier to get someone from the Black family to locate it. Besides, there are more than wards to worry about in that creepy house," he explained, with a full body shudder at the things he and his friends had come across while cleaning, though most of those manifested after Sirius's mum had died there were some that that crazy old bat had left on purpose. "I plan on removing Harry's tonight," he added as an aside.

Sirius's face took on a look of grief and guilt. "I can't believe Regulus turned on the Dark Wanker. I treated him so badly in school. Sometimes I think if only I hadn't, he never would have been a Death Eater to begin

with. I was so selfish."

"I know, Padfoot," Remus said as he got up and went to his friend and rubbed the other man's back, "Now, you can help by finishing what he started."

Sirius sighed and nodded. "I can't do anything until I hear from Grandfather. He's the one who can get into the house and Bella's vault." "In my timeline, your grandfather hid away because he was disgusted at all the family members bowing before Voldemort," Hydrus said thoughtfully, ignoring the flinches. He figured since the man was vanquished, for now, the taboo was null and void. "That and he named you the next Lord Black, despite your difference. So maybe, he'll come through for you."

Two owls swooped in and landed in front of Sirius. He gave them each a bit of ham from lunch and took the letters. After he read the first one he said, "It's from Marius. He said he has no problem having a grandson, since both of his boys died. He wants to meet us though to get the story straight."

"I have no issue with that," Hydrus shrugged. It would be beneficial anyway.

Sirius took up the second letter. "It's from Cissy; she says that if Grandfather tells her the same, she'll stay out of politics. She also wants to know if I know if her husband is alive." He shot a look at the immortal. "Tell her you have no idea where he is. It's the truth," Hydrus stated. He really needed to check on them soon, if just to make sure they were still there.

"What do you plan on doing to the ones you have in a coma?" Remus asked, still concerned over that.

"I haven't decided yet, I can tell you that I plan on leaving them there for

now. You have to understand there are some people who just cannot be saved," he said with a hard look. "Dumbledore made a huge mess of things trying to redeem the irredeemable. Lucius is an excellent example of that, Albus let that man run unchecked and his son was no better. He could have made sure that every Death Eater had a trial under Veritaserum, but he wanted them to have a second chance." Seeing the defensive looks on the other men's faces he held up his hands and said, "Look, I know he is a good man. I just don't have the same outlook as he does. We'll just have to agree to disagree when it comes to the Headmaster." He wasn't going to change the years of hero worship in only a few days.

Two more mutinous looks and Sirius decided to change the subject. "I have to go and get the rest of my things and close down my flat."

"I want to take a look at your cellar and see if it is what's needed for Moony. I might have to keep my house if we can't reinforce it."

"Sure," Hydrus said as he got up. The other men followed and they went to the sturdy framed door in the kitchen. "This leads to the cellar, and as you can see we can put a metal door up. I think the people before me were going to make a bomb shelter but ran out of money." He opened the door and flipped on the lights.

The stairs that lead down were in good repair. At the bottom of the stairs was a large metal door; inside the door was a huge room with no windows. The floor and the walls were hardwood, like someone was trying to make it homey.

"You know Moony will tear up this wood, right?" Remus said as he looked around.

Hydrus said, "I told you I know how to brew Wolfsbane. We'll get you and Padfoot some rawhide bones and you'll be okay."

Sirius chuckled until Remus shot him a look. "I am still not sure that I should be in the house with a baby," the werewolf said, worriedly. The room looked solid, but he still had his doubts.

"Not a problem, me and Harry can always spend the night in a motel. It'll be our bonding night."

"I cannot ask you to do that," Remus exclaimed.

"You're not," Hydrus replied, folding his arms across his chest and leaning against the wall. "I'm offering."

"You really do not have a problem with me being in your house, do you?"

the werewolf asked in awe, the only people who had ever accepted him was the Marauders and Dumbledore.

"Nope."

"Let me think it over for a few days. I will be happy to help you raise Harry, but I am uncomfortable about being here on the full moon."

"Take your time, I only want you to do what you feel is best for you,"

Hydrus said, getting up from the wall and leading the way back up the stairs. "I can always make this a panic room."

"What's a panic room?" Sirius asked as he followed his cousin.

## 11. Fun With Blocks and Letters

Answered

### Chapter 11 Fun With Blocks and Letters Answered

AN: thanks to my betas, The 5h15 Spaceman, darreldeam and alix33. All mistakes are my own, I would like to note, again, that I have a bad habit of adding things and not sending the chapter back to my wonderful betas. Thank you all for viewing, reviewing, favoriting and following my story. A quick thanks to all of those who point out my errors, some are on purpose and some are mistakes. So thanks.

AN: I gave the Black family a bit more of a violent history than they had in canon. I also want to note that I'm making up the meeting places, the eatery and the park.

Hphphp

It was early in the evening when the two Marauders watched in amazement. Hydrus had just deftly removed the horcrux from baby Harry. First, the immortal cast a Sleeping Spell on the child, then laid him on the padded coffee table. He then called up a piece of junk from his pocket, making a mental note to clean it out once again.

Holding the item above the still red scar he incanted, "Repel aliena anima." Harry squirmed as the foreign bit of soul was removed from his forehead, but stayed asleep.

Hydrus called Tippy to take care of the baby, who would wake soon. He then put the cursed junk into a medium sized ceramic bowl. He called up his acid and dropped some on it and watched as it blackened. The screech of a dying soul was heard, leaving the two Marauders in stunned silence. Then it was over.

"Piece of cake," Hydrus said smugly.

"Who knew it was that easy?" Remus said with a bit of awe. "I mean, these are the Darkest items ever created. How could a simple Latin term work so well? And why hasn't anyone thought of it before? To use Muggle acid, I would have never thought of that."

"If there is one thing I've noticed about magicals, it's that they lose common sense and creativity the more they learn magic. No offense, guys, but you have to admit that the common wizard doesn't think for themselves. Even you, Remus, fell to gossip and believed the papers and not your heart," Hydrus explained. Remus looked down at his shoes sheepishly. This caused Hydrus's godfather to chuckle.

"Don't laugh, Sirius, you did the same when you took Dumbledore's and Pettigrew's word about Remus. I'm hoping that therapy will help you get back to thinking for yourselves. I know if I hadn't left the wizarding world behind, I might have lost my common sense. It's only all the stupid ridicule and gossip that kept mine where it is supposed to be."

The two men nodded in agreement. Hydrus cleaned up the mess with a Banishing Charm and Scourgify, put the bowl back in his pocket-space and then he got comfortable on the sofa. The other two settled in their chairs. By now, they each had their favorite seats; Sirius liked the leather recliner, Remus preferred the comfy straight back chair, while Hydrus always took to the sofa.

"Hey, Hydrus, you never told me how you got that wicked pocket-space above your shoulder," Sirius said, hoping to lighten the mood now that Harry no longer carried the cursed scar.

It was Hydrus's turn to look sheepish. "It was a bit of an accident, really. I was trying to make an undetectable extended bag, when I misquoted the spell and it backfired. So I have no idea how it works, I'm just glad it does."

The two men chuckled and then Sirius pouted. "That means I can't have one," he whinged.

"Well, you could try, but, I wouldn't recommend it," Hydrus said playfully.

"You could show us the memory, and we could give it a go," Remus suggested.

"Yeah, I can do that. I have a few pensieves in there somewhere," the time traveler agreed.

"So, what now?" Sirius asked.

"Tomorrow I'll call around and see about counseling. I'd like to see if my

old therapist is working, but I doubt it. Maybe we can use the same clinic though," Hydrus said thoughtfully. "I also need to get to my shop and see how things are going. You guys are welcome to come along. You might get a kick out of what I'm selling, Remus."

"I would like that."

"I think I'll pass," Sirius said, wanting to spend more time with his godson.

Tippy popped in and let them know Harry was awake and asking for them. So they asked her to bring him down. They played with the now thin scarred toddler until it was his bedtime and then the three men talked over plans for the next day and soon went off to bed.

The next morning everyone woke bright and early. Hydrus, of course, made breakfast. He went for a light meal of scrambled eggs with cheese and toast. Harry as usual made quite a mess and this time Sirius volunteered to clean him up. When the two didn't appear after ten minutes, Hydrus and Remus went to find out why.

They walked into the bathroom that was for Harry's use and saw the baby, in a shallow bath, splashing a pitiful looking, bubble covered, large, black dog. The two burst out laughing and had to hold each other up. Padfoot gently removed himself from Harry, stepped out of the tub and shook himself off. He then morphed back into Sirius. "Oi, it's not that funny," he snapped at the laughing pair.

"How... how did you wind up being the one to be cleaned?" Hydrus asked between chuckles, all the while keeping his eye on the playing toddler.

"He kept crying," the dog Animagus said. "I know he likes Padfoot, so I changed, but he still wouldn't stop crying until I got in the tub," the still damp man defended himself, folding his arms across his chest and pouting.

"Sirius, why did you think he needed a bath? You could have simply cleaned his face with a flannel."

"Well, I was going to, until I saw eggs in his hair. So, I thought a bath would be better."

"And you were correct," Remus decided to stand up for his friend, causing Sirius to beam at him.

"Sorry, sorry," said the still chuckling Hydrus. "Let's finish cleaning Harry and go outside. It's a nice day, probably one of the last of the season."

After making sure all the eggs were out of Harry's hair, they used a charm to dry him off, got him bundled up and went into the back yard, this time bringing the toddler some toys in hopes of saving the rest of the garden. Hydrus made a mental note to fence that off the next spring. It was cold out, but the sun was shining and they used plenty of Warming Charms to keep the toddler from getting a chill.

"You guys watch Harry for a bit, okay? I'm going to call the clinic,"

Hydrus said, after he played with Harry for a while. He went into the house and did just that. He made three evaluation appointments in a few days, and hung up the phone. He also checked in on his investments.

It was getting to be around noon, so Hydrus made a nice lunch of tomato soup and hot ham sandwiches. He called the others in and they all sat.

Harry had lukewarm soup in his sippy cup and a half of a cheese sandwich (his favorite). The rest enjoyed the hot meal. This time Hydrus cleaned Harry.

"Ready to go, Remus?" Hydrus asked.

"Let me get my coat," was Remus's reply.

"Are you going to be okay alone, Padfoot? Tippy will be here to help, we shouldn't be long."

"I'll be okay," Sirius said firmly.

Hydrus nodded, picked Harry up, took him in the living room and placed him with his toys. After going to his room and putting in his grey contacts, he met Remus at the door. He pulled his coat on and the two men left. They Apparated to the alley next to the Cauldron and went into the pub. It wasn't crowded as lunch was just over. They made their way to the Alley and moved down the street to the shop; Home Appliances of The Future. It had taken a minute for Hydrus to name the store, but he didn't want his name in it. He decided to keep it simple, so that people would know what it was before they ventured in.

The store seemed to be quite busy as they wove through the moderate crowd. Remus looked around in fascination; Hydrus promised he could get a closer look while he did some business, so the two men parted at the checkout counter.

In the back room was a cheerful looking man with wispy white hair. He was going over the books and when Hydrus entered he looked up. "Mr. Black, sir, what a wonderful surprise," he said as he got up to shake his boss's hand.

"Mr. Parker, it is good to see you. Judging from the crowd, business is well?" Hydrus said as he shook the man's hand and then gestured to the chairs near the fireplace. The two men sat and got comfortable.

"Oh, it is indeed," Joshua Parker said. He was ecstatic about his position as store manager. When Hydrus had approached him originally he had his doubts. Now, though, he was happy to be here.

"That's great," Hydrus beamed. "I was wondering if there were any letters or notes for me. I'm waiting for a response from someone, and told them to leave it here."

"Oh, yes, yes, of course. A gentleman did come by and left you a missive. At first he was quite upset then after looking at your rune array and

patent, he calmed down," Mr. Parker said as he got up and went to the desk to retrieve the note.

Hydrus let out a small sigh of relief. He wanted to work with the man, not make an enemy of him. Since his design was so different from Frostwell's, he was hoping this would be the outcome. Those hopes were dashed when he read the letter. In it Frostwell stated that while Hydrus's arrays were good, he worked alone, so they would be friendly competition.

After the immortal thought about it; he figured it was a good thing. The more inventions that were on the market, the sooner the magicals would start thinking for themselves. Since Frostwell mostly tinkered with small things such as book-readers and calculators, and Hydrus was selling large contraptions like the washing machines and tellies (which mostly sold to Muggle-born), they wouldn't really be competing.

Hydrus and Mr. Parker discussed the store and the profits and then Hydrus went to find Remus. He found him next to a dryer. The werewolf was reading the manual, trying to figure out what it was for.

"It's a dryer," Hydrus said, startling the other man. "It dries your clothes."

"This doesn't look like any machine I've ever seen. We magical folk usually use a drying charm."

"Yeah, but that leaves clothes stiff, this doesn't. I'll show you the one I have at the house."

"You have one? Of course you do, sorry, stupid question," Remus said as he put the manual down. "I have to say, you have a real good thing going here. Ready to go?"

"Yup, all done. Did you want to look around more? I have a lot of this at the house, I just thought you would like to see the things I don't have," he said. He then bent closer and whispered, "Mine stuff is better, didn't want

to push too much advancement on the public."

Remus hadn't really looked over Hydrus's house, he had mostly been thinking about whether or not to move in. He still hadn't reached that decision. So, he nodded to the other man and they left the store.

Hydrus got a creepy feeling that someone was watching him and they didn't have good thoughts. He looked around, but didn't see anyone, so he shrugged it off for now and the two men left the Alley.

After they got back home, they found Sirius, as Padfoot, curled up on the floor and Harry sleeping on top of him, in that boneless way which only babies can do, drool pooling on the dogs fur. Hydrus called up a camera and the first pictures were taken. He then jerked his head to the kitchen and led the way, Remus following stifling his laughter.

"Come on, I'll show you the laundry room," Hydrus said when they were out of earshot. He showed the werewolf the marvels of non-magical technology. While Remus had spent some time in London, he always kept his house magical. So he had seen a lot of the machines, he just had no idea what they were for. After that they sat at the kitchen table and chatted over tea. They talked about the inventions in the shop and how they differed from the ones Hydrus had at the house.

An hour later they heard the other two awake and went to join them.

"Good nap, Sirius?" Remus asked with a huge smile.

"Yes, it was actually," Sirius sniffed, nose in the air.

"Good, good."

They spent a good part of the afternoon trying to teach Harry how to build castles with his blocks, it was relaxing for everyone. A simple dinner of fish and chips was had and soon enough it was Harry's bedtime. Remus offered to do the honors. When he came back down a half an hour later, they settled in the living room, with tea and cakes.

"I sent another letter to Grandfather, asking him to tell Cissy to keep her money away from Death Eaters. Whether or not he will do so, I don't know," Sirius said, getting down to business.

Hydrus nodded, there was little they could do in that front, but if that didn't work he had no problem kidnapping the Death Eaters that got away, and putting them with their comrades. Judging from the reactions of the other two, he would have to do it alone. Oh, they would know it was him, but at least their hands would be clean.

"I still have a few people that need to disappear. They aren't Death Eaters, but the things they do cause a lot of misery for the public. Dolores Umbridge is the one who set up those Muggle-born camps. And Rita Skeeter was the reason for most of the populace turning on me. Her vicious quill caused many good people to fall," he said, ticking the two hated women off on his fingers.

The other two men exchanged worrying glances.

"Are you going to kill them?" Remus asked.

"Look, I know you guys think I'm unbalanced, but I truly only want what's best for magical Britain," Hydrus sighed, pinching his nose. "I really don't want to go down that path and if I can find a way not to kill, I will. The exception being Voldemort; however, if we get the horcruxes first that shouldn't be an issue."

"Unless he makes another one," Sirius said. "After all, he did before. This time you don't have a connection with him, so you won't know if he fades after we get the other two."

"When we get those, I'll make a trip to Albania, talk to the locals, listen to gossip," Hydrus said, already making plans; maybe he would use vengeful ghosts as spies. "Hey, Sirius, can you write to Marius and set up a meeting so we can talk to him. Also we need to get the Fidelius up soon."

"I can do that," Sirius said.

"Good, let him pick the place and time."

"Who do you want to make the Secret Keeper?" Remus asked.

"Remus, you cast the charm and I'll be the Keeper," Hydrus said. "Now that that's settled, let's play some video games. Remus hasn't tried it yet."

Sirius whooped, dove for the console and put in HALO: Reach, while Hydrus tried to explain the concept to Remus. The three men played into the night and made it to bed around three in the morning.

It was a tired trio that trudged their way to the kitchen the next morning.

Hydrus decided not to cook and everyone had cold cereal. Sirius excused himself to write his letter and the other two played blocks with Harry.

"Unca Mooy!" Harry shouted, bouncing up and down, pointing at his rickety three block tower.

"Very good, Harry," Remus said, beaming at how happy Harry was.

"Unca Hyrus, Unca Hyrus, look!" the toddler yelled as he toddled to Hydrus, who was watching in amusement.

Hydrus picked up the cheering child and gave him a raspberry on his tummy. The tot giggled and wiggled to get free. Sirius came into the room looking around to see what all the excitement was for.

"Unca P'fut," Harry said and squirmed free of Hydrus running to his favorite Animagus. "Buil' alocks."

"Look at that. You did good, Prongslet," Sirius said, and then tickled the proud child.

"I wonder how he learned to talk so well," Hydrus said as he watched the two in the tickle fight. Well, it wasn't much of a fight, Sirius was doing the tickling and Harry was trying his best to get free.

"Lily," Remus answered. "She wouldn't let us baby talk to him."

"Yeah, I read something about that. I don't remember having much of a

vocabulary when I was growing up. Then again, all I got were orders and reprimands from the Dursleys." He shook his head sadly at the reminder and then went to help Harry in his war against Sirius.

The four males played until it was Harry's nap time. Sirius was playing some Mortal Kombat with Remus, and was put out that the werewolf was kicking his arse. Hydrus was going over his non-magical documents.

Harry woke up and Hydrus kicked the two adults off the telly and set the child down to watch a movie on the alphabet which used fluffy animals to learn. Harry watched it for about five minutes and then waddled away to his toys. It was a start.

It was after lunch that a regal owl pecked on the window. Sirius got up and let it in, giving him some meat from the lunch as he removed the letter addressed to him. The owl ate his treat and flew away.

"It's from Grandfather Arcturus," the dogman said as he started reading.

"Says here that he told Cissy to keep her nose clean or he'd chuck her out of the family. He also wants to meet with me tomorrow. And that I'm to come alone."

"That is a good sign, right?" Remus asked.

"You don't know Grandfather Arcturus; he's a righteous old bastard. It could mean anything from him agreeing to help or wanting to kill me and let the family name die," Sirius said worriedly. Arcturus was a puzzle to him, he had only met the man once when he was a child and he wasn't ashamed to admit his grandfather scared the crap out of him.

"He's too proud to let the family name die," Hydrus said, hoping to soothe that fear.

"Yeah, maybe."

"Anyway, we need his help, so..." Hydrus trailed off as he checked in on the toddler, who was still playing with his toys. He made a mental note

to invent some that lit up to the touch, so he could teach Harry his colors.

"I'm a Gryffindor and a Black, I will face him with dignity," Sirius said, straightening his shoulders and firming his face.

"And you will do Gryffindor proud," Remus said, clapping his friend on the back.

"So, Remus, have you decided if you're moving in?" Hydrus asked.

"We will go with your plan for one full moon. You take Harry out of the house and I will see if your cellar will suffice."

"That's great, why don't you go and get some of your things tomorrow, while Sirius visits his grandfather?" the immortal suggested.

The werewolf nodded and the two dog men went back to what they were doing. Hydrus left to go and talk to his solicitor about a contract for Marius. He returned an hour later, with a smug grin.

The rest of the day was spent with Hydrus and Remus playing with Harry, and Sirius playing his favorite game, HALO: Reach. He was getting addicted and attempting to drag his best friend with him.

That night they cast the Fidelius charm, so that Sirius and Remus couldn't tell where Harry lived.

The next morning with heavy breakfast out of the way, Sirius went to see his grandfather, Remus went to gather some of his things, and Hydrus once more tried to get Harry to watch the kids' movie, with as much success as the first time. So, he spent the rest of the time going over equations for the color toy and almost had it figured out when a shell-shocked Sirius came home.

"Merlin, what happened to you?" Hydrus said as he guided Sirius to his favorite chair.

"He stepped down," the other man said, with a vacant stare. "We had a

huge fight for about an hour, he kept going on and on about family loyalty. I told him that he was a deluded old fool if he thought Death Eaters were loyal to anyone except You Know Who. I thought for sure he was going to kill me and then he started laughing and handed me the Lordship. He said if I can stand up to him then I might be able to pull the Black family back together. There'll be an announcement in the Daily Prophet tomorrow."

"Well," Hydrus said as he plopped to the sofa, "that's unexpected. A bonus, but unexpected."

"We spent the last hour going over what that meant. I mean, I already knew most of it; I was raised to take over before I ran away, but he wanted to make sure," Sirius said, coming back to himself. "One thing he did say is I can kick Mum out of the house and make her go and live in one of the smaller houses. He doesn't want me to remove anyone from the family, but I can bring anyone who is magical back in. I mean, I can do anything I want, but these are his final requests. I have to meet with him again, soon, but this time he wants to meet you."

"Me, why in Merlin's name, would he want to meet me? I'm just a nobody born to a squib," Hydrus exclaimed.

"Don't know, but he does."

Hydrus shrugged and brought up an important question. "With Bellatrix presumed dead and the Lestrangle brothers in prison, can you get the horcrux from her vault?"

"Yeah, those greedy goblins will do anything for payment. There's tons of goblin made silver at Grimmauld Place I can use," Sirius said with a nod.

"As long as it's you and not me, I can't stand goblins. Why don't you unwind a bit, play some war game or something, and then later you can see your lawyer about adding people back in the family. Hey," Hydrus

said excitedly, just realizing something, "you can add me to the family.

Or maybe not, since the tree will put me in a weird spot," he added thoughtfully.

"Nay, the tree will leave you free hanging; it can be explained away as you being a son of a squib." Sirius waved it away. "Besides, I think your name is already on the tree or Grandfather Arcturus wouldn't know about you. I didn't mention you in our talks, so it caught me by surprise when he asked about you."

"Oh, okay. I wonder what's taking Remus so long. He should have been back ages ago."

"Don't know," Sirius said, turning to the front door. Then he shrugged and put in his favorite game and got lost in the zone.

It was forty minutes later that Remus came in looking irked. He dumped his boxes next to the door, flopped down into his chair and ran a hand through his hair. "We put that charm up just in time. I was packing some things when Albus came through the Floo. We had tea and talked of nonessential things, and then he asked if I had heard from Sirius. I told him I had. He then asked if Sirius had taken Harry away from the Dursleys, and I told him that Sirius hadn't been near the place."

Hydrus grumbled under his breath about nosy old men.

"He asked if I knew where Harry was, and I told him that as far as I knew he was with his family. He tried for an hour to get me to explain further, but thanks to the truth and the charm that is all he got out of me. Thank Merlin werewolves have a natural mental shield. That is what took me so long. Oh, and he did say the Dursleys were gone," the werewolf finished, and then got up to get some tea.

"Huh," Hydrus said, watching the man leave the room, "I didn't think it'd be so soon. Mrs. Figg must've been there long before I thought." He then

looked at the happily playing Harry and shrugged. With the blood wards and the Fidelius no one will find them. Hopefully, with Remus only stating the truth, as he knew it, and the monitors on the wards, that'll be enough for the Headmaster to not question further.

"I need to write my lawyer," Sirius said, abandoning his game and leaving the room.

Hydrus put his notes away and sat down on the floor with Harry. "It's just you and me, kid, what say we build some more blocks?"

"alocks!" Harry bounced. And that is just what they did. Remus came back with his tea and settled into his chair with his book-reader. Sirius appeared twenty minutes later and went back to his game. They had a nice family evening.

The next morning Marius's reply came via owl. In it he stated that the owls were getting noticed and he preferred the non-magical mail, he would give them an address when they met. He gave a time to meet at a park and a phone number to call to respond. Sirius, after being shown how, called the man and confirmed they would all be there at one.

So at noon they all bundled up and buckled in the car. Hydrus, using the directions from his book-reader, drove to the park. He had to wonder why the man chose such a setting, but then again dealing with the Black Family, he might just be very cautious. The phone number was probably a pay phone. The immortal didn't blame the man; the Blacks were notorious for killing off unwanted members of their family. Hydrus was surprised that Marius, Andromeda and Sirius were allowed to live; then again Sirius had the backing of Harry's grandmother, Dorea Black. Black family customs gave him a headache. In his timeline they were mostly dead, so he didn't have to deal with them.

Arriving at the park, they got out of the car and wandered around, Harry

was in a buggy with a blanket that had a warming charm, and searched for the other Black. He approached them, with a curious look on his face.

"I recognize Sirius from the newspaper, and from the description in the letter, I'm assuming you're Hydrus, but who's the baby and the other man?" the tall dark-haired man asked. He looked like a Black, long black hair, grey eyes and an aristocratic face. "By the way, thanks for dressing like a Muggle," he said with a bite in his voice. "I was worried that you'd show up in robes or dressed outdated, like most of your kind." Yeah, he was bitter. They all ignored the tone; the man had a right to be angry.

"Marius—I assume—you look like Regulus," Sirius said a bit sadly as he shook hands with his long lost relative. "This is Hydrus, as you guessed, and the other man is Remus. We can't tell you who the baby is, yet. Not until we know each other better."

"Then why, in God's name, did you bring him?" Marius growled. "It's bloody freezing out here. Stupid wizards."

"He needs to get out of the house more, he's been cooped up for ages. Besides, the blanket is warmed," Sirius defended their actions. In all honesty, Harry had thrown a fit when he saw they were about to leave and none of the men could calm him. Since they were pressed for time, they decided to bring him along.

"Fine, whatever, let's get him out of the cold air. There's a rec center over there that has a room we can talk in," the other man said, waving his hand to his left. So they all set out to the rather plain looking building that had the sign stating it was Baldwin Park's Recreational Center.

The building was split into three large rooms and a few offices. There was the sports room where kids could play indoors, a meeting room, which is where you could rent the room for your club meetings and a study room with a small library and a dozen tables that held eight to ten

people. Marius rented the meeting room for them and when the door was closed, Sirius threw up some security wards.

"While I'm happy to get a bit of revenge on the Black family, how are we going to make you my grandson? You said the name of my son, Patrick, name is on your birth certificate, why?" the wary man asked, getting straight to the point.

Hydrus was lifting Harry out of his buggy and removing his heavy winter suit. He'd be warm enough in just his little jeans, tiny snow boots and jumper. He didn't want the tot to overheat. The rest had already taken off their jackets. When he was done, he set the toddler on his lap and handed him his car keys. He then turned to the upset man and gave a sheepish look and held his hands up in supplication. "When I did the adoption I needed a relative the magicals wouldn't look for, so I looked on the tree and saw your name blasted off. I did a bit of research and found out you're a squib, that your sons were dead, so I used it. I figured we could just say Hydrus is a family name."

Marius grunted and nodded at the simple explanation and said, "I don't like it, and I'll tell you here and now, if this wasn't a way to get back at the family that dumped me, and if I didn't know better tried to kill me, I'd be a hell of a lot angrier. Now tell me why you need this so bad."

"Well, since you can't take a vow, I brought a contract for you," Hydrus said, pulling said contract from his pocket and handing it to his hopefully soon to be faux grandfather.

Marius growled again and snatched the contract. He read it over and saw that it only stated that he couldn't tell anyone what was discussed here today. He grunted, pulled a pen from his shirt pocket, and signed. It wasn't like he could lose his life or magic if he told anyone.

The next two hours were spent with Hydrus relating everything Marius

needed to know, mostly about his childhood, how the wizarding world turned on him (hoping the man would relate) and anything he did in the non-magical world. Why he felt he needed to go back in time and how this story would help him. He was thinking that he really didn't need the man's permission, but it would help if anyone were to investigate. The only thing they had to do was come up with a reason Hydrus was still alive, when the rest of the family was dead.

From his research in the future, Hydrus knew Marius had two sons, they each had one son. All of them died mysteriously. It was his belief that someone in the Black family killed them off when the grandsons showed no signs of magic (more than likely on Voldemort's orders, so no heir would pop up later and the Black Lordship would go to Draco). What he needed to do was refine his tale and get Marius to agree to it.

After hours of discussion, they came up with a story that when Hydrus showed signs of magic as a baby, he was adopted out, since the family was still bitter. When he found his birth certificate and heard about his birth family's murder, he hid. He had gone to Marius, who told him to get lost. That he was only surfacing now because of the inheritance that was left to him by his squib godfather, who is still unnamed. It wouldn't hold up to deep investigations. Hopefully the magicals would more than likely never search out Marius. Marius was mollified that Hydrus didn't want to casually use the name and he knew that it was only a courtesy that they told him anything.

During that time Harry was passed from man to man, until he got fussy and was given some snacks, and soon enough went to sleep on Sirius's shoulder.

They parted ways with the exchange of phone numbers and Marius's address, in case the magicals hunted him down. Hydrus said he'd set up a

P.O. Box soon.

Back at the house, Hydrus reminded them of their appointments the next day. The other two men groaned.

## 12. Stressful Days

### Chapter 12 Stressful Days

AN: thanks to my betas, The 5h15 Spaceman, darrelldream and alix33. All mistakes are my own, I would like to note, again, that I have a bad habit of adding things and not sending the chapter back to my wonderful betas. Thank you all for viewing, reviewing, favoriting and following my story. A quick thanks to all of those who point out my errors, some are on purpose and some are mistakes. So thanks.

If you like Percy Jackson stories, check out Hera's Task by The 5h15 Spaceman, he does some really good action scenes. You should read it.

There is a bit of grossness, so if you get easily queasy skip the marked scenes. I have no idea what came over me, but it felt right. I am using non-Potterverse ghouls. I am using the Oxford definition which is: an evil spirit or phantom, especially one supposed to rob graves and feed on dead bodies

One more thing, I also want to stress I'm not men bashing in the end, I have three brothers and they always are uncomfortable talking about emotions. Just my observations.

Hphphp

The next morning Hydrus knew the other two men would be nervous, so he made a light breakfast of boiled eggs and soldiers. He gave Harry some dry cereal and a banana, and waited for the other two to emerge. It was a reluctant duo that came to the table. They played with their breakfast and sent pleading glances to Hydrus.

As if I have any true control over them. Hydrus thought. "Look, I know you guys are nervous, but really it isn't a big thing," he said calmly. "Just keep your talks non-magical and try not to use names. You can say things like, you were fighting a secret terrorist war. The main terrorist is gone, but his fighters are still out there. Tell about your losses and speak the truth, as much as you can, they can't help you if you hide things from them," the immortal said gently. "Remember you're doing this for yourself and Harry."

"They're going to want to know about my childhood," Sirius whinged.

"You told me they always do."

"Well, yeah, I know that's a bit hard to talk about, but, I gotta tell ya, it helps. Besides, they'll only ask and if you're not comfortable they'll put it off until you are," he said calmly. He remembered how hard it was to accept that the Dursleys' treatment of him was actual abuse.

"I am more worried about me being a werewolf," Remus said, sullenly. "I cannot tell them about that, and it is my number one fear."

"That's a bit trickier, not much you can tell about that, other than it's an illness," Hydrus said, rubbing his chin in thought. "Or, you could just tell them you have bouts of uncontrollable anger, that you mostly have a handle on, but you fear hurting someone." Then he shook his head. "No, maybe not, they might want to observe and put you in a hospital for a few nights," he mused. "I'd keep that bit to myself, I know I just said not to do that, but in this case it can't be helped. You could just use the self-help books on yoga and meditation. Remus, you're a great guy and your fears are misplaced. You are one of the gentlest souls I've ever met. You've been a werewolf almost all your life, and only had one close call, that wasn't even your fault."

Sirius hung his head in shame and looked at his best friend.

"I forgave you years ago, Padfoot."

"Yeah, but if you want to get over that guilt you might want to tell your counselor about the prank that went wrong," Hydrus gently suggested.

"Yeah," Sirius replied, thinking over what he could and could not say.

And the two men went back to pushing around their breakfast.

"Tippy," Hydrus called, when they were done.

"Master Hydrus is wanting Tippy?" the little elf squeaked. She had taken to wearing a child's dress; it was cute, pink and straight with no sleeves and a high neck. There was a huge daisy embroidered on the front. There were buttons down half the dress, which Hydrus thought would be the only way she would be able to get it over her rather large head. It wasn't anything fancy, but better than a tea towel.

"Hey, Tippy, how are you today?"

"Tippy is being bored, Master Hydrus is not letting Tippy do her job," the elf answered honestly.

"Hmmm," the immortal thought a moment. "It hasn't started to snow yet, so maybe you could clean up the garden, the flower garden needs to be fenced off, and it looks like we will need some of those trees trimmed. Do you think you could do that?"

"Tippy is a house elf, not a garden elf," she replied sadly.

Hydrus thought a bit more, and had another idea, "Tippy, sorry that I never asked, but can you read?"

"Tippy is reading very well."

So he called up one of his many book-readers and looked through the titles. He had raided all the libraries in London, not to mention all of the magical libraries, before he came back, so there was bound to be books on landscaping. He found a few, gave the reader to Tippy and showed her how to use it. "When you're not looking after Harry, this is yours to

read. These books that I brought up are on landscaping, both magical and Muggle, so you can learn at your leisure."

The little elf's eyes lit up as she reverently took the reader and scanned the page. She then gently placed it in front of her dress. Hydrus never figured out how house elves hid things in their clothes, maybe they had pocketspaces too.

He shook his head out of those thoughts and said, "We have to be going soon. Harry has been fed and changed. He's in the living room playing with his toys. He's probably going to cry when we leave, but we can't take him with us this time, sorry," he explained. Had he known Harry would throw fits every time they left, he wouldn't have made the appointments on the same day. On the other hand, the other two men would need all the support they could get.

"Tippy will be taking good care of Little Master." She nodded her head happily.

"Thanks, Tippy, you're the best." He patted her head and went to find the other two men.

They were with Harry, playing with the blocks he so loved, so Hydrus cleared his throat and jerked his head to the door. Tippy popped in the room and waited for them to leave. Sure enough when they were putting their jackets on, Harry started to cry and toddled to them with his hands held in the air. Tippy took the baby in a firm hug and led him back to the living room. Hydrus took a firm hold on Sirius's elbow and led him away. He knew it was hard, it was hard on him too, but they needed to go.

Remus followed, though he kept looking over his shoulder. You could hear Tippy telling Harry they'd be back.

The trio drove to Ashford's Clinic and went to the reception desk letting the lady there know they were here. She handed them paperwork to fill

out, and they did the best they could. Sirius had a bit of a chuckle at the questions about his family history. When they were done, Hydrus took the papers back to the desk and handed them to the receptionist. Now all they could do was wait.

The Clinic was rather large with three psychiatrists and fifteen therapists. So, they would probably be seeing different ones. The men were extremely lucky that it was not busy right now. Remus went first, and with a wary look to Hydrus he followed the middle aged female therapist into the back.

Sirius started to get more and more panicky, his knee was going a mile a minute, so Hydrus put a hand on his shoulder.

"It'll be okay, really. I wouldn't ask this of you if it wasn't helpful. I promise you don't have to talk about anything you don't want to. But, for Harry, try, okay?" he whispered to the anxious man.

"Right, right, for Harry," Sirius muttered. He firmed his jaw, like the Gryffindor he was, and stopped his bouncing knee.

Hydrus was the most concerned about the man next to him. Though he calmed down a lot in the last week, he was still prone to fits of anger. It was a good thing he had enough control to take it out on the video games. Hydrus was positive he was suffering from PTSD, and since it was only newly diagnosable in this timeline, he hoped the therapist would catch it. He was going to suggest potions, but he wanted to see if they were going to prescribe him medicine first. He might just need therapy. Sirius was called and he stood straight and marched into the back room with a nice looking young woman. Hydrus let out a sigh of relief, Sirius would open up better to a young person.

"Hydrus Black?" a thin, tall, older man called.

"That's me," he said as he rose. He followed the man down the long

hallway and entered the room indicated.

The office was like any other analyst office he had been in, a large messy desk with patient files stacked to the side, a bookcase full of diagnostic books and some self-help books, calming pictures of the sea, a few comfortable chairs on the other side of the desk.

"Good Afternoon, Mr. Black, I am Alfie Noble and I will be doing your evaluation today. You may or may not get me as your counselor later, it all depends on what we talk about in this session," Mr. Noble said as he sat on one of the comfortable chairs, indicated for Hydrus to sit in front of him, and pulled out a notepad and pen, poised to start writing.

Hydrus sat in the chair indicated. "Good Afternoon, Mr. Noble, please, call me Hydrus." He relaxed back in his seat and gave off a calm demeanor.

"Very well, Hydrus, what do you want out of therapy?" came the standard first question.

"Well, first let me start off by saying I'm a recovering PTSD patient. I've had years of therapy under my belt, and have been off medication for some time. I was only seeing my last counselor every three months for a checkup," Hydrus explained evenly.

"Can you give me the name of your last clinic, so we can send for your records?" Alfie asked as he made a note.

"Sorry, I'm under police protection. I wish I could, my therapist was great and helped me a lot," Hydrus said. He had thought about bringing his records with him, but the treatment wouldn't match the timeline.

"Oh, tell me how that came to be," the startled man looked up.

"I can explain it to you, but, I can't give any names."

"Yes, please, do. It will go a long way in evaluating you."

And so the next hour was spent telling about his childhood and the

terrorist that hunted him and killed his family. Noble's eyes grew wider at each almost death experience Hydrus had as a child, but he did note the young man seemed to be in complete control. In the end it was decided that Hydrus would continue with an every three month checkup. The two shook hands and Hydrus was led back to the lobby. There two very emotional men were seated, though Remus seemed more concerned about Sirius. The immortal made his way to the front desk, paid the bills for all of them, made his appointment and turned to his friends.

"Come on, guys, let's go to get some tea," Hydrus suggested, thinking it would give everyone time to regain control before they went home. And knowing drinking alcohol would only make it worse, even if Sirius looked like he wanted to get pissed.

Remus took his friend by the elbow and led him to the car. They drove to the nearest diner and had some scones and tea.

After ten minutes of silence passed Hydrus asked, "Do you want to talk about it, Sirius?"

"Yeah, yeah, Ms. Goddard said that'd be a good thing, to talk to you two," Sirius said, coming back to himself.

Remus rubbed his back and said, "Take your time, Padfoot."

"The questions were just so intrusive," the dogman said with a shudder, had he not just been talking to the analyst he wouldn't be opening up now. "I know you told me they would be, but I brought up things I thought I had forgotten about. It was really hard and emotional. She said I had to come every day for the next few months." His face looked torn between relief at getting help and sadness that he was so screwed up.

"She said the psychiatrist will give me Muggle pills for anxiety and depression. I'm going to see if there are equivalents in potions."

"Well, we're here for you, if you ever want to talk about. It's good to have

people to support you through all of this," Hydrus said sincerely, looking in the other man's eyes, showing him what he said was true. He remembered well that George had been a great help to him when he first went through all his therapy. He'd hate to think how much harder it would have been if he hadn't had that support. "There are better potions; we can brew some up later."

That seemed to relax the man a bit. "She did say something about my loyalty to Dumbledore as being unnatural, especially after I told her what he did to Harry. I didn't use any names, but I did tell her that he was a great man and leader, so I didn't understand his actions," Sirius said a bit confused.

"I've been thinking about that. Was there a loyalty clause in the oaths you took for the Order of the Phoenix?" Hydrus asked.

Both men's eyes glazed over as they thought back to when they joined the Order. Recognition came to their faces as they realized that there was indeed a sentence about being loyal to the leader of the Order until the group was disbanded. They both came back to the present and nodded.

"Yeah, there was, it wasn't specifically to Dumbledore just whoever was the leader and only if that leader made a vow to fight for the Light. But, how did Pettigrew break that oath without dying?" Sirius asked a little angry.

"I'm not sure, maybe it was because he didn't go against the leader, he went against members of the Order," Hydrus answered. Though, that didn't make much sense either, wouldn't the Order members make the same vow to fight for the Light. Since he wasn't there when they made the vow he didn't have the answer to that. It could be that Pettigrew used a false name, or reworded his vow, that sneaky rat would find a way to get around it, if he was already a Death Eater.

"So, we are going to be sticking up for Albus until he disperses the Order?" Remus asked also angry about that clause, it was too much like mind control.

"Yeah, but when the trials are over, he should be doing that, so it will only be for a few more weeks," Hydrus said, hoping to ease their anger.

"Besides, you guys were only fresh out of Hogwarts when you made that vow and Dumbledore had made a good impression on the both of you, letting you do the things you did without reprimand. And with enough therapy, you might just find a way around that clause, if the Order starts up again. It's amazing what the mind can do when given the correct motivation."

The two men relaxed at that, Hydrus, so far, hadn't steered them wrong.

"What about you, Remus," Sirius asked, taking a sip of his tea, wishing for something stronger. "You don't seem stressed at all."

"Oh, not to make it sound like I am better than you, but, my therapist, Ms. Frankston, said that I am simply suffering from plain old depression and will overcome it in time," the werewolf answered. "She said my fear of hurting people can be treated with meditation and perhaps exercise. So you were right, Hydrus. She gave me a pamphlet on the grieving stages. She recommended that I only come to the clinic if I feel I cannot handle the grieving process myself. I told her I had you two and that I will be okay."

"That's Moony for you, always the calm and collected one," Sirius said with a sincere smile. They finished their tea chatting about happier times and went home.

Harry was very excited to see them and called each of their names, demanding to be picked up. Sirius, upon seeing his godson, firmed his resolve to get better and gave the toddler a big hug. He then handed him

to Remus and went to kill a few pixel men. Hydrus watched him go with sad eyes, knowing exactly what he was thinking. Sirius didn't trust himself around Harry. Hopefully with time that will change.

Bit of a queasy scene

Hydrus decided it was time to go and check on his coma victims, so he asked Remus if he was okay with Harry. When the werewolf nodded he popped away. He reappeared in the cemetery and went to the crypt holding Lucius and Bellatrix.

When he got near he noted the door was ajar and the smell was overwhelming, he had to cast a Bubblehead Charm just to get inside. It took everything he had not to empty his stomach. There were body parts everywhere; the blood coated the floors and the walls. The two bodies laid on the stone coffins, their inside showing to the world. It looked like something had eaten them from the throat down. Bits of flesh were thrown around the crypt, there was an arm and a hand laying just inside the door. Their faces were untouched, except blood spatter, it looked like they were sleeping.

These two Death Eaters will never kill again.

A fleeting thought on why whatever had eaten the two wasn't affected by the Draught of the Living Death went through his mind.

It looked like they had been torn apart by wild animals, but an animal couldn't open the doors. So Hydrus took a closer look, still trying to keep his lunch. Those were human teeth marks, so it must have been ghouls.

He cursed himself for warding against humans and not magical creatures.

He knew ghouls took up in abandoned cemeteries. He had thought it was only magical graveyards. Looks like he was wrong. He was going to have nightmares about this; it was a good thing that he was mostly over his guilt complex.

He decided to leave them as they were; he'd anonymously tell the families, hoping they'd get some closure. He closed the door, took down the wards and went to check on the others and was met with similar scenes. Using the Elder Wand he made sure all evidence of his magic was gone from the graveyard, and then he went back home.

He avoided the other two men until dinner; instead he went to his room and meditated on what happened and how he could prevent it from happening again. He still had to do something about the two hated women, but he didn't want their deaths on his hands if he could prevent it. Not after seeing and feeling that. He pushed the images to the back of his mind and concentrated on creating other plans.

He made some tentative plans and wrote them in his laptop. He then went to order dinner, since he didn't feel like cooking after that horrific ordeal. He had given Tippy the night off to read her book-reader. Not even thinking about it, he called for pizza to be picked up, hoping the other men would like the meatlovers, which they should. He then went to the living room and put on a calm face and played with Harry.

"Hey, Sirius, you ever have pizza?"

"No, Lily told me about it, but we never had any."

"What about you, Remus?"

"I have had some. It is easier to call out than to cook on the days after the full moon."

"Good, I don't feel like cooking tonight, so I ordered a meatlovers pizza for dinner. I hope you don't mind? Harry can have some of the crust, but I'm not comfortable with him eating the pizza. I've got some baby food for him."

"Nay, I don't mind. Hey, do you think I can feed Harry?" Sirius asked perking up at the thought. That should be something he can handle.

"Sure, but I got to warn you, he's at the age where he is going to want to do it himself. So be prepared for a fight. If it gets too much for you switch with someone," Hydrus warned in all seriousness.

When the time came, he went and got his order and put it on the table, calling his family to eat. When he opened the box, he realized that pizza was probably the worst idea he had all day. Swallowing down the bile, he gamely served everyone and then made the excuse that he wasn't hungry after all.

End of queasy scene

"Are you alright?" Remus asked in concern. He noted the immortal looked peaked.

"Just not feeling right, I'll tell why you tomorrow. I'm just going to go and work on my toy for Harry," Hydrus explained, then left the room. He sat on the sofa and took some deep breaths. Calming his stomach, he pulled his notes for the toy and started reading.

The two men joined him after they ate and cleaned Harry. Sirius tried to get the toddler interested in watching his HALO game, but the tyke only wanted his blocks. While the tot was busy playing, Sirius and Remus took their chairs and shared a look then cleared their throats to get the other man's attention. Hydrus looked up from his notes and smiled wanly.

"I'm not going to tell you tonight. Just know it is important, but not a priority," he told them and went back to his notes. He was almost there and should have a model ready soon. He would have to convert one of the studies to his lab. If the other two wanted to help they were welcome.

The rest of the night was spent, reading, playing with Harry or on the game console. Just a relaxing night after a stressful day.

The next day was cold and bitter, matching Hydrus's mood. He was right; he had nightmares of the carnage all night. He probably got two hours of

sleep. He went and gathered the awake Harry and took him to the kitchen, this time making pancakes, which should be easy on his churning tummy.

Today was Saturday, so Sirius didn't have to go to the clinic. Hydrus figured he would have to teach the man how to drive a car, since it would be dangerous for the motorcycle soon. He'd ask him when he woke up. He was going to try and get them to use non-magical means of transportation, since CCTV cameras would be going up on all the streets in the future.

The dogmen stumbled into the kitchen, as usual, awoken by the aroma of breakfast.

"No meat?" Remus asked, piling his plate with pancakes and grabbing the syrup.

"Not today," was the succinct answer.

The werewolf looked up and noticed Hydrus was still a little pale, so he just nodded his head and added more to his plate.

Sirius was still drinking his first cup of coffee, so he just served himself some of the breakfast and tried to wake up more.

"Are you going to tell us what happened to make you so squeamish?"

Remus asked gently.

"Yeah, when Harry goes down for his nap," Hydrus answered, and went back to his own meal.

The rest of the breakfast was eaten in silence. When the table was cleared Hydrus excused himself to write some letters. He typed up a letter for each family that he knew about, telling them that their family member was dead, how they died, where they could find the remains and left them unsigned. He would send Bellatrix's to Arcturus. He printed them out and tucked them away to post later. He'd have to go to the Alley to

get them sent off. He still had plenty of non-magical disguises in his pocket-space. This way there would be no tracing them back to him.

He went and joined the family. He sat with Harry and tried to get him to say the colors of his toys. Harry got 'lue' and 'ed' right, most of the time; it was still a work in progress. After a half an hour of that, he told the other two he had an errand to run and he'd be back before lunch.

With a blonde wig and blue contacts, he posted the letters, got that feeling of being watched again (which was weird, because he was in disguise) and hurried home, making sure to remove the wig and contacts before entering the house. Everyone was still in the living room doing what they always did. Harry saw him come in and immediately waddled to him, held up his arms and demanded, "Up".

"Hey, Prongslet, you ready for lunch?" Hydrus asked as he settled the toddler on his hip and tickled his chin.

"Cheese," was the giggling response.

"You're as bad as Remus with chocolate," he mock growled at the tot and tickled him again.

"Are you feeling better?" Remus asked as he joined them.

Hydrus walked to the kitchen, put Harry in his highchair and started pulling stuff for a salad. "Yeah, I do. That errand I ran helped."

Remus went to the pantry and got Harry some jarred toddler food—spaghetti. Harry upon seeing it started to demand cheese. Remus gently talked the toddler into eating the pasta; he was really good at that. They had read that too much cheese might not be good for him, so Hydrus was insistent that they attempt to get him to like other foods.

Hydrus finished the salad and made some roast beef sandwiches and called Sirius in. They ate a nice meal and talked of nonessential things.

"Hey, Sirius, do you know how to drive?" Hydrus asked. "The motorcycle

isn't going to be safe soon, if you ever get it back from Hagrid," he explained at the quizzical look. "I don't remember if I told you this, but the government is going to start putting up more of those CCTV cameras on the main streets, so Apparating is not a good idea."

"Well, it's been awhile, so I might need a refresher. Lily taught us the summer of sixth year," Sirius said rubbing his chin. "Do you think we should warn the Ministry about those cameras?"

"I'll write them an anonymous letter soon. I might just casually drop the newspaper articles in the Alley. If I remember correctly there was a lot of protest about them," the immortal said and then turned to the werewolf.

"What about you, Remus, do you drive?"

"I was not around that summer, so, no, I do not know how to drive," Remus answered.

"Do you want to learn? We can get another car for you two. With Padfoot having daily sessions, it might be better," Hydrus suggested. "Sirius can buy his own, now that he is all Lorded up."

"Don't remind me," Sirius groaned and went back to his meal. Then he realized what Hydrus said and perked up, thinking about all the wicked sports cars he'd seen on the telly.

"Do not get too carried away, Padfoot. Remember you have a child to care for," Remus reprimanded gently.

Sirius waved it away. "I can get more than one," he said, still dreaming.

"So how about it, Remus, you want to learn?" Hydrus asked again.

"Sounds like it would be a good idea."

"Alright after our talk, I'll take you out and show you the basics." With that everyone returned to their meal. When they were finished Remus took Harry to get cleaned and down for his nap. He then joined the other men in the living room.

"So, what happened to put you off your food," Sirius all but demanded, tired of waiting.

"I went to check on the Death Eaters; needless to say they will never kill again. I didn't do it, they were dead when I got there," Hydrus said quickly, when he saw the horrified looks. He told them about how the ghouls had gotten them, but held back on the carnage. They were grown wizards and could figure it out on their own. He then recapped his errand, leaving out the being watched feeling. The entire time his voice was steady and his face contrite. "So, you see I didn't want them to die that way. I was still undecided what to do with them exactly. I was actually thinking of wiping their memories and binding their magic."

The two listeners shared a glance and then looked back to the immortal. They could see he was telling the truth and Sirius broke the silence first, "I thought ghouls only fed in magical graveyards."

"No, they go wherever there is a dead body," Remus explained. He was more versed on magical creatures, being one himself.

"Yeah, I thought the same as Sirius, so I didn't ward for them," Hydrus said, the more he thought about it the better he felt. Those people will never kill, rape or maim again. Even though he hadn't planned on seeing them dead, this was for the best. He kept those thoughts to himself and showed nothing on his face.

"It was an honest mistake," Remus said gently, bringing Hydrus from his thoughts. "It is not well known that ghouls hunt in the Muggle world. Besides, your letters were a sign of genuine guilt."

"Yeah, don't beat yourself up over it," Sirius piped in. "I'd've probably made the same mistake."

Hydrus let out a sigh of relief, he had been worried about how they would take it and he really wanted his family to stay together. "Let's get

you to driving, Remus."

So the two men donned their jackets and went to the garage. Hydrus only pointed out the parts of the car and what they were for; he'd take the werewolf out when he knew what each was. When they were done, Hydrus grabbed Sirius and took him for a test run. Sirius wasn't as rusty as he thought, so Hydrus was comfortable enough to let the man use the car until he got his own. They were going to have to get magic-upped licenses for everyone.

They were playing video games when Harry got up and Hydrus remembered another letter he had to write. So he excused himself to his room and wrote the Board of Governors about the Room of Hidden Things. He once again used the printer and left it unsigned. It would be interesting to see what they'd do with everything.

He set up his lab and brewed the potions for Sirius, for which the man was thankful. They watched the telly to see if the non-magicals had discovered the carnage, and were relieved when they hadn't. Soon enough they all went to bed, worried about what tomorrow would bring. The next morning after breakfast, Remus went and got the Daily Prophet, just to see if the story had broke. It had, the headline read:

Missing Members Found: Signs of the Dark Mark Confirms Suspicions.

The article that followed stated that Bartemius Crouch Sr. was the first on the scene. He ranted that someone had murdered his son, even though the investigation said it was the ghouls. No one could explain why so many members of the magical society were in the Muggle cemetery in the first place. It was only when the Dark Mark was found on all of the bodies (Bartemius Crouch Jr.'s included) that it was established that they were followers of He Who Must Not Be Named. The newspaper even

printed one of the letters to see if anyone could identify who wrote them as they were wanted for questioning.

"Well, that's that," Hydrus said, after he read the paper out loud. "Good thing I made you take that vow, or you'd turn me in," he said jokingly as he folded the paper and placed it on the coffee table.

"That's not funny," snapped Sirius, making Hydrus wonder about his sudden change of attitude. "If anything ever gets out you could wind up in Azkaban. Then we'd have to take Harry and run."

"Why, the house is paid for, and under enough wards and charms you'd be safe here," Hydrus said confused. Then it dawned on him that the blood wards would fade. That would be bad. He had better figure out a backup ward, then again with the Fidelius they should be safe enough.

"Calm down, Sirius, you heard that they concluded it was a ghoulish attack and they have no leads," Remus said, putting his hand on the other man's shoulder.

"I just don't want to lose anyone else," Sirius said, after he took a few deep breaths.

"You won't," Hydrus tried to sound reassuring.

"You can't know that. You've changed so much already, what you know of the future is useless," Sirius said with a bite. "I'm not saying it isn't for the better, I'm just saying we can't count on your knowledge."

"I made sure my magical signature was gone, there is nothing tying me to this." He felt sure this was true. "If it makes you feel better, I'll be extra careful about who I talk to and what I do in the future."

"Yeah, you do that. I'm going to go and brush up on my Occlumency,"

Sirius left the room, stomping his way up the stairs.

The mood was tense for the rest of the day, even Harry was fussy with all the strain in the air. It took until the afternoon to get Sirius to calm down

enough to not snap at everybody, and that was only after Hydrus shoved a Calming Draught down his throat. The younger Black took to his room after that, and Hydrus had no idea what he did, but he came down to dinner in much better spirits.

Monday came and Sirius drove himself to the clinic and when he returned he was stressed again. He had a journal clutched in his hand and was looking at it with a grimace. He took it to his room and stayed there for the better part of an hour. When he reappeared, he settled into his chair and said, "I just want you two to know how thankful I am to have you in my life," he said uncomfortably, shifting in his chair and not meeting their eyes.

"We will always be there for you, Padfoot," Remus said, while Hydrus nodded in agreement.

"Well, good," the dogman said. He then put in his video game and got lost in the zone. The other two men shared a look and then shrugged; they weren't comfortable sharing their feelings either. So they went back to what they were doing before, and like many men before them ignored that that ever happened.

### 13. Moving Along

#### Chapter 13 Moving Along

AN: thanks to my betas, The 5h15 Spaceman and darrelldeam and alix33. All mistakes are my own; I would like to note, again, that I have a bad habit of adding things and not sending the chapter back to my wonderful betas. Thank you all for viewing, reviewing, favoriting and following my story. I do believe it is my most followed one to date.

Thanks to the reviewer that pointed out that my bowl needed to be ceramic, I've update the previous chapters.

Hphphp

The next morning Hydrus went through his usual routines and got up with Harry and made breakfast. This time making a full English breakfast with egg, sausage, bacon, beans and toast. Coffee was brewing, and the kettle was on. Harry was happily playing with a toy waiting for his meal. As usual, the smell of cooking meat brought the other two men stumbling down.

"So, Sirius," Hydrus asked as he served the bacon, "are you going to move your mother soon? I'd like to get that necklace as soon as possible."

"Yeah, I'll write a letter today."

With that they went back to talking about happier things, like teaching Harry his colors and trying to get the tot to watch the educational cartoons. Harry was content in letting the adults talk around him while he tore up his toast and shook his sippy cup so his juice would make the bits into a soggy mess.

The meal done and Harry cleaned; they all met in the living room to discuss plans for the day. Then Sirius went to his session, he'd be back in a few hours.

"Harry," Hydrus asked getting the tot's attention, "what color is this?" He held up a red block.

"'lue," Harry answered quite proudly.

"Red," his uncle corrected.

"'lue," the toddler insisted.

That went back and forth for about two minutes until Harry tired of the game and waddled away. Hydrus sighed. For all his education he had, he still didn't understand children. He had read the baby books before he came back, and knew Harry was a bit ahead of some toddlers. Not a genius by any means, but further along than normal. But, all said and

done, he was still just a baby and a puzzle to the time traveler.

"Hey, Remus, I'm going to my lab and work on that toy and probably make your Wolfsbane," the immortal said as he got up off the floor.

"Watch Harry for me, okay?"

"I can do that," the werewolf said as he put his reader away. The full moon was coming up in a week, and it will be nice to not lose his mind.

The study had been set up for putting together gizmos and potions, with two long tables on either side of the room, plenty of ventilation and spells on the walls to prevent damage from things that could go awry.

Since Hydrus had his pocket-space there was little need for cabinets. That might change when the other two men joined him, unless they figured out how it was done. They had looked over the memory and Remus tried to recreate the spell, but so far no luck.

He spent two hours brewing the potion and another hour on this toy. He missed lunch and wandered to the kitchen to make a sandwich. When he got there he let out a groan at the mess. Tippy must still be reading, because the place was covered in food. You would think a food fight had happened, but he knew it was just because Sirius made lunch. It was one of the main reasons Hydrus insisted on cooking.

"Tippy," he called.

"Master Hydrus is wanting Tippy?" Hydrus had long ago given up on making house elves call him by his first name only.

"Can you help me clean this up?" he asked, indicating the food covered counters and floor.

Tippy looked around the room and made an 'Oh' sound. Then she got a contrite look on her face. "Tippy is sorry she is not doing her job," she said sadly as her ears dipped and her eyes watered. "You can be taking Tippy's pay."

"No, it's not your fault; you're only doing what I asked. We can clean this up together." He put a hand on her shoulder to show he wasn't mad, making the elf perk back up. For all that she was a free elf; she still thrived on approval of her master, uh, boss.

"Tippy can do," she said with a firm nod. And the two cleaned the kitchen wondering how tomato sauce got on the ceiling when it looked like macaroni and cheese was made.

"So how is the research going?" Hydrus asked when they were done as he pulled out makings for a pulled meat sandwich.

"Tippy is learning lots and lots. She is thinking she can start on the garden in two days, if it is not being snowing," the enthusiastic elf said as she bounced on the balls of her bare spindly feet. "Tippy is having great plans for the backyard, making it a wonderful place for Little Master to play in safely."

"That's great, Tippy, just show me your plans and let me know if you need help, okay? I don't want you doing anything you don't think you can handle." He knew house elves would work themselves sick if not told not to.

"Tippy can do," she said, and then popped away.

Finishing his lunch Hydrus went to the living room where he was sure everyone was. He settled on the sofa and watched as Remus and Sirius tried to get Harry to say their names correctly. It was amusing.

"Sirius, did you write your letter?" he asked gaining the man's attention.

"Yup, I told her she had two days to vacate Grimmauld Place and move to the cottage in France, because I know she'll hate that, or find a place on her own. Whichever she chooses she has to take that damn house elf with her," Sirius said with a beaming smile. He really loved poking at his mother.

"Hmmm, Kreacher might take that necklace with them. Besides, didn't I tell you how useful he was after I took up residence there?" he chastised gently. Kreacher was a good elf, but Hydrus was having a hard time convincing Sirius of this.

"Oh, I didn't think of that, I forgot how much Kreacher treasured that necklace. Hmmm, I'd better write her back and tell her to leave him there and turn his ownership over to me," the dogman said with a grimace.

There was a lot of bad blood between him and that elf, but if Hydrus was right, then that would be overcome.

"Would you, please? Think of it as making your mother angrier," the immortal said with a malicious gleam in his eyes. He hated that woman as much as Sirius did. Mostly for what she did to his cousin.

"Yeah, I'll go and send that out now." And with that he left the room.

"Did you get your toy done?" Remus asked.

"Oh, yeah, I forgot about it when I saw the state of the kitchen."

"Sorry about that, Sirius really wanted to cook. Then Harry got fussy and would not go down for his nap. So I guess I forgot," the embarrassed man said. He was never letting Sirius cook unsupervised again.

"Next time call Tippy; it's what I pay her for," he said, shaking his head at that oversight.

"Your house elf is free?" the astonished man asked.

"Yeah, didn't I tell you?"

"No, you did not."

Hydrus waved it away and said it was a story for another time. He called the toy, sat on the floor and rolled it to Harry. The toy was shaped like a ball and right now it was white. Seeing the bright light the toddler squealed and grabbed it. When his little hands rested on the ball, it turned red and said, "Red," slowly and clearly. In a female voice that

Hydrus hoped Harry would relate to better.

Harry answered, "ruh-ed."

The ball said, "Correct." And turned blue, causing the toddler to giggle and clap his hands.

It was a stroke of genius that had him make it respond to baby talk, as well as to the voices of adults. Hydrus was thankful it worked. This should keep the tot busy for a while, since every time he said the correct word the color would change and it would start again. If the correct word wasn't said, the ball would repeat three times and then change color.

Right now there were only three easy colors on the toy, red, blue, green.

Hydrus would add more when Harry got these down.

Sirius came back into the room and the four males played with the new toy, passing it around and saying the colors. That lasted for about a half an hour and, Harry went back to his blocks and the three men did what they usually did until it was time for dinner. They ate some of the pulled beef that Hydrus had for lunch, Harry had baby food. The rest of the night was relaxing and nothing heavy was discussed.

The next two days went much the same. There wasn't much to do with winter setting in. On the evening of the second day Sirius called Kreacher. The other two men were seated, letting Sirius deal with Kreacher, until it was time to cleanse the horcrux. Harry was in his room with Tippy.

The old house elf popped in and bowed to Sirius. "Blood Traitor Master is calling Kreacher. Mistress is so upset that the great house of Black has fallen to the Blood Traitor. She is telling Kreacher he must be answering to Master's calls. Poor Mistress will be lost without Kreacher," the elf rambled on. This was not a happy elf; this elf looked like it was one step away from the grave. His pillowcase was dirty and torn, the usual gangly

features were skeletal, and his huge eyes were tired and droopy.

"Shut it, Kreacher. Has my dear old mum departed from Grimmauld Place?" Sirius asked, ignoring the ramblings as best he could, though the thought of his mum without a house elf made him happy.

"Mistress has left the house," Kreacher answered, bowing once again.

"Kreacher, I know that Regulus left a necklace in your care. I know you're supposed to destroy it. I want you to bring it to me, so it can be cleansed," Sirius ordered, trying to be gentle, remembering what Hydrus told him. His daily potions helped.

The old elf looked at his new master in complete shock, and then his eyes started welling with tears. "Master will destroy the Dark item? Kreacher had tried, but nothing Kreacher had done worked."

"I'll take the Darkness out of it and then you can have the necklace when we're done," Sirius said kindly, seeing how distraught the elf was. He was still feeling guilty about his brother's death; it was one of the many things he and his therapist were working through. "Go and get it," he ordered. Kreacher popped away and was back in minutes. He handed the cursed necklace to Sirius and backed away. Sirius handed it to Hydrus.

"This one is going to be a bit trickier," he said as he called the ceramic bowl, acid and a piece of junk. "One of the reasons is I have to open it. Then it is going to show you some of your fears, it will talk to you and try and get you to wear it. Sirius, are you sure you want to be here?" he asked when he had everything set up.

"Remus is strong enough to hold me back," the dogman said with a firm nod, going to the other side of the room with the werewolf.

Hydrus nodded and turned back to the necklace. He opened it with parseltongue the curse started.

"You are never going to succeed. The boy will die. He will be all alone before

he dies, and it will be entirely your fault. You should have never tried to interfere with Fate," the unnerving disembodied voice said, making the time traveler shiver at hearing his fears out loud. "They will turn on you, just like everyone else did. They think you are mad. Killing was easy wasn't it? You will fall to the Dark."

Trying his best to ignore the voice, Hydrus quickly said the spell to move the soul piece, once again using the bowl and acid. The voice went from mocking to screaming as the bit of soul died. It was done. He closed the necklace, walked over to Sirius and handed it to the man. "It's up to you, do you want to keep it or give it to Kreacher?"

The Black Lord looked at the piece of jewelry and gave it serious thought; it was the last link to his brother and a valuable historical piece.

However, Kreacher had worked himself sick (judging from his gaunt looks and now overly thankful eyes) trying to finish Regulus's last order.

"I gave my word," he answered and handed to the old house elf.

"Kreacher never thought he would see his Master Regulus's final order done. Kreacher tried and tried and failed his master. Master Sirius is a wonderful master to give poor Kreacher this treasure," the distraught elf wailed as he clung to the piece of jewelry.

"Kreacher, I want you to go back to Grimmauld Place and remove any Dark item. Take them to the vault," Sirius ordered, not wanting to listen to the elf wail.

"Yes, Master," the elf said and popped out.

"Now all we need is the cup," Hydrus said as he flopped on the sofa.

"When do you think you can get that, Sirius?"

"Now that Bella is dead, I can get it anytime. Since her husband is in prison, I can get a lawyer to seize the vault." He waved it away. He too plopped into his recliner, glad that that was over with.

"I also need you to go to the Ministry. See if you can start getting allies. We really need to start doing something positive. I know with Malfoy out of the way, Fudge will need someone to line his pockets. That's if we let him be Minister, with enough pull and bribes we should be able to get someone better. Amelia Bones comes to mind. I have all that Death Eater gold just waiting to grease some palms," the immortal said, thinking it was time they stopped laying about the house.

"I want to help if I can," Remus said. He too was tired of just sitting about. He didn't have a job at the moment and would be hard-pressed to get one.

"Mostly everything is calm at the moment, this Ministry at least is trying to help the public recover and since the first war wasn't as bad as the second one, it's easier. The death of the Death Eaters went a long way in boosting the public morale. All the other followers have had trials and only Karkaroff and Snape are walking free," Hydrus said as he mentally went over the current news reports.

"Right now Muggle-born and -raised are doing okay, they have good jobs and aren't grossly discriminated against. That didn't start happening until Malfoy started throwing his money around. So we only have to keep an eye on what laws are being passed. If the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures goes the way it did last time, then there will be laws they'll be trying to pass through that we want to prevent," he explained, now going over the future history in his head. "Mostly restrictions on werewolves, Sirius can use the money and his proxy as Harry's magical guardian to help stop those. With both seats on the Wizengamot he should have the pull to get more allies."

Sirius groaned at the reminder, he had forgotten that being a Lord meant dealing with those old fogies on the Wizengamot, but he couldn't fault

Hydrus's logic.

"Yes, but what can I do to help?" the werewolf questioned, bringing the immortal man's attention back to the present.

"Well, I'd like to be seen more in the Alley. Get a few more of mine and George's inventions in the shop. Get my lawyer to anonymously add some of the profits to the Weasley vault. So, Harry needs an adult to watch him. Tippy is great, but she is a house elf, Harry needs a human to interact with. Maybe take him to daycare and volunteer there?" Hydrus suggested.

When the twins were old enough he was going to send them an unsigned note telling them if they kept their grades up he'd support whatever they wanted to do in the future. He just had to figure out how to do it without coming off as stalkerish; maybe he'd use the Marauders' names.

"I was hoping for something that came with pay. You cannot support me forever." Remus leaned forward and looked the time traveler in the face to show he was dead serious.

"That was a short term suggestion. Once we get you driving, you can open a bookstore or something and Harry can go to daycare fulltime," Hydrus protested. He had forgotten how touchy the man was about charity. "Maybe you can look into hiring squibs and Muggle-borns that didn't make it in the magical world, it wouldn't be much, but every little bit helps. Call Marius and ask if there is help for the squibs, maybe there is an underground network that we don't know about." That was something he never found out about in the future, he had been too busy with the Muggle-borns. "We can donate money or supplies if there is. "That and you can have a back room for magicals and once Frostwell starts selling the book-readers, have them on display back there," he continued rapidly. Many new plans and ideas were running through his

mind. "You'd have to get with him to work that out. As a matter of fact, write him a letter and give him the idea. He's a wonderful inventor and should have some up and going quickly. Then when you get established in the non-magical world, have some of your Muggle-born work a shop in Diagon Alley." He'd have to see if he could get those readers up and running in the non-magical world sooner than they had in the future. That was going to be problematic.

"We all have brilliant minds, yes, you too, Padfoot," Hydrus said at the scoff, continuing to go over his new plans. "We can do so much to help the magical world move forward without stepping on their values and traditions. The possibilities are endless. We just have to put our minds to it and sitting around this house isn't going to do that," the immortal said then pulled a pensieve out of his pocket. "I want to show you guys some of the more horrible things that I saw happen to the Muggle-borns, during and after the second war. It's one thing to hear about it, another to see."

So they spent an hour going over the Muggle-born trial Hydrus had witnessed, with Dolores in her glory, and the views of the beggars in Diagon Alley and what Hydrus had to do after to get them out. The other two men were speechless after that. They had been so wrapped up in Harry, their grief and other issues that they had forgotten about the horrible future that Hydrus had explained to them. Now, though, they had a purpose and could see those ideas working. That is not to say the war they just went through wasn't bad, it was, it's just that You Know Who was mostly trying to get allies and it was Pure-bloods and those that fought him that died the most.

"This'll be great," barked Sirius, when he got to thinking about the time traveler's plans for the Ministry. "Undermine them from the inside and

not too quickly. With the announcement in the paper about my Lordship, I'd be expected to be seen trying to get allies, though most will think I'd go to the Darker element. Won't they be shocked when I'm seen buttering up everyone?"

"The second you see Umbridge you let me know, and I'll take care of her," Hydrus said forcefully he had no idea where that woman was in this timeline. "Don't start. I already said I'd try not to kill her. Besides, you just saw what she did, do you want her to do it again, because with the right backing she will." He glared at them when they took on wary looks and then sighed and changed the subject. "Sirius you need to be seen with pictures of Harry. Start telling stories about how he is just like any other baby. This might play down the whole Boy Who Lived thing. Take them, show them off and brag about him like anyone would their son. Tell anyone who asks that you are in touch with his family. If Dumbledore asks you can tell him the truth and that he's under the Fidelius. I can't be seen having anything to do with Harry, so it will be up to you to put rumors about him to rest."

"Yeah, I can do that," Sirius said, still worried about the Headmaster's ability to read minds. His Occlumency wasn't quite where he wanted it, but he was working on it daily, since it helped with his PTSD. "What if he asks how the Dursleys are doing?"

"You can lie and say they are doing fine. Well, that wouldn't be much of a lie, for all we know they are," the immortal replied. He'd have to hire an investigator to see if he could find them. Not that he wanted anything to do with his old family, but if the magicals got close to them, he'd need to warn them again. Hopefully they were smart and moved out of Britain, though he doubted it. On the other hand, if Dumbledore believe them to be under the charm he might just let it be.

The three men spent the rest of the night going over some of those ideas and refining them. Sirius was actually excited to be doing something, as much as he loved gaming it was boring to play all the time, plus, new games wouldn't be coming for years. Now, though, he could work on what they had been fighting for, and he wouldn't even have to get his hands dirty, much. The wonderful thing about it was he didn't need to use his own money.

First they needed the cup, so Sirius went to the bank the next day with a few goblin made artifacts, not waiting to go through the lawyer, and came back with it. The same ritual was performed and the cup cleansed. Hydrus called upon the vengeful spirits to see if there was any sign of Voldemort. To their great displeasure he was still around, though very weakened. They didn't know if it was because he made a new horcrux or if it was because that bit of soul needed to be reborn to die. The Master of Death left the spirits to haunt and spy for him. He would figure it out and do his best to keep Harry out of it. Maybe he could get one of the guys to kill him and go talk to Death, yeah, that'll be easy.

Hydrus gave Remus startup money for the book store. Remus demanded that they get to a non-magical lawyer and get a loan agreement signed before he did anything else. The immortal agreed readily.

The full moon came and went without fanfare. Hydrus and Harry went to a moderate hotel for the night and the cellar was found to be adequate. They would still leave the house until Moony got over his fear, but all in all it was satisfactory. Remus was now a fulltime resident.

The weeks went by in a flurry of paperwork, phone calls, letters, storefront buying, casing out large abandoned mansions, driving lessons, therapy sessions, contracts and setting up Harry for daycare. That last one was delicate, because they wouldn't give an address. The center

finally settled with the P.O. Box that Hydrus set up and phone numbers, with the help of a small Confundus Charm.

At first Harry didn't want to go, too much had changed in his young life, but he was soon playing with the other kids and happy at the center.

They all hoped he didn't start his accidental magic early, usually that manifested around the age of four. That is when they planned on homeschooling him and setting up play dates with magical children.

They needed to get further established in the magical world before they approached parents.

The phone calls to Marius were stilted until they made him realize that they were only trying to help. The man was bitter, there was no doubt about that, he didn't trust wizards, even knowing the story behind Hydrus's future. It took more calls and a few vows to make him see that they were on the up and up. It was Marius's suggestion that got Sirius and Hydrus to open an orphanage for the squib children, hence the need for a mansion.

One day after a call with Marius Hydrus set Sirius down and they planned.

"Well, we've got a site setup and are just waiting for the mansion to be overhauled. Now, what we need is employees and to go to the Department of Family Services and see if we can get the records of the squibs that went through there for the last five years," Hydrus said from his place on the sofa. It had been a long two weeks and there was more that needed to be done, mostly getting workers that knew about the magical world for the orphanage and bookstore. Marius was helping, although there wasn't an underground movement, per se, the man did have some contacts.

"It's about time we use some of that dirty money you have stashed away,"

his cousin agreed. He too was exhausted, but keeping busy had actually helped a lot. He didn't have time to dwell on his feelings, though his therapist told him that he needed to open up to them on occasion so they didn't get bottled up and blow up in his face later. With a child in the house that would be a bad thing. So he used his journal and Occlumency sessions, in the privacy of his room, for those emotional outbursts.

Looking at his watch and seeing it was only one in the afternoon the immortal said, "Let's go see what that money can buy."

So the two Blacks got up and went to the Ministry. They were soon in the office with the same man reading behind the counter. Sirius cleared his throat and the man looked up. "I have a quick question for you, Mr. Winifred," he said, after reading the nameplate on the counter.

"Oh, Hello, Mr. Black and friend, sorry, I never got your name," Jacob smiled as he put down his book.

"It's Mr. Black too, but you may call me Hydrus," the time traveler answered, trying to keep the man at ease; when they had left last time it was on a bitter note, but the clerk seemed to have gotten over that.

"Good to meet you, Hydrus. You can call me Jacob. You too, Mr. Black, or should that be Lord Black?" the man said as he shook hands with both men.

"First names all around, call me Sirius. I don't go by Lord Black unless I have to, and this is not one of those times," the dogman said. "Back to my question— do you like working here?"

"It's an easy enough job, so, yes, I do like it. It's not what I had hoped for when I took the position, but every little bit helps, as they say," Jacob said a bit sadly. When he was hired he truly did want to help the children, he did the best he could by suggesting they were placed in orphanages he knew were good, but there was little else he could do.

Most of the Pure-bloods wouldn't even go through this department. They just abandoned the poor souls on the streets or killed them by trying to scare the magic out of them. Though magicals treasured their children, squibs weren't considered as such, to most Pure-bloods they were abominations and a black mark on the family. It was usually the Half-bloods that came through deeply concerned for the child, but not wanting them to grow up around magic they didn't have. Plus, knowing there was little work for squibs here. They were doing what they felt was the best for their children.

"I was hoping you'd say that. I have an offer for you. We're trying to open an orphanage in the Muggle world for the squibs. Give them a better shot at making it in their new environment, and we're hoping you can help us," Sirius said sincerely. He was hopeful that the man wasn't too greedy and truly wanted to help and judging by his words he did.

"How can I help?" the eager clerk asked, though he hoped it wouldn't be too much work or against the law. He really did like his cushy job.

"We just need the names of all the children sent to the non-magical world for the last five years," Hydrus explained. "We can make it worth your while," he added at seeing the reluctance.

"Really," Jacob exclaimed. He had heard of people taking bribes, but his department was so unworthy he never thought someone would offer him one. Not that he was a greedy man, but he did have a family to feed.

"Well, it's not breaking any laws that I know of, but I could be fired if certain people found out."

"Let's say 200 galleons for those names and we leave you the address of our orphanage for future children," Sirius offered, as it was expected of him. "And we vow never to reveal our source." Hydrus nodded in agreement at that.

"400," was the rebuttal.

And they quibbled for a few minutes until it was settled on 325 galleons. Jacob, upon receiving the money and the vows, went to the archive and called the names they wanted. The whole transaction took less than ten minutes.

"What're you going to do about the abandoned ones?" the clerk asked after he handed over a copy of the names.

"We're already working with the non-magical social services to see if they can send them our way, once we're up and running," Hydrus answered as he thumbed through the files.

The non-magical case workers were thrilled to help, though they questioned why they would only take the children who had been abandoned between the ages of eight and seventeen and not runaways. They had given a sob story about the same happening to members of their family, which was true, and wanting to prevent the poor children living on the streets. It worked. They knew that there might actually be non-magicals coming their way. They'd do their best to pay squib families to foster them and not tell them about the magical world.

"Oh, well, that's good then," Jacob said happily. They all shook hands and the two Blacks left the office satisfied, though they did feel bad for those that would die under their family's attempt to make accidental magic happen, but they had no way of finding them. The child would either do magic or be dead or severely injured. Maybe some donations to St.

Mungo's would be needed for names of those that survived the attempts. They could then bribe the families into letting them take the children.

Sirius still went to his daily sessions and was doing much better. He had cut back on his game time and spent more time with the family. Remus settled into being a shop owner, and had hired a few Muggle-born and

squibs to help run it, making sure they knew they were working with a werewolf and were okay with that.

Hydrus introduced more things to his shop, like computers; again, mostly Muggle-raised purchased them. He also sold VCR's and Disney cartoons; those should appease the magicals since they were full of magic and morals. It might just jump start some rational thinking or maybe even get some magical artist to do their own. There were a few magical raised that bought them; Mr. Weasley splurged some of his new income on a telly and VCR along with two movies (Cinderella and the Sword and the Stone). Hydrus figured he'd be back for more soon. All in all it was a good start.

#### 14. Swift Changes

##### Chapter 14 Swift Changes

AN: thanks to my betas, The 5h15 Spaceman, darreldeam and alix33. All mistakes are my own; I would like to note, again, that I have a bad habit of adding things and not sending the chapter back to my wonderful betas. Thank you all for viewing, reviewing, favoriting and following my story. I do believe it is my most followed one to date.

Remember this is fanfiction on a magical world, reality need not apply. So businesses are going up faster than they would in actuality.

According to Harry Potter wiki, Merlin's Frog Card says he was sorted into Slytherin. It is said J.K. Rowling changed his birthdate.

Hphphp

It was a cold winter evening and a tired trio had just put Harry to bed.

They were sitting in their favorite seats, sipping tea and relaxing.

"Hey, Remus," Hydrus broke the silence, "you're a researcher, right?"

"Yes," the werewolf answered tentatively at the gleam in the immortal's

eyes. That look usually meant more work. Not that he had a problem with work, but getting the book store up and running had taken a lot out of him.

Sirius just sat back and snickered quietly. Remus had done all the research for the Marauders, so he knew that once Hydrus gave the werewolf something to look up, the man would be lost in the world of books.

"I have an idea," the time traveler said, "I was wondering if you could get with the Chocolate Frog Company and make a book on the people depicted on the cards. Put them in order of Hogwarts Houses or unaffiliated, for those that didn't attend. Add more descriptions as to what they did and who they are, you know, make it more of a history book geared towards teens."

"Why?" Remus asked, not seeing what good that would do.

"Well, most magicals seem to forget things like Merlin being sorted into Slytherin, or that guy, Paracelsus, who named and was a parseltongue, being an alchemist and a healer. If it's all in order then they can see that not everyone from that House or with such talents are evil," Hydrus explained, still going over the possibilities. "There are some Dark Lords and Ladies from other Houses, as well. It'll also show that blood doesn't matter, if you do the research to show their blood status. There are loads of things like that on those cards, but for some reason they aren't paid attention to. You can get the Company to tell you where they got their information and use those reference points to get the public to do some of their own research."

"That might actually work," the other man said thoughtfully. "I can do it on my down time. But, I might need some of your Death Eater money to pay them."

Hydrus waved that off as a given and the two settled down to discuss it more. Sirius added his own two Knuts' worth every now and then. It would take a while to get it put together, but they were hopeful for the summer.

The next day Sirius got a missive from his grandfather saying that they couldn't put off the meeting any longer. So dressed in their best robes, the two Blacks went to Arcturus's house.

The house was small for a Black home. It was only three stories tall and painted in a dark brown that was almost black. The trees formed a circle around it, casting deep shadows making the cloudy day even darker, like a large foreboding fence. The front yard was trimmed and flowerless. The path they walked up was dark grey gravel, with deep green bushes, that came up to their shoulders, lining each side. Hydrus had to wonder why the old man wanted his house to look haunted. The whole place made you feel like you were walking to your death.

Sirius used the large head shaped knocker to announce their arrival. A clean, yet, worn looking, house elf answered and showed them to the parlor.

Seated in a high wing backed chair sat a very old, emaciated, looking man. He was dressed in formal robes of green and silver. He was very pale, as if he hadn't seen the sun in years. His hair was streaked with grey and his face was lined with wrinkles. His grey eyes were alert and the set of his mouth was thin with repressed emotion. However, if you looked hard enough you could see he was once a handsome man. Power also radiated off him, he may look weak, but he was magically strong.

"Sirius," the surprisingly strong, deep, voice said, "it is about time you came. I told you I wanted to meet this young man weeks ago."

"We've been busy," the dogman defended. The two were still standing

near the entryway, waiting to be offered seats.

"Yes, I have heard of all your exploits," Arcturus said, waving his hands for them to sit. "I have to wonder if you are actually going to do anything for the family. I trusted you to pull them together."

"Well, you see..." the chastised man tried to explain as they took the chairs indicated. "I did bring a few of the others and Andromeda back into the family and set up vaults for them and their children."

"Yes, you did, but what of your other great aunts, uncles and cousins? Your cousin Narcissa and her son?" the ex-Lord asked, shooting a disappointed glare at the youngest Black. He was thinking maybe he shouldn't have given up the seat quite so soon.

"Cissy still has her vault and has expressed that she wants little to do with the family. I did send her a message about what we're doing. She said she wouldn't stand in our way, but she had little faith of any of it working," Sirius rattled off. "As for the others, do you really think they would understand the things I'm trying to set in motion?"

Arcturus rubbed his chin and thought for a moment. "Your cousin Callidora has always had a soft spot for squibs, so she might help you with your orphanage. Your Uncle Cygnus can help you gain allies, his only dream, at this point in time, is to see the Black family name return to power. Your Aunt Cassiopeia is said to have a blackmail list on everyone in the Wizengamot so you might want to seek her out as well," he said, ticking off the members with a tap of his finger on the arm of his chair. "However, you are correct in the rest of the family. They will not understand what you are trying to accomplish, you do need to write to them and use your status as their Lord to make them stay out of your way, since they are all older and respect tradition. I recommend that you take more time to communicate with them to let them know that you

have not abandoned the family."

"I'll do that this afternoon, Grandfather," Sirius said, settling back in his chair now that the other man wasn't angry at him anymore. It wouldn't hurt to open relations with the older members of the family, who knows he might just get more allies that way.

"I would like to see you married, before too much longer. My time is near, and I wish to know that the name will not die with you," the old man demanded. He had been shut up for so long that he had made himself ill, he weakened every day. It was one of the reasons he handed the Lordship to the younger man, well that and there were no other successors.

"Well, I've already got an heir, however, I think it's time I started courting again," the grandson said, thinking about his lovely therapist. Though, he might not want to lose her great counseling. He'd have to think about it. He was just glad his sex drive was up again, he had been very worried about that.

"Who is your heir? It better not be young Draco, though with his father dead, that might not be as bad as I had envisioned," the old man said, once again rubbing his chin in thought. "Still, I would not see the family name going to the Malfoys."

"Harry Potter."

"At least, he has Black blood, though not as close as I'd like."

"He is my heir," Sirius said with finality.

"As to you, young man," Arcturus said dropping the subject and turning his attention to the quiet man, "I would like to know how you just appeared on the family tree. And do not give me that story you are descended from Marius, I know of all his sons and grandsons and there was not a magical among them."

It had angered him greatly when he found out that the Death Eaters had killed off all but one of that family. Now there will never be a magical born of that line. He never could get the younger generation to understand that Muggle-borns came from long lines of squibs. No, they had all taken Voldemort at his word and killed where they were told to. Even his title as their Lord would not sway them. Now they were all dead or imprisoned, but for a few. "Moreover, names don't just appear on the tree, especially after said person is an adult," he added.

Hydrus shared a look with Sirius, they had discussed this. Sirius wanted Hydrus to tell his grandfather the whole truth. He claimed that the old man would understand and might even back them if he knew the downfall of the magical world in Britain was possible. Hydrus, on the other hand, was leery; rumors about the elder Black were that he was a strong supporter of Pure-bloods, though the conversation he had just listened to gave doubt to those stories.

"I need a vow of secrecy," he said politely.

"Your tale is such that you would encumber an old man with that great a burden," Arcturus asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Yes," was the succinct answer as Hydrus looked the man dead in the eye to show he was serious.

The elder Black looked into those grey eyes, so like a Black, and saw the need in them. "I need your full name."

So Hydrus gave his name and once again it was pointed out that Williamsford wasn't a star name. He said he'd give explanations after the vow.

One vow, many hours of talking and the ample use of the pensieve later and the old man exploded out of his chair, belying his ill appearance.

"You are a fool!" he yelled, his face contorted with rage and aura of

power coming off him in waves. "No one should mess with time the way you did! And just so you can simply save yourself! Of all the greedy, selfish reasons!" He started pacing, using his wand to throw priceless items against the walls, all the while yelling at the stupidity of youth. The other two younger men sat in a state of shock and let the man rant. He didn't wind down for at least five minutes, pacing back and forth, fingering his wand when he wasn't destroying things, shooting piercing glares at the time traveler, as if he would kill Hydrus in any minute. "Give me one good reason not to end your life," Arcturus said, with a murderous glint in his eye.

"If I hadn't come back, the magical world of Britain would have fallen. Your precious family name would be dead. Every member of your immediate family died with no heir. Sirius in my timeline called the name dead in his will. There would be no more Blacks in Britain," the immortal spat as he glowered back. "If Harry went to the Dursleys, this timeline would have played out exactly the same. So don't give me your self-righteous indignation. You would have done the same thing to save your family."

With that Arcturus deflated and dropped bonelessly back into his chair. The boy was right, and if the future he was showed was real, and he knew the method used, he would do just that. He would do it now, if only to try harder in keeping his family from joining the Dark Lord. He had the power, but the time traveler in front of him stated that a special wand was needed.

"Besides," Hydrus continued in a much calmer voice, "you can't kill me." That caused the old man's head to snap up. "What do you mean, I cannot kill you. I assure you young man I am more than capable." "I'm immortal."

"How did that happen?" came the shocked, yet, curious reply. The elder Black looked honestly inquisitive, like it was something he too had been searching for. Not that he would ever split his soul, he knew madness lay in that direction, and he was quite fond of his sanity.

"I'm the Master of Death," Hydrus said and he produced the Deathly Hallows.

Once more fingering his wand the old man's eyes turned greedy.

"Don't even try. I have it on good authority that I will be the only Master," the immortal said as he placed the Hallows in his pocket. Arcturus slumped in his chair as he watched the fabled items vanish. "My time is near, as I have said, I would have one favor to ask of you, Sirius," he said tiredly, turning back to his grandson.

The youngest Black had been quiet up till now, letting the other two vent their feelings. "What do you require, Grandfather?"

"Cremate me and give my sister the ashes. I have no want to be set in the ground." It was because of his fear of being used from the grave that he made such a request.

Once again the other two were shocked; it wasn't the Pure-blood way.

However, since it was the man's final wish, Sirius would see it done.

"I am done with you two. Do what you will, I will not hinder or help.

Leave this old man to die in peace. I will instruct the house elf to tell you when I have passed. Leave," the weary man said, waving his hand in dismissal.

The two younger Blacks got up and left the house, neither one of them were happy about the confrontation, yet were content at the conclusion.

They went home, told Remus what had happened and then decided to set it all aside until such time it needed to be dealt with.

Sirius sequestered himself in his room to write reams of letters to the

family. That blackmail list would come in handy and Aunt Cassiopeia was known to be on the Grey side. She was more of a researcher than anything else; her fights with other family members were legendary. It was her research on squibs producing magicals that swayed his grandfather to her argument.

More weeks flew by and the spirits that Hydrus set on Voldemort had little good news, the wraith was angry at the ghosts that haunted him and was keeping his mouth shut as to whether or not he made a new horcrux. So the Master of Death suggested they only trail him from afar during the day and haunt him at night, maybe he might let something slip, though that was a long shot. They did tell him the wraith was weakening, he could only possess small animals and only for a short time. That bit of information made the immortal hopeful.

Harry was doing great at daycare; he was learning to play with other children and could now say a few more words and colors. So far no accidental magic was seen, which was a major relief. Sirius had approached a few magical families to set up play dates in the future. The dogman had approached the Weasleys, thanks to Arthur's love of the appliance store, and made arrangements. Hydrus's problem with that was Ron; he still had some bitterness about his ex-friend. He was hopeful that if they got to the child soon enough it might turn out different. Sirius would take Harry to the other people's houses to keep the other two's names away from the child's.

The orphanage was up and running, they had fifteen squib children and three non-magical. Sirius was in contact with Marius and social services about fostering the non-magical ones out. They had a few prospects, but social services were still doing background checks on them. It was hard to keep the magical world from those three, but they talked with the

other children and told them to tone it down or say it was their imagination talking. The kids were between eight and fifteen so most of them understood why they needed to not discuss their past in front of the others. Though, some of the older squibs were bitter and wanted to expose the magical world. It was an ongoing battle to keep it all hushed. Hydrus made sure to have on staff two magic knowing counselors, who had mandatory meetings with every child. Marius was a great resource. The mansion was huge, with thirty bedrooms, one large playroom, a humongous dining room, and five studies for the children to do school work. There were a few offices on the ground floor, as well as a visiting area for those looking to adopt. The counselors were set up on the first floor. The rooms at this time were individual as there were only a few children in comparison to the amount of space they had. The staff also lived in the mansion.

They did hire three house elves, which they bought and then freed, for the cooking and taking care of the yardwork. Tippy helped a lot when that happened, letting the elves know that they weren't being punished and what they could do with their pay. She also instructed them on how to keep up the yards.

The yards were divided into four. The front yard was maintained as a pretty entryway, with trimmed grass and shrubbery. The backyard was a play yard with swings, slides and other playground equipment, plus an area for football. The side yard to the right was smaller and used for barbeques, outdoor parties and picnics. The other side yard was made into a vegetable garden that everyone worked in.

Remus used Hydrus's name to write to Frostwell and gave him the idea for the book-readers. The inventor said it was a wonderful idea and that he would see about getting one made soon, they were hopeful for next

autumn. They didn't give the man any that they had, just a general sketch, because Hydrus wanted to make sure that Frostwell got the credit and the profits from them. Besides, how would they explain it?

With copious use of bribes, Sirius prevented the werewolf restrictions from happening. He was also working on getting better relations with the goblins, much to the immortal's displeasure. But, Sirius's reasoning was that he was trying to prevent what happened in the future from happening again. Hydrus couldn't fault that logic, but he didn't have to like the greedy bastards. Sirius also prevented a few Pure-blood laws from going into effect. He had quite a lot of allies now, and not all of them had to be bribed, just poked in the correct direction. That list came in handy.

It was now spring and Tippy was working hard on the garden. The flower bed was now fenced off. She was adding a small waterfall, which was warded against children. The trees were trimmed back and starting to bloom. A play yard was added with swings, a slide, and a sandbox.

Needless to say, she was putting those books to good use.

The first Boy Who Lived book hit the shelf and Sirius fell on the publisher and author like a rabid dog. His lawyer sued the pants off them and the godfather threatened further action if it happened again. This action caused the Prophet to write a headline that accused the Black Lord of trying to keep the public away from their hero. Sirius gave an interview on the Wizard Wireless Network in rebuttal. He claimed that if anyone wanted to know about Harry all they had to do was ask, but he wasn't going to let rumor or speculation run wild about his godson. He even gave a few anecdotes about Harry's potty training and eating habits to show that he was still just a toddler and not the next coming of Merlin. Because of this, they also started their own newspaper, since they

couldn't buy any shares of the Prophet (It was mostly owned by the Ministry). They simply called it The Times, blatantly stealing the name from the non-magicals. They hired reporters that were made to vow that everything they wrote was true—to their knowledge. They didn't want anyone to die or lose their magic for printing something that would later be found out to be incorrect.

The paper was a medium success, somewhere between the Prophet and the Quibbler. The things they reported on were the government, social pages, sports and up and coming entrepreneurs like Hydrus and Frostwell. Every now and then there was an article on how well Harry was doing, showing once again that he as just a child. They even had a section on what was big news in the non-magical world. It was gaining subscribers with each printing.

Everything was going well, but Hydrus knew something would come up to ruin that soon. He was still getting that watched feeling every time he went into Diagon Alley. Besides, nothing ever went this smoothly for long, not for him anyway. Those thoughts made him jumpy and nervous. He started distrusting everyone he met, until such time they proved themselves not a threat. He made sure he never mentioned Harry or Remus. He cut his public time with Sirius in half, only being seen with him a few times a month.

The others in the house, of course, noticed the twitchy behavior and confronted him one night towards the end of spring.

"Hydrus, what's going on with you? You're all jumpy and it's got us worried," Sirius said when they settled for evening tea.

The immortal sighed and set his cup down. "Sorry, I'm not used to things going so well without waiting for the other shoe to drop. I mean, even when me and George were getting our revenge on the magicals, things

would pop up that would throw plans off. So, I'm waiting for something bad to happen. I just don't know what," he said. "That and I can't shake the feeling that someone is stalking me."

"Let's go over a few things and see if we are missing anything," Remus suggested.

"Okay, orphanage, going good. Newspaper, flourishing. Bookstore, doing well. Your store, making a huge profit. Harry, growing every day and well loved, so the wards are strong. Death Eaters, dead or in Azkaban. Politics, many allies. Chocolate Frog book, at the publishers. My therapy, down to once a week," Sirius said, ticking off everything. "I can't for the life of me think of anyone you've offended that's not in prison or dead. The only downside I see is You Know Who; we have no idea how to kill him off."

The time traveler waved that off and stated, "The spirits tell me he weakens every day, so we might just have already solved that problem. No, it's something else, something I've forgotten."

"As much as I hate to bring it up, have either of you heard about Umbridge or Skeeter?" Remus asked mildly.

"Now that I think about it, no, I've not heard a word about either of them," Hydrus said a bit shocked. Maybe it was one of them following him, which would make sense.

"Umbridge works for the Improper Use of Magic Office. Didn't I tell you? She's the one who drafted the werewolf restrictions," Sirius added.

"No, you didn't tell me, but I should've known. I better keep an eye out for Dolores causing trouble, that office would be a bad place for her to work. I wonder where Skeeter is," the immortal thought out loud. He had been so caught up in moving things along that he had forgotten about those two. Well Skeeter didn't become a reporter until 1989, when she

appeared out of nowhere. He'd have to hire an investigator to see what they were up to and dig up as much of their past as possible. He could just pop over to Umbridge's family house and take care of her now.

Something to meditate on.

"Sirius," Hydrus asked, after another thought came to him, "have you heard from Dumbledore?"

"Sure, I've talked with him a few times. He seems happy that Harry is growing up well. He did ask how I got the pictures and I told him that I was in touch with the Dursleys, but that I could only see Harry at his daycare. He just nodded and twinkled at me," Sirius said, thinking over the few times he had run into the Headmaster. "Though he did ask if I was the one to cast the Fidelius Charm, and I told him they asked to be hidden from the magicals and I complied." He really hated to lie, but needs must. He thanked Merlin that his Occlumency shields were at their fullest now.

"Did he ask about me?"

"Only once, he asked if you were the owner of the appliance and entertainment store and expressed his opinion on it. I had to tell him you were, since it's a well-known secret. He thinks it's a marvelous trend. He went on and on about how he had bought a telly and VCR and some of the movies. He was even suggesting getting some for the common rooms at Hogwarts. He said something about having to get the Board's approval."

That made Hydrus feel better. When it came to the Headmaster his emotions were still conflicted. While he was sure the man had done some shady things to keep his secrets, he couldn't help but think Dumbledore truly believed it was for his Greater Good, and that that belief was his way of helping all magicals. Besides, he really couldn't throw stones,

since the things he had done since he'd been back, stuff he still planned on doing and what he had done in his timeline would border on the darker Grey side. Though the immortal still thought the old man had too much power, he didn't think he was nefarious. How the Headmaster reacted to what was happening in the world today would go a long way in settling those opposed feelings.

"What about you, Remus? Has he contacted you?" Hydrus turned to the werewolf.

"He wrote me a letter expressing his concern that he could no longer contact me through the Floo. I wrote him back and informed him that I was no longer living in a magical house and that I was doing well. I have not heard from him since."

"Well, it seems that Dumbledore is placated for now. We'll still keep an ear out, that man is tricky," Hydrus said thoughtfully.

"Can you think of anything else?" Sirius asked in trepidation. Now that he thought about it, the time traveler was right, things were going too well.

"No, that's what is so frustrating, I can't think of anything that would hinder our plans," Hydrus said, shaking his head and running his hand through his hair.

"Well, the only thing we can do is continue on as planned and fix whatever pops up," Remus suggested mildly.

The other two nodded and the conversation turned to other things. They soon went to bed, the next day being Saturday none of them had work until the afternoon, when Remus and Hydrus would make visits to their stores.

The next morning Hydrus decided to make waffles, with fruit toppings. He gathered Harry and set to cooking. Harry was banging his sippy cup on his tray and giggling when the juice would spurt out. Then the toddler

accidentally let go of the cup and it fell to the floor. Hydrus was about to pick it up when it flew to the tot's hand.

Damn, I was hoping that wouldn't happen till later, he thought. He smiled at the child and patted him on the head as to not discourage him and then turned back to breakfast, making sure to fix some sausage, since the full moon was coming up soon.

When everyone was seated and had their plates fixed, Hydrus told them what happened. Both men were joyful that Harry was showing magic, until the immortal reminded them that it could be a bad thing.

"I don't know much about magical children, but I thought that would only happen when he was around four," the confused time traveler said.

"It can happen sometimes when they are toddlers, but it is rare," explained the ever knowledgeable Remus.

"That doesn't mean he is going to be like super magical, does it?" That would be worrying, though it didn't make sense to Hydrus, because he wasn't super powered.

"No, it just means he is used to magic. Many Pure-bloods do little things like that, whereas the Muggle-born and -raised wait until they're older," Sirius said, still beaming at Harry.

Harry had thrown his cup to the floor once again and was getting angry that it wouldn't come back like it did before. Hydrus picked the cup up and handed it to the toddler only for him to throw it once again.

"No, Harry, don't throw your cup," Hydrus said firmly. He picked it up once again and put it on the tray. It went flying, thanks to a swat of Harry's arm. This time when the older man retrieved it he didn't hand it back to the child, which of course made Harry cry.

"Cup," the tearful tot demanded.

"No, Harry, eat your breakfast," Hydrus said.

"Cup." Harry banged his little fist on the tray, causing the rest of his breakfast to spatter on the floor.

"I think someone needs some time out," the adult replied. And with that took the child to his playpen, which of course started a fit. After five minutes of being ignored, the temper tantrum died down and the child was happily playing with his toys. Much to the relief of the adults, listening to a toddler yell wasn't fun, but Harry had to learn that he couldn't always get his way.

"Isn't he a little young for time outs?" Remus questioned. He too had read the books on child raising and knew that time outs were to keep disagreements between child and adult to a minimum without the use of spankings. Knowing how Hydrus was raised he understood why the immortal would choose this method.

"Which is why he went to his playpen and not the corner, this way he'll be distracted and I won't have given into his demands. When he is older, I'll set him in the corner."

"Oh, well, I guess that makes sense."

The rest of the day was uneventful, in such that no more fits were thrown, though they did have a fussy child at naptime. After the nap, they took Harry out in the back garden and started him in the child swing. He very much enjoyed it and the slide. After a while he wanted to play in the sandbox. So the adults let him and sat with tea and chatted about how their businesses were going.

Around three in the afternoon, both Hydrus and Remus went to their respective shops. When the time traveler entered his store he had to withhold a groan. There looking at the VHS movies was one Albus Dumbledore. Just as he was about to try and sneak past him, the crowd being too large to whip out his Cloak, the Headmaster turned and smiled.

"Hydrus, my boy, good to see you," Albus said cheerfully. He was holding a couple of movies in his hand.

"Hello, Headmaster, it is good to see you as well," Hydrus replied, putting a smile on his face. "I see you're enjoying the movies."

"Yes, they are a marvelous way to seeing what Muggles think of what magic entails. Oh, that what they believe were only reality," the twinkling eyed man exclaimed. "Think of the wondrous things that could happen if one only had to wish upon a star. Still, I would like to see someone in this world create such works of art."

"I've always enjoyed them; it makes me happy to see they are so well received." There was a very sincere look on his face.

"Yes, yes, my boy, superb indeed. It is admirable to see the young so enterprising. Now, I was hoping you could satisfy an old man's curiosity. I don't recall ever having a Hydrus Black in Hogwarts; can you tell me where you received your education?" Dumbledore asked politely, trying to figure out the young man in front of him, without coming across as prying.

"I was homeschooled," was the succinct response.

"May I inquire, by whom?"

"My adopted parents," he said in a voice that said he would not welcome any more questions on that topic.

"Judging from your products they did a splendid job. I have never encountered a rune array such as yours, splendid, indeed," he praised, with a twinkle in his eyes he raised his free hand and placed it on the young man's shoulder. Then he let it drop when Hydrus gave a small smile and a nod of thanks. His smile brightened and he changed the subject. "I was wondering if you have spent time with your cousin Sirius."  
"We have lunch a few times a month," the immortal said with a casual lift

of his shoulder. "He's trying to get the family together and support his political standing. I wholeheartedly agree with everything he has accomplished so far."

"Indeed, Sirius has done some ideal things in the Ministry. Have you ever come across his godson, young Harry?"

"I've only seen pictures," Hydrus lied with a disinterested face. "The child seems happy enough," he said with another shrug.

"Definitely, those pictures do speak a thousand words, as the Muggles say. It was delightful seeing you again, my boy. Thank you for answering this old man's questions. However, I must be off," the Headmaster said, going to the checkout counter to purchase the movies in his hand.

Hydrus gave a silent sigh of relief. That wasn't so bad, though I'm pretty sure it won't be the last time I see the Headmaster. I'm probably correct that he has a monitor on the wards. Still, I must keep my knowledge of Harry out of the public.

When the Headmaster had left, Hydrus went and conducted his business with his store manager. After that he went home and let the other two adults know what happened. They both promised they would watch what they say about Hydrus in public. The rest of the night was spent rehashing the immortal's story about being adopted, until it was time for bed. All of them hoping that what the time traveler told them was correct and the Headmaster's inquiries were just a passing interest.

Hphphp

I hate writing Dumbledore, not that I can't get his speech correct, but, because no matter how I write him I get reviews saying I'm doing him wrong. So I'll just say this, in this story Dumbledore is an old man who thinks he is always right and going to get his way. So people like Hydrus are of little interest to him, unless they show a Dark side or go against one of his plans. The Headmaster,

at this time, thinks Hydrus is of the Light since he made the vow to help Harry and tried to save the Potters, and he hasn't done anything mysterious since. With the pictures Sirius is showing around he sees that Harry is happy and away from his fame, which is what he wants (at least in this fic).

15. Two down, One to go

Chapter 15 Two down, One to go

AN: Thanks to my betas, The 5h15 Spaceman, darrelldeam and alix33. All mistakes are my own.

I'm making Skeeter's background up and not sticking to canon with her. It was pointed out that Merlin died before Hogwarts was built, I know that, you know that, but he still has a Chocolate Frog Card that says he was sorted into Slytherin.

I am blown away with the response to the last chapter. Thanks again for all of your support.

Hphphp

It was a beautiful July day. The sun was shining and there was a nice breeze. The family was enjoying their luscious back yard, with a picnic lunch of cold turkey sandwiches and crisps. Harry was running around the garden trying to catch butterflies. He was walking well now and his speech had improved greatly. The color ball was updated to more difficult to say colors such as purple and orange. He would be two soon, and the men couldn't wait to celebrate.

The rest of the males were thankful for the down time. All of their projects were time-consuming. It being Sunday they were taking a well-deserved day off simply watching Harry while seated in comfortable garden chairs, sipping tea and enjoying the sun. This put the time traveler in a joyful mood; this is what he wanted when he came back in time, for Harry to have a happy family. Days like this made everything

worth it.

"So, Padfoot, how is the dating going?" Hydrus asked. He was glad the man had healed enough to start seeing women regularly.

The youngest Black had taken up dating one of the other therapists at the clinic. She was a nice lady, with Brunette hair and dark blue eyes and curves to die for.

"Very well, thank you very much," the dogman said with a sniff. Then he laughed and said, "Faith is doing good, she has taken to Harry well. What about you, Hydrus, are you going to start dating? One night stands are only going to satisfy you for so long. Everyone needs a better half." He was speaking from experience, his womanizing days were over and he was looking to settle down. It would be hard, unless he branched out to the magical world or at least someone that knew of it.

"I don't think it would be fair to anyone I was serious with, what with me being immortal. I'd have to watch them grow old and die, while they'd know that I'd never meet them in the afterlife." He was sad about that, though it didn't stop him from having one night stands as long as the other party knew it was only once. "Besides, I have plans for the future that don't include anyone but me."

"What plans?"

"I'll tell you when the time gets closer. Don't worry; I'll make sure everything is going well before I implement them." He waved it off.

"Well, I like Faith well enough, though she keeps nagging me to come to my home. I'm running out of things to tell her," Sirius said getting back on topic, knowing the other man would be closed-mouthed about his secrets. Although they lived together there were still plenty of things they didn't share.

"Yeah, that would be disconcerting," the immortal said, "but we can't take

the chance. Maybe you can get a flat in the city and use it for your bachelor pad, like the one I have set up, or you could just use mine."

The flat Hydrus had rented was a small, clean, one bedroom place. It was in a nice neighborhood without being overly impressive, making the immortal seem to be just a simple man looking for a good time. He didn't use his money to get women: that only brought out gold-diggers and he had had his fair experience with those in his last timeline. He used it many times just to get away from the responsibilities he had foisted on himself, well, and the occasional one night stand. It was also his and Harry's residence during the full moon.

"That's an idea, I wonder why I didn't think of it," Sirius said thoughtfully. Then he turned his attention to the other man, who had been sitting quietly, hoping to go unnoticed. "Moony?"

"You know I don't date, Sirius," the werewolf answered.

"And I told you, you did in my timeline. And that your son didn't carry your affliction," reprimanded Hydrus. Sometime Remus's fear of his werewolf got tiring and no matter what he and Sirius told the man, Remus was too set in his ways.

"Maybe I am just waiting for Nymphadora to come of age," the other man countered, and then grimaced at the thought. Tonks was just a child right now and it made him feel creepy just thinking about it.

"I wouldn't count on what I know to cement that. This isn't a time of war and that might be what brought you two together. With Voldemort weakening every day, that war might not happen. You should date among the magicals. What about that blonde in the book store? Sarah? She knows about your furry little problem and she doesn't care," the time traveler suggested. He glanced at Harry who was now playing in the sandbox, trying to make the dry sand stand up. Hydrus sent a small spray

of water to the area in front of the tot to give him wet sand. Harry squealed with glee and was now attempting to fill his bucket.

"I'll think about it," Remus replied after a minute, making the other two groan. His tone of voice suggested that he wouldn't think that hard.

"Changing the subject, have your investigators found anything on our two evil women?" Sirius asked.

"Oh yeah, Umbridge's background contradicts everything she believes in. I have tons of blackmail on that bitch. I've got reports she's already trying to crack down on Muggle-borns with trumped-up charges," Hydrus said. He only needed a few more details and then he was going to snag that bitch right from under the Ministry's nose. "I need you to get the DMLE to investigate those reports, Sirius, talk to Scrimgeour or whoever is in charge right now."

"What's the blackmail," Padfoot asked eagerly. He loved using blackmail. With his family slowly, but surely, coming to his side, if only to bring the power of the Blacks down on the government, he had tons of blackmail. With him standing on the premise that Muggle-borns were descended from squibs and with Cassiopeia's research, they stood together to get the others to change their minds. It was a work in progress.

"Well, did you know her father was a mop pusher in the Ministry? He was also a Hufflepuff that believed in Pure-blood supremacy. I have no idea why he married a non-magical with that belief, but he was the one that taught Dolores her ideals. Her mother, as I said, was a non-magical and her brother was a squib, that belies all her believes that non-magicals steal magic or her mother would have been a witch, and she and her father would be squibs. The mum and brother were cast out of the family and disappeared in London somewhere," he recounted what he read. In his timeline, that information wasn't known, Dolores must have wiped it

out.

"Huh, yeah, she comes off as a Pure-blood," Sirius said, thinking on how he could use that bit of information. Even in the low office that she was in, that woman caused all sorts of conflict at the Ministry. He had no idea why she wasn't fired.

"Well, if she's already up to her dirty tricks, it's time for me to get her out of the picture," he said, not noticing the wary looks between the other two. Then an idea popped into his head. "Hey, Sirius, I just remembered someone else who needs taken down. How would you like to prank someone?" Hydrus asked brightly, already going over ideas.

The Marauder perked up, it had been awhile since he pranked anyone.

"Who? What? When? Where?" he asked rapidly.

"Marge Dursley. Let her dogs loose. Tonight. At her house. Then you're going to call Animal Control and let them know the dogs are running wild and that she is a breeder that kills."

"Great," the Animagus said, enthusiastically bouncing in his seat, rubbing his hands together in anticipation.

"Did you want to come, Remus?" Hydrus asked, turning to the other man.

"No, I think I will sit this one out," the werewolf answered. He was too tired to go gallivanting around England at midnight.

"Suit yourself," Padfoot said. He was going to have fun, with or without his old partner.

They spent the rest of the day playing with Harry, who loved the sandbox. When they finished their roast beef dinner, and put Harry to bed, the two pranksters started planning with Remus putting his two Knuts' worth in. Around midnight the Blacks left the house to the outskirts of London. They made sure there were no people on the street at this hour, even went as far as to cast a mild sleeping charm on all the

houses to keep the residents from waking, especially Marge. They put up a containment shield to keep the dogs on this street, which would fall when they left. They then put dog repelling charms on their clothes, unlocked the fence surrounding the yard and opened the pens.

Most of the bulldogs jumped at the chance of being free and ran to the streets. Some were shy and stayed in their kennels and had to be coaxed out. Sirius then went to the nearest phone booth and called Animal Control.

"Hello, this is Animal Control, how can I help you tonight," a bored male voice asked.

"You've got to come quickly. That Dursley woman's dogs are all running the streets. They're vicious and I'm afraid they'll bite someone," Sirius said in a shaky voice.

"What's your name? Where are you? What type of dogs? And how many?" the man fired off questions.

"I think they're purebred bulldogs. And I can't tell, but there are more than ten. Hurry, one is coming my way. I'm in phone booth. I was out getting the missus some strawberry ice cream and beets, she pregnant you know, and I saw them running towards me and I got in the booth and called you," Sirius rambled, trying hard not to sound excited. "That Dursley woman would kill me if I tell you who I am. She's mad, I tell ya. I heard her tell her helper to 'kill the bitch'; I don't know if she was talking about one of her dogs or the neighbor lady."

"What is the location?" the now alert voice asked.

"We're on Hyde Street. Oh, no, one has me pinned in the booth," he shrieked like a little girl, all the while had a huge smile plastered on his face.

Hydrus quickly transfigured a rock to a dog and made it bark.

"I've heard that woman trains them to attack anyone," Sirius continued.

"She has also been known to drown the puppies. We, the neighbors, had talked about calling you before, but... OH, NO, it's trying to get in."

The transfigured dog started scratching on the booth. You could hear the other dogs barking all over the neighborhood.

Hydrus was bent over and trying to gasp in some air. He was holding in his laughter so much it hurt. Then he noticed the lights coming on in one of the houses, the sleeping spell must have worn off. He motioned to Sirius it was time to go and got a nod in return.

"We'll be there as soon as possible. Stay in the booth and don't try to fight the dog," came the stern warning over the phone. You could hear him shouting orders in the background.

"AHHHH, it's opening the door, it's going to bite me!" With that he dropped the receiver and ran from the booth screaming. After canceling his spell on the rock, Hydrus was hot on his tail. They got to the end of the street and Apparated out. They returned home and broke down in fits of laughter; Remus looked at them with fond exasperation.

"How did it go?" the werewolf asked.

"Without a hitch," Sirius said between chuckles and told him what they did, causing the other man to join in on their merriment.

"They'll grab all the dogs and put them in the shelter. Since they are purebreds they shouldn't have a hard time adopting them out. Then hopefully they'll investigate her puppy farm and lock her up," Hydrus added smugly. He was glad to see that that woman would get her comeuppance.

His thoughts wandered to the Dursleys who had disappeared from Britain. His detectives trailed them to America. They were still fearful of the magicals hunting them down and were unlisted. The only way they

had been tracked was that Vernon didn't change companies, he simply asked for a transfer—idiot. The immortal was once again thankful that Dumbledore was under the impression that Harry was still with them here in Britain. Those monitoring charms were a godsend, they, along with the pictures Sirius showed and the Fidelius Charm, made the story believable. Still, he'd keep an eye on them, just in case.

A little while later all the men made their way to their beds. One down, two to go, Hydrus thought as he went to sleep.

The next morning there was a report in the local paper for Marge's area, which showed that over twenty dogs were taken by Animal Control, thankfully no one was bitten. Marge Dursley was arrested for having an illegal puppy farm and animal cruelty.

The week passed and soon it was Harry's birthday. Since the house was hidden they couldn't have the party there, so they went to the London Zoo, with some of the children from daycare and their parents. So it was a group of seven tots and eleven adults that traipsed the zoo that day. They kept it small, because chasing a bunch of toddlers was tiring and seven was the limit they felt they could handle.

"Uncle Padfoot, look pony," Harry said pointing at the elephant.

"That's an elephant, Harry," Sirius gently corrected, picking the boy up and placing him on his hip.

"Elfant," Harry tried the word.

"El a fant," Hydrus said, sounding it out.

"Elapant," was the next try.

"Close enough," Remus said mussing the toddler's hair.

And so it went with every exhibit, Harry and his little friends learned a lot of animal names that day and a large party was held in the family restaurant. The children enjoyed the lunch of burgers, chips and fizzy

drinks, much to the concern of the adults. Then a large chocolate cake was brought out and Happy Birthday was sung by the parents and the staff, with the help of the off-key older children. Presents were nice, mostly toys to help with learning, but Harry, being the inquisitive child he was, liked them all. It was a good thing they held the party last, because now they could send all the sugar high children home and only have to worry about Harry. Judging from the looks they were receiving there would be payback.

That night the adults stayed up and had a few drinks to celebrate Hydrus's birthday. They talked about their good times in Hogwarts and the past gifts received from friends, as well as birthday pranks the Marauders did to each other. The immortal was content with that. He figured he'd stop celebrating when he got a bit older, it'd get tiring trying to remember how old he was after 100.

One weekday, during the first week of August, Hydrus snuck in the Ministry under his Cloak. He made his way to the Improper Use of Magic Office and watched the toad like woman gleefully send out missives. From the look on her fat face they were probably sent to Muggle-borns. He crept behind her desk and stunned her. Then using the Elder Wand, so it would last until he broke it, he quickly turned her into a chamber pot and put her in his pocket-space. He'd have to figure out what to do with her later, but for now she was out of the way. Clearing any sign of him he left the office.

He had no idea where her father was, he disappeared a week ago. His investigators said that Mr. Umbridge was paid off by Dolores, since he would hinder her chances of moving up in the Ministry. Hydrus brushed the man aside for now, but would keep an eye open for him. Anyone spouting Pure-blood supremacy needed to be watched.

Making his way quickly out of the building, he moved to get to his shop, where everyone thought he was going over paperwork in his office. He got to the office and pulled off his Cloak and seated himself behind the desk, just in time for his manager to enter.

"Ah, Mr. Black, I have been meaning to talk with you. It seems some of our customers wish to have a wider variety of movies. Some of the Muggle-raised would like— what did they call them? — oh, yes, science fiction," Mr. Parker said when he entered, taking a seat across from his employer.

"I don't see any issue with that, talk to the distributors and see what they have. It'll be interesting to see what magicals make of the Star Wars movies," he answered with a chuckle. Those American films had some good special effects for this time period. He should start carrying a wider selection of movies, now that the Disney ones had been so well received. Maybe he should open a store just for videos, something to think about. Or I could sell that idea to Frostwell, no, movies weren't gizmos, well, maybe, I'll think of something. "Keep only a few for now; we don't really have the space for more than fifty. So stick to best sellers," he said as an afterthought.

"I will get right on it," the store manager said as he picked up the phone to do just that. It had taken awhile to teach the man to use the device, but when all was said and done, Mr. Parker was thrilled to have a way to run the business without little use of Floo or owl. Phones were much more expedient. Now all he had to do is get other magical businessmen to use them. Setting up delivery to a warehouse they used for non-magical products, Mr. Parker hung up the phone and went back into the store.

Hydrus went over some invoices and worked out what he needed to

stock. Getting the inventory for his store was easy. He would buy the non-magical equivalent from the distributors, have it shipped to the warehouse, update it and make it run on magic. He then had to update the manuals, with a note stating what they were purchasing and who the original manufacturer was. He had two other people who helped him with the rune array and the updates. The more futuristic stuff was still at his house or in the pocket-space, like the game console and TV. He was waiting until the better ones hit the market in the non-magical world to introduce them to the magical public.

Frostwell had opened his business, Wondrous Gizmos, and was the friendly competition that he promised to be. The inventor had a wide selection of devices for teens, like music players, book-readers and handheld electronic games, which at this time only played one game. These he had adapted from the non-magicals after Hydrus suggested he take a look at what they sold. The man was ecstatic at what he found and updated the Walkman players into a portable WWN with the option to play cassette tapes, which he had a variety of. His shop was doing well with the teen crowd. Like Hydrus, he had a warehouse and would buy, update and sell.

"Did you kill her?" came the out of the blue question from Sirius one evening a few days after the toad disappeared. The full moon had just passed and Remus was in bed early.

"I haven't killed anyone," Hydrus answered defensively. "You've known me for months now and you still think I'm a murderer. I'm actually hurt." And you could see the pain in his eyes; he thought they were past this and that he more than proved himself to the other two men.

"I... well... you see... Hydrus, you told us you didn't have a problem 'taking out' those two women," the other man stuttered. There was a look

of remorse on his face, showing that he was sorry for asking. It was a question that had been bugging him and he didn't want to ask it, but he needed to know.

"Yes, but I also told you I was trying not to walk down that path," the immortal snapped.

"But you didn't say you wouldn't."

"Look, what happened with the Death Eaters was an accident. You know that. I'm still thinking on what to do with Dolores. I have a few ideas, but I'm undecided as of yet. I haven't told you guys, because I want you to have plausible deniability," the older man explained.

"So you're not going to tell us what you've done with her?"

"Nope, I'm going to keep it to myself. As far as you know, she simply disappeared. All you need to know is she's not dead. Look, I know you want to help, but this is something you can't help with. I'm only trying to make sure that she doesn't cause problems in the future. The way you can help is to make sure someone more evil doesn't take her place. Keep your ears open at the Ministry and an eye on the laws trying to be approved and who is trying to pass them. Sometimes the adage 'better the devil you know' is fact." He had thought about that and it was the only reason that Dolores was still alive.

"Right, I can do that," Sirius conceded. He could see Hydrus's point, no one could accuse him of anything if he didn't know anything.

A week after Dolores Umbridge vanished, an article was printed in The Times comparing her to Riddle. Both had a Pure-blood parent that married a Muggle. Both believed in the Pure-blood doctrine, even though they were Half-bloods. Both disappeared from Britain, to unknown locations.

The DMLE did their investigation and found the reports of her using her

position to trump up charges on the Muggle-born to be correct. There were even allegations that she tried to kill off some of the Muggle-raised, but there was little proof. Needless to say, she was fired from her position. If Hydrus ever let her go, her reputation would be ruined. This report caused Muggle-raised to go into an uproar. They wanted to have the laws against them overturned. A good deal of the Half-blood rallied to their side. The Wizengamot was frantically trying to regain control. Minister Bagnold was iffy on her stance, probably thinking it was about time she stepped down. There was a committee formed to go over all the laws passed in the last ten years, to see if the Muggle-raised protest were valid. Every letter that Umbridge sent out was now being reviewed and many of those charges were being dropped.

It was towards the end of August and Remus and Hydrus were standing outside an empty shop space in Diagon Alley with the woman, Sarah, who the immortal had tried to set the werewolf up with.

"So, Sarah, what do you think?" Hydrus asked the lanky blonde.

Sarah was a tall, thin, blonde woman with beautiful sky blue eyes. Right now she was tapping her finger on her chin in thought. "Let me get this straight, you want me to open a tea shop/book store? Where we would sell books and rent out book-readers to people who will then sit and drink tea while they read? Where did you even get such a concept?"

"America, actually, but they use coffee and not tea," the immortal lied casually. Well, he had, but it was in a future timeline.

"Do you really think it'll work?" the blonde woman asked. "Why don't you set it up yourself? Why do you want me to?"

"I don't want to be seen trying to take over the Alley. Two businesses, maybe three, are more than enough. I'll lend you the money, help you get up and running and then bow out."

She turned to Remus and asked the same question.

"I can't own a business here, I'm a werewolf. You know that."

"That's just stupid," she spat and then she put her thoughtful face back on and tried to decide whether it was a worthy business. "What'll we call it?" she inquired after ten minutes of thought. After all it was her dream to be the owner of a book store, though she never would have thought to add a tea shop with it. It was brilliant.

"Well, I'd call it The Tea Cozy, but I'm horrible at picking names. So you can call it whatever you want. It's your business," Hydrus answered, with a bright smile.

"I think something more along the lines of The Book Nook," Sarah said, her eyes roaming the store front already going over designs.

A week later The Book Nook was opened to the public, oh the wonders of magic. Bookcases lined the walls, while thirteen tables that sat four were in the middle. A small kitchen in the back baked pastries and made little sandwiches, along with tea. There was a small glass display to show what could be ordered along the back wall. There was a wire stand for the Frostwell Book-readers, to the right of the checkout counter that was in the front of the store. Those readers had an anti-theft charm on them and were rented out to the customers by the hour. If they wanted to purchase one they had to go to Wondrous Gizmos. There was a second floor that had more bookshelves and a few couches, tea wasn't served there. All the books in the shop had a time limit charm of ten minutes to browse them, after that they would disappear back to the shelf unless the book was put in a basket to be purchased or rented.

They didn't sell textbooks or older tomes, so they were of little competition to Flourish and Blotts. Mostly they encouraged people to buy and read fictional works, there were even non-magical mystery, fantasy,

sci-fi and romance novels thrown in. This shop mostly catered to the young adult crowd. They did sell the Chocolate Frog Book, and many opinions were changing. Large portions of the younger public stopped affiliating any House with good or evil and were teaching their children the same.

The newspaper was going well, when they had first run an editorial on Tom Riddle, the subscriptions went through the roof. The commentary on Umbridge also upped sales. They kept printing articles on famous people and what they had really done in the past, which in turn made the Chocolate Frog Book a bestseller. Their government section did interviews with the politicians making sure to double-check the laws they voted on and talk to their coworkers, family and friends.

The back page annotations on Harry Potter did a lot to help keep the rumors down about the Boy Who Lived. Their section on non-magical news was well received by most of the Muggle-raised, who had little news of their former homes unless they had the time to go to London and get the papers there, which most didn't. The articles also brought reality to many Magical-raised; they were, for the first time, seeing everything they believed about Muggles was wrong. At this point in time, no one was sure if that was a good thing or not.

Sirius came under fire in the paper when he was almost caught trying to bribe someone into voting against a particularly nasty half-breed law against Veelas. Sirius got away with the attempted bribe with a bit of lying and turning of phrase, like any good politician. Since no money had actually changed hands, it was relegated to the back page, but he was now under watch and needed to be more careful.

"I can't believe you almost got caught," laughed Hydrus the night that article was printed.

"I can't believe it either," Sirius said chuckling.

"This is not funny, you two. It could seriously damage our plans," Remus snapped.

"Oh, leave off, Remus, this is a good thing," the dogman said.

"How is it a good thing?"

"It means that no one is exempt, which gives the public more reason to believe what we print."

"I'm just impressed with the way they had no problem running it. They know Sirius is one of the owners of the paper," the immortal said, sobering up a little.

"You should've seen the defiant look on the editor's face," Sirius laughed harder. When he had gone to the office the man had stood his ground and told Sirius that the article was factual and would be printed as such. He then told the Animagus that he really didn't want to work for a crooked politician. Sirius assured him that he was one of the good guys and would try and stay out of the spotlight from now on. That mollified the editor, for now.

"Still you need to be more careful, Padfoot. I would hate to see you lose your position in the government," the werewolf reprimanded.

"I'll be as careful as I can be," he promised.

"Still it's good that we have such honest reporters. We'll need that if anything starts to go wrong," Hydrus said, glad that they made those employees take that vow.

They talked about the article and how they were going to be more cautious until bedtime. When they finally went to bed, Hydrus was still waiting for the other shoe to drop. There had only been a few minor setbacks and each of those was taken care of with ease. He knew now that Dolores wasn't the one watching him, so it must be someone else he

offended.

With so many changes, the Ministry was in an uproar. However, there was little to be done, since they had to go with public opinion. The one time they tried to get *The Times* banned, the community protested so loud they had to drop it. No longer were the crowds easily swayed. The old fogies of the Wizengamot were in a pickle. They had always just made laws and the sheep would follow. Now with their stories being printed in a reputable paper, they had to change their ways or step down. There were still the Pure-bloods that tried to buy the votes, but Hydrus's little stash was much more than they could beat. With his accounts in Sweden the money was untraceable. Since the Black accounts were massive no one questioned where Sirius's 'donations' came from.

The relations with the goblins weren't going so well, since most magicals refused to give up goblin made items. The greedy bastards (in Hydrus's opinion) refused to listen to the talks. Some in the Ministry were afraid that a new rebellion would start if they kept trying. So that project was put on hold.

Skeeter was nowhere to be found, the detectives came up blank. After graduating she simply vanished. Hydrus knew when she would start with the Prophet, but he had little else on her history. So now he was in a quandary as to what to do about her. He knew he would take her out of the public as soon as he could and hope that a more vicious reporter didn't take her place. If that happened he had no problem snatching someone else. With *The Times* now outselling the Daily Prophet and the Quibbler, and magicals thinking for themselves, maybe he would just let her bury herself.

Then the thought came to him, She's a spy! She's probably working on blackmail material as we speak. If Pettigrew can live his life as a rat, Skeeter

can do the same as a bug. But how to find her? She hasn't killed anyone, so setting ghosts on her won't work. While she's rather distinctive, she's still just a bug. Something he was going to have to tell his detectives.

He had told them that she was an Animagus, and a water beetle, but they were looking for a woman. Now they would have to set sights on an insect, and wasn't that going to be fun. He'd point them in the direction of the Ministry, if she was looking for blackmail that's where she'd be, or in the politicians' homes. It was a good thing that they were under a Fidelius and Sirius made sure only to mention the other two men in passing in his talks with others. He'd have to put Animagus Revealing Charms on the businesses so she can't sneak in.

So the next day, the older men of the house set about doing just that.

They put the charm on the newspaper office, Hydrus's store and Remus's bookstore, just in case. Sirius whenever he talked to a fellow politician, made sure to cast the charm on the room they were in. They weren't going to take any chances on this particular woman. The Master of Death tried to call her parents, but no one came, so they must still be alive.

## 16. Solving a Few Things

### Chapter 16 Solving a Few Things

AN: Thanks to my betas, The 5h15 Spaceman, darrelldream and alix33. All mistakes are my own.

It was asked if I got the Book Nook from the story Hermione's Book Nook. Nope, never read it, though I do have it downloaded on my kindle and will read soon. No, I got the idea from a coffee shop in Washington State that I used to frequent when I was younger.

Hphphp

A medium narration

Almost three years passed in a whirlwind of business and play. Harry was

growing up well. The articles printed about him kept the public from putting him on a pedestal. He was learning fast; he could recite his ABC's, spell small words and his name, and count to fifty without a problem. He was talking almost like an adult. He was also starting to show more accidental magic. There was only one incident at daycare, when he was fighting with a little girl over a crayon and her hair turned green, which Sirius was able to reverse and confuse away. They were going to pull him this year and start teaching him at home. He would be going on weekend play dates to magical households starting with the Weasleys this coming weekend.

Sirius was down to monthly counseling. Faith had broken up with him when he told her he had a secret. She said that she couldn't trust him if he couldn't trust her. She was too upset that he kept something from her that she never found out what the secret was. You would think as a counselor she would be more understanding.

It was sad in the house that week, but Sirius pulled himself together and started looking in the magical world. He had his eye set on a young clerk in the Department of Magical Accidents and Catastrophes, whom he had met through Arthur. Her name was Laura Webb, a short, reddish-blond woman, who was bubbly and flirtatious.

Remus was dating Sarah, and those two were doing well. Dating made the shy man come out of his shell more, and he was far more confident than he had been since the Potters' deaths. He and the others shared the flat that Hydrus set up. Sarah was thriving as a shop owner and didn't care that she couldn't come to the werewolf's house. The Book Nook opened a store in Hogsmeade catering to the older teens, many of the villagers and a few of the teachers. It was doing well.

Hydrus stuck to one night stands, though he kept them to a minimum

now that Harry was older. He had spent most of the last few years setting up his businesses to run without him, so he could spend all day at home teaching Harry. He was content with his life, all of his plans were coming together, and little had gotten in their way.

Voldemort was a mere shadow now; he couldn't even possess animals, making the adults confident that he didn't have another horcrux. The Master of Death kept the spirits hounding him, just in case. They still didn't know how to finally rid themselves of Tom. They were hoping he'd just fade away.

Grimmauld Place was stripped of all magic; all the Dark items were stored in the family vault. Sirius had it updated to a non-magical home. He told the contractors his mother was old-fashioned and had recently died (which she had). He then sold his childhood home and never looked back. It was good closure.

Kreacher was brought to the children's home, but, like before, wasn't freed, since he could die if the bond broke. The old elf was content to work in the kitchens, but stayed away from the children. His standards were still Pure-blood, but he followed his master's orders.

The stores were doing well, the appliance store downsized a bit, and a new entertainment store was opened near it. The new store, Fun For All, held computers, TV's, VCR's, and movies. It was a big hit. These items were now commonplace in homes, bar some of the diehard Pure-bloods. There were even computers being used for recordkeeping in the Ministry and, much to Hydrus's displeasure, Gringotts, since the immortal updated them to store records the same way his book-reader did. The manuals that came with the computers were very simply worded, even the most incompetent wizard-raised should be able to load files. It did help that solitaire and other card games came with the devices.

Hydrus made sure his bank in Sweden was set up with a better system.

They paid handsomely for the new workstations.

Hydrus sold Frostwell the gaming consoles idea, for a piece of the profit.

Those two businessmen were very friendly competition; they tried hard not to step on each other's ideas. Their playful banter was often heard in one store or another. Frostwell's Wondrous Gizmos also set up a store in Hogsmeade, many of his products were used in Hogwarts now. The calculators were a Merlin send to those studying Arithmancy.

The professors were hard-pressed to keep the radios and handheld games out of the classrooms, and the volume down in the common rooms. They had to revamp the rules to go with all the new devices. They tried to ban them, but the students protested and many parents took the kids' side, since the gizmos didn't hurt anyone. The best they could do was ban them from the classroom or confiscate them until class was over.

The only professor that didn't complain was Binns. The Headmaster thought they were wonderful creations, but had to take the staffs' side and lay down the rules.

Another idea he gave Frostwell was to set up arcades in Hogsmeade. He even took the man to show him what a non-magical one was like. You could see the wheels turning in the inventor's head. It wouldn't be long until one was up and running in both the Alley and village. The immortal tried to get Sarah to add a game to The Book Nook, but she said it would distract the readers.

Hydrus kept his businesses in Diagon Alley and let others make changes; he didn't want to draw too much attention to himself. He subtly set up others in businesses and then would bow out when they were up and running. There were other similar stores popping up in other countries, if they used Hydrus's array then he got some of the profits. The immortal

made sure everything went through his solicitor.

There was still no sign of Skeeter; not even magic could locate her. They tried to owl her, but like Dementors, the animal couldn't find the bitch while she was a bug. They also attempted the point me spell, but it only pointed in a general direction and then would twirl again. Hydrus had Sirius turn into Padfoot to see if it was because she was an Animagus. When he called out Sirius's name it would point and twirl, when he called Padfoot it would locate him. So they figured that she also had an animal name.

Hydrus was beginning to think she wasn't in Britain. If she was, she was hiding very well. With The Times doing well, he might just let her show and see what she does before burying her. If she came for a job with the paper, she'd have to take the same vow as the other reporters.

Present time

It was now 1985 and finally there was a warrant out for the arrest of Dolores Umbridge, and Hydrus was tempted to just wrap her up and hand her over. Even if she was somehow found innocent, her reputation was shattered. So with that in mind he sat the others down one night and talked it over.

"So, Sirius, I heard there's a warrant out for Umbridge," the immortal mentioned casually as they all settled in their chairs. There was tea and scones on the coffee table.

"Yeah, one of the Muggle-born she tried to kill came forward with more evidence," the dogman answered, reclining back in his Lazyboy. "Seems she went to his house to break his wand, and when he refused she threatened to kill him with the AK. Even went as far as to draw her wand and start the spell. His wife came home and startled her. They in turn drew their wands and said they were going to turn her in for falsifying a

report and using an Unforgivable. Being the weak witch she is, she couldn't fight the two of them so she threatened them once more and Disapparated away," he said and they had a good laugh at the cowardliness of the woman.

"So why wasn't she fired?" Hydrus asked, leaning forward a bit and lifting up his cup of tea.

"When they took their complaints to the DMLE she lied and said she had never heard of the man. They had the letters she sent, but she said she had no record of ever sending a warning to that house. Any evidence there was had been wiped from the Ministry. This was during the end of the war, and it was such a minor thing, it was shrugged off. It was only after some more investigation that it came up again." He sat his chair up, grabbed a scone and shrugged.

"What took so long? I mean, there have to be dozens of similar reports. It's been years."

"The ones they found, the wand was broken and the people vanished either into the non-magical world or dead. This report was buried as solved. They only just talked to the guy a few days ago. Luckily he had kept the letters and gave up his memory."

"Oh, well, I was thinking I might just turn her over to the DMLE," Hydrus said, and measured their reaction.

"You mean she is still alive?" Remus exclaimed, shocked, much to the disappointment of the time traveler, who took a quick look at Sirius and found a passive look on the dogman's face.

"Yes," he hissed, showing how upset he was just by the tone in his voice.

"That is not what I meant. I meant that after all this time of hiding her she has not succumbed to whatever you did, like the Death Eaters," the werewolf back-pedaled, and held up his hands in supplication. "You have

not really said anything about her in all this time, so I had wondered if you were just trying to protect us."

"Oh, yeah, well, I can see where you'd get that," the mollified man said, rubbing the back of his head. "Come to think of it, I haven't checked on her since. So it's possible you're right. Let's put on some cloaks like the Death Eaters and you guys get your wands out."

Everyone did as suggested and he then called the chamber pot and put it on a chair in the middle of the room. Using the Elder Wand he canceled the transfiguration. She was still stunned, so they roped her to the chair and cast the Rennervate. The men stood behind her so she couldn't see them, yet.

The toad-like woman blinked as she woke. She looked around the decidedly Muggle home and sneered. "Who dares hold me hostage? Don't you know who I am? I work for a very important department in the Ministry. You won't get away with kidnapping me," she said in her girly voice, trying to come off as intimidating and failing.

"You don't need to know that, Dolores, just answer a simple question. Are you a supporter of the Dark Lord?" Hydrus asked, using a charmed voice.

"The Dark Lord is dead," she snapped, struggling in her bonds.

"That was not my question," he intoned back, and hit her with a stinging hex. He then motioned for them to move to where she could see them, hoping she would tell the truth about her ideals if she saw they were of like mind.

Seeing the men in dark robes with masks on their face, Dolores pondered her answer. She was thinking that she was somehow in the middle of a Death Eater raid. Though, how she got there from her office, she had no idea. "I believe he had the right idea, but went about it the wrong way," she finally settled on, simpering. "He should have started with the

Ministry. If he had done what I did then more of the Mudbloods would be dead."

"Wrong answer," Hydrus said gleefully, stunning her again, Obliviating the last five minutes and once again changing her into the chamber pot and putting her in his pocket space. "So, turn her over?" he asked, looking at the other two.

"I think so," Remus said thoughtfully, shedding his disguise. "But how would you explain her absence?"

"And her lack of memories for the last few years?" Sirius piped in, also ridding himself of the cloak and mask.

"Those are valid questions," Hydrus conceded, thinking furiously on how to solve them. "Well, I could write an anonymous note stating I found her wandering Muggle London dazed and confused. Spouting off how she was going to kill them all. Then make sure to say she mentioned the Unforgivables."

"That might work, as long as you type it up. With computers being more recognized in the magical world there would be no tying it to you," Remus answered.

So that's what Hydrus did, he typed the note, put on his Cloak and snuck into the DMLE in the middle of lunch and went to the head office. He then summoned her out, put her back to herself, stunned her with his holly wand and bound her tight. Using the Elder wand, he cleared his magical signature; left her tied to a chair, stuck the note to her forehead and simply walked away.

Two days later an article appeared in The Times, stating that Dolores Umbridge was found and questioned under Veritaserum. The questioning led to her confessing that she had used two of the Unforgivables on Muggle-raised, giving her a life sentence in Azkaban.

The two dogmen were overjoyed that Hydrus hadn't had to kill. While they thought well of the time traveler that was always an underlying fear of theirs.

The first Saturday with the Weasleys went with only a few hitches. Since Hydrus couldn't join them, he learned about it from Sirius.

"It was going well," the Animagus said that night after Harry was in bed.

"The kids were getting along and even the twins were behaving. Though, you were right about that Ron kid, he came off as a tad jealous. Don't know why though the Weasleys are doing well with the deposits you make to their vault. Arthur is still wondering where that money is coming from, by the way." They both chuckled at that. Arthur even tried to give the money back at one point, but to no avail.

Sirius sobered a bit and continued, "I'm hoping to work on Ron; he's not a bad kid, just overshadowed by all his brothers. Anyway, they have a TV, VCR and loads of kids' movies, so the kids watched a show and then went outside. Bill and Charlie were showing me that they have some of Frostwell's portable radios. We were all playing in the back garden, with the younger kids chasing the gnomes, when Dumbledore showed."

"Well, that's disconcerting," Hydrus said, a bit on edge. He had had a few more run-ins with the Headmaster, though nothing really came from them. "How did he even know Harry was there?"

"Arthur was bragging about it at work," Sirius answered, berating himself for not telling the man to keep it to himself. Thankfully all the Death Eaters were dead, imprisoned or gone. "Albus said he only came by to make sure Harry was healthy. The problem came up when he asked Harry how his family was. Harry answered honestly that they were fine. The Headmaster then asked if he was happy and the little guy smiled and said yes. We dodged curse fire today. But, what are we going to do if he

asks Harry specifically about his aunt?" Sirius was majorly concerned about that. He was more than thankful that Albus wouldn't go so far as to use Legilimency on a small child, since it was unknown how the child would react. Some say it could cause major pain, while others say that it could affect their brain and slow their thinking.

"Hmmm," was all the answer he got.

"Hydrus," the dogman snapped, "this is serious."

"I know, I'm thinking," the immortal snapped back. "How did the Headmaster react?"

"He patted Harry on the head, talked with me about the Dursleys and Arthur about the movies. He went on to complain that he was still trying to get the Board to let TV's be in the common rooms or set up a theater, and then he left."

"So, he seemed satisfied? No wand waving? Or in-depth questions?"

Hydrus asked, his mind going over different scenarios. After all their encounters with the Headmaster, he never once put spells on them. They had checked and were mildly surprised when they always came up clean. Albus seemed content on thinking that all was right with little Harry.

"Yeah, he just seemed happy that Harry was happy," Sirius said thoughtfully. Maybe he was worried over nothing. He just didn't want anything to take away his family.

"I think... no, that won't work... maybe... no, that won't work either... how about... can't ask Harry to do that..." Hydrus mumbled to himself as he paced around the room, leaving Sirius to look at him strangely.

Remus came into the room and looked at the muttering man and asked Sirius, "What has got him so bent out of shape?"

"Dumbledore showed up at the Weasleys and questioned Harry."

"Oh, I can see where that might be a problem."

The two men sat and watched the immortal think of and discard ideas. They were thinking of solutions as well, just not as rapidly as Hydrus seemed to be.

"Is there any way to plant false memories?" Sirius asked, grasping at straws.

"It's too risky," Remus answered, "just like Legilimency, it could have adverse effects on a small child."

"Hydrus," the youngest Black said, loudly, to get the older man's attention. When the immortal focused on him he asked, "Can you get pictures of the Dursleys and doctor them to have Harry in them?"

"That's not a bad idea," Hydrus said, flopping down on the sofa. He had Photoshop on his laptop from the future. "I can get my detectives to get some and then we can tell stories to Harry about the Dursleys, keeping as much to the truth as we can. How they don't like magicals and don't want to have anything to do with our world. How they are in hiding, and things like that. I'd have to make sure to add Padfoot and Harry off to the side, since they wouldn't want to be seen with them. Put them in the background or something."

"The only problem with that is that Harry, being as young as he is, is going to say things like, 'Uncle Hydrus told me that...' outing you as a relative," Remus argued.

"Maybe it's time for Harry and the Dursleys to meet," Hydrus said thoughtfully. He hadn't ever wanted anything to do with them, but if it kept their secrets safe, maybe. "I think we have a while until we face Dumbledore again. Today should satisfy him that his plans are still in action. I might have to be seen with pictures of Harry, that way if he does say that we can say that I met him on outings with Sirius."

"Maybe," the two men said together.

"You know, I'm not sure why we're getting all worked up over this. I mean, I am Harry's legal and magical guardian. There really isn't anything Albus can do to take him away," Sirius said after a few minute's silence.

"That's true, I'm more worried about him finding out about me" Hydrus said. "I mean, we have a good cover story, I've doctored all the correct paperwork, but if someone looks close enough it will fall apart. The press will have a field day."

"For which you have a counter newspaper," Remus reminded him.

"You've done so much, got so many thinking for themselves, are you really worried?"

"Well, judging from what happened to me in my timeline, I think I have the right to be worried," the time traveler answered.

"Well, with all the new changes and more politically powerful friends and family, that shouldn't happen again," Sirius said cheerfully, trying to lighten the mood.

"Maybe you're right, and I'm just getting paranoid. On to more pleasant things, I was thinking on taking Harry to Barkley's Children's Home. They're mostly good kids; counseling is making them independent and getting them over their issues. What do you guys think?"

The orphanage had morphed into something of a halfway house with permanent residents. There was mandatory therapy and treatment depended on how the child came to be there. If the family only wanted what was best for the child then everything was done to maintain contact, so the child would not feel too abandoned. If the child was left on the street, then they were given sessions on how it wasn't their fault. The home had classes set up to catch the children up on non-magical studies and lifestyles, and then they would enroll them in state school.

Most of the children were between the ages of eight to fifteen. It was working out well.

"Well, he would have more people to play with, and he is an outgoing child," Remus said, thinking of the pros and cons. "But they are all older than him, so they might not relate."

"Won't they pick on him for being magical?" Sirius asked.

"They might," the immortal answered.

"I think you should hold off on that for now," Remus concluded.

"Maybe, you're right, it might set some of them back."

The three talked more into the night and around midnight went to bed without bringing anymore heavy discussion up. Hydrus was beating himself up for not thinking about how the Headmaster would question the child. He was becoming too compliant around the man, maybe it was time to let Albus know that the horcruxes were gone, something to think about. He was going over his story seeing if there was any way to tighten it.

The next day after a breakfast of chocolate chip pancakes, the family went to the living room. Harry was settled in his play area, with one of the many educational toys Hydrus had created for him.

"How are things going with the family, Sirius?" Hydrus asked out of the blue.

"They're actually going well. My Aunt Cassiopeia and I have turned most of them to thinking more on the Grey side, which helps in my political stance. Uncle Cygnus has reconciled with Andromeda. He was reluctant at first until he found out that Nymphadora was a Metamorphmagus, which he thought only Pure-bloods could be. Since it runs in the Black Family, he decided to mend bridges. He still doesn't like Ted though. I think that's more of a clash in personalities." He stopped to sip some tea.

"I had a family meeting and made them all vow to keep anything to do with the Black family a secret. Some were reluctant until I told them I would cut them out of the family."

"Well that's good news," the immortal said with a big smile. The more people on their side the better. "How about the rest?"

"Cousin Callidora, as you know, is now the one in charge of finding the squibs and sending them to Barkley's. She has more Pure-blood ties," the youngest Black explained happily, and then his face went neutral. "The rest of the family, like Narcissa, is staying out of the way. I was thinking of getting her to let Draco and Harry play together one weekend to see how she is raising him," he said. He had only met the child for a few minutes when he ran into them in Diagon Alley. Narcissa wasn't sociable that day, so they parted quickly.

"If it turns out that she is raising him to be a stuck up Pure-blood then we'll have to see about future play dates." Hydrus was firm on that stance; he knew he couldn't save everyone. With the deaths and incarcerations of many Pure-bloods they were a minority now, a loud minority, but one nevertheless. Many of the businesses left behind were picked up by the wives. Though, there were some that had to be sold and were snatched up by non-Pure-bloods. Narcissa, so far, was content with being a Pure-blood widow, who simply threw parties and had teas.

Sirius waved it off as a given and went on. "I got a letter from Grandfather, he expressed that he was proud of me for pulling the family back together, and once more making the name of Black something to be reckoned with." He beamed at that, it wasn't often his grandfather would state he was pleased.

"That's great, Sirius," the older man said happily.

"Uncle Hydrus, look," Harry said proudly, bringing the spelling bee game

that his Uncle Hydrus had given him for his birthday. On the screen it showed that the four and a half year old (a very important age to a toddler) correctly spelled the word 'home'.

"That's great, Prongslet," Hydrus said, hoisting the youngster on his lap.

"Now let's see what the next word is." And the two played with the game for about ten minutes, when Harry decided it was time to do something else and squirmed down. After the child left, Hydrus looked at his watch and said, "I have to go to the orphanage. I told them I'd look over some of their books today. You guys okay with watching Harry?"

"We're fine," Sirius said as he set up the gaming console to play Mortal Kombat with Remus. He was bound and determined that he was going to beat the werewolf one day.

"Tippy," Hydrus called.

"Master Hydrus is wanting Tippy?" the little elf squeaked when she popped into the room.

"Yeah, I have to leave and I don't know when I'll be back, so can you make lunch today? We don't want Sirius in the kitchen again," he asked, ignoring the 'Oi'.

"Tippy can do," she said firmly, glaring at the man who kept destroying her kitchen.

Padfoot looked sheepish, but defended himself. "I was only trying to help. You have so much work to do around the house and the garden that I didn't want to bother you."

"Yet, yous is making more work for Tippy with your messes," the elf said, putting her hands on her hips and stomping her spindly foot.

"Sorry, I do try and clean them."

"Yous does try," she conceded with a nod of her large head. "However, Tippy is being banning yous from the kitchens," she said, finally laying

down the law. It had been amusing at first to watch the man attempt cooking and cleaning, but after a while it got irritating when he didn't get any better.

"Alright, Tippy, you win, I'll never cook a meal again, unless I learn how to first."

The others were watching with varying degrees of amusement. Tippy nodded her head again and popped away.

"Well, now that that's settled, I'm off," Hydrus said with a slight chuckle, and Disapparated out. He reappeared in one of the bedrooms designated for magicals to Apparate in. It was one that was high up, near the small owlery, so as to not startle the kids. He made his way down to the offices, happily watching the playing children run down the halls, and found the Matron's office. He knocked on the door and was bid to enter.

The office itself was nothing special. A square room in light beige color. A large desk piled with folders and some family photos, with a filing cabinet behind it. There were two semi-comfortable chairs in front of the desk and bookcases with law and psychology books in them to the sides. There were documents and official papers framed on the walls. It was very businesslike.

Ms. Morgan Cartwright was an older woman with steel grey hair that she kept in a loose, sloppy, bun. She was a bit on the dumpy side, but you could see that she was a beauty in her youth. She wasn't as stern as McGonagall, but she was firm with the children. She was a non-magical who had been married to a Muggle-born that died of Dragon Pox a few years back. They had three children, who were now grown and gone, so far no grandkids, which is why she applied for this position where she could live around children.

"Ah, Mr. Black, how good to see you," the Matron said brightly. It was her

never-ending smile that got Hydrus to hire her in the first place, well that and she was wickedly good with kids. She had run a daycare before Hydrus snatched her up.

"Ms. Cartwright, lovely to see you as well," the immortal said as he took a seat. "How are things going? You said you needed me to go over some of the books?"

"As well as can be expected, I guess," she answered with a sigh. "There are some things that need to be updated, like the plumbing and the insulation. But we have the funds for that, but I wanted your opinion. We've gathered twenty squib children and fostered out most of the non-magicals. We do have one child we're looking into bringing in, but he is young. He would need more attention."

"Why bring him in at all?" Hydrus leaned forward, giving the woman his full attention.

"His uncle tried to drown him to scare the magic out of him. One of the nurses we have there informed us yesterday. He's still in St. Mungo's and we're thinking of talking to the parents," she said sadly, then smirked. "I do hear the uncle is in another ward because the father beat him almost to death."

"Do you have a name?" the concerned immortal asked, thinking it might be Neville.

"Yes, it's Longbottom," she said, confirming that belief.

"Hold off on that, I know the family, so I'll go and talk to them later," Hydrus said, and then changed the subject to the repairs the mansion needed. It took an hour to get the numbers situated. Then he gave his good-byes and Apparated to the house.

"Hey, Sirius, we need to get to St. Mungo's," he said, taking a seat on the sofa and interrupting the game still in play.

"What? Why?" the dogman ask, putting his controller down. He was losing anyway.

"We need to talk to Frank and Alice, seems their Uncle Algie tried to drown Neville. I was thinking of bringing Harry along with that old color ball. Harry can make a friend and the color ball will show the Longbottoms that Neville is magical."

"I thought you said it was childhood trauma that kept him repressed," Remus said, joining the conversation.

"I thought it was," the immortal shrugged, "I guess I was wrong."

"Well, Frank and Alice are good people, so I don't mind Harry befriending Neville. Let's get him ready and we'll go see what we can do." With that the two Blacks left the room with little Harry, got prepared and departed to St. Mungo's. When they got to the empty storefront Sirius said, "We're here to visit Neville Longbottom."

The mannequin nodded and they walked through the glass. They made their way to the reception desk and got the room number. When they entered the room they saw the Longbottom parents and little Neville still in bed.

"Hello, Frank," Sirius said, shaking the sandy-haired, lanky man's hand, and then turned to the petite mousy blonde next to him, "And Alice." He shook her hand as well. "This is my cousin Hydrus and my godson Harry," he introduced the two standing silently.

Frank nodded to Hydrus and quickly glanced at Harry's very faint scar.

"Not that I'm not happy to see you, but what are you doing here, Sirius?" He turned back to the man he knew.

"I heard Neville was here and wanted to introduce him to Harry, figured it might cheer him up, having someone his age around."

Hydrus approached the bed with Harry on his hip. Harry was holding the

color ball and looking at the sandy-haired, plump, boy in the bed.

"Did you get an owie?" the dark-haired boy asked with wide eyes.

"Yeah," Neville replied sadly, still in shock about what happened. He looked at the dark-haired boy shyly and gave a little smile to show he was brave. He was a big boy now.

"Oh, sorry. Are you all better now? Do you want to play with my ball? It changes color when your magic touches it," Harry asked as he squirmed down and climbed on the bed.

"I don't have 'agic," the little boy said tearfully. "That's what Uncle Algie says." His little shoulders slumped.

Alice quickly went to her child and gave him a hug. "You don't listen to Uncle Algie," she said softly as she ran her hand through his hair. "He's a mean old man who doesn't know what he's talking about. You are my perfect little boy."

"Luv you, mummy," the sandy-haired boy said, snuggling into his mum.

Harry watched the scene with a happy smile and then brought the attention back to him and said, "Try." And he rolled the ball to his new friend.

The adults were watching with various degrees of anticipation, all but the time traveler who knew Neville was a powerful wizard. The ball made its way across the covers and stopped in front of the injured child. He reached out his little hands and shakily touched the ball. The ball instantly turned color and said "Purple."

Neville smiled and picked up the ball and shook it to make it change again.

"You're 'appa to say 'pur-ple' and it'll change again," came the exasperated explanation from the four and a half year old.

"Oh, pur-ple," said Neville and the ball changed to red. While the two

children played with the ball the adults talked.

"How did you know Neville was here?" Alice asked curiously as she got up to join her husband, hugging the man and smiling as she watched her child use magic. She never doubted he was a wizard and even if he wasn't she would never condone Algie's actions. She was very proud of her husband's reaction and hoped that old man stayed in the hospital a long time. Frank was talking about kicking the man out of the family and turning him over to the DMLE, it was Augusta who was staying his hand. "Barkley's," Hydrus explained as he joined the other adults at the end of the bed. "The matron, Ms. Cartwright, informed me that there was a younger child who might be in danger from his uncle. So I asked Sirius if he knew you and we figured we'd come and help." He then explained what Barkley's was and why they monitored the hospital. "Sirius said what wonderful parents you are, so I wanted to see if he had magic and offer our services if he didn't, even if it was just counseling."

"That's a wonderful concept," the mousy woman said with a beaming smile.

"Yes, we thought it might save some of the children," Hydrus agreed.

"And the ball?" Frank asked, happy to see his child playing so willingly with someone his own age. Neville was a shy child by nature. He got it from his mother.

"Harry's favorite as a baby, and the easiest way I could think of to prove you had a wizard child," he said easily.

"You should sell them, they might keep something like this from happening to someone else," the sandy-haired man suggested. He had heard this man owned a few businesses in Diagon Alley, though he never met him. He even shopped at the entertainment store for a TV and VCR with a few of the children's movies, though Alice was bugging him to buy

some of the adult ones. With their stressful jobs as Aurors, they needed something to unwind.

That was how Algie got to Neville in the first place. They were at work and his mum was supposed to be watching the child, but let that old man do it instead. Now, they were either going to have to find a sitter or nanny or one of them would stop working, since he no longer trusted his family to protect his son.

"I'm thinking of putting them in Fun For All," the immortal said distractedly as he watched the two toddlers playing on the bed. It was a good idea, one he had been mulling over for a few months now. Seeing the Longbottoms so relieved, he'd have to see about getting a children's section set up soon. Then again, it might make it so more squibs were killed or thrown into the streets at an earlier age. He'd have to talk to Ms. Cartwright to set up a section of the home for younger children.

"Well, whatever the reason, thanks for making my little boy's day," Alice said, kissing each man on the cheek.

"I've been setting up play dates with children Neville's age. Do you think we can come and visit some Saturdays and let the two get to know each other better?" Sirius asked.

"That's a great idea. I heard Harry was living with his Muggle aunt and they were in hiding, so I'm surprised you are allowed to take him anywhere," Frank said, raising an eyebrow.

Sirius stuck with their story about how he was only allowed to see Harry away from the Dursleys and that they didn't like wizards and were only keeping Harry for the wards. The guardians made arrangements to meet again in a few weeks' time and the Blacks and Harry left the hospital shortly after.

"That went better than I thought," Sirius said as they made their way to

the Apparation point.

"Nay, I knew Neville's a strong wizard. Since his dad is alive, he'll have his own wand. Then everyone will know how powerful he is," Hydrus said with a wave of his hand and a smile on his face.

"Still, maybe Frank is right and you should sell those toys," the dogman suggested.

"I'm thinking about the pro and cons of it," the immortal answered as they made it to the point. The two adults and one child then Disapparated home. They told Moony what happened and discussed selling the toys some more.

Harry was content that he had a new friend and played with his toys, only to disrupt the adults when he did something correct. They all had a good, relaxing evening and soon went to bed with the knowledge that all was going well.

## 17. Some Time With Harry

### Chapter 17 Some Time With Harry

AN: Thanks to my betas, The 5h15 Spaceman, darrelldeam and alix33. All mistakes are my own. Once again thanks for all the reviews, favorites and follows.

Here is a light-hearted chapter for you, mostly.

Hphphp

A few weeks later Hydrus got some pictures of the Dursleys playing outdoors from his detectives, and doctored half of them to include Sirius and Harry in the background. He sat Sirius down one day, showed him the pictures, described each person and asked him to talk to Harry.

"Why me? You know them, I don't," the godfather said, a curious look on his face.

"Yeah, but what Remus said might be true, and it'd be easier if you

explained to Harry who they are, so if he slips it'll be 'Uncle Padfoot told me...' the immortal explained. "I want us to do our best not to have Harry lie, so if we give general descriptions of each family member's attitude that might be enough."

"Yeah, I guess you're right," Sirius agreed, rubbing the back of his head and going over what he had just been told about the Dursleys.

"If you want I can be there to help, but most of the information has to come from you," Hydrus offered, he had wanted to stay out of it, but that was a bit unreasonable. No one in the house knew the Dursleys as well as he did. Besides, he was better at explaining things to Harry. Well, Remus was good at dumbing things down, but Hydrus was better at full-on explanations. His education from his timeline served him well, though the way kids think still confused the hell out of him.

"When did you want to do this?" Sirius asked, getting comfortable in his recliner.

"Now, actually. The sooner the better."

"Okay. Hey, Pup, come here a minute," the dogman yelled up at the ceiling.

The sound of small feet was heard running through the house and coming down the stairs.

"Don't run down the stairs," Hydrus yelled, being the one who disciplined the child the most, since he was the oldest adult and wanted the child to be well rounded. Sirius was the more playful uncle and let Harry get away with a lot. Remus was the calmer one, and would only tell Harry how disappointed he was if the child caused trouble.

The sound slowed down and soon the little dark-haired boy shuffled in the room.

"Yes, Uncle Padfoot," he said timidly, thinking he may be in trouble for

flushing his toy down the loo. He thought they didn't know, but you never know with adults, though his uncle didn't sound mad.

"What did you do?" Hydrus asked at the guilty look, the scuffing of feet and the wringing of little hands.

"Nothin'" the child said hurriedly, waving his hands in front of him.

"Harry," came the stern voice.

"Nothin'" the child tried to look innocent, but only looked guiltier.

"I'll find out," his oldest uncle said.

"I didn't do apurpose," Harry defended himself, firming his little face.

"On purpose," Hydrus corrected. "What did you do?"

"Well, I might have flushed my duck in the loo," was the shy response.

When he saw his Uncle Hydrus was going to scold him, he hurried to explain, "But, it's otay, it disapperiated and everythin'." Then he turned a bit sad and said, "I just wanted to see if it would float."

"Harry, the toilet is not a toy. Don't do that again," the immortal said firmly, shaking his finger at the child. He remembered Dudley doing the same when he was about this age, though not for the same reason. Harry was a bit more advanced than his cousin. Without being repressed by the Dursleys, his curiosity was something to be admired.

"That's not why I called you," Sirius butted in before punishment could be handed out, earning a glare from the immortal. "I want to show you some pictures of some of your mum's family. So come up here and let's look at them." He patted the arm of the chair.

"Otay," Harry said warily as he gave Uncle Hydrus a cautious look and climbed on his dogfather's lap.

Hydrus sighed and let it go for now, since there was no damage done. He watched as Sirius pointed to each person and told Harry who they were. He did have to stop the godfather from saying things like 'This horse of a

woman...' by sending a stinging hex.

"Where does they live?" the dark-haired boy asked, thinking it was great to have more family.

"Do they," his uncle corrected.

"Do they," Harry echoed.

"They live far away, but we think you should not tell people that," Sirius answered, hoping in vain that the boy wouldn't question the request.

"Why?" the dark-haired boy asked, confirming that four and a half year old's questioned everything.

"Because they are hiding, and if you tell people where they are they might be found. We don't want them to be found," Hydrus explained, when Sirius got a blank look on his face.

"Oh, why are they hidin'?" the child asked with a scrunched up nose. "Are they playin' hide-and-seek?"

"No, they just don't like magic," Sirius said, trying to keep the bitterness out of his voice. He still had issues with what this family had done to Hydrus, even though the time traveler had let it go. "They're afraid that people with magic will hurt them."

"Really? That's 'tupid," Harry said, folding his arms and pouting, maybe he didn't want to know these dummy people.

"Stupid. And that's not a nice word," the oldest Black corrected.

"So," Sirius once again interrupted, "if anyone asks you tell them that they are hiding, which is the truth." He patted the boy on the head.

"Otay, Uncle Padfoot. Can I go play now?" the child asked, bored with the conversation about people he might never know.

"Yeah, go play. If you ever have any questions about the Dursleys just ask, okay?" the godfather said as he lifted the child off his lap.

"Otay." And Harry ran out of the room.

"No running," Hydrus said loudly and the noise once again slowed.

"That went well," Sirius said, putting the pictures on the table.

"Yeah, it could have been more emotional, but then again I could be projecting." Hydrus picked up the pictures and put them in his pocket. He knew when he was Harry's age all he wanted was a loving family, but Harry had one, so, yeah, projecting.

The rest of the day was spent normally, until after Harry went to bed and they got some wonderful news from the vengeful ghosts.

Voldemort was gone. The spirits told the Master of Death the Dark Lord had tried to do some magic to create another horcrux, but it was too much for the wraith and he vanished. The shades with no one left to haunt went back to the realm of the dead after imparting that information.

To say the men were happy about this turn of circumstance was an understatement. The adults of the house got Tippy to watch Harry for the night and partied till the break of dawn.

"The prophecy still came true," Hydrus said the next morning as he looked over the nice English breakfast Tippy cooked.

"How's that?" Sirius questioned in a quiet voice as to not jar his head, and then groaned and grabbed the hangover potion that Tippy sat in front of him with a loud bang.

"Well, I was still born as the seventh month died, marked as his equal and I had a power he knew not," the immortal said cheerfully. He only had a few things to solve now and Harry will have a good life, then maybe, just maybe, he could start looking for an immortal to settle down with. But first, he wanted to make sure that magical Britain wouldn't go the way his timeline did. If he could tie up those last few knots then he'd see.

"What was the power?" the groggy man asked, still nursing his head.

"Time travel," was the gleeful response from the chipper man. He had not drunk as much as his cousin, knowing alcohol was bad for his PTSD and someone needed to make sure that nothing happened to Sirius, who would not be dissuaded.

Remus walked in looking fresh as ever, like he hadn't drunk the other Marauder under the table the night before. He sat at the table and grabbed some sausage and eggs, and poured himself some tea.

"I hate you," the youngest Black said with a growl. "You never get hangovers." He put his still fuzzy head on the table, only to have Tippy thump him.

"You should not be putting your head on the tables," she said in her squeaky voice, shaking her finger.

"Ow. Sorry Tippy," he said as he sat up, rubbing his head. He then looked at the food and decided it was a good morning for toast.

"Part of being a werewolf," Remus said, between bites. "You should know that by now. You have never been able to out-drink me. You would think after all this time, you would give up trying." He shook his head and went back to his breakfast.

"I still hate you," Sirius grumbled, nibbling on his toast.

"Anyway, let's talk after breakfast," Hydrus suggested as he quickly glanced at Harry to make sure he wasn't paying attention, then turning back to his own meal.

Harry was eating away ignoring the whining uncle. His eggs staying on his fork was more important than what the older man was complaining about. When he was done with his food, he watched Tippy clean the table and went to the living room and the uncles followed.

After settling in their seats, Hydrus brought up a touchy subject. He threw up a Muffliato, shocking the other two men. Hydrus hardly ever

used silencing charms at home. "So, I was thinking of telling Dumbledore about the horcruxes being gone, and with them Voldemort," he said, measuring their reaction. It was something he had been mulling over all morning.

The two men were stunned again. After all of this time hiding from the Headmaster he wanted to bring him in? What changed? Did something happen they didn't know about? Why now? Just how much was he willing to tell?

"Did you want to tell him the truth about Harry and you living in the same house? You'd have to explain the blood wards," Sirius asked, leaning forward and giving the man his undivided attention.

"I'm not sure," the immortal hedged, settling further into the sofa. "I think we'll keep that secret for now. I was just going to send him all of the artifacts with an unsigned note saying what they were and how I found them. Most of them should be at Hogwarts anyway. Then let him know I had spies on the Dark Lord and they say he is gone. I'm hoping that he'll leave Harry alone after that."

"What about the one in Harry? How will you explain that?" Remus asked as he looked at the happily playing child. They had discussed the time lapse from the night the Potters died, and realized that Dumbledore must have taken Harry to Hogwarts and known that there was a horcrux in Harry's scar.

Hydrus had always thought that the Headmaster figured it out in his second year. But with that missing day, it made more sense as to why the old man wanted the boy behind the blood wards, since the protection should keep him from being overtaken by the soul piece. It worked in his timeline, at least that's what they figured. In the letter that was with Harry that night, was a request that he be raised as a son. There was also

a mild threat that the baby come to no harm under their care. Too bad the old man never counted on non-physical abuse.

It did make Hydrus more accepting of Dumbledore's manipulations, even though he was still miffed at the man for never checking on him. Not to mention all his stress from his school years. No, there were still things Hydrus was upset about, but he was beginning to see some of the reasons why the Headmaster did what he felt was for the best. Not that the immortal agreed with him, but you don't have to agree to understand. Shaking himself from his musing, he turned back to the conversation.

"Well, I could give him the ritual that removes horcruxes and say that I did remove the one from the last Potter. The only thing I can't think of is how to explain when I came across Harry," he said thoughtfully.

"Are you going to tell him who you are?" the werewolf asked.

"No, I was going to do it covertly. Type a note, send the ritual, hand over the artifacts and say that Harry is clean too. Except those who already do, I don't think anyone else should ever know about me. Well, maybe one other, but that's a later topic," he stated firmly.

"He's going to want to see Harry and question him about who had talked to him," Sirius said, glancing at Harry, who was quietly playing.

"Yeah, that might be a problem. I might just have to come clean about cleansing the horcruxes. I'd have to make up some story about how I knew about them, and I'm not sure I want to do that. Suggestions," he almost pleaded. He truly just wanted Harry to have a good life at Hogwarts without the Headmaster playing games. Now that the public was much calmer about the Boy Who Lived, he had hoped that none of the issues he had in the wizarding world would affect his younger self. If Dumbledore believed that Harry was free of taint then the two would never have to interact outside of the Headmaster's venue.

"Let's put that aside for now and think on it some more. Harry is only four so we have time," Remus said calmly, hoping to lighten the tension in the room.

"Well, I have another issue," the time traveler said uncertainly.

"Must be important," Sirius said, though he couldn't figure out what was more important than Dumbledore.

"Harry is getting to the age where he is asking questions. Do I tell him who I am, or let him think the story we have about me is true? The only reason I ask is because I hated it when adults lied to me growing up." He looked at his younger self, who was now paying attention to the adults.

Hydrus gave a smile and wave, shooing the child back to his toys.

"That's another tough one," Remus said thoughtfully, running his hand through his hair.

"Well, we've already introduced him to Marius, so he knows some of your back story. You could always tell him that you have a mystery that he can solve when he is older. Besides, won't it create a paradox if he knows you are him?" Sirius asked with a hint of worry.

"Yeah, it might. Okay, that sounds like a plan, I'll keep to my story, but let him know that there are some secrets that can't be told. Maybe he'll figure it out on his own, he's a smart kid." And with a firm nod he lifted the silencing spell.

Harry came over and crawled into his Uncle Hydrus's lap. "What were you talkin' 'bout?" he never liked it when the adults talked where he couldn't hear. Uncle Remus said sometimes kids weren't supposed to hear what adults talked about, which was stupid because he was a big boy now.

"Nothing you need to know, right now. When you're older," the oldest uncle said and tweaked the child's nose.

"Not fair," the little boy grumped, folding his arms over his chest and throwing himself backwards on to the sofa.

"I know, but it's the truth, I promise I'll tell you more when you're older," Hydrus said firmly and lifted the boy back onto his lap. "What do you want to do today, Harry?" he asked, hoping to avoid a fit by changing the subject.

"Can I go see, Neville?" he asked with pleading eyes. He really wanted to see his new friend.

"No, not today, only on the weekends and today is Friday, so tomorrow we'll see."

"Can we go to the zoo?"

"I don't know it's awful cold out. Are you sure that's what you want? We could go out to eat or do something indoors," Remus suggested, thinking about what could keep a four year old entertained.

"I know," Sirius said brightly, "let's go and get Harry a broom." He almost bounced out of his chair with excitement.

"Can we, Uncle Hydrus, plllleeeaaaasssee?" the small child begged, with puppy-dog eyes.

"It'll have to be a training one," Hydrus said firmly, remembering the stories the other two men told of him riding a toy broom and almost killing the cat.

"Yay," Harry said as he jumped off the lap and started running around the room. Sirius turned into Padfoot and joined the chaos. The other two men smiled indulgently.

"Come on, get your coats and we'll hit Diagon Alley," Hydrus called over the noise

So family, sans Remus, who begged off, got their jackets and went to the Alley. They went to Broomstix and looked at training brooms. They were

discussing which one to get when a child's voice interrupted them.

"Look, Mother, a baby getting a baby's broom," came the childish drawl from a kid's voice. They turned to see a young boy with white blond hair, and blue eyes. He was standing with his arms folded and trying to look at them with superiority, which was out of place on his young, angular face.

"Are you sure you can ride, you look like Muggles?" he added with an adorable wrinkle of his little nose at their casual non-magical clothing.

Hydrus, trying hard not to laugh at the little boy trying to be a man, picked Harry up and shushed him from snapping at the other child. "Let your Uncle Padfoot take care of this. They're his family," he whispered in his nephew's ear. The boy nodded and they sat and watched the byplay.

Sirius glared at his little cousin, disappointed at his behavior. He then turned to his older cousin and said, "Cissy, how lovely to see you. I didn't know young Draco was riding adult brooms, how careless of you, dear cousin."

"Sirius," Narcissa greeted with a regal nod. "I assure you that Draco does not ride anything but a child's broom. Draco, apologize at once for your awful manners," the tall blonde woman snapped at her child.

"Sorry," came the insincere apology. The boy looked downright miserable at having been chastised in front of people. His mother never did that before, so it made him wonder who these people were to make her act so strangely.

Narcissa, not wanting Sirius to be offended, said, "I do apologize for my son, he usually is not so ill mannered. I will make sure that he sees the error of his ways." Once more sending a cutting glare at her son. He had been taught better than this. She had hoped with the death of her husband he would not be so forward, but her social circle was filled with Pure-blood women and spoiled children. He must have picked up that

mannerism from one of the older boys.

"How are you doing, Cissy?" he asked for politeness sake, ignoring the pouting child.

"As well as can be expected, I suppose," she said airily.

"Well, it was nice to see you, however, we must be getting our errand done," the youngest Black said dismissively.

"Will you not introduce me to your friends?" she said softly. She knew who they were; they had just never actually met. She was hoping to get on her cousin's good side by making the acquaintance of the Mudblood and the Boy Who Lived. Sirius could pull her from the family for her son's slight, and while the Malfoy name carried a good deal of money and prestige, the Black name carried more and while Sirius was childless Draco stood a chance to inherit. She damned Arcturus for giving this Gryffindor the position of family head so soon.

"No, I don't believe I will. Perhaps another time, when young Draco has learned some manners," he said once more snubbing the widow. He had warned her to keep Draco under control, but judging from his behavior today, that wasn't happening. He would have let it go, were it not directed at Harry.

"As you say," Narcissa sniffed and turned away. "Come, Draco, we will return later." And with that they left the store, Draco complaining the entire time.

"Why was he so mean, Uncle Padfoot?" Harry asked, looking to where the two had stood, wiggling to get down.

"Well, sometimes people are just mean," the dogman said awkwardly, not really sure how to explain that to a child.

"But, why? Shouldn't everyone be nice?" the green-eyed boy asked, though he did remember there were not nice kids at the daycare center.

There was that one girl who always fought over crayons, and that one boy who would try and take his snacks. But the teacher said everyone should be nice, was she wrong?

"Yes, everyone should try and be nice, but, Prongslet, people are different. Not everyone is a good person," Hydrus tried to explain as he set the boy down and knelt to his height.

"But, why?"

"Because if everyone was the same, the world would be boring," the immortal said, standing and patting the child on his ever-messy head.

"Oh," Harry said thoughtfully. He didn't like being bored, so that made sense. Then he turned back to the brooms, dismissing the whole scene.

There were three brooms to choose from, each progressively went to a higher altitude. The first was ten feet, the second was twenty and the third was thirty. Hydrus, knowing he had been a natural flyer, was hemming and hawing on the one that went thirty. He was trying to be a responsible adult, but he also wanted Harry to enjoy the air as much as he did. In the end responsibility won and they got the one that went ten feet.

They paid for the broom and went home. Taking Harry into the backyard, they decided to start in the sandbox.

"Okay, Harry, put the broom on the ground next to your foot," Sirius said and watched the child follow that order. "Now, hold your hand over it like this," he said, showing his hand just off to his side, palm down, fingers spread and waited for Harry to copy him, correcting him only a few times. "That's right, good. Now, say 'up'."

"Up," little Harry said and the broom jumped to his hand, making him beam with pride.

"Very good. Now, put your leg over the broom and just sit there a

minute," Sirius said and then showed him where his hands needed to be.

"Good, now, gently kick off." Keeping his hands near the boy in case he fell. The other two men with their wands ready for the same reason.

"Very good, Harry," Remus said proudly as the broom rose about four feet.

"Yes, well done," Hydrus added his praise.

The boy smiled at all his uncles.

"Now, lean a little forward, like this," Sirius continued as he bent at his waist, just a tiny bit. Harry copied and the broom lowered. "Good, now, lean back, like this." He straightened and showed how far to move. Once again Harry copied and the broom moved back up to four feet. The instructions continued until Harry was making circles around the sandbox, whooping with joy. His little face red from the cold and the flying, but there was a huge smile plastered on it.

After flying for about a half an hour, the adults called it quits for the night. And they all went inside to eat the meal of pot roast that Tippy made them.

Hydrus laid down some rules. "Harry, no flying without an adult, only inside the fence and not in the house," he said firmly. "If you do I will take your broom away."

"Okay, Uncle Hydrus," Harry nodded quickly, not wanting to lose his new toy. "Can I take it to Neville's?"

"You have to ask Uncle Sirius, he's the one taking you," was the gentle reply.

"I have no problem with that. Are you going to share?" the godfather asked.

"Yup, Neville'll be happy," the child grinned. If he liked flying everyone must.

"We'll see," Hydrus said, remembering that Neville didn't like flying at all. Not even when he was older, however, that might be because that bastard uncle of his dropped him out of a window. So, maybe, he wasn't scared of heights this time. He grinned internally at how he heard that Frank got the man sent to Azkaban for attempted murder of a magical child.

They moved to the living room and watched the evening news. Then Hydrus put in one of the educational cartoons and let Harry have the TV until bedtime.

The next day after a breakfast of omelets, while Harry was playing in his room, the newspaper came with the headline:

The Dark Mark Gone: Death Eaters In A Frenzy

The story that followed was about how all the incarcerated followers of He Who Must Not Be Named were screaming their denials that their only chance to escape was now gone. Some of them went so far as to hurt themselves by bashing their heads on the walls of their cells. The Dementors were agitated with all the emotions in the air; though very few of those thoughts were happy, at least none from the Death Eater. The prisoners had been examined and their arms were clean of the mark, and all of them were severely weakened. It was a mystery that the Department of Mysteries was determined to solve.

"Well, that's one less thing we have to tell Dumbledore," Hydrus said as he laid The Times on the coffee table.

"Maybe you should send those Founders artifacts to him anyway," Remus suggested.

"Yeah, I will. I just won't tell him they were horcruxes. He's a smart man; he'll figure it out for himself. Though, now he's going to want to see Harry," the immortal said. "I've been thinking, Sirius, you know the

ritual, you can tell him you rid Harry of his. Use your brother as a reason for knowing. Tell him Kreacher gave you the story and that you found the ritual in the Black library." His mind was working furiously, going over scenarios. "You could say you were worried about the scar not healing and checked it out. When you figured out what it was, you found a way to rid Harry of it."

"That's not a bad idea," the godfather said as he picked up *The Times* to read over the other headlines to make sure there was nothing else going to hit them on the head.

"Well, I, for one, am glad that I do not have to lie to anymore," Remus confessed, he was always the more rule-abiding person of the house. Though he was upset with the Headmaster for Hydrus's past, he just didn't like lying.

"You never had to lie to begin with," Hydrus corrected the werewolf, a bit confused. "As far as I know the last you heard from the Headmaster was right after you moved in here," he said, since Dumbledore was the only man that Remus was asked to fib to. With his book store the werewolf hardly ever venture into the magical world.

"Well, you are correct, but I do not like lying," the werewolf said, running his hand through his hair. "It agitates the wolf, which in turn, makes me jumpy."

"Oh, I didn't know that. Why didn't you say so before?" the time traveler asked, though if you asked him a lot made the man in front of him jumpy. There was still so much he didn't know about werewolves, since Remus wasn't a typical one, and there was little truth written about them.

"You made me take a vow," was the quiet answer.

"Yeah, and I'm still holding you to that, but I also said to tell the truth when you could. Lies are too easily torn apart, which is why I'm

concerned about my cover story," Hydrus said, looking at the wolf a bit upset at where this conversation was going. He would not be blamed for making them take a vow, his secrets are too important.

"Hey, Hydrus, it says here Gringotts is upping their fees," Sirius interrupted, lowering the paper to look at the immortal. "I was wondering why you never opened a bank to shut them down."

"I was going to, but Mr. Jasper, my lawyer, said I couldn't because there's a Merlin bedamned treaty. If I open a bank then they revolt. Those greedy bastards have a monopoly on finances in Britain and parts of the continent. I won't be responsible for them attacking innocents because of revenge," he huffed, folding his arms in frustration. He had been very put out when he heard that bit of news.

"Oh. So, why didn't you do like last time and get people to move their vaults?" the confused dogman asked. "Come to think of it, you wanted me to keep all my gold in Gringotts."

"If I shut down Gringotts without an alternative then the economy will fall. I want this timeline to flourish, so until I can work a way around it, Gringotts stays." The unhappiness with that issue showed in his green eyes. The fact that he banked outside of Britain had not gone unnoticed by the goblins. They had sent representatives to his lawyer, but were turned away, since Hydrus still spent his money in Diagon Alley, therefore adding to the economy.

"I guess that makes sense," Sirius answered, and went back to the paper.

"I think it is time to play some tricks on the Alleys," Hydrus said suddenly. He still had all those items from WWI that he never used. He wasn't selling them, because they were solely the Weasley twins' inventions and he would be damned if he took their dream away. Though there were a few things, like the non-magical Halloween items and stuff

he and George invented, that he could put in Fun For All.

"Really?" Padfoot perked.

"Yeah, let's see what I have in the pocket-space," the immortal said, rubbing his hands together excitedly. So they cleared an area in the living room and he called all the joke items.

Sirius was in heaven. He never heard of any of these and never would have thought of half of them.

The closet Ravenclaw was also happy to see all the new tricks. His inquisitive mind was itching to take them apart and see how they worked.

"Some of these are exclusively WWW products, so we won't use them.

However, there are some that only me and George invented and I want to market them, giving the Weasleys a cut of course. So as a gimmick let's set up a few of the harmless ones around the Alley and advertise the shop. I'd better talk to my store manager first, but let's say this week or the next?" Hydrus said as he sorted all the pranks into two piles, to be sold and not to be sold.

"Which ones were you thinking?" Remus asked as he read the package for the Peruvian Darkness Powder. "This would have been really useful in the war," he added handing it to Sirius.

"You bet it would," the dark-haired prankster said after reading it. "Would have been helpful getting away after curfew in Hogwarts too."

"Yes, I imagine it would have," the werewolf said distractedly as he looked over a few more items.

"So, nothing that shocks or hexes, I'm looking to startle not hurt. We'll keep the more painful items for people who piss us off," Hydrus said, still sorting, but now he was adding a pile of the more harmful pranks to a not to be sold yet pile.

"What's this?" Padfoot asked, picking up a disk that would stick to your hand.

"A joy buzzer, it's a big seller in the non-magical world," the immortal explained and then held out his hand to be shaken.

The two hands met and Hydrus's got the jolt, which, even though he was expecting it, still made his hand jerk. Sirius laughed and looked to Remus, who was shaking his head no. They played with a few more pranks; Sirius was turned into a canary, which caused Remus to accidentally fire off a few fireworks, which made Harry come running, which hurried Hydrus to quickly put harmful stuff in his pocket-space. The whole house had a good laugh and continued to sort through the prank items.

Two hours later, Hydrus looked at his watch and said he had to go and talk to his manager for Fun For All and set a toy section and prank section up. So he put most of the pranks in his pocket-space, causing groans and pleas from Sirius and Harry, which he ignored, and left to his shop.

Fun For All was a large square building, the cashiers' counters were in the front of the store with three registers and an anti-theft alarms on the doors. The back wall was lined with TVs and the two aisles in front of them housed VCRs, cameras, and video recorders. In front of those were aisles and aisles of movies. The computers were in their own section off to the right. There were five well trained witches and wizards to answer any of your questions. To the left was a repair counter, which was manned by the most electronically knowledgeable wizard Hydrus could find and train. Not that many of his products broke, but things happen. Hydrus looked around the store trying to figure out if toy and prank sections could be added without taking away from the rest of the

merchandise. He might have to open yet another store, and this one he couldn't pass off to anyone, because the Weasleys would be getting their share. Maybe, an annex in the back, Fun For All Kids section.

He made his way to the front left corner of the store where the offices were. Ellie Sanderson, a petite, auburn-haired woman was sitting behind the largest desk, poring over paperwork. She was a Half-blood raised in both worlds. Hydrus was an equal opportunity employer, he didn't discriminate with anyone. There was even a squib cashier. The repairman and one of the floor people were Pure-bloods. The rest were Muggle-born. She looked up when her boss entered the office and huffed when she saw the mischievous look on his face.

"What has that look in your eye? Are you going to make more work for me?" she said arching her eyebrows and folding her arms across her ample chest.

"Well," Hydrus hedged as he sat in the chair in front of the desk. "I might have a few ideas for an annex or two, if we can build an expanded room in the back. It'll be for kids and teens."

"Let me look at the lease," Ellie said and went through her computer files.

"According to this we can add two rooms to the back of the building, so two magically extended rooms should be okay. If we build small rooms and enlarge them, we only have to pay for the area of the pre-expanded add-ons," she read off. "What are you planning?" she asked as she looked up.

"That's good news, since I have two types of items to sell. Do you think we should do both rooms? One for the kids and one for the teens. That would mean hiring more people. Do we have the budget for that? They wouldn't have to be as trained as the ones we have now, however, it might be a good idea to do so anyway, so they can help pick up slack

when it gets busy up front," the immortal said, tapping his fingers on the desk in thought. The Christmas rush had been a nightmare.

Ellie smacked the tapping fingers and looked over the budget. "We're doing really well, the profits are amazing. I never thought I'd see the day when magicals would use electronics. So I would say yes to all the above."

"Wonderful." He rubbed his hands together. "We're going to do a promotional on the pranks next week. Do you think you can get the rooms up and ready by then, or should we hold off?"

"I'm not going to like that... promotional, am I?" again with the arched eyebrows.

"It'll only be a few harmless pranks," Hydrus defended with a pout.

"Fine, whatever, you owe me a raise," the manager waved it off; there really was no stopping him anyway.

"Great, you get that set up and I'll go talk to Jesse about the inventory," Hydrus said, standing and giving his manager a wave he left the office and made his way to the repair counter. "Jesse, just the man I wanted to see," he greeted the shorter, skinny, dark-haired man, who was looking rather bored, behind the counter.

"What's up, boss?" Jesse asked, perking up at the man who looked like he was going to give him work.

"I'm going to open a kid's annex with toys that work on magic. The only problem I have is that if the toys don't work the child could be named a squib and be hurt or worse. So what I need for you to do is, before we sell them, fix them to work for anyone or at least anyone with squib level magic. Maybe have the runes run off ambient magic. I've worked out most of the figures, but I don't have the time like I used to. Do you think you can get me some up and running before next week? If not give me a

time estimate and I'll hold off the opening," the immortal rambled on as he pulled all his notes from his pocketspace and handed them over to the excited repairman. He had weighed the pro and cons and decided that it would be better not to have them run off the child's magic. While it would tell if a child was a squib, it could also lead to the deaths of children, and he didn't want that on his conscience.

The skinny man looked over the notes and got more excited as he read. He could do this, since the notes were almost complete. "Do you have prototypes?"

"Yeah," Hydrus said and pulled both the magic using ball and the prototype he fixed up a few days ago and gave them to Jesse.

"Give me a few days and I'll let you know, but I should get them out on time."

"Thanks, Jesse, do your best." And with that the immortal left the store for home. He told the others what he was planning and they all sat and came up with pranks for the Alley until dinner. When they were done with the duck dinner Hydrus cooked, they decided to put off more planning until the next day and settled down for a good ole family movie night.

## 18. Treasures Found

### Chapter 18 Treasures Found

AN: Thanks to my betas, darreldeam and alix33. All mistakes are my own. Once again thanks for all the reviews, favorites and follows. In addition, to all of you who added me to your community.

Hphphp

Hydrus had to rush the patents for the improved toys and harmless pranks, but since he had already done the preliminary work with Mr. Jasper it was relatively easy. His manager was Merlin sent, she got both

rooms up and running within the week. There was, however, a setback for the toys. Jesse was able to get all the toys to work, but was falling behind the deadline. The immortal and his repairman worked two days straight to get the inventory they needed. Hydrus ran an advertisement in The Times and put everything on an opening day sale.

The jokes played on the Alley went off with only a few hitches. It was funny to watch people jump when they went past the store and heard cackling. If they came in the store their hair would turn green and their skin purple. A few got upset until they realized it only lasted for twenty seconds. The workers all had joy buzzers on their hands. The mines that popped up ghosts may have been a bit much, since a few witches fainted. You would think after Hogwarts magicals wouldn't be afraid of ghosts. Hydrus made sure the ones who fainted were okay, and gave them a small gift-certificate for the store. All in all a good laugh was had by most of the customers.

The annexes opened with a lot of fanfare, Fun For All Kids, was a huge success. The educational stuff sold out that day. Thank Merlin for magic, and Jesse, or they'd never be able to keep their stock. Frostwell came to see what the fuss was about and was a bit put out that he didn't think of the teaching toys first, since they went hand in hand with his book-readers. They may have to talk about mergers or at the very least selling compatible products in each store. Sarah was talking about renting them in her tea shop so mums could bring their older children.

Fun For All Pranking got good profits as well. Young adults flocked to the annex and they had a hard time keeping the shelves supplied. The store manager knew that once Hogwarts was out for the year, they would have even more business. Hydrus was hopeful that when the Weasley twins were old enough he could form a partnership, instead of being rivals.

Magical Britain didn't need three joke shops. If worst came to worst he would bow out and sell his stuff to the twins, because had it not been for George, in his timeline, he never would have done as well as he had.

Dumbledore came on the second day.

"Ah, Hydrus, my boy, I see once again you have taken the public by storm," the old man said with a delighted twinkle in his eyes as he turned from his perusal of the jokes. "I am afraid that Mr. Filch will ban these items in Hogwarts. The poor man never could understand the need for laughter." His gentle grandfather smile was on his lips as he shook his head at his caretaker's lack of humor.

"Headmaster," the immortal greeted with a nod, "it's good to see you. Are you looking for yourself?" You never know with Dumbledore.

"Alas, no, I am merely endeavoring to see what we must be on the lookout for at the school. Children can be most rambunctious. I wish to make sure that nothing detrimental is being sold," he said, looking over his half-moon glasses in mild reprimand.

"As you can see, Headmaster, nothing harmful is in this stock." Hydrus gave the man a defiant glare, since he had gone out of his way to make sure everything, when used correctly, was non-violent.

"Forgive an old man his worries. When you have been in charge of students as long as I have, you find yourself doubtful on such things as pranks," Dumbledore answered, looking at the prank in his hand.

"I suppose I can understand that," the time traveler said with a slight nod. He knew as well as anyone the simplest thing could cause havoc. "Please feel free to look around and ask anyone here if you have doubts on the integrity of our products." And he turned to walk away.

"I was hoping that I could ask you a personal question, my boy," Albus said before he could even take a step.

"As long as you know, I don't have to answer," Hydrus sighed, turning back to face the older man.

"It has come to my attention that you do not bank at Gringotts, may I ask why?" the Headmaster asked, as if Hydrus had committed a minor infraction. "The goblins seem most put out that you are banking elsewhere. They have brought their grievances to the Ministry."

"I had a bad experience with goblins when I was younger. I find them to be greedy and they think wizards are lower life forms. I don't trust them with my money," he answered with another defiant look hoping to cut off further inquiry.

"Do you think it wise to anger such a volatile nation?" was the gentle argument. "We do not wish to have a rebellion on our hands. It would be most devastating to the populace were such a thing to happen." The old man once again had disapproval in his eyes as he looked over his glasses.

"I hardly think that one wizard refusing to use their bank would cause such a disruption," Hydrus all but snapped, folding his arms and narrowing his eyes.

"Perhaps," the old man said, stroking his beard in thought. "I have heard it said that you do not make your employees bank elsewhere, so it is probable that the goblins will eventually overlook your slight."

"They slighted me first," Hydrus snapped. "Besides, where I put my money is my own business. It's not illegal to bank outside of Britain, my lawyer checked." Though the goblins had tried to make it so, the Wizengamot refused to censor such activities. Perhaps a few of those old fogies also banked outside of Britain, or held secret accounts for their bribes. Hydrus wouldn't put it past them, nor begrudge them, since he did the same.

"Of course, my boy, I did not mean to infringe upon your privacy. As

Chief Warlock it is my duty to make sure that no one stirs up trouble, and I see that is not your intention," the Headmaster placated, moving his empty hand in a calming gesture. "I do have one more inquiry. I was wondering if you could tell me where Sirius is living. I have attempted to contact him with questions about young Harry; however, I cannot seem to locate his abode."

"Don't you see him at the Ministry?" the younger man asked with a quirk of his head, letting the subject of his banking habit go. Sirius had told him he talked to Dumbledore many times over the years, so Hydrus had to wonder why the old man wanted his cousin's address.

"I do," the old man confirmed with a slow nod, "however, I sometimes have thoughts that I feel must be answered straightaway when I am doing my duties elsewhere."

"I'm afraid I can't tell you where he lives," Hydrus lied, making sure his Occlumency shields were up. "I only meet with him in public and we use the telephone to communicate. I will however tell him you wish to speak to him. If there is nothing else, Headmaster," he said firmly.

"No, nothing at the moment," Albus said a bit sorrowful at not getting the answers he wanted. Then he perked up and hoping to lighten the young man's sour demeanor, he added, "I do want to express how wonderful these enterprises you have brought to Diagon Alley are. They seem to be most useful to the society at large, especially the academic toys, most useful indeed. With the amazing things you and young Mr. Frostwell have invented, our students have flourished. Good show." He looked that the firm face in front of him and was resigned to the fact that he might have stepped on some toes. So he gave his good-byes. "Once again, it was good to see you, my boy," Dumbledore said brightly and turned back to the grabbing hag's hand he was admiring. He wondered if he should

purchase a few, it would liven up his staff meetings and meals.

"Thank you, Headmaster, until we meet again." He turned and this time made his escape.

Hydrus finished out his morning at the store and went home. As he was making his way to the Apparation point he felt eyes on him. He looked around and noted there were a few people smiling at him, so he shrugged it off as nothing. When he made it to the house, he told Sirius that the Headmaster was trying to find out where he lived, leaving out the part about his banking preferences.

"I can't tell him I live here," Sirius sighed, flopping in his recliner. "I wonder what took him so long to ask, and why he didn't just ask me." That question went unanswered, since none of them understood the Headmaster's way of thinking.

"You could always use the flat in London. Have a ward set up to tell us when owls come," Remus suggested, after a minute's silence. "Just tell him, that you live in a non-magical area and that you had an owl ward up to stop inquiries about Harry."

"That's not a bad idea," Padfoot said. He then turned to his older cousin and asked, "Hey, Hydrus, speaking of owl wards, I was wondering where all of Harry's post is. Even if he is not the hero you were, there's always going to be diehard fans."

"I set up my own post ward, right after I took down Albus's, and had it redirected to Hellströms. They check it, put it in a vault and then send thank you notes. I'll tell Harry about it when he learns to read and write better. For right now, there's a form letter stating that his lawyer handles all post, which Mr. Jasper set up. There really isn't that much, thanks to those books never being published," he said with a grateful grin. He never did find out what happened to all his mail in his timeline.

"I am really glad you stopped those books, Sirius. Now, at least, he can go to Diagon Alley without being mobbed," Remus added, remembering some of the memories of Hydrus's time in the Alley.

"Yeah, that was never fun," Hydrus pouted. "Anyway, how did Neville's play date go?" he asked, quickly changing the subject.

"It went well. You were right, little Neville doesn't like brooms. There was a bit of a small argument over that, but they got over it pretty quick," Sirius said happily. It had been a good day. Harry brought his broom and they did teach Neville to fly, but the child was scared of heights, so that only lasted a few minutes. So they broke out some of Harry's more educational, yet fun, toys and started Neville on his spelling. Frank and Alice were very impressed and declared they would hit Fun For All Kids the next day.

"We're going to have to set up other places for the kids to play. I'd like to have the Weasleys and Neville interact, maybe a park with a rec center?" the immortal said thoughtfully. He wanted Harry to know the people he was going to go to school with. Maybe the more exposed he was the better other people's reaction would be. They already made trips to Diagon Alley with little to no problems. With Harry's scar nothing but a thin white line, his pleasant character and outgoing personality, people didn't see the reason to overwhelm the child. The articles The Times ran helped immensely. They were actually thinking of stopping them, the readers had to be bored by now. He did wonder if there was a park near Hermione's house.

"I do not think having them meet in the non-magical world would be a good idea. Both of those families are Pure-bloods, with little to do with that world. We might just have to let them in on our secret," Remus contradicted, thinking of the trouble accidental magic would cause. Not

to mention, all the questions the kids and Arthur would ask that would, more than likely, be noticed.

"With Voldemort and the Death Eaters gone, it might not be a bad idea," Sirius added. "Even if we let them in on the secret they can't tell anyone."

"But, what if they ask about the Dursleys? I love Arthur to death, but he can't keep a secret to save his life, he's much like Hagrid. Ron is just as bad," Hydrus argued. "Not to mention, Molly will be up in arms about a child being raised without a woman around."

"Yeah, I guess you're right. There are parks that don't have many children visit them. So, we can look into them. They may not have rec centers, but we can always continue what we're doing and go to the other houses in the winter months," Sirius said, rubbing his chin in thought. "Speaking of Arthur, I'd've thought you'd've hired him right away. I know he'd be in heaven working in one of your stores."

"Well, Mr. Weasley's knowledge of non-magicals is kinda warped; he keeps praising them as if they were small children. I told him that if he went through the training he could work in Fun For All. I think he is talking to Molly about it. You know convincing her to let him leave the Ministry will be quite a battle," the immortal said with a tilt of his head, then shrugged. "I'm going to look up some parks." He pulled out his book-reader to see if there was indeed a park near his old best friend's house. He was very hopeful that with Harry's outgoing personality, the boy would befriend the shy girl. Then again, Harry still thought girls were icky.

They sat for a few quiet minutes until Hydrus found what he was looking for. They talked over the location of the park and that they would set up the play dates when it was warmer and fell into silence again.

"I'll go set up the flat and write to Albus," the dogman said suddenly,

getting up from his chair.

"I'm going to check on Harry, he's being awful quiet up there," Hydrus said, also getting up from his seat and making his way to the stairs. He made it to Harry's room and looked in on the child. Harry was sleeping on the floor surrounded by his favorite toys.

The room was a pigsty; blocks, books, clothes, stuffed toys, and electronic devices were scattered everywhere. Tippy had been told from the time Harry was four not to clean this room. It would be up to the child to keep it tidy. Hydrus was regretting not looking at the room sooner, he had been so busy putting his affairs in order that he really only saw Harry during meals, on weekends and bedtime, which Sirius took as his responsibility as the boy's guardian. The playful uncle was also supposed to make the child clean his room, but judging from the mess that didn't happen. It made Hydrus shudder to think what the dogman's room looked like.

Hydrus sighed and shut the door, when Harry got up he would talk to him about the mess and help him clean and straighten the room.

He took himself to his study and booted up the computer. He then wrote a note to the Headmaster about the Founders' artifacts. Kreacher had passed away, and upon his passing he gave the locket to Sirius. Hydrus didn't know why the house elf died much quicker than before, maybe it was because the house had been made non-magical and he was too heartbroken about the loss of his only home and Mistress.

Headmaster Albus Dumbledore

These artifacts came into my hands after searching for other treasures.

There had been some Dark magic on them, but I took care of it. I

thought you might like them for the school. As you know the cup belongs to Helga Hufflepuff, the necklace to Salazar Slytherin, the diadem to

Rowena Ravenclaw. It is with great sorrow that I did not find anything pertaining to Gryffindor, since it is my former House.

I do hope that you will strive to place these items where the children can see them, perhaps with a bit of history for each one. Ask the ghosts and I am sure you will be riddled with stories about each. Being the great wizard that you are, I know you can set up proper security.

I am also enclosing a ring that I was told you have been searching for. I found no magical properties on it, though there was a taint from past magic, which I cleansed. I found this ring in a small shack that once belonged to the Gaunt family, who are said to be the last of the Slytherin line. I hope it is what you were looking for.

Enjoy

A former student

Hydrus couldn't help but put the dig about the ring in the letter. As far as he knew the Headmaster was still looking for the Hallows. Maybe now that Dumbledore had all three of the now defunct items, he might start thinking it was a mere child's story after all. Then again, the man might start his search anew.

It did make the immortal wonder why no news was ever heard about the Headmaster's wand not working anymore. The old man seemed to be as chipper as ever, but then again, Dumbledore always held his cards close to his chest and had a great poker face.

Another thought drifted across Hydrus's mind. Did the Board of Governors ever actually clean out the Room of Hidden Things? No news was ever told about that either. Perhaps he should write a letter of inquiry.

He called all the items forth and using the Elder Wand, he cleansed them of everything having to do with him; magic, fingerprints and so on.

Conjuring a box and levitating the artifacts to it, he cleansed his magic

once more, donned a non-magical disguise, cleared his departure with Tippy, went to Diagon Alley and posted the package.

When he returned to the house and after removing his disguise, the time traveler checked on Harry. The boy was up and eating his lunch of grilled cheese sandwich and crisps. So Hydrus made a roast beef sandwich and joined him.

"Harry, when you're done with your sandwich, we're going to go and clean your room," Hydrus said firmly.

"But, why?" the confused child asked. He liked his room the way it was. He knew where everything was and didn't see the need to clean. Uncle Padfoot never made him put stuff away.

"Because, if you keep your toys on the floor, especially the electronic ones, you could step on them and break them. If that happens then I'm not going to replace them," his eldest uncle warned, with a very stern look. "I work very hard at making those things for you and I don't want to have to take them away."

"Oh," Harry said nodding his understanding. He didn't want to lose his toys, they were too fun to play with and he was learning loads of interesting things. He knew how to spell all sorts of words now.

"If you keep up your room then maybe I'll let you help me in my lab," the immortal offered. There were little things the tyke could do to help. Even if it was holding something still while Hydrus worked on it. From what he had read, children this age loved to help.

"Really?" the green-eyed boy asked. It would mean he really was a big boy, to help in the lab. He wasn't even allowed to go in there. He tried, but his Uncle Hydrus made it so little boys couldn't open the door.

"Yes, really," Hydrus said, patting the child on the head and turning back to his sandwich.

So the two finished their lunch and went to clean the youngster's room. It was easy to tell Harry where to put things as Hydrus floated a few to the space they belong and the boy put the rest away. In short order the room was straightened and Harry promised to not let it get that messy again. They then went to the lab and Hydrus let Harry hold his holly wand with a Lumos so that he could see inside the toy he was making. Harry was ecstatic and watched his uncle very carefully. He wanted to do this when he was all grownup. They worked in the lab for about an hour, doing little toys and one easy potion. They both left the room with great satisfaction. Hydrus warned Harry that he couldn't come to the lab alone and only if his room was clean.

Three days later, The Times headline read:

#### Lost Artifacts of the Founders Returned

The story told about how an unknown alumnus returned the artifacts to the Headmaster. Dumbledore did indeed set up a display in the Great Hall; he even included the Gryffindor sword. Parents and alumni herded to the castle, only to be told they must return on the weekend as to not disturb classes. It also was read that a great deal of security was around the artifacts at all times. There was a picture of the historical items on the front page. Each one had a placard under it with the story behind them. They were direct quotes from the ghosts. Side articles about the spirits' history were posted. Now everyone knew why the Bloody Baron was... bloody and who the Grey Lady was, plus the grim story of the death of those two.

"Wow, I didn't actually think he'd let it be known," Hydrus said in surprise as he placed the paper down. "I'm even more surprised that he got the stories from the House ghosts."

"Why? I would think that all the kids would write their parents anyway.

Besides, Dumbledore has no pull with The Times," Remus said as he picked up the paper to read it for himself. "I am a bit surprised at the House ghosts' articles as well."

"Yeah, but in all the years I attended Hogwarts very few of my exploits ever made it to the paper, and it was usually the bad things, like me being a parselmouth. That's why rumor was so easily believed," the time traveler explained, leaning back on the sofa. He still didn't know if young Harry was a parselmouth or not, maybe they got the horcrux out soon enough that the language didn't stick. He'd have to test that soon.

"Like Remus said, the Headmaster doesn't have anything to do with The Times," Sirius said, waiting for Remus to finish the paper so he could read the sports section.

"I guess," Hydrus conceded, thinking once again that he should write the Board of Governors. If they didn't do anything this time, he'd write The Times and they could question why such a treasure trove of valuables was being ignored. From the stuff that was still in his pocket space, Hydrus knew they would find little things of the Founders and Merlin in there.

"Hey, Moony, are you done with the sports section? I want to check on the Harpies," Sirius whined impatiently.

"Here you go, you big baby," the werewolf said, handing the section over to the dogman.

Hydrus smacked himself on the head, making the other two men look at him funny. "I can't believe I forgot. Hey, Sirius, you're still in good with the goblins, right?" he asked.

"Yeah, why?" came the wary inquiry. Anything to do with Gringotts was a touchy subject with the immortal.

A wicked smile came across the older man's face. "I have the results of

Quidditch winners up to 2010." Then his brow furrowed. "Though they might not be accurate, what with Muggle-raised being hired more than they were before, it'll still be a gamble, but some of those results should pay off."

"Do you have the team list, if the teams are the same the results should be too," Sirius said excitedly, bouncing in his recliner. "We can check what was then with what is now and see."

"Yeah, here let me get them," the immortal said, pulling all of his paperwork on future games out. The three men bent over the papers and compared the teams. Most were the same, so they decided to take the chance and do some betting.

Hydrus wrote the Board and waited to see if they would search the room. He figured with the return of the Founders' items, they might be a bit more interested this time.

A week passed when the headline in The Times appeared:

Hidden Room in Hogwarts Found: Thousands of Lost Artifacts  
Recovered

Things discovered were old spell books, diaries from past students, clothes, jewels, money, antique furniture and school books on subjects not taught at the school in hundreds of years, plus lots and lots of junk.

The article went on to tell that with the books found the Hogwarts library was now the biggest school library in all of Europe. Once again parents and alumni converged on the school.

The Ministry of Magic also wanted to claim the treasures and a compromise was invoked. The Department of Mysteries would check each item for curses or unknown spells and remove them for study, and monies and jewels were put in the school vault. All the books were added to the library, and copies went to the Ministry. The article told that with

the help of the Hogwarts house elves, the Department of Mysteries sorted through everything rather quickly, though they were still sorting through it hoping to find journals of the Founders.

#### Lost Journal of Merlin Discovered

Was the second headline. Though there were only a few great feats of magic depicted, the chronicle did tell of Merlin's schooldays and how Slytherin was a great wizard of his times. Too bad Merlin left the school before the historic fight between the two male founders happened. But it was still a great find and also placed in the display with the Founders' item, after it was copied for the library and the Ministry. The students were quoted to say they were happy to have untold stories of years gone by at their fingertips. And with the book-readers they could take those stories wherever they wanted.

The next day an article in The Daily Prophet dampened their mood.

#### Who is this Mysterious Benefactor? Is He Really Helping or Hindering?

The headline read. The elusive Skeeter had put together all of the anonymously sent notes and The Prophet was now stating that they were all from the same person, including the one about the Death Eaters and Umbridge. Since the letters were unsigned whoever wrote them must be up to no good, was Rita's reasoning.

Barty Crouch was up in arms to find who was writing these missives. He was still in denial that his son was a Death Eater, the Dark Mark notwithstanding. Other families gathered to his side; their voices could be heard arguing with the Minister to do something. However there were no leads.

Hydrus, upon seeing the article, put on his Cloak and went to the Prophet's offices that night. He tried to find where the woman lived, but

to no avail. Her address was unlisted and her employee contract was barely legal. He tore apart that office and her desk looking for anything that would lead to the vindictive bitch. He went home unsatisfied, but not without leaving a few pranks behind. He'd have to get his investigators on her case again, now that she had shown herself to the public. He'd have them stake out the newspaper's offices. They'd find her sooner or later.

The next day The Times ran an article on all the good things the man, or woman, had done, including letting families know their loved ones were dead. They waxed on that only a person of good moral fiber would let go of the Founders' artifacts, give closure to families, turn over a criminal and tell where treasure was hidden.

The Quibbler hit closer to home by saying that the mysterious person was part of a conspiracy to make the wizarding world more useful. They waxed poetic that the person was only being truthful and keeping the nargles away. That article was buried in the back pages of the failing paper.

The three papers battled back and forth for a week before it was all old news. Nothing was heard from the DMLE in all that time, so the men relaxed a bit.

It was a good thing that all the notes pointed to someone who attended Hogwarts, barring two. There really was nothing to tie Hydrus to any of it; however, it did make the public question the motives. It was beneficial that The Times wrote articles on all up and coming wizards and witches, never singling out anyone, which kept people from pointing at someone and asking 'where did he come from?'

Hydrus's back story had been published years ago and he was known as a Muggle-raised orphan who was taken in an unknown magical couple and

home schooled, since the couple was in hiding from the Death Eaters.

When asked who the couple was the immortal would simply say they were dead and their family name died with them.

The detectives came to the conclusion that Skeeter was coming and going from The Daily Prophet in bug form. She must know that someone was looking for her. They made sure they weren't carrying any passengers when they left their stakeouts. The only way they made contact with Hydrus was via the telephone.

Hydrus did wonder if Skeeter was his stalker. She was good enough to hide from him. He would have to make sure that the bitch wasn't around if he talked about anything in public, which he rarely did.

The gambling paid off; they won quite a bit, and lost a few, which actually worked in their favor—for a while. The goblins were in an uproar over their losses. They banned Sirius from betting, so Remus took over until he too was blocked. They simply hired others to place their bets from there. It would take a while, but the goblin nation would start to feel the losses. Yeah, it was petty, but it made Hydrus feel good inside, until he could find another way to get them back.

The weeks passed and it was warmer now and Hydrus decided it was time to go to the park near Hermione's house. Though whether the little girl was there or not was uncertain, he had to try. So he told Sirius to ask if Neville could come and plans were made for that Saturday.

The day came and Sirius picked up Neville and met Hydrus and Harry at the park. The boys whooped at the swing set and jungle gym and ran to play. Sirius, being the kid at heart he is, joined them. Hydrus looked around to see if there was a bushy-haired girl anywhere, but unfortunately there was not. He sighed and turned his attention to the playing boys, who seemed to have started playing with a few of the other

kids. If what he was seeing was correct they were playing pirates on the jungle gym. He sat on the nearest bench, smiled and kept watch.

"Which one is yours?" a voice said from his left.

He turned his head and spotted a young woman with short blonde hair and startling blue eyes. He shook his head and smiled. "The dark-haired, green-eyed one, hanging upside down," he answered, pointing to Harry.

"Oh, he's a cutie," the woman cooed.

"The sandy-haired kid next to him is his friend." He waved to Neville who was trying to do the same as Harry with little success. "Which one is yours?" Hydrus returned the question.

"None of them really, I'm the nanny for a young girl who lives near here. I just come to watch the children play. My employers come home for lunch and eat with the child, so I come here. My charge doesn't get out much, she's a bit of a bookworm," she said with a soft smile. "Grace Banks," she added holding out her hand.

"Hydrus Black," the immortal replied as he shook the very soft hand offered to him. He did have a fleeting thought if her charge was Hermione, but his best friend never said anything about nannies, so he waved it aside.

"What an unusual name, the water snake star, isn't it?" Grace cocked her head to the side.

"Yeah, it's my family's tradition, to name the children after stars," he said with a shy grin. "That's my cousin Sirius over there, playing with the kids." He pointed to the man trying to climb the gym and laughed at his efforts.

"And your boy's name?" the blonde inquired, looking to the playing children and Sirius.

"Oh, well, he's adopted by Sirius. His name is Harry, so no star name for

him," Hydrus answered, and the two fell into a quiet conversation about the stars and their names until Grace had to leave, her lunch break being over.

"I'll bring my charge here to play, if you're going to be around they can meet," she said shyly, once again offering her hand.

"That'll be great," Hydrus said, this time kissing the knuckles, making the young woman giggle.

"Next weekend?"

"We'll be here."

Grace then went on her way, while Hydrus watched the sway of her hips.

He then sighed and berated himself for thinking about setting up dates, especially innocent ones. He was still a firm believer that he being immortal would mess up any relationship.

"Who's the bird?" Sirius asked as he flopped on the bench, tired from playing.

"Her name is Grace. She's a nanny," were the succinct answers.

"Nice name. She's not your normal type. I don't think she's a love them and leave them type of gal," the dogman said thoughtfully. "You two seemed rather cozy. Are you going to see her again?" He was actually hopeful the immortal would say yes. He had tried time and time again to get the man to date, but so far to no avail.

"We're coming back here next weekend to meet her charge," Hydrus said reluctantly.

"Yes," the other man shouted, pumping his fist in the air, making the kids look at him as if he were weird. "It's about time." He slapped the older man on the back.

"It's only a play date with her charge. Quit getting all worked up," the time traveler snapped in denial.

"Whatever you say, old chap, whatever you say," the cousin grinned.

Hydrus let it drop and watched the children playing until it started to get dark. He called them over and had Sirius take Neville home, while he took Harry to the car. They made it home and had a quiet night, listening to Harry tell of his pirate adventures, until it was time for bed. Hydrus went to sleep that night thinking of a short-haired blonde with nice hips.

Hphphp

There, a bit of romantic start for all of you asking for it. Be forewarned I don't do romance well. I'm still searching my limit on that genre.

## 19. The Party

### Chapter 19 The Party

AN: Thanks to my betas, darrelldeam and alix33. All mistakes are my own. Once again thanks for all the reviews, favorites and follows. I may not answer your reviews, often, but I do read them all. If I answer your questions by incorporating it into the story, then I thank you for your ideas.

I have read hundreds of fanfics that named the Grangers, Dan and Emma, so, though it isn't imaginative on my part, I've come to think of those as their real names. Therefore I am using them. Someone pointed out that it was after Daniel Radcliff and Emma Watson, which made me facepalm that I didn't figure that out on my own. Silly me.

Hphphp

The week flew by, and Hydrus was a bit nervous. He had never really dated, not in this timeline or the last. The closest he had was the disastrous date with Cho and a few innocent ones with Ginny. He spent a good amount of time that week berating himself for getting worked up over someone he didn't really know and a date that wasn't really a date. He thought a lot on how he was going to react if her charge was

Hermione. He was hopeful that if it was both the kids would get on well.

The weekend came and they were settled down to a breakfast of fruit crepes. Harry was tearing his thin pancakes apart and eating the sweet fruit inside, though keeping the mess to a minimum. He was getting really good with silverware and quite proud of that fact.

"So, ready for the big date?" Sirius teased with a wink as he sat in his chair and dished up some of the crepes. He had been ribbing the immortal all week.

"It's not a date," Hydrus snapped for the hundredth time, even though he had dressed nice for a day in the park. He was wearing a blue polo shirt, which brought out his grey contacts, and new black slacks.

"What's a date?" came the innocent question from the almost five year old, who was done with his fruit and picking at the rest.

"It is when two people who like each other share some time together," Remus answered, taking a sip of his tea.

"Like me and Neville? Or me and the 'easleys?"

"Those are play dates, which is technically a date, but not the kind we are talking about," the werewolf explained. "What your Uncle Padfoot is talking about is when two adults spend time together."

"Like all of you? You spend lots of time toget'er" Harry asked, still confused.

"Together," his uncle Hydrus corrected. "No, it's usually a man and a woman. We," he pointed at himself and the other two men, "spend time together because we're family."

"Ewww, you mean a girl?" the boy asked as he wrinkled his nose.

"Hey, I like girls," Sirius answered with a barking laugh. "You know Laura, right? You see her all the time. She and I date. I take her to dinner or a show and we spend time together." He wiggled his eyebrows,

causing the other two men to groan and Harry to look more confused.

"Yeah, but, Laura isn't a girl. She's an adult," Harry said, firm in his belief that women weren't as icky as girls. Besides, Laura gives him hugs and candy.

"I won't tell her you said that," Sirius teased, mussing up the tyke's hair.

"Didn't I tell you, you're going to meet a new friend today?" Hydrus asked, tilting his head to the side. He was sure he told Harry that he was going to meet a girl.

"Yeah."

"Well the friend you're going to meet is a girl," the immortal said. Then firmed his voice and added, "You will be nice."

"Ewww, really?" again with the scrunched up face.

"Just give it a chance. I hear she really likes to read. You guys can talk about books," Hydrus offered in a much gentler tone. "Or you could play on the gym or swings for a while."

The green-eyed boy gave a heavy sigh and nodded his head. His Uncle Hydrus told him he had to be nice to everyone, unless they were mean first. "Is Neville tummin'?"

"Not this time. And it's coming not tumming," the eldest Black corrected.

"Otay," another sigh and the child turned back to his breakfast.

"Okay."

"O-kay."

The family finished their breakfast and got cleaned up. They donned their jackets and went to the park. Grace wasn't there yet, so Harry went to play with the few kids on the playground. Sirius sat with Hydrus and they talked about business. Remus stayed home, as usual, because he wanted to get some work done.

A half an hour had passed when the two men heard a small argument

between an adult female and a little girl.

"But, why do I have to come to the park?" a determined child's voice asked.

"Hermione, we've been over this. You need to go and play every now and then or you'll get sick," was the exasperated reply.

The two came into view and Hydrus's breath stuck. He didn't realize it would affect him so to see the young version of his friend. Yet, there she was, her hair not quite as bushy and her front teeth not yet as pronounced. But there was no doubt it was Hermione. His eyes watered a bit, seeing the girl so young and full of life. He had fleeting thoughts as to what his Hermione was doing in the other timeline. Was she well? Did she set up dates for George like she said she would? Was her job still just as rewarding? Was she still befriending her parents? Seeing this younger version of her made him miss his best friend all the more.

It had sorta been like that the first time he saw the twins. Seeing Fred alive made the nightmares of the war come back for a week. Listening to the two of them finish each other's sentences had brought back memories and he had to see his counselor weekly for a month after that. He wondered if the same was going to happen now.

Triggers it was called, he knew them well after being back he had a few.

This however was the most emotional he had gotten since his return.

Hermione had been a bigger part of his life than anyone alive. She had been his anchor. He stood there trying to pull himself together, making a mental note to call the clinic.

"You don't have to play if you don't want to, but you need to be in the sun," Grace continued the argument; bringing Hydrus back to the present.

Sirius gave him an inquisitive look and the immortal just shook his head and mouthed 'later'.

"I can be in the sun in the back garden," the child snapped, hugging her book closer to her chest as if it were a shield.

"Hermione, sweetie, try to make some friends," the blonde woman cooed, running her hand over her charges hair in a soothing gesture.

The little girl looked over the playground and her nose scrunched.

"They're all boys." She hugged her book tighter and stomped her foot.

"Boys are mean. They always make fun of me," she added with a sad tone.

"No, look there are some girls by the swings," the nanny corrected, pointing to the group of girls playing in the sandbox.

Hermione looked at the group with a bit of longing, but she didn't have any good memories of girls either.

Grace looked up and saw the two Blacks and a smile lit her face. "Come on, there's some people I want you to meet. Then if you want you can go and read under that tree over there," she said pointing to a large oak, just outside the playground near the benches.

The two females made their way to where the men sat. Hydrus and Sirius stood as they approached.

"Grace, it's good to see you again," Hydrus said as he took her hand and kissed the knuckles. "This is my cousin, Sirius," he said waving to the man on his left.

"Pleasure," Sirius said, also kissing the hand offered to him.

"Hydrus, it's good to see you as well," she giggled, making Hermione roll her eyes. "Sirius, it's nice to meet you. This is my charge, Hermione,"

Grace added pulling the upset girl forward. Hermione merely glared at the two men as if it were their fault she had to be there. Hydrus looked at the younger version of his friend and gave her a soft smile. "Hermione, be nice. Where is Harry?" she asked looking around. "I want to introduce

them."

"Oi, Harry, come here a minute," Sirius called to the dark-haired boy.

Hydrus, once again, pulled himself together.

"Tummin'" the child replied as he broke away from the group of boys and ran to his uncles.

"Harry," the immortal said when the boy was closer, "this is Grace and her charge, Hermione. Be nice."

"Otay," the boy pouted. "Hi. It is nice to meet ya," he added shyly.

"Oh, aren't you adorable," Grace said sweetly and knelt down to his level and held out her hand. When Harry shook it, like he'd been taught, she stood and said, "Harry, this is Hermione." Introducing her again and indicating the bushy-haired girl. "Hermione, this is Harry." She gave the boy another soft smile.

"Pleasure," Hermione said, ducking behind Grace. She didn't have a good history meeting other kids, they always teased her.

"Do you want to tum and play pirates with us?" Harry asked, peeking around the adult woman's legs.

"I've never played pirates before. Do you act like real pirates? I've read all about them and they are not nice people." She shuddered at the thought of boys and swords.

"Nay, it's all make-believe," Harry waved off her concern. "We're being good pirates and rescuin' 'amsels in atressed," he said with a huge smile.

"You can be who we rescue."

"Don't you mean damsels in distress?" Hermione asked, thinking the boy must be stupid if he couldn't talk right.

"That's what I said," the green-eyed boy said, a bit confused.

"Hermione, what did I tell you about correcting people your age?" chided Grace as she gently lifted the girls face to look at her.

"That I'm smarter than most people my age and I have to be nice to them," quoted the bookworm. "But how are they going to learn if no one corrects them?"

"That is up to their parents or in this case his uncles. You're still a little girl and if you want to make friends you shouldn't correct people," Grace said softly, running her hands over that bushy hair. She always worried about the little genius making friends. The girl will start school soon and she wouldn't need a nanny anymore, so Grace was trying to instill some values on her before she left.

"Wow," Harry said, breaking the heavy mood, "are you really that smart? You read and everythin'? I am learnin' how to spell, and my Uncle Hydrus," he pointed to the oldest Black, "says I'm really good at talking for a four and a half year old." He puffed out his little chest and beamed with pride.

"That you are, Harry," the time traveler said, ruffling the ever messy hair.

"So, do you want to play with us?" Harry asked again.

"As long as I don't have to get dirty," Hermione sighed and handed her book to Grace.

The two children ran to the playground and Harry was introducing Hermione with wild arm gestures as the adults looked on.

"I'll go and make sure they play nice," Sirius said, with a devious grin, not fooling Hydrus for one minute.

"Thank you, Sirius. I do so worry about her," Grace sighed as she sat.

Hydrus sat next to her and there was an uncomfortable silence. Then he started a conversation about his business, keeping it non-magical. Grace told him that she would be leaving the Grangers when Hermione went to school. And the two talked for an hour, keeping an eye on the children.

Hydrus asked why Hermione wasn't being homeschooled if she was so

intelligent.

"Her parents want her to be around children her own age. They tried daycare, but Hermione was so far ahead of the rest of the kids that they teased her horribly. They hired me to try and curb her tendencies to always be the best, but it is in her nature," Grace sighed, feeling like she failed the child. "They feel that she has learned enough that they want to try again."

"Well, that can't be helped. Perhaps they should look into therapy. I speak from experience that it can do remarkable things," the immortal offered that secret softly.

Grace nodded her head to show she heard, but decided this wasn't the place to discuss such secrets. "I'll bring it up, but I doubt they will.

They're so sure that it'll make her a better person if she just learns to live with the taunts," the young blonde sighed again. "The Grangers are good people, they just..." she trailed off, not sure how to explain her employers, without making them out to be bad.

"I get it," Hydrus said, patting her hand. "I'm sure they're lovey parents."

"Well, I'm hoping for the best. Now, is Harry going to school? You mentioned homeschooling," she said, taking her hand back with a blush.

And the two talked about the benefits and the downfalls of homeschooling a child.

Suddenly there were loud voices from the jungle gym. "That's not right," came the bossy tone of a bushy-haired young girl. "According to the stories, you're supposed to untie me, throw me over your shoulder and take me away," she said from her place in the middle of the gym.

"I'm not big enough to put you on my shoulder," a blond-haired boy snapped. He looked to be a few years older than the other kids, so he probably thought he was in charge.

"Whoa," came Sirius's voice. "I'm big enough. I'll rescue the fair maiden," he said holding up his hands to prevent the argument from going further. He then proceeded to approach the girl tied up with what looked like a jacket.

"Oh, yes, well, I guess that works," Hermione stammered. It wasn't in her experience to have adults play with children. Grace had tried to get her to play with dolls and such, but she liked her stories and was unrelenting in her stance. This was the first time her nanny made her come to the park to play. Usually they just sat quietly and talked or read. And the playing continued until the fair maiden was placed next to the large tree. Hermione decided she had played enough for one day and came and demanded her book.

"You did very well, Hermione. I'm so very proud of you," Grace said with a big smile as she handed the book over.

"I actually had fun, maybe boys aren't as stupid as I thought," the little girl conceded as she took her book and went to read.

The boys played until lunch and Hydrus and Grace talked of nonessential things, while Hermione read her book. Finally it was time for everyone to go home.

"Harry has other play dates scheduled, however, we can come here on the last weekend of the month and meet up," Hydrus said softly. "It was great talking to you."

"I think we'll like that, maybe Hermione will learn more about playing with children the more we come," Grace said with a smile. "Here's my phone number, try to call in the evening after bedtime," she added as she rummaged through her purse for a pen and paper. She had her own phone in her room for privacy.

"If you have an extra piece of paper, I'll give you mine and you can call

me anytime," the immortal offered. So the two exchanged phone numbers, Grace blushing the entire time, then she gathered up her charge and went home. Harry and Sirius joined the time traveler at the bench.

"I'm hungry," whined the youngest.

"Let's go home and eat. I'm really proud of you, Harry, you did good," Hydrus said, kneeling down to Harry's level.

"She's not bad, for a girl. She even let us tie her up," the child said beaming, proud of his new friend.

"That's wonderful. It takes a special girl to allow that," his uncle said as he stood and led them to the car.

"Next time can we bring Neville, or maybe the twins?"

"We'll talk about it when we get home."

They made it home and had a hearty lunch of cold chicken and a salad.

The immortal led his younger self to the living room.

"Sit for a minute, Harry," Hydrus said as he sat on the sofa, pointing to the recliner and waited for the child to get comfortable. "You know we have to keep magic a secret from those that don't know about it, right?" Harry nodded with a confused look, he hadn't told anyone about magic unless it was make-believe.

"Neville and Weasleys know this too, but all of you are very young and it is easy to let it slip that your family can do things that non-magicals can't do," his uncle explained, making Harry roll his eyes.

"I'm not 'tupid," the big boy said.

"Stupid. And I didn't say you were, I said you were young,"

"I played all day and didn't say anythin' about magic," Harry defended himself with a pout.

"I know, and I'm proud of you. I just don't want people to get mad at you if they think you're fibbing," Hydrus said. "Anyway, Hermione is a witch,

but she doesn't know that, so you can't say anything unless you see her do accidental magic. Then you bring her to me or Sirius and we'll explain it to her and her parents."

"Is she really?" Harry asked excitedly and then his face morphed back into the confusion. "But why can't I tell her?"

"Well, the law says we can't tell her unless we see her do something magical," his uncle stated.

"That's 'tupid," the boy protested.

"I know, but it's the law," Hydrus agreed, not correcting the mispronounced word.

"Otay, can I go play now?" Harry asked. Grownups had too many stupid rules to learn.

"Yes, but if you have any questions come and ask any of us," Hydrus sighed, this didn't go the way he wanted. He was expecting more questions, but four and a half year olds had the attention span of a gnat.

"Otay," Harry said as he got down and ran up the stairs, until his uncle yelled at him and then he slowed down and made his way to his room.

"So," Sirius said as he claimed the recliner, "that's your plan, telling the Grangers that Hermione is a witch as soon as you see magic. Do you plan on telling Grace? She's not family to the girl so technically you'd be breaking the law."

"I know and it'll only be if we start something romantic that I'll tell her. She's a good person, and I'd like to get to know her better," the immortal sighed as he ran his hand down his face. Dating a non-magical was always touchy. The laws about it were confusing at best. He'd have to get in touch with his lawyer to make sure when and what he could tell her, if needs must.

"And if she's the one to see the magic?" came the gentle inquiry.

"I guess it depends on how she reacts," the dark-haired immortal said with a shrug.

"I guess we'll have to wait and see."

"How's the gambling going?" Hydrus asked, changing the subject.

"It's going good," the dogman answered, letting it go. "We're making a killing."

"Great. Do the goblins suspect anything?"

"No, not yet, they haven't figured out that we set up a ring," Sirius said with a mischievous smile. He felt it was a great prank on Gringotts.

"Wonderful," Hydrus said rubbing his hands together in glee. "We might want to back off for a while and do some gambling in the non-magical world. Then come back to the goblins later." He didn't want to start a rebellion, though he had faith that if one started this new and improved magical community would be victorious. Then new treaties would be made and maybe a human bank could be set up. One more thing to set up with the solicitor.

The rest of the day was spent leisurely, with only Remus doing any work.

Hydrus received a call from Grace that night after the kids were in bed.

The couple talked all night, telling about their lives. Hydrus did let her know bits of his unsavory childhood, without mentioning names. She just thought it was a bad orphanage. There were lots of secrets on his side, she could tell just from the missing information in his story. But she decided that they really didn't know each other well enough to divulge such things. By the end of the conversation they made tentative plans for a lunch date.

As time went on they got closer. They even utilized the London flat a few nights they had alone, mostly for home movie nights and cuddling. The nanny never asked the immortal why he had a separate flat. She came to

the conclusion that all the men used it to get away from everyone.

Hydrus confirmed that theory when he told her they couldn't go there, because Sirius and his girlfriend would be using it that night.

Hydrus met the Grangers, he liked them a lot. They were very professional, and worried about their daughter. He did bring up child counseling once, they said they'd think about it and the subject was dropped. He learned from Grace that they were seriously discussing it if Hermione's time at school went bad, which was a major relief to both of them.

Months passed and Hydrus was shocked that the nightmares didn't return. He gave credit to Grace's calm demeanor as his new anchor. Soon it was Harry's birthday. They talked to all the families they had play dates with and decided to go to the park near Hermione's house and have a party. There was a picnic area off to the side of the playground that had a few barbeque grills, so they'd set up there. Each magical family was sat down and it was explained that there were going to be non-magicals at the party.

Arthur, of course, was ecstatic about meeting them. He never was able to talk Molly into the working for Fun For All, because with the computers now in the Ministry everyone's jobs were much easier and they all got raises. However, he was a regular customer. The older Weasley boys understood and were simply happy to be out and about. Percy was especially eager to meet another smart person, even if it was a girl. The twins were talked to behaving and Hydrus, on the sly, gave them a few non-magical pranks to play with. Ron, who had come a long way with his jealousy, was happy to be a part of the party, even if there were going to be icky girls. However, there was going to be cake and that was enough for him. Ginny was really too young to care about any of it.

The Longbottoms were happy to join the festivities, and Neville was excited to meet more people. With his parents working all the time and him staying with a babysitter he only had Harry for a friend. He had heard of the Weasleys and they sounded like a bunch of fun.

So on the day of the party, Hydrus led the Weasleys to the park, Arthur driving his car, and Harry and Remus with the immortal. Sirius went and got the Longbottoms, giving them the location of the alley near the park. The magicals set up the picnic area. The kids ran to the playground with Harry in the lead, even Percy want to play on the non-magical contraption.

"Bill, Charlie, watch your sister," Molly yelled, then discretely emptying a picnic basket of far more food than it should hold.

"I'll keep an eye on her, Molly," Sirius yelled back, and picked up the little girl and hoisted her on his shoulder and joined the kids on the playground, staying there to make sure secrets were kept.

Arthur was fascinated with the jungle gym and said he was going to set one up for his children. Hydrus manned the grill. Remus was at a loss as to what to do, since Molly shooed him off and Hydrus said he had it covered. So the werewolf settled down with a mystery novel. Frank and Alice were taking a nice stroll around the playground; they were basking in the nice feeling of the sunny outdoors.

Hydrus spotted the Grangers and Grace coming around the corner.

Hermione was carrying a present and a backpack that probably had books in it. Dan carrying a picnic basket, and Emma carried the blanket. He waved them over and introduced them to everyone.

"Dan, Emma, Hermione and Grace this is Molly and Arthur Weasley.

Frank and Alice Longbottom are over there" he pointed to the couple headed their way, "and you know Sirius." He pointed to the man who was

pushing Ginny on one of the baby swings. "The quiet guy reading is Remus. We'll introduce the kids when we eat. Everyone this is Mr. and Mrs. Granger, their daughter Hermione, and their nanny Grace Banks." All the adults shook hands as Hermione made a beeline to Remus to find out what he was reading. Dan put his picnic basket down and pulled out his contribution for the grill and took the one next to Hydrus. They started up a conversation about football as they tended their meats. The women flocked together to tell stories about the children. Molly was having a difficult time keeping it non-magical. Arthur was listening to the two men manning the grills and marveling on the way they were cooking. Frank and Alice were watching the playground to make sure the kids were safe, it came with the job.

Hermione settled down next to Remus and pulled out a book, until Harry, in frustration, came and dragged her away. "Mione," he said as he pulled her to the playground, "it's a party— no reading. Turn on and meet Ginny, she's the only girl in all her family and she doesn't have many girl friends. She's only three, but she's okay."

"Harry, quit pulling me, I can walk you know," the bushy-haired girl snapped as she yanked her hand away from her friend. "And stop calling me Mione."

"But I can't say your name," the green-eyed boy whined.

"How hard is it to say Her-moin-e?" she enunciated.

"Hard," he argued back, still trying to pull her to the park. Soon their voices faded and the adults looked on with fond exasperations. This was a fight the two kids had all the time. Sometimes Hermione got Harry to read, other times the young boy got her to play, and so neither ever truly won. But it was cute the way they kept at it.

"I think it's adorable," Grace said as she sidled up to Hydrus.

"Yeah, it reminds me of a friend I had in school. She was very much like your Hermione," he said in tender reminiscence. He gave her a quick kiss on the cheek and turned back to the food. She remained at his side, watching the kids and talking about simple things like the weather and the last book she read. Hydrus nodded along and soon the meat was cooked. He looked to see that Dan's was done as well and they took the platters of finished barbeque over to the tables.

Molly, having the biggest mum voice, called the kids. Cheering and whines were heard from various children as they all ran to the blankets. Grace and Emma pulled out towelettes and made the kids clean their face and hands. The magical parents marveled quietly over the simple wetnaps. When all the faces and hands were washed they started in on the large picnic.

Many conversations were held, Arthur was even able to contribute to the non-magical talk thanks to his TV and movies. The kids mostly talked about the games they played that day and Ginny tried to talk to Hermione, but the age and intelligence difference made it difficult. When the time came for the cake, all the kids sang Happy Birthday with loud voices and smiles. Presents were tricky; Hydrus discretely cast a small spell to make none of them move. Like the poster the twins got Harry on Quidditch, now it looked like a normal poster for a fantasy game.

Hermione gave Harry a nice book on fairytales; her parents talked her into keeping it age appropriate. She had been going to give him the Tales of Narnia.

The uncles had decided to give Harry their gifts at home, since they were things that weren't on the market yet in the non-magical world, so they had no way to explain them.

Cake and presents done the children once again ran to the playground to

play the game of Princess in the Tower, with Ginny as the princess since she was the youngest. Sirius was her guard, to make sure she didn't get hurt or run off. The younger boys fought the older boys valiantly with their pretend swords, and they almost got to the tower, with Hermione as their general. As she was dictating who went where, one of the older boys pushed her for being bossy. When she fell the boy who pushed her was knocked back by an invisible force.

Harry, enraged, yelled at the fallen boy and caused his face to break out in boils. The child screamed and Sirius, who was there just for that reason, quickly cast a counter spell, wiped the memory and grabbed Harry.

It wasn't soon enough for the parents watching. Yelling started and the non-magical parents of the child started screaming at Harry. The uncles, the Longbottoms and the Weasleys moved as one and soon enough peace was had at the park again, with all but the Grangers' memories modified. They all went back to the picnic area and sat the children down so their parents could calm them.

"What the hell was that?" Dan said in a frantic whisper to Hydrus, not wanting to believe what he saw with his own eyes. "Are you going to do hocus pocus on us too?" he asked worried for his family.

"No," Hydrus said firmly, cutting a glare to all the magical adults present.

"We don't have to modify your memories, because," he took a deep breath and softened his face, "Hermione is a witch. It was her magic that knocked the boy down."

Denial came swiftly from all the non-magical adults, while the magicals looked relieved at the fact. Frank and Alice were especially thankful that they didn't have to fine their friend, however they were still a bit concerned about the nanny. The older kids talked rapidly to their

newfound witch friend. Chaos was had for a few minutes, until Hydrus sent a piercing whistle over the group.

When he got the quiet he sought, he said, "This is not the place to discuss this. I'm going to take the Grangers, Grace and Harry to their house. I'm sorry the party ended on a bad note, however, we now have a new family to welcome in our midst." He smiled reassuringly at the confused and fearful parents and the contemplative Grace and Hermione. "Sirius, if you could see everyone home," he waited for the nod. "We'll catch up later. Frank, Alice, I assure you, I won't be breaking any laws." They gave him a trusting look and nodded.

The party mess was cleared and everyone said good-byes, leaving Hydrus, Harry and the Granger household to make their way to the house. Dan invited them in with a grim, yet determined, look in his eyes. They made their way to a modern and spacey living room.

There were two leather couches and three armchairs, scattered around a nice, large coffee table. The Grangers took one of the sofas, while Hydrus sat in the armchair facing them, with Harry on his lap. Grace took the chair next to Hydrus.

"I'm not sure I believe you, what happened in the park was... unbelievable. I doubt my own mind," Dan said breaking the silence. He was after all a professional and had a scientific mindset. Seeing magic was startling to say the least. His wife nodded in agreement. "How do you know Hermione is a... witch... magical... whatever?"

"I understand. I truly do. I didn't believe it when they told me I was a wizard," Hydrus said sympathetically. "I can prove it," he added pulling an older version of the color ball from his pocket space, causing an intake of breath from all but Harry. "If any of you adults touch this, nothing will happen," he explained, handing the ball to Grace.

She took the ball and it remained white. She shook it, examined it and then shook her head and handed it to Emma. The toy was passed to Dan and they all looked at Hydrus in confusion. The immortal waved to Hermione and when she touched the ball it glowed green and said 'green', making the little girl squeal and drop the toy. Hydrus summoned the ball to him, making everyone jerk.

"This is a simple toy we use to prove who has magic and who doesn't. That's a story for another time though," he said with a sad smile. Though the ones in the toy store ran on squib level magic, Barkley's still used this one for the kids in St. Mungo's. They had rescued five children with it. He put it back in his pocket, once again making everyone gasp. The immortal sent a shy look to his girlfriend to see how she was taking the news. She appeared to be more thoughtful than upset.

"Are there books?" both Hermione and Emma asked, making everyone breakout with a small smile.

"Yes, but I have something better," Hydrus said and pulled out four book-readers and handed three of them to the adults. He gave the child's version to Harry to give to Hermione and said, "Take Hermione to her room and show her how to use this, okay?" The little green-eyed boy nodded enthusiastically, climbed off the lap, grabbed his protesting friend's hand and led her from the room. "Sorry, there are just things you should know that she really doesn't need to yet," he said sheepishly.

The three adults looked up from the book-readers and Emma asked, "What things?"

"There are laws that I must tell you about, and things you need to know before Hermione goes to school." He settled in his chair and started to explain about the wizarding world and all the rules thereof. How Hermione would be prone to accidental magic when emotional. He

explained the readers and the books they needed to read. The Granger parents took it well, but not without many questions. They talked for an hour, Grace was quiet the whole time; she simply sat and took in all the new information. It made Hydrus nervous.

"Why aren't these... book-readers on the market?" Emma wanted to know.

"They will be, in the future, I'm sure, however, right now these run off magic, I don't have a prototype for non-magical ones. Besides they're not my invention," he stammered trying to come up with a reason. He couldn't tell them he was from the future. That was something they could never hide in their minds.

"If they run off magic, why can we use them and not the ball?" Dan asked, tilting his head in confusion.

"These run off ambient magic, which is in the air of any household that has a magical person in it," the time traveler stated with a shrug. "If you take them to your dental practice they won't work." It had taken a while to get them like that, but he had made a dozen that did, just for occasions like this.

A few more questions were asked and answered, and Hydrus expressed the need to maintain secrecy. They were going to have to sit Hermione down and explain it all to her. She was a very smart girl and would hopefully understand, given her need to get approval of authority figures it should be simple—he hoped.

When all the answers were given, for now, Hydrus looked at his still silent girlfriend and said, "Can we talk?"

20. Resolutions

Chapter 20 Resolutions

AN: Thanks to my betas, darrelldream and alix33. All mistakes are

my own. Once again thanks for all the reviews, favorites and follows.

Hphphp

Grace nodded, stood and led Hydrus to the back garden. It was well lit and had a large grassy area with rose bushes as a border. There was a small gravel path to a bench, which sat away from the house. A small swing hung from a tree in the corner. There was a wading pool in the middle of the yard. It was well kept and nice.

As they approached the bench, Hydrus asked, "Are you okay? You've been awful quiet."

"Well, that was quite a secret you spilled. It's a bit much to take in," she said as she sat. "I've watched children all my life, and read all the fairytales and all the adult fantasy novels I can lay my hands on. So I might be a little more open to your world, but..." the nanny trailed off with a small shrug.

Hydrus settled next to her, making sure he faced his girlfriend so she would have his full attention. "You heard what I told the Grangers, right? That it's not something I can talk about to just anyone. The law is very specific. The only reason I can tell you is because we're in a very close relationship," the immortal said quickly, hoping to ease the tension.

"And if we break up?"

"Then you'd forget all about magic."

Silence descended. Hydrus tried not to fidget, but her quietness wasn't helpful. He clasped his hands together and placed them in his lap and just stared at his hopefully still girlfriend. Grace merely gazed at the evening sky; you could see she was thinking, weighing the pros and cons.

This actually gave the time traveler a bit of hope.

"Would you do it? Take my memories? Like you did the people in the

park? I think I would prefer it if you did, and not some stranger," Grace broke the quiet and looked in Hydrus's eyes.

"Only if I had to," he said firmly, taking one of her hands and holding it in his. "Grace, you mean a lot to me. If you didn't I would've erased your memory of magic at the park and told the Grangers they would have to let you go early. I have secrets, some I may never tell you, or I might tell you everything if we marry. The point is, I do trust you, but there are wizards that can read your mind. If my secrets get out, it could destroy everything I've worked for. Because of my past, I've done my best to make the wizarding society a wonderful society for people like Hermione to live in." He hoped that his explanation was enough to help her decide. He learned from all the self-help books that honesty was important to a relationship.

"I understand the need to keep magic a secret. Your explanations were clear, so I do realize what could happen if your world were exposed. I also get, that there are things you can't tell me, I would ask if any of them are illegal, but that's for another time." She squeezed his hand reassuringly. "We've only known each other for a few months, so there are things about my childhood I've not shared with you."

The immortal breathed a sigh of relief and gave her a small smile.

"What I'm trying to wrap my mind around is the fact that it is real," the nanny continued. "I mean, all my life I wished fantasy was reality, and now I find out it is, but I can only watch," she said sadly, her eyes watered a little. It had been a dream as a little girl, to be able to wave her hand and have what she needed. Yeah, she was an adult now, but some dreams stick with you. To have it so close, but still out of her reach was disheartening.

"Oh, honey," Hydrus said, and pulled her close, wrapping his arms

around her in a gentle hug. He never really thought of that. It must be why Petunia turned so bitter, though according to Snape's memories of his aunt, she was always a spiteful bitch. Still he hoped the same thing didn't happen to the wonderful, kind woman in his arms.

"I've been trying to think if I want you to erase it all or keep the feeling of magic close," Grace whispered into this shoulder. "It wouldn't hurt so if I didn't remember, but you'd have to break up with me eventually knowing I could never accept you. On the other hand, it's magic and I've always wanted to see magic and we can stay together forever."

Hydrus quickly grimaced at the word 'forever' glad she couldn't see his face. He ran his hand up and down her arm and let her think. While he could sympathize, he really didn't understand. He remembered standing in the Great Hall and waiting to be told that it was all a mistake that he had no magic and that he'd have to go back to the Dursleys. He silently chuckled at his thoughts about following after Hagrid if he were ever expelled. But it wasn't the fear of losing his magic; it was the hatred of his family that caused those thoughts and feelings. This was something else, so he really couldn't empathize.

Grace gave a soft sigh and said, "Let's try it for a while, until I leave the Grangers. That'll give me a month to grasp it all. If I find I can't handle it, I want you," she patted his chest, "to make sure I don't remember anything. I do think I care about you enough that in the end I'll accept you as you are, however, I have to let go of my childhood fantasy and that might take some time." She cuddled in closer.

"Of course," Hydrus said and firmed his hold on his girlfriend. They'd have to wait and see.

The two sat in a slightly more comfortable silence — there was still some tension — until the sun faded and Hydrus said he had to get Harry home.

"Call me tonight and I'll tell you everything I legally can," he said as he gave her a soft kiss and stood with his hand held in hers.

"Alright, after the kids go to bed," she agreed, and returned his kiss as she stood with him. "Though it might be late, Hermione has new information after all." That caused them both to smile at the thought of what the night would bring for the Grangers.

Hydrus chuckled. "Call when you can," he said, "I'll be up until you do." Just as they turned to leave, Hydrus spotted a beetle on the bushes. He gave Grace a soft hug and whispered for her to be quiet a minute and then said louder, "These are lovely rose bushes. However did you get them to bloom so well?" He turned away from the bug and called a jar from his pocket. He took off the lid and cast a notice-me-not charm on the jar, placing the lid in one hand and jar in the other. He thanked Merlin that he kept these jars for potion ingredients. "And these over here, I've never seen such wonderful roses. What are they called?" he turned to where Skeeter was poised.

"I'm not sure," Grace said, going along with him, though there was a curious note to her tone, "Emma is the gardener of the family." She watched as her boyfriend leaned over the bush and then quickly clapped his hands close to each other. She heard the clinking of glass and metal, but it wasn't until he lifted the spell that she could see a jar that now contained a rather strange looking beetle, with curly antennae and bizarre markings around its face.

"Hello, Ms. Skeeter," Hydrus drawled, drawing Grace's attention. He was about to put her in his pocket, when he realized there might not be any air in there. So he waved his wand and turned her into a button, still in the jar, and then threw her in. "I have to go," he said suddenly, giving the nanny another quick kiss and turning to the house. He wasn't sure if

this was the first time Skeeter had followed him or Harry. He needed to get home to and find out, he didn't know if he'd question her or try and locate where she lived. He'd talk to the guys and see what they thought. "Wait a minute," Grace said grabbing his hand and pulled him around to face her. "What was that? Why did you catch that bug only to turn it into a button? Is this something about the secrets you can't tell me?" she asked worriedly, her eye darted across his face looking for some clue as to his change in demeanor.

"That is no bug, it's a witch. I can't explain right now, but I promise, I'll tell you everything about that insect as soon as I take care of her, but right now I have to get Harry home." He was still worried he might compromise the Grangers. His paranoia getting the best of him, but this bitchbug had been a spy so he wanted to get behind the safety of the wards. He still remembered all the times he felt he was being watched, now he might have caught the culprit and he wanted to find out why, though if her past was any indication, she was out for a juicy story.

"It sounds important, like you're worried for your lives," she said as she followed him down the path.

"Well, maybe not our lives, but yeah, I'm concerned about this bug spilling some of my secrets. I'll tell you more tonight. Only wait for me to call you, because I don't know how long I'll be," he said as he went over the many possible ways he would find out what Rita has been up to.

They made it to the back door and Grace said she'd get Harry. So Hydrus went to the living room where the Grangers were reading the book-readers. They looked up when he came in and stood when they saw the worry etched on his face.

"Did she take it bad?" Emma asked, hoping not. Grace was a good friend as well as a nanny, so she was hoping that the couple would work out.

"No, something else came up and we have to go. Sorry to put this on you and run, but it's rather important that I get Harry home. If you have any questions then Grace has my phone number. You can call me any time," Hydrus answered. He softened his face to ease their worry.

Harry came down the stairs and Hermione and Grace were behind him.

"Do we hafta go?" the five year old asked.

"Yeah, you can come back another time, I promise, but we have to get home." He lifted the small boy on to his hip. "I'm about to do something we consider rude, and I apologize for that. It's rather imperative that we get home as quickly as possible," the immortal said as he turned to the owners of the house. "I'm going to take Harry home by disappearing right in front of you. Harry, say good-bye to everyone."

"Bye, Mione," he said and waved. "Bye, everyone." Knowing what was coming next he wrapped his little arms around his uncle's neck, put his head on the broad shoulder and made sure his legs were tight around the adult's waist.

"Bye, Harry," Hermione said, her eyes brightened about seeing more magic. The adults waved and said their good-byes, they were also curious to see it. Hydrus spun on his heel and with a loud crack was gone. The man and child reappeared in the living room of their home. Sirius and Remus both stood with wand in hand.

"What happened? Did Grace break up with you?" Sirius asked, seeing the look on the immortal's face. He and Remus put their wands away.

Hydrus put Harry down and told him to go wash for dinner. "No, we're on a wait and see basis right now. Something else came up," Hydrus answered after Harry left and called up the jar.

The two men breathed a sigh of relief and looked at the button in the jar.

Hydrus shook his head and mouthed 'later'. Harry came running back

into the room with still wet hands. "Let's see if there are any leftovers from the picnic and have dinner. It's been a stressful day," he said, putting the jar back where it came from, then summoning a dry flannel he dried the five year olds hands.

"Yay, cake," Harry said, running full tilt to the kitchen. "Tippy, do we have any cake left?" he yelled on the way.

The three men chuckled and followed the excited boy. They ate a meal of barbecued ribs and potato salad, with cake for afters. After cleaning up, they trooped back into the living room and gave Harry the rest of his presents. One was a Latin Learner, for colors, numbers and the alphabet. Hydrus would update it when Harry was ready to start spelling. Sirius and Remus stuck to children's toys. They sent Harry off to work off his sugar high and were once more sitting in their favorite chairs. Hydrus called the jar and put it on the table; he then cast silencing charms around it.

"It's Rita," the time traveler said, waving at the jar.

"Oh," was the duo reply.

"How did she find you? Was she looking for you or Harry? Was there anyone else?" Sirius fired off questions.

"I don't know which is why I brought Harry home right away. I don't think there was anyone else," Hydrus slumped in his seat. He had let his suspicion get away with him. But all he could think about at the time was to get Harry home. Now he had that... woman in his house. He did wonder how he got both Umbridge and Skeeter in the house without telling them the secret, maybe it was because they were both inanimate objects in his pocket-space. He was glad he wiped Dolores's mind before he handed her over. He'd do the same for Rita.

"What do you plan on doing with her?" Remus asked cautiously.

"Well, I thought we might erase her memory of this day, but I'm worried she might have notes for just that purpose. If she does then she'll work harder to get her story. I can break into her flat, but I have no idea where she lives, so that might not help. I could always leave her like that for now, but people would notice she's gone and unlike Umbridge they'll worry. I could blackmail her, like my Hermione did, but that always backfires in the end. So, I'm at a loss for the minute," the immortal confessed, running a hand down his face. He hated that he didn't know what to do.

"Take her out, put her on a chair, stun her, revert her to human form and find her purse. There might be an address in it," Sirius suggested, leaning forward and poking the jar.

Hydrus smacked himself on the head. So simple, he thought. So he did as suggested and found the handbag. He then reversed the process and checked for recording charms. There was one, so he did the counter spell and left her on the table.

The handbag was ugly; it was made of cloth and had green and purple swirls all over it. Hydrus turned it over the coffee table, but nothing came out. So he did what he did when he wanted to clean out the pocket space and said, "Empty purse." Nothing happened, so he called up his shock gun, blasted the wards and spells and again said, "Empty purse." Quills, parchments, recording devices, small notebooks, makeup and other womanly products spilled from the bag.

The three men sorted through it quickly and found the address book they were looking for. However, her address wasn't in it. So they looked at other things and found a receipt for the rent, it appeared she lived in London on the non-magical side. That explains why they couldn't find her, if she was unlisted then she was hiding in plain sight. Though how

she got away with wearing those hideous clothes in a non-magical area was a mystery. Her neighbors must think she's mental or color-blind.

"Are you going to go tonight?" Remus asked, leaning forward in anticipation.

"Can I come with you?" Sirius bounced in his chair.

"Yes, Moony, and no, Padfoot," Hydrus answered. "I'm not pranking tonight; it's just going to be a quick look-see to see if she has any notes on Harry. You guys stay here."

Remus nodded and Sirius pouted. Putting everything back into the bag and placing it and the jar, with a button, back in the pocket space, the immortal pulled out his book-reader, looked up the address and popped away to the nearest alley to see if he could enter her home.

The alley was cleanish, so he figured this was a good neighborhood. He walked out of the alley and stood on the street. Looking at the building numbers he found the apartment building. There was no security, which he was thankful for, so he made his way to her flat. Making sure no one was looking he cast to see if there were any wards. There were, so he took out his shock gun and blasted them away. Opening the door he went into the cluttered apartment.

It was small, only one bedroom, a living area, a kitchen/dining room and a small study nook. There was paper and photos everywhere, piled on the floor, posted to the walls and spilling off the desk.

Hydrus sighed. This is going to take longer than I thought. He started on the walls, there were secrets of many politicians lining those walls, so he took everything down and put it in his space. He looked through the papers on the floor and found the same thing and repeated his actions.

The stuff on the desk was notes on all the up and coming witches and wizards, including himself, Sarah and Frostwell. Once again he banished

them into the pocket space.

When he cleared all the notes he could find, he looked around the rooms.

He hadn't found anything on Harry, but there might be a safe or hidden area. He cast as many revealing charms that he knew in every room. The hidden space was behind a self-portrait of Rita, which was hanging over her bed. He chuckled at that and shocked the wards surrounding it.

Inside were notes on the Minister, Dumbledore, the Blacks, Sirius and Harry. He put them away and continued to look, just in case there were more hidden spaces. Hours later, when the flat was cleared out, he put on his Cloak, popped away to the offices' of the Daily Prophet, cleared her desk and then popped home.

He threw off the Cloak, plopped on to the sofa and threw an arm over his eyes. "She's got blackmail on everyone. There are pictures, notes and documents on people I've never even heard of. She's been working on this shite for years. It looks like she was going to write that book on Dumbledore, and maybe one on the Blacks. She's also got shite on Harry. There are even some notes on an up and coming Dark Lady, though they're vague. Seems she was trying to find her and get on her good side."

"Grace and the Grangers called. We talked to the Grangers and told Grace you were busy," Remus said, changing the subject. He shot a glance to the child that had woken up and was sitting on Sirius's lap, half-asleep. At first Harry had perked up seeing his uncle, but now he was settling back on his godfather's shoulder and closing his tired eyes.

"Oops, I didn't even see him. Why is he up?" Hydrus said sheepishly as he sat up and looked around. He was just so tired that he didn't even pay attention to who was in the room.

"His tummy was hurting from too much cake," Sirius said quietly, rubbing said tummy, making the child go further into sleep.

"We gave him a soother, it should be okay to put him back to bed now,"

Remus stated, looking fondly at the tired boy.

"I'll do it," the dogfather said. He slowly got up, repositioned the tyke and went up the stairs.

Hydrus looked at his watch and groaned. It was well past midnight. He was hemming and hawing about calling Grace when the phone rang. He reached over and snagged the receiver. "Hello," he said.

"Hydrus?"

"Yeah, hi, Grace," he greeted softly. "I'm sorry I wasn't here when you called. I was busy taking care of something. I can answer a few questions now, but the whole story is going to have to wait. I have a few more things to take care of tonight," the immortal said gently with a heavy yawn.

"Just answer this, are you and Harry okay?" Grace said, stifling her own yawn, her worry projected in her voice.

"We're fine, and when I'm done tonight, we'll be much better," he confirmed. It warmed his heart that she was concerned about them.

"Okay, I want the whole story tomorrow," came the firm reply.

"I promise. Goodnight, sweetheart," Hydrus said.

"Goodnight, Hydrus, I'm glad you're okay. Sleep well." And the phone disconnected.

He put the phone back in its cradle and made a mental note to get a cordless. Sirius came back down the stairs and reclaimed the recliner.

Both men looked at Hydrus expectantly. He sighed and said, "Let's clear a space, there is tons of material. I'll get some pepper-up; I don't think we'll be sleeping tonight."

So they cleared an area behind the sofa and Hydrus emptied all the parchment and photos from his space.

"Oh Merlin, she's got stuff on Grandfather..."

"Isn't that the Wizengamot member that went missing?"

"Where does she get this shite?"

"I can use this, I've been trying to dig up dirt on her forever..."

"I can't believe the shite she got on my family..."

"Look here's some notes on you, Hydrus..."

Were some of the comments thrown around that night. The immortal looked at the notes and saw they were on his cover story. She'd even spied on Marius. She didn't find anything, but had commented on how pissed she was that she couldn't get into the stores, and that she was going to see him brought down because of that.

The notes on Harry were vague, like she was still trying to dig up dirt on the five year old. There were interviews with the daycare workers, making Hydrus glad Harry wouldn't be going back. The questions she asked them indicated that she was trying to make him out to be spoiled or a bully. Only a bitch would try and write a scathing article on a child. She did comment that he was seen with the Weasleys and the Longbottoms. Today she decided to follow the Weasleys to see if she could find out more on the Boy Who Lived. There were no other notes on Harry much to the men's relief.

Had Hydrus not caught her he could only imagine what tomorrow's headline would be. He took great delight in burning anything pertaining to him, Harry, the Blacks and other allies. He put the rest in his space and settled on his sofa. He looked at his watch, called Tippy for some coffee and to ask if she'd make breakfast.

The little house elf agreed and popped away, minutes later there was coffee on the table and the smell of bacon filled the air.

"So what now?" Sirius said as he took up his cup.

"I'm thinking of selectively wiping her memory of everything she's done since she graduated from Hogwarts," Hydrus suggested with a vindictive look in his eyes, then took a sip of his coffee. He really hated this woman, and seeing her notes made that animosity grow.

"Are you sure that is a good idea?" Remus asked. He was worried that it might bring more attention to them. So far they had been lucky and stayed out of the limelight, but if the Prophet's star reporter showed up with missing memories there would be an investigation.

"We could run a story in The Times that she was spying on everyone. All we have to do is give them her work with a letter. Keep her in the jar and drop everything on our best reporter's desk," Sirius offered as an alternate.

"Yeah, what's another anonymous letter?" Hydrus brightened at that idea. He had just the reporter in mind. She was the political investigator that almost caught Sirius all those years ago. Her name was, Isobel Harper, a short ginger that never let a good story go. She was still watching Sirius to make sure he didn't get caught again. This might be out of her venue, but he was sure she'd handle it the best.

"How about we wait until tonight? Then we can keep the stuff that's helpful to us, but give your reporter the rest with the jar and letter," the dogman said as he yawned.

"Sounds like a plan," the time traveler agreed. "But I'm still wiping her mind of everything that has to do with us and our allies," his tone brooked not argument. The other two men nodded their heads; they could see the reason in that.

They heard Harry get up and go to the loo, so they gathered up the tray and headed to the kitchen. Hydrus put the tray on the counter and made his way, with his cup, to the table and waited for Tippy to finish

breakfast. It looked like they were having waffles and bacon this morning.

Since it was Sunday, they rested and played in the back garden. The only time there was a disturbance was when the ever inquisitive Grangers called with a rant or a question. The three men took turns in calming their fears and giving answers. They told how the society had changed in the last few years and that Muggle-borns were no longer looked down on, by most, like they had been in the histories the worried parents were reading. Hydrus promised them a subscription to The Times.

After a long phone call that night, explaining everything there was to do with Rita and the current goings on of the wizarding world to Grace, the three men settled in their seats and once more sorted through the notes and photos. Every bit of dirt that they could use was stored and everything else was put in a Mokeskin bag, which was tied to the now unbreakable jar, which housed the still stunned and memory wiped beetle. Hydrus wrote a short missive.

Ms. Harper

In this jar you will find an illegal Animagus by the name of Rita Skeeter. In the pouch attached there are many of her notes on various people in the wizarding world. She had been using her beetle form to spy on the Ministry and predominant people in our society. Do with her what you will.

A friend

Donning his Cloak Hydrus made his way to the newspaper's office and dropped his package on the desk. Using the Elder Wand he cleared everything to do with him or the guys, then popped back home and waited.

Three days later The Times headline read:

Are Your Secrets Your Own? Our Favorite Note Writer Strikes Again.

The article that followed depicted the story of one Rita Skeeter. Harper had dug up all the dirt she could on the bug and posted everything. It told of Skeeter's time in Hogwarts, how she was a malicious gossip that never stopped telling lies to bring her enemies down. Many quotes were given by those who had roomed with her in Ravenclaw. It was told how she had been spying for years since her graduation and how she accomplished that. There was a warning that there may be other illegal Animagus and that people might want to ward their homes. It went on to tell who Rita had been writing a gossip column in a non-magical rag, using another name, to make ends meet. The notes that were found told how she was going to align with who she thought was a Dark Lady, when she found her, and be the second in command. Rita was now being held for trial for being a spy on the Ministry. The notes and photos were handed over as evidence.

Other articles followed on some of the things Rita had been working on. It seemed Ms. Harper took those stories and ran with them. There would be a lot of people trying to cover their asses in the near future. Nothing too serious, but there was some Ministry officials that were still taking bribes or having affairs. Isobel made sure everything was factual; she didn't want to lose her magic. There were side notes that these people came under investigation due to the notes found with Skeeter.

"She might just see the inside of Azkaban for this," Sirius said when he put the paper down.

"I wonder if they could even hold her in prison," Hydrus said thoughtfully. He remembered that Sirius turned into his dog form to diminish the Dementors punishments.

"They can ward the cell so she can't transform," the dogman answered.

"You are still thinking the Aurors are the same that they were in your timeline. They are not, with Snape never having been the potions professor, the quality is much better," Remus added as he took up the paper.

"You're probably right," Hydrus sighed, yet he still worried.

The headline in the Daily Prophet the next day was cutting

Who Is The Real Spy? How Does This Mysterious Note Writer Know?

The article once again disparaged the unsigned notes. They stated that only a spy would know everything this person did. And that he was trying to put good people in prison so that he could step in and take over the wizarding world. It told how the Prophet offices were broken into and that the note writer could be planting evidence.

The Times and the Quibbler once again took up the defense of the mysterious man, or woman. The papers battled for a month this time, though they all vowed to find this person and get the true story.

In that month Grace decided that she liked magic so the two sat down one night and discussed what to do next.

"Now I'll ask are the secrets you're keeping from me illegal?" the nanny asked as they sat in a cozy tea shop.

Hydrus looked sheepish, while he hadn't out and out killed anyone, the death of the Death Eaters were his fault. If brought up on charges the chances were fifty-fifty that he'd get off. "Not illegal, per se, but there are a few things that could get me thrown in jail. But, I want to reassure you that what happened wasn't entirely my fault," he said quickly.

"Can you tell me?" she asked, and then bit into her scone.

"I would rather give you plausible deniability," he said in a cautious voice. "I want to tell you, but once again I have to warn you that there are people who can read your mind."

"Oh, I had forgotten that," Grace said, and sat in thought. She didn't want to think badly about the man in front of her. He was the kindest man she had met, and so patient with the Grangers and Hermione, and even her, this last month. His gentleness with young Harry was astounding. He had told her that he had been in a war and that he had received counseling. However, if he was breaking the law will her growing feelings stand up to her morals?

He thought a minute and decided to share one of his crimes. "I might have also done some breaking and entering, but never to steal from or hurt any innocent person. The last time the person had information that I took, but all her valuables were left in the flat." He wasn't even going to think about the many times he broke into Death Eater homes. "If it makes you feel better, anyone who suffered from my doings were evil people. They're all gone now or in prison. I saved everyone I could, but..." he trailed off, a look of remorse in his eyes for those he couldn't save, like his parents. He had no sympathy for the Death Eaters.

She saw the look and decided to let him keep his secrets, until such time as right before they were married. Maybe he was a secret agent. She dropped the subject and they continued their date.

With the help of the book-readers the Granger adults were helping Hermione understand the need for secrecy. Hydrus and Harry had permission to 'pop' in at any time. They were taken to Diagon Alley and shown around, by Sirius. Hydrus made it a point not to be seen with Harry or the Grangers in the magical world, especially since he was still getting that watched feeling.

Hermione went to school and Harry started his homeschooling. Grace went back to college, with the funds she got from being a live-in nanny. Also in that month they pulled away from gambling with the goblins.

There were rumors of a revolt and, after much debate, Hydrus felt it would do more harm than good to get one started. Too many innocent people would die, and it could take years to resolve. The men figured they had embarrassed the goblins enough for now, maybe they'd start again in a few years. The non-magical gambling was going strong, as were Hydrus's investments.

"Hydrus, why do you need so much money?" Sirius asked one day after they collected their winnings. "I mean, I know you're going to live forever, but, still, with what we have now you're set for a few centuries."

"I still have that plan," the immortal shrugged.

"And you're still not going to tell me what it is, are you?"

"Nope."

The only thing they were worried about right now was the mysterious Dark Lady. Rita's notes on her were hearsay, so they didn't even know if she was real. Hydrus dropped an unsigned note on the editor's desk and suggested The Times keep a lookout for people disappearing in both worlds. He did the same for the head of the DMLE. Now they waited.

## 21. Mind Games

### Chapter 21 Mind Games

Thanks to alix33 and darreldeam for looking this over. All mistakes are my own. Once again thanks for all the reviews, favorites and follows.

Hphphp

Months passed and nothing was found on the Dark Lady, whose name they still didn't know. There were no reports of anyone mysteriously missing, though there were a few on people with suddenly changing personalities. One minute the person would be happy and bubbly, the next they would be sad and depressed. At first it was thought they were

simply suffering from mental illness, but that was quickly discarded upon examination. There was a spell on them. Why someone would want this was the question. How would it further a goal to have depressed people? St. Mungo's was trying to come up with a counter curse.

There was nothing tying these people together, except they were magical. Men and women were affected, though no child was hit. They came from all walks of life, Pure-blood, Half-blood, and Muggle-born. They were shop owners, politicians and housewives. It was as if the person casting the spell just picked someone randomly and fired. The DMLE was investigating.

In those months Hydrus and Grace's relationship grew. She had accepted the fact that he wasn't always an upstanding citizen, but never targeted innocents. She thought of him as a spy, giving him that mysterious feeling that she adored. Grace told him of her childhood and about her uncle who was caught being a pervert. He never did anything to her, but it still hit her hard since he was her favorite relative. That was her secret that she wanted to share.

Hydrus shared a few more stories of his own childhood, still letting her believe that it was in the orphanage. He kept most of his secrets and tried to keep the conversations in the now. He made sure to take his monthly aging potion. He didn't think he would ever reveal he was immortal; magic was one thing, immortality and time travel were different. The fact that he couldn't die would cause undue stress on the woman he cared for. They still used the London flat, and spent a lot of nights there.

Harry was doing great in his schooling. If he were in a school he would be top of his class. The inventions and Hydrus's own future college education went a long way to making the child a smart boy. Thanks to never having met his mum's sister and her family, he never felt depressed

or repressed. He was in no way a genius, but still doing very well.

They tried to get all the kids together in non-magical parks a few more times. Each time someone lost their temper and accidents happened. So they were discussing having play dates by alternating wizards and the Grangers houses.

The calls from the Granger parents petered off, now that they felt better about Hermione being magical. They still had some doubts on the wizarding society, but the men were quelling them the best they could. One day the men were sitting in the living room going over their plans for the day, like they did every day. "I am thinking of breaking one of my rules," Hydrus said suddenly as he finished reading *The Times* and put it on the table.

"Which rule would that be?" Remus asked as he grabbed up the newspaper, beating Sirius to it. He did separate the sports section and hand it to his friend.

"I'm thinking of selling a few of the twins' products, and some of the things me and George worked on," the immortal sighed and ran a hand down his face. He had been debating this in his head ever since the reports on the new spell came out.

"Oh, which ones?" Sirius asked, perking up at new joke products. Hydrus never let him play with the twins' stuff.

"Down boy," Hydrus joked, making the other man pout. "No, not joke items, but things like the shield hats. They stop up to medium level curses and I can tweak them to cover the whole body. If we can get people to wear them then maybe we can reduce the amount of people hit. And a few of the other war based ones."

"That is a good idea," Remus said, ruffling the paper, "though I would make them better looking." He smirked over the top of *The Times*.

"Yeah," the time traveler smiled. The hats were pretty hideous.

"You could make them more stylish and keep them funny. Sell the stylish ones to Madam Malkin and put the funny ones in Fun For All Pranks.

Maybe even make some gloves," the dogman suggested.

"Good idea," Hydrus said thoughtfully. "If I sell the patent for part of the profit, I can still deposit it in the Weasley vault."

"What if whoever is working this spell finds a way to get around the shield?" the werewolf asked, folding the paper and giving his full attention to the discussion.

"I'll just keep upping the protection. I'll do some research on the spell and see if I can't find that Dark Lady while I'm at it," Hydrus answered with a shrug. He still had all the books from the future on his book-reader and laptop. He also had many of the books he raided from the Death Eaters' houses that he had never read. Maybe the curse was in one of them. He might have to cut back on his dating time to start studying them.

"I can help with that," Remus said, pulling the immortal out of his thoughts. "The book store runs well without me, and I am sure if I ask Sarah, she would be more than happy to help in her spare time."

"I can help, it's a slow time at the Ministry right now, but Laura is busy, plus she's not much of a researcher," Sirius added, wagging his eyebrows.

"Give me your book-readers and I'll download some of the books I brought from the future. Sirius, I've got the entire Death Eater libraries on my laptop, so you can look through them with me. Remus, I'll give you the stuff I got from Flourish and Blott's." He waited until the two men called up their readers.

Remus had finally figured out how to make the pocket-space. His was over his left wrist, so it looked like he was conjuring something or to non-magicals it would look like it had been in his hand the entire time.

Sirius decided he wanted his over his right hip, so he could look like a gunslinger when he called something up.

"I want us to increase our time at the gym," Hydrus said as he took each reader. "If there truly is a Dark Lady, then we need to be prepared. So far there's nothing indicating that she is after a particular group of people, but still..." he got up and started to the study, the other two followed. When they got to the room, Hydrus booted up the laptop and waited.

"That'll mean less time with the ladies," Padfoot whined.

"And less time with Harry," Moony added.

"We can take him with us, and we can go in the mornings so it won't interfere with our dating," the immortal said. "There's a daycare at the gym, they actually have the kids do simple workouts in the form of games," he added as he started downloading the books he wanted. It would do Harry good to get some exercise.

Finishing up, he handed each man back their readers and headed back to the living room, stopping to check in on Harry. The child was sitting on his floor reading his child's reader. If Hydrus remembered right, he would be working on the different ABC learning books and how they used other words for each book. Like A is for apple in one or A is for alligator in another.

"Doing okay, Harry?" the oldest uncle asked as he leaned in the doorway.

"No, not really," Harry pouted. "I don't get some of these words." He was getting better, but he was no Hermione.

"Write down what you don't understand, then come and find me and I'll explain them," Hydrus said with kindness. "This way you can practice your writing and learn to spell some bigger words." He hadn't expected Harry to understand all the books he had assigned. But, he wanted to make sure that his younger self would ask for help, unlike how he was as

a child.

"Okay, Uncle Hydrus," the child said, though you could see he really didn't want to, but Hydrus had made it very clear that there would be no whining about school work. If he did well then he could fly in the back yard and help more in the lab. His uncle was letting him make small toys that he could give to his friends.

"Find me when you're done," the immortal said and turned to leave.

The three men made it back to the living room and settled in their chairs.

"Do you not think you are being a little hard on him? I mean, some of those books are way past his reading level," Remus asked.

"Not really, I told him just to do his best and read any word he knew and we'd talk about those he didn't." Hydrus shrugged. "I'm keeping it to children's learning books, so the words are small and there are pictures to help."

"Maybe," the ever cautious werewolf said.

"Don't worry, I'm not going to mark him down on what he gets wrong. It's a learning exercise," he defended himself. "The assignments for homeschooling are stuff he does in the classroom. This is like homework. He'll do fine."

"Alright, I will take your word for it," Remus conceded.

The three men settled more in their seats and started reading the old books on their readers. They spent an hour going over the information, learning some forgotten things, but nothing about the new curse. Harry came in after that hour and Hydrus pulled up the children's dictionary on Harry's reader and they went over the words. The day was spent with everyone working on their own thing until the afternoon, when Hydrus declared it was playtime.

After an afternoon playing in the sun, they ate a Beef Wellington dinner

and enjoyed movie night. Harry was sent to bed at eight and the three men started research again.

"We should start looking into anyone who disappeared in the last ten years," Hydrus said, breaking the silence. "The DMLE hasn't found anything, and I'm thinking it's time we help. I was hoping they would apprehend this woman before now, without our help." He had been hoping to stay out of this fight. All he wanted to do was raise Harry, settle with his girl and live a happy life until he started his other plan.

"Why?" Sirius asked, looking up from his research.

"It's how Dark Lords operate, they disappear and then reappear with an agenda," the immortal shrugged.

"How will we do that? There are thousands of magicals in the United Kingdom. How will we know who to look for? And if the DMLE cannot find them, what makes you think we can?" Remus asked with a puzzled look on his face.

"Well, Sirius is still in good with the Ministry, he can grease some palms. I can get my private investigators on the case. You still have ties with people like Mundungus," he ticked off the possibilities.

"I have not seen Fletcher in years," the werewolf said. "Not since I moved in here. Well, there was one time I ran into him in the Alley, but that was years ago."

"You don't have to if you don't want to, it was just a suggestion," Hydrus all but snapped. Sometimes Remus was annoying with the way he debated everything. The immortal knew it was just his way, but did he have to make an alternate point on everything?

"I did not say I would not help. I just said that is an avenue I might not be able to use," Moony defended.

"Then do what you can. Besides, Fletcher will do anything for a price, use

the bribe money and ask him to look into it. I only ask you to get in touch with him, because I might have to hurt him for what he tried to do to me," Hydrus said in a bitter tone.

"What did he do to you?" Sirius asked. He always liked that petty thief, but he never really trusted the man.

"When the goblins put a price on my head, he tried to wiggle out of the vow I made him take and get the bounty. He died for his efforts, but still he tried. So if you do contact him, keep my name out of it. I don't want to have to see him."

"Oh, I will see if I can get a hold of him," Remus said and then looked back to his research. He was fascinated on all the updated spells from the future.

"Remember, we're looking for a woman," Hydrus stated, and then went back to his own reader.

He got two nods in return and silence fell once again. They kept at it until midnight, not finding anything on what they were researching, but plenty of good things they might be able to use in the future. This set the rhythm for the next few months.

A few busy days passed and little was found, the looking into the people missing and reappearing was a bust. Hundreds of witches left the country ten years ago and many of them returned and were all doing normal things, like working and raising a family. So this Dark Lady was still a mystery, if she even existed at all. It was something they were debating, because there was no word of an uprising in the darker parts of the magical world. No recruiting, no propaganda, nothing that would indicate someone trying to take over. The only thing they had to go on was Hydrus's stalker, and they didn't know if she was one and the same. Not wanting to take that chance, they continued researching.

It was Saturday and Hydrus and Sirius were having one of their public lunches. They tried to be seen in public a few times a month, so there was reason to talk about one another at their jobs. They had just finished their meal and were walking to the Apparation point when out of nowhere Hydrus was hit with a Killing Curse.

Once again finding himself in a grey space, Hydrus said, "Well, this sucks. Death, are you around?"

"Yes," came the succinct answer from behind him.

Hydrus turned and saw the deity in all his gloomy glory. He waved his hand and conjured seats. "Will I always meet you here? I mean, can't I just drop dead and then jump back up?" the immortal asked as he sat in on of the chairs.

"I needed to speak with you," the very thin man said with a shrug of his shoulder, taking the other chair. "You will usually heal right away, unless I am in need of you."

"Really that takes a load off my mind. What do you need to talk to me about? Is it about whoever killed me this time?"

"Yes, this Dark Lady of yours does not like you. I believe you are the reason she is around. I cannot tell you who she is, but you have personally affronted her. While she is not a major threat to the citizens, she will still come after you until you die or you neutralize her. Since you cannot die..." another shrug of the shoulder.

"Great, my own personal nutter, guess she can't really be called a Dark Lady. Hmmm, wonder who I slighted so badly?" Hydrus sighed and ran his hand down his face. "Is Harry in danger?" something he was very concerned about.

"Only from crossfire. She has a thing for children. She will not harm them intentionally," Death answered in is stoic voice.

"And Grace?"

"It might be best that she carries protection, though I don't think she would hurt her too bad. Once again she has a soft spot for non-magicals. This woman is not like your Voldemort. This is a personal vendetta," the tall thin man warned. "You would do well by looking into all you have done since you came back. The reason she is after you is hidden in plain sight."

"Anything else?" Hydrus asked as he stood. He really hated those riddle like answers. It reminded him too much of Dumbledore.

"No," was the answer as the deity stood as well.

"Well thanks for the tips. Can you send me back now, we were in a busy area and I don't want to be known as the Boy Who Lived again."

With a wave of his arm Death flung his soul back to his body. Hydrus woke with a gasp, sat up and looked around. His forehead furrowed; he was on a table, in a dusty room made of wood in what looked like the back of an empty shop. There were bits of broken furniture and piles of discarded parchment. The afternoon sun was the only light, shining through the broken, dirty windows. He seemed to be alone, but he could hear someone coming, so he whipped out his Cloak and moved to the furthest wall, wand in hand.

Sirius came into the room and looked around, wand in hand. "Wonderful, first he dies on a full street and now he disappears." He threw up his hands and was going to walk out.

"Padfoot," Hydrus said, taking off the Cloak, "what happened?"

"Hydrus!" Sirius shouted as he twirled around. "You had me scared half to death. You got hit with a Killing Curse right in the middle of the pavement. I knew you didn't want people to know, so I disillusioned you as soon as you fell and drug your heavy arse in here." Which was sort of a

lie, since he levitated him.

"Did you see who hit me?" the immortal asked as he put away his Cloak.

"Was anyone hurt?"

"Nah, it came from behind us. I ducked and looked, but everyone was running at that point. So I disillusioned you and made like I was taking cover. After you fell, there were no more curses thrown."

"Oh, okay, and thanks for that. Did anyone see me get hit?" He sat on the dusty table he had woken up on.

"Merlin, I hope not." He shuddered thinking of all the press that would happen if that occurred.

"You and me both, Padfoot, you and me both," Hydrus sighed, thinking the same thing. He then jumped off the table and went to the door. "Well no time like the present to find out." He opened the door, his wand at the ready, and saw a lot of confused people milling about. Many of them had wands in hand and were looking around for an enemy, which was a far cry from his timeline when they just ran and hid. It made the time traveler feel better about the populace that they were ready to defend themselves.

He stepped out the door, Sirius right behind him, and went to the nearest man. "Did you see what happened?" he asked the alert person.

"Someone fired a Killing Curse, but we don't think it hit anyone. Can't be too careful, what with rumors of a Dark Lady floating about," the man said, looking Hydrus up and down as if to make sure he was a man.

"That doesn't sound good. You don't think anyone was hit? That's a relief. I wonder who it was," the immortal feigned innocence.

"Yeah, it is. Only a wacko would fire a curse in the middle of Diagon Alley. I'm sure the Aurors will find them," the man said, pointing to the red clad people flooding the street and then clapping Hydrus on the back,

pocketed his wand and walked away.

"Thanks," Hydrus called and then turned to Sirius. The two Blacks shrugged and started to the Apparation point again.

"Sirius, my boy," came the call from behind. Both men groaned, pasted on innocent looks and turned. "And Hydrus," Dumbledore said as he walked to the two men. "Terrible business, Dark curses in the streets. Thankfully no one was injured. Alas, I had thought that the Dark times were behind us," the headmaster said, stroking his beard.

"Albus, what can I do for you?" Sirius asked pleasantly.

"I was simply wondering if you knew what had happened," the old man said in his grandfather voice, twinkle going full force.

"Not really, we were just leaving when the curse flew over our heads. So we ducked into a storeroom and tried to find the shooter." He was very glad both he and Hydrus's minds were protected.

"Well, it is very fortunate that neither of you were hit," the Headmaster said kindly. "If such business continues, I might have to call old friends together. Will you be willing to join us?"

"Only if the wording of the oath is tightened," the dogman said with a bit of a bite. "We had spies the last time our 'old friends' convened." His face flashed with remorse at the reminder of the death of his friends and the betrayal of Wormtail.

"Yes, I will endeavor to rectify that," Dumbledore said seriously. He patted Sirius on the shoulder in a fatherly fashion. "And you, Hydrus, my boy, would you be willing to help?" he asked as he turned his attention to the older Black.

"I'll have to see what my schedule is like," was the vague answer. Hydrus didn't see much point in the Order, they really didn't do much in his timeline when Voldemort rose the second time, but he knew they did

well in the first war. However, to have a leader that withholds information was detrimental to any vigilante group.

Dumbledore looked disappointed, but he knew this young man didn't hold him in high regard so it was expected. "Talk to Sirius and Remus, if you must, let them tell you how our friends operate. If you change your mind, you would be most welcome to join us," he replied. "Now, I must be off. It was good to see you gentlemen again." And with that he turned and went to talk to the Aurors that were questioning the public.

"Will you really join up again? Knowing what you know about Dumbledore," the immortal asked his cousin.

"It would be expected, but I won't take any vows that'll hurt the family," Sirius answered in all honesty. "I wonder if the old man still thinks it's Voldemort."

"I wouldn't doubt it, which is one of the reasons I'll stay away from the Order. Once that man gets an idea in his head it takes a massive act of magic to change it." They were stopped and questioned, their wands checked. When they gave their story and their wands were cleared, they continued on. They got to the point and Apparated home.

Hydrus sent Harry to his room to work on his books and asked the two men to sit. After they settled he put up a silencing charm and told them what Death said and about all the times he felt like he was being watched.

"So you have a personal stalker who is crazy and only after you? Why the curse to make people depressed then?" Remus asked, sitting back in his comfy chair to think.

"Well, if I remember my psychology, then it might be that she is making people feel the way she is," Hydrus said, going over what he remembered studying when he started therapy.

"So we're looking for a depressed, crazy, stalker lady, who feels you did her wrong. Since it's personal we can't really call her a Dark Lady. Maybe just a Dark Nutter," the dogman said, echoing Hydrus's statement and also thinking over this new bit of information. "Let's see who we know. Rita, in prison. Dolores, in prison. Carrow, dead. Bella, dead. Narcissa, wouldn't get her hands dirty. Who else do we know?"

"When did Carrow die?" Remus asked.

"The Aurors got her when she was fighting them after the war. Her and her brother," Sirius answered, still going over the women they knew.

"Well, it must be someone you guys don't know then. Since, I technically didn't exist until right before the end of the war, I'm going to go out on a limb and say it's someone who is pissed about the changes."

"You might be right on that. You weren't a big part of the war, and no one knows about you and the Death Eaters. So it's sure to be a Pure-blood," Sirius said thoughtfully. Now he was thinking about anyone who had been making a fuss in the Ministry, but he couldn't place his finger on anything.

"It could even be a foreigner, you brought those shops to the continent," Remus added his two Knuts worth. "They have even set up squib orphanages in those countries that still banish squibs."

"Well that's just dandy. We have no idea where to start." The immortal threw up his hands. "And this time I don't have my own personal connection to the lunatic." He looked at his watch and saw it was time to start dinner. "I'll think about this later. What do you want to eat tonight?"

"Pizza," Sirius said quickly.

"You always want pizza," Remus said with a chuckle.

"I like pizza," the dogman pouted.

"Come on, Padfoot, we'll make homemade pizza. Go get Harry and he can

help." Hydrus got up, dispelled the silencing charm and went to start the fixings. They had fun creating a massive meat pizza, which everyone enjoyed.

Hydrus called Grace and let her know that there was someone out to get him personally and that they might not want to be seen in public that often. He made arrangements with her to pick her up via Apparation and take her to the flat. He thanked Merlin every day that he had such an understanding girlfriend. It was one of the major reasons he cared for her so, she accepted everything about him so far, even his darker past.

The next morning the headlines in The Times read:

#### Killing Curse Fired in Diagon Alley

What followed told the story of what had happened and praised the Department of Magical Law Enforcement for being on the scene as quickly as they had. It commented on how the public took cover and tried to defend themselves. The article suggested that everyone brush up on their defense. There was also the standard request that anyone with any information contact the DMLE.

The Daily Prophet's article was different.

#### Rumors of the Dark Lady are True

This article brought up stories of the Dark times that had just passed and tried to create fear and chaos. It said that the Dark Lady must be a Death Eater trying to resurrect He Who Must Not Be Named and continued on that vain. The article was full of rumor and speculation.

The Times' next issue got quotes from the Ministry to support their story that it was a single person. The Prophet did the same, and still tried to instill fear. The two papers once again battled it out for a week, until the Prophet's subscribers dropped. No one wanted to listen to rumor when they were given hard facts. This time the Quibbler didn't offer an

opinion.

The next Saturday Hydrus was sitting in his office at Fun For All, drinking a cup of tea, when the tea vanished and the leaves read, I Know What You Are. He dropped the cup and looked around; people were looking at him curiously, wondering what caused him to make a ruckus. There was no indication of anyone doing anything malicious.

This is not good. Did someone really know? Was this a joke? I trust these people. Where is this woman? were some of the thoughts rapidly filling his mind. His breathing became erratic and his heart started beating faster. He needed to get out of the store. Taking deep breaths and slowing his breathing enough to talk without sounding panicked, he turned to his manager and said, "I've got to go."

"But we have to get set up for Christmas. You promised you'd help instead of hiring a temp," Ellie said firmly, looking up from her paperwork. The last temp they hired was a disaster; she had made the schedule so bad that it took two days of confusion to straighten it out.

"Something came up," he answered as he stood. His breathing was becoming uneven again. What if she hurts these people? Do she really does know my secrets? Once more calming himself he focused on his manager.

"How? You've been sitting here the whole time and no one has talked to you in the last half hour," she questioned with an arched eyebrow, and a hint of worry, wondering what has come over him.

"Well, I had a sudden thought and I need to check on something at home," was the excuse.

"Hydrus, we have to get this done soon. The Christmas rush is already starting and we need to get the employee schedule out before tomorrow. Not to mention you need to get with Jesse on inventory."

"I know. I'll be back in an hour. I promise," the immortal said as calmly as

he could as he walked out of the office. He left the store and ducked into the alley behind it, donned his Cloak and went to the Apparation point. He popped in to the house and called to see if anyone was home. Sirius came down the stairs.

"What happened now?" the dogman asked, seeing the look on his cousin's face.

Hydrus told him about the tea leaves and ran his hand down his face, taking deep breaths.

"That's weird," Sirius said, taking his seat.

"I need a Calming Draught. This is freaking me out," the time traveler replied, his paranoia getting the better of him. "I didn't want to have some kind of episode in the store. I haven't had a panic attack in years. I don't want whoever this is to see me have one now." He called Tippy to bring him the potion. She popped away and was back in seconds.

"Well, according to my therapist, it's to be expected," Sirius rationalized.

"Stress is always going to cause some type of reaction."

"I know," Hydrus said, and then downed the Calming Draught. "That doesn't mean I have to like it. It always makes me feel weak to have one."

His shoulders slumped as the potion did its job. "I'm going to have to start meditating longer and carrying my potions with me, just in case."

"Well, you didn't have a flashback, so I think you did pretty good," the younger cousin said still trying to make Hydrus feel better.

"I'll call the clinic tomorrow and set up an appointment. Mr. Noble needs to know I have a nutter after me anyway." Now that he was calmer he stood and said, "I have to get back to the store, I promised Ellie I'd help her with the scheduling. I'm not sure when I'll be home."

"Alright, I'll see you later," Sirius said and stood with him. "I'll have Tippy cook tonight and we'll save you a plate."

"Uncle Hydrus, you're home," Harry said as he ran into the room, fresh from his nap.

"Sorry, Harry, but I have to go back to work. I had to talk to your Uncle Padfoot about something, now I have to go," he said as he picked up the five and a half year old.

"Aw, do you really?" Harry pouted.

"Yup, but I'll try and be home before you go to bed," the uncle said, tweaking the child's nose.

"Fine," the little boy pouted and then demanded to be let down. He went to his other uncle and stood by him with his little arms folded in anger.

"Bye, Uncle Hydrus," he said sullenly.

"I'll be home as quickly as I can," Hydrus said kindly, knowing he was disappointing his younger self, but it couldn't be helped. He went to the child, kissed the top of his head and popped away. He thought about putting his Cloak back on when he reappeared in the Alley, but realized whoever sent him the message did it while he was in his office.

He made it to the store unmolested and went back to work. His eyes kept darting around the room, making it hard to concentrate. He messed up the schedule three times before he got it right. When he went to help Jesse with the inventory, his attentiveness was so unfocused that the man chased him out of the area. Seeing that he was little help, he went home early.

He was just in time to eat the nice roast beef dinner. After that they settled down for a night of video games. Harry did his best to play the grownup games, and had fun trying to beat Sirius. When the five and a half year old went to bed, Hydrus and Sirius told Remus what had happened.

"So our mysterious lady is playing with your mind, which makes sense if

she's the one behind the depression spell and your feeling of being followed," the werewolf said thoughtfully. "She might not even know you're immortal, she might just be saying something to see how you'll react. You might have just played into her hands."

"It was either that or have a full-on panic attack in the middle of the store," Hydrus defended himself.

"I am not saying you did something wrong. I am merely pointing out that now she knows how to push your buttons," Remus said, hold up his hands in a compliant gesture.

"No, you're right; I need to have better control than that. It's just been so long since I've had anyone target me. I mean, the Killing Curse didn't faze me, because I know it really won't do harm. But, if my secrets get out, then I'll have to leave. I don't want to do that," Hydrus said, slumping in his seat. "I've worked hard for everything I've accomplished since I've been back. It took years of preparation to get me here."

"You didn't see anyone looking suspicious?" Sirius asked, leaning forward.

"No, they were all looking at me to see why I dropped my cup, but everyone's face was simply curious," he answered.

"You didn't get any bad vibes, like before?"

"Nope, everything was normal."

"Well, damn."

"Have we looked at the wives of the Death Eaters that died?" Remus inquired.

"According to the Black women, none of them are doing anything shady," Sirius said. "It was one of the first things I asked about when all this Dark Lady stuff came up. I'll ask them to keep watching. I can even order Cissy to give me the gossip."

"Well, damn. I have not heard anything from Mundungus either. There's

no word of anyone trying to rise," the werewolf said, running a hand through his hair.

The three men sat in silence, trying to figure out how to cope with this new development. They brought out their book-readers and researched more. They went to bed in the wee hours of the morning, finding nothing. The next day being Sunday they spent the day at the house relaxing.

Weeks passed and the hats and gloves went on sale just in time for the Christmas rush. They were hot sellers in the prank shop; the hats didn't do as well in Madam Malkin's, but the gloves did. Hydrus also marketed the Peruvian Instant Darkness Powder, which also flew off the shelves.

There were a few of the shock mines and the alarm system that he sold as well. He set the alarm system up in Grace's flat and in his stores.

The Weasleys were once again getting income they couldn't find the source of. If this kept up then there would never be second-hand wands in that house again.

The cure for the spell was in one of the Death Eater books, so they made sure that the unsigned note writer sent it to St. Mungo's, which started the newspapers fighting again.

Hydrus took to carrying a gun in his pocket space, in case he needed to defend himself in the non-magical world. He had to go to the continent and buy it off the street, but since it was well hidden he didn't feel the need to let anyone know he had it. So far, nothing had happened since the tea episode and he was busy with his stores, teaching Harry and taking care of his investments. Soon it will be Christmas and he needed to do his shopping. He hired a private investigator to watch his back and completed his shopping without incident.

When he got home he called to see who was there. His entire family

came into the living room. He looked at their smiling faces and realized this was the reason he would fight this Dark Nutter. He would protect them with his... well, life. Smiling back at them, he settled down for a relaxing evening.

## 22. Christmas and Boxing Day

### Chapter 22 Christmas and Boxing Day

Thanks to alix33 and darrelldream for looking this over. All mistakes are my own. Once again thanks for all the reviews, favorites and follows.

RUGoing2writethat wrote a nice oneshot about what she thinks happened after Hydrus left his timeline. You should check it out. It's called Brand New Start - Home Dimension. Anyone who feels the need to do the same, have at it, just drop me a link.

Hphphp

It was Christmas Eve and the adults of the house and Tippy were wrapping presents. Harry, being the little boy he was, was sitting on his bed listening for Father Christmas with droopy eyes and many yawns. He had tried to ask his uncles to let him stay up, but they told him that Santa wouldn't come if he were awake. So, he was going to stay awake and trick them, when he heard the reindeer, he was going to sneak down and surprise St. Nick. Right after he took a nap.

The house was decorated inside and out. Outside there were fairy lights everywhere, plastic statues of Christmas characters were also prominent and a small elf village was erected. Padfoot had gone wild with the lights and if the house could be seen from the streets, they would have kept people up with their brightness. The inside was more tastefully done, since Moony and Hydrus were in charge. The fireplace had four stockings and a few boughs of fir, a medium sized tree with old-fashion ornaments

and white fairy lights sat in the corner, and a few sprigs of holly strung with green garland hung from the ceiling.

"I can't believe we were so stupid," Hydrus said out of nowhere, smacking his forehead and frowning.

"What?" Sirius questioned, putting down the game he was wrapping and glaring at the older man. Everything had been cheerful up to that point and he had to wonder what set the immortal off now.

"Why do you say that, Hydrus?" Remus was calmer about it. He too put down the gift he was wrapping.

"We've been looking at people from the war, even though we all pointed out that I had little to nothing to do with it. We should be looking at anyone who has been protesting the changes I've made. Death said I made this person, so it could be someone who died in my timeline, but not in this one," the immortal said as he paced the living room. "I think it was Rita calling her a Dark Lady that threw us off. I have to wonder how she even knew this person existed when we can't find anything on this mysterious woman."

"The problem with that is you do not know who died in the first war or after. I mean, you saved the Longbottoms, but I am pretty sure Alice is not your stalker," the werewolf said, running his hand through his hair.

"Then there's Barty's wife," Padfoot said, thinking over the women they knew about. "You said she died of a broken heart and took her son's place in Azkaban. Now that he's dead, she might have snapped."

"But how would she know I had anything to do with her son? No, I don't think it's her," Hydrus argued, still pacing the floor. "If it is then it wouldn't be for that reason."

"Well, I've kept my eyes and ears open at the Ministry, and I haven't heard any women complaining. There have been quite a few men

disappointed at the changes, but most of the women stand by them,"

Sirius said. "There were a few wives that were up in arms when the Death Eaters were found. But, like you said they would have no way of knowing it was you." He rubbed his chin in thought.

"Are we sure it is not Narcissa?" Remus asked, turning towards Sirius.

"I made her take a vow not to hurt the family. Hydrus is part of the family, so, no, I don't think she'd risk losing her magic," the dogman said, shaking his head.

"Well, damn," the immortal sighed, sitting on the sofa, running a hand down his face.

"Tippy can be asking the house elves if they is hearing anything. As long as they does not tell thiers family secrets, theys can be gossiping," Tippy said as she finished wrapping a toy and putting Santa's name on it. She wasn't nearly as upset as the men. She knew her boss was the greatest.

"That would be a great help," Hydrus said, smiling brightly at the little elf. He was running ladies that had died in the war the last time with those who were still alive in this timeline. The problem was he didn't know many. His research had been mostly on his family and friends. He was berating himself for not bringing the old Daily Prophets from his timeline to compare. There was something he was missing. "Death said the reason the woman is troubled was hiding in plain sight."

"Let's go over the changes you've made. There are the stores, making everyone think for themselves and be brought up to modern times," Sirius said.

"Then there's the orphanage, so there are now more squibs living good lives," was Remus's addition.

"And the newspaper, making facts be know, so more politicians have to behave," Hydrus added.

"You got Frostwell to start his inventions early," Sirius said, holding up four fingers.

"You have helped others open shops, especially Muggle-borns." Remus held up five. "However, you were a silent partner, so I do not think that one counts." He put his finger back down.

"The only people I can think that would protest any of these changes would be Pure-bloods," the dogman said after a minutes thought.

"Yeah, but what Pure-blood family do we know that has a soft spot for kids and non-magicals?" Hydrus asked. The only person he could think of was Molly. He disregarded that as soon as he thought of it. While Molly Weasley was very vocal, he didn't think she had it in her to cast a Killing Curse unless her kids were in danger, besides her family was thriving.

"So maybe not a Pure-blood," the werewolf said. "It might be someone else affected by the changes. Who do we know that has suffered?" he looked around the room as if the answer would just pop up.

"We need to drop this for now. It's Christmas and, I, for one, am not going to let some crazy person ruin it," Hydrus said firmly as he stood and started gathering up all the Santa presents, ignoring the fact that he was the one to bring it up in the first place. The two other men exchanged looks and the room fell silent again as they finished their wrapping.

So they put the mystery to the side and as soon as they were done with the gifts, Tippy gathered up all the presents to their friends and popped away. Sirius went to the roof and started making a ruckus. Remus snuck in Harry's room and cast a mild tickling charm on the child's nose to wake him up. Hydrus put on the Santa robes, conjured a large cloth sack, added the Santa presents, took the Polyjuice to make him an old man, (he had snagged a hair off the Headmaster) and put on one of his

disguise watches. Now he looked like Father Christmas in his flowing red robes with white fur trim and long white beard and hair.

Harry swatted away whatever was tickling his nose. He startled awake when he heard noises on the roof. Quietly he got out of his bed, went to his dresser and got the present he made for Santa. It was a simple picture of him and his family playing in the back garden. He wanted to make sure that Santa knew that they were all good people, so that they would stay on his nice list. Holding the parchment in his little fist he silently left his room.

'Santa' was waiting until he heard the patter of little feet, then he bent over and started putting the presents under the tree. He could hear Harry in the doorway. Sirius and Remus were disillusioned, silenced and standing in a corner of the room watching the scene while taking pictures. Thank Merlin, magical cameras from the future didn't need flashbulbs.

"Santa," the little boy gasped, surprised that his plan actually worked. He had tried last year, but was asleep when Father Christmas came.

"Ho, Ho, Ho, what is this? A little boy out of bed. Are you being naughty?" the bearded man said as he turned and looked over his half-moon glasses.

"No!" Harry said quickly and held up the picture, "I wanted to give you a present. I was asleep and everything, until I heard your reindeers."

"A present? For me? What a good little boy you are," 'Santa' said, mussing the child's hair and taking the parchment from the shaky little hand. He unrolled it and it was all he could do to hold back the tear that wanted to escape. The picture had the four of them riding brooms with Tippy standing in the flower garden watching and each person had a name over their head. The top of the paper had the words 'Nice List' in big, bold

letters. There was a small note that said:

Dear Santa

Tese are my uncles and Tippy. And they is nice people. Plez make sure they get presents.

Harry

"It is very kind of you to think of your family, young Harry," 'Santa' said stroking his beard and making his eyes twinkle. "For that I'm going to give you a special present." And with that he pulled out a new broom and placed it under the tree. "Now, you cannot ride it until tomorrow. After your uncles wake up. Promise?"

"I promise," the little pajama clad boy swore. His eyes glued to the broom. His Uncle Hydrus told him he had to wait to get a broom that went higher. He hoped that the older uncle would let him ride it.

"Now, I think it is time for all good little boys to go back to bed," the old man said, not wanting his Polyjuice to wear off in front of Harry.

"Thanks, Santa," Harry said, running and giving the nice man a hug and then turned and ran as fast as his little feet would carry him. Not wanting Santa to take away his broom if he were naughty.

Sirius and Remus waited until they heard the bedroom door close and then dispelled the charms that kept them hidden. They went to Hydrus and looked at the picture. The two younger men also teared up at the sentiment. Harry was such a good boy.

"That has to be the sweetest thing I have ever seen," Remus said, taking a seat in the comfy chair.

"I have to admit, I didn't know Harry had it in him. I mean, I knew he was a good kid, but this is really good," Sirius said, plopping down in the recliner.

"Well, now we're going to have to wrap more presents from Santa with

our names on them," Hydrus said as he pulled a few things from his pocketspace, to do just that. His disguise was going to wear off soon, so he switched out his 'Santa' robes for bathrobes. He'd change once he went to bed.

So the three picked some small things they wanted, put Santa's name on them, renamed one of Tippy's presents and soon they went to bed.

Because of Harry's late night adventure, the child didn't wake up until it was after nine, which in turn let the adults sleep in. When he woke, Harry ran to his Uncle Hydrus's room, opened the door and ran to the bed. "Uncle Hydrus, wake up. I got to see Santa," he said as he bounced on the bed.

"You did?" the groggy man said, opening one eye. "Does that mean you got out of bed?"

"But I had to," protested the child. "I had to give him his present." He folded his little arms defiantly and pouted that his uncle wasn't as excited as he was. Grownups were no fun.

"Okay," the now awake man said as he sat up. "That was very nice of you, Harry. Next time leave it on the fireplace and Santa will know it's from you," he chastised mildly, tapping the boy on the nose to take any bite out of his words.

Harry giggled when he saw he wasn't in trouble. "I will," he promised and then started bouncing again. "Can we go open presents now?"

"Go wake up Padfoot and Moony and we can open them after a small breakfast," the oldest uncle said as he grabbed the lively child and put him on his feet.

"Okay," Harry all but yelled and ran from the room. "Uncle Padfoot, Uncle Moony, wake up!" he shouted as he ran down the hall. "I got to see Santa."

Hydrus shook his head and chuckled as he got out of bed and readied himself for a long day of playing. He went to the kitchen and decided that a quick breakfast of hot cereal was the order of the day.

The rest of the family joined him; Harry didn't stop squirming for a single moment. The child kept looking longingly at the doorway. The older members just chuckled and took their time eating. Soon enough it was time to open the presents and they all trooped to the living room.

The excited little boy ran to the tree and once the men sat in their seats, he started handing out presents. "Look, you guys got stuff from Santa! He thinks you're good boys," Harry yelled, upon reading some of the tags.

"Oh, and Tippy got one too!" He was happy Santa remembered the house elf.

Tippy popped in with a tray of cocoa, said she'd open her presents in a little while and popped out to finish cleaning breakfast dishes.

"I wonder why he thinks that," mused Sirius as he took the present Harry handed him.

"See what Santa brought me," Harry said, holding up the broom, looking a little sheepish. "Can I keep it, please, Uncle Hydrus?" he all but begged, his big green eyes opened wide in a puppy dog way.

"Of course," Hydrus said. "If Santa thinks you're a good enough boy to have one, then, yes, you can keep it, but, the same rules apply." He shook his finger at the child.

"I'll be good," the tyke promised with a vigorous nodding of his head.

The next hour was spent opening gifts. There were games (board, electronic and video), clothes, watches, joke items, hats and gloves (with the shield spell), candies, fruit and many other things. Wrapping paper flew around the room, since Remus was the only one who didn't tear his open.

Tippy was there for a minute to get the new dresses her bosses (and Santa) bought for her. Then she went back to making the evening dinner. It had been a big debate as to who was going to cook the dinner, Tippy won by telling Hydrus he was to spend time with the family and she was paid to do these types of meals.

The men put their presents in their pocketspaces and helped Harry carry his up to his room and put them away. They all changed into day clothes and then bundled up and grabbed their brooms for a day in the snow. It was a tired bunch of males that finally made it back into the house late in the afternoon. They all washed up for an early dinner and went to the dining area.

Tippy had made a wonderful roast duck dinner with stuffing, gravy with forcemeat, pigs in blankets, devils on horseback, cranberry sauce, redcurrant jelly, bread sauce, roast potatoes, Brussels sprouts and parsnips with dessert of Christmas pudding and mincemeat pie. They'd be having leftovers for quite a while.

They chatted about their presents and the nice day they had in the snow, Harry chiming in about how great Santa was. They left all the stressful topics for another day and just enjoyed this time with family.

All of the adults had set up a schedule to see their girlfriends. Remus would go and see Sarah right after dinner and spend a few hours with her, since the two were only casually dating. Then Sirius would be taking Laura to a movie and spend the night in the flat. Hydrus made arrangements to see Grace for the afternoon on Boxing Day.

After Remus left, the rest of the family went and watched a Christmas movie. Then the werewolf came back with a sloppy grin and Sirius left for his date. Hydrus settled down with Harry and was playing with the handheld game the boy had gotten from him.

Harry was doing his best to work the buttons and destroy the aliens. His stubby little fingers flew around the controller and shot the aliens out of the sky, eliciting a whoop every time one was obliterated. Hydrus sat and cheered him on, while Remus took out a book he got from 'Santa'. They all spent a nice evening, until it was time for the boy to go to bed, after much protesting and whining Hydrus finally got Harry down for the night. He went to the living room and sat on the sofa. "I think I'm going to make it an early night," he said with a yawn.

Remus looked up from his book and nodded. "I think I will too."

So after making sure everything was secure the two adults trudged to their rooms. The next morning while they were eating a light breakfast of cheesy scrambled eggs and toast, Sirius came in and joined them. They decided that another day flying in the back garden was in order. They spent many hours in the yard, until it was time for Hydrus to leave.

He popped over to Grace's flat, gave her a quick kiss and settled on her sofa. She snuggled up to him and asked about his Christmas.

"It went well. I dressed as Santa and got a nice gift from Harry," he said as he pulled the drawing out of his space and showed it to her.

"That is the cutest thing," she cooed, looking at the flying stick figures and the note at the bottom. "You are doing such a wonderful job at raising him," Grace praised as she patted his chest.

"I'm doing the best I can. I can only hope it's enough," he replied a bit humbly.

"Well, I stand by my statement," she said firmly, snuggling deeper in to his side.

"How was yours?" the immortal asked, changing the subject.

"I spent the day with my family. It was wonderfully relaxing not to have to study all day," she sighed and stretched out her feet.

"That's great. So, um, here's your present," Hydrus said, pulling a gift out and handing it to her.

She unwrapped the present and gasped when she saw the ruby heart necklace. "Hydrus, you shouldn't spend so much on me," she protested, sitting up and looking at his sheepish face.

"It really didn't cost that much," he hedged, not looking in her eyes. It was mostly true; things in the magical world were cheaper.

"Well, it is beautiful," she softened at his boyish look. She stroked the side of his face and smiled. "Here, put it on me." And she handed it back and turned so he could do just that. After the clasp was secured, she turned back around and asked, "How does it look?"

"Just as beautiful as the woman wearing it," Hydrus said, kissing her on the nose.

"Let me get your present." Grace got up and went to her room, returning after only a minute. In her hand was a small box, which she handed over as she sat facing him.

He took the box and ripped the paper off. Inside was a man's ring, it was silver and had a snake entwined around the top. He gave her a big smile, though there was a look of curiosity in his eyes.

"I saw it at an estate sale and thought of you. You did tell me you could talk to snakes," she said softly.

"It's perfect," he said as he put it on his right index finger. He then leaned over and gave her a nice long kiss. Things went from there and the two had a lovely time enjoying each other's... assets. When they were blissfully finished, they once more snuggled on the couch. They had just settled to watch a movie when the phone rang.

Grace picked up the receiver and after saying 'hello', she handed it to Hydrus. "It's Sirius and he sounds worried."

"What's wrong?" the immortal asked as soon as the phone was to his ear.

"You need to get to Fun For All. I just got a call from Ellie and there's been a disturbance." Sirius said urgently.

"Alright, if she calls back tell her I'll be there in a minute," he said and handed the phone back to his girlfriend. He stood and drew her up with him. "I have to go. Sorry to cut our time short, but there's a problem in one of the shops. I'll call you when I'm done." He gave her a long kiss and started to turn to Apparate, stopping when she grabbed his hand.

"Be careful," she said, grabbing his face and giving him one more deep kiss. Then she let him go and stood back. There was no anger or disappointment on her face, just worry. One of the reasons Hydrus cared for her so much.

The time traveler nodded his head and popped away to Diagon Alley. He made his way to the shop and saw Aurors milling about asking customers' questions. He went to find his manager and ask what happened. She was standing outside Fun For All Kids. She was leaning against the wall with a disgruntled look on her face, since the annex was taped off and she could assess the damage.

"What happened, Ellie?" Hydrus questioned as he sidled up to her side.

"Someone broke all the color balls," she answered as she turned to her boss. "We think it was a time delay spell. I've never seen anything like it." She shook her head in wonder. "One minute everything was fine, the next minute all the balls just exploded. No one got hurt," she added quickly at his concerned look. "It was like the spell waited until everyone was cleared and then went off."

"Well that's something. Was it just the color balls?" the immortal asked.

Trying to think of anyone he knew that could pull off such a spell and coming up blank.

"Yep, even the ones in inventory," Ellie said, looking towards the store room. "Don't worry we're insured." She shrugged her shoulder and looked to the taped off room again.

"Let me guess, there is no clue as to who did it," he said, running a hand down his face.

"Nope, like I said, time delay and possible motion detector. It could have been put on the toys anytime in the last week, according to the Aurors."

It was about that time one of the red robed men came up to the two. "We found this hidden behind the destroyed toys, since it's addressed to you..." he said, handing over a smoking red envelope.

Heaving a deep sigh, Hydrus took the howler and dropped it in front of him. The letter exploded open and started shouting, "YOU TOOK MY SON, YOU BASTARD. IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR YOUR STUPID BALLS, MY HUSBAND WOULD HAVE LET ME KEEP MY SON LONGER. YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS, YOU STINKING MUDBLOOD." And then it ripped itself to tiny pieces and fell to the floor.

"Do you have any idea who that was?" the still unnamed Auror asked the store owner.

"I've never heard that voice," Hydrus answered truthfully, he had no idea who this woman was. But now he had a direction to point his detectives towards. "Judging from the content, it must be someone whose son is in the orphanage," he offered the man.

The Auror nodded and scooped up the mess into an evidence bag and said, "We'll do our best to see who sent it. We'll keep in touch." He gave a quick nod and walked away.

Customers were milling about and looking at Hydrus with a bit of sympathy. They had all read about the wonderful things Barkley's was doing and most of the community was all for it.

The red robed men soon filed out of the store, with their evidence, and business resumed. Hydrus and Ellie went to the office. The immortal ran his hand down his face and sighed. "I knew this was going to happen. It was one of the reasons I made these balls work with squib magic.

Barkley's must have found the child in St. Mungo's. I better warn them to be on the lookout. And I need to get the wards stronger, even though it looks like she is after me, I don't want the kids hurt." He started making notes on the things he needed to do.

"Well other than this, it's been a good day," his manager offered, hoping to make her boss relax.

"The sale was going well?" he asked, looking up from his scribbling.

"Yup, even better than last year," Ellie said with a huge smile at the job well done.

"That's great news, keep up the good work," he said, smiling back, though it didn't reach his eyes. He got up, grabbed his list and headed out the door, throwing over his shoulder, "I've got to go. I'll check back in tomorrow."

He went to Barkley's and asked Ms. Cartwright for a list of the parents of any males recently brought in.

"Why do you need that?" the matronly woman questioned as she looked through her files.

"Seems like one of the mothers isn't happy about losing her son," Hydrus answered, drumming his fingers on the desk. "Someone destroyed all the color balls at the shop and left a howler."

"On Boxing Day? How sad," Ms. Cartwright said, putting the short list on the desk and sliding it under the tapping fingers. "I've talked to all of these women and they all seemed quite content on leaving their child here. Of course they were a bit sad in the beginning, but now they are

happy. Each and every one has visited at least once. They all sent presents for the children. There were even some donated for the others. With the gifts you and your family sent, everyone had a happy Christmas. Thank you so much for all you've done." She patted the now still hand. "You are more than welcome, and we'll do that every year until we can't anymore." He took up her hand and gave it a gentle kiss, smirking at her giggle and then grew serious. "Yeah, it was today, and it does make me wonder why they waited until after the Christmas rush," he said thoughtfully as he looked over the list.

There were only three names on it and the only one he recognized was Greengrass. From what he remembered of that family they were neutral. He never heard of a son, but then again he wouldn't have, since squibs were rarely talked about. He had to wonder what happened to the child in his timeline.

The Greengrasses never got involved in the war, so he didn't think they had anything to do with shooting off Dark curses, but he could be wrong. He tucked the list in his pocket and stood. "I have to get home and make some phone calls. Right after I boost the wards. You should expect the Aurors to be here soon, make sure you have a copy of the list for them. Happy Christmas, Ms. Cartwright."

"Alright, Mr. Black, I'll do just that. Do you think the children are in danger?" She looked around with great concern etched on her face.

"I don't think so," he said as he turned in the doorway. "Whoever this was loves their son, but I'm going to do the wards, just in case. They shouldn't affect anyone who has good intention towards the people in this house. They will knock out anyone who doesn't. I'll be back tomorrow to set up the new alarm system." And with that he turned and left. Making his way outside, he discretely palmed the Elder Wand and strengthened the

wards. When he got them as strong as he could he went up the stairs to the Apparation room and went home.

He sent Harry to play, threw up the silencing charms and told the other two what happened. He handed them the list and asked if they knew who the women were.

"I don't recognize anyone," Remus said with a shake of his head.

"I know of the Greengrasses, but I don't recognize the others," Sirius added and handed back the list.

"I'm going to call my detectives and give the list to them," Hydrus said, picking up the phone. He talked to the man on the other end for about ten minutes, telling his story and asking the agent to look into every woman in his life, something he should have done weeks ago, and then hung up.

"Do you think whoever did this is your wacko woman?" the dogman asked, hoping it was true.

"I'm not sure," the immortal said, rubbing his hand down his face, realizing he had been doing that most of the day. "There's a good chance it is, but it could be I've pissed off more than one person."

The three men sat in silence, mulling that over. Then almost as one, decided to let the agency and the Aurors handle it. Hydrus called Grace and let her know what happened. The two lovebirds talked for more than an hour. Then the uncles spent the rest of the day with Harry, playing with his new games.

An article appeared in The Times, telling about what happened. The same day the Daily Prophet ran one that said it was the work of the Dark Lady. There was even an article in the Quibbler, which said it was only a smokescreen to the greater conspiracy to hide the goings-on of the Ministry.

Two days later Hydrus received a phone call from his investigator, pinning the Greengrass mum. The immortal asked him to forward the file to the DMLE and let them deal with it. He got an owl a few days later, letting him know that she was questioned and fined for the destruction of the merchandise, but since sending a howler wasn't against the law and no one was hurt; she was given a warning.

He let the other two men know what happened, each and every one hoping that this was at an end. Hydrus would keep one of his detectives on her, just to make sure she didn't sneak up and kill him. He stuck close to home for the rest of the Holiday, spending New Year's Eve with Grace. They celebrated the night, with too much champagne and lots of mutual admiration.

They should have known Hydrus's luck never made it easy.

23. It's Not Over Yet

Chapter 23 It Is Not Over Yet

Thanks to alix33 and darreldeam for looking this over. All mistakes are my own.

I want to thank each and every one of you that reviewed, favorited or followed this story, plus those that added me to your communities. It was because of you that this is my number one tale. It was your reviews and support that helped it along. So here is my big THANK YOU. KISSES AND HUGS. YOU GUYS ARE THE BEST.

Hphphp

The week went smoothly and the men got back into the flow of working.

Hydrus and Harry started lessons again and those were going well.

Nothing more happened with the store and the papers dropped the story now that it was old news.

Hydrus received a letter of apology from Mr. Greengrass. In it he stated

that he had not known his wife took losing their son so hard. He explained that they were doing what they thought best for the child. Now his son could prosper in the non-magical world. They had donated a lot of money to the orphanage and were one of the ones who sent gifts to the other children. He promised to get her help in the form of a mind-healer to help her better understand that she didn't lose a son; he was just in a better place.

The family was sitting at breakfast on Saturday morning and enjoying the quiet time, when the phone rang. "I'll get it," Hydrus said as he got up and made his way to the living room. All the while hoping better mobiles would come out soon. "Hello."

"Mr. Hydrus Black?" asked a deep male voice.

"This is he," the immortal said, recognizing the voice of one of his investigators.

"Mark here. I have a report for you," the now named Mark said.

"Go ahead," Hydrus sighed as he plopped down on the sofa and hoped for good news.

"First, I wanted to report that I did a background check on all the women you know and they all come up clean for using Dark magic. There are a few minor things, but nothing Dark. Second, I took a deeper look at the timed spell used in the store and I don't think that it was the Greengrass woman's work. The signatures on the howler and the balls are different. We're pretty sure they were working together, but when we questioned Greengrass, she had no recollection of the spell. We think her mind has been wiped." The man took a deep breath and continued, "Third, we got into Azkaban and talked to Skeeter. She said that she only heard a woman's voice in passing that she was 'going to make them pay' and took it to mean that this person was an up-and-coming Dark Lady. She never

got a look at the woman," Mark droned in an apathetic voice. "Also, we don't have an origin on the spell; the motion detector on it was a masterpiece. Whoever did this is very, very smart." He actually sounded a bit excited about that bit of news.

"Well, damn. Thanks. Let me know if you find out more and give your report to the DMLE," the time traveler said, running his hand down his face. At least he knew it wasn't his friends or employees.

"Of course," the detective said and hung up.

"Good-bye to you too," Hydrus mumbled as he replaced the receiver. He went back to the table and shook his head slightly and mouthed 'later'. They resumed their meal of Scotch eggs. When they were done, he sent Harry to do some homework and the adults trooped to the living room. Hydrus told them what Mark had said and they all settled with thoughtful looks on their faces.

"Well, I'm clueless," Sirius said after a minute.

"Me too," Remus sighed.

"I don't have any ideas either," Hydrus said. "Let's wait and see if the DMLE comes up with anything. What are you guys doing today?"

"I have a date with Laura," the dogman said, waggling his eyebrows.

"I have to go to the book store. We are having a sale today, in the magical side, to clear out some of the inventory. There is a new mystery novel set to come out and we need the space," the werewolf said.

The new mystery was going to be a bestseller. It was the first magical one on the market. While the magicals hadn't gotten around to making cartoons and movies, they were taking things from the non-magical books in The Book Nook and adapting them for their community. They had a few romances that flew off the shelves, but this was the first mystery that used magical and non-magical means to discover the villain.

Remus was excited.

"I have to go to the appliance store. Mr. Parker said one of the employees quit and he wants my opinion on the applicants," the immortal said. "One of us needs to stay with Harry." He looked at the other two.

"My date isn't until later, I can stay until around one," offered Sirius.

"Okay, I should be done by then. Have him finish his work on the book I assigned and I'll be back before noon."

"Why are you making him do homework on a Saturday?" Remus asked, once again thinking that Hydrus was pushing the boy too hard.

"It's only reading," Hydrus said with a bit of a bite. "All he has to do is read and come to me with the words he doesn't know. If I can get him to read a bit every day then he will learn faster."

"Still, it is Saturday," the werewolf pointed out.

"And when he is done, I'll take him flying the rest of the day. Look, we all agreed that when it came to Harry's education I was in charge. I don't think I'm pushing him too hard, if he starts to hate reading then I'll back off. But right now he is enjoying it, doing well and learning fast. So let it be," his tone suggested the subject was over.

That being said Hydrus got up to get ready to go into public by changing into casual business clothes and putting in his grey contacts. He stopped to say good-bye to his nephew, praised him for doing well and then disappeared to the Alley. He made his way down the busy street to his store and weaved through the customers into the back room.

"Hello, Mr. Parker. How is business?" he asked as he took the chair in front of the crowded desk.

"Good morning, Mr. Black," the neatly dressed man said, looking up from the paper he was reading. "Business is going well, very well indeed.

Christmas brought in a lot of new customers. We are so far in the black

that I have very little worries about profit at this time."

"Good, I was a bit worried about a drop when I took the entertainment out of the store. It's good to know that didn't happen. So let's look at the applicants." And the two men started going through the applications. There weren't that many and they ranged from all walks of life. They settled on five to interview and then Hydrus rose to get home so Sirius could go on his date. After shaking Mr. Parker's hand and congratulating him on doing well, the immortal left the store.

When he stepped out on to the sidewalk there was a bright flash of light, which caused the whole street to shield their eyes. When the light died down in the sky were the words 'I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE' in bright neon pink. They were too big to hang only over his store, so they covered the five stores to the side, and were slightly over the street, like the person casting had bad aim.

Well shite. Hydrus looked around to see how people were taking this. Most were simply confused and started pointing to the words. Many were asking what the words meant. The Alley was suddenly flooded with reporters and photographers, like they had been warned this would happen. Trying to calm his racing heart, the immortal decided to stick around, in case it looked like he was hurrying from the scene.

A reporter, for The Times, did come up and ask him if he knew what was happening, since the words were so close to his shop. Hydrus answered honestly that he had no clue as to who put them there. After about a half an hour he finally made it home. He told Padfoot what happened and then sent him on his way. He called his detective and informed him. The man said he'd look into it.

Harry came running in and hugged him. "I finished my book. Here are the words I don't know," the five and a half year old said, handing the

paper over. "Can we fly now?" He bounced on the balls of his feet.

"Let's go over a few of these first and then we can fly," Hydrus said, mussing that ever messy hair.

"Fine," the child pouted, while he liked reading and learning words, right now he wanted to play. So the two sat and discussed the schoolwork and twenty minutes later they were outside enjoying the cold air.

That night, after a simple dinner of macaroni and cheese, the men settled in the living room. Harry was on the sofa playing with his handheld.

"How did your date go, Sirius?" Remus asked, not knowing about the happenings in the Alley.

"Very well," the dogman answered with a dopey grin. "Laura is such a fun gal. We took in a movie and then went to a restaurant and then back to the flat for a bit of slap and tickle."

"What kind of game is that?" chimed in Harry. "It doesn't sound fun." He wrinkled his nose at the thought of people slapping then tickling each other. The three adults burst out laughing, making the little boy pout and shout, "It's not funny!"

"Sorry, Harry, we don't mean to laugh at you. Slap and tickle is an adult game, you will learn about it when you're older," Hydrus said as he hugged his nephew, still trying to control his laughter. He was dreading the time when Harry would be old enough for The Talk. Maybe he could pass that off to Sirius; he was the guardian after all.

"Well grownups are stupid," Harry said firmly.

"I promise you'll understand it later in life. For now just believe us when we say it is a fun game for us," the oldest uncle said with a huge grin.

"Fine," the boy stated and turned back to his game.

The three men shared a smile and talked of nonessential things until Harry went to bed. The Hydrus turned serious and told them what

happened in the Alley.

"So you think this woman is behind it?" Sirius asked, rubbing his chin.

"Who else would it be?" he answered with a shrug.

"Well, we were wrong about it being Mrs. Greengrass," Remus pointed out.

"Not quite. She did work with someone to do the spell and she sent the howler," was the rebuttal.

"Do you think it could be someone else who lost their child?" Sirius questioned, his mind running through the short list. He had asked his cousins and aunts about them. They all said that these women were from Pure-blood family, but they both backed Dumbledore making them less likely to cast Dark spells.

"I don't know," the immortal answered, running a hand down his face.

"I'm beginning to think it's someone I haven't met yet, but is affected by the changes nonetheless." He shook his head, all this guess work was getting them nowhere. "When is Harry's next play date? He's been cooped up here too long," he asked changing the beaten subject.

"Tomorrow, we're going to the Burrow," the Animagus answered with a grin, he too was happy to stop guessing. "With all the money they are making off your sales, Ron is doing much better. He still gets shirty when people show up with new toys, but he calms down after a talking-to."

"That's good to hear, I hope he gets better, except for his bouts of jealousy he was a good friend. Are Neville and Hermione going to be there? How about Luna? She must be lonely," Hydrus asked, thinking about his quirky friend, there was something he was supposed to remember about her, but it was just out of his reach.

"Well, the Longbottoms are bringing Neville and I'll go and ask the Lovegoods if Luna can join us," Sirius answered. "The Grangers are

driving up. They want to see what a magical house looks like." It would be their first time at the Burrow and you couldn't find a more magical house.

"That's good, try and be patient with Luna, she's a little flighty. Much like her parents," the older Black warned with a fond grin, taking the bite out of his words.

"Yeah, I've read the Quibbler," the dogman replied with a chuckle.

"I enjoy his conspiracy theories," Remus said with a small laugh. "Too bad it might fold soon."

"What?" Hydrus exclaimed.

"Yeah, don't you read your own paper? There was an article on the drop in subscriptions of the Daily Prophet and the Quibbler. Seems like the Quibbler might be gone soon, if they don't find proof of one of their creatures," Sirius said a bit sad, he really did like that magazine. The rune crosswords were mindboggling and you had to read the entire paper to get the answers. It was a crafty piece of work.

"Well, we'll have to see what we can do to help," the immortal said firmly, maybe some private funding and a few hints will keep it afloat.

Then he changed the subject, "If you're taking Harry tomorrow then I'm going to visit Grace. I better call her and ask before it gets too late." And with that picked up the phone and called his girlfriend and made arrangements to meet the next day.

The next morning the newspapers ran the articles about the words in the sky. The Times asked who they were talking about. What the words meant? And how they got into the sky?

The Prophet went on to say it was much like the Dark Mark and that it was someone trying to draw out the Dark Lady. It insinuated that there might be a turf war.

The Quibbler said it was merely the Wibblewonkers playing with people's minds and to not pay attention to the words as they didn't mean anything.

Having read the papers, they all shared a good laugh to relieve their worries, and then they all split up. Harry and Sirius popped to the Burrow. Remus went to the study to have a day reading the new mystery novel. Hydrus went to the lab to work on a port-key that would take him home if he ever fell dead. This way no one would know that he actually died and he would never have to earn the title ending with Who Lived. He worked until it was time to go and popped to Grace's flat. They had a great couple of hours, chatting and making out. Then he went home, feeling that same calm he felt every time he spent time in her company. Once again settling for their evening chat, the three men claimed their chairs to talk about their day. Harry settled next to Hydrus on the sofa and told about his exciting day at the Weasleys.

"We went flying and Uncle Padfoot tried to teach us how to catch apples, like a seeker. Then we had a pretend game of Quidditch, with the adults throwing apples to each of us. Fred and George had to use bats to swat them away. And Ron was appost to make sure they didn't get in the hoops. It was loads of fun. Then me and Ginny played who could catch the mostest, I caught the more and Mrs. Weasley gave me a biscuit and said I'm going to grow up and be a great seeker," the child rambled on, making swooping motions with his hands.

Hydrus chuckled and gave him a one-armed hug and said, "That you will, Harry. I have no doubt."

"Hermione didn't want to play with us, so she talked to Mr. Weasley with her parents. I don't think she likes flying," Harry complained. Who didn't like flying? Even Ginny played with them. Girls are weird.

"Bill and Charlie had to degnome the garden, they were in trouble. Percy was in his room reading. Harry, here, was great," Sirius beamed at his nephew. "He caught six apples. The twins are going to be powerful beaters, and Ron was a good keeper. Ginny almost beat Harry in the number of apples caught, she got five. Little Luna didn't fly, but she did commentate and it was funny as... heck," he said with a small laugh, remembering all the mysterious creatures the little girl would blame if someone missed what they were aiming for.

"Ginny's alright for a baby," Harry said with a shrug. He was still put out that he had to play with a girl and a baby one at that.

"Molly was in a right state when we let her little girl on a broom, but that child is a natural." Sirius's ears were still ringing from when the Weasley mum went off on them. Arthur tried to defend the men, but she was having none of it. They tried to tell her that none of the kids went over ten feet, but she still yelled at them for twenty minutes. The kids were just happy they weren't the ones being disciplined.

"Well, I am glad everyone enjoyed themselves," Remus said with a fond smile at the now yawning boy.

"Time to go and wash up for bed," the oldest uncle said, picking up the tired child and setting him on the floor.

"I'll be up to read you a story in a minute," the youngest Black said, ruffling the boy's hair as he passed. It was still his duty to see the boy tucked in.

After the footsteps made it up the stairs Hydrus asked, "So, how many apples did they miss?"

"About twenty, it was cute the way they dove around the field, but they are just little kids. Ginny was adorable," the dogfather said with a huge grin.

Then the immortal got serious. "Nothing bad happened?"

"Nope," the youngest Black said, still grinning. "It was just a relaxing day of fun for the kids."

Hydrus relaxed. "I'm working on a port-key to take me here if I die. Next I'm going to make one for the two of you, so if you get hit by a Dark spell you'll come here as well. Then Tippy can get me and if you need medical attention I can get you to St. Mungo's."

"Why not straight to St. Mungo's?" Remus asked.

"Not all Dark Spells are life-threatening. If I can dispel it then I prefer that you come here, where it is safer," the older man answered.

"Why only if we get hit by a Dark Curse?"

"I figured that you two would rather stay and fight," Hydrus said with a shrug.

"And Harry and Grace?"

"I'm working on some that will pop them away if they are near any hostile spell fire," Hydrus answered with a determined glint in his eyes.

"Oh, well, I guess that makes sense. When do you think you will have them done?" Remus questioned, leaning forward in his seat.

"In the next few days."

The conversation dropped off from there and the three men got lost in their thoughts. Sirius went to read to Harry. Remus pulled out his book. Hydrus finally gave it up reading as a bad job and said he was going to go and meditate. After sitting an hour in calm bliss he finally remembered what he had to do for Luna, making a mental note to send off a missive of support to the family he went to sleep.

The next day he sent a letter to the Lovegoods with an anonymous donation to the Quibbler and words he hoped they'd use to find one of the creatures. His Luna had found it when she moved to France. It was

what made her paper take off so well, even though her paper was more factual than her fathers, it was a great discovery, plus a lifelong dream come true.

To the Lovegood Family

I have recently heard of the woes of your wonderful publication. With the enclosed donation I would like to help. I have only just been to a seer and she said that to help your family I must tell you where to find the Crumple-Horned Snorkack. It is in France. Look for it where the Veelas dwell.

This seer also warned me that should Pandora not take better precautions with her spell-crafting a great tragedy will occur.

Since I care about what happens to you and yours, please, take the donation and the warning to heart.

Sincerely

A Friend

Going through his usual routine when sending these letters, he cleared his magical signature, donned a non-magical disguise and went to the owl post office in the Alley and then went home. That night he let the others know what he did and they all hoped for the best.

Dumbledore cornered Sirius at the Ministry the next day and said he was getting the Order together and asked if he would find Remus and let him know. Sirius said he would try and reiterated that he would need to update the vow. The youngest Black let them know what the Headmaster said in their nightly chat.

"Did he ask about me?" Hydrus asked, not really worried about the old man any more.

"Nope. I'd expect a visit to one of your shops soon," the dogman replied.

With that they turned to other topics and soon went to bed.

Hydrus finished the port-keys a few days later and handed them out.

Harry's and Grace's were to take them home if any spells came their way.

He designed them to look like regular bracelets, Harry's being more masculine. A permanent charm on the clasp and his two most valued people were now protected. He also added the shield charm, just in case anti-port-key wards were in place. The immortal only hoped it was enough.

Spending most of his time with Harry, Hydrus hardly ever left the house, unless it was to go on a date with his girlfriend. His detectives did say that the signature on the words and the one on the toys was the same, but they had no idea who cast them. The words showed up in the Alley three more times, each time Hydrus was there, leaving the public baffled and gossiping. The newspapers battled it out whenever they showed, but none of them came close as to the meaning.

On one of the few occasions Hydrus went to check on his shops he heard a disembodied female voice whisper in the air. "Death doesn't need a Master."

He whipped out his wand and whirled around to see who it was, causing people to look at him funny. They hadn't heard anything.

"Are you alright, Mr. Black?" a middle aged man asked at the freaked out look on the immortal's face.

"Yeah, sorry, I thought I heard someone," Hydrus said, running a hand down his face. "Must have been the wind. Thanks for asking," he said sincerely, lowering his wand and clapping the man on the shoulder.

"No problem, glad you're okay," the man said gently. And with a shake of his head he wandered off.

"I'm starting to look like a right nutter," the time traveler mumbled to himself, making him look like just that, causing people to edge away

from him. When he noticed he chastised himself and put on an innocent smile and made his way to Fun For All. After getting a good report from Ellie, he went to Home Appliances of the Future and got a nice report from Mr. Parker, with whom he never had the same casual relationship he had with Ellie. His eyes kept flitting from face to face in the Alley as he made his way home.

"It has to be someone who works in Diagon Alley," Remus concluded, after they heard what happened. "These things only happen to you there, so they have to see you to cast these spells."

"You're right," Hydrus agreed, making him brighten at the small clue. "I'll have my investigator cross check everyone."

"Do you think it could be someone you employ?" Sirius asked, going over the shops workers.

"No, Mark cleared them," he said, waving that away. He was thinking about what shops were in the Alley and who he knew there. He picked up the phone and called Mark to let him know what they thought, the detective promised to do some checking and hung up. The chat turned to a more relaxing venue and soon the men went to bed.

The floating words stopped in the sky, but the whispers became more frequent. Every time he stepped into the shopping district he was assaulted with those disembodied words. It got to the point that reports on the businesses were done by phone calls.

The agency came up with a small list of suspects that they were looking into. Most of the women on that list couldn't pull off the spells that haunted Hydrus. The others he dismissed as being good people.

Hydrus decided that it was time to get away for a while, so he told the others he was going on vacation with Grace, hoping that the woman plaguing him wouldn't follow. They went to Sweden to relax and enjoy

the hospitality of the country. They spent a week camping in the forest and visiting the Viking Magical village, Fredriksson's.

The old-fashioned marketplace, with the colorful robes and clothing styles made the country a very nice place to visit. They made sure to pick up gifts for everyone and spent a lot of time walking the trails and looking at the non-magical ruins; though Hydrus had a feeling some of them were forgotten magical villages. The runes carved into the stones, peeking out of the grass, in the parks were fascinating and Grace was enthralled with the language.

The two went home completely relaxed. Grace had to catch up on her missing class assignments and Hydrus had to correct all the homework he had assigned Harry.

In the week they were gone nothing bad had happened, thank Merlin.

Harry and Sirius visited the Grangers with Neville and Luna. The Weasleys had begged off, stating that the younger children had not behaved that week and couldn't go anywhere.

An article ran in the Quibbler about the discovery of the Crumple-Horned Snorkack. There on the front page, in glossy colored photos was an ugly creature that looked like a cross between an armadillo and a unicorn, with its round armored body, shiny white coat and bright blue eyes. The horn on its head was indeed crumpled. The story that followed depicted the exciting tale of how the Lovegood family finally found the creature and how they were going to study it in its natural environment. This caused the publication's subscriptions to soar, making Hydrus feel better.

The whole family was all settled in the living room playing the video games and generally having a good time. Harry was sitting next to his Uncle Padfoot watching him get demolished by Uncle Remus.

"Uncle Padfoot," Harry said, getting the man's attention. "Why do you

keep playing this game with Uncle Remus when he always wins?"

"Sometimes you just have to keep trying no matter how many times you lose," Sirius answered with a big grin. "That way when you do win, you'll feel great. One day I'm going to beat your Uncle Remus and he's going to have to work harder to beat me. This pushes us to do better." He mussed the child's hair and turned back to the screen just in time to see his avatar die. "Cheater," he accused.

"You were the one to get distracted," the werewolf defended himself with a smirk.

"Let that be another lesson to you, Harry. Don't get distracted," Sirius said seriously.

"Oh, okay," the child said, not really understanding.

"You'll figure it out," the dogfather said, and then started a new game.

"Harry," Hydrus said, looking up from the homework he was correcting, "come here a minute. I want to explain one of the questions you asked."

So Harry got up and took a seat on the sofa and listened to his oldest uncle explain why there were words that sounded the same but meant different things. Even with the small words his uncle used, he still didn't quite grasp it and decided that it was just one of those things he would never understand.

The next day Hydrus received a call from his lawyer, who stated he needed to come in and sign some paperwork on one of his patents. He made the appointment and was hemming and hawing on whether or not to go in disguise. He had many resources to do so. He would need to remove the disguise when he got to the solicitors' office. One of his watches would be his best bet. Having decided on that course of action he went to bed.

The next morning after letting everyone know about his appointment, he

put on one of the watches and morphed into a different face. He Apparated from his room, not wanting Harry to see his disguise and ask questions, to the Alley and started walking down the street, when he heard the disembodied voice say, "I know who you are." Glancing around, he hurried on his way. Nothing further happened by the time he got to his destination. Taking off his watch he went inside.

The new patent was on the microwave, he had hoped to get it out by Christmas, but the paperwork held up production. After all the papers were signed, he left the office, not bothering to put on his watch, since whoever it was knew he was there anyway. He decided to check in on his stores and visited the appliance shop first. He let Mr. Parker know that he could start selling the microwaves and the man was ecstatic. Hydrus then went to Fun For All and talked to Ellie. As he was leaving the shop he was waylaid by the Headmaster.

"Hydrus, my boy," the old man greeted him. "I am so glad I had the fortune to run into you. I am getting the group of old friends together and was wondering if you had the chance to talk to your cousin about joining us."

"I did get time to talk to Sirius, however, I don't think that I have time in my busy schedule to join your 'friends'," the immortal said, still looking around the room for anyone who looked suspicious.

"You seem jumpy, my boy. Is there anything you wish to talk about?"

Dumbledore asked as he noted the flitting eyes.

"That's very kind of you, Headmaster, but, no. I'm just making sure there is no one out to destroy my merchandise," Hydrus said, quickly thinking of a reason he would be so tense.

"Yes, I did hear of that," Dumbledore said with a sad note, stroking his beard. "It is such a shame that people are upset on the wonders of your

orphanage. I, for one, am very thankful that you have given these children a chance on living a good life. I know of two of my very dear friends that have had to utilize Barkley's." He hesitated and then added. "It was my political clout that started them in the other countries. All I had to do was put in the word that it would boost the morale of the general public and the leaders agreed. I hope you do not think I overstepped my bounds," Albus said, playing down how hard he really had to work with the ICW to get them running and very much hoping he had not offended the young man in front of him.

"No, not at all, Headmaster. That was good thinking on your part," he said honestly. He had wondered how that happened. While he was the silent partner in opening the electronic stores abroad, for a profit, he never had the political pull to talk to foreign governments. Sirius had tried, but the Black family name was mostly British based.

The Headmaster sighed with relief and tried once again to talk the young man into joining the Order. "It is with a heavy heart that I need to call my old friends together. Alas, with the happenings in the Alley, what with the words in the sky, so much like the Dark Mark, that I feel we need to come up with a strategy to stop whoever is plaguing Diagon Alley," he said with a touch of remorse in his voice. He was sure it was Tom playing mind games with him.

"I'm not sure I agree with you, Headmaster. It seems like a giant prank to me," he said with a smile. He knew what the old man was thinking. "No one has been hurt so I don't think it is the work of Dark Forces."

"Nevertheless, it would not hurt to be prepared," Albus argued with a twinkle in his eyes, he liked a good rebuttal. Too many people just agreed with him and never showed their true thoughts.

"I will give you that, but, I don't agree. Therefore, I don't feel I'd be of any

help," the immortal said with a shrug as he gave the store one more look over.

"If you change your mind, feel free to contact me or Sirius and let us know," Dumbledore said, patting the young man on the shoulder.

"I will," was the only answer.

"Good day to you, young Hydrus, and may your profits be high," the old man said jovially, and wandered to the prank annex.

Hydrus just shook his head and smiled at the old man's antics. Taking one more look around he made for the doors. He was just to the Apparation point when he was hit on the back of the head. As he blacked out he caught sight of light blonde hair. Maybe it was Narcissa after all, were his thoughts as he fell.

24. No! Not Her!

Chapter 24 No! Not Her!

Thanks to alix33 and darrelldeam for looking this over. All mistakes are my own.

Darn, I made it too easy for some of you. I'll have to work harder on that if I ever do a story on this venue again. Thanks for all your reviews.

Hphphp

Hydrus came to tied to a comfy, colorful, tacky chair. Ropes bound his arms, legs and neck to the appendages of the chair. His hands were stuck palms down on the arms of the chair, so he couldn't use his wandless magic to call anything to him. Whoever did this was very smart.

Moving his eyes around the room he noted that it was a small, white room with no windows. There was one other chair in front of him and a table with some bizarre devices on it, lined up like a surgery tray. His head was killing him and he eyes were a bit blurry from the pain.

"Not, Narcissa then. She would never own such a chair. Merlin, what hit

me?" he groaned, trying to shake the cobwebs from his head. He took some deep breaths and willed the ache away. He needed his wits about him if he was going to get out of here.

Wiggling in his bonds he found them to be very constricting. His wands were in his pocket, and Hydrus thanked Merlin only he could call them. He tried his port-key but nothing happened. Looking down at his wrist he saw it was there, so there must be wards. Since no spells were cast and he didn't die, it didn't port him away. A mistake on his part. He tried to call Tippy, but there must be wards up for house elves as well. He didn't even know there were such protections. He'd have to look into that when he got out of this mess.

He had no idea how much time had passed, the ropes covered his watch. He tried to topple over the chair but it was stuck to the floor. He made attempt after attempt to get free, but to no avail. Struggling only tightened the bonds and without the use of his hands, he couldn't call anything to him. He thought about emptying his entire pocket, but he would get buried in the rubble. He was well and truly stuck.

He wondered how long he'd been out and if anyone was looking for him. Knowing he couldn't be killed and hoping none of his family was there. He set about trying to meditate, going over all the clues and women he knew with light blonde hair.

Hours passed and he was hungry, thirsty and needed the loo. He called out, "Hello, is anyone there?" Of course there was no answer. He tried to get his hands free again, but to no gain. He wondered if this person was going to let him starve to death, or die of dehydration. That won't be fun. More hours passed and the immortal started to get tired. His head started to droop and his eyelids were heavy. You would think the stress of being captured would keep him awake, but he was only tired, maybe he was

concussed. Finally, unable to keep his eyes open, he nodded off.

When he woke again, his bladder was empty, his mouth moist and his stomach was full. He came to the conclusion that whoever this was, was monitoring him and spelled him like a coma patient. Was she a nurse?

The only nurse he knows was Nurse Sparks, who was the one who kept a lookout for battered squibs, but she was a brunette.

Now that he was awake he went over the clues again. Someone who might have died in his timeline, but didn't in this one. Someone who was very smart. Someone who could be affected by one or more of his business ventures. Someone who was at the very least a Grey magical, they had to be to throw the Killing Curse. Someone who could pull off great feats of magic. A blonde. A woman. But who?

Over and over these clues ran through his mind. Hydrus didn't consider himself a stupid person, but for the life of him he could not figure out who this enemy might be, or at the very least the two people he thought of he dismissed.

Narcissa wouldn't sully herself to hitting him on the head the non-magical way. Though, she would hire someone. That and she'd lose her magic, so, no, not Mrs. Malfoy.

The other he almost dismissed out of hand. Pandora Lovegood. She was smart, blonde, and powerful and at least one of his enterprises would have affected her and her family. The Times. Having a factual paper presented to the public had caused the subscription to the Quibbler to fall. But she was depicted as a nice, kind woman. Then again, what family would portray their lost loved one as anything but good? Merlin he hoped it wasn't her. If it was he hoped he could talk her out of whatever she had planned for him.

It could be someone using a glamor or Polyjuice, which was a very good

possibility.

After what seemed like days, but was only hours, the door finally opened and in walked Pandora Lovegood. She was a wisp of a woman with long blonde hair and large blue-grey eyes. She reminded him of his Luna.

"Merlin, I had hoped it wasn't you," Hydrus said in defeat. His shoulders slumping and sadness filled his eyes.

"I'm surprised you figured it out," Pandora said in the Lovegood dreamy voice.

"Why? What could I have possibly done to you?" a hint of desperation filled his voice.

"I'm a spell-crafter, did you know?" she asked vaguely as she took the chair in front of him.

"And a very good one, if I remember correctly, but what does that have to do with me?" he looked into her blue-grey eyes.

"One of my lifelong dreams was to get electronics to work in the magical world. I love Muggles, did you know? Not like Arthur, no, I think they've done wonderful things and I wanted to share those things with everyone. I have been working on this problem for years. Then you came along and opened those stores and presto, no more need for Pandora Lovegood," she said with a malicious tone. She picked up one of the items on the tray and fingered it for a minute. She looked to the man and then at the piece and back again. "I'm not a violent person by nature," she said. "But my life changed so much when you appeared out of nowhere." She took the device and placed it on his chest.

Hydrus screamed at the sensation of something grabbing his heart and squeezing. It lasted about a minute then stopped. He panted and looked at her face, which was examining him like a strange bug.

"Mrs. Lovegood, don't do this," he pleaded. "I know you're a good person.

Don't turn to this."

She sighed and put the device down. "I am a kind person. I don't like inflicting pain, but you have something I want and I don't think you'll just give them up. That should have killed you and not painfully..." her words faded as if she was going over how the instrument went wrong. She glanced to the others on the table with a calculating look.

"Why didn't you go after Frostwell? He is as good as I am. Not that I want you to go after him, but why did you choose me?" he quickly thought of something to distract her.

"Frostwell is good," she conceded, turning her attention to him, "and he was the next to go, after I disposed of you. I did send him a few messages. However, you were the bigger target. At first I was going to just move on, then you started The Times, and our paper started floundering, money got tighter. My daughter couldn't get the things she wanted."

"Think of your daughter for a moment, how would she feel right now?" Hydrus tried to reason.

"I was going to start other spells," Pandora said, ignoring the tied up man in front of her, "but without the money from the paper I had no research funds. I had to quit my spell-crafting and start reporting for the Quibbler, which had me spending more time in Diagon Alley, looking for stories that would boost sales. Did you know there are many creatures hidden in the shadows of dark spaces in magical communities?" Pandora asked in her airy voice, and then she got more comfortable in her chair, adjusted her skirts and stared straight into his eyes. "I thought, if I killed you then your stores would close and I could start my research over and take up where you left off. But, you didn't die. And I knew you were immortal." "My stores were left to other people; they wouldn't have folded if I died.

Were you just going to keep killing until we all were dead?" he asked, praying that wasn't the case.

She waved the question away and continued her spiel. "When I destroyed your toys I had hoped that the Pure-blood bigots would rise against you. They didn't. Idiots. Mrs. Greengrass was so upset about losing her son. She came to the Quibbler hoping we would run a story to discredit you, but Xenon wouldn't touch it. I convinced her to send the howler, told her I'd deliver it and spelled your toys. It was easy to wipe me from her mind."

"Why would you think that? Barkley's is helpful; the Pure-bloods wouldn't have the power to close it. And if they did all those kids would be out on the street." The immortal tried again to appeal to her motherly nature. He knew from his talks with his Luna that this woman was a good mother who loved children. If he could get her to stop thinking of revenge and start thinking of her family then maybe he could get her to let him go.

"That is not what I wanted. I was hoping they would throw you in prison for going against tradition."

"That doesn't make sense," Hydrus said, shaking his head as much as he could. "They are a minority now. The war saw to that."

At that the blonde got thoughtful and nodded. She went on, "When I sent you the message in the tea leaves, you acted almost as I had hoped. I was hoping to shame you to the public; they would think you were crazy and stop shopping in your stores. You held it together, but you did run, albeit slowly. When I saw you put on the Invisibility Cloak then I knew you were the Master of Death and my plans changed. Oh, I still wanted people to think you were crazy, but now I had to get my hands on the Deathly Hallows. My husband has studied them for years. They are the most powerful tools in the entire magical world. I don't want to control

Death; however, I need a powerful wand to further my experiments. Now I want them. If I can live forever I can finally make my family proud of me."

"Your family is proud. Sirius told me about Luna and she has nothing but wonderful things to say about you," he said hurriedly. "You could've asked at any time and I would've been happy to have you on board," Hydrus all but pleaded with the woman sitting in front of him. He was no longer scared for himself he could only think of little Luna and how she could be effected. "You still can. We can forget all of this and work together to make the magical world a wonderful place for our children."

"And give up tools like the Hallows," she laughed at the thought.

"Please, Mrs. Lovegood, think of Luna and your husband. Don't do this to them," he begged. "Even if I wanted to I can't give you the Hallows they are bonded to me for all time. Please, I beg you, stop this madness."

"You lie," she spat, getting up from her chair and started pacing. "You have to be, they are the only way I can achieve my goals. No, give me the Hallows and I'll prove you are lying." She whirled around and glared at him, then grabbed a random device off the tray and threw it at him.

He fell to darkness and awoke minutes later, still tied to the chair.

"Why won't you die?" Pandora asked, picking up something else. "These are my most powerful inventions, not even your being the Master of Death should prevent them from working. I made them during the war, to protect my family. They have to work." You could see the desperation in her face as she threw the device.

Over and over again she pelted her inventions at him, and over and over again he was either in pain or died and came back. What she was hoping to achieve he didn't know, she knew he couldn't die. He could see the confusion and frustration reflected in her eyes. She wasn't thinking

clearly, that was obvious.

On the fifth time he awoke, he saw her picking up another object and shouted, "Wait! I'll prove it to you, release my right hand and arm and I'll call them up. When you have them all you can try and use them, but they will not work for you, I promise," he said once more sagging in defeat. She's cracked. There was nothing he could say right now to make her see what she was doing was wrong. However, he didn't want to have to hurt her. He was quickly thinking up ways to get out of this without bloodshed.

Pandora moved to the chair, unstuck his hand and untied his arm. The whole time her wand was in her other hand aiming for his manhood. He didn't try and break free; he only called up the Hallows, one at a time, and handed them to her. The victorious smile on her face morphed to anger when the Elder Wand didn't so much as give off a spark. She tried to call her dead mother, but the Resurrection Stone simply lay in her hand. The only Hallow that worked was the Invisibility Cloak, and even it didn't give her a sense of power.

In her anger she threw them to the wall. "NO!" she cried. "It can't be. I need to be the owner of these tools." She paced around the room again, muttering to herself.

Hydrus used her distraction and called the Hallows back. He used the wand and turned her into a flower vase. Putting the Stone away, he then rid himself of the ropes, gently placed her in his pocket, donned the Cloak and cautiously made his way to the door. Opening it, he glanced around the hall it led to. It appeared he was in a deserted office building. Making his way out of the building and looking around, he discovered he was at the Quibbler's office in Diagon Alley. Trudging to the Apparation point, with a turning of his body, he went home. He popped to the

kitchen hoping not to startle anyone and made his way to where he hoped the men were.

It was night time and only the adults were awake, though little Harry was asleep in Sirius's arms. He dropped heavily on the sofa, put his face in his hands and groaned. He still ached from all those deaths.

"Merlin, where have you been? You disappeared two days ago," Sirius asked as quietly as he could. "Harry has been worried sick; we only just got him to sleep. Grace had been calling all night. You were supposed to meet her yesterday."

"Are you alright, Hydrus?" Remus asked, seeing the man was in pain.

"Has it been two days? Damn, I was out longer than I thought; she must have hit me pretty hard. Yeah, I'm okay," Hydrus said, running a hand down his face. He looked at his watch and saw it was eleven in the evening. Too late to call Grace, he'd call her in the morning if she didn't call first. "Tippy," he called

"Master Hydrus is home, what can Tippy be doing for you?" the excited house elf exclaimed. She had been worried about not being able to find him.

"I need a pain relief potion, please," the immortal asked.

She nodded her head popped away and brought one back in seconds.

"Thanks, Tippy. Go ahead to bed now," he said softly, then downed the potion. The house elf nodded and disappeared. "Let's wake Harry up and get him to bed and I'll tell you what happened."

Seeing Hydrus relax from the brew Sirius gently shook the child in his arms and said, "Harry, Harry, wake up, look who's home."

Harry slowly woke up and groggily turned to Hydrus. "Uncle Hydrus!" he yelled, now wide awake, scrambled off his godfather's lap and on to his favorite uncle's. "Why didn't you come home?" he asked, his eyes

watering.

"I got busy with something," the immortal said vaguely as he hugged his younger self to his chest. "I'm sorry I worried you, but I'm home now and all safe." He ran his hand through the boy's hair in a soothing manner.

"You should've called," the young boy chastised, trying not to show his worry, because big boys don't cry.

"If I could've, I would've," Hydrus said in a kind voice, "but there was no phone where I was." Still running his hand over that ever-messy hair.

"Oh," Harry said, his eyes started to close. He was so tired and now that he knew his uncle was home he was going to go to sleep. "Don't do that again." He patted his hand on that broad chest and started to nod off.

"You need to go to bed, and I'll see you in the morning. I'm not going anywhere tonight," the oldest uncle promised, giving the boy one more big hug and setting him down.

The tired little boy started to the staircase and everyone called their good-nights. When the door to Harry's room closed the other two men turned to Hydrus. The immortal put up a silencing charm, knowing how they were going to react.

"Okay, tell us what happened. We looked all over the Alley for you, even parts of Knockturn. If you didn't show up by tomorrow Mr. Jasper was going to the DMLE and report you missing," Sirius said with worry in his voice. "That and you look like shite."

"I was kidnapped," he said with a heavy sigh, "by Pandora Lovegood."

"What!?" both men shouted, leaning forward in their chairs, looks of disbelief on their faces. If it wasn't so serious, he would have laughed at them doing the same thing at the same time.

"I was as shocked as you are, but it's true." He told them of what had occurred the last few of hours. "I have her in my pocket, but I have

no idea what to do with her. She's completely cracked. She blames me for taking her glory on getting electronics to work and almost losing the Quibbler," he explained, running his hand down his face and then pulling his hair in frustration.

"No, I met her... she's the kindest woman I've ever known," Sirius shook his head in denial. The woman he met, the few times he went to pick up Luna, was the sweetest, gentlest woman he ever laid eyes on. There is no way she would try and kill someone.

"Padfoot," Hydrus said sadly, his eyes full of remorse, "I swear, I'm telling you the truth. I need your help in figuring out what to do with her. Her family will know she's gone soon and the last thing I want is to hurt them or her." He was letting his feeling for his Luna cloud his judgement, he knew this, but couldn't seem to hate the woman who tortured him.

Unlike Umbridge and Skeeter, this woman was a product of his improvements, he was sure that had he not made the changes she would never have gone over the edge. No, he couldn't hate her.

"Maybe you could talk to Xeno," Remus offered. "Let him know what she did and he could possibly get her help."

"I'm not sure that will work," the time traveler said with a shake of his head. "I remember him from my timeline. I don't think there is anything I could say that would make him think his wonderful wife has cracked."

Xeno Lovegood would do anything to protect his family, even turn the then Harry and his friends over to the snatchers. Hydrus remembered the overly fond look in the man's eyes when he talked of his deceased wife.

Well, if Hydrus worded it right and showed him the proof, maybe it would work. Xeno was just as smart as his wife, though a bit more enthusiastic on things, but intelligent nonetheless.

"Yeah," Sirius agreed, "she's what holds that family firmly to the ground."

If they lose their anchor who knows what will happen." Recalling the way little Luna would speak of her mother. The tales she would tell portrayed a woman who kept her family firmly in reality.

"Well, they did okay in my timeline, if a little more quirky than before she died," Hydrus rebutted with a fond smile at the memories.

"That was before they found the Crumple-Horned Snorkack," the dogman said, still trying to come to terms with what was happening. "Finding that creature might have saved their paper, but now they are going to try harder to find more. She might be what's keeping them from spending all their time and money doing that. She is a very smart woman and highly protective of her family."

"You may be right," he conceded.

"So, back to the subject, what do we do with Mrs. Lovegood?" Remus asked.

"I could try and wipe her memories of me and the Deathly Hallows," Hydrus said thoughtfully, it was not something he wanted to do, but if it helped keep that family together, then maybe it was the only way.

"I do not think that will work. She is smart enough to figure it out again, and there will be nothing stopping her from terrorizing you again," was the werewolf's argument.

"Well, I can't bloody well leave her as a flower vase in my pocket," Hydrus all but yelled, the situation finally catching up to him.

"Can we get her treatment? Get her to St. Mungo's, Janus Thickey Ward? They might be able to help her," Sirius asked, trying to calm the immortal down.

"If we do that the Prophet will have a field day. They'll tear down the Lovegoods and start posting about me being immortal. Then I'll have all sorts of people trying to kill me," the immortal argued. Last thing he

needed was more nutters trying to do him in.

"Maybe we can combine the three, wipe her memory of the Master of Death thing, but let her keep her anger at you, well, maybe lessen it. Implant the memory of you telling them about how to save their paper. Take her to her husband and show him the room she kept you in and prove to him that she was trying to kill you. Let him know about the note. Then maybe he'll get her some help," Remus said, thinking of all the pros and cons of that plan.

"That might still cause public ridicule of the Lovegoods," Hydrus said, thinking over ways to prevent that.

"Not really, there is nothing to say anyone has to know she's there," debated Sirius. "It's not like she's a public figure. To most people she's just a housewife, and not newsworthy."

"You may be right, I'll try and talk to Xeno tomorrow," Hydrus said, thinking over what he would tell the man and how he would present his wife to him. Hydrus dared not show the Deathly Hallows to Mr. Lovegood, for fear he would react the same as his wife. Still wiping her memories seemed like the logical solution. The phone interrupted his thoughts. He reached over and snagged the receiver. "Hello."

"Oh, Hydrus," a semi-hysterical voice of his beloved said. "Where have you been? Are you okay? Did you get hurt?"

"Grace," he stopped her questioning. "I'm fine, everything is okay now. Well, almost okay, but I'm safe."

"Can you come over? I really need to see you," she asked softly.

"I promised Harry I wouldn't go anywhere tonight. However, I can get Sirius to go and get you and bring you here," he offered.

"Give me twenty minutes and I'll be ready," Grace said quickly and hung up the phone.

"Guess she's in a hurry," Hydrus mumbled. "Sirius, will you go and pick up Grace in twenty minutes or so?" he asked the younger Black.

"Yeah," was the only answer. The poor man still looked like he had been hit with a fish.

"Here," Hydrus said, scribbling on a piece of paper. "She needs to know the secret."

"You trust her enough?" Remus asked, not even their girlfriends knew the secret.

"She has no ties with the magical world, now that she doesn't work for the Grangers, I'm pretty sure it'll be okay," the immortal waved it away.

Right now he needed his love to help combat the nightmares he was going to have tonight. He handed the paper to Sirius, who was coming out of his shock. "Besides, Dumbledore is the least of my worries, he is chasing rainbows." He then told them about his talk with the Headmaster, hoping to lighten the atmosphere. It worked. They all had a quiet chuckle.

Sirius went and got Grace, they had to pop outside the wards, so she'd see the house after reading the paper. When they got to the doors, Hydrus was waiting for her. She dropped her overnight bag and flew to his arms. The immortal took her to his room and the two lovers stayed up most of the night consoling each other. He was right; she kept the nightmares at bay. Most would say there was nothing special about his love, but to him she was the anchor that kept his feet firmly on the ground, with her kind and understanding disposition.

It was a tired family, plus one, that made it to breakfast the next morning. Hydrus decided on cold cereal and fruit for this morning's meal.

"How is everyone?" Grace asked in a chipper voice as she walked by the seated Harry and ruffled his hair.

"We had a bit of bad news last night," Remus answered. "I do not think any of us slept well." He ran his hand through his hair.

"I had bad dreams," chimed in Harry, who was chasing his cereal around his bowl. "I dreamed that Uncle Hydrus never came home."

"Oh, Prongslet, why didn't you wake me or your other uncles?" Hydrus asked, getting up and going to the child. He then picked him up, settled him on his hip and kissed the top of that dark hair.

"I was going to, but I got to your door and heard you talking to Grace, and I didn't want to disturb you," Harry said, putting his head on his uncle's shoulder.

"Unless the door is locked, which it wasn't, you can get me anytime, as long as you knock first. If my door is locked go to Padfoot or Moony. Okay?" he lifted the boy's chin and looked him in the eye.

"Okay."

Hydrus put the child back down and went to resume his breakfast. Slowly the tension faded and they finished their meal and vacated to the living room, Grace sitting next to Hydrus. Harry, not wanting to be left out, decided to play with his handheld next to Grace. They talked of simple business matters and soon everyone left for their own daily plans. Sirius stayed home, since he didn't have a nine-to-five job. Grace had to leave to get to class and Hydrus took her home, making plans to see her that night. The immortal popped back to the house, set Harry up with some schoolwork and warded himself in his room. He wanted to try and reason with Pandora one more time.

He pulled the flower vase out of his pocket and returned Pandora to herself, quickly roping her to the chair making sure she couldn't use her hands. He settled on his bed facing her. "Mrs. Lovegood, I am so sorry it has come to this," he said sadly.

A look of fear came across her face, as if it just dawned on her that her life might be in peril. "Are you going to kill me?" she whispered.

"No," he said softly, "not if I can help it. I truly do care for your family and I'll not see them hurt if I can prevent it. But Mrs. Lovegood, you can't keep the memories of me being the Master of Death. I will also need you to swear a vow that you will never try and kill anyone again, unless they are directly trying to hurt your family." he prayed she would take him up on this offer, not wanting to take huge parts of her memories.

"I'm not sure I can do that," she said with a bit more steel to her voice.

"I don't think you have a choice," the immortal said firmly.

"Tell me why? Why did you take my life's dream?" she demanded, with tears in her blue-grey eyes.

"I had no idea what you were working on," Hydrus said with a shake of his head. "If I had I would've invited you to join me. I didn't start my businesses for power. I did it to help the magical world progress."

"And The Times? Why start a newspaper if not to drum out the other publications?" she snapped, all fear gone now.

"The only paper I wanted to 'drum out' was the Daily Prophet. The Quibbler was never to have been effected. I thought it would weather the storm. It always has in the past." He shrugged.

"So you never even thought of the damage you would do to others. You're just a stupid man plowing ahead without thinking of the consequences," her shoulders sagged in defeat.

"I will help your family in any way I can, if you take the vow," he offered, glad to see he was getting through to her.

"But, you're still going to wipe my memories?" she accused.

"You left me with no choice. You killed me many times, that will plague you and you will try again. No, those memories have to go. I'm going to

talk to your husband about getting you help. Actually, let's make that part of the vow," he said, running his hand over his chin in thought.

Ten minutes of uncomfortable silence went by as Pandora tried to see her way out of her predicament. Hydrus just waited to see what she decided.

While he did have qualms about it, if he had to he would wipe himself completely from her mind and suggest to Xeno that it might be time to relocate. After all, it worked for Hermione and she didn't have the Elder Wand.

"No, I won't take your stupid vow; I'm not risking my magic to satisfy your needs. I will figure out a way to get the Hallows. There is nothing you can do to stop me," she finally said, firming her face and looking him dead in the eyes.

The immortal gave a heavy sigh and called up the Elder Wand. "I didn't want to do this," he said and then turned the wand to her head and stated in a clear voice, "Legilimens." He sorted through all her memories of him, the spells she did to terrorize him and Frostwell, and what he had to do with the Deathly Hallows.

He then turned the wand again and said, "Obliviate." Taking every one of the recollections and planting the suggestion that she gave up her spell-crafting peacefully to help the struggling Quibbler. He used the memories of her starting the new spells and built on that, so when she got back into spell-crafting that's what she'd work on.

"Stupify." She sagged in her bonds. Sighing once again, he turned her into the flower vase and put her back in his space.

He left the room with a heavy heart, put on a happy face and went to spend time with Harry. After correcting the schoolwork the two spent time flying, but soon enough it was time for him to face Xeno. Or maybe he could say he found her wandering the street near his house. No, that

was the coward's way.

Undecided on how he would tell his tale, he figured he would just go with the flow and made his way to the Quibbler. Asking at the front desk he was pointed to the man's office. Knocking on the door frame to alert the harried looking man, he announced his presence. "Mr. Lovegood?" he asked. When the man looked up he said, "We have to talk."

"Is it important? My wife is missing and I have to find her. She hasn't been well for some time and I fear what she will do," Xeno said as he looked back at the papers on his desk for clues as to where his beloved would be.

"You knew?" the shocked immortal asked, sitting heavily in the chair in front of the desk.

Xeno's head snapped up at that question. "I knew what?" he demanded.

"That your wife had snapped?" Hydrus said curiously with what he hoped was a kind voice.

"I knew she was upset about her spell-crafting, and I knew she was plotting revenge, though I don't know on whom," the editor confessed with a very contrite look on his face. "Now that you are here, I assume it was you." His shoulders dropped and his mind raced on what his wife could have done to this man.

"It was," the time traveler confirmed. "She kidnapped me two days ago and held me in a room in this very building. I swear she's fine; I have her in a safe place. The problem is; how are we going to get her help so she doesn't come after me again? I've already taken her memories of me from her mind, but it was pointed out that she is a very smart lady and might put it all together again." He gave the man a wary look, not sure how he would react to meddling with Pandora's mind.

Xeno's face contorted into a mask of anger, he sat up straighter and

glared at the immortal. "Are you even qualified enough to mess with the Obliviating spell?" he asked heatedly, knowing that an unqualified person could do great damage to his wife's intelligence.

"I am," was the succinct answer as Hydrus pulled his license out and showed to him. It was real, just not the dates. One of the few times he went to the Ministry as Hydrus Black in his timeline, it was part of the self-study he did on Aurors and Hit-wizards.

At that the blond man's shoulders sagged again. "She is okay? You didn't hurt her?"

"I never laid a finger on her, and after the torture she put me through I could have killed her and it would have been self-defense," Hydrus said calmly, yet firmly. He had to make it clear that the woman had done him wrong.

"Why would she torture you? My wife is a non-violent person," Mr. Lovegood said defensively, without much heat. He knew of the inventions Pandora cooked up during the war.

"She blames me for ruining her career in spell-crafting, that and she somehow got the notion that I hold the Deathly Hallows," he said, and pulled a regular invisibility cloak from his pocket space and handed it to the distraught man. "She saw me use this and jumped to conclusions, I think her anger got the better of her reasoning." He also pulled his holly wand to show it wasn't the Elder Wand. "Nothing I could say seemed to convince her that I am not the Master of Death."

Xeno examined the cloak and noted that it was indeed just a plain invisibility cloak. He handed it back and demanded, "Where is my wife?"

"Safe. I don't want her to hurt herself or others. I just want your family to prosper and be happy," the immortal said softly.

"Why? You don't even know us," the confused man asked, leaning on his

desk.

"I've read your paper, and heard stories about you and your family's brilliance. I only want to make up for the bad times my businesses have caused you, albeit unintentionally."

"What do you think we should do?" Mr. Lovegood asked, ready to do anything to help get back his wife.

"Move. Go study the Crumple-Horned Snorkack. Publish your paper in France. I have it on good authority that it will thrive there, if you don't pick on the government. Goblins are open season though," he added, hoping to lighten the mood. It didn't work. "I'll even fund you. As long as you are here, she will always have a niggling feeling that she should know something about me. It would be better if you relocate. Get her help. With the memory wipe she should be mostly normal, but she might take offence to someone else and try revenge again. She needs a mind-healer."

The idea of the Lovegood relocating was a bit depressing, knowing that if the man took him up on his offer that would be one more friend that Harry would never know. Maybe he'd see if Sirius could buy Dobby off Narcissa. His thoughts were interrupted by Mr. Lovegood's last attempt to protect his wife.

"Or I could go to the DMLE and report you for kidnapping my wife," Xenon said, though not very forcefully, like he knew it was an empty threat.

"And I would have to share my memories of her hitting me on the back of the head, tying me to a chair and throwing torture devices at me for the better part of a day," Hydrus rebutted firmly, though you could see from the remorse in his eyes that it was the last thing he wanted to do.

The tall, blond man slumped in his chair, he knew he was defeated and for the good of his family he would take this man up on his offer. They

spent hours going over what needed to be done, in the end Hydrus would give them the startup money and Xeno would sign a contract to not come back to Britain, unless it was imperative. They talked over how to get Pandora the help she needed. They went to Mr. Jasper's office and set up everything. Hydrus told Xeno that he would bring his wife home soon. He went home, to his room, and restored Pandora, but kept her knocked out. He then picked her up and Disapparated to the Rookery. He handed her to her husband and with a remorseful farewell he left. He went back to the Quibbler's office and to the room he had been tied up in. He gathered all of the inventions and put them in his pocket space and banished the chairs. Then with a lightened heart, he went home. Glad that this part of his life was finally over, nevertheless sad that he may never see them again.

He just hoped letting her go didn't come back to bite him in the arse later.

Hphphp

Well, now you know, and this is the end of that little drama. I hope the conclusion wasn't too anti-climactic for you; however I didn't want to kill off Luna's mom. Thanks again for all your support.

Very little is known about Pandora Lovegood only that she was Luna's mom who died in front of her and was a spell-crafter. I got her name off Harry Potter wiki. I know most people call her Selena, but I like the name Pandora.

25. It All Works Out

Chapter 25 It All Works Out

Thanks to alix33 and darrelledeam for looking this over. All mistakes are my own. I added a lot to this and didn't send it back to them.

Thanks again for your reviews, favorites and follows, plus, making this my number one story. I also want to thank those that pointed

out my mistakes.

I'm bringing the CCTV camera debate and satellites up earlier than they were.

The wonders of an artistic license.

Hphphp

The Lovegoods left without fanfare. They opened the Quibbler in France and stayed away from politics. Well, French politics, they still posted the conspiracy theories about the British Magical Ministry, which made the paper a big hit in their new country. As per their agreement, Xeno wrote to Hydrus that so far his wife was doing well with the memory wipe and there should be no repercussion coming back to haunt him. Mr. Lovegood explained that he used the excuse that the wrackspurts caused her to lose her memory and that they were taking over Britain, which is why they moved to France. That and to study the Crumple-Horned Snorkack. She accepted those reasons and started her spell-crafting again, on the things Hydrus had implanted in her mind, which made the immortal feel a little better. Xeno said that if she should reform to hating Hydrus then he would call and let him know.

"So they're okay?" Sirius asked, sitting in the recliner. They had just sent Harry to bed, and were now relaxing in the living room with tea and a lemon cake.

"Yeah," Hydrus answered, still leery about Pandora suddenly showing back up, it was something he would not forgive a second time. "It seems the Veelas have taken to the women. They tolerate Xeno well enough, but find Luna and Pandora to be a breath of fresh air." He read more of the letter and was thankful that little Luna seemed to be making many more friends there than she had here in England.

"Well, that is good news. How is everything in the Alley going?" Remus inquired from his comfy chair, sipping his tea.

"Pretty good, actually," the immortal beamed, putting the letter away, glad for the change in subject. "I've got all my businesses set and with the gambling we're making loads of money."

"Should we start back on the goblins?" the dogman wanted to know, excited at the prospect.

"Let's," was the equally excited reply. "And I have another idea or two to put the hurt on them as well." Hydrus rubbed his hands together, a gleam in his eyes.

"Am I going to like these ideas?" the werewolf asked, running his hand through his hair. He was always the Devil's Advocate.

"Oh, they're not bad. I just need someone to run them," Hydrus waved the younger man's concern away.

"Well, tell us and we can help," Sirius said, leaning forward. He liked all of Hydrus's ideas so far.

A wicked grin spread across the oldest Black's face and he answered, "Curse breaking." At their gobsmacked looks he laughed and added, "I have those blast guns. If I power them down lower so they only take care of low level curses and wards, then we can start a company to excavate the tombs and stuff. We just have to lower the bids. Plus, we can have a sister company that will hire out to put up some of the better wards that Hermione, George and I created in my last timeline." He sat back with a smug look.

"That is actually quite clever," Remus nodded, thinking over the people from his school year.

Sirius gave a bark of laughter and turned to Remus and the two last Marauders put their heads together and went over their former classmates. Hydrus threw his two Knuts' worth in, on if he ever heard of them in the future. It was his hope that by opening the curse breaking

business that Bill wouldn't have to work for the goblins. And some petty revenge. This should make it so the goblins would be reduced to just banking.

"There's only one problem I see," Remus said after they discussed the names. "The Ministry is going to want to regulate those guns. Two problems if you count the goblins protesting."

"Yeah, which is why I'm going to under-power them, get the patent and use them only for the business and not sell them retail," Hydrus agreed, thinking over the equations he would need to reduce the power and restrict it so it couldn't be set higher, he'd probably have to use parseltongue. "I asked Mr. Jasper and he said the goblins don't have the monopoly on tomb raiding. So they can protest all they want, nothing will come of it. And if they try to say they'll rebel then this better society will stop them." After what had happened with the rumors of the Dark Lady That Wasn't and the way they all stood to fight, he felt much better about the public fighting back with little to no loss.

"That should make the Wizengamot feel better, but how are you going to keep them from the public? There might be an uproar if people find their wards aren't any good," Sirius added thoughtfully, rubbing his goatee with worry.

"Perhaps, but vows and contracts to take care of that," the werewolf said.

"I'll get with Mr. Jasper tomorrow," the immortal decided. "Hey, Sirius, do you think you can buy Dobby from Narcissa?" he asked out of the blue.

"Shouldn't be a problem, she's always going on about what a horrible elf he is. Why?" the younger Black asked.

"He was a great friend to me in my timeline, and I think he'll make a good friend to Harry."

"Okay, I'll talk to her tomorrow." And they all went back to their evening activities. Hydrus pulled out his book-reader and read over the blast guns schematics while the two dogmen battled it out on Mortal Kombat. Sirius had finally beaten Remus at the game and now they tied scores more often.

Sirius did buy Dobby and it took Tippy to explain the household rules about being a free elf to get the excitable little guy to calm down. He was a wonderful addition to the family. He spent most of his time working at the orphanage, for pay, but lived with them. His worship of Harry wasn't as strong as it had been in Hydrus's timeline, but his devotion to the Great Harry Potter was still fun to witness. Poor Harry had to talk the little elf down and soon enough they became a force to be reckoned with on the tag-teaming pranks they pulled on the adults.

It took a lot of paperwork, contracts, plans, downgrading and bribes, but, they finally got the curse breaking business up and running. They made sure that The Times ran an article on just what they planned and the vows taken about the guns to be used only in excavation sites. Anyone caught in public with the blast guns would be brought up on criminal charges.

"So, how many did you have to bribe to get the sentencing reduced to two month?" Hydrus asked Sirius when the law was passed. It had taken months to get the use of the guns through the Wizengamot. Plus now they had to give the model to the DMLE for legal reasons.

"Not that many actually, remember there are Half-bloods on the Wizengamot now and they understand the need to progress, not like when it was nothing but bigoted old fuss buckets that were there before the war," the dogman replied with a waving of his hand.

"Right, I forgot they did lineage test to see who would fill the empty

seats," the immortal said, rubbing the back of his head sheepishly. "Do you think they'll get Muggle-borns in the rest of the seats?"

"They're still debating that," Sirius answered. "They feel that it is too much change at once, what with the anti-discrimination laws that are on the docket. They're afraid they're losing control."

"Well, here's to hoping," Hydrus said, pretending to raise a glass. The two went on to talk about who they would hire to run the companies.

They chose a Muggle-born by the name of Jake Sullivan, who was a year below Sirius and Remus, to run the business. He was a Ravenclaw that was always reading and going on about the Egyptians and other lost civilizations. He had gone back to the non-magical world and got his education in Archaeology, so he was set on doing it both the magical and non-magical way. In time he would have a large crew and make everyone loads of money. There were even a few goblins in his employ, ones that rebelled against the goblin nation. They had to take vows to protect the secrets of the company. It took a lot to get Hydrus to stop ranting about them, but he finally conceded that not all goblins were alike.

The sister corporation was opened before the curse breaking one. They hired a Pure-blood named Harvey Lyons, who had been in Slytherin, but was never an extremist. He came to them when rumor got out they were looking for someone to run the establishment. His family had never been wealthy, but they made do. That company prospered quickly and had a small group of employees, who all had to sign contracts and take vows never to reveal the spells they used. They were also in charge of installing the alarm system that Hydrus marketed.

Just as the time traveler had planned Gringotts was now downsized to banking. They couldn't compete with the lower bids and better equipment, and they were losing money with their gambling. They

protested loudly, but were quieted by the public threatening to take their banking abroad.

Albus had tried to talk Hydrus into joining the Order. The twinkly-eyed man approached him one Saturday in Fun For All. "Hydrus, my boy, I am glad I ran into you. Are you sure you will not come to one of our meetings?" he asked as he stopped Hydrus from going home after a long day's work.

"Headmaster, it is good to see you again," the immortal nodded politely. "I'll have to decline your offer, yet again. I've told you I don't think there are any malicious happenings going on. It's just one big prank. Now, if there had been more than one curse thrown in the Alley, I'd sign up in a minute, however, there haven't even been the words in the sky in weeks." He tried once again to make his point clear.

"Perhaps, you are correct and I am merely overreacting, still, it pays to be vigilant," the old man said, stroking his beard in thought. "Alas, I may be jumping at shadows or so my friends tell me," he conceded. Then his twinkle was back and he said, "I see your business is doing well, very good, young man, very good indeed."

"Thank you, Albus. Did you ever get the Board to approve TV's in the common rooms?" he asked, really wanting to know.

"It took a lot of persuasion, but, yes, I did indeed succeed. I have to say some of my staff is most put out with me," he said jovially, like he was happy they were upset with him. "It is one of the reasons for my visit today. Can you direct me to the more family oriented movies?"

"Of course," Hydrus said and they went to the tapes and took an hour to go over the best movies for young people. Soon they parted and Hydrus went home and told everyone what occurred. They all had a good laugh and spent the night reminiscing about their Hogwarts days and how

having entertainment in the common rooms would have kept them out of trouble, maybe.

A short narration

The Order of the Phoenix only convened five times. The vow was updated to no turning on the Order, instead of the leader. When nothing further happened in the Alley, they disbanded, though now many of those 'old friends' thought maybe Albus Dumbledore was getting too old to lead. He was still firm in his belief that Voldemort was not gone, and had no problem telling them such; though he did say that recent events might not be the work of Tom.

Time passed and the Wizarding World grew and flourished. There was now a movie company and the films were spectacular. Since they could use real magic and not special effects—though they used them as well—the quality was overwhelmingly better than their non-magical counterparts. Theaters were opened in Diagon Alley and Hogsmeade and the weekend features were always sold out. The films were created with a pensieve effect, much better than the regular 3D effect. You felt as if you were part of the action, yet never had to leave your seat.

The film writers, like the book writers, started with combining the non-magical with the magical. Imagine Indiana Jones with a wand. Soon enough they incorporated the new bestsellers to scripts and those authors were making money hand over foot.

The reason it had taken so long was because they still had to get people to play parts and learn the art of movie making, and it took time and training. They hired a company from the Muggle world to teach the actors how to perform and show the filming crew how to actually use the equipment. The non-magicals were confused, but the money was good, so they did their best to get these people's act together. The industry hired

indiscriminately, every walk of life was used, though they did tend to get the prettier people to sign on. The Pure-bloods took a bit of talking to and many of the widows became leading ladies, including Narcissa.

Unfortunately, Draco became a child star and his attitude was taken to new heights.

They created a movie studio in the hills of Scotland and warded it to the gills to prevent any non-magical from finding it. There were apartment buildings erected for the crews and a small village was soon a thriving community. Foreigners flocked to the studio to get hired on.

The cartoon company that followed was just as enjoyable and used the same methods of training. They too used magic to create outstanding pieces of art. They copied many of the non-magicals' ideas and took them to greater heights. Then they used the children's stories such as Tales of Beedle the Bard and created magical (pun intended) masterpieces, again with the pensieve like reality. Since they could incorporate the same spells that were used on portraits, their cartoons moved fluidly and you could hardly tell they were drawn at all.

Hydrus made sure to keep all of the Wizarding movies and cartoons in stock with his non-magical ones. Both were still great sellers, though the tapes didn't have the same pensieve effects the theater did, they were still riveting stories.

There was even talk of a Wizarding Television Network, but they were having problems keeping the non-magical airwaves from picking them up. Once that little kink was solved then news, education and drama would be in every magical household. The Wizengamot had a committee formed to monitor the non-magical stations to see what they aired and how they were useful. Hydrus was a bit wary about a Ministry run station, but he would see about getting a private one running if they

started to get too biased.

With the blackmail and the bribe money, Sirius kept many Pure-blood laws from passing, which weren't many since the Pure-blood bigots were a minority and mostly comprised of widows. He kept pushing to get the seats filled with whoever was next in line for them, even if they were from a long line of squibs. His argument was that they couldn't be efficient if they weren't full. He had many people on his side, and the debates were slowly wearing the old fogies down.

Remus stayed out of the magical world for the most part. He ran his book store and made a comfortable living. With the cellar being as strong as it was and Wolfsbane given to him each full moon, his tearing up of his own face was reduced and he didn't start to turn grey, like he had in Hydrus's timeline.

They were both still dating their girlfriends and there was talk on Sirius's part about settling down. Laura and Sarah were given the secret, but the flat was still utilized for the mail and alone time. It had taken a lot to convince the immortal, but it was pointed out that he was being a hypocrite, since Grace already knew the secret and she couldn't protect her mind. Laura moved in to the house when talks of marriage were bandied about.

Hydrus was known as a financial powerhouse. His businesses and investments made him one of the richest men in both worlds. Many were thankful to him for bringing them entertainment and educating them on the non-magical world.

What used to be called Blood Traitors were happy to finally be proven right. They always knew Muggles were moving forward while they stayed stagnant. Hydrus was more than happy to provide them with solid evidence that they needed to be more careful or the Statute of Secrecy

would be blown apart.

The Times still ran non-magical news, so when the CCTV camera debates started in that world the Wizarding world held its breath. If this were to pass then they would no longer be able to use magic in the non-magical world, for fear of being seen on one of those cameras. The Wizengamot had emergency meetings all during the debates; they kept a very close eye on them.

When the CCTV cameras were mounted on almost every street corner in London, laws were passed forbidding Apparation in the Muggle world. This caused an enterprising young Muggle-born woman to open a car lot, with a handy driving school on the side. She went from a poor salesperson to a rich woman in under a month. No one knew that Hydrus gave her the startup loan.

A traffic department in the Ministry was formed, and parking garages were built and warded, since there were CCTV cameras mounted at the defunct phone booth they used to use. New laws and regulations had to be passed quickly and once more they turned to the Muggle-born to help them understand these new changes.

Other laws were passed about using any magic on the pavements of non-magical London. Anyone caught would be fined and if they persisted then they would spend some time in Azkaban. The Statute of Secrecy must be upheld. There were even talks of using similar magical cameras in the streets of Diagon Alley and Hogsmeade.

Their greatest fear was the satellites that were popping up all over the sky. Wards were being created to fold the air above magical places and houses to prevent these satellites from picking up the blanks caused by the repelling wards. It was still a work in progress, but the Wizengamot and the Unspeakables were working full-time at keeping the Wizarding

world hidden.

Because of all the changes no more Dark Forces came on the scene. Well one, but he was so minor it was ridiculous. Mr. Umbridge decided that the Wizarding world did his little girl wrong and tried to rise as a Dark Lord. The Pure-bloods laughed at him because of his former job and lack of title or money. Even his former House—Hufflepuff— was used against him. The first time he tried to curse one of them, the Muggle-raised quickly captured him and turned him over to the DMLE. He now occupied a cell next to Dolores.

More time passed and now the Muggle-borns were treated as first class citizens, even getting good jobs in the Ministry and they claimed the empty seats on the Wizengamot. It wouldn't surprise Hydrus if one was voted Minister when Bagnold left. Well, maybe not quite that soon, but he was ever hopeful. The last and only Muggle-born Minister was drummed out of office by a Black. Since the Blacks were no longer a Dark family, that won't happen this time. Even some of the other Dark families were following in the footsteps of the Blacks and becoming Grey. With solid proof that Muggle-borns were from a long line of squibs, there was even talk of betrothals to Half-bloods that had a Muggle-born parent. It was a start.

The orphanage stayed strong. Though there were never more than twenty squib children at a time, the donations from the families kept them afloat. They even started taking in non-magical children, making sure that the squibs never told them about their lives before they came to Barkley's. Counseling was still mandatory for every child.

When cell phones came out Hydrus jumped on that and opened his final store in Diagon Alley. He used the connection and payment plans that he and George had utilized in his timeline. Instead of a cell tower, there was

a large crystal that kept the phones from being picked up by non-magicals. The magical world flocked to the store, wanting to gain a new way of talking that didn't require the Floo or stationary phone. It was the only one of Hydrus's stores to have an annex in Hogsmeade, much to the frustration of the staff of Hogwarts, though he was thinking of putting a Fun For All Pranks there.

Present time

Everything was going good, and when Harry was eight, the oldest Black decided it was time to sit him down and tell what happened to his parents. So one morning after a nice English breakfast he took Harry into the living room and threw up a silencing charm.

"Take a seat, kiddo," the immortal said, pointing to the recliner. He waited until the boy sat and then firmed his resolve. "You know how you've always asked what happened to your parents and why some people stare at you."

"Yeah?" was the cautious answer that sounded like a question.

"I'm going to tell you what happened that night," Hydrus said and taking a deep breath he started his recounting of what happened the night the Potters died. He told of betrayal of a friend, the Dark Lord, the death of the Potters, the rebound curse, the argument he had with Hagrid, the scuffle he got into with Sirius and finally the kidnapping out of the 'safe place' baby Harry was taken too. He left out anything having to do with Snape, since the child would never meet the man, he didn't need to know.

Hydrus went on to tell him how his Uncle Padfoot had stopped the newspapers and the authors from making Harry out to be the next Merlin, but said that some people still thought such. He told him about his fan mail and that he would have to start answering it.

"Why did you let this... Hagrid take me in the first place?" the little boy asked in a small voice. There were tears running down his face and he had moved to his uncle's side during the telling of his parents' death. Now, he was cuddled with the man that always made him feel safe. He was majorly relieved that he wasn't depicted as a great hero, thanks to his protective uncles.

"I knew where he was going, so I figured that I would find you and kidnap you. Besides, Hagrid is a half-giant, there was no way I could fight him and not hurt you at the same time," Hydrus answered honestly, giving him a comforting hug.

"Oh, where did he take me?"

"You know the Dursleys? That family we keep showing you pictures of and telling you about? Yeah, that's where the Headmaster was going to leave you, but he had a very good reason. That reason came to me when I picked you up and brought you here," the oldest uncle said firmly.

"What reason?"

"There are wards that are tuned to your mum's blood. Since I have some of her blood in my background when I kidnapped you the wards bonded to me," he explained honestly. "These wards keep you hidden from anyone who will do you harm." He truly hoped that Harry wouldn't ask how they were related.

"Oh, why did I need those wards?" now the questions were purely curious. The tears were dry and the little boy's face morphed into inquisitive.

"I told you about the Dark Lord that was terrorizing the country, right? The one that died from the rebound, remember?" He waited for the nod.

"When he came to your house and killed your parents and tried to kill you, a Dark curse was left on your forehead. We, Sirius, Remus and I, got

rid of it as soon as we could. But the Headmaster didn't know how, so he thought if he put you under the protections of wards keyed to your mother's blood, then you wouldn't be overcome by the curse. His intentions were good." Though his methods left a lot to be desired, was the bitter thought. It's a good thing we got that horcrux out in time.

They had found out that Harry wasn't a parseltongue, which was news they actually partied over. Hydrus killed the basilisk three years ago and sold the corpse to the dwarfs, making a healthy donation to Hogwarts. It had been so easy, all he did was sneak in some roosters and it was done before five minutes were up. Much better than the last time.

"Oh, Okay, thanks for that, I don't think I'd want a curse on my forehead," Harry said with a nod. He understood why this headmaster did what he did, so he wouldn't hold it against him. Besides, he had the family he wanted. He was very thankful that his uncle came and got him, those pictures of the Dursleys made him do full body shudders each time they were brought out. "Does that mean that the Dursleys are bad people? Is that why you took me away from them?"

"Well, I told you that they hate magic, right?" Again he waited for the nod. "They're scared of it and I was worried that they might take it out on you."

"How did you know that?"

"I researched them when I learned of my family," he hedged. It was decided long ago that they wouldn't take the chance of creating a paradox by telling Harry who Hydrus really was. As the child grew all talks of time traveler's timeline were under silencing charms. They never spoke of his real past outside of planning.

"Oh, so why was this man after me?" he asked as if that just caught up with him. There was a look of mild fear on his face, he was trying to be a

brave boy and not show how scared he was at the thought.

"There was a prophecy and at the time Voldemort and Dumbledore thought it pertained to you. I'm not going to tell you what it said, because it is all over and I was the one to fulfill it." He gave the child a proud smile to relieve his fears that he was trying so hard to hide.

"So this Voldyshorts is gone?" there was a hopeful note in that question.

"Yep, completely and utterly gone. No coming back for him," Hydrus said with every bit of confidence he could put in his voice. He had used the Ring to call the shade of Tom Riddle and mocked him for an hour, yeah it was mean, but he wanted to make sure that the man was truly gone.

"That's a relief," Harry sighed and slumped against his uncle's side.

"If you have any questions then ask any one of us. We'll be more than happy to give you answers," Hydrus said, giving him one more hug.

"I will," Harry said as he got down from the sofa. "I'm going to go and finish my homework, and then can I call Mione?"

"Sure, bring me your homework first and we'll go over it, then you can call her." he was very proud of how smart his younger self was. He dispelled the silencing charm and gave Harry hair ruffling.

"Okay," the green-eyed boy said as he ran from the room, only to slow down when Hydrus yelled at him. Because if there is one thing kids never learn, it's to not run in the house.

Grace wandered in and sat on the sofa. "How did it go?" she asked leaning her head on his shoulder.

"Better than I thought it would," he confessed, running his hand up and down her arm, taking comfort in her presence.

Grace had moved in about the same time Laura did, when Harry was just turning six. The only girlfriend that remained outside the house was Sarah, because she didn't want to lose her independence.

"I noticed you had the silencing charm up, more secrets?" she asked in a soft voice.

"No, not really, but again, I would rather give you plausible deniability," he reasoned. He was still trying to come up with a way to protect her mind, but, until he did, he would keep his secrets.

"So you're still my special agent?" she said playfully, swatting his chest.

"If it makes you feel better to think so, then, yes, I am Secret Agent Man," he said, striking a sitting pose by deepening his voice and puffing out his chest.

"Oh, you," she huffed and hit him again. The two dissolved into chuckles and changed the topic to school and business. The other adults came in one by one and joined the subject being discussed. Harry showed up around forty-five minutes later with homework in hand. He and Hydrus went to the study and went over the well done job.

Harry excused himself to call his best friend and talked with her for hours. He then called Ron and talked Quidditch and when he was done he called Neville and talked plants and family. Cell phones were Merlin sent. His circle of friends was small, but they were a tight knit group. He got on well with all the Weasleys and Neville, but his best friend was Hermione. He could relate to her better since they were both studious.

Harry had grown into the caring young man Hydrus wanted him to be.

He was never repressed and hardly ever in the spotlight. The blood wards were as strong as they could be, hiding him from people who would mean them harm. After the talk about what happened to his parents, he asked many questions about that night and had a clear understanding on just how much his uncles played parts in his upbringing.

Hermione, under the force of Harry, was no longer the bossy know-it-all.

She made friends in her school and flourish to a well behaved little girl,

who just happened to have a male best friend. She was still a genius, but never flaunted it to her peers, instead she did private studying, nagging Harry to do the same.

Ron proved to be a good friend who was now fine with how his family lived. He was a good chess player for his age and never had to get hand-me-downs from his brothers, which went a long way in boosting his self-esteem.

Neville under the loving care of his parents never had a confidence problem and was an outgoing young man who loved to play pirates with his friends.

A few months later Hydrus was starting to feel depressed. He moped around the house and listlessly went about his business. The adults all sat him down one night after Harry went to bed and confronted him.

"What is up with you?" Sirius started off bluntly. "You've been moping about for weeks now."

"I feel useless. I've done everything I've set out to do. The Wizarding world is a utopia now. Muggle-born and -raised are thriving. Anti-discrimination laws have been passed and there is no more hiring on blood status. The entertainment business has gone further than I ever thought it would. All the corrupt people are dead, gone or in Azkaban. I feel as if I've done it all, now there's nothing left for me to do," he whined, keeping his complaints brief, since Grace didn't know his story. He shoulders sagged and he slouched in his seat, only to straighten up when Grace hit him on the head.

"Idiot," she scolded, causing everyone to chuckle at him. "You still have Harry to raise and me to cater too. You should be happy that you can relax now. Git." She stuck her nose in the air and held that pose for a moment before breaking down and laughing.

"Besides," Laura offered, she had been privy to many of the men's secrets (with a vow of course), since she could protect her mind, "there is always room for improvement. Are you an inventor or not?"

Hydrus perked up at that, he had gotten so caught up in changes, laws, gambling, investments and his businesses that he had put all of his inventions to the wayside. There were hundreds of things he could market that he had stashed in his pocket space, he had been trying to keep it in line with the non-magical world that he didn't even think that it would boost moral if they surpassed that world.

This was the new start he had been working for and he grabbed it with both hands. More futuristic models of cell phone, laptops, computers, household appliances and entertainment devices hit the shelves in his stores. All the learning items he had built Harry over the years went on sale as well. He spent a good deal of his time in the lab making them better than ever. He felt useful again.

Time moved on again, and it was time for the Hogwarts letter to come.

Hydrus and the other uncles sat Harry down and explained a few things to him. Laura took Grace out for a girls' night, so they didn't have to talk behind a charm. Grace accepted it with good grace.

"Harry, you're going to be going to Hogwarts soon. There are a few things we want to warn you about. One is the Headmaster still believes that Voldemort is out there and trying to come back. No matter how much proof we give him, he is still under this delusion. So, what that means to you is he still thinks that you are the boy hero of the prophecy," Hydrus explained, after they got comfortable with some butterbeer and biscuits.

"Is he barmy?" the green-eyed boy asked, confused. He reached over and grabbed one of the biscuits and nibbled it while waiting for an answer.

"Yeah, I'd say he is a little off his rocker," the immortal agreed with a

small smile. "But he is still a man of power, so some respect must be given. The only reason we're telling you is so you can stand firm in your belief that you are safe."

Nothing they achieved caused Dumbledore to lose any of his positions.

He was still in charge of Hogwarts, the ICW and the Wizengamot;

however, he backed most of their platforms and helped them move the

Wizarding world to where it was today, even going so far as to add or

update classes in the Hogwarts curriculum to educate on the changes. He

repeatedly expressed his pride of Sirius about the reform he did on his

family and always had words of praise for Hydrus. The only thing the

men could hold against him was the diehard belief that Tom was still out

there. It was a good thing that Dumbledore still thought Harry lived with

the Dursleys. With the pictures and reports from Sirius he never

concluded it wasn't true.

"So, what does that mean for me? What can I expect?" the inquisitive boy asked.

"We're not completely sure," confessed Sirius, rubbing his chin. "We think

it'll mean nothing but him keeping a closer eye on you." Even if the

Headmaster hid Flamel's Stone in the school, there was no Voldemort to

fight, no Snape to suspect, so there was a good chance that Harry

wouldn't feel the need to protect it.

"So we want to say that if you're going to break the rules, then make sure you're not caught," Hydrus added with a wink.

"And make sure you keep up on your studies," Remus added.

"I can do that," Harry said with a big grin and a wink at his favorite uncle, causing everyone to chuckle.

"Also," Hydrus said, when the chuckles died, "he still believes you grew up with the Dursleys. If he asks about them tell him everything you have

been told. You don't have to lie, mostly, you can tell him you grew up with family and had a happy childhood."

That caused Harry's brow to furrow. He really didn't like lying, but, if it kept his family safe, he would. So he gave his nod of agreement and they spent most of the night going over the Dursleys' life as they knew it, from Hydrus's investigators. The only part they would have to change is that that family lived here in London; however, since they were supposed to be in hiding Harry wouldn't be able to tell where. If he kept it mostly factual then he should have no problems with the Headmaster.

After that long night of talking Hydrus went to his room, and while he waited for his love to come home he went over his future plan. It was a plan he shared with no one, since they would not be included. He made sure all his i's were dotted and all his t's were crossed, so that when the time came to implement it, he could without messing it up.

## 26. The Next Great Adventure

### Chapter 26 The Next Great Adventure

Thanks to alix33 and darrelldeam for looking this over. All mistakes are my own.

So I decided to close the tale. Thanks for everyone who supported me throughout the telling of this story. If I missed someone you want to know about, let me know and I'll add them.

Hphphp

The Hogwarts' letter came to the old flat they still rented for just that purpose. The whole family went to Diagon Alley to get supplies. They made their way to Gringotts (Hydrus waited outside) with the key Sirius asked the Headmaster for and then to the shops. The first shop they went to was Ollivander's and Harry got a wand of holly and griffin feather. Hydrus had held his breath about the wands, not knowing if the holly

and phoenix feather still worked. The immortal figured that wand went inert when he came back in time, depending on how long ago it was made. Maybe Fawkes just didn't give up another feather, or maybe it was still in the back. He never found out.

So they left the wand shop and gathered everything Harry needed, and then some, they went home. Harry studied very hard that month and was now prepared for school. He was very excited after all the stories Uncles Padfoot and Moony told him about them and his parents. He had bought a lot of prank items in Fun For All Pranks and now was determined to have fun.

Harry and his family met up with his friends and their families at King's Cross station on September 1, 1991, and mass chaos ensued. With animals, trunks and the Weasleys running late there was a lot of commotion. Excited chatter was going around the families, good-byes and good wishes were thrown in. Hugs and kisses were given and the kids soon boarded the Hogwarts Express, leaving all of the adults behind in various degrees of cheerfulness and sadness.

The Longbottoms left for their jobs. The Grangers also had to work. The Weasleys went home. Hydrus suggested they go to tea and Sirius and Remus agreed. The women declined joining them, since both had work. So the men went to a cozy cafe outside the station.

"So how do you think it'll go?" Sirius asked, after the server left.

"I think it will be okay," Remus said, taking a sip of his tea.

"I'm not too worried," Hydrus added. "With no Dark Lord lurking about there's no reason for the Flamels to hide the stone. Snape isn't going to be there, so that's a bonus. I wonder whatever happened to him." Maybe he'd sic his detectives on the man. Nay, as long as he is gone Hydrus really didn't care.

"I really don't care," the dogman snarled, echoing the immortal's thoughts. "I care what's going to happen to Harry. What house do you think he'll be in?" He was worried about the boy getting sorted into Slytherin. Not that he still thought that House was evil, more like he was concerned about the reception Harry would get. There were still Pure-blood bigot children and most of them got sorted into the house of the snakes.

"Ravenclaw," the immortal answered. That hadn't been an option in his timeline, but Harry with the help of his uncles and Hermione had had the bookworm brought out in him. Besides Quidditch, reading was young man's favorite pastime.

"I think Hufflepuff is a good option as well," added the werewolf. "He is very hard-working and loyal to his friends and family."

"Why not Gryffindor?" Sirius whinged. "He's brave. Remember all those times kids picked on Hermione? He stuck up for her." He was proud of his nephew.

"Oh, that's a possibility as well," the time traveler said, mockingly patting the man on the head.

"Well, I guess we'll just have to wait and see," Sirius said, finishing off his scone. "I've got to get back home. I told Laura I'd help her with research on one of her projects."

"I have to get to the bookstore," Remus stated, wiping his hands on a napkin.

"Yeah, I told Grace I'd be home before noon and I've got to check on the stores," Hydrus said, waving down the server for the bill. When it came he paid and the three men left their separate ways.

It was a few days before they got a letter from Harry. It read:

Uncles Hydrus, Padfoot and Moony

The ride on the train was fun. Me and my friends all stuck together and ate far more candy than we should have. Hermione yelled at us and her and Ron got into an argument, until Neville stopped them. I was just having fun listening to them, but Neville doesn't like it when they fight. The twins were great; they made sure no one bullied us.

Speaking of bullies, Draco Malfoy came by our compartment and he is one snobby git. He went on and on about how he's more famous than me. I told him I didn't care, but he wouldn't listen. He just kept bragging about being a star and filthy rich, until Ron threatened to punch him in the nose. He ran screaming that someone was trying to ruin his pretty face. The twins just thought the whole thing was funny, well, so did I, but Ron didn't.

The castle is brilliant. We got to ride in boats across the Black Lake and I saw the Giant Squid. Hagrid was emotional and cried when he saw me. Professor McGonagall is just as strict as Uncle Padfoot said she would be. The Great Hall was wonderful with the sky ceiling and all the candles. It was weird that there are no electric lights, but it was also kinda cool.

We were so scared about the sorting and I think you guys are right gits for not telling us it was just a hat. I got sorted into Ravenclaw with Hermione. She was disappointed because she wanted to go to Gryffindor. But I got her calmed down. Now she's just happy to be with a friend.

Neville got into Hufflepuff and he's really happy there. Ron, like the rest of his family, was sorted into Gryffindor. He was upset, 'cause he thought me and Hermione would stop talking to him. I told him he was stupid to think that and he calmed down.

Ravenclaw has a separate room for the telly and you can't go in there

unless you prove your homework is done. It has a history channel for magicals, which is way better than listening to boring old Binns. There's also a theater for weekends, again you have to have your school work finished. I don't know why they don't have electric lights. It would make reading so much easier on the eyes. Maybe you guys can write a letter to Dumbledore.

You were right; the Headmaster is barmy. He keeps saying weird things. He looked disappointed that I was sorted into the house of the wise. Professor Flitwick fell out of his chair he was so happy. I don't know why, since I'm just a kid.

There are a lot of good people here and they all seem friendly. I met all of my dorm mates and none of them think I'm some boy hero. They just see me as Harry.

Well, I've got to get to Transfiguration now. I don't want to be late.

See you at Christmas.

Love Harry

Hydrus put the letter down and smiled. "See? I told you he'd get into Ravenclaw," he said smugly, holding out his hand.

Sirius groaned and handed over two galleons, which caused the other two to laugh.

"What are you laughing about?" Grace asked as she came into the room and sat next to Hydrus, kissing him on the cheek.

"Sirius lost a bet."

"Oh, well, he should know better than to bet with you," she said with a mock look of disapproval. Everyone laughed and settled into eating their breakfast of pancakes and sausage.

Time went on in such a flurry of businesses, politics, gambling, and fiancées that they hardly noted half the year passed. Now it was time to

pick up Harry for Christmas. So Hydrus, Remus and Sirius got into the car and drove through the snow to get to King's Cross. They waited outside the barrier with the Grangers, making small talk about the kids. Soon enough, in pairs and small groups, the kids started to appear.

"Uncle Hydrus!" came the yell from the dark-haired boy as he torpedoed into said man's side.

Hydrus picked up his younger self and twirled him around. "Hello, Harry, did you have a good term?"

"Don't do that, I'm not a baby." He hit his uncle's shoulder and then beamed. "You bet, I had fun and I made loads of friends," Harry said as he was lowered to the ground.

"What about us?" whinged Sirius with a mocking frown.

"I missed you too," assured the pre-teen with a laugh as he gave each of his uncles a hug.

"Where's your stuff?" the immortal asked.

"Hedwig flew home and Percy shrunk my trunk." Harry patted his pocket.

"Go and say your good-byes and we'll wait for you."

"Nay, I already did. They have my number," the green-eyed boy waved it away.

"Right, let's go home," Sirius said as he turned towards the entrance.

So they went to the car and Harry prattled on about his new friends and classes. He swore he liked Potions the best, which made Hydrus smirk.

They got to the house and Grace and Laura got hugs and kisses. The whole family sat to a nice roast beef dinner and listened to Harry tell about his year so far.

They trooped into the living room and everyone took their seats. Laura and Sirius now shared a double Lazyboy. Hydrus, Grace and Harry claimed the sofa. Remus, who was now single, still had his comfy chair.

"So," Hydrus said slowly, "you didn't have any problems with the Headmaster?"

"Nope, well, he did call me to his office to tell me I needed to spend the holiday with the Dursleys. I told him I was more than happy to spend time with my family," Harry said smugly. He was just glad he didn't have to lie, he was terrible at it.

"He didn't bother you at any other time?" Sirius asked, leaning forward, a bit worried that the child might be harassed.

"Nope, he mostly just sat at the Head Table and twinkled at everyone," the green-eyed boy said with a big smile. "After I got sorted into Ravenclaw, he paid very little attention to me."

"I heard Ravenclaw has some bullies. Did anyone bother you?" the still worried dogman said.

"Oh, they tried, but me and Hermione set them right." And he told the story about the first time they were cornered and how they punched the bullies in the stomach, got away and told Professor Flitwick. The adults commended him on that. Hydrus was especially proud; he never would have told a teacher when he was younger.

The talk went on until the late hours, when they finally sent Harry to bed. The women decided they would go and talk about girl things and give the men some time to do their secret sharing. Grace still couldn't guard her mind, so she left without a fuss.

"See, I told you it would be okay," Hydrus said, completely elated that his younger self wasn't suffering in school like he had. It was the whole reason he came back. Everything else was just a bonus.

"I know, I know, but I can't help but worry after everything you told us," Sirius said, leaning back in his chair.

"I get that," the immortal said, "but when there was no mention of

forbidden corridors or anything like that..." he trailed off with a shrug.

"Yeah, yeah, I get it. I'm just being overly worried," the dogman said, waving his hand in the air.

"Seems to me like you two have changed position," the werewolf added, looking between the two men. "It used to be that Hydrus was the more worried one and Sirius was the carefree one. I wonder what happened."

"Hmmm, you could be right," Hydrus said, rubbing his chin. "I just feel calm about the whole thing."

"I'm more concerned about the bullies than I am Dumbledore. I know we," he waved his hand between him and Moony, "and the others made Snivellus's life hell in school. Now that I understand that what we did was wrong, I can't help but worry."

"Oh," was Remus's only reply as he too thought back on all the shenanigans they pulled at Hogwarts.

"Right, I'm going to go and find my lovely lady and head to bed. I'll see you guys in the morning." And with that, Hydrus got up and left the room. This day set the pattern for the whole time Harry was in Hogwarts.

Many years later

## HARRY POTTER THE NEW MINISTER OF MAGIC

In a landslide victory, Mr. Potter has become our new Minister. Given the history of this wonderful man we can expect great things for him. Mr. Potter has passed many laws to protect us from the technology of the non-magical world. With the backing of his famous uncle, Hydrus Black, our world now flourishes. Many of us are grateful for everything this family has done. Now with the Leader of the Light in office we can expect a great deal more. What can we...

Hydrus set The Times down, after reading the rest of the article. He thought over the last forty years with a fond smile of reminiscence.

Harry never had any issues with the Headmaster. No trials to overcome, no rumors to dispel, no jealous friends to fight with, no DADA professors out to kill him, just the normal teenage life, with girls, Quidditch (he made the team second year), and homework. The only adversary he had was Malfoy and that was only because the young star didn't like to be second best. Somethings never change.

Hermione, Neville and Ron were great friends to the only Potter, plus he was the most popular boy in school with his charm and manners. It was with the help of his friends, along with his uncles, that he was where he was today.

Harry married the lovely Susan Bones, who he took to the Yule ball in his fourth year. The Triwizard Tournament still happened, but Harry was merely a spectator. He made friends with many of the guest and that gave him a lot of clout in their countries.

Susan was also a major part of his political backing, with her Aunt Amelia being so high up in the Ministry. They so far had two boys, who Harry named Hydrus James and Sirius Remus. Susan was making noises that she wanted a girl. They lived in Potter Manor, which was found under a family Fidelius charm. Hydrus never knew about it in his timeline, but was happy that Harry now had an ancestral place to raise his family.

Harry figured out that Hydrus was a time traveler in his fifth year, but Hermione warned him of possible paradoxes, so he never confronted the man. He was just happy to have him in his life. He never knew that Hydrus Black was born Harry Potter, he just puzzled out that he came from the future and was probably a family friend.

Hermione went on to get her Masters in Charms and Transfiguration. She worked hard at the Ministry, with Harry's backing, to get creature rights

for house elves, centaurs, goblins (much to Hydrus's displeasure) and many other magical creatures. She succeeded with the house elves and centaurs and others, but failed with the goblins, (much to Hydrus's pleasure) because they wouldn't compromise. She married a Pure-blood and had two girls. Her husband wanted to try one more time for a boy and she was more than happy to practice.

Neville did mostly the same as he had in Hydrus's timeline. He married Hannah Abbott and they now owned the Leaky Cauldron. He had his Masters in Herbology and was waiting for Professor Sprout to retire. He was content in his life, with his wife and three kids.

Sirius and Laura married and had four boys, so Harry was no longer the heir to the Black family. They moved out when Harry graduated from Hogwarts and got their own house on the outskirts of London. Sirius became a political powerhouse. It was partly with his help and 'donations' that Harry got where he was today. Laura retired from the Ministry after the second boy and was a wonderful work-at-home mum. She decided to go to a non-magical school and get a degree in Literature and was now a famous author.

Remus settled into a homey life of a book store owner. He married a non-magical that found his werewolf persona fascinating. They lived above the store and Remus used Hydrus's basement on the full moons, until he had a soundproof cellar constructed under the store. The couple had two kids, one boy and a girl, who didn't carry over the werewolf gene, just like the immortal informed him so long ago.

Grace, Hydrus's wonderful wife of thirty-nine years, passed away a week ago. They had a wonderful life together. They remained in the house that Harry grew up in. They never had children, Hydrus wondered if it was because of him being the Master of Death, but he never died so he

couldn't ask Death. Grace was sad that she remained childless and took to volunteering at Barkley's to help relieve some of that mummy fever.

She never learned he was immortal. He always made sure to take the aging potion. She continued to keep up the pretense that he was a spy.

Oh, she knew better, but after a run-in with a reporter who was trying to dig up dirt on her beloved she found out just how true it was that wizards could read minds.

It had been a nasty article in The Prophet the next day, about how Hydrus Black was married to a Muggle and turning his back on the magical world by doing so. The Times of course disagreed. It took a week for the articles to disappear. The public knew better than to bend to rumor and lies from the now deemed gossip rag known as the Daily Prophet. It was still a wonder that it was in circulation.

Hydrus laid no blame on her, just kissed her on the nose and told her he told her so. For which she smacked him.

The immortal prankster sold the rights to Fun For All Pranks to the Weasley twins when they graduated with ten NEWTs. He had written a note to them in their fourth year, stating that if they got over five NEWTs he would sell to them, give them the loan for their own shop and introduce them to the Marauders. The time traveler stated that he still wanted to be able to help them with their inventions. They happily agreed. Remus and Sirius were giddy that the twins worshiped them so. They did let them keep the Map and simply made another one for Harry. Weasley Wizarding Wheezes was a bigger success than the Fun For All Pranks, with Hydrus giving the twins nudges about what they should invent. George married a non-magical and had three boys. Fred married a Half-blood and had four boys. They were both trying to talk their wives into having a girl. George's wife was willing to try again, but Fred's put

her foot down and said no.

Ron, because he never faced a life-threatening situation, didn't become an Auror. He never had the jealousy issues he had in Hydrus's timeline and was content to being a friend to Harry. He played chess professionally for a few years then went on to be the Keeper for his favorite Quidditch team, the Chudley Cannons. He married Lavender Brown and they had seven kids, five boys and two girls.

Draco Malfoy discovered what most childhood stars do, that fame doesn't last forever. He stopped getting parts when he turned fifteen and slowly faded into the background. His mother, being smarter than her son, had saved his pay and so he didn't wind up a pauper. He married an up-and-coming starlet and soon found out another actor's curse; they divorced spectacularly after only a year. He married three times before finally settling down.

Pandora Lovegood died trying to create the same spell she worked on in the previous timeline. This caused conflicting emotions in Hydrus. On the one hand, he was thankful that she'd never come back to terrorize him or Harry. On the other hand, he was sad for Luna and Xenophilius. He called Mr. Lovegood and offered to break the contract so they could move back to England, but the man refused stating he was doing well where he was. Luna went to Beauxbatons and grew to be a spell-crafter like her mother and left the searching for strange creatures for her father. She married and had two girls.

Dumbledore passed on in his sleep from old age at 120. He never let go of the thought that Voldemort was just biding his time. He even tried to track down Snape to get him to come to Hogwarts. He never found the man. His interactions with Harry were few and far between, he only called the boy to his office when school was about to let out to make sure

the teen knew he had to reside with his family. The Headmaster stopped calling him after Harry's fourth year, when he realized that the child had no problems complying. It did make him wonder how Petunia got over her hatred of all things magical, but he brushed it off as familial love. The Wizengamot let him retire at the age of 110, stating it was time for younger blood to be its Leader. The ICW also asked him to step down around the same age. Albus was more than happy to be just the Headmaster until the day he died.

Any Dark wizard or witch that tried to rise was quickly smacked down by the new Department of Investigative Detectives. The DMLE was also improved with all the inventions, such as computers and forensic machines, both departments thrived into something to be proud of. The magical equivalents of CCTV cameras were mounted in all of the wizarding communities. There had been protest, like the non-magical world, but the Wizengamot won in the end.

Hydrus came back from his reminiscing and was now making plans to finish his other plan that he designed many years ago. He asked Sirius and Remus to come and talk with him. They complied and were soon in his living room.

"What's up?" Sirius asked, settling his old bones into the new recliner. He looked good for an old man; his hair was steely grey and he held on to his aristocratic features. He looked much like his grandfather, only not as pale or thin.

"Yes, why did you want to see us?" Remus inquired as he too relaxed in the comfy chair. He too looked better than he had in the old timeline. His hair was light grey and there were very few scars on his face. He looked like the content store owner he was.

"Well, you know Grace passed away just a week ago?" he asked sadly as

he waited for the nods, which were also tinged with grief. She was missed. "Remember that plan I wouldn't tell you about?"

"Vaguely," said the old dog.

"No," said the werewolf.

"Well, I'm going to implement it soon, but in order to do that I have to fake my death," the immortal said, with a determined voice.

"Are you sure that is wise? Harry will be devastated if you die," Remus said, being the one to always point out the downside to any of Hydrus's plans.

"Yeah, I'm sure. It's time," was the firm answer. He had been thinking about it since Grace passed away and didn't really want to live in this timeline without her.

"Are you going to tell us what you're planning?" Sirius asked in an excited voice, always the one to back the time traveler.

"You know all the questions I asked about the night my parents died? How I keep hounding you to tell me everything?"

"Yeah, I thought you just wanted to make sure Harry had the whole story," answered the dogman.

"That was one reason. There's another reason that I was hoping you'd figure out on your own," the immortal smirked at the two men.

"You are going to go back again," Remus guessed with a confused tilt of his head. He didn't know if it was a good thing.

"Yes and this time I'm going to save my parents, which is why I want you guys to give me your memories on what happened after you left Hogwarts. I'm not going to be left flatfooted this time," Hydrus all but demanded as he called his pensieve from his pocket space.

"Do you just keep planning to do this over and over?" Remus asked warily. "I mean, that is creating a lot of timelines. Do you not think that

Death or some other deity will start getting angry with you?"

"I'm not sure," the immortal said thoughtfully. "I guess it all depends on if I succeed this time."

"And what about us, don't you think we'll miss you?" Sirius asked, put out that the immortal wasn't thinking of those he'd leave behind and the fact that he couldn't go.

"Of course I do," Hydrus said gently, "but there will always be someone who will miss me. Be it Harry or his kids or anyone I've met over the years. I can't put this on hold forever. No, death is a part of life and before I leave I'll make sure that there is a body to leave behind. I want to be remembered as the kind old man that raised Harry Potter."

"Why don't you let us tell Harry that you aren't really gone? We can inform him who you were and he won't be sad," Sirius asked in an almost desperate tone.

"That still might create a paradox. No, it is better for him to think I'm gone," the immortal said with a shake of his head.

"Why are you telling us?" Remus asked with a tilt of his head.

"One, I need your memories. Two, you guys have been with me from the start and you know I can't die. I don't want you to try and find me when I complete my plan," he said, ticking the reasons off on his fingers.

There was a tense silence while the other two men thought it over. After about ten minutes of thinking Sirius slumped his shoulders. "I owe you my life. If you hadn't come back, I would have lead a miserable existence and died years ago."

Remus nodded that he thought the same.

"I'm going to do everything in my power to make sure that doesn't happen again," Hydrus said, reaching over and patting the man on the hand. "If I do it right this time then there will never be any reason for the

Potters to hide. I'm going to try and go back far enough to stop the reason they go into hiding, which is why I need your memories."

Both men nodded and filled the pensieve with what they could remember from the time they left school to the day Voldemort vanished. Hydrus thanked them and they talked about his plans for a while, until the two men left.

Hydrus spent the next week going through those memories and now had a firmer grasp on what transpired. Then he set about gathering everything he would need to go back. It took months to do it, selling off his investments, closing his bank accounts in both worlds, handing over his businesses to family and friends, trying to sell the ones the family didn't want, converting his money into gold bullion, gathering up all the new technology and making out his will, and there was still so much to do.

Harry was concerned that his favorite uncle was suicidal, so he went and confronted the man. "Why are you getting rid of everything?" he asked when he entered the house. "Are you suffering from depression or something?"

"And a merry hello to you too, Harry," Hydrus answered as he sat on the sofa and called for tea. Tippy and Dobby were still around, but they were both old, so the only time he used Tippy was for small things, like tea and dusting, though she insisted that the garden was her domain. Dobby was still working at Barkley's, but he was relegated to making beds only. "Sorry, Uncle Hydrus, I'm just worried about you," the new Minister said sheepishly, rubbing the back of his head. "With Grace's passing away and your selling and giving away everything, well, I just..."

"I know and I do understand, but, no, I'm not suicidal. However, I am getting old and I don't think I have much longer to live. So I felt it would

be better if I got my affairs in order now before I go on my next great adventure," the immortal said kindly. Looking at the handsome young man that he raised, feeling pride that he had done such a good job.

"Are you sick? Do you need to see a Healer?" Harry panicked, looking over his uncle as if he could see what was wrong.

"Only old age," Hydrus reassured him. "I get weaker every day, maybe I'm suffering from a broken heart, or maybe I'm just tired. Who knows?" He shrugged, trying not to get the younger man overly concerned.

"I don't want you to die," Harry said softly. "You're not that old.

Dumbledore lived until he was over a hundred. You're only in your eighties."

"I don't want to die," Hydrus lied just as softly. It was actually something he longed for, well, maybe not until after his plan. "A good man once told me that death is merely a part of life, and that to die is to go on the next great adventure or something like that. Death is not something I'm afraid of. You may miss me, but if you remember all the good times, the pain will fade." He was hoping to ease the burden on his younger self, but truly there was no easy way to do that.

Harry was fiddling with the idea to confront his uncle about his time traveling; he was going over the pros and cons and finally settled on not saying anything. It might help if he simply thought the man was going back in time and didn't die. The two changed the subject and talked about Harry's new office, his marriage and how things were going in the Ministry. They also discussed the happier times. The new Minister left feeling better than he had when he arrived.

Hydrus, however, felt horrible. He knew what he had to do, but was starting to think maybe he should hold off. Then he realized that he would never be able to explain why he was still living when everyone

else was dead. He could start a new life, he had the tools and the paperwork to do that, but he really wanted to save his parents.

A few months later everything was in place. The house was for sale (all wards taken down), his money and inventions were in his pocket space, he wrote his will (leaving a good amount of money to Harry) and his businesses were sold or handed over. It was time.

Standing in the empty house on July 31, 2033, Hydrus looked over the homunculus that he created, using his blood and hair. It was the spitting image of him and he had used the Elder Wand to ensure that no one knew it was a fake. Making sure that it would pass inspection, he banished it to the flat he rented when he put the house on the market. He fondly looked around the house that held so many memories and then straightened his shoulders.

Creating the same time warp he used before, he stepped into the near blinding white portal. He felt like he was moving through an electrical storm. He came out the other end, banished the portal and noted the house was empty. He went through the same motions of buying the house, setting up his accounts, getting a car, putting his name in the system and settling down.

A week later, using the taboo, he went about capturing the Death Eaters, this time changing them into lifeless objects and putting them in his pocket space. He decided they would stay there forever, or he would break them at some point, who knew. The time traveler also hunted down the horcruxes that he could. After having captured and transfigured thirty Death Eaters (including the entire inner circle, barring Snape) and removing the dark curse from the diary and the diadem, (the ring was inert after he came back) he turned his attention into meeting the Potters.

On August 23, 1981, a month before they went into hiding, Hydrus made his way to the house in Godric's Hollow and knocked on the door. He drew in a breath when James Potter answered, he could see Lily holding baby Harry in the background, looking ready to run. He put on his most innocent face and said calmly, "Hi, my name is Hydrus Black. You don't know me, but I have a story you're going to want to hear."

Hphphp

Now ends the tale of Hydrus Black in his first new timeline.

There's a sequel up called This Time The Potters. And it's complete.

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