

Інформація

Адреса змісту:[https://www.fanfiction.net/s/11950816/35/Harry-](https://www.fanfiction.net/s/11950816/35/Harry-Potter-and-the-Game)

[Potter-and-the-Game](#)

Книги

>

Гарри Поттер

Сохранять

Гарри Поттер и Игра

Автор:

Concept101

Теперь, когда его жизнь превратилась в Игру, Гарри предстоит вырастить Феникса, раскрыть самые темные секреты Основателей, бороться с политическими манипуляциями и выживать в Хогвартсе, отчаянно стараясь не ругаться слишком много.

Рейтинг:

Художественная литература Т

- Английский - Приключения/Фэнтези - Гарри П., Гермиона Г.,

Джинни В., Альбус Д. - Главы: 45 - Слов: 363 393 - Отзывов:

7 887

- Избранных: 12 510 - Подписчиков: 14 405 - Обновлено:

29.07.2018, 00:53:47

- Опубликовано:

17.05.2016, 10:33:45

- id: 11950816

32. Book-II:Comedy and Tragedy

Chapter 12:

Harry and Lockhart stepped out of the fireplace near the Malfoy and let the derelict looking house elf use its brush to dust the ashes off their

robes.

With a spike of guilt, Harry remembered his promise about finding a way to give the house elves a choice to be free that he had made to himself ages ago. 'After the school closes down,' he promised himself, and let the elf lead them up the stone staircase and into the ballroom.

The room couldn't have been more different from the way it was the last time Harry had been here. There were no torches lighting the hall, instead, the lighting came from what appeared to be hundreds of brightly glowing butterflies of various colors fluttering around near the level of the roof. Instead of streamers, decorative vines hung from the ceiling, and most of the guests looked utterly ridiculous, their formal attire clashing with the animal-themed accessories that they sported.

But most notably, many large glass cages lined the walls, filled with creatures of all sizes and colors. One contained a massive kneazle, and another a bunch of crups. A bunch of nifflers moved around restlessly inside one, and an Orangutan sat chewing on his apple inside another. The whole room looked like an overly posh zoo.

Before Harry could get a good look at all the cages, however, he caught sight of their host and tensed. Lucius Malfoy had walked over to greet them.

"Mr. Potter. Mr. Lockhart. I am glad you could make it tonight." The subtle, almost inaudible tone of respect the man's voice held when he spoke Harry's name confirmed to Harry that the Obliviate still held the man and that he was safe here for now.

"Lucius! What a wonderful Ball you have put together. Almost as good as the Ball I once planned for a Veela colony in France. Good stuff, good stuff," Lockhart said as he joyously grabbed the man's hand and shook it vigorously, before he caught sight of something and perked up like a

meerkat, "Is that the Minister? Oh dear. Forgive me my good man, but I must go greet him."

As they watched Lockart hold onto his hat and jog off into the crowd towards the Minister of Magic, Harry, forcing a friendly tone, asked, "Are you very familiar with Professor Lockhart, Mr. Malfoy?"

Lucius's face seemed stuck in a look of bewildered amusement, "Quite the contrary. Never met the man in person before. Is he always this excitable?"

"More or less."

Lucius dropped the topic of the Defense professor and turned to Harry, "So how have you been doing Mr. Potter? Terrible business, what with the students getting petrified left and right. It must be really hard living in the castle now."

"I've been doing fine. There are bad days, but what can one do but get over them," Harry said, before asking, "There have been rumors about the school closing down...well, I suppose they are not rumors anymore. One can only wonder how long the shutdown will last. You're on the school board aren't you, Mr. Malfoy? I bet you know how long it will last."

"You overestimate my reach Mr. Potter," Lucius genially said, "I'm merely a board member. The decision to close down the school was taken by the Ministry."

"Oh do stop being humble Mr. Malfoy," Harry said, putting a sly smile on his face, "I bet you'd know if a fly sat on the wrong person in the Ministry."

Lucius chuckled, "You are pertinacious. I've heard from the Education department and Aurors; heard mind you; that it might be closed for a few months. They won't know exactly until they go in and see what needs to be done."

"Well it is a relief to know that it is not permanent or something like that"

"I doubt anyone would stand for it if it was permanent. The Wizarding world wouldn't really be the Wizarding world without Hogwarts," Malfoy said, before he caught sight of someone in the crowd, "I must take your leave now Mr. Potter. The people from the animal sanctuary will soon be taking some of the guests for a tour of the animals before the New Year's countdown. Please enjoy yourself."

Ping!

Skill has leveled up due to interacting with an experienced politician!

Politics Lv- 4 (20%)

This is your ability to maneuver in political situations by methods of persuasion, blackmail, guile and manipulation. The higher the level, the more chance of success!

$(\text{Lv of Lying} + \text{Lv of Bullshitting})\%$ chance of success, less based on how extreme the motive is.

Harry smiled as he watched the man walk off to greet the Goyles, who had just arrived. That had gone much smoother and better than he had ever expected. He hadn't even had to use any Hydromancy, which was well and good, since using blood control on people with their own powerful magic was harder than it had any right to be.

Harry headed to the drinks bar, greeting a few other guests along the way, where he grabbed himself a drink and sat down on one of the barstools, watching the adults dance in the butterfly light, wondering where he should start bugging everything up.

It had to be something related to the animals, he decided, if only because it would be a crime not to do something related to them after the Malfoys spent so much time setting them up.

The beginnings of a plan started forming in his mind, and he pushed himself off the barstool and headed towards the cage holding what looked like a three-headed Runespoor to test his initial hypothesis.

"Observe," he muttered, focusing on the glass and trying to ignore the conversation amongst the snakes about which head could rhyme the fastest.

Unbreakable Glass

Transparent glass that is enchanted to not break, no matter how hard it is impacted upon. Used for a variety of purposes. Since unbreakable charms do not have easily usable counterspells, they are often built with a specific failsafe to shatter them down completely when removal is required.

Failsafe: Small explosion near the bottom left corner

Harry grinned. This was beyond convenient. This was downright begging to be used.

"That's the one that father likes the most," came a voice from beside him, "Do you like it?"

It was Draco, Harry realized when he turned and checked before answering, "I think it's a bit creepy myself, but it's really curious how it ever gets anything done with three heads arguing amongst themselves all the time."

"It's been a long time since we last talked Harry," Draco said, "Are your new guardians treating you well?"

"They have. It has been a bit surreal, but they are good people," he honestly answered before asking, "And how have you been Draco?"

Draco's eyes gained an uneasy look, "Not good. The other students have been bullying any Slytherins they can get alone, so I have to stick together with the others and stay inside the dorm. Then there are the

half-bloods getting petrified. So now we have to worry about the Heir as well since no one knows whether he's just started on a killing spree or not."

"Let's hope not," Harry said, before changing the topic, "In your letter, you mentioned something about your father not wanting you to meet me. What was that all about? Didn't your father want you to get close to me?" Draco shuffled around a bit, looking a bit uncomfortable, "It's not really just you. Students from every other house have been beating up Slytherin students and getting away with it. Father wanted me to completely keep away from other house students, no exceptions."

"And you don't believe that he's doing it just for your safety?" Harry asked with a frown.

The blond's face grew even more uncomfortable, "I...It was something about the way he put it in the letter. It seemed...pre-written somehow. Like he had written this letter a while back and was sending it to me months later. I don't know. It was probably just me."

It took Harry seconds to process that information. Malfoy must have written that warning letter to his son before Obliviating himself of the knowledge of how he got the heir into Hogwarts. "Is there any way you can get that letter to me? Maybe I could take a look and see if it was just you or not?"

Draco shook his head, "He had me burn the letter the moment I finished reading it. Even put one of those compulsion charms onto it to make sure I did put it into the fire."

'Damn it!' Harry thought.

A pleasant voice echoed across the hall at that moment, "Attention, please. All the guests interested in a guided tour of the lovely Scamander Sanctuary Creatures please join your guide Mister Booplesnoot near the

entry door in five minutes. Thank you for your time, and have a good evening"

"I think I'll go. I haven't seen most of the animals here yet. Will you be coming, Harry?" Draco asked as soon as the announcement finished.

It was time to start the set up for his pranks, Harry thought as he replied, "I will. I'll just pop over to the loo for a bit before meeting you near the entrance for the tour, alright?"

After getting a nod from Draco, he headed out of a side door into the bathroom, where he shut himself in, before muttering, "ID Create."

The sky outside turned red, and Harry quickly converted Gandiva into its bow form, before he notched a Doom arrow. Instead of firing it, he picked the explosive arrow up and set it to the side, before repeating it a couple of dozen times. After he had all the arrows he needed, he returned Gandiva to its ring form, before turning to the arrows and started to remove their arrowheads.

He was left with a couple of dozen explosive arrowheads, upon which he used Reducios to shrink and reduce their effects from huge explosions to a tiny concentrated hot blast.

When they were all as small as the size of his fingertips, he put them in an inventory box. It read,

27 minimized explosive arrowheads

Satisfied with his preparation, Harry dropped out of the ID and made his way out of the loo and to the entrance of the Ballroom to join Draco, Mr. Booplesnoot and half a dozen other guests who joined them. Harry could see Parkinson and Greengrass in the group as well, but they were religiously ignoring Harry, so he simply followed suit and ignored them, sticking close to Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle.

"Velcome efferybody!" Mr Booplesnoot exclaimed in a heavy German

accent, "Totay ve shall be taking a tour of the farious animals of the Zanctuary zat ve haffe brought here, and ve vill learn zome zings about zem. It vill be fun. Do ve haffe efferyone for zis batch here? Let's go zen!" And with that, they started towards the first animal cage.

"The first animal you are zeeing here," he said, pointing towards the giant reptilian creature with a tail as long as its body and armoured scaly skin resting on a rock in a glass cage, "He is Quasimodo the magical Komodo Drakon. He is the last of his kind on the world. Muggles haffe discoffered his non-magical couzins, but zey cannot find him becauze of one reazon. Let me show you vat zat is."

He rapped the front of the glass cage with his knuckle, and in the blink of an eye, the Komodo dragon vanished.

"You zee!" Mr. Booplesnoot exclaimed, "He can turn invizible. Zat is hov zey catch prey and escape predators. Unfortunately, in zeir home island of Rinca near Indonezia, zey haffe peen hunted down by magical farmers who zink zey are a pest. Quasimodo is nov being prepared to be introduced into a breeding program."

"Do they have venom?" Daphne Greengrass asked.

Mr Booplesnoot smiled impishly, "Zey do, but it is of no real danger to wizards. If one of zem bites you, the only zing zat vill happen is zat you vill become very...Vat is the word...Amorous for a few minutes. The only zing it is venomous to is romantic relationships."

"Isn't that the only one of his species? I wonder what they will breed them with," Harry heard Goyle ask Crabbe behind him.

"They'll probably have to cross it with something cool. Like a Nimbus 2001," Crabbe replied, probably louder than he intended.

"As fantastic as it zounds, unfortunately young zir, zat is not pozible. We vill haffe to breed him vith one of his non magical couzins," Mr

Booplesnoot replied with a grin over the chuckles of the group.

Harry quietly used a sticking charm to stick an explosive arrowhead to the corner of the front of the glass cage, getting a window to pop up.

Ping!

Quest 'Fuck up the Party as hard as you can' has progressed.

Harry waved the screen away, and soon they headed over to the next cage, in which stood the massive kneazle Harry had seen earlier. It had a spotted fur coat and was the size of a small golden retriever, an unusual size for a kneazle.

He soon learned why.

"Aww!" Parkinson squealed, "A kneazle!"

"Not quite miss," Mr. Booplesnoot said, "Zis is a Nundu cub. It is barely a month old."

The entire group froze.

"A N-nundu?" someone from the back stuttered out.

Mr Booplesnoot nodded, "Ja. His name is Fred, and he is a East African Nundu. He was captured ven his mother was killed to protect the villages zere from her attacks. The pads under his feet make zure he moves zilently despite his size ven he grows up. The breath of the grown Nundu is toxic and filled vith dizeaze, but Fred here is fery young, zo he doezn't have zat yet. His breath still does stink like fermented hipogriff dung zough, and he has to fart a lot to get rid of all the gas in his stomach."

This continued on until they met all the different animals.

Sammy the runespoor, it turned out, had had his poison sacs removed painfully by his older owners. The niffles and the crups were the ones that the group seemed to like the most. One cage, that looked like it was simply a bunch of saplings was actually an entire colony of bowtruckles that made Draco almost screech when they popped up from the soil and

started running around the cage.

The two feet tall pure white kangaroo called Ricky elicited some 'aww's as well. The poor guy had been cursed with a permanent springfoot curse, and couldn't really jump without sending himself half a dozen feet into the air.

Maurice the orangutan was just that. A mostly normal orangutan, who was a bit smarter than the fellow members of the species, and had been forcefully taught sign language by his Muggle circus owners before he was rescued from there by a member of the Scamander Sanctuary. He wasn't the only non-magical animal there either. The domesticated fox, which Mr. Booplesnoot insisted on calling 'Forest corgi', was also there, chilling in his own cage.

All of the animals that were brought to the Ball were mostly harmless to humans, which was why Harry had found no problem in sticking an explosive arrowhead to each one of their cages.

Ping!

Quest 'Fuck up the Party as hard as you can' has progressed.

"Zat vill be all for today efferybody," Mr. Booplesnoot finally said, "Zank you zo much for your time. I hope you vill donate to our cauze totay and spread the vord of creature konzervazion and help us zave many more."

There was a small applause, to which the man bowed, and soon after that, he and the rest of the group thanked Mr. Booplesnoot and dispersed,

Harry and Draco heading back towards the drinks bar, watching Booplesnoot collect the next batch of people who wanted to get a tour.

"That was quite a bit of fun wasn't it?" Draco said, grabbing himself a glass of apfelwein.

"That it was," Harry replied, but Draco wasn't paying attention to him anymore. He had tensed and was looking unblinking at something.

Harry followed his eyes, realizing that he was looking at a black-robed man who was walking towards them. He had fully grey cropped hair, a square clean-shaven jaw, and strict looking grey eyes that made him look as if he was a member of the army. He looked oddly familiar to Harry's eyes.

Harry quickly glanced at the window floating above his head.

Wentworth Wright

Lv-53

"Mr. Potter," the man said, standing in front of him and extending a hand, which Harry shook, getting up to his feet, "Wright. Lord Wentworth Wright."

"A pleasure Lord Wright," Harry said, "Are you having a good evening?"

Wright looked at Draco, who was still stiffly sitting in his seat, with a severe stare before replying, "As much as one can enjoy this sad excuse of a ball that young Mr. Malfoy here insisted on having turned into a circus show."

"Do you not like animals?" Harry asked.

"I feel no kinship to them," he said, before adding, "I only came over to say welcome back to the Wizarding World Mr. Potter. I did not get to greet you the last time you were here, but I do hope you are doing well."

"Thank you, Lord Wright," Harry replied, "I am having a good time learning all about the culture and the people that I couldn't meet the first ten years of my life. It still feels a bit new, but it is my home now."

Lord Wright approvingly nodded, "As it should be. Very well then Mr. Potter. Have a good evening."

Harry nodded, and watched curiously as the man walked off into the crowd before turning to Draco, who was still tense, "This Ball theme thing was your idea? And what happened to you when he was talking?"

You looked petrified."

Draco completely ignored his first question as he tightly said, "That was old Lord Wentworth Anal Wright. He's a right bastard is what he is."

Harry choked on his own spit, "Anal?"

"Alan...I accidentally mispronounced," he flatly said.

"...No, you didn't. Why is he a right bastard?"

Draco's face turned into an ugly frown, "Hates animals, hates children, hates pretty much everything in his eyesight. He used to come over for meetings with father when I was smaller and used to hang me upside down from the chandelier if I walked into the room while they were talking. Father thought it was hilarious," he spat, before he seemed to realize that he was ranting about his childhood embarrassments to a schoolmate and tried to cover ass, "I was brave, calm and stoic through the entire ordeal of course."

"Of course," Harry nodded.

"But it's a cruel thing for someone to do to a child," Draco added.

Harry patted his back and turned to use observe on the familiar looking Lord Wright, but the man had disappeared into the crowd, nowhere to be found. Scanning the crowd one last time, and not finding the man, Harry let it go and shifted his attention to the stage, where Malfoy senior had cast a Sonorus on himself, and was starting to speak.

"Father's starting the new year countdown," Draco said from beside him, just as Lucius started speaking.

"Thank you to the Scamander Sanctuary and Mr. Scamander for bringing in their amazing creatures to join us today joining in today and bringing all these amazing creatures. Sadly, Mister Scamander could not join us today, but his deputy Mister Booplesnoot is here in his stead. We would like to thank him, and gift the Sanctuary with a donation of three

thousand galleons in hopes that they will be able to continue their good work for as long as they can."

Lucius paused to let the crowd's applause subside.

"And finally, the House of Malfoy thanks you for your presence at this celebration on this evening. Let us count down the last few seconds of this year together."

A glowing clock appeared above the stage, and as one, the crowd started chanting.

"FIVE!"

Harry spread out tendrils of his mana to each one of the explosive arrowheads that were attached to the animals' glass cages.

"FOUR!"

He used Pyromancy to set off a small fire around each of the explosive arrowheads.

"THREE!"

A dozen tiny, pops sounded across the hall, barely audible over the crowd's chants.

"TWO!"

A million thin spidery cracks spread all across each of the dozen cages.

"ONE!"

And all hell broke loose.

Dolores Jane Umbridge was not having a good day.

In the morning, the Floo Network and the Drainage systems in the Ministry had been both down for maintenance, and only one main Fireplace had been left open.

Which meant that Sanitation department had to use the same fireplace as the employees coming in to work. She had Floored in at the wrong moment and startled the worker who had been trying to levitate a large

vat of...stuff that had been clogging up the ministry drains...through the Floo to dispose, and as a result, had been completely drenched in what she had later found out was a fermented mixture of human excrement. She had raged at the worker continuously for an hour before firing him from his job at the spot.

Much to her extreme annoyance and displeasure, she learned later that day that the man brought a ticket on his way home, and had won the Annual Christmas lottery. He was now the proud owner of a retirement fund of half a million galleons and luxurious home in the Bahamas. By the time noon rolled around, she had started off to finish up her annual inspection of the departments by heading down to the only department she hadn't inspected yet.

Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures.

Of course, it was one of those days, and nothing was to go right for her, which was why as soon as she had stepped out of the elevator, a toad, who had apparently been cursed by someone with a levitation curse, had come flailing at her and landed smack dab right on her face.

After being completely humiliated in front of the entire department, she had given them the lowest assessment she could have right on the spot and then headed right back into the elevator and back to her office.

Still, she considered herself a patient woman and had put on her best robes and done her hair and put on a perfume before head to the Malfoy Ball for the evening. The Minister needed her after all.

And it had all gone wonderfully for a while. By the time the New Year's countdown started, she and the minister had met and greeted anyone of any importance in the entire ball, including Gilderoy Lockhart, who had complimented her on her 'unique fashion sense'. It was all going swimmingly.

"Three! Two! One!" the crowd chanted in an undignified manner, she noted with an upturned nose from her spot beside the minister near one side of the dance floor.

A sudden crackling sound from her left suddenly grabbed her attention, and she turned around to see where it came from. The only thing to the left of her was a glass cage containing what looked like large kneazle. It was only when a foul smell reached her nose that she looked down, and realized that the glass lay shattered into dust on the floor. Her eyes immediately snapped up to the kneazle, who seemed to have realized that it was free now.

Her eyes moved to the collar around its neck to check what its name was as she tried to soothe it in what she felt was a soothing voice, "There there little kitty. Don't you move a bit."

Fred the Nundu

She froze.

The Nundu bared its teeth and snarled.

Fred did not, apparently, find Dolores's voice soothing.

Dolores tried to stay calm and steady as she screeched at the man frozen still beside her, "Minister! Do something!"

Fred, apparently, disliked Dolores's screeches even more than it disliked her soothing voice, because as soon as he heard the screech, he sank on his haunches and sprung with tremendous speeds at her, catching her in the chest and sending her crashing to the floor.

She crashed to the ground with what looked like a massive cat on her.

She tried to stay completely still, wondering why the other people around her were screaming, hoping that the creature would simply lose interest and walk away.

Fred did lose interest.

Fred did not, however, walk away.

He prowled over Dolores's body for a few more seconds, before he did some self-reflection and decided that Dolores's face was a very comfortable place to sit.

A small puff of windy gas and the sight of a month old nundu's bum were all she knew before a mind-numbing smell filled her nose and she passed out.

Cornelius Fudge, on the other hand, was having quite the fantastic day. Everything had gone smoothly for him so far, and he was simply looking forward to what promised to be a very delicious dinner with the Malfoys. Which was why, he was quite surprised when he heard dozens of panes of glass shatter into dust, and screams start tearing through the hall. He looked at his Undersecretary to ask what happen, only to see her having a stare-off with what he remembered from that tour he'd taken to be a nundu.

Quickly realizing that he, like the other guests around him, should be getting out of here, Fudge, instead of helping his Undersecretary, decided to do exactly that and started heading straight towards the exit.

"The Bowtruckles! They're coming for our wands! Hide them!" he suddenly heard a nearby old woman behind him cry, and immediately stopped and stuffed his own wand down his shirt to make sure that the angry little creatures, infamous for stealing wooden artifacts, didn't get to it. Before he could fully finish stuffing his wand in, however, he felt something painfully sting on his leg.

But he had no time to check what it was, because, with a spike of panic, he noticed a fox with a runespoor sitting on top of its head leading a bunch of crups rampaging through the crowd, coming in his direction. He quickly looked left and right, and suddenly caught sight of a small

door.

'The washroom!' he thought, realizing that he could hide in there until help arrived. He altered course and held onto his bowler hat as he quickly jogged towards the door, dodging the fox and the crups, before he promptly let himself in and held the door shut behind him. With a relieved breath, he turned around. And froze.

Standing two feet from him, wedged inside the bathtub, was a massive orange orangutan.

Further screwing him up was another little thing that he did not know.

The sting he had felt earlier was a bite from Quasimodo the magical Komodo dragon, whose venom caused the victim to feel incredibly amorous. The moment Cornelius saw the Orangutan, his heart rate sped up due to fear, and the venom finally made it to his heart, from where it was promptly sent into his brain, where it started showing its effects.

A pleasant haze fell over his mind as Cornelius spread his arms, puckered his lips, and started towards the orangutan.

Maurice the orangutan, who had simply been trying to hide from all the chaos until now, felt afraid for its virtue. He promptly gave out a loud screech and plonked Cornelius in the face before opening the door and heading out of the washroom to find a new place to hide from all the chaos.

Cornelius was found four hours later in that same bathroom by a plumber named Salmoni.

Harry looked around at the sheer chaos that was the Ballroom right now, wondering why so few of the guests were trying to control the animals.

Maybe they were scared of the Bowtruckles, who were now scuttling over almost every surface in the room? Or maybe they were scared of the baby nundu? They couldn't be scared of the crups or the little kangaroo that

was flying around the room, could they?

Oh well, he thought, Regardless of the guests' reactions, this was a success. With the exception of Lucius, Mister Booplesnoot, and a couple of other sanctuary workers who were trying to summon the animals into some Transfigured cages, no one else was trying to do anything other than just escape the place. This was definitely a successful prank, and would more than affect Malfoy Sr.'s reputation adversely. He did remember to drop a couple of thousand galleons from his inventory into the donation box, just to make sure that the sanctuary didn't suffer for this.

Ping!

Quest Success!

Fuck up the Party as hard as you can!

Reward,

50,000 Exp

5 stat points

New Perk!

Ping!

You have gained a new perk!

Amateur Prankster- With the genes of James Potter, you have a natural skill for the mischievous and the devious. This perk grants you a permanent +5 level boost to Sneaking, Blackmailing, Lying, Theatrics, and Bullshitting, and a further +5 level boost when out pranking.

'Nice!' Harry thought with a grin as he let the flow of the guests around him direct him towards the room where the floo fireplace was there.

Wading through the crowd, Harry found Lockhart almost near the front of the impromptu line near the Floo.

"Not quite the night we expected eh Harry?" Lockhart said with a garish grin, "Although I did get to tell the minister the tale of the infamous Tyrannosaurus Deer I had fought in Australia, so the night wasn't a complete failure."

Harry made himself simply stay quiet and not snap off a comeback, forcing himself to remember that he was trying to make this walking talking infomercial of a man look good. If he wanted to call a kangaroo a Tyrannosaurus Deer, then he was free to do so.

Soon afterward, they Flooed back to Hogwarts, leaving the party behind them in a complete mess.

Throughout the next few days, Harry learned that Lucius Malfoy was very good at covering fuck ups. Nothing about the party had made to any of the newspapers, and no one was actually talking about it except the occasional Slytherin in the halls. But Harry was far from disheartened. Most of the powerful politicians in the country had been in that room, and even if the public didn't know about what happened in there, those politicians did, and that almost definitely meant that Lucius's reputation with most of them would have fallen a lot.

The morning of January a few days later found Harry, Dean and Professor Vector in the Project Room, working on a magical contraption that could identify animals.

It had all started when Dean had pulled out a Self Spelling quill and started using it for his homework. It had then occurred to Harry that the Quill must need to check the spellings of the words somewhere to correct them.

'Observe' he had cast on the quill, and had found what he had needed.

Self Spelling Quill

It is a type of quill which corrects the writer's spelling

automatically. It does so by using a Protean Charm to link the quill to a Source dictionary and a Quarean Charm to scan for the word in question.

After explaining to Dean and Hermione how this could prove to be the key to building something to identify a creature and looking through a bunch of books in the library looking for the two charms, it had been Dean who had found what it was in a book in the Sixth Year reference section.

The Quarean and Protean charms, also called the Looking and Linking charms, were sixth year charms well beyond the capability and understanding of any second year student, even Harry.

Thankfully, they had one full-grown Arithmancy teacher at their disposal who did know how to cast the charms.

"Careful," Harry whispered to Professor Vector as she used a sharp knife to carve the rune Ehwaz, the rune for Partnership onto the thick metal wristband that lay on the table. Dean shushed him with a finger, keeping his own eyes stuck on the bracelet.

"The list," the Professor sharply said, and Dean quickly handed over the notebook which contained the entire compiled list of all the magical creatures that they could find any information upon. They had been working on it for three months now, and it was finally paying off.

The Professor quickly and with a deft hand carved Ehwaz's partner rune Wazhe on the spine of the notebook.

It was important, the Professor had told them, that there be some sort of runes to help keep the spells permanently going, and keep the list and the band permanently linked.

With the runes carved and ready to go, the Professor pulled her wand out and pointed it at the list.

"Proteus," she incanted, tapping the notebook once. Her wand tip started glowing with a vibrant green light. With the glowing tip, she tapped the metal band. Both the objects were infused with a glowing green light, which subsided in a few seconds, after which she repeated the spellcasting process for Quareus, enchanting the golden bracelet with the Looking charm.

"Hedwig!" Harry called, and Hedwig fluttered down from her perch onto the desk they were working on, brought her head close to the metal band, and dropped a single tear onto the rune, before doing the same for the rune on the notebook.

The runes flashed once and then started glowing a very dim blue. A gentle, almost inaudible hum started emanating from the band, showing that the charms were active.

And it was done.

The first actual result that had come out of this project of theirs, was done.

The Professor took a step back, watching the two unmoving boys with a small smile, clearly happy for them.

Meanwhile, Harry didn't know whether he wanted to touch it or not, held back by an almost infantile fear that it would perhaps break the moment he touch it. Instead, he used an Observe on it.

The Identifier Band

A magical device capable of identifying any magical creature whose existence has been recorded in its Source Book. Just put on the Band and point your index finger at the creature, say 'Identify' and the name of the creature will carve itself on the band.

"Go on. Test it," Professor Vector said with a grin.

Dean looked at Harry, who nodded at him before he picked the Identifier

up gingerly and slipped it onto his arm. It immediately resized itself to fit Dean's wrist, who shot Harry a grin. Poor Hermione had spent all of last night working on the Resizing spell and putting it onto the band and was now passed out in her dorms, tired out of her mind.

Harry looked over Dean's shoulder to get a better look at the band as he pointed his index finger at Hedwig, who was sitting on the desk, his hands shivering with anticipation. As clearly as he could, he said,

"Identify"

The Identifier gave a small shudder, and before their eyes, the word 'Phoenix' carved itself onto the metal band.

Ping!

A skill has levelled up twice due to a successful planning of an enchantment!

Enchanting, Lv-3 (65%)

You can use this skill to imbue magical properties to a non-magical object by layering spells and runes together. The process can make the spells last much longer than normal. High enough level in this can even make the spells permanent.

40% chance of success

Dean grabbed Harry in a hug, who patted his back, "We did it Dean! The first step of success in all this."

"If this takes off, we'll be toasty by the time we get out of school," Dean said with a chuckle, letting go of Harry and taking off the band from his wrist.

"Free NEWTs here we come," Harry joked with a grin, taking the Identifier from Dean and subtly dropping it into his inventory from inside his pocket before doing the same for the Source notebook.

The Professor let them joke around for another couple of minutes before

butting in, "Yes, yes, good job you two. You can celebrate later when Miss Granger is back up. Now do tidy up the room. I have to escort you to the grounds to watch Professor Lockhart's...Stunt. Mandatory stuff I'm afraid."

Two simultaneous groans echoed across the room.

When the two boys reached the grounds, they were surprised to find quite the crowd under the highest tower.

Giant canopies had been set up in a U around the safety net with dozens of chairs and roofs made of transparent screen so that they could see the fall clearly. Students from all the years who had stayed for the holidays, Hogsmeade citizens, and what looked like a bunch of photographers spread all around the place, getting every angle possible. If one squinted, one could see Lockhart standing on top of the tower. The giant golden net stood beneath him, looking as unbreakable as ever before. Just to be safe, Harry quickly cast an observe on it.

Enchanted Industrial Grade Breaking Safety Net

A very powerful enchanted safety net capable of protecting people from any injury after falling from great heights by limiting the distance they fall, and deflecting to dissipate the impact energy.

Charmed to be Unbreakable, this net can catch a falling overweight troll from a height over 700 meters without any harm to the subject at all.

Lockhart would be alright, Harry thought as he took a seat underneath one of the canopies beside Dean, tuning out the random announcements and the overly saccharine sweet-talking that the anchor was doing to warm up the crowd. All he had to do now, was wait and watch.

"And now!" the portly announcer standing in front of the net shouted into his megaphone, "For the moment you have all been waiting for! The-"

The megaphone suddenly stopped with a large static screech.

Murmurs swept through the crowd as Professor McGonagall came half marching, half running across the grounds to the announcer, and started arguing with him. Harry only caught bare snippets of the announcer's side of the argument, "Shut this down...months of preparation...over in a few minutes...not stopping...Fine...Only two."

The megaphone switched on with another screech of static, before the announcer said, "We will be starting the event shortly. Meanwhile, Mister Potter and Mister Thomas! Professor McGonagall is asking for you. I repeat. Potter and Thomas!"

Harry looked at Dean with wide eyes, feeling almost a stone drop in his stomach, wondering what had happened. They got to their feet and promptly made their way over to the acting Headmistress, who simply said, "Come with me now you two," before giving the announcer a glare and walking off with the two boys in tow.

"Professor," Harry hesitantly asked as they made their way into the school and up the marble staircase, "What happened?"

"This will be a bit of a shock," said Professor McGonagall in a surprisingly gentle voice, just as Harry noticed with a spike of horror that they were approaching the Infirmary, "There has been another attack."

Harry's insides did a horrible turn. Professor McGonagall pushed the door open and he and Dean entered.

Madam Pomfrey was bending over a girl that lay on the bed utterly still, her eyes open and glassy. A girl with long, bushy hair.

'Hermione' the name of the girl came to him, yet for an infantile moment, his mind rejected that answer. For how could it be Hermione when she had been just fine this morning? A bit tired, but just fine and happy as usual.

"Oh no..." he heard Dean mutter in shock, and knew at that moment that he wasn't ready to handle the shock all by himself. He quickly used Gamer's Mind to push back his emotions, before turning to McGonagall and asking, "How did this happen?"

"She was found near the library ten minutes ago," said Professor McGonagall gently, "You can have some time with her. I have to go see that...Professor Lockhart's event finishes up quick, and the students head back to the tower immediately."

Madam Pomfrey soon finished making Hermione comfortable, before she let the two of them pull over a pair of chairs and sit down next to her. "If it's any consolation, the Mandrakes will be ready in a month at most, and she will be up and moving soon enough."

It was some consolation. But not much.

For the longer part of an hour, they just sat there, doing absolutely nothing. Harry used an Observe on her.

Hermione Granger (Status: Petrification)

(Relationship Meter-54%)

Lv-8

HP-400/400

MP-350/350

Race-Witch

Str-4

Vit-6

Dex-5

Int-15

Wis-6

Luc-3

Hermione Jean Granger is a Muggle-born witch and the daughter of

two dentists in London. She grew up as a normal girl until, at age eleven, she learned that she was a witch and had been accepted into Hogwarts. She possesses a brilliant academic mind, and is a gifted student. She is very studious and bookish and can be very bossy and obnoxious.

She does not have any thoughts right now.

Harry tried his Healing and Healing Touch ability on her, despite knowing that he would almost definitely fail.

Nothing.

"I wonder if she did see the attacker, though?" said Dean, looking sadly at Hermione's rigid face. "Because if he sneaked up on them all, no one will ever know..."

Before Harry could reply, footsteps rang from outside the Hospital wing. They turned to see Professor McGonagall walk in, somehow looking even more distressed and shaken than she had been when she had left them.

"Mr. Thomas. Mr. Potter. I will escort you back to your respective towers," she said heavily.

"Did the stunt go alright Professor? Is Professor Lockhart fine? Is everything alright?" Dean asked.

Her face wilted, "Unfortunately not Mr. Thomas. It failed. Professor Lockhart was able to float down for a few moments, before he plummeted down."

"But the net caught him right? He's safe?" Harry asked, his stomach dropping. McGonagall's tone did not bode well.

"The net's enchantment had failed," she grimly said, "and it didn't slow him down as much as it needed to. Professor Lockhart suffered from serious bone injuries and internal injuries, and is in a serious condition right now. He was just portkeyed him over to St Mungo's Hospital to start

his treatment and hopefully, will soon recover."

Ping!

Quest Failure!

Keep Lockhart alive and awesome-looking until the end of January!

Failure,

Possible death amongst the Hogwarts students!

'Oh no. Oh no no,' Harry thought as he read through the window and paled. 'This was bad. This was very bad. How could this have even happened?! He had made sure that the net was enchanted.'

"Take a couple of more minutes with Miss Granger," McGonagall said, unaware of Harry's internal turmoil, "I need to talk to Madam Pomfrey before we head back."

As Dean watched McGonagall head off deeper into the Hospital wing, Harry rested his head in his palms, his mind running through the hundred worst-case scenarios that this could lead to. Suddenly, something caught his sight through the corner of his eye.

Hermione's right hand.

It lay clenched on top of her blankets, and bending closer, he saw that a piece of paper was scrunched inside her fist. Checking to make sure that Dean wasn't looking, Harry quickly used his strength to pry open her vice grip on the paper, only managing to tell that it was some sort of newspaper cut-out before he subtly dropped it into his inventory. Dean, who was still trying to catch sight of whatever McGonagall was talking about with Madam Pomfrey, saw none of it, and Harry decided that he'd tell him the next day.

Professor McGonagall returned moments later, and escorted them back to their respective towers.

That night, feeling slightly sickened from all the mindless gossip and

discussion that had pervaded all throughout the tower, Harry had shut himself up in his bedcurtains after making sure that all his dorm mates were asleep and pulled out the piece of paper that he had found in Hermione's hand to peruse.

It was a news article, dated 19 June 1943. Harry was pretty sure that this particular cut-out was from the library archives newspapers, which made it all the more shocking that Hermione was willing to tear one off. The paper was fully riddled with underlines and notes in Hermione's handwriting. Harry started reading it.

HOGWARTS MURDERER CAUGHT

The notorious culprit behind the Hogwarts petrifications (last time opening) and the murder of Myrtle Warren (Moaning Myrtle?) has finally been caught red handed, the Ministry of Magic confirmed today, writes Special Correspondent Mira Thakur.

Since both the culprit and his capturer are both underage, the officials have refused to reveal their names and have provided us with only the following statement, "The culprit has been expelled (check expulsion list of 1943?) from the school and will definitely be held responsible for his actions."

What caused those petrifications in the first place, was not something that was clear. However, various anonymous sources in the school witnessed a massive spider escaping the castle on the day of the culprit's capture, which has led to few speculations about some venomous variations of giant spiders (Acromantula? Marshweaver?) being the cause in question. These are, however, simple speculation, and should not be taken as fact.

Due to the valiant efforts of Potions Master Barnabus Belby, the petrified students will soon be able to reawaken from their months long slumber. We here at the Daily Prophet wish them and Hogwarts school the very best for their recovery.

And underneath the article, in an almost unreadable shaky script, was the final note that Hermione had made.

(Large spider the Beast of Slytherin? Heir can control spiders?...

Imperius?...Harry?)

And suddenly, with a sharp stab of hurt, Harry remembered the time he had told her that he could get spiders to listen to him, and immediately realized what all these notes meant.

Hermione had believed, or at least suspected in part, that he was the Heir of Slytherin.

It was a logical conclusion that she had come to, Harry told himself, by following some very clear evidence. She had even considered other possible options, like the Imperius Curse. But he couldn't stop the hurt that seemed to worm itself into his heart.

Harry dropped the piece of paper into his Inventory, and parted his curtains to step out into the quiet sleeping dorm.

He made his way over the window and sat down on the sill, looking out over the grounds of Hogwarts and trying not to think of anything. An hour and a half he sat there, looking at the moon slowly make its way across the sky, before a commotion in the grounds suddenly grabbed his attention.

Harry squinted to see what was going on, but couldn't really make out anything other than a few figures heading out of Hagrid's hut.

A small black figure was springing around the figures, barking up a storm. That told him that it was Fang the boarhound...whose loud barks had grabbed his attention in the first place.

Frowning, Harry quickly ran over to his trunk, out of which he pulled out his Astronomy telescope. He carried over the telescope and placed it on the sill before looking through it to see what was going on.

It was Hagrid, bound in shackles, being taken away by three men in Auror uniforms. A distressed-looking Professor McGonagall and Minister Cornelius Fudge followed them close by.

The pieces are set. The finale is setting in, and expect it to end VERY differently than canon. Next chapter will be different. There'll be less Gamer stuff, and we will see Tom's perspective on how he pulled off the entire incident in the latter part of the chapter. Leave a review about what you thought.

33. Book-II: Webs of Deception

Chapter 13:

While Harry and Dean were working on the Identifier Band, hundreds of feet below them in the deep dark belly of the Chamber of Secrets, a red-eyed girl calmly circled the unconscious body of one Argus Filch.

It had been a whole week since he had taken full possession of his host since the last time he had done so had almost proven too taxing on him. He really should have expected that though. Of course using the Imperius had proven to be more taxing, especially since it required the use of an organized mind, and his young host was quite lacking in that.

But the information that the Imperiused Professor Pomona Sprout had given him had proven to be more than worth it.

He had learned from her that contrary to popular belief, his Prime soul piece had not perished after all. It had been at this very school the last year.

He had also learned that the Headmaster believed that his Prime had fled to the forests of Albania, and had told Sprout that he would be going to look for him there after his suspension.

Foolish of the old fool really, to trust people with such weak minds.

But then again, Voldemort's memories had shown him that trusting

untrustworthy people was the biggest weakness that Albus Dumbledore had.

So now, after he had finally regained enough strength to take over his host's body again, he had devised a plan to help his Prime out a little bit. Pulling his wand out, he cast, "Sectumsempra," slicing open the squib's chest. With a few more waves, he stopped the blood and vanished some muscle, leaving behind a small cavity in the caretaker's body.

He dipped a hand into a robe pocket, pulling out a silver Diadem with an oval sapphire encrusted into it, which he gently placed on his host's head. Steeling himself, he sent a small tendril of his magic to connect to the much more diminished piece of soul in the diadem. With a small flutter, consciousness in the ancient headpiece rose, and sensing a larger, more active portion of its soul nearby, waited for its command.

'Lead the squib to the Prime. Assist him in regaining his power,' he instructed, sending all the information he had on the Prime into the diadem.

The soul inside shuddered in obedience.

Pulling the diadem off of his head, he used his wand to cast a powerful dark compulsion charm on Filch before tying it to the Diadem, making sure that the squib would do everything the Diadem wanted it to without it needing to possess him.

Finally, he placed the diadem into the cavity that he had carved into the squib's chest and with a wave of his wand, fully healed it over, hiding the horcrux completely inside his body. Another few waves, and the man's torn clothes fixed themselves.

Filch's eyes snapped open, and he wordlessly rose to his feet before standing still, waiting for his command.

"Go," he said.

With a nod, Filch turned around and headed towards the side wall of the chamber. A circular passageway opened up in the stone wall, which Tom knew would lead out into the edge of the Forbidden Forest, from where the squib would be able to steal one of the school's thestrals for transportation.

Of course, he idly thought, he could go find the Prime himself after he himself gained a body, or maybe he could even send someone stronger than a squib, but in his less than humble opinion, if his Prime had grown so weak that he couldn't make do with the squib and one of its Horcruxes, then perhaps it didn't deserve to be the Prime any more.

Besides, squibs were easier to control, wouldn't be able to fight against a full possession, and no one at Hogwarts would really notice that he was missing until it was too late, so it wasn't all bad at all.

The stone wall closed behind the man's back, and he turned and headed towards the corner where the Draught of Restoration had been bubbling away silently.

It was almost completely done now and needed barely a day's of work to finish up. But for now, he needed to get to the library so nobody noticed his host missing. The next big step of his plan was only hours away, and until then, it was a waiting game.

Giving the potion a few stirs and adding the last batch of unicorn blood to it, he covered it with a lid, opened up a passage that led up to the third floor and headed into it, ducking to avoid the low entrance.

He exited behind a tapestry near the library corridor. Walking briskly into the library, he made his way over to a desk near the back, where he sat down before withdrawing his consciousness from his host's mind, leaving only a small tendril of magic connected to make sure that he could see and hear everything happening around her through her senses.

His host woke up a few seconds later, feeling groggy.

Her mind was full of confusion, he noted, before he quickly sent a small tendril and quashed the confusion down, leaving her with a sense of serene acceptance. She quietly walked over to a bookshelf, picked out a book and started reading it.

The next hour and a half saw nothing else happen since the library was mostly empty except for Madam Irma Pince.

Just as he was about to withdraw the tendril of consciousness he had left connected to his host, however, something interesting happened.

Hermione Granger walked into the library before heading straight into newspaper archives, looking entirely too shifty for herself. If there was any place in the school that the little mudblood wouldn't be acting shifty, it would be the library. Curiosity aroused, he gave a twist and a pull, and his own consciousness snapped right out of the diary and settled into Lisa's head.

Pushing himself up from the desk, he walked around the Charms shelf and quietly entered the archives section, trying to stay unseen. Granger was sitting cross-legged beside a box of old newspapers, ruffling through it, quietly, looking for something.

It didn't take much to guess what.

Making sure that he hadn't been seen, he quickly slipped out of the archives and out of the library, before making his way to the nearby girl's bathroom where he shut himself up in one of the stalls.

The basilisk usually stayed in the pipes, since the winter wasn't really comfortable for it. The echoing nature of the pipes made sending messages to the giant serpent quite easy for him.

Making sure that no one else was in the bathroom with a quick spell, he lifted the lid of the toilet, cast *Sonus* on his voice, and keeping his face

at the seat's height, hissed into it, "Outside the library. The girl with bushy hair. Petrify. Don't kill."

It wouldn't be good to have an obvious mystery killing when his plan was so close to its end, he thought as he headed back out of the bathroom and into the library. He had to stick to a petrification for now.

All that he had left to do now was to make sure that Granger went outside in time for her petrification.

He made his way into the archives section; gladly noting along the way that Pince had already left for Lockhart's event; where Granger was sitting on the floor still looking through newspapers.

He swiftly planned out the entire conversation in his head, disguised his eyes with a wave of his hand before he put a curious expression on to Lisa's face and drew Granger's attention with a cough.

Startled, the bushy-haired Ravenclaw quickly turned around, her eyes widening at the sight of her housemate, "Lisa-"

Not giving the girl any chances, he asked, "You're looking for articles about the last time the chamber was opened aren't you?"

Granger's eyes widened, and then she hesitated, before finally nodding.

He walked over to her, and sunk down to his knees beside the girl, slightly impressed to see that the girl was actually looking in the right year's newspapers, "Have you found anything?"

The bushy haired girl's expression grew miserable as she shook her head, "I've been sneaking away to try and find something for the longest while now. I've gone through as many papers as I could. Nothing."

"Do your friends know about it?"

She shook her head again. "I've been telling them that I'm tired and sick so that I can come look for something in the library by myself. I don't want to pull them into this and put their lives at risk. Especially not

Harry. He hasn't been doing good recently, what with Terry being gone," she said before looking at him fearfully, "You won't tell him will you?"

"I won't," he promised her, "In fact, I think I can help."

Granger looked at him curiously, "You can?"

He nodded, before pulling out a regular marble from his host's pocket.

"This is a Searchible. My mum gave me a bunch of these for my birthday. If you point your wand at it and say the word you are looking for, it will find the nearest piece of paper with that word written on it."

Granger looked doubtfully at the marble, "Really? I don't think I've ever heard of anything called Searchibles."

"Watch," he simply said in reply, before pointing his wand at the marble, and saying, "Petrifactions"

As Granger watched with wide eyes, the marble cracked into two in her hands, and one of the newspapers on the floor lit up with an orange light.

"Go on," he told her, and Granger looked at his host's calm face doubtfully before cracking open the newspaper and sifting through it.

"Oh!" she exclaimed loudly, before realizing that she was in the library and quieting down. He looked over her shoulder, and looked at the article she had found.

'HOGWARTS MURDERER CAUGHT' the headline read. Simple enough article with little actual information. Nothing to fret about, he thought as he turned to look at Granger, who had gone bone white.

"Those marbles only have a single use, but I have loads more back in the dorms," he said, making his host sound as earnest as he could, "I could get the rest from the dorm right now and we could just look for as many of these articles as possible. Who knows, maybe we could find something interesting."

Granger looked at her as if she couldn't believe her fortune. She

gratefully smiled at him before saying, "I'll come with you Lisa. Most people are down at the grounds for Professor Lockhart's event, and it's not safe to go all the way to the tower alone. Would you please wait for me near the doors for a second. I'll put these newspapers away and we can head up together from there."

So the girl had a little Gryffindor in her, he amusedly thought before nodding and heading out of the archives section.

He walked out of the library, not bothering to wait as he stepped around the giant Basilisk sitting right outside the door that only he could see and headed down the corridor towards the stairs which would lead him to Lockhart's event.

A small thud behind him indicated to him that the Basilisk's job was done.

He grinned. He could have just cast an Imperius on the girl and made her come outside, but mudbloods were so gullible and fun to play with. A couple of small charms and a glowing charm on the paper, and the girl instantly believed everything that he said.

'Searchibles indeed,' he thought with a chuckle, 'Hilarious really.'

Gilderoy Lockhart was a wizard who was hailed by many as the greatest wizard since Albus Dumbledore, with exploits far more widespread and varied than the Headmaster's. He had felt the man's magic a couple of times through his host's senses and it had been enough to make his host light-headed, which spoke volumes of the man's raw ability.

Of course, there were people who believed that he was a fraud, and maybe he was. He was a man more incompetent a teacher than any he had ever seen before.

But he wasn't feeling up to taking any risks. If there was even a one percent chance that the man could, in any unpredictable or unexpected

way, prove to be a hurdle to his plans, then it was better to take it as absolute certainty and simply remove him from the equation.

Besides, this ridiculously over-publicised attempt at jumping off of a tower and proving that he had somehow discovered the key to broomless flight was almost too convenient to pass off on.

He had barely made his way to a seat under the giant canopy that had been set up under the highest tower when suddenly, the announcer's megaphone suddenly stopped with a large static screech. Murmurs swept through the crowd as Professor McGonagall came half marching, half running across the grounds to the announcer, and started arguing with him.

The megaphone switched on a minute later with another screech of static, before the announcer said, "We will be starting the event shortly. Meanwhile, Mister Potter and Mister Thomas! Professor McGonagall is asking for you. I repeat. Potter and Thomas!"

He watched amusedly as the two boys waded through the crowd and followed the acting Headmistress as she jogged off into the castle. They must have discovered Granger.

He pushed the thought out of his mind as he cast a Supersensory charm on his host's eyes before looking up at the tower, on top which he could now clearly see what the Defence Professor was doing.

He smirked at the sight.

The man had used some rope to tie two children's brooms to his arms, and was now putting on his plum robes. Apparently, he was going to use the broom's child-safety feature of simply floating down into the ground to create an illusion of a controlled fall.

"And now!" the announcer yelled, "The moment you have been waiting for. Ladies and gentlemen! Give it up for the legendary

Gilderooooooooooy Lockhart!"

And with that, the Defence professor above the tower stepped off the precipice. A ripple of shock spread through the crowd as the man started slowly floating down instead of the madly plummeting to his death, before the cheers started.

It was time.

His eyes flickered to the enchanted safety net underneath the tower, before he quickly sent out a substantial tendril of magic and shattered the Unbreakable charm on it. He quickly looked back up at Lockhart before muttering a short jinx under his breath.

The brooms, and Lockhart's arms tied to it, gave a mighty lurch before the enchantments on the brooms completely broke and the man plummeted with a loud yell, going faster and faster as screams of horror rose in volume in the crowd. He tore right through the net, barely slowing down as he slammed straight into the solid ground with a loud crunch.

The mediwizards and mediwitches nearby rushed in to help the man, and the teachers started herding the students back into the castle. He let his host get carried by the flow of the crowd. This would be more than enough of a distraction to make sure nobody noticed anything until it was too late.

But for now, it was time to rest and recuperate his strength. The next day was going to be much more taxing than this one.

The next day, Harry skipped breakfast to head up to visit Hermione, only to learn that Madam Pomfrey had barred visitors completely from entering the hospital wing.

"We're taking no more chances," Madam Pomfrey told him severely through a crack in the infirmary door. "No Potter, I'm sorry. There's every

chance that the attacker might come back to finish these people off."

With that sort of start to the morning, the rest of the day wasn't exactly looking up. By the time noon rolled around, he learned that Dean had shut himself up in the Gryffindor tower, feeling quite under the weather. The rest of the school, forced to stick together in groups of two and three were full of gossips and rumours.

"The Minister wouldn't have taken Hagrid to Azkaban if he hadn't been a hundred percent sure that he was guilty," said a third year Hufflepuff to his mates as Harry passed him by and Harry held himself from correcting them. He had a gut feeling that the half giant could never have been the killer, but he couldn't really say that for sure. And with the current paranoia in the school, saying anything even remotely supportive of someone who was apparently convicted of opening the Chamber would have been a stupid thing to do.

So he headed over to the Project room, where he shut himself up, spread the newspaper article Hermione had found open on one of the worktables, and pointedly trying to ignore the last line about her suspecting him, started looking through it, scanning for clues.

By and in itself, he noted, the article was almost completely useless. But with Hermione's notes, it started to reveal information that he wouldn't have noticed by himself immediately. Information like that female ghost Moaning Myrtle being the same girl that had been killed all those years ago. And some sort of spider being associated with the opening of the chamber back then.

However, he almost immediately dismissed her theory about a spider being the Beast.

Dumbledore had been more than sure when he had told him that the creature was serpentine, and he was willing to take the headmaster's

word for it. In fact, if the ministry believed that the killer was Hagrid and the beast was a spider, then the impossibility of the spider being the beast also made Hagrid being the heir highly improbable.

Something had happened here at Hogwarts all those years ago.

Something that he didn't know about. And there was only one person who he could get answers from.

Myrtle Warren.

He needed to find the ghost, find out what had happened all those years ago, find out what she remembered about her death, track down where the Chamber of Secrets was and then stopping the heir before he went on a massive killing spree or something similarly horrible.

The heir was protected by his shield of anonymity. If Harry could somehow break that shield down and find the person behind all this, then taking him down ought to become much easier.

Of course, there was still the giant ass problem of no one being able to see or hear the beast itself, but he'd just have to pray that his unique set of skills would somehow end up covering his bottom in that pickle of a situation.

Ping!

Due to the successful crafting of a Plan of Action in distress, take

+1 Wis!

Waving that stat screen away, Harry quickly folded up the paper and dropped it into his inventory, before he headed out of the room, his destination the second floor girl's bathroom, Moaning Myrtle's haunt.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the school inside the Ravenclaw tower, a red eyed girl was placing a plain looking diary inside a rune circle carved into the floor of the otherwise empty girls' dorms.

Throughout the months in which he had been brewing the Draught of

Restoration, had found one particular decision to be very troublesome to make.

Whether or not he would leave his host alive.

His host, as he had often thought, would make for a loyal follower, and at least in the first few days after his revival when he would be weak, a loyal follower to have his back would be invaluable. But leaving her alive would also bring its share problems, including the fact that she could simply take his diary and reveal the secret to his immortality to someone untrustworthy while he was weak right after the ritual.

A problem indeed, but not an unsolvable one.

"Mi aggata mujhesusu lagra nu sanguini le kasa" he chanted in a monotone.

The rune circle around the diary lit up with a sickly orange light, and a loud scream filled the dorms. Whether it was coming from the diary or his own host's mouth he did not know, but what he did know that the ritual was working as intended, separating the entirety of his soul from the diary and pulling it into his current host's body.

A dark pulsating cloud of smoke that he knew to be his soul rose from the diary and converged into a sphere above the now former horcrux, before it immediately sensed where its consciousness was flew into his kneeling host's body with a whoosh.

A final scream of pain escaped his host's mouth as she fell to the floor, her body shuddering uncontrollably as it tried to accommodate his entire soul.

It was a while before he pushed himself up from the floor and onto his feet.

He had about eight more hours until his host's mind and body would become permanently damaged from the strain of holding his soul, but until then, he was in complete control of Lisa Turpin's mind, magic and

body.

It was time to decide what his future loyal follower would and would not know.

He closed her eyes, and dipped into her mind, dissolving the innermost shields he had crafted to hide a bunch of memories from Lisa herself.

With all those memories out in the open, he started grouping together the memories that he wanted no one to know, i.e. the memories from Lord Voldemort and everything about the horcrux.

He considered erasing the memories of their more...intimate interactions, but decided to let them be. It was important for her to remember just how much power he had over her. He had needed them hidden while she was in school, but now, with her primed to be his most loyal follower, he wanted her to remember every bit of those memories with vivid clarity.

With a crushing swipe of his mental presence, he completely destroyed the memories he wanted gone, leaving their only recollection as a part of his own soul.

Then, on the way out of her mind, he crafted the strongest set of shields that he could craft, making her mind nigh impenetrable by anyone except him and him only, making sure that it would take care of anyone ever trying to get into his host's thoughts and stealing his secrets.

The girl opened her eyes, now no more a mere host, but a horcrux herself.

She eyed the diary that was nothing more than a plain notebook now, before grabbing her wand and systematically dismantling every bit of dark magic protection on it. With a final wave of her wand, the diary's cover smoothed over and the name embossed in it completely disappeared, leaving the diary in the exact same condition that it had been purchased half a century ago.

Empty.

She burnt the diary into ashes with a flick of her wand and headed out of the dorms herself. Dusk was starting to fall, and it was time for the beginning of the end.

It took Harry a few minutes to find the girls' bathroom that Moaning Myrtle was known to haunt, which, he noted curiously, was mere meters away from the spot where Mrs. Norris had been found petrified.

Wondering if this was some coincidence or perhaps related, he gingerly stepped over the OUT OF ORDER sign, opened the door and stepped into the bathroom.

It was the most depressing bathroom Harry had ever set foot in. Under a large, cracked, and spotted mirror were a row of chipped sinks. The floor was damp and reflected the dull light given off by the stubs of a few candles, burning low in their holders. The wooden doors to the stalls were flaking and scratched and one of them was dangling off its hinges. A sobbing sound echoed through the bathroom, and Harry followed it over towards the end stall. When he reached it, he quietly used Observe on the dangling ghostly feet that were clearly visible from under the stall's door.

Myrtle Warren

(Relationship Meter-20%)

Lv-0

HP-0/0

MP-0/0

Race-Ghost Witch

Str-0

Vit-0

Dex-0

Int-0

Wis-0

Luc-0

Myrtle Elizabeth Warren, more commonly known after her death as Moaning Myrtle, is a ghost who haunts the girls' bathroom at Hogwarts. She died in 1943 due to ?

She is sad about being dead right now. She doesn't know Harry, but has heard good things about him.

Harry read the question marks in the observe with a spike of frustration. The Fidelius was even affecting the game, and that was more than cause for worry. He waved the screen away, having made sure that he wasn't disturbing the wrong ghost, before he slowly opened the door to the stall. "Hello, Myrtle, how are you?" he gingerly said to the ghost of the young girl who was floating above the tank of the toilet, picking a spot on her chin.

"This is a girls' bathroom," she said, eyeing Harry suspiciously. "You're not a girl."

"No," Harry agreed, trying not to set off the famously weepy girl's tears, "I just wanted to ask you about how you died,"

Contrary to what Harry expected, Myrtle's whole aspect changed at once. She looked as though she had never been asked such a flattering question.

"Ooooh, it was so horrible," she said happily, "I remember it clearly. It happened-"

Much to Harry's shock, she stopped talking mid-sentence and her face suddenly blanked.

Harry snapped his fingers in front of her, but she did not respond. It was as if she had gone catatonic.

She maintained the same blank look for a full half minute, and just as Harry was starting to wonder if he should call somebody, she suddenly regained her bright expression and said, "And that's how I died."

Harry's eyes widened as he realised what had just happened.

The Fidelius.

But he was far from being discouraged. The fact that Myrtle couldn't remember how she died could only mean one thing. That it had been the Beast of Slytherin that had killed her. The Fidelius only hid things that had anything to do with the chamber. It was just like Dumbledore said.

He had to follow the blanks, and soon he would find the truth.

Uncovering the mystery of how Myrtle died was how he could find the Chamber of Secrets!

Thus emboldened, Harry asked Myrtle another question.

"After you died and became a ghost, did you hear anything about a large spider in the school? It said in the newspapers that a large spider killed you. Do you remember anything at all about that?"

Myrtle frowned in concentration, before replying, "I don't think I remember anything about a spider, but I do remember Professor Slughorn saying that a colony of Acromantula had appeared in the forbidden forest a few years after I died. I remember hearing him and being very scared. I'm not very fond of spiders you see."

Yes...It was all starting to make sense in his mind.

If Hagrid had been the one who had been raising the giant spider, and if the ministry believed that it was the Beast, then Hagrid would have been convicted of being the killer. The Acromantula itself had escaped to settle down in the Forbidden Forest, and meanwhile, the real killer had gotten away with it.

Acromantula could talk, Harry remembered, and if the one that was

suspected of being the Beast was still alive in the forest, then it could help fill in a lot of blanks that Harry still had in Harry's story.

An unrelated seeming piece of information suddenly popped up into his mind, and Harry almost pushed it away before he saw what Gamer's mind skill had found and froze.

Dobby...

That night in the hospital wing, when Dobby had told him that he had felt some of his memories being wiped clean, he had been talking about the Fidelius!

Whereas most humans had been entirely unable to even notice that their minds had been altered, Dobby, despite not being the brightest bulb, had noticed that something off.

Was it something related to his not being fully human? Was that the reason? House elves were created from the human species, so the Fidelius had affected Dobby, but they weren't all human, which could have been why he had noticed that something was off.

So by that logic, would that mean that something that was entirely non-human...something like an acromantula...would it be entirely unaffected by the charm?

Had he stumbled upon a hole in the Fidelius?

"Do you think the acromantula colony is still there in the forest?" Harry asked urgently.

Myrtle shuddered, blurring her form a bit, before answering, "I don't see why they wouldn't be."

Ping!

Quest Alert!

Find the acromantula colony and talk to them

Rewards,

20,000 exp

New information

Failure,

Death

YES/NO?

And now he knew what he was going to do next.

"Thank you Myrtle. You've been very helpful," Harry said, with a smile as he pressed yes on the quest.

Myrtle's ghostly cheeks fogged up, and Harry realised with some surprise that the girl was blushing. With a shrill 'Eeep!', she rose up in the air, turned over, and dived headfirst into the toilet, vanishing from sight, although from the direction of her muffled sobs, she had come to rest somewhere in the U-bend.

Harry considered trying to talk to the ghost, but gave it up as a lost cause and headed out of the bathroom before jogging off towards the stairs.

He had an acromantula to find.

Dean Thomas had not been feeling well today.

With the petrification of Hermione and Lockhart's hospitalization, he had just been feeling all sorts of horrible when he had gone to sleep, and when he'd woke up this morning, he had immediately realised stress had taken his toll on his body.

He had woken up late in the morning with a fever.

At first, he had simply elected to rest in his dorms, but when he had simply proceeded to feel more and more horrible as the sun rolled across the sky, he had realized that he needed medical assistance.

Which was why when the dusk started to fall and he was sure that it wasn't bright enough outside to hurt his eyes or something, he pushed himself off of his bed and headed down the Gryffindor tower to the

hospital wing.

However, his trip wasn't meant to be all that smooth, because about halfway to the hospital wing as he turned a corner in the second-floor corridors, he saw something that made him grind to a halt.

Near the spot where Mrs. Norris had been found petrified all those months ago, there was a message painted permanently into the wall. It wasn't that old message that had chilled him to the bones, however.

It was the small figure that was daubing another bloody message right underneath the first one.

Her skeleton will lie in the Chamber forever.

A small draft blew through the halls, making the torchlight flicker and cast a light on the small figure's face. Lisa Turpin, he remembered with a small chill. The Ravenclaw girl.

'Is she the heir?' he thought incredulously as he tried to stay unnoticed.

Lisa finished daubing the message in, and with a wave of her wand, removed the paint that coated her fingers before she quickly headed into the girl's bathroom that was a few meters away from the spot.

Dean followed, his own illness forgotten as the prospect of finally finding the heir and making her pay for what happened to Hermione presented itself to him. He tiptoed over to the doors of the bathroom, where he cracked open the door as quietly as he could before peering in.

The girl was standing next to the sink, bent over a tap as if looking for something.

Suddenly, she opened her mouth and let loose a guttural noise that sent chills down his spine, "Hashssshaaaaasaaaa"

Parseltongue, he remembered.

The mark of a descendant of Slytherin. If there had been any doubt that Turpin was the Heir in his mind, it was now well and truly gone.

The tap she was hissing at suddenly glowed and began to spin. Next second, the sink began to move, sinking right out of sight, leaving a large pipe exposed.

It took him all his restraint to not gasp.

The girl lowered herself into the pipe before she let go, dropping down to wherever she was going to with a whoosh of wind. The sink started rising back up, and at that moment, Dean knew that he had a choice to make.

He could go back and call the teachers, or he could follow the girl down the pipe.

'But she had spoken parseltongue to open the pipe', he thought. If he went back to get the teachers now, then there would be no way for them to teachers get into the sink. With almost no time left to think, he immediately made a decision and slipped through the door as he dashed towards the opening in the ground.

"Gryffindors charge bravely ahead," he told himself as he jumped into the pipe, just as the sink closed back up above him.

It was like rushing down an endless slide. After what felt like a full minute, he landed on something soft and crunchy, and when he looked up, a pair of giant yellow eyes were staring back at him.

His body seized up, and he knew no more.

"ID Escape," Harry muttered and appeared in the real world in a Forbidden Forest clearing near the edge of the forest. The sun had finally gone down, and the moon was shining brightly in the sky, bathing the clearing in a silvery light. It was finally dark enough for what Harry needed to do.

Pulling out Gandiva from his inventory and notching a fire arrow in it, Harry aimed it at the sky and let it fly. Sending a small tendril of mana to the fire as the burning arrow reached its highest point above the forest

canopy, Harry made the fire explode into a bright fireball for an instant before he extinguished it, not wanting to start any forest fires.

It was a short signal, but the people whose attention he was trying to get were quite vigilant. They would've seen it.

Harry stood there for a few minutes before the distinct noise of clip-clopping hooves reached his ears. He put Gandiva back into his inventory, not wanting to appear threatening just as half a dozen centaurs armed with drawn bows burst into the clearing with a familiar form at the lead.

"Good evening Firenze," he said to the group's leader, who raised a hand, telling the others to stand down. The other centaurs lowered their bows and backed off, but Harry could tell that they were watching from the edge of the clearing.

"You caused quite a panic at the tribe, Harry Potter. The elders were close to predicting that the forest's chosen wizard was in danger." the centaur said, walking closer to Harry.

"I really do apologize for any inconvenience caused Firenze," Harry said, "but I needed someone from the centaur tribe to help me find the acromantula colony that has been living here. Perhaps you know of it? It started when one of them escaped from the school into the forest sometime about fifty years ago."

Firenze's expression had grown disapproving and guarded, "What do you want with the likes of Aragog and his children? Abandon whatever your wish is and leave Harry Potter. Only grave danger awaits any man who goes there."

"Do you guys at the tribe know what has been happening at the school? The petrifications?" Harry asked, noting the name Aragog in the back of his mind as he changed his direction of approach.

"Yes we do," Firenze said, looking up at the night sky, "For some reason, the stars have been entirely too silent about it."

"The stars won't tell you anything Firenze. The person behind this has cast a Fidelius on himself. A charm that is capable of hiding the very existence of a secret. With that charm on the beast that is going around petrifying the people, it could do anything it wants...hurt whoever it wants and never be found or held responsible. But I think I know a way to break through it. Aragog is the key."

Firenze's eyes widened in shock, before he peered at his face, searching for something. Whatever it was, he must have found it, because he said, "Go east, and follow the spiders. Aragog will listen to you if you say that you are a friend of Hagrid's, but do not let yourself get surrounded. Do not trust them. Aragog is old, but his children are numerous, out of control and rowdy. Keep your bow handy...and stay safe."

He bowed at Harry, saying no more as he turned around and galloped back into the forest.

Harry kept an ear out until the sound of the hooves faded away before he activated his Unicorn Boost perk and ran to the east, plotting out the quickest route through the trees as he darted through the low hanging branches and vines, looking for some indication of what Firenze meant by following the spiders.

It didn't take him long to find out.

About five minutes of continuous full speed running later, he spotted something on the forest floor and stopped to investigate. Several large spiders were scuttling over the dead leaves and half-melted snow, moving in an unnaturally straight line as though taking the shortest route to a prearranged meeting.

A window suddenly popped up in the corner of his vision.

Ping!

Arachnid Empathy active!

And in that moment, the line of spiders stopped moving. In his own mind, through his empathy skill, he could clearly sense every bit of primal fear and the need for safety that filled the spiders' mind, and he knew that each of those spiders knew his own fear, anger and worry, at least the best they could understand.

"I need to meet Aragog," he said, hoping that the spiders would somehow be able to understand his intentions through the empathy.

The spiders seemed to look at him curiously, before a spike of panic came through his empathy skill and they scattered completely.

Harry didn't even have time to turn around. There was a scuttle and a shuffle and a loud clicking noise, and suddenly he felt something long and hairy seize him around the middle and lift him off the ground so that he was hanging facedown.

"What do you want with Aragog, wizard?" whatever was holding him said. It was hard to comprehend its speech since it seemed oddly clickety sounding.

Harry could make out in the darkness that whatever it was had eight legs, and immediately knew that he was being held by one of Aragog's children. He held himself from simply burning the creature to a crisp and said what he hoped would get him to meet Aragog, "I am a friend of Hagrid's. Hagrid is in trouble and I need Aragog's help to save him."

There was no reply. He heard more clicking, and next moment, he was being carried away into the dark trees. He did not know how long he was in the acromantula's clutches, but he knew that the leaf-strewn ground around him when he stopped was now swarming with spiders.

Not tiny spiders like those surging over the leaves below. Spiders the size

of carthorses, eight-eyed, eight-legged, black, hairy, gigantic. The massive specimen that was carrying Harry made its way down the steep slope of a vast hollow towards a misty, domed web in the very center, while its fellow brethren closed in all around it, clicking their pincers excitedly at the sight of its load.

Harry fell to the ground on all fours as the spider released him.

"Aragog!" the spider that had dropped him called, "Aragog!"

And from the middle of the misty, domed web, a spider the size of a small elephant emerged, very slowly. There was gray in the black of his body and legs, and each of the eyes on his ugly, pincer head was milky white. He was blind.

"What is it?" he said, clicking his pincers rapidly.

"Man," clicked the spider who had caught Harry.

"Is it Hagrid?" said Aragog, moving closer, his eight milky eyes wandering vaguely.

"Stranger. Says he is friend of Hagrid," clicked the spider. Click, click, click went the pincers of the spiders all around the hollow, as a wave of unease had spread through them. Aragog paused.

"Hagrid has never sent men into our hollow before," he said slowly.

"Hagrid is in trouble," said Harry quickly, trying to get his word in before the massive creature lost patience, "That's why I have come."

"In trouble?" said the aged spider, and Harry thought he heard concern beneath the clicking pincers. "But why has he sent you?"

Harry thought of getting to his feet but decided against it. Not showing any dominance and hostility seemed like a good thing to do. Besides, if he needed to escape, he simply had to say two words to drop into an ID.

So he spoke from the ground, keeping his voice incredibly calm as he tried to use his Arachnid Empathy to connect to the ancient acromantula.

"They think that Hagrid's been setting something on students. Something that petrified them. They've taken him to Azkaban for it."

Aragog clicked his pincers furiously, "But that was years ago. I remember it well. That is why they made him leave the school. They believed that I was the monster that dwells in what they call the Chamber of Secrets. They thought that Hagrid had opened the Chamber and set me free."

"But you didn't come from the Chamber did you? It was something else. Some kind of snake. And it was all blamed on you." said Harry, eagerly. Aragog was providing information that he was sure no human would have remembered in the wake of the Fidelius. Maybe he had actually found a way to break the Fidelius charm and expose the Heir.

"Yes," croaked the old spider. "It would have been my instinct to harm humans, but out of respect for Hagrid, I never did so. The body of the girl who was killed was discovered in a bathroom. I never saw any part of the castle but the cupboard in which I grew up."

Harry grinned. He finally knew where Myrtle had died! If he looked around in her bathroom enough, he was sure he could find some clue or the other to find where the entrance to the Chamber was.

"Do you know what did kill that girl?" he eagerly asked, looking for the last piece of the puzzle, but his words were drowned by loud clicking and the rustling of many long legs shifting around him.

"The thing that lives in the castle," said Aragog, "is an ancient creature we spiders fear above all others. I remember well, how I pleaded with Hagrid to let me go when I sensed the beast moving about the school. We do not speak of it. We do not name it. I never even told Hagrid the name of that creature, though he asked me, many times."

Harry could feel the spiders pressing together around him on all sides. Not wanting to use destructive force and lose any chance of finding out

what the Beast really was, Harry decided to use the other approach.

"It will come for you!" he exclaimed, and the advancing spiders stopped.

There was not a click to be heard.

"What do you mean?" Aragog rasped.

"Do you think that wizards will stop it this time? That you'll stay safe in this hollow of yours? Oh no you won't. The beast is protected by a charm that completely hides it from wizards' senses. If you don't tell me what the creature is right now, then soon it will kill everything that remains in the castle. How long do you think it will take for it to kill all of your children?"

He used Gamer's mind to isolate his sense of fear from the rest of his emotions and sent it down the empathy link, making sure that every single one of the hundreds of spiders in the clearing could feel it clearly.

Aragog paused, his unseeing eyes looking around as his legs shifting uneasily.

He was considering it, Harry could tell from his empathy link. And from that link, he knew the exact moment the ancient spider made up his mind.

"They call it a basilisk," Aragog said quickly and quietly, and a loud outbreak of clicking and rustling of many long legs shifting angrily broke out as large black shapes shifted all around him just as a ping went off.

Ping!

Quest Success!

Find the acromantula colony and talk to them

Rewards,

20,000 exp

New information

Ping!

A skill has leveled up due to calm use!

Blackmailing Lv- 10 (21%)

This is your ability to make another person do something you want by expressly using some sort of leverage against them. The higher the level, the more chance of success!

(25 + Lv of Bullshitting)% chance of success, less based on how extreme the demand is.

But Harry saw none of that.

The moment he had heard the word 'basilisk', a blinding, mind-numbing headache had burst in his head.

Seeing the edges of his vision blacken, Harry held onto his head as he croaked out, "ID Create," and dropped into an ID where, safe from the gigantic spiders that could eat him at any moment, he lost consciousness.

When Harry woke up, much to his relief, his headache was fully gone.

A quick look at the watch told him that he had been unconscious for over an hour. Pushing himself up onto his feet, Harry headed back onto the Hogwarts grounds, where he popped back out into the real world.

He had to tell the Professors what he'd found.

He had barely made it past the greenhouses and into the castle corridor, when suddenly a musical trill sounded from above, making him look up at the direction the sound came from. It was Hedwig, he happily realized, flying down at him from the direction of the Ravenclaw tower.

He hadn't spent any time with his familiar today at all, and apparently, she was happy to see him too. He held out his arm, on which his phoenix flapped down onto, before jumping onto his shoulder. Harry gave her a smile, ruffling her back feathers before he explained all that he had done today to her.

However, it was near the end of his telling that he encountered a

problem.

"And the acromantula told me that the beast of Slytherin was actually a-"

Harry suddenly choked over his own spit, unable to say anything.

And it was at that moment, he remembered that the Fidelius's secret could only be spoken by its secret keeper, which he wasn't. He hadn't broken the Fidelius charm...he had simply cheated his way into it, and was now stuck with a secret that he couldn't tell anybody. Even if he told the teachers about the entrance, they would be walking into a suicide mission without knowing what awaited them in the chamber.

Fuck.

He didn't let the frustration cloud his senses though. This little conundrum left him with only one solution. Find the heir and stop him all by himself.

Looking at his familiar, Harry realized that there was another way that he could let Hedwig know the secret.

He quickly pulled out Fantastic Beasts and where to find them and opened it to the page where Basilisks were talked about. He showed it to Hedwig, who he knew had learned to read English from Fawkes. Hedwig peered at the page before looking at him, her beady eyes wide.

Thankfully, Hedwig not being a human meant that the Fidelius wouldn't affect her and that she would be able to read the page clearly.

"That is the beast," Harry said, and the Fidelius allowed only that much.

Hedwig was now in on the secret and could help him with finding the entrance, which would be more than invaluable since her eyesight was a hundred times better than his.

However, his pleasant feeling wasn't to last.

Suddenly, echoing through the corridors came Professor McGonagall's voice, magically magnified. "All remaining students are immediately to

return to their House dormitories at once. All teachers return to the staff room. There has been another attack."

Harry's eyes widened as implications of what could have happened filled his mind. Another petrification? An attack on the petrified students? A killing?

"Staffroom Hedwig! Quick!" he told his familiar, pushing down his foreboding thoughts. With a quick chirp of agreement, Hedwig spread her wings and fire filled his vision.

When the flames receded, they were in a nook just off of the staff rooms. Letting Hedwig get into his expanded pocket, Harry put on his invisibility cloak and headed out of the nook and hid just outside the door of the staff room. He needed to hear who had been attacked before he could do anything.

The teachers started flooding in one by one, some looking puzzled, others downright scared. And then Professor McGonagall walked into the room.

"It has happened," Harry heard her tell the silent staff room. "Students have been taken by the monster into the Chamber itself."

Gasps started around the room, before Snape's voice interrupted them, "How can you be sure?"

"The Heir of Slytherin," said Professor McGonagall, "has left another message. Right underneath the first one. 'Her skeleton will lie in the Chamber forever.'"

"Who is it?" said Madam Hooch's voice, "Which student?"

"Lisa Turpin," Professor McGonagall's tone sounded broken as she answered, "We will have to send all the students home tomorrow...This is the end of Hogwarts."

There was no more talking. One by one, the teachers walked out of the room. Meanwhile, Harry was busy asking himself why the heir would

take the quiet Ravenclaw girl of all people.

Had she known something?

Had she come across something that had set the heir on edge?

Why her?

All these questions and more filled his mind as he headed into an abandoned classroom nearby, where he pulled off his cloak and had Hedwig flame him up to Myrtle's bathroom.

The ghostly girl wasn't present there, probably off with the other ghosts trying to get straggler students to go back to their dorms as per Professor McGonagall's orders. Harry let Hedwig out of his pocket.

"Look for something out of the ordinary. It's probably related to snakes and well hidden," he told her, and the phoenix flew up, looking for anything like Harry had described.

Meanwhile, Harry himself was considering using something that he had promised himself he wouldn't use anymore at Hogwarts. Mage Sight. The Hogwarts castle was overflowing with magic, which of course made Mage sight completely useless if you did not want to get blinded by the sheer intensity of the light. But this was one of those situations that felt like it was worth the pain.

"Mage sight activate," he muttered.

Nope.

Bad idea.

Almost blinded by the sheer intensity of light, Harry quickly shut his eyes and deactivated the ability, trying to stop a headache from forming. The bathroom was pretty much near the center of the castle, and the only thing he was able to see was pure burning white. It was rather stupid of him to even bother trying.

Just as he had pulled up his healing ability and healed away his

headache, a trill sounded from across the room. Trying to blink out the spots in his eyes, he looked over at where Hedwig was calling him from. She was perched on a sink, pecking one of the copper taps.

Harry hurried over to it and looked at the sink closely before he finally saw it. Scratched on the side of one of the copper taps was a tiny snake.

"Observe," he immediately cast at the tap.

Entrance to the Chamber of Secrets

The tap requires a Password from anyone who wishes to gain entry.

This password is given to this tap, which can give access to the pipe which leads to the Chamber.

Password - Any Parseltongue phrase

Suddenly a window popped up in the corner of his vision.

Parseltongue Skill Active!

"Open up," he said, and at once the tap glowed with a brilliant white light and began to spin. Next second, the sink began to move, sinking right out of sight, leaving a large pipe exposed, a pipe wide enough for a man to slide into.

Ping!

Quest Alert!

Save Lisa and defeat the beast of the Chamber!

Rewards,

80,000 exp

10 stat points

Skill book!

Failure,

Death

YES/NO?

Taking a deep breath, he pressed yes, before casting a Bombarda on the

sink, exploding it to pieces. If he somehow didn't make it, then at least people who couldn't speak Parseltongue; people like Aurors and investigators; would be able to enter the chamber.

He grabbed onto Hedwig's legs as she lifted him up, and together, they descended down into the Chamber of Secrets.

I've been worrying about posting this chapter. There are always a bunch of people who hate seeing character death and get angry at the authors for writing them, but hey, I have to tell the story I set out to tell, so I'll just have to weather the flames and angry reviews.

There were always going to be casualties in this plotline and Dean was one of them. His death will unleash multiple new plotlines and will have a long-lasting impact on the story. This was the longest chapter yet, with a whole lot of setups paying off. Let me know what you thought of it.

Dark times ahead...

34. Book-II:The Red Eyed Girl

Chapter 14:

It was like slowly going down a slimy, dark slide. He could see more pipes branching off in all directions, but none as large as theirs, which twisted and turned, sloping steeply downwards. He knew that they were flying slowly deeper below the school than even the dungeons. It eerily quiet, with no other sound around except the occasional tip tap of water and the rhythmic flapping of Hedwig's wings above him.

After a minute or so of careful maneuvering, the pipe leveled out, and he dropped down onto the slimy, damp floor of a dark stone tunnel large enough to stand in. Hedwig fluttered down onto his shoulder as he looked around the tunnel.

"We must be miles under the school. Under the lake," said Harry as he

looked at the wet, slimy ceiling of the tunnel, his voice echoing in the black tunnel. Hedwig chirped in uneasy agreement, looking around with peeled eyes for any movement in the darkness.

Harry lifted his hand, intending to light up a fire before he stopped himself.

If the Basilisk was nearby, attracting its attention with a fireball was going to be the last thing he wanted to do.

No.

Stealth was the way to go.

Dipping a hand into the inventory and pulling out the Invisibility Cloak, Harry wrapped it around himself and Hedwig. Deciding to trust his senses, for now, he walked off into the tunnel, trying to avoid making any splashes in the puddles of water on the floor.

The next few moments Harry quietly moved, listening hard for any sound that could make it to him, be it cries of help from the abducted Ravenclaw girl or the crunching bones underneath a slithering basilisk.

He found neither. But what he did find, was much more...disturbing.

As he turned a dark bend in the tunnel, he caught sight of something giant and curved. It wasn't moving. However, before he could do anything, Hedwig suddenly gave a loud screech before vanishing from his shoulder with a burst of flames. She reappeared a few feet away, whereupon with a screech of anger, she started scratching and tearing at the structure.

In a corner of his mind, Harry realized that Hedwig was making a lot of noise and that he should probably stop her, but that corner was mostly ignored as he took in the massive snakeskin of a vivid and poisonous green color, lying curled and empty across the tunnel floor. The basilisk that had shed it must have been at least fifty feet in length.

A quick calculation in his head, and Harry knew that the basilisk that had been terrorizing the school wasn't a young one.

"Bugger," he muttered to himself, "That's big."

An older basilisk presented a whole host of problems that a younger one wouldn't have. Problems like the size, resistance to all forms of wand magic that he knew, resistance to the fire that was his own favored weapon, immense strength, swift-acting and powerful venom, nigh impenetrable skin and an instantly fatal gaze.

Bugger indeed.

Harry shook his head, shaking off the worry that had started to set in with the help of Gamer's Mind and opened up his skill window and started looking through his skills. He needed a plan if he was to come out of a confrontation with the Beast alive.

It took him a while of ruffling through skills and spells and an old science book that he had nicked from his old school's library, but he cobbled together a rough plan in a few minutes, which wasn't all that reliable but was definitely better than nothing. He was about to close the skill window when something caught his eye.

Dragon's Breath, Lv-1

A concentrated breath of fire mimicking the magical properties of Dragon fire. Capable of burning through almost anything, and can be used for metal work too.

1% level of control

Cost - 1000 MP

It was tempting to consider using this. A skill that had killed a Dementor...

'No...No. A 1000 MP cost and a 1% level of control...This skill needs to be leveled up a lot before I could use it reliably,' he thought. And if the

control failed him in between the battle, then he would have no idea what would happen. Would the fire puffer out, or would it just burn him down, or would it just suck all his magic out like a ward? It was all too blurry to fit in a plan about a situation as dangerous as this. Besides, he had Hedwig, and that was an advantage that was too good to ignore. So he tore his eyes away from the screen, closed it, and called for Hedwig who had finally stopped pecking at the shed skin. "Hedwig! You're making a ruckus. We need to stay quiet," he scolded. The bird gave an apologetic tweet before bursting into flames and reappearing on Harry's shoulder. After taking a few minutes to instruct her on what to do, he pulled the Cloak snug around them and stepped past the giant snakeskin. The tunnel turned and turned again, and every nerve in Harry's body was tingling. He wanted the tunnel to end, yet dreaded what he'd find when it did. And then, at last, as he crept around yet another bend, he saw a solid wall ahead on which two entwined serpents were carved, their eyes set with great, glinting emeralds. Harry approached, casting an Observe.

Snake themed Door

The wall-door requires a Password from anyone who wishes to gain entry. This password is given to this door, which can give access to the Chamber.

Password - Any Parseltongue phrase

Suddenly a window popped up in the corner of his vision.

Parseltongue Skill Active!

"Open," he said in a faint low hiss to the snakes, who looked strangely alive with their flickering emerald eyes. And lo and behold, the serpents parted. The wall cracked open, the halves slid smoothly out of sight, and Harry walked inside on tiptoes.

He was standing at the end of a very long, dimly lit chamber. Towering

stone pillars entwined with more carved serpents rose to support a ceiling lost in darkness, casting long, black shadows through the odd, greenish gloom that filled the place. A hundred questions filled his mind at the same time. Could the basilisk be lurking in a shadowy corner, behind a pillar? And where was Lisa? Was she dead?

He quietly moved forward between the serpentine columns. The hollow eye sockets of the stone snakes seemed to be following him. More than once, with a jolt of the stomach, he thought he saw one stir. He kept his eyes narrowed, ready to clamp them shut at the smallest sign of movement.

Then, as he drew level with the last pair of pillars, a statue high as the Chamber itself loomed into view, standing against the back wall.

Harry had to crane his neck to look up into the giant face above. It was ancient and monkeyish, with a beard that fell almost to the bottom of the wizard's stone robes, where two enormous grey feet stood on the smooth Chamber floor. And between the feet, facing towards the statue, stood the figure of a tall black-haired boy fiddling with something that was blocked from his view by the figure's body.

Suddenly, a loud painful screech of static, not unlike an old telly, filled the Chamber. Before Harry could even lift his hands to cover his ears, it stopped, and a piano started playing. The figure stepped back, and a playing gramophone came into view, sitting on a spindly table.

Whoever it was, was comfortable enough to play music in a situation like this, and that didn't sit right with Harry. Harry frowned, and cast an Observe on the figure and waited for the window to pop up.

Nothing. Nothing at all.

The piano from the gramophone had stopped playing by the time Harry confusedly wondered if what was happening and why the Observe wasn't

showing up, having led smoothly further into the song where a guitar strummed rhythmically in the background, and a saxophone played a soothing jazz.

The figure turned around, and much to Harry's shock, looked at him straight through his Cloak with a smile.

"I wondered whether I'd be meeting you here, Potter," he said with an unnerving smile, slightly blurring around his edges. Harry uneasily noted the blurring and wondered if this was a ghost.

And then it hit him. Maybe it was the red eyes or maybe it was the familiar words that he had heard from the mouth of Quirrell a year ago, but Harry instantly knew without a single shred of doubt that he was talking to Lord Voldemort.

"You!" he spat almost involuntarily, letting his cloak slide off of his shoulders, "What did you do to Lisa!?"

Meanwhile, Hedwig quickly grabbed the cloak in her talons, flew up into the air and perched herself on the head of one of the snakes that wound around the Chamber's pillars, obeying Harry's instructions of keeping herself as much out of danger as possible.

Riddle keenly watched Hedwig fly up into the heights, ignoring Harry's question. After Hedwig had found her perch, he turned to him and said, "You know who I am. How?"

A spike of pain in his head suddenly startled Harry. A window had popped up in front of him.

Ping!

Legilimency attack averted.

"That trick doesn't work on me Riddle," Harry spat at him, wincing under the spike of pain.

Riddle's eyebrows rose and the smile fell off his face, "How do you know

that name?"

"Doesn't take much to figure it out," Harry snarked, before he stifled his anger and activated Gamer's Mind to its full extent.

The world around him slowed to a crawl as his mind sped up to incredible rates.

Alright, he told himself. The situation had suddenly gone worse than rock bottom. Now he had to deal with a basilisk and an incorporeal teenage dark lord who he didn't have the element of surprise on anymore since the dark wizard had seen him use his abilities when he had faced him last year.

Great!

He started to scan through anything and everything he knew about Voldemort. He could attack him, but as far as he knew, he had no way of hurting spirits or ghosts. Furthermore, he had to find Lisa, and the only way to do that was to find out where Voldemort took her. Since he couldn't force him to tell him, he'd have to trick him.

'What is Voldemort's weakness?' Harry asked himself, 'What is his Achilles heel?'

It didn't take too long for him to figure it out.

Voldemort was a megalomaniac. He enjoyed bragging. He enjoyed letting his victims know how well he had played them, and how they were completely helpless in front of his genius and power and were facing certain death. So if he could convince him to tell him about his plan, he would be able to find Lisa.

But Voldemort wasn't an idiot. He wouldn't go around monologuing to someone who he thought was going to beat him and foil his plans. Harry needed to make himself appear weak and powerless if he wanted to find out where Lisa was.

A rudimentary plan formed, the world around him sped back up.

"Doesn't it?" Riddle continued, his face expressionless, "I'd always thought that I hid it well en-" His spiel was interrupted when a ball of fire passed straight through him and hit Slytherin's toe behind him.

'Two birds with one stone,' Harry thought. He now knew for sure that his wandless magic couldn't hurt Riddle and that he was actually a spirit.

And he also set up his act of looking helpless in front of him.

Ping!

A skill has leveled up due to clever planned use!

Theatrics, Lv- 9 (30%)

You have a penchant for the grand, a wish to bedazzle and the desire to intimidate. This skill helps you achieve it.

Harry closed the window. Something about Riddle's expression was making Harry uneasy. Riddle was looking at Harry's hand with an expression of utmost shock and surprise. That surprise, he noted with some befuddlement. There was no faking that. Somehow, Voldemort was not only younger than when he had faced him last time, he also didn't have any memories of their last confrontation, where he had clearly seen him use his wandless magic.

Nevertheless, he had a plan to stick to. So he forced an expression of utter shock and terror onto his face.

"What are you?" he whispered, injecting terror into his voice, "How did that not hurt you?"

Riddle's surprise vanished, replaced by a greedy victorious expression, "I've wanted to see you for the longest time, Harry. To speak to you. And now that we meet, you have surprises up your sleeve! Wandless magic... occlumency...all so similar to my own. It's a shame that Lord Voldemort would never even consider sparing someone who brought about his fall.

And to have gotten into this chamber...I heard you speak the Parseltongue near the door...Such a waste."

Harry stared at him. There was something very funny going on here.

"You speak like you aren't Voldemort?"

Riddle chuckled, "That would be because I am not. I am a memory Harry, of my younger self, stored in a container that I broke free from. Your dear housemate, whom I presume you wished to save when you came running down here, really helped me with that."

A memory...so that was why Riddle hadn't known about his wandless magic before. Harry spirits lightened a bit. That meant that this Riddle had no idea what else he could do! He had gotten the element of surprise back! And his plan of getting him to talk about Lisa was working too!

"What are you talking about?" he asked, "Lisa helped you?"

"She did indeed," said Riddle, "Although not quite willingly. My container, my diary, was something that she quite loved. She has been writing in it for months, telling me all her pitiful worries...And I've been writing back."

All the time he spoke, Riddle's eyes never left Harry's face. There was an almost hungry look in them.

"It's amazing how far sympathy gets you isn't it..." Riddle laughed, a high cold laugh, that didn't suit him. A chill ran down Harry's back. "Lisa poured out her soul to me, and I took all that I needed. Her magic, her body, her soul. She belongs to me. And now, with her body and magic, I finally will have my own body back."

"It was Lisa," Harry whispered out with wide eyes as he made the connection, "She opened the Chamber of Secrets."

"Very smart of you Harry," Tom said with the delighted tone of a teacher whose student had solved a particularly difficult question, "Much like

how I did half a century ago, she opened the chamber. Of course, she didn't know what she was doing. I took great care of that. I made her mind impenetrable. Made her obedient."

Anger coursed through Harry's body as his nails dug into the palms of his clenched fists. Voldemort had ruined yet another life. Yet another innocent future...destroyed.

No, he told himself, halting that train of thought. He couldn't give up on Lisa now, not after he had come this far. He had to save her. No matter how.

"You framed Hagrid didn't you?"

Riddle laughed his high laugh again. "It was my word against Hagrid's. On the one hand, Tom Riddle, poor but brilliant, parentless but so brave, school prefect, model student...on the other hand, big, blundering Hagrid, in trouble every other week, trying to raise werewolf cubs under his bed, sneaking off to the Forbidden Forest to wrestle trolls. The plan worked well."

"I bet Dumbledore saw right through you," said Harry, his teeth gritted. If only that stupid Fidelius wouldn't have still been on the Basilisk, he would have gotten Hedwig to flame the entire staff in here, and it would have all been over in minutes.

"Well, he certainly kept an annoyingly close watch on me after Hagrid was expelled," said Riddle carelessly. "I knew it wouldn't be safe to open the Chamber again while I was still at school. So I decided to leave behind a diary, preserving my sixteen-year-old self in its pages, so that one day, with luck, I would be able to lead another in my footsteps, and finish Salazar Slytherin's noble work."

"And now what?" he asked, fighting to keep his voice steady, "You've lost haven't you? The school is closing down. The petrified people will be

awake soon. The chamber will be discovered. And what was all this for?

Your sick pleasure?"

Riddle's smile turned into a chilling grin, "I suppose you are not so smart after all Harry. There is always an endgame to a plan as brilliant as mine.

Can you not guess what a disembodied spirit wants the most? Can you not figure it out Harry? You've met my future self after all."

And it was then that it hit Harry.

"You want a body."

Two Voldemorts...that was the endgame. This...memory wanted to get a body himself, and then help the real Voldemort get a body too.

"Indeed. My spirit and Lisa's now reside together in her body, and she will help me regain mine. In fact, right now, as you pathetically try to wriggle out her location from me, the potion for the creation of my body is being brewed through its final step."

Harry blood chilled. Riddle had seen right through his attempts at manipulation.

"Wh-Why," he stuttered, "Why are you telling me all this then?"

"Why stalling of course," Riddle exclaimed, much to Harry shock, "You see, I can't cast magic through my host's body directly before being dipped the Draught of Restoration. So I created a little illusion that I can control. A mirage in the Chamber through whose eyes I can see, if you will."

Riddle's blurry outline started to blur and flicker even more.

"While it can't cast magic, it can stall just fine until my Beast, which I had sent on a little errand, comes back. I can hear him in the pipes above now, although you will not quite be able to sense him. A rather nifty little spellwork on my part if I do say so myself. But don't worry. Your death will be quick and painless. That I promise you."

Riddle...No. The illusion smiled at him one last time before it turned and looked up into the stone face of Slytherin, high above it in the half-darkness.

"Speak to me, Slytherin, greatest of the Hogwarts Four!"

There was the sound of stone grinding against stone, and Slytherin's gigantic stone face was moving, his mouth opening, wider and wider to make a huge black hole. And something was stirring inside the statue's mouth. Something was slithering up from its depths.

Harry backed away as he shut his eyes tight and activated Mage Sight just in time to see a huge serpentine shape thick as an oak trunk with a poisonous green glow hit the chamber floor with a loud thud. Harry felt it shudder and watched as it uncoiled itself from Slytherin's mouth.

Then he heard Riddle's hissing voice, "Kill him." And with that, the flickering glow of Riddle's illusion faded away and the serpent lunged.

Harry activated Unicorn Boost and rushed to the side, dodging the serpent's attack, feeling confident despite the fear that ran through him.

This he knew was going to happen. This he had a plan for. He immediately cast an Observe on the Beast.

Basilisk

Lv-95

HP:98400/98400

MP: 600/600

Str- 95

Vit- 81

Dex-38

Int-19

Wis-21

Luc-0

The Serpent of Slytherin is a female Basilisk placed by Salazar Slytherin inside the Chamber of Secrets and can only be controlled by his heir. She is venomous, possesses incredible strength and durability, is resistant to majority of spells, and direct contact with her gaze results in death.

Kill to get- 15,000 Exp.

The Observe contained nothing that Harry hadn't already known, but it was good to have it confirmed.

The Basilisk, however, wasn't exactly foolish. While Harry had his attention divided, it turned and boxed him in with the wall with its body. It was when he closed the window, he realized his predicament. Just as the giant snake lunged at Harry again, who was desperately looking for a way to dodge, he felt claws dig into his shoulder and he disappeared from the spot in a burst of flames, leaving the Basilisk to smash its face against the stone floor.

Harry reappeared on the other side of the hall.

"Thanks, Hedwig," Harry said as his avian friend puffed her chest up,

"There's no point in wasting time, let's put the plan into action now."

Hedwig gave a sharp nod and rose into the air with a determined trill, before flying off with a burst of speed towards the Basilisk. Harry wanted to make sure that she was alright, but dared not waste any time, instead speeding off towards the door with the snakes on it, through which he had entered the Chamber. Turning off Mage Sight so that he could tell the door apart from the walls around it, Harry quickly hissed out, "Close" Much like how the serpents had parted as the wall had cracked open, the halves reappeared, and smoothly slid shut with a thud.

Behind him, Hedwig was doing a fantastic job of distracting the Basilisk.

Harry closed his eyes, turned Mage Sight back on and looked back into

the chamber. The Basilisk had moved to the center of the Chamber, where the enormous serpent had raised itself high in the air and its great blunt head was weaving drunkenly between the pillars. Hedwig was soaring around its head, and the basilisk was snapping furiously at her with fangs, long and thin as sabers.

Harry dipped into his inventory and pulled out a pencil nub that he had idly thrown in there once. Making sure that there was little to no graphite on the nub, Harry tossed it at the serpent. It landed on the floor near the spot where the Basilisk was tussling with Hedwig.

And it was time.

"Hedwig! It's time!" Harry called loudly. Taking the cue, Hedwig burst into flames and reappeared on Harry's shoulder.

"Listen, Hedwig. As soon as I cast the spell, get us out into the tunnel outside. FULGURIS!" Harry yelled, aiming at the pencil nub and pushing as much mana into the spell as he could.

As soon as the burst of lightning left his wand, Hedwig immediately flamed them out of there and into the tunnel outside.

Amongst all his training in the spell and using it to convert metal to metal, the one thing Nicholas had told Harry to never do was to overdo an Alchemical Transmutation. Since alchemy worked by fiddling with the atom's structure itself, overdoing the spell risked setting off a nuclear reaction which, as any muggle worth his salt could tell you, is usually a dangerous thing.

Harry's aim struck true, and temperature of the pencil stub rose millionfold to the point that it was flash-heated to that of the surface of the sun. The Carbon atoms in the nub structurally burst open into electrons protons and neutrons. The protons then interacted with the Hydrogen in the air around them to undergo one of the most common

and powerful nuclear reactions in the known universe called the Proton-Carbon cycle.

In short, literal milliseconds after Harry and Hedwig teleported out, an explosion the size of a dozen hand grenades rocked the Chamber.

BOOM!

As soon as Harry reappeared outside the Chamber, he dropped to his knees and shielded himself and Hedwig as rocks and stones lodged in the roof of the tunnel that had gotten shaken loose and fell on them.

Finally, a minute later when the dust settled, Harry rose to his feet and dusted himself off. Hedwig shook herself, flapping her wings to shake the dust off them before trilling apprehensively at Harry.

"I don't want to go in too, Hedwig," said Harry, "But we have to help Lisa."

And turning to the entrance, he hissed, "Open" making the serpents part and the halves slide out of view.

Hedwig flew in, scoping out the situation as Harry gingerly stepped into the room with eyes closed and Mage Sight on.

"Are the snake's eyes closed?" he asked his phoenix, who flapped over to the now unmoving glowing green serpent to check before trilling out an affirmative.

Harry opened his eyes and shut down Mage Sight before taking in the sight of what he had done.

Three of the pillars had completely broken down, and a lot of the others had cracks on them. The floor was cracked as well, though whether that was from the basilisk or the explosion, Harry did not know. Dust covered pretty much every surface, and Salazar Slytherin no longer had much of a lower body, since one of his legs, both his arms and much of his abdomen were now simply missing. And in the middle of Chamber, massive and

unmoving, lay the Basilisk. The snake must have been thrown around and roughed up pretty bad in the explosion because it looked bent up in a lot of wrong ways.

As the urgency of the situation set in, Harry quickly called for Hedwig, who had picked up his Cloak, put the cloak back into his Inventory, and headed towards the spot in between Slytherin's feet. Before, when he had mage sight on, he had absently noticed something that he wanted to check out.

Reaching the spot in between the feet, Harry noted that the gramophone that had been playing music must have been charmed unbreakable since it was still completely intact and playing that jazz. He shook off that thought before he turned on Mage Sight. Sure enough, one human-sized rectangular portion of the wall was much lighter than the rest. That, as Harry knew, meant that the wall had empty space behind it. He cast Observe.

Entrance to the inner Chamber

The wall requires a Password from anyone who wishes to gain entry. This password is given to this wall, which can give access to the tunnel which leads to the inner chamber.

Password - 'Salazar' in Parseltongue

"Salazar" he hissed, following the Observe's information, and the section of the wall slid down into the floor. With Hedwig on his shoulder, he walked into the tunnel with Mage Sight turned on, just in case there were any traps or wards.

The light from the chamber behind him soon disappeared around a bend, leaving him in complete darkness. It was a few moments and a couple more bends later that the end of the tunnel appeared, lit by a single torch in a torch bracket, a solid wall with a snake carved on it.

A hissed "Open" later, the wall slid open, and what he saw left Harry shocked to a standstill.

Because in the small otherwise empty room in front of him, the familiar form of Dean Thomas stood in front of a bubbling potion in cauldron large enough to fit a man in. But that wasn't what shocked Harry. It was the fact that Dean was holding in his arms what appeared to be a very much alive Lisa Turpin.

And in front of Harry's wide eyes, Dean turned to look at him, his eyes eerily vacant, and not even looking away, dropped the girl into the burning potion.

"NO!" Harry yelled and lunged at Dean, tackling him into the ground. But it was too late. Lisa had fallen into the cauldron.

Quickly pushing himself onto his feet, Harry quickly used Pyromancy to stop the magical fire and quickly pushed the cauldron over its stand, tipping its entire contents out onto the floor.

The creamy potion splashed onto the floor, as did Lisa Turpin, who went sliding before she stopped by the wall. Her skin had turned red, and in places had burnt severely. Pulling out his wand, Harry quickly vanished as much of the potion as he could, taking the clear lack of a brand spanking new Voldemort to mean that he still must be inside the girl's body.

It was probably too much to hope that the potion would have killed off Voldemort's soul while keeping Lisa's alive.

"Observe" he cast, kneeling down beside the unconscious girl.

LeilsdadiR Tmuorpitn (Status: Shared Body-2 Souls, Unconscious,

2nd Degree burns)

(Relationship Meter-0%)

Lv-! \$#!%! %! %!

Race-Dead Body

Str-0

Vit-0

Dex-0

Int-0

Wis-0

Luc-0

Dean Thomas was a half-blood son of Jonathon Wright and Marie Corsaw. He grew up with his mother and stepfather until, at age eleven, he was accepted into Hogwarts. He was killed by Basilisk stare.

He is dead.

"No," Harry muttered as he read the last line, sinking onto his knees as his expression scrunched into a mask of horror, "No no no no no no no. NO!"

He suddenly shook his head, shaking off the tears that had started forming near his eyes. Now wasn't the time to lose himself in despair.

There could be time. "He-healing touch..."

Nothing happened.

"Healing touch!" he said more forcefully, choking down the sobs that threatened to surface in his voice. Dean couldn't be dead. He just couldn't be. There had to be some way or the other to bring him back.

Again, nothing happened.

"Healing touch!" he said again. And yet again...nothing.

"Healing touch! Healing touch! Healing touch! HEALING TOUCH! HEALING TOUCH! HEALING TOUCH!" he yelled, his voice cracking as tears ran down his face, "Healing...touch..."

Suddenly, a veneer of red fell over his vision, and his tears stopped. An

unfailing calm fell over his mind, and his head snapped around to look at Lisa lying a few feet away. But he didn't see the unconscious girl lying there. He saw the murderer of his parents, and now the murderer of his friend.

The ground underneath Lisa trembled before it turned fluid and started swallowing her up. Her legs went first, sinking with a cracking noise into the ground, and then it was her arms, and then her torso, until all of her that was left above the ground was her head and neck.

Harry calmly got up to his feet and walked over to stand in front of the almost entombed girl, before he pulled out his wand and snapped out an *Enervate*.

The eyes that opened were bright red, and somehow, completely percipient.

"You should be dead," she calmly said, although Harry clearly knew who was talking.

"So should you. Why did you kill Dean?" he asked calmly, staring unblinking and expressionless at his prisoner.

"How did you survive? She asked, her eyes gaining an odd gleam as she ignored his question, "The serpent wouldn't have let you come in here."

"She didn't have a choice."

"But the *Fidelius*-"

"Has no effect on me anymore."

The red eyes widened drastically before they darted over to his scar, and the girl burst out laughing. The shrill cold laughter echoed in the small room over and over again, and if in his current state Harry could have felt much of anything, he would have felt apprehensive and uncomfortable.

Instead, he simply asked, "Something funny Riddle?"

The laughter slowed into the occasional chuckle, before she answered with a grin on her face, "I was just thinking how lucky my real self is, and how you have absolutely no idea what you are. What he made you into..."

This piqued Harry's interest. Was this something related to him being the Gamer? Maybe Riddle had seen something that he hadn't. "And what would that be?"

A chilling grin ripped across the girl's face, "Oh you'll find out. But not from me. Ha! This is just too good to be true!" and she burst out laughing again.

"You are not really in the position to show attitude, Riddle. I could crush your bones right now. You said you and Turpin share this body. So if she dies, you die. Answer my questions Riddle or else-"

The laughter stopped with a start.

"And what will you do if I do answer you Harry?" she sneered, "Let me go? You won't do that. Keeping you curious keeps me alive Harry, and I get more time to find a way out of this little trap of yours."

Harry stared at her, not responding.

"A little advice Harry. Learn to fear death. Not everyone dies a valiant death fighting Lord Voldemort as your parents did. Most people die meaningless deaths. Disease, accident, robbed, murdered...age...being in the wrong place at the wrong time. That was how your friend died."

Harry pushed down the spike of anger that threatened to push him over the wire-thin edge he was standing on.

The red-eyed girl continued, "Tell me, Harry, would it have made you feel better if I had told you that he was some vital part of my master plan? Essential, in fact, and that without his death, all my work would have been worthless? That his death was needed? It wasn't. He followed

me down the entrance pipe, and my basilisk took care of him. He died a meaningless death, just like you and everyone you hold dear will when I inevitably rise again."

And she burst out laughing again.

Feeling his anger starting to bleed through his shields, Harry dropped to a knee and slammed his fist into the girl's face, knocking her out.

"That's enough," he said to himself, wiping the girl's nose blood off his fist. He pulled the golden ring he was wearing off his finger, before turning it into a bow. He pulled the string back, notching an arrow as he took aim at her.

One shot, and both of them would be finished. Riddle would be dead.

Dean would be avenged, and Lisa would simply be collateral damage. He would dump her body in an ID, and she would simply become the girl who had been lost to the Heir.

No Auror would ever find her.

He stretched the string and frowned. He wasn't imagining it. Gandiva was growing heavier in his hands, as if the ancient bow refusing to obey him this time. And in front of Harry's eyes, without his instruction, the arrow he had notched disappeared, and with a flash of light, the bow turned itself into its ring form and teleported itself onto his finger.

Harry frowned and cast an Observe on it.

The Gandiva

This 6000 year old legendary bow is one of the most powerful magical weapons out there. It is indestructible, can create arrows inexhaustibly and fires arrows with the strength of a thousand bows. Its arrows can be enchanted to do a variety of things and can penetrate most magical shields. It can turn into a ring when not being used. When in ring form, it can protect its user from all forms

of poison.

Its unable to be lifted by anyone it judges unworthy. If you hold this, you've impressed a lot of right people.

Attack-100 + (10 x level of Archery)

+50% when used against the ill-intentioned.

+100% when used by a magically competent being.

There was nothing wrong with the bow. Harry shook his head. No matter. He didn't need a bow to end someone's life. Dropping the bow to the ground, he sent a thick tendril of mana into Lisa's bloodstream, fighting against her own magic as he focused it around her heart.

It would be quick and painless, he thought and was about to give the mana a single twitch to stop her heart, when suddenly the voice of a young girl reached his ears.

"Don't do it, Harry!"

Harry whirled around, and the mana connection broke with a snap.

The voice had come from Hedwig, who had been quietly perched on the upturned cauldron and watching the events unfold.

"You're speaking..." he muttered in awe, looking at her with wide eyes.

Hedwig however, completely ignored his mutters, before agitatedly shifting her weight from foot to foot and ruffling her feathers, "She is innocent Harry. She hasn't done anything. You can't just kill her."

"I have to!" Harry insisted, begging her to understand, "Don't you see? If Riddle gets out into the world, then there is no knowing what will happen! Just in a year, he did this to the school! Imagine what two of him will do to the world at large!"

"But you aren't killing to protect the world are you? You are killing for revenge. Revenge for Dean. That's why your bow stopped working..." Hedwig insisted, flapping her wings in agitation as she watched him keenly with

her beady eyes.

"Does it matter that I killed for revenge? Riddle needs to be stopped, and killing Lisa is the way!"

"It matters," Hedwig insisted, "It matters because Lisa doesn't deserve the retribution for Dean's death. Riddle does. It's not like you to justify murder for the greater good. You don't just take the easy road out. You find another way."

"There is no another way!"

"Then make one! You of all people can do it. No other wizard can do what you can Harry. And if you find the will, you can do anything. We can do anything."

And she was right, Harry dazedly thought as he turned and looked at her. He had gifts and powers beyond anything a wizard could hope for, and if there was anyone that could figure out a way to destroy Riddle's soul without killing Lisa, it was him. He pushed back the veil of cold rage that had taken over his thoughts, roughly shoved all his grief to deal with later, and activated Gamer's Mind to its fullest potential.

The world around him slowed down, and his mind started finding and evaluating anything and everything he had ever read, seen or heard about souls and magic, forming and discarding plans at breakneck speeds. It took him a while to find something that had some chance of working.

He looked back at Hedwig, "I have something. It's insane, and probably won't work-"

The next few minutes, he explained to Hedwig all that he needed her to do, and finally, with an uplifting trill, the phoenix flew over onto Harry shoulder.

Checking her status to make sure that Lisa was fully unconscious, Harry

sent his mana into the floor, and slowly pushed her entire body out of the ground, before placing a hand on her. And then, he took a deep breath before he said the words.

"ID Create: Zombies!"

There was no sky, but he knew that they were now in an ID. Picking Lisa up and throwing her on his shoulder, Harry said, "Hedwig, London, please. The roof of our apartment."

There was only one place that he knew for a fact that this particular creature spawned, and that was Buckingham Palace. And in a situation like this, there was no taking chances. They burst into flames and reappeared on the roof of their apartment building. Harry quickly dropped Lisa onto the roof. The girl wasn't going anywhere with those broken limbs, and she would be safe from the zombies up here at this height.

Zombies, unlike Basilisks, had a clear and fatal weakness, and that was why Harry had no issues fighting with them. He quickly equipped the appropriate title for what he was about to do.

Apprentice Zombie killer- 30% more attack and defense when dealing with the undead. +5 to all stats when dealing with the undead.

Gandiva burst into its bow form, once more perfectly weighted and ready to go. Harry jogged over to the ledge looked down at the mass of zombies that were hobbling along the road, making a beeline towards the direction of the Buckingham Palace, trashing and destroying everything along the way.

Thankfully, Hedwig knew the nearby area pretty well, so when Harry told her to take them to the roof of the Lancaster House, she knew exactly where to go. They burst into existence over the Lancaster House,

from where to take stock of the situation.

Much like how he had seen months ago, hundreds of zombies were packed into the Victoria Memorial Crossing in front of the palace. Three enormous piles of zombies were lying unmoving in front of the Palace. Harry knew that they would turn into Legion Zombies as soon as he finished the horde outside the castle.

Letting Hedwig go fly high above the danger zone, Harry took aim, not wanting to hold back or stall anymore, and let three mighty Doom arrows fly in a giant arc into the center of the Crossing.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The fountain at the center of the square blew up into pieces, and zombies being as flammable as they were, started burning the second even the smallest bit of flame hit them. Within seconds, the whole Crossing lit up like a firework.

But there was no more time to hold back. Even more zombies were flooding the Crossing from the streets, and while he had eliminated almost half the amount of normal zombies that the location had, he still had to deal with the remaining half, that was now aware of his location and was slowly hobbling towards the Lancaster house.

He let loose another two Doom arrows at the group that was trying to jump the fence of Green Park and trying to cross over to the house.

BOOM! BOOM!

And the entire group ended like that.

But in that time, the remaining zombies who had been coming from the other sides had come too close for him to use Doom arrows without completely destroying the very structure he was standing on. So Harry put his bow back into its ring form and started focusing his mana on creating a devastating attack that he knew was fatal to zombies.

He let loose a massive gust of wind, which coalesced into a massive swirling tornado, at the eye of which was the Lancaster house. As soon as the tornado was stable enough, he let loose a huge burst of fire into it, creating his largest ever fire tornado.

And in a few minutes, it was all over, leaving behind nothing but a boy and a bunch of gold dust covering the area around him.

With their trademark booming thunderous sound, one of the piles of zombies that lay in the corner of the Palace started to fuse together. But Harry had no time to waste. If he had wanted to get exp from the Legion, he would have had to wait for them to fully form, but since exp wasn't on his mind, he simply let loose a couple of Doom Arrows at each of the piles of zombies fusing into a Legion.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Critical Strike! Doom Arrow- $2200 \times 700\% = 15400$ Attack!

Critical Strike! Doom Arrow- $2200 \times 700\% = 15400$ Attack!

Critical Strike! Doom Arrow- $2200 \times 700\% = 15400$ Attack!

The piles of zombies exploded in massive showers of blood and gore, before turning into dust just as Harry regained his balance from all the shockwaves that had rocked through the ground.

And with that, the second tier boss in the zombie dungeon was finished.

'Soon,' he thought as he activated Unicorn Boost and ran over to the center of the Crossing, and waited for the only monster that could help him save Lisa to form.

The wind around him started to pick up as a cold feeling started to set in.

With a warming trill, Hedwig alighted onto his shoulder. "Be ready," he told her, as he searched the skies for it.

It was a few seconds before he saw it. Flying at him from the skyline above the Buckingham Palace, illuminated by the rays of the waning

moon, was a cloaked figure.

Harry wasted no time. He knew that the Dementor had seen him, and would follow him. Now it was time to lead it to Lisa. So he simply turned, activated Unicorn's Boost, and ran, making sure that the Dementor could see him clearly.

He ran and did not look back this time, instead focusing squarely on running as fast as he could down the Whitehall road towards his apartment, making sure to occasionally throw fireballs behind him to slow down the creature following him. The only reason he didn't stutter and fall like he had last time was that Hedwig was singing an uplifting song as she flew above him, keeping his heart full and helping him fight off the effects of the Dementor.

When he finally reached his apartment, Hedwig swooped down from above, grabbed him, and flamed him onto the top of the building, where Lisa was. Harry quickly moved into the right position that he had planned.

The Dementor, which was until now chasing Harry at the street level, rose to the roof's height in pursuit.

And that was the moment.

The moment where he could finally save Lisa. He was standing on one end of the roof, and the Dementor the other, while Lisa lay bound and unconscious in the middle. Logically, the Dementor should have gone for the prey closest to it, which was the more easily caught one.

It did the exact opposite.

It completely ignored the bound prey in front of it, and simply lunged over it at Harry, who in a blind panic, apparated him and Hedwig to a spot on the roof about three buildings away from where he was before.

"Why isn't it going for her?" Harry wondered puzzledly, watching the

Dementor completely ignore the girl on Harry's building roof as it looked around for what was presumably him.

"It has locked onto you. You are its target. Until it gets you, it won't go for any other prey," Hedwig replied gravely.

"So how do we get him to attack her?" Harry asked, hoping his immortal friend would have an idea. Because he sure didn't.

Hedwig thought for a second, before saying, "I remember reading in one of your books that Dementors sense its prey by their emotions since they don't have other senses"

And it clicked in Harry's mind.

If he somehow managed to empty himself of emotion to a degree that even a Dementor wouldn't be able to sense it, he could make the Dementor think he wasn't even there.

"Keep singing Hedwig," he simply said, before disappearing from the roof and reappearing on the roof with the Dementor. The amortal beast's head snapped towards him, and it started advancing on him. And Harry needed to make sure that the creature was convinced that Harry was dead, so he let it.

He could feel the creature watching him, hear its rattling breath like an evil wind around him. The Dementor seemed to be considering him as it closed in. It raised one of its rotting hands, and lowered its hood, exposing the grey scabbed skin, stretched blankly over empty sockets, and the mouth...a gaping, shapeless black hole, sucking the air with the sound of a death rattle.

Suddenly, A paralyzing terror filled Harry so that he couldn't move or speak. His mind seemed to fuse as the entire plan he had fuzed out of his consciousness. 'Focus of Hedwig's song,' he tried to tell himself, but the thought disintegrated into wisps before it could even fully form. He

stumbled down onto the floor.

A pair of strong, clammy hands suddenly attached themselves around Harry's neck. They were forcing his face upward...He could feel its breath sucking...He could feel its putrid breath...His mother was screaming in his ears again...

"Remember Harry! Remember!" Hedwig's voice sounded in his head, snapping him out of his tizzy.

'This is not the end. Not today.' he thought to himself in his moment of clarity and pulled down every shield he had, turned up Gamer's Mind to its fullest extent, and pushed every single positive emotion he had into oblivion before flooding his own mind shields with mana.

The sucking stopped, the hands let go and the Dementor above him came into focus. It looked...faintly puzzled for a second before it straightened, believing this morsel of its food to be finished and heading over to the next one. Harry silently signaled for Hedwig to stay back.

Ping!

You have learned a new skill!

Ghosting, Lv-1

A clearing of emotions of the mind in the deepest levels that not even Gamer's Mind can control. This skill is a combination of mana and mind that can be used to hide from creatures that track people by the use of their emotions like Dementors.

25% chance of success

Ping!

Ghosting Active!

He got to his feet, his entire being emotionless as he walked over to where the Dementor was bending over Lisa to take its next soul. It sucked, and just as Harry had hoped, the guest in the body came out first,

a putrid black smoke that connected the Dementor to its prey.

With a final dull pop, the Dementor sucked out Riddle's soul, breaking the connection between them. And before it could go in for the second soul in the body, Harry activated his 'Iron Fist' ability, lit his fist on fire, and with a powerful punch, sent the Dementor flying off of Lisa's body. He had to get attention off of Lisa now and defeat the Dementor so that they could all get out of here.

There was only one ability that could do it, for that he needed something. Rage.

One emotion a Dementor had no control over.

And he knew that he had the rage. The events in the chamber had made sure of that. Emboldened by Hedwig's ongoing song, Harry walked over to the Dementor that was confusedly looking at him before grabbing its head with both arms, feeling its cold putrid breath on his skin.

Thoughts of Dean's dead body and Hermione's petrified form flew around his head as rage filled him, and a familiar burning hot feeling started in his stomach, fighting the bone-chilling cold of the Dementor's breath on his skin.

And with all that he had in him, he roared.

And whether by chance or by sheer force of will, despite the abysmal chances of the skill working, Harry's magic responded flawlessly, and a brilliant white pillar of fire erupted from his mouth, and tore away at the monster's skeletal face, broiling and incinerating its entire head. With its head burned off, the Dementor dropped motionless in front of Harry, unmoving before it turned into dust.

Drained, and exhausted, Harry dropped to his knees with a groan. 1000 MP, as he learned right now, was a lot to spend in one go.

Ping!

A skill leveled up!

Dragon's Breath, Lv-2

A concentrated breath of fire mimicking the magical properties of Dragon fire. Capable of burning through almost anything, and can be used for metal work too.

5% level of control

Cost - 950 MP

"Harry!" Hedwig fluttered down in front of him with a worried look, "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine," he muttered, waving the window away and opening up his inventory from which he pulled out a Pepper Up potion and tossed it, feeling the remaining cold get driven out by the potion's effects. "It's over Hedwig," he told his familiar, a nervous chuckle escaping him as the adrenaline slowly left his system. "We saved her."

"We did Harry. It's over."

For a moment, he sat there, staring at the pile of golden dust that had been the Dementor. He extended his hand and touched the dust,

Ping!

You have gained a net of 20163 Exp!

Ping!

Loot transferred to Inventory!

3,000£

520 G

Dementor's Skull - Crafting Item

Ping!

Quest Success!

Save Lisa and defeat the beast of the Chamber!

Rewards,

80,000 exp

10 stat points

Skill book:

Ping!

You have levelled up!

Harry Potter

Health-1975/1975

Mana-1675/1675

The Gamer

Title-The Boy who Lived

Level-14 Exp-435990/790000

Race-Wizard

STR-33

VIT-26(+4)=30

DEX-24(+4)=28

INT-41

WIS-45

LUC-27

POINTS-43

MONEY- 14025£ / 3697G 188S 56K

Harry Potter is a wizard, the son of Lily Potter and James Potter. He is a new fledgling wizard at Hogwarts. He likes hanging with his new friends and divides his time between figuring out insanely complicated political manipulations and honing his unusual magical skills as the Gamer in secret. Harry loves his parents, and wants to help the world they died protecting.

Status- wizard, giving Harry +4 VIT, +4 DEX and the ability to control magic, talk to snakes, control his appearance and look cool.

"Now let's get out of here. Lisa probably needs Madam Pomfrey's help," he said as he waved the window away and pushed himself to his feet, fighting against the soreness in his bones. Walking over to where Lisa lay, Harry picked her up onto his shoulder with a humph, and Hedwig grabbed onto his other shoulder before flaming them back to the Inner Chamber in the Chamber of Secrets.

"ID Escape," he muttered, and reappeared in the inner chamber.

"Wait for a minute Hedwig," he said as he put Lisa onto the floor again, "I have to go make sure that all the Parseltongue doors are blown up so that other people can get in here."

Getting a trill of agreement, Harry headed out, at first blowing a hole in the door that led into the inner chamber, before heading out of that hole into the tunnel which led into the main Chamber.

He had barely stepped foot into the Chamber when he froze.

Something was off, and it took a terrifying second for him to realize what.

The Basilisk was gone.

But that wasn't all. Something else had changed. The saxophone medley that had been playing from the gramophone under Slytherin's statue ever since he had entered the Chamber was now no longer playing. Instead, a scathing harsh hissing sound filled the hall, echoing again and again from the giant walls.

A window popped up in the corner of his vision.

Parseltongue Skill Active!

And the hissing slowly softened and flowed together into comprehensible words.

Three words, in fact, looping over and over and over again on the magical gramophone.

"Kill them all. Kill them all. Kill them all..."

The meaning of all this suddenly clicked in Harry's mind.

A failsafe.

Panic starting to set in, Harry rushed over to the gramophone, before immediately casting *Observe* on it.

Enchanted Unbreakable Gramophone

A gramophone enchanted with a *Switching* charm and a targeted *Homenum Revelio* charm to make sure that it will play Track 1 when the enchanter is nearby, and Track 2 when the enchanter is not nearby.

Track 1 - Coleman Hawkins - Body & Soul

Track 2 - Parseltongue recording.

His eyes widened in panic as *Gamer's Mind* made the connections and he realized what this meant.

"Hedwig!" he yelled as he turned around and ran into the tunnel towards the Inner Chamber, boosting his way into the Chamber and towards limp bodies that lay on the ground, one alive and one not.

Picking up Lisa's body onto his shoulder with little effort, Harry Boosted over to Dean's body, which he picked him up onto his other shoulder.

Hedwig immediately landed on his forearm, and the world around him dissolved in fire.

When he reappeared in front of the Great Hall, his first thought wasn't related to the broken Great Hall doors in front of him. Instead, it was that he hadn't realized how long he had been in the chamber for.

It had been hours. The sun was peeking in through the windows now.

He stepped into the Hall, and his insides twisted with a hundred different emotions. His head felt dizzy as he took in the sight in front of him.

Scattered all across the hall lay the lifeless forms of over half a dozen

students, most of them the older Slytherins, since other houses had chosen to mostly leave for the holidays.

Up near the staff table, Professor Dumbledore knelt over the limp body of Professor Kettleburn with his wand pointed at the dead basilisk, tears running down his face. A small tendril of smoke rose from the tip of his wand, and the almost tangible smell of powerful...destructive dark magic hung in the air.

The giant corpse of the sixty-foot-long ancient basilisk lay to the Slytherin side of the hall, its head blown clean off its body and its brains scattered over the Hall windows, tinting the sunlight red.

What an end to a chapter eh?

P.S. Don't worry. Only older OWL and NEWT level students have died. Pretty much all of the younger students are fine. I'll make that clear in the next chapter in Dumbledore's POV, but if you were worried, don't be. Those worried about the tone of the story, again, don't be. This story has a fair bit of humor, but the dark undertones need to There will be serious and difficult chapters, but their purpose lies in building the plot.

REVIEW!

35. Book-II:Hope Springs Eternal

Chapter 15:

THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

The last few months seemed to have been tragic for Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry with the numerous mysterious petrifications reminiscent of the 1943, Gilderoy Lockhart's accident, and most tragic of them all, the massacre that happened yesterday, writes correspondent Velma Sullivan.

A message about the opening of the legendary Chamber of Secrets and the

coming of the 'Heir of Slytherin' was the first sign, followed by the petrification of one Hannah Abbott mere weeks later and then followed soon after by the October 31st Halloween attacks on one Seamus Finnigan and one Justin Finch-Fletchley, leading to the removal of Albus Dumbledore from his post as the Headmaster. However, Dumbledore's removal did not do anything to deter the Heir, and the next attack happened on the January 7th, with the petrification of one Hermione Granger.

The final attack on January 8th was different however in that it did not have petrifications. Instead, that night, the staff found a message from the Heir. The Heir had taken a child, one Lisa Turpin, right into the Chamber. The chamber which no one knew the location of. Dejected and defeated, the Hogwarts staff started to prepare to send the students home the next day.

But the next morning's breakfast was not to be quiet, for the Heir had made the last move. In the middle of the breakfast, the Basilisk blasted right through the front doors and barrelled into the Hall armed with its killer gaze. Official testimony states the Secrecy Charm that hid the Basilisk broke under the strain of having too many minds to hide the Beast from, enabling Albus Dumbledore, who was there as an invited guest speaker, to work out a solution and cast a Blindness curse on each individual in the room before ending the Basilisk with powerful magic.

However, he was too late, and 8 students and 1 teacher had fallen prey to the terrible gaze of the Basilisk.

For more on this story and official testimonies, article by Jennifer Law follows.

HOGWARTS MASSACRE: WHO IS TO BLAME!

As the events of the night of January 8th were unfolding and the teachers, defeated, were preparing for Hogwarts closing down, one person had not assumed defeat, and that was Harry Potter.

Having overheard his teachers' conversation about Lisa Turpin, Harry did

what no one else had done. He found the entrance to Chamber of Secrets and went in. What follows is an excerpt from his official statement to DMLE.

~~~Statement Begins~~~

Interrogator: How did you realize where the Entrance was located?

HP: The only reason I realized where the Entrance was is because of Myrtle, the ghost of the girl who was killed in 1943. When I asked her how she died, her face went all blank. I'd read that only stuff like Secrecy charms could do that, so I asked where she had died, trying to get around the charm. She was able to tell me that she died in the bathroom she currently haunts. I realized that there must be some sort of connection to the Chamber from that place, so I and my phoenix Hedwig searched for anything peculiar. We found a tap with a snake engraved on it. I knocked on the wall and realized it was hollow, and I realized that the entrance must be behind it.

Interrogator: And how did you open the entrance?

HP: I figured there would be some password to it so I just sent a blasting hex at it. The sink blew up, and there was this really big pipe behind it.

Interrogator: Why did you not alert others and what did you do next?

HP: Since Myrtle couldn't tell me how she died, I figured that the Beast must have been covered by the Secrecy charm. I didn't want to risk anyone else's life. We went down the pipe and through the tunnel and found an open door with snakes on it. I had a family heirloom with me, so I was able to hide and slowly sneak around the sides of the Chamber, looking for Lisa. The place was really dark, dusty and looked almost destroyed. Somehow I managed to get through to the other end without encountering the Basilisk. I just wanted to save Lisa and get out of there as fast as I could.

Interrogator: That was when you reached the smaller door underneath the statue of Slytherin yes?

HP: Yeah. It led into a tunnel, which led to a smaller room. I found the two of

them lying there, along with an upended red-hot cauldron.

Interrogator: Be more specific for the record please. Them?

HP: Dean Thomas, my friend, and Lisa Turpin lying on the floor, not moving.

Lisa had burns all over her, and her robes were soaked with something that was burning her. But she was alive. I dried her up the best I could before going over to check on Dean. But he . . . he was . . .

Interrogator: Would you like some water, Mr. Potter?

HP: No. No. I'm fine. He...He was dead. I don't know how long I sat there for, but when I snapped out of it, I grabbed them both and got Hedwig to take us to the Great Hall. There I just remember seeing the carnage, and then I passed out.

Interrogator: That will be all. Thank you

~~~Statement Ends~~~

DMLE investigation so far corroborates this version of events. The Chamber was indeed almost destroyed, although by what is not clear. A gramophone, set to spew mysterious spitting noises was found in the chamber as well. Its purpose is yet to be discovered. The cauldron mentioned, however, has been suspected of containing a dark empowering potion, and it is suspected that the burns on Miss Turpin's body occurred because she was somehow dipped into the potion. She is now seeking treatment at St Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries.

Current DMLE theory says that Dean Thomas might have somehow followed the Heir into the Chamber as Lisa Turpin was being kidnapped, and when he noticed Miss Turpin being thrown into the potion, he tackled it and saved her life, stopping the dark ritual from occurring. The current running theory is that this might have what caused a magical backlash causing the damage to the Chamber.

So who did it? Who was behind all this? Whatever the truth, you can expect

Daily Prophet to bring it to your knowledge as soon as possible.

HOGWARTS CLOSING DOWN!

Yesterday, on the 10th of January, the day after the Massacre at Hogwarts and all the alive and well students returning home, Headmistress Minerva McGonagall addressed the press from the gates of an empty Hogwarts.

"In the light of recent events, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry will be closing down for the upcoming school year. We shall be improving our security, faculty, protections, and many other important fields of our ancient school. Due to his experience in magical protections and his actions in protecting the students of Hogwarts Albus Dumbledore will soon be reinstated as the Headmaster of Hogwarts to oversee these renovations. Hogwarts is not just a school, but a monument to the Wizarding World's strength and tenacity in face of peril. We solemnly swear that we will return it to the greatness it deserves."

While the impassioned speech was much appreciated by the crowd gathered to listen, the implications that the statement had were disturbing.

If Hogwarts chooses to close down for the next year, then more than likely the entire school year will be lost for the students studying here. Murmurs from the Department of Magical Education suggest that the students may be transferred to another school for the year of 1993, with their expenses for books, uniforms and assorted requirements paid in full for that year provided that the students choose to remain affiliated with Hogwarts, even in their transfer school.

It is fairly obvious that this is an effort to not lose the remaining Hogwarts students to a foreign school while they are transferred there. But how successful will this be? While no doubt many students will return for their fourth year at school, just for the sake of being closer to home, some have already permanently transferred to other schools. The wounds have been

made, and they won't be easy to fill in.

The promises of improving the faculty and security were much appreciated.

One does have to question the competency of the staff when a twelve-year-old boy sees patterns that none of them were able to see. Hopefully, with the reopening of Hogwarts once more under Dumbledore, we will be seeing a more trained and professional staff armed with better security measures.

But as the future seems bleak for Hogwarts and its students, one ray of sunshine shines through in the form of the soon forthcoming recovery of the petrified individuals. We here at the Daily Prophet wish them and Hogwarts school the very best for the future.

Those three articles adorned the first page of the January 10th newspaper sitting on top of Harry's desk. The newspaper was four days old, having come out a couple of days after the...the incident, as Harry preferred to call it in his head now. A few feet away from the table, Harry stood in front of his open wardrobe.

He considered the occasion for a second before pulling out one of his nicer set of robes before tossing them onto his bed behind him.

Closing the wardrobe doors behind him, he turned around and quickly threw the robes on, using the new skill he had learned from his skill book to weave on an illusion, making him look clean not like he had just rolled in a bale of hay with elephant poop mixed in for good measure.

Glamouring, Lv- 1 (0%)

Allows the user to weave illusions around himself and alter the look of small portions of his body.

You can only make yourself look fresh at the current level of this ability.

Cost- 50 MP

That was one useful skill when in a hurry. Plus it had a lot of potential to

grow into something more powerful and useful. But for now, he needed to make sure he looked decent.

Today was an important day. Today was the day Hermione was going to wake up.

"Are you sure you don't want to come, Hedwig?" he asked his phoenix, who was sitting in the little tray underneath her perch reserved for her post-Burning Day form.

"You know I can't," Hedwig's childlike mental voice echoed in his mind, sounding slightly miserable, "I can't go out like this. I look hideous!"

Harry turned from patting down his robes to look at his friend.

Phoenixes, he'd learned the day of Hedwig's burning day yesterday, had quite a few body image issues about the way they looked after their Burning Days. It shouldn't have been a surprise really, considering how much pride Hedwig held in her plumage, but hearing it verbalized made a whole world of difference.

"You look better than you did yesterday," he told her with a smile,

"Yesterday was bad."

"Thanks, Harry,"

"As in, really bad."

"No really. Thank you."

"You looked tiny yesterday," he continued with a smirk, "Like a mix between a fist-sized shriveled bean and a chicken."

"Really grateful for the confidence boost Harry. Appreciate that." she flatly said before going back to pecking at the piece of chocolate in the little bowl on her tray.

And she appreciated sarcasm, which was frankly great in Harry's opinion.

Made for good banter.

"No problem," he said before walking over to her, extending an arm to

scratch behind her neck, watching with a grin as her eyes slid shut and her tiny leg started twitching.

"Are you coming, Harry!?" Nicholas's voice rang loudly from downstairs.

"Coming!" Harry yelled back before he gave Hedwig a final pat on the head and walked over to the newspaper sitting on his desk before picking it up and looking at it. The words he had almost committed to memory sprang right back at him, mesmerizing him into a trance as he unblinkingly stared at them.

"Tell Hermione that I sent my good wishes," Hedwig said from her perch, startling Harry out of his thrall. His hand hastily jerked against the edge of the paper, slitting open a small cut in his palm.

"I will," Harry said, ignoring the cut as he hastily stuffed the paper into his pocket before heading towards the door.

"You aren't going to heal that are you?" Hedwig quietly said from behind him as he reached for the doorknob.

He stopped. It had been almost a week now. An entire week of him blaming himself for each one of those deaths that had happened at Hogwarts that day. Wondering if his killing one girl would have saved all those other lives. Wondering if he had sacrificed 9 people in exchange for his moral integrity and a girl whose life was destroyed anyway. Trying to tell himself again and again that he made the right choice at the moment. He was just tired of thinking at this point.

Not thinking about all that and just focusing on trying to save and protect what he had left just felt like the right thing to do.

He looked at his hand. Hundreds of tiny cuts were peppered all across his arms and his back from the rocks falling on him in the tunnel outside Slytherin's cave. This new red one, the paper cut, stood out brightly amongst all the ones that had scabbed over. Every single one of those

cuts he could have healed.

But he didn't.

Maybe it was stupid. In fact, it probably was. But it felt like the right thing to do. As meaningless it was, this pathetic little form of penance that he had taken upon himself, it felt like the right thing to do.

"It's just a little cut. Nothing really. I'll see you later." he said before opening the door and leaving.

"How far is the Hospital from here?" Harry asked Nicholas as they stepped out of the alley they had apparated to from home into a broad store-lined street. All the petrified victims had been transferred to St Mungo's Hospital the day Hogwarts had closed down.

"Not far. We're just around the corner," Nicholas said, parting a group of shoppers to make way for them to pass before adding, "I will be waiting outside the building. There's a nice tea shop across the street. You take as much time as you need."

"Here we go," he added a moment later. It was a large, old-fashioned, red brick department store called Purge & Dowse Ltd. The place had a miserable air. The window displays consisted of a few chipped dummies with their wigs askew, and large signs on all the dusty doors read: 'Closed for Refurbishment'.

"It's the glass window. Be ready to step through when I tell you to," he said, pointing towards a window displaying nothing but a particularly ugly female dummy. Its false eyelashes were hanging off and it was modeling a green nylon pinafore dress.

Harry nodded, and Nicholas leaned closer to the glass before saying, "We're here to see Hermione Granger."

Harry really shouldn't have been surprised by the dummy giving a nod, but he was nevertheless. However, he remembered his instructions and

stepped through the glass. It felt like stepping through a thin waterfall as he emerged quite warm and dry on the other side.

There was no sign of the ugly dummy or the space where she had stood.

Instead, St. Mungo's Hospital's reception area stood in full glory in front of him. Rows of witches and wizards sat upon wooden chairs, some looking perfectly normal and others sporting gruesome disfigurements such as elephant trunks or extra hands sticking out of their chests.

Healers in lime-green robes were walking up and down the rows, asking questions and making notes on clipboards. Harry noticed the emblem embroidered on their chests: a wand and bone, crossed.

Harry walked over to the queue in front of a sickly thin witch seated at a desk marked Enquiries. The wall behind her was covered in notices and posters. There was also a large portrait of a witch with long silver ringlets which was labeled:

Dilys Derwent

St Mungo's Healer 1722-1741

Headmistress of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

1741-1768

Dilys was eyeing Harry closely, and Harry knew that it was because another portrait of hers hung in the Headmaster's office at Hogwarts, where he had been a few times.

"Next!" the blonde witch said, snapping Harry's attention back. He was up next."

"Hello," he said, "I'm here to see Hermione Granger. Could you tell me where I can find her?"

"Hermione Granger?" said the witch, not looking at him as she ran her finger down a long list. "Yes, first floor, third door on the right, La'am Djimple Ward."

"Thank you," said Harry, glad to not have drawn any attention.

For good measure, he dropped into Sneak mode to make sure he wouldn't be recognized as he entered the double doors and walked through the narrow corridor beyond which was lit by crystal bubbles full of candles that floated up on the ceiling, looking like giant soapsuds.

He climbed a flight of stairs, following the arrows and entered the Creature-Induced Injuries corridor, which was crowded with family of the petrified students. He recognized the Amelia Bones waiting alongside the Abbotts and a sobbing Susan. Not wanting to draw attention to himself at all, he turned to the second door on the right, dropped out of Sneak mode, and read the sign.

La'am Djimple Ward: Mysterious Maladies.

Ping!

Skill leveled up due to successful use!

Sneaking, Lv-17(21%)

Allows you to sneak up on someone.

71% chance of not getting caught.

71% chance of critical strike.

Harry waved the window away and knocked.

The door opened to reveal the familiar brown-haired woman whom he had met at Dean's birthday all those months ago. Mrs. Granger's eyes were wet. She gave him a smile before wiping her tears away.

"Hello, Harry. Come right in. Ronald has already arrived and they were waiting for you. I was just about to head upstairs to get something to eat."

"Thank you, Mrs. Granger," Harry said as the woman let him in before heading out of the door herself, closing the door behind her.

The ward was small and rather dingy, as the only window was narrow

and set high in the wall facing the door. Most of the light came from more shining crystal bubbles clustered in the middle of the ceiling. All four of the petrified students were there, lying on beds, but only one of them was awake.

Hermione occupied the bed at the far end of the ward beside the tiny window. Harry was pleased to see that she was propped up on several pillows and was talking to Ron, who was sitting on a stool beside her bed. The tears streaming down her face, however, meant that she had heard about what had happened.

They looked up as he walked towards him and, seeing who it was, Hermione wiped her tears and gave a shaky smile.

"Hello Harry," she said as Harry bent down and hugged her before taking a seat on a stool on the opposite side of the bed to him.

"How are you?" Harry asked with concern.

"I'm alright," she said, "Just a bit weak. The Healers think they'll have me out in a day at most, which is pretty fast."

"They're just afraid of your mum and dad and their muggle healer ways,"

Ron chimed in, making the girl chuckle.

Harry looked at Ron for a second. The last he had seen him, the redhead had been an inconsolable mess. The time with his family must have been helpful.

"Have you told her all about what happened Ron?" he asked.

Ron nodded, "Most of it."

Harry dipped a hand into his pocket, pulling out the newspaper he'd grabbed from his desk and handing it to Hermione. "The first three articles cover pretty much all of it. Just in case Ron missed anything."

Ron nodded his thanks. This was clearly painful for him, talking about the Incident. Harry took a moment to admire the boy's strength. He was

closer to Dean than any in their group, being in the same house as him.

No doubt he was still in pain, yet despite not having any Gamer's Mind to protect himself from his emotions, here he was, stoically trying to support his friend.

His respect for Ron grew quite a bit.

"Oh no..." Hermione muttered as she read through the articles, "Oh goodness no."

The newspaper soon slipped from her hands as she stared uncomprehendingly ahead. Slowly, as Harry and Ron watched worriedly, her shoulders started to rock in sobs. Soon, the tears that had stopped when he had come in started to fall again.

Harry moved from his stool onto the edge of the bed and pulled her to his arms, grabbing her in a hug.

"He-" she cried into his chest in between hiccups, "He didn't deserve it. He was the nicest person. Why..."

And they sat there, Harry gently patting Hermione's back and Ron holding her hand as she cried her heart out to them.

It was in moments like this that Harry was glad he hadn't told anyone the truth. Voldemort was right. Death without a purpose hurt. So he'd given Dean's death a purpose. Dean died saving someone's life. He died stopping a dark ritual. As far as the rest of the world was concerned, he died for a noble purpose.

Ping!

Due to finishing the execution of a justified lie, a skill has levelled up!

Lying, Lv- 12 (30%)

This is your ability to lie to people, the higher the level the better the lie and less chance of discovery!

65% chance of success, less based on how extreme the lie is.

It was quite some time before Hermione's sobs ceased and turned into the occasional hiccup, before melding into silence.

It was Ron who spoke first, "So it's just us now huh?"

"Yeah," Harry replied, trying to keep the melancholy out of his voice.

They fell back into silence again.

A few minutes later, Hermione, in an attempt to make conversation, asked, "Will we still be doing the Project?"

"I...don't know." Harry honestly replied.

"It'll be weird without...you know." Ron said.

"Yeah. It will," Harry sighed, "I don't know really. I think I'll visit the school and talk to Professor Vector sometime soon, but until then, I don't know."

"Did Terry write?" Hermione asked, changing the subject.

"Hmm?" Harry asked, before the question hit him and he replied, "Oh yeah. At school, he used to write a lot asking about how you were doing and all that. Last I heard, he told me that he was going to be living in France for a few months with his uncle to learn French before his term at Beauxbatons. I haven't heard from him after the Incident though. Haven't really had the chance to write either."

Harry frowned. Ron had frozen as soon as Terry's name was mentioned.

"He misses us you know," he said, just as much to Ron as to Hermione.

The resentment Ron was harboring towards Terry for something that wasn't even his fault didn't sit well with Harry.

"Things will be different now," Ron replied, his tone lined with chill,

"Really different. He's going to go to school in France and with Hogwarts being closed, we have no idea what's going to be happening to us."

Hermione glanced at Harry, her expression one of worried concern,

before she asked, "The newspaper said you got Dean's...his body out of the Chamber. What happened to him after that?"

"Dad said that the DMLE is holding him for the investigation period," Ron piped in.

"Shouldn't he be released to his family?" Hermione asked, "They must be in so much pain."

"That's what I said. Dad told me the DMLE is afraid that if she wants to cremate then they might lose evidence permanently. Or at least that's the official reason,"

"It sounds reasonable. I guess," Hermione muttered.

"When will you be released?" Harry asked Hermione.

"They're running a few tests on me to make sure that the Mandrake worked as it should have, but they think I'll be out by tomorrow,"

Hermione replied as she picked up the newspaper and looked at it again.

"This says that we'll be transferred to a new school. Do you have any idea where?" she asked with a curious frown.

"It's not really official yet is it? But if we're given a choice then I'll choose Beauxbatons. Nick and Ellie have land in France." Harry replied.

"I think I'll do the same. Plus we have someone we know there. It'll be easier to fit in." Hermione said musingly, before asking, "And you Ron?"

"Same I suppose. It's closest to home," he said grudgingly, before looking at his wristwatch. He hesitantly added, "It's been over an hour. Mum must be waiting for me outside. I can tell her to come later if you want me to stay."

"Oh no, its fine," Hermione assured, "Go. I'll see you later,"

Ron gave a nod, before standing up and turning to Harry, "It was good seeing you again. Floo over to the Burrow sometime."

"I will Ron."

And with that, Ron left, leaving Harry and Hermione alone. Harry leaned back into the chair, closing his eyes. He knew what was coming.

"You saw it didn't you," he heard Hermione say.

"That newspaper article you had in your hand? I did," he replied, not opening his eyes.

"You're not angry?" she asked after a pause.

"No. A bit disappointed, a bit sad, but not angry." And much to his own relief, he knew that it was the truth. A year ago he would have flipped at this. But he had grown. He had changed. In light of all that had happened...being angry over this seemed trivial and not worth it at all.

Ping!

Due to self-reflection and understanding, take +1 Wis!

The silence after his reply lasted a few minutes.

"Why?"

Harry opened his eyes and looked into hers with a half-baked smile,

"Because you made a mistake. A justified mistake. Then I forgave you for it...because I can't lose another one of my friends."

She did not say anything for the longest while, instead staring at him with an odd mixture of pity and wonder on her face, before leaning over and grabbing him in a hug.

"Thank you," she whispered.

"Anytime Hermione," he said, patting her back, "Anytime."

After that, they spent time talking about everything and nothing, enjoying each other's company for a while. Mrs. Granger brought them some food from the cafeteria above, and before he knew it, another hour had passed. He had to take his leave, promising to come visit soon.

He walked out of that room feeling lighter than he had in the last week.

Jogging down the stairs, he headed out of the hospital through the glass

window, walking straight across the road to the indoor tea shop across the street in which Nicholas was waiting for him.

A soft chime rang through the wood-paneled walls of the quaint little shop as Harry opened the door and walked in, locating Nicholas reading a magazine on a table by the corner. He walked over and slid into the chair in front of him.

"Did you enjoy your tea old man?" he asked.

Nicholas put down his magazine and peered at his face for a second before smiling. "I did. I'm glad you are feeling better."

Harry didn't know how to respond to that. He'd been careful not to worry his guardians too much, so the fact that Nicholas had noticed his unrest was...disconcerting. And so he simply nodded in response.

Soon, Nicholas finished his cup of tea and they paid for it before heading back out into the cold air of the crowded street outside. They walked for a bit, talking about things of no real importance, like why St. Mungo's was founded in a busy Muggle street and whether this tea shop was better than the one in Diagon, before they found an out of sight alley and ducked into it.

Harry grabbed onto the offered arm before the duo twisted out of existence, smoothly and silently apparating to the front door of their apartment.

Finding his footing, Harry let go of Nicholas's arm and knocked on the door. The lock clicked open, and Harry turned the doorknob, leading Nicholas into the apartment.

He had barely locked the door behind him, when much to his surprise, he heard Nicholas ask, "Albus? What are you doing here?"

And sure enough, it was Dumbledore, sitting on the living room sofa across from Perenelle. The old Headmaster turned and looked at them

just as Harry noticed that Perenelle was staring at a paper in her hands with a horrified expression.

"I'm sorry to intrude Nicholas, but a rather disturbing turn of events has happened. Lisa Turpin has been arrested and is set to stand trial in front of Wizengamot. I need Harry's help to protect her."

One thing of note about this entire situation was that Harry had 3 versions of the happenings in the Chamber of Secrets.

1) The version he had told to the press, in which he had done nothing but lie.

2) The version he had told the Flamels and Dumbledore, which included pretty much everything except the part where he went into the ID to save Lisa. Much like how he had told the newspaper, he'd told them that the potion was already upturned by the time he got there, but he did tell them about his battle with the Basilisk. It helped that they already knew about his Wandless magic capabilities.

3) And the truth.

Lie, Bullshit, and Truth.

It would have been funny if it hadn't been so grim.

"You said that Riddle used an illusion to taunt you, then you took down the Basilisk using Alchemy. Then you went into the small tunnel under Salazar Slytherin's statue, and found the upturned cauldron and young Mr. Thomas lying there with a badly burnt Miss Turpin. After that, you grabbed them and got them back to the Great Hall. During any of this, did you notice an object? A diary? Something like the one Mr. Riddle mentioned was his 'container'? Are you absolutely sure?" Dumbledore asked for the third time in a row.

"No, I didn't. And yes I'm very sure. I would have noticed if anything was there," Harry firmly replied. He'd been looking for the 'container' from

the moment Riddle had mentioned it in the chamber, and he'd found nothing.

Dumbledore and Nicholas shared another meaningful glance, just like they had been sharing since Dumbledore had mentioned the 'container'. Harry suspected that they knew something that he didn't.

"What is going on Professor?" he asked, growing impatient, "Why would they arrest Lisa? Didn't I make it clear in my statement to DMLE that she was the victim? That she was the one being hurt?"

"You did Harry," Dumbledore agreed warily, "However, it appears that the Grand Prosecutor has gained some sort of evidence that warranted a trial against Miss Turpin. A trial in front of Wizengamot with the charges being of murder, grievous injury, terrorism, and many more."

"She could get Dementor's Kiss if she gets convicted on even half of those charges," Perenelle muttered, looking stricken.

"Should I tell them? That she was possessed by Voldemort?" Harry asked, looking around worriedly.

Dumbledore sighed, taking off his glasses as he rubbed his eyes, "Harry, there were reasons I asked you to lie to the press. I told you not to tell the press about how you took down the Basilisk because even minor scrutiny on your methods could have exposed Nicholas. I told you to not tell them about Miss Turpin's possession because no one would believe you."

"You're joking," Harry muttered. He couldn't be serious. They wouldn't believe him?!

"You didn't see anything conclusive Harry. All you saw was an illusion. They have every reason to not believe you." Nicholas pointed out.

"Then why are you believing me?" Harry asked, turning to Dumbledore.

"Because the things you said that the illusion told you," replied

Dumbledore, "You would not have known any other way. You heard things that only I and Lord Voldemort know. That is why I believe you. And that is why no one else will."

"But surely if you tell them-"

"Even if I do that, my word will not count for much at this point."

Dumbledore said, "The amount of deaths that happened is making a lot of the families call for an investigation and trial. Therein lies the problem. There is little to no evidence protecting Miss Turpin in a trial. All there is, is your word. They have substituted me as the Chief Warlock until the case is over, claiming bias. Furthermore, I am going to be arguing for her in court, and that will render my testimony useless."

"But..." Harry said desperately, "Isn't there any symptom of her being possessed that we could show in the trial? Like Quirrell had a face behind his head? We won't have to tell anyone that Voldemort was involved at all. Just say that it was a malicious spirit or something."

"Hmm..." Dumbledore leaned back into his chair as he considered what Harry said, "A defense suggesting possession is possible, but the lack of any actual physical evidence makes me wary. And in answer to your question, no. She does not have any evidence of possession, more than likely because of who she was possessed by."

"What do you mean?"

"Lord Voldemort is well versed in the Dark Arts, and with as much time as he had as a student, he must have put Miss Turpin through some ritual or the other to make sure she did not show any evidence of possession."

This was starting to sound worse and worse.

"Making the situation even worse is that the entire ordeal ended up harming her in more ways than one. They won't be able to use Veritaserum on her, and they won't be able to have the Court

Legilimencer interrogate her. I visited her in her Ministry cell today. Her mind was rendered impenetrable. Her magic...damaged. " Dumbledore gave a pained grimace as he said the last word.

"Damaged...like she was?" Perenelle asked, her tone full of a morbid curiosity.

Dumbledore nodded tiredly, resting his head in his hands.

Harry was confusedly looked back and forth between Dumbledore and the Flamels, whose expressions seemed to be stuck between pity and sorrow.

"Are you alright, Albus?" Nicholas asked gently, resting a hand on the aged man's arm.

Dumbledore nodded before looking up from his hands to Harry. "They will be starting the Trial within the next couple of days, and I will need your assistance more than anything, both inside the courtroom and outside. Can I count on it, Harry?"

Ping!

Quest Alert!

Help Dumbledore save Lisa's life!

Reward,

50,000 Exp

?

?

Failure,

Death of Lisa Turpin

YES/NO?

He had to accept this quest, and not just because of Lisa, but also for himself. He couldn't let Lisa Turpin die. Not when him saving her life had inadvertently resulted in the deaths of nine other people. Her life was

worth more now. More than ever before.

She had to live.

With determination, Harry pressed yes, before saying to Dumbledore.

"What do you need me to do?"

Four days before the day the Petrified victims woke up, in the warm confines of his manor's study, Wentworth Wright was looking through the same newspaper that Harry would be reading in the future, calculating and recalculating the possible fallout from the massacre happening as he sipped on his Darjeeling tea.

The severe blow to Dumbledore's power was obvious and imminent. Even if the old headmaster spun it the right way, it would significantly decrease his tout in the political community. He would most likely never be able to run for public office again.

The boy on the other hand...

He took another sip of his tea, before putting it down on the table beside his armchair and turning the page to look at the small blurry photo of the boy in question. The photo looked like it had been snapped in a hurry. Harry Potter was turning out to be quite the unexpected force here. Not even thirteen yet, and he had a foot on every side of the camp, being at least casual acquaintances with Lucius Malfoy, Dumbledore, the Minister and even Bones herself. And now, with even more public goodwill on his side after this entire debacle, the boy was politically untouchable.

He had always been firmly entrenched in the Neutrals in the Wizengamot, leaning more towards Traditionalists, but seeing this rise to power in action was making him seriously consider choosing a side.

A small pop behind him distracted him from his thoughts. He turned to look at the house elf that had popped into the study.

"Tibby is sorry to disturb Master sir, but the goblins have Floo called

from Gringotts are insisting on meeting Master.." the little creature stuttered out.

He nodded, and the elf popped away. Folding the newspaper up and putting it into a pocket, he stood up and headed out of the study towards the living room where the fireplace was located. The goblins had never contacted him before, and them using the Floo was almost unheard of, so this must have been quite the emergency.

Entering the living room, he headed straight for the fireplace, where the hook-nosed face of a Gringotts goblin waited impatiently in the embers. Its eyes widened when it noticed him, and it promptly started speaking. "Are you one Wentworth Alan Wright, primary and only holder of the Wright Gringotts Premium Vault?"

Wentworth's grey brows pushed together in a frown. This sounded like some official business. "I am," he replied, "Can I help you?"

The goblin ignored his question, instead of asking, "Have you ever had any contact with one Dean Thomas or his immediate family?"

'Dean Thomas?' he thought curiously, wondering what was going on. "No. I have not."

The goblin's head disappeared for a minute before it reappeared. "You might want to step through Mr. Wright. There has been an interesting development that might be of concern to you. If you would just step through the Floo."

"This is highly irregula-"

"It is about your son." the goblin interrupted, striking him silent. His son...John had been dead for over twelve years now.

It took him a moment to recover, but when he did, there was only one thing to do. "I'm coming through."

The goblin gave a sharp nod before his head disappeared from the fire.

He stepped into the green fire, and with a burst of flame, was flung through the Floo Network to the Gringotts floo that he had been called from.

Stepping out into what appeared to be a small sparsely furnished office, he dusted off his robes. The door leading out was closed, and the goblin that had called him was sitting on a tall chair at the table in the center of the room, looking through a folder. With a wave of its hand, it invited him to sit in the guest chair across him.

"What is this about?" he asked as he took his seat.

The goblin put down the folder and looked at him.

"When a Muggleborn student dies in the magical world," it said out of the blue, "the Ministry registers the death and then contacts Gringotts, supplying us with a small vial of blood of the deceased as proof of death. This is done since Muggles cannot own a Gringotts Vault, and as such, the contents of the student's vault would need to be emptied and handed over to the Muggleborn's family."

"And how does that pertain to my situation?" he asked.

"Greatly. The same procedure was followed for the death of Dean Thomas after he died at Hogwarts. We received a vial of his blood from the Ministry and ran the blood through our Vault Register as part of the protocol. For a Muggleborn, that search would only show one match, which would usually just be a Student Vault. Dean Thomas's blood showed two. One his Student Vault, and the other a PremiumVault. Your Premium Vault."

"That is impossible!" he said, a sinking feeling settling into his stomach.

And even as he rebutted the goblin's words, his own mind brought up thoughts to the contrary.

'There was no body.'

"That is what we thought at first, especially since your only known heir had been declared dead. However, when we made contact with our DMLE contacts, a piece of evidence that the DMLE had just acquired erased all doubt."

The goblin opened its folder and pulled the first of the stack of papers inside before handing it to him. He took it from the creature before looking at it. The first few lines by themselves shocked him frozen.

Dearest Son,

This letter would have found you only if I were no longer alive. And if I am indeed dead, I do not wish to die without you ever knowing about me. So let me introduce myself. My name is Johnathon Armin Wright. I am your father.

Feelings of hurt, sorrow, betrayal, and anger filled him as he read through the letter. By the time he had finished it, his entire world turned upside. For over a decade now, he had believed that his son was dead.

His wife had died from the shock, and his entire existence had turned into a lifeless nightmare. But all this time, his son had been alive. Turned into a beast yes, but still alive. Oh if only he had returned...

No...

He couldn't continue that line of thought. He knew himself too well for that. If his son would have returned a werewolf and with a half-blood son back then, he would not have taken well to that. He used to be too much of an idealist.

But time had made a different man out of him.

Turning to the goblin, trying to not let any tears escape, he asked, "Is that the only letter?"

The goblin opened the folder before handing him the remaining papers.

"They are all addressed to his son, your grandson. I took the liberty of making the letters disappear from the DMLE's record and subtracting a

nominal fee from your vault. You are holding the only copies of those letters now."

He pocketed the letters. He couldn't read them now. He had business to do. It was good that the goblin had removed the letters from the record. Gringotts goblins had their contacts, and making such things disappear from records was no new thing for them. The 'nominal' fee would no doubt be quite the dent in his pockets.

"Transfer fifteen thousand galleons from my vault to the child's vault before you convert it to muggle money and hand it to his family. Tell them he had won a scholarship or something," he said. The goblin nodded. His grandson's family would never want for anything again.

"And I want to see him. My grandson. I want to see him."

"That is impossible I'm afraid Mr. Wright. The body is in DMLE custody as of this moment. It would be nearly impos-"

"You heard me goblin," he flatly said.

The goblin stared long and hard at his face, before saying, "You'll have to be discreet. And it won't be cheap."

He stared right back. "Did I flinch?"

"Very well then," The goblin said before it hopped off its chair and headed out of the room, closing the door behind him.

It was a full twenty minutes before it returned, this time not bothering to sit

"I've had our contact smuggle his body into a discreet room with a fireplace. You will have five minutes alone in there, and you will have to Floo back before that time is up. We do not want our contacts to see our clients or vice versa, so the contact will be waiting outside. Knock the door once before you Floo back."

"What is the Floo address?" he asked, getting up from his chair.

"Wizengamot Office 39"

He promptly turned around, not saying anything more as he grabbed Floo powder from the pot on the mantelpiece, threw it into the fire and stepped in, muttering the address under his breath.

The green blaze engulfed him once more, spitting him out into a familiar looking room. It was an unused Wizengamot office, presumably belonging to some now extinct family. The chairs and the desk had collected dust for quite a while now.

But all that was in the back of his mind. The only thing his eyes were focused on was the gown-clad body on the wheeled stretcher that stood in the middle of the room.

His legs walked as if involuntarily as he took in the face of his grandson. His blood. His heir.

He hadn't seen any similarities when he had glanced at his picture in the newspaper, most probably because he wasn't looking for them. But now, the resemblance was starting to become obvious. Johnny's nose and cheekbones were prominent in that forever stilled face. He stood there for how long he did not know, memorizing everything he could about the family he would never know.

It was only when an urgent knock sounded at the door that he realized that his time was up.

He looked at the body for one last time before he pulled out the newspaper he'd put in his pocket and looked at the face plastered on the front page. A sudden wave of burning hatred took over him, and he crumpled the paper up and threw it into the fireplace that lit the room.

Turning to the body of his grandson, he ran a hand through the boy's hair.

"Your killer will pay. I promise you that much," he said, before he wiped

his eyes of their tears, walked over to the door to knock on it once before quickly entering the Floo and headed back in a blaze of fire.

The magical picture of Lisa Turpin, motile as all magical pictures were, tried in vain to save itself as the newspaper burnt to ashes.

What did you think of the chapter?

I really wanted to portray Harry's grief in subtler ways rather than have him overtly mope about it. He's quite rational, and would never resort to self-harm, but letting himself heal like a normal person is just barely rationalizable as 'no harm done', which is why I felt that it fit Harry. He'll work through it in the next couple of chapters, so that'll be an interesting write.

And the Wright family saga lives on through Wentworth Wright and his behind the scenes vengeance against Lisa. Let me know what you thought of it.

36. Book-II:The Greater Good

Chapter 16:

He was about an hour early for his meeting with Dumbledore, Harry thought as he emerged from the Floo in Professor McGonagall's office the next day.

The office was empty, he realized as he looked around. The Transfiguration Professor was probably busy dealing with the numerous Aurors that were no doubt swarming the place, looking through anything and everything in sight. Walking over to the oaken door leading out of the office, Harry opened it and slipped outside into the corridor.

It had never really hit him that he wouldn't be seeing these hallways again for a year, Harry thought as he walked towards the Headmaster's office. He hadn't expected that it would affect him as much as it was.

But he should have. It was his home after all.

Turning a corner on the way to the Grand Staircase, Harry suddenly came to a halt. McGonagall and a burly Auror were loudly arguing in the middle of the hallway. Neither of them seemed to have noticed him yet.

Harry backtracked to a spot just behind the corner, pulling out and putting on his Invisibility Cloak before leaning over to spy on the conversation. The Auror was tapping his wand on the lock on a nearby door as McGonagall was trying vainly to talk him out of doing it.

"Entering the seventh year Alchemy classroom without the Headmaster's permission or assistance is very dangerous Mr. Murphy." McGonagall argued.

"That's Auror Murphy to you," the Auror interrupted gruffly.

Harry frowned.

A flush crept up the Professor's face before she replied, "Very well then Auror Murphy. There are several dangerous alchemical concoctions in that room, and the Headmaster is the only one sufficiently trained in Alchemy in this school. If he does not supervise you going into that room, then your life might be at ri-"

"Don't teach me how to do my job woman," the burly Auror; Murphy; snapped at her, "If you had done yours right then maybe all those kids wouldn't have died."

Harry's eyes widened as he almost gasped.

The color drained out of McGonagall's face. She gritted her teeth, visibly trying to restrain herself, before she angrily stomped away from the conversation. Harry pushed himself up against the side as she passed him, trying to remain unnoticed as he watched her wipe her eyes on her sleeves before striding off towards her office.

Ping!

Quest Alert

How about you stop moping about your life for a minute and teach that twerp a lesson for messing with our dear Professor? Cunt!

Reward,

1,000 Exp

Failure,

What are you expecting? Death? Here's what's gonna happen. At worst temporary detention by the Auror, because seriously. You're fucking Harry Potter. Do what you need to.

YES/NO?

Harry grinned before accepting the quest and waving away the windows. It had been a while since the game had shown its personality overtly. It was nice to have the familiar sarcastic tone back again.

And while he had no doubt that the esteemed Professor could easily take care of herself, she seemed to be unwilling to act in retribution against Auror Dickhead over there. Due to that, as a loyal student himself, it only made sense to act in her stead.

Besides, what else was he supposed to do with an entire hour of free time?

Harry opened up his inventory and pulled out a dungbomb that Ron had given him for his birthday last year. But he wasn't just going to throw them at the Auror.

Oh no. That was for plebs.

A dungbomb usually consisted of three layers inside it. The first layer was the dried potion, that when touched by fire would immediately turn into the stenchful gas. The second layer was a small bunch of gunpowder, primed to explode and light the stench potion. The third was the fuse, which proceeded through a hole all the way out of the bomb's shell, and needed to be lit by the prankster.

Pulling out a knife, Harry gently cut the dungbomb horizontally in half from the middle, exposing the insides of the popular prank item.

Removing all the gunpowder from inside, Harry removed the fuse and sealed it back shut.

What remained was a ball with a single hole in it, full of a potion that'd spit out a mind famboozlingly disgusting smelling gas at the slightest spark.

The next step was to knock the man out, but that was easier said than done. Harry knew Stupefy, but there was no way that a trained Auror wouldn't dodge that or just fling it right back at him.

Instead, he opted to extend a thick tendril of his mana into the body of the Auror who was trying to get through the lock on the Alchemy classroom. Fighting heavily against the man's own magic, he pushed his mana into his blood. Letting the mana settle in and saturate his blood, Harry closed his hand into a fist, slowing down the flow of blood as much as he could with a grown man's magical flow fighting against him.

It was almost stupid how hard it was to even make the man dizzy. The more someone seemed to be trained in their use of magic, the harder it was to control their blood.

Ping!

For making an accurate deduction, take +1 to Int!

The Auror stumbled upon his feet, swaying as the symptoms of low blood pressure started to take hold, dizzily shaking his head. And Harry didn't waste any time in pulling his wand out and sending a Stupefy right at him, catching him off guard.

And down he went.

Harry secured his Invisibility Cloak around him and ran over, dropping to his knees as he pried open the Auror's mouth and positioned the

dungbomb at his lips, with the hole facing into his mouth.

With a snap of his fingers, he lit a single spark inside the ball, lighting up the potion. Within seconds, the entire dry potion sublimated into its smelly gaseous form. Since there was no gunpowder to explode the dungbomb's shell away, the gas went the only way it could.

Forcefully out through the hole, into Auror Murphy's mouth, and right into his digestive tract.

Harry kneeled there for a minute, holding the dungbomb in the man's mouth and idly wondering when would be an ideal time to stop.

"FTWEEEEEEEE!" echoed a fart through the empty hallway.

Harry burst out in a fit of hysterical laughter. It was so immature, but he hadn't laughed in so long that he almost couldn't stop himself.

Yup. That would be a decent enough time to stop.

He pulling the dungbomb back and dropped it into his inventory before it spewed any gas onto him, before making sure that the 'Unconscious' status effect would wear off soon with a quick Observe. Then, he pointed his wand at the man.

"Anapneo" he cast, clearing the man's lung airway and making sure he wouldn't choke or something.

Ping!

Quest Success!

How about you stop moping about your life for a minute and teach that twerp a lesson for messing with our dear Professor? Cunt!

Reward,

1,000 Exp

Casting a sticking charm onto the man's butt just for good measure, sticking it to the floor, Harry got up onto his feet and headed up towards the Grand Staircase.

No doubt the entire thing was quite irresponsible, immature, and reckless, but it was also quite fun, and honestly, Harry had been feeling a bit drained of fun lately.

The staircases weren't feeling very kind today, which was why it took a few minutes for him to make his way up to the Project Room.

By the time he got there, he had come down from the momentary high of the prank in anticipation entering this familiar place, and he was having some serious mixed emotions about why.

Pulling out the key the Professor had given him a while back, Harry unlocked the door and stepped in, closing the door behind him before walking in and looking around the place.

The chairs, desks and the transfigured sofas were still there. Dust hadn't had the time to settle on the desks they had arranged around the walls as their work surfaces. The library books were still there and so were the quills and half-filled notebooks, scattered all across the work surfaces.

Nothing had changed, yet everything had changed.

And almost involuntarily, his eyes slid shut, and his lightning-fast Gamer's mind responded to a wish that even he didn't know he had, in vivid detail imagining the future that would have come to pass if the last few months had never happened.

The school would have been normal, and their lives unmoved. They would have grown better as a team, researching and studying magic both on and off school course. Heck, time permitting, they would have worked on the Game project, maybe even made a working prototype that would have probably broken down between ten minutes of it coming together.

But they wouldn't have been discouraged. They would have stared at the burning piece of magical technology for a minute before they would have laughed and joyously gone off to celebrate. Dean and Ron would have

smurfed down every bit of dessert they would have smuggled away from the kitchens. Hermione would have watched disapprovingly before he and Terry would have forced her into joining in anyway.

Christmas would have been merry, and the New Year's would have been joyous. They would have crushed the end of the year exams before heading off home, eager to come back for a new third year at the school. And now, all that was gone.

Harry's eyes were wet when he opened them, the sparkle that they had gained during that impromptu revenge prank completely lost. A couple of flicks of his hand made the Identifier Band fall out of his Inventory and onto his palm.

"Observe"

The Identifier Band

A magical device capable of identifying any magical creature whose existence has been recorded in its Source Book. Just put on the Band and point your index finger at the creature, say 'Identify' and the name of the creature will carve itself on the band.

It was only weeks ago that he and Dean had crafted that with the Professor Vector's help. One nightmare ago.

A knock sounded at the door, and a voice came through, echoing around the classroom.

"Mind if I let myself in Harry?" Professor Vector said.

"Give me a second, Professor," Harry called back, wiping his eyes.

The door opened behind him a second later, and the Professor walked in, her steps sounding loud and clear in his ears.

"Did the Aurors search the place?" Harry asked, looking up at her.

"They did. Yesterday evening, after they found out that Argus was missing. They didn't find anything of concern, and as soon as I mentioned

that this was where Harry Potter works on his side projects they were quite glad to put everything back where it was before," the Professor said, keenly looking at his face. She asked, "Are you alright Harry?"

"I am. I'm fine really." Harry said, although he knew well before the ping sounded that his lie had been unsuccessful.

Ping!

Lie Unsuccessful!

Professor Vector frowned, "Suppressing how you feel isn't the right way to go about it, Harry. You just went through some really bad times, and feeling dejected is natural. But you have to talk about it."

Harry took a deep breath, deciding to word it better this time, "Thank you for being concerned Professor, but I do know that. I have a family now. I can talk to them about things like this. And I do talk to them.

They've been really helpful."

Ping!

Maybe you should think about why you have such high levels of Lying and Bullshitting while your Lie Detection is so low. Says a lot about you and those around you. Skill leveled up!

Lying, Lv- 13 (1%)

This is your ability to lie to people, the higher the level the better the lie and less chance of discovery!

67% chance of success, less based on how extreme the lie is.

Harry frowned. He knew just fine how much of a lying problem he had.

He didn't need the game's help in pointing that out.

"If you say so," the Professor hesitantly said, letting go of the topic before saying, "So why are you at school Harry?"

"I had a meeting with Professor Dumbledore," Harry replied, "And I wanted to talk about the Project to you. I, as well as Hermione and

Ron...we were all wondering about what will happen to it."

"You tell me. You are the leader of the project after all." The Professor said, her voice pleasant and calm.

"But isn't Hogwarts being shut down for the year? How can I still-"

"The Project is registered with the Ministry, Harry. Not the school. You have the permit, and so long as I don't cut the cord as your supervisor, you can do whatever you want. I won't be cutting the cord unless you want me to, so it's all up to you. Whatever you decide, I will understand."

Harry looked down at the Band in his hands, "I want to keep it going, even if just for the sake of honoring Dean's memory, but I don't think it would be the same without him."

The Professor pondered for a moment, before saying, "Then it's alright if you want to stop for now Harry. Take a break this year. Drop the Project. You've accomplished so much in a few months, and I have no doubt that you'll have no issues catching up once Hogwarts starts back up again.

Give yourself time."

Harry nodded. That seemed like a good idea. And he could still work on it on his off time if he wanted to.

"Then that is how it will be," the Professor said before patting his shoulder, "I have an appointment at the Ministry now. You take as much time as you need."

And with that, she turned around and left the room.

Harry stayed there for a few minutes more, idly thinking about this and that as he arranged all the books and notebooks into separate neat stacks so that Madam Pince could take the library books back when she inevitably came looking for them.

It was while finishing up the final stack that an idea struck Harry, and he quickly tidied up and left, heading towards the seventh floor this time.

The idea, and the Room of Requirement, as it turned out, proved to be entirely useless. The room was fairly good at finding things, and Harry's idea was to go and ask it for the diary.

Much to his frustration, the idea didn't work, which meant that the diary must have been destroyed or something, which in turn didn't bode well for his plan of telling the court about the possession.

'It's alright,' he thought as he told the password to the statue and rode up the revolving staircase leading up to the Headmaster's office. Dumbledore would probably manage to work something out. He'd been part of the legal system for decades now and had a mind that probably surpassed his own Gamer enhanced one.

'If anyone could find a way, it would be Dumbledore.' He thought to himself as he knocked on the door.

"Come on in Harry," came the voice of the Headmaster from inside.

Harry pushed the door open and stepped in, almost unconsciously bracing as memories of the tornado of belongings that he'd walked into the last time he'd walked into this office flashed in his mind.

But no such tornado awaited him. Instead, everything was just as it had been before Dumbledore had left the office. The portraits were still there, all awake and looking at him curiously, the spindly contraptions were on the side tables, whirring and puffing smoke, and behind the claw-footed desk was the Headmaster himself, dressed in violently offensive neon green robes.

"You arrived early, didn't you Harry. My apologies for making you wait. Dilys over there," Dumbledore said, pointing to the portrait of the Headmistress that he had seen on his trip to St Mungo's yesterday, "was telling me about a patient that had come in with a burnt hindquarters and how no one quite knew what it was that did it, so I had to go see for

myself. Forgive me, but curiosity does strike my fancy once a while."

"Did you find out what caused it? Some spell?" Harry asked, walking over to the table and taking the guest seat.

"Oh nothing like that," Dumbledore replied as he waved his hand, making the tea set that lay on the table fly up and pour a cup for Harry. "Turned out the man had brought a muggle hair curler and had stuck it up his rear thinking it was something else. It was all cured soon, although I do not envy the healer who had to apply the burn salve. The burns looked rather deep-seated."

Harry stared. Every once in a while, usually with Dumbledore around, he was reminded of how strangely absurd the Wizarding World truly was.

Although considering all else that he had seen, he supposed accidentally using hair curlers as a dildo wasn't all that far out there.

His Gamer's Mind, being the delightfully helpful thing that it was, conjured up a nice little mental image for him.

He then promptly decided that it definitely was far out there.

Deciding to casually pretend that the last minute of conversation had been wiped out of existence by a random black hole dancing through space-time, Harry took a sip of his tea and asked the question on his mind.

"What is the plan for tomorrow's trial? Should I tell them about the possession? That I talked to Riddle?"

Dumbledore's face grew serious, "I have thought about it, and I think pursuing a possession-based defense might be the best option we have.

However, Miss Turpin's mind being impenetrable might prove to be an issue"

"What about Imperius Curse? I know that the death eaters during the last war got off on that. That defense must've been really good. I've read that

Barty Crouch Sr was really strict on Dark Arts at the time. Why can't we use something like that?"

Dumbledore was shaking his head even before Harry finished, "There were fairly complicated factors at play there, not the least of which were bribes and networking. And remember Harry that the people who will be casting the votes already know that the Imperius defense was popularly used by Death Eaters. Those that know that it had been used to keep guilty people out of prison and are bitter about it would vote against us, and those who themselves used it to stay out of prison would also vote against us."

Harry knew where Dumbledore was going, "Combine that with the families that lost their sons and daughters, who we can assume will vote against us no matter what, we will lose no matter how airtight the defense is."

"Exactly. You have to remember Harry that a Wizarding Criminal trial is not just about the law, but also about the people who vote. It is them we have to convince, and it is them we must focus on the most," Dumbledore said.

"So what do you want me to do?"

"Tell them about the possession without mentioning Lord Voldemort. Say that you saw someone in the Chamber, but were afraid to tell people about it because you thought no one would believe you. Be vague. Your age will give you some liberties. Take advantage of them. Is that clear Harry?"

"Crystal," Harry answered before asking, "But what about Lisa? What about her being on the stand?"

Dumbledore's face aged a decade within a second, "Miss Turpin...she does not remember much. A lot of her memories involve blacking out for

periods of time. But there are also quite a few things that she does remember and feels guilty about because she does not remember anyone forcing her to those things. Almost all of those I am positive Tom Riddle made her do."

Harry's optimism about the trial plummeted.

Dumbledore wasn't finished, "Further worsening the situation are her mental shields, which make her immune to Veritaserum, and her lack of any recollection whatsoever about the Voldemort's diary. Both no doubt courtesy of Mr. Riddle."

"Letting her take the stand would be bad wouldn't it," Harry asked, leaning tiredly back into his chair.

"To put it lightly, yes,"

Harry sighed, before he looked up at the Headmaster said, "Then I suppose I will have to sway all the people I can."

Dumbledore's eyes twinkled at Harry's statement before he set his untouched cup of tea aside to pull out a small file from his drawer and opened it.

"The Prosecutor the Ministry has appointed for the case is Lord Mulciber," he said as he read the page in the file, "He is a very well respected member of the traditionalist side, and a shrewd politician and attorney. The acting Judge, as always, will remain anonymous until the trial starts. The trial will be held in tomorrow in Courtroom Twelve, beginning at two in the afternoon."

Dumbledore closed the file, took off his glasses and leaned in to look Harry in the eyes.

"You must be careful Harry. You must not interrupt anyone. You must not speak up. You must not appear hostile or biased in any way. And most importantly, you must not give them any reason to use Veritaserum on

you."

Harry frowned, "But wouldn't my Occlumency stop it from taking effect or something? Couldn't I just lie to th-"

Dumbledore's voice was quite serious when he interrupted Harry, "There are over a thousand different microexpressions and indicators of Veritaserum taking effect on a person. Those indicators are one of the most well guarded magical secrets, passed on by word of mouth from one Court Administrator to the next. Even I do not know them all. A person who is unaware of those indicators might possibly be duped, but it is impossible to fake the effects of the Truth serum in a Court and not be caught. And the situation is even worse for you."

"Worse for me?"

Dumbledore nodded, "Nicholas tells me that memory spells do not work on you, which prevents us from temporarily rewriting your memories to show that you did sneak past the basilisk. If we had been able to do that, you would have been able to bypass Veritaserum, since you yourself would have believed that to be the truth,"

"But my shields prevent that," Harry whispered in morbid realization. The one protection that he cherished above all was proving to be their undoing.

"They do."

Silence took over the office for a moment, the only sound echoing through being the puffing and whirring of the machines.

"Test me," Harry finally said, breaking the silence, "I'll try to take down my shields. Try to Obliviate me."

"Harry, thi-" Dumbledore began speaking, his expression shocked.

"Don't let me think about this twice Professor," Harry interrupted, "I don't trust myself to not stop you. Just do it. Obliviate the last minute of this

conversation from my mind. If we can do this then we can save Lisa's life."

Dumbledore looked him in the eye before he pulled out his wand and pointed it at him. His voice shook as he said his next words, "I have said this before and I will say it again Harry. Never in my years at Hogwarts have I ever been prouder of a student than I am of you. Obliviate."

Harry did his best to exert as much control over Gamer's Mind that he could, commanding his shields to take themselves down as the spell washed over him.

Ping!

Memory spell attack averted!

"Damn it!" Harry cursed in frustration as soon as he heard the ping before he realized who was sitting in front of him, "Sorry Professor."

"No worries Harry, although I presume you already know the result of that little experiment," Dumbledore said, waving away his apologies, "I must say I expected that, but as disappointing as the result may be, you offering to do what you just did...it speaks volumes of your character Harry."

Harry didn't know what to say, so he decided to take a sip of his tea instead. It had lost its heat, leaving behind a cold and bitter concoction.

Dumbledore smiled at him, "I've kept you here for a while. Perenelle must no doubt be wondering when you will be coming home. I would rather not risk her ire if that is fine with you."

"Yeah," said Harry, scratching the back of his head as he looked at the time, "I did tell her that I'd be back within a couple of hours."

"Then off you go Harry. Just hop through from the Floo here this time."

Harry nodded before he got up from his chair and headed over to the fireplace, grabbing the powder and throwing it into the fire. The fire

turned green and Harry stepped in. Seconds later he was off, hurtling through the Floo Network in the direction of his home.

After Harry had disappeared in a burst of green flames from the fireplace, Albus Dumbledore pulled his wand out and vanished the Veritaserum laced tea that Harry had been drinking out of his cup.

The experiment that Harry had volunteered for was only one of the two that Dumbledore had been conducting this meeting.

Both had failed.

"It's getting late Harry!" rang Nicholas's voice from downstairs just as Harry finished fluffing up a pillow for Hedwig on his bed.

"Just go Harry. I'll be fine," Hedwig's voice sounded in his head.

Nodding, Harry quickly grabbed his wand and ran out of the room and down the stairs, where Nicholas was waiting for him beside the door.

They quickly made their way down the corridor and into the small room that held the floor's Floo connection.

Handing two sickles over to the doorman, Nicholas grabbed the Floo powder and threw it into the fire.

"After you, Harry," he said, waving Harry into the fireplace.

Harry acquiesced, stepping into the fireplace before saying, "Ministry of Magic!"

And he was whooshed away, flitting through an ethereal black space with many momentarily visible green specks of light whizzing by him as he headed towards one green spot of light that grew. Harry braced himself, carefully managing to step out of the fireplace without stumbling.

Flooding was still something he wasn't entirely used to, he thought as he looked up at the splendid hallway in front of him.

The highly polished dark wood floor and walls, the peacock blue ceiling

inlaid with gleaming moving golden symbols and many gilded fireplaces looked just as grand as they had the first time he had come to the Ministry. The number of people going in and out of the fireplaces was much less though since it was midday, and other than the few dozen people who were hurriedly walking through towards the atrium, the hallway was fairly empty.

Nicholas emerged in a burst of flame from the fireplace behind him before placing a hand on his shoulder, "Let's go, Harry. We don't want to be late."

Passing the Fountain of Magical Brethren halfway down the hall, they joined the small crowd of people, wading their way through towards the Security desk near the left corner of the Atrium. Occasional snippets of strange and curious conversations reached his ears.

"...just send your toilet over to the DMLE and they'll lick it clean for you..."

"...if your wife gets mad at you for yelling at your kids, just put a coin in your sock every time you yell at them. Soon you'll have a weapon to beat them with..."

"...my goat got my baby stuck in a tree..."

But Nicholas had a firm grip on his shoulder as he guided them hurriedly through to the Security desk, and Harry had no time to investigate any of them.

"Step over here," said the wizard in a bored voice as they reached the desk.

Harry walked closer to him and the wizard held up a long golden rod, thin and flexible as a car aerial, and passed it up and down Harry's front and back before doing the same for Nicholas.

"Wands," grunted the security wizard at them, putting down the golden

instrument and holding out his hand. The wizard read the wands on the brass instrument one by one, before handing them back.

"Thank you," said Nicholas firmly, and grasping Harry by the shoulder he steered him away from the desk and back into the stream of wizards and witches walking through the golden gates.

Harry followed him through the gates into the smaller hall beyond, where at least twenty lifts stood behind golden grilles. Harry and Nicholas picked one that looked like it was empty. They hurriedly jogged over to the lift, and before anyone else could get in, Nicholas slid the grills shut and pressed the button labeled Level Nine.

The lift gave a groan before it ascended slowly with a shudder, carrying the two of them.

The hall soon disappeared into the floor, and they were alone in the lift. Nicholas turned to look him in the eyes, "I'm sure Albus stressed it enough in your meeting yesterday, Harry, but remember not to lose your cool in there. Mulciber will be looking for weaknesses, and he will definitely try to provoke you. Don't let him."

"I know Nicholas," Harry said over the rattling noise, "Professor told me all that yesterday."

"I have no doubt," Nicholas said. The flickering light on his face made him look older than Harry had ever seen him look, "But he has a habit of trying to sugarcoat things. I'll be blunt. This trial is being seen as so damaging and polarising that even Fudge refused any part in it. People are out for revenge, and they are not looking to hold back. Just promise me that you will be careful in there."

There was a palpable worry in the man's voice, and it was kind of off-putting to see someone that Harry was used to being cheerful look like that. He nodded, agreeing to that promise.

"Department of Mysteries," the female voice sounded and left it at that.

They were on the only floor that Harry had not been to in his tour with Mr. Bagman all those months back. He quickly cast an Observe on the label above the lift button labeled 9, hoping it would work.

Level 9: The Department of Mysteries

The Department of Mysteries, located on Level Nine, is a section of the Ministry of Magic that carries out confidential research regarding particular enigmas that magic has yet to solve. Most of its operations are carried out in total secrecy from the general wizard populace.

Harry frowned. Why were they here?

The grill rattled open all by itself this time and answered Harry's question, revealing the familiar form of Professor Dumbledore, dressed in a midnight blue set of robes.

"Good to see you here Nicholas," he greeted before turning to him,

"Ready Harry?"

"Hold on Albus," Nicholas interrupted, "Are you absolutely sure that they will not allow me to sit with Harry? This is highly unusual for a court to do."

"I am positive. The judge waived the guardian's rights for the trial because both the accused and the primary witness are underage. It was done by popular vote to avoid delaying the trial more. Miss Turpin's mother was quite devastated, but I couldn't do much to stop them."

Dumbledore gravely replied.

The statement had all sorts of bad implications, but the one that struck Harry the hardest wasn't the legal stuff.

Her mother. Lisa had a mother. She was a widow who worked at the Ministry.

'I had forgotten that,' Harry thought as his stomach churned with an odd mixture of shame and guilt. He wondered what she must be feeling right now, with her daughter being pushed into a trial that could get her branded as a criminal and her job no doubt in peril.

Deciding to put that into the pile of reasons why it was important to save Lisa, Harry started to pay attention to Dumbledore again. They had started to head down the corridor towards the polished door.

"...you will have to sit in the viewer's gallery I'm afraid, but Mrs. Turpin will be sitting there as well and I am glad that you will be there to give her at least some support through this."

"There is that," Nicholas said with a sigh as they reached a fork in the corridor, "Well. This is where I have to go right and you left. Good luck Harry. And to you too Albus. I will be watching."

With that, Nicholas headed through an opening and down the flight of stairs towards the right, and Dumbledore guided Harry down the left. They reached the bottom of the steps and walked in silence along yet another corridor, which bore a great resemblance to the one that led to Professor Snape's dungeon at Hogwarts, with rough stone walls and torches in brackets. The doors they passed here were heavy wooden ones with iron bolts and keyholes.

The Professor opened one of the heavy doors and walked right in. Harry eyed the engraving on top of the door.

Courtroom Twelve

There was a bleak and forbidding air about the place. The walls were made of dark stone, dimly lit by torches. There were no pictures on the walls, no decorations at all. Just the serried rows of benches full of people that Harry knew were Wizengamot members, rising in levels all around the room, all positioned so that they had a clear view of the

center, which was presumably where the arguments took place.

Ahead, in the highest bench of all, was a shadowy figure. The Judge. The window above his head told Harry his name, which was Rudolph Barnes.

Harry had no idea who that was, which was why he cast the Observe.

Rudolph Barnes

(Relationship Meter: 0%)

Lv-50

HP-17000/17000

MP-8000/8000

Race-Wizard

Str-21

Vit-32

Dex-20

Int-39

Wis-29

Luc-16

Rudolph Barnes is a wizard and a member of Wizengamot of some influence. He has practiced traditionalist leaning politics, but is seen as a fair minded family man on both sides due to his past service in DMLE. He is a decent dueler and is fluent in Spanish. He has two daughters and a wife whom he dearly loves.

He has never before been appointed to the position of acting Judge, and is quite nervous, but is trying not to show it.

He has no strong opinion about Harry.

Harry waved away the Observe. There wasn't anything too notable here but did help dissuade a lot of his fears. The low voices that had been echoing around the courtroom stopped as the heavy door swung close behind Harry and Dumbledore.

A cold male voice, Judge Barnes's voice, rang across the courtroom, "Take your seat in the witness gallery Mr. Potter."

Harry looked around, before quickly identifying the slightly raised group of benches beside the Judge's seat to be the witness section. He obligingly walked over and took his seat, which he realized was quite lower than the Judge's.

An elderly man who looked a few decades younger than Dumbledore walked over to stand just off the center of the room. Dumbledore walked over to stand beside him.

"Lord Mulciber," the judge asked, "Will the accused not be presented to the court?"

"The Prosecution has waived the presentation of the accused until the time of her testimony arrives out of respect for the families of the deceased amongst us" the elderly man, Mulciber, said with a genial smile.

"Very well then. Is the defense ready to begin?"

"We are your Honour."

"As is the Prosecution."

"Very well then. Court scribe take note. This trial has begun," The judge said out loud to the silent room, before reading the charges from a file on his desk.

"The accused Lisa Turpin stands charged with the following: Murder of 8 minors and one Silvanus Kettleburn on January 9th 1993; Purchase of illegal potion ingredients; Purposeful endangerment; and Terrorism.

Prosecutor Mulciber and Defence Attorney Dumbledore arguing before the presiding judge Rudolph Barnes, along with court scribe Bigglesworth McToot. How does the defendant plead?"

"Not guilty on all charges."

A wave of murmurs spread across the room. Harry could make out quite

a few faces in the darkness, easily picking out Amelia Bones and Malfoy along with quite a few other people he had met at the New Year's parties, all keenly watching Dumbledore.

The judge took a note, "Very well then. The Prosecution shall be opening with a statement, followed by Defence."

Dumbledore walked off to stand by the side, giving the floor to Mulciber, who cleared his throat before beginning.

"Our world has just witnessed one of the most devastating events in the past decade. A Basilisk, armed with its deadly gaze, was veiled in the shroud of a powerful secrecy charm and cast loose upon Hogwarts, killing nine people and petrifying four others. In the last few days, our minds have been full of questions. Who did it? Who is the Heir of Slytherin? Who was the one that set the Basilisk free? Who took and killed Dean Thomas? Who took Lisa Turpin into the Chamber? Well, your Honor the answer has been hiding behind a mask of innocence all this time. It is none other than Lisa Turpin herself. She was not taken down the chamber. She walked in there willingly. SHE is the heir! And today, with the evidence we have found against her and our expert witnesses, we will put her to justice."

Mulciber bowed before he headed to the side and yielded the floor to Dumbledore.

"In light of recent events," he started, "it is more than understandable that our people are feeling anger. They want the culprit punished, and they want it fast which is also understandable. However, what is not understandable is the Prosecution's attempts at directing that anger at Miss Turpin. No doubt there has been a lot of pressure on the Ministry to find and convict the culprit, but to desperately pin the blame on someone innocent is not something that we stand for."

The mutterings started up again, this time accompanied with quite a few nodding heads.

Dumbledore continued, "And that desperation shows in his words. Lord Mulciber just mentioned a powerful secrecy charm that managed to shroud the Basilisk from all eyes, including my own. Does he mean to say that a 12-year-old cast that charm? The flaws in his arguments are already showing. Do not let this fool you."

It was working. A considerable amount of the whispers that reached Harry's ears were positive. Dumbledore had made a solid point about her age, and that had resonated well.

"Very well then," the Judge's cool voice sounded, "Prosecution. Who is your first witness?"

"I would like to ask for Auror Dawlish to take the stand," Mulciber said as he eyed Dumbledore warily.

The judge agreed, and Auror Dawlish rose from his seat and took the witness stand.

"We know that Miss Turpin was either taken or went into the Chamber and Mr. Dean Thomas followed her in. Sometime later, Harry Potter found the way into the Chamber with the help of his phoenix companion, found Mr. Thomas dead and Miss Turpin unconscious, and got them out of there," Mulciber stated before asking, "What happened in that time?" Dawlish's voice was monotonous and rehearsed when he answered the question, "We've worked out that Miss Turpin was immersed in a cauldron that contained a Potion that has yet to be identified. That we know by the burns all over her body when she was found. And Dean Thomas pushed the cauldron over and made her spill out, disrupting the brewing process and causing some sort of backlash that might have been the reason behind the death of Dean Thomas and the destruction that

was found in the Chamber itself."

"Is there any indication whatsoever of anyone else ever being in there?"

"No. None at all."

"Tell us about this gramophone device you found. The one that was said to have been continuously playing harsh hissing sounds when it was found." The Prosecutor asked, his tone sounding saccharinely pleasant with a noticeable undertone of eagerness.

"That was a gramophone enchanted to switch between two sounds. One was a song, and the other was a Parseltongue recording in Miss Turpin's voice saying something along the veins of 'kill them all'," Dawlish replied in that same rehearsed tone.

"A parseltongue recording saying that? How did you reach to that conclusion?"

"We used an experiment with a few snakes that one of our Junior Aurors suggested we try."

"An experiment, your Honour," Mulciber said as he turned around with a flap of his robes, sounding like a stage actor about to say his best line, "that we have set up to show the court right now. May I?"

"Go ahead."

Mulciber gave a wave of his wand and the door that Harry had entered from opened. A wizard levitated a table into the room, which he placed in the center, in clear view of everyone.

On the table, much to Harry's shock was the same gramophone that Harry had seen in the Chamber, and a large transparent glass cage containing what appeared to be dozens upon dozens of snakes, writhing around simultaneously in an entangled mass in the box.

Mulciber turned the gramophone on with a flick of his wand, and a scathing harsh hissing sound filled the Courtroom, echoing again and

again from the giant walls. A wave of discomfiture traveled through the room. Someone in the back row squeaked with horror.

A window popped up in the corner of his vision.

Parseltongue Skill Active!

And the hissing slowly softened and flowed together into comprehensible words.

"Kill them all. Kill them all. Kill them all..."

Harry knew what was going to happen before it happened. Blood spurted against the walls of the glass cage as the snakes in the glass cage stabbed their fangs into each other, obeying the single command that was being given to them in Parseltongue as they tore each other apart into pieces. Multiple screams rang out in the room, as some averted their eyes from the cage and others watched with horrified fascination.

"ORDER!" Judge Barnes loudly ordered over the screams as he slammed his gavel down, "That is enough! Your point has been made."

The sound stopped, and the wizard promptly levitated the table back out of the courtroom. Mulciber stepped forth with a victorious expression on his face.

"It is fairly clear what the recording said, which means we now know the reason why the Basilisk attacked the Great Hall that day. An instruction, in Lisa Turpin's voice, telling it to go kill them. The connection is obvious. She was the one who had the Basilisk kill everyone. SHE is the culprit we are looking for."

And with that, Mulciber undid every single bit of work that Dumbledore had done. Harry had no doubt that every single person in the room would have voted Guilty if they had been asked right this moment. He had no idea how anyone could salvage this situation.

But Dumbledore's stride was purposeful as he headed over to the witness

stand to ask his own question.

"Are there any details you have on this potion that you are aware of?" he asked, and silence reigned. No one, not even Harry had expected this question.

Dawlish frowned, before answering, "I'd say it was fairly complex, considering it probably took months to brew in there."

Dumbledore did not hesitate, "Would you say that it could be brewed by a twelve-year-old alone?"

"Er...no," Dawlish replied, floundering a bit, "Pretty sure it couldn't. Our potions master said so himself."

Dumbledore turned to look up at the people watching uncertainly, as he spoke, "Esteemed members of the Wizengamot, this is proof that someone else was involved who more knowledgeable in potions. The one who manipulated Miss Turpin into using her apparent Parseltongue ability to record this message. The one who cast the enchantments from her wand. The one who guided her through making such a powerful potion. And that is the real culprit here."

Mulciber, who had probably realized that Dumbledore was starting to sway people, suddenly spoke up, "The Prosecution would like to call witness Harry Potter to the stand!"

The Judge agreed, and Harry, hoping that his acting was up to par, made his over to the witness stand, where Mulciber asked, "Mr. Potter? That night, was there anyone else you saw in there?"

Harry knew that now was the time to shine his skills, "Yes. I did."

Mulciber looked like lightning had struck him where he stood, "What?! Your official statement very clearly states that you saw no one else in there."

Making sure his voice was shaking a bit, he looked down, and said, "I did."

I saw a man there, but before I could even see anything about him, he disappeared. I knew that people couldn't apparate inside Hogwarts, so I was afraid that if I told people they'd think I was a liar."

"That is a lie!" The elderly Lord snapped at him before he whirled around to look at the judge, "Your Honour, the witness is being uncooperative and is muddling facts. I demand a vote for Veritaserum!"

"I'm not lyin-" Harry started to refute, but was interrupted by Mulciber.

"Do stay quiet unless you are spoken to Mr. Potter," he snapped, "Maybe if you hadn't spent so much time moping over your friend's body in the chamber, then perhaps countless others would have been saved."

Harry's vision flashed red, and he would have probably done something really bad if the loud babblings of the Wizengamot members around him disapproving of Mulciber's words hadn't driven into him that he was being watched.

Instead, he settled for gritting his teeth and glaring at the man.

"That was out of line Lord Mulciber!" the Judge firmly chastised, "Mr. Potter not only had reasonable cause for what he did, but he also felt it right to confess in the middle of the trial. Your motion is denied! Any further mistreatment of witnesses will result in you being removed from your role as Prosecutor."

Mulciber glared at Harry, before turning to the judge and gritting out, "No more questions."

Dumbledore called from where he was standing, "No more questions from Defence as well." Harry could tell that he had a small smile on his face.

And so Harry went back, a small victory under his belt.

"The Prosecution would now like to call the accused to the stand."

Mulciber finally said when Harry was back in his own seat.

"Objection!" was Dumbledore's immediate response, "Miss Turpin is

nowhere near good mental health and the time she was forced to spend in detention here in the Ministry further exacerbated her condition.

Letting her take the stand is by no means fair."

Mulciber's voice was snide and condescending as he refuted Dumbledore,

"She is conscious and can answer questions. I don't think we need anything more than that."

The judge considered them both for a second before, much to Harry's dismay, he said, "I will allow it."

And with that, the preparations for bringing the accused girl began. A small portion of the floor in the center of the room vanished, and a foreboding looking chair with chains hanging off of the limbs rose up. An Auror escorted Lisa into the room, and Harry watched concerned as he took in her pasty skin, her sunken cheeks and her stumbling walk. He worriedly cast his Healing skill at her, wondering if he could help with whatever was wrong with her.

Ping!

You are attempting to heal somebody with several ailments! Please chose one to heal:

Insomnia

Vitamin K deficiency

Fractured Mind

Magical Trauma

Harry frowned as he selected Fractured Mind.

WARNING: Status effect is MENTAL in nature and is very deep rooted. Removal has 80% risk of rendering the subject psychotic, 10% chance of rendering subject brain dead and 10% chance of permanent neural damage. Chances of recovery, 0%.

Proceed?

YES/NO

Harry almost cursed, before he pressed NO and selected the Magical Trauma.

WARNING: Patient has fractured dream-like memories about times in which she used the magic to do terrible things. These memories are causing her to consciously be repulsed by her own magic. Thus, the magic turns inward, harming her. Any heal would only be temporary unless she learns to trust her magic again.

Proceed for 6 month heal?

YES/NO

This one Harry pressed yes on. Six months was a long enough period of time, and not having her own magic harming her was always a good thing. He also pressed heal on her Insomnia and Vitamin K deficiency and gladly watched as some of her color returned to her face as she took her seat on the chair. She still looked completely unresponsive and in shock, but at least her body was healing.

But Harry's good mood wasn't to last too long.

Mulciber, who had been watching as Lisa was being escorted in, had another blow to deliver, "Your Honor. I propose a motion for a vote on Veritaserum. Reasonable doubt has more than been established, and we wouldn't want her mental state affecting her truthfulness would we?" And whether it was because she wasn't Harry or for some other reason, the Judge did not hesitate this time, "Very well then. We will put it to a vote."

Harry's heart felt swollen against his ribcage. If they gave Lisa Veritaserum and it didn't work, people would no doubt start distrusting her, just like Dumbledore had distrusted him when he had learned about his shields. That would no doubt be damaging.

"Those in favor of using Veritaserum,"

A clear majority voted yes, and Harry's stomach plummeted.

"Call for the Court Administerer and the Court Legilimencer both," the judge said, sending an aide running through a side door to call for the two people that Harry definitely did not want Lisa to encounter today.

It was another full minute before the aide returned with two hooded figures, one of whom stood by the sidelines and the other moved closer to Lisa. There was a tiny glass vial of truth potion in his hand.

He pried open her mouth and dropped three drops of it into her mouth, before kneeling down and starting to continuously peer at her face.

Seconds turned into minutes as the whispers ringing across the hall grew, and eventually, even the judge lost his patience.

"What is going on?" he asked, irritated.

"It is not working," was the simple monotone reply as the man stood up,

"Her Occlumency is too strong."

And the distrustful whispers started growing rapidly along with Harry's sense of unrest. It was just like Dumbledore said. You couldn't fake being under Veritaserum under court. And Lisa wasn't even trying.

"Order! Order!" the judge said, smacking his gavel to silence the room,

"Court Legilimencer, can you confirm this?"

The other hooded man walked over to the middle of the room before he too dropped down onto a knee before Lisa. He looked her in the eye for a second, presumably trying Legilimency to enter her mind. Harry knew before he did that he would be unsuccessful.

"I can confirm," the Court Legilimencer said flatly a second later, "She has some of the strongest shields I have ever encountered."

Angry and suspicious mutters spread across the entire Wizengamot.

Harry was starting to worry, but one look at Dumbledore fixed that. The

man had a plan, and it became even more obvious when he started to speak.

"It is clear that this effect on her mind is due to the trauma of the possession. She has blank memories, has shown multiple instances of knowing more than anyone her age does and has mental trauma. The fact that it was a possession is even bolstered by Mr. Potter's testimony of a disappearing man-

Dumbledore was winning people over, and Mulciber knew it, which was why he loudly interrupted him, "Possessed was she? She was possessed for what was the better part of the year and absolutely no one noticed? She did not show any changes in behavior? Should we be prosecuting the venerable Headmaster and Miss Turpin's mother for criminal negligence then? "

He took a breath and barrelled on, "That girl is a Parseltongue who is using Occlumency stronger than most of us in the room can. Her finding a potions recipe feels unrealistic to you? And what trauma are you talking about? In all my years at the ministry, I have never heard of anyone learning Occlumency from a spirit that possessed them. You keep piling on theory after theory connecting dots there aren't even there, yet the only evidence you have is the word of a child that is no doubt traumatized by the events of the Chamber and thus cannot be trusted to be fully accurate. This has to be utter nonsense coming from an incompetent teacher who has clearly gone senile."

The whole hall erupted in a massive din, with the families that supported Dumbledore shouting obscenities at Mulciber, and the families allied with Mulciber shouting back to defend him. Sounds of slamming desks with hands and hoarse screams echoed in Harry's ears as he admired Mulciber's tactic with a sick feeling.

The man had, in the guise of losing his temper, singlehandedly drowned out anything that Dumbledore had to say.

BOOM!

The sudden sound of the explosion almost ripped Harry's eardrum apart.

The whole hall suddenly fell silent.

Dumbledore lowered his wand, before pointedly looking at the judge.

"Ah. Yes," the Judge said, regaining his bearings before he instructed, "It is clear that spirits are running high now. We will be dispersing for today and will be reconvening tomorrow for further on this case. Court dispersed!"

And with that final gavel, it ended.

The trial wrapped up in the next few minutes, and a few minutes after that, Harry, Nicholas, and Dumbledore were sitting in Dumbledore's office. Harry was silently sitting as the two adults discussed how the trial had gone and what to do next.

"You miscalculated Albus," Nicholas gravely said.

"I know," Dumbledore replied, "Something was wrong there. The motion for Veritaserum should not have been nearly as unanimous. The votes are being influenced, and the prosecutor is no doubt being coached to take Miss Turpin down as brutally as possible. Someone is meddling to make sure that Lisa Turpin does not survive this."

Nicholas hummed in agreement, "Either way, our defense is frail. Right now, the only things we have going for us is the sheer unbelievability of a 12-year-old doing all that magic and Harry's testimony. Your possession argument was holding well before Mulciber interrupted you, but it will not be enough."

"I know," Dumbledore said with a tired sigh, "This entire generation has been coached to fear Parseltongue after Lord Voldemort, and that fear

hadn't gotten the time to settle in today's court. It will have tomorrow, and people will be much less sympathetic towards Miss Turpin. We need to bolster our possession defense."

"Professor..." said Harry, who had been quiet this entire time, lost in his thoughts, "Please don't take this the wrong way. It's just a thought that I just had."

He had been using Gamer's Mind to rifle through possible defenses, and an idea formed in his head. It sat uneasy with him, but he had to share it.

"What is it?" Nicholas asked with a frown.

Harry's own voice sounded unbelieving to his ears as he spoke, "Those people in there, those grieving families and angry people, they're looking for someone to blame. Right now, that someone is Lisa. But what if they found someone else to blame. Someone who was twisted and resentful due to not having any magic. Someone who had been confiscating and collecting dark artifacts from students for decades. Someone who would appear to be willing to use those dark artefacts to do harm to a school that he had always been resentful towards. Someone who has been suspiciously missing for the last week."

And contrary to the instantly disgusted rejection of the idea that he had expected from both Nicholas and Dumbledore, their faces morphed into troubled frowns.

They were considering it.

It was a particularly gloomy night. The soft whooshing sounds of dozens of dementors gliding along the dark obsidian floors of Azkaban prison echoed across the cramped hallways, with the only other sound being that of the nightguard repeatedly clanging his baton against the bars of the doors as he checked on each of the prisoners.

A sickly thin dog huddled upon itself in the corner of one of the cells,

shivering as it tried not to let the January cold seep into its heart and still it forever. The terrible memories were still there in his mind for him, the nightmares still persistent, but they were dampened. Blurred by the simple chemistry and thought processes of the animal mind.

He felt a spike of joy and gratitude towards his friends and his old Transfiguration teacher for teaching him so well that he was capable enough as a student to make this transformation without any professional help.

The chill near the room grew, and the dog hurriedly huddled into itself. The dementor must have sensed the joy, and was here trying to find its next snack. Its next morsel of food. That momentary spike of joy slowly drained away into a vast vat of nothingness, leaving behind naught but sorrow and misery.

Such was Azkaban. A place reserved for those the wizarding world felt undeserving of joy and happiness. Where prisoners couldn't even be granted the mercy of death unless they decided to slowly starve themselves away, or just managed to break out a splinter of their own bone and stabbed themselves through the heart with it. Where their bodies would lie undiscovered for weeks until the next nightguard came along to inspect the prisoners.

Suddenly, the cold started to slowly fade away, and the clanging of the nightguard's bell drew ever nearer. The dog, knowing that staying in that form would risk exposing the life-saving secret he had, shifted back to his human form, pulling his rags closer around himself to shield from the cold.

A pair of steps rang through the corridor.

CLANG! rang the iron baton against the bars of the cell next to his own.

The nightguard's voice echoed down the corridor, "Wake up! Wake up

you cunt! Good morning Bellatrix. Say hello to the morning sun you little bitch!"

More steps.

CLANG!

"Look here Black! Show me that pretty little face. Gotta make sure you're all alive here."

Black...that was his name. Sirius Black. He turned around to stare out the iron grates. The nightguard stood there in black robes with a grin on his face, his jackal Patronus shining a warm light around him. It was a momentary relief, tainted by the fact that it would soon be gone with its owner.

But moments passed, and the guard did not leave.

"Remember the lad you tried to get killed, Black? The one that blew your master up?", the nightguard asked with a cruel smile on his face.

'Harry,' his mind reminded him, finally functional in the shade of the nightguard's Patronus. He shook his head. He did not kill him. He did not try to kill him. He never even could have. He was his godson...his life. He loved him. More than anything.

The nightguard continued, taking the shaking of his head as a sign of acknowledgment, "Well lookie here. That lad not only survived his magic-hating family and his Defense teacher trying to off him last year but also a giant snake roaming around Hogwarts killing people. Pretty sure he helped save a kid or two too."

The guard pulled out a newspaper from his pocket before throwing it at him as hard as he could. The newspaper smacked him in the face before falling into his lap, leaving a stinging red mark behind.

"Read it, you bastard. Know, that you failed. Your master is dead. The kid you tried to kill has a new family to care for him now and is surviving

anything the world is throwing at him. He survived an entire fucking massacre. Your entire damn betrayal was for nothing. Fucking let that sink in. I'll be back a few hours later to take my paper back."

And with that, the Patronus and its owner passed on, clanging on the next cells after his own, carrying with him the warmth that had momentarily graced him.

But oddly enough, the clarity of mind that the Patronus had momentarily gifted him with did not pass. The bruised face of his godson on the front page captured his entire attention, and the world around him faded away as he immersed himself into the words that rose up at him from the newspaper.

...8 students and 1 teacher had fallen prey to the terrible gaze of the Basilisk...

...He found the entrance to Chamber of Secrets and went in...

...I didn't want to risk anyone else's life...

...Massacre at Hogwarts...

He had failed. Failed to protect his godson from all that would harm him.

Failed to save him from the nightmares of the world around him. Failed to give him a shoulder to lean on as he watched his friend die...

Failed...

Not anymore.

There were certain emotions that a Dementor could not suck away.

Disgust. Self Loathing. Hate. Yet those were all powerful emotions, and it was their power that had given Sirius Black something that he had not had in over eleven years.

Purpose.

With a mere thought, his magic rose up like a coiled beast springing up into action, infiltrating every inch of his body as he commanded his

Animagus transformation again. His bones cracked and shifted, his snout elongated, his backbone rearranged, and the rags that were his clothes slowly disappeared as long matted coat of black fur appeared all over his body.

Mere seconds later, where there was once a man, now once again stood the grim.

Later that night, when the nightguard returned from his round around the prison to take his newspaper before leaving for home, the cell was empty.

What do you think about Harry's idea of pushing blame onto Argus Filch? It has bad moral implications for Harry as he's pushing one innocent down the pit to help another. But on the other hand, that innocent is already under Voldemort's control. Any thoughts about the portrayal of the trial? And did you like the Sirius scene?

37. Book-II:Unknown We Fear

Chapter 17:

"Keep in mind that since yesterday we had to disperse pre-emptively, today's proceedings will be short and decisive. Both sides have prepared their arguments and will only get one chance to present their cases, after which we will disperse and re-gather tomorrow for the final verdict. With that understood, let today's proceedings begin," the Judge said, slamming his gavel down.

Dumbledore swept over to the center of the courtroom, his half-moon glasses glinting in the firelight. "The Defense would like to present first your Honor," he said, and Harry leaned forward, eagerly listening for how he was about to present their argument.

The last day had been difficult, and it had been hours of serious, occasionally tense, discussions between Dumbledore and Nicholas before

they had finally reached a conclusion that they would use the idea.

It took Harry some time to convince himself that he wouldn't be condemning the man. No one knew where Filch had gone, and if he was found, then they could easily hide him until such a time that Lisa's mind and magic had fully healed, and the truth could be known. They didn't have to condemn Filch. They just had to cast enough doubt in the minds of the voters.

Nicholas had called it, 'stalling for time'.

Harry wasn't quite sure he agreed with the assessment, but he was the one who had come up with the idea after all and even if didn't sit well with him, it was the best they had for now.

With a deep sigh, he turned to look at the company he had today.

Since today, he hadn't been required to stand witness, he had been told to sit up here in the visitor's gallery with Nicholas and Lisa's mum, Margaret Turpin, who were the only people allowed in due to the trial's restricted nature. The nature of Lisa's arrest had been mostly kept out of the public eye, and little had actually made it to the newspapers, which was quite surprising.

"I would like to ask for Auror Dawlish to take the stand once again."

Dumbledore's voice drew Harry's attention back to the center of the room, which looked much smaller from this bird's eye view he had from the Visitor's Gallery. But still, Dawlish's form was easily identifiable to his eyes as he made his way to the witness stand.

"Throughout the last weeks, the Auror force has been screening every inch of the Hogwarts castle, checking security enchantments, interviewing the staff, looking into records and reporting the findings to the DMLE. Am I correct?" Dumbledore asked pleasantly.

"You are," Dawlish replied tersely.

"And at what point did the DMLE realize that Argus Filch, the in-residence caretaker, was missing from the campus?"

The almost tangible blanket of curiosity solidified over the Wizengamot as members old and young watched keenly, wondering where this was going. Dawlish looked a bit taken aback at that question too, and took a moment before he replied, "We realized that he was missing about four days ago, and we confirmed it yesterday evening after our search finished."

The statement showed weakness, and Dumbledore wasted no time in moving in on that, "Have you not been in Hogwarts for weeks now? Why, in your opinion, did it take so long for the Auror force to realize that one of the staff was missing?"

"Well...you know," Dawlish squirmed uncomfortably, "He...he's one of them lot, isn't he? A squib. He can't do magic. We didn't really think to look for him until we stumbled across his office during one of our rounds."

"A squib?" he heard Lisa's mum mutter, almost as if she had never even imagined that Filch could have been born without magic. Mutterings and murmurings of a similar tone spread through the courtroom crowd.

Apparently, the old caretaker had managed to keep that particular secret closer to his chest than Harry had thought.

"I would like the Court to note that squibs, while unable to cast spells, remain perfectly able to use magical objects. The reason they cannot brew is that all potions require wand spellcasting at some step or the other. There is no such issue with magical artifacts. Mr. Filch has used Dark Arts Detectors many times, same as our Ministry security wizard does even today," Dumbledore's said, his voice cold, before turning back to Dawlish, "And do tell us what you found in the said office?"

"Bunch of detention records, loads of bits and bobs that he confiscated from students over the years, and loads of cat food," Dawlish answered warily.

"In those bits and bobs, would you say there were any...questionable artifacts?" Dumbledore pushed on.

Dawlish's eyes shifted to the shadows where Mulciber was standing, before he hesitantly replied, "Yes."

"Would you care to list them for us?"

"We...found two Hands of Glory, thirteen different cursed books, eight items of jewelry enchanted with dark curses of all kinds, and a Black Quill; also called Blood Quill."

A moment of silence followed, and Dumbledore let it hang, letting the statement sink into the minds of those listening.

"Thank you, Auror Dawlish," he finally said, and Dawlish promptly left the stand and went back to his seat.

"We have found the final piece of the puzzle," Dumbledore said gravely, "Argus Filch. Someone who has been resentful towards Hogwarts and its students for not having been born with the gift of magic. Someone who could move through the school with complete anonymity, free to use any of the dark artefacts he had confiscated from students throughout the decades. Someone with both the intent and the means to do harm."

Harry scanned the crowd. A lot of people were hanging onto Dumbledore's every word, and it was looking more and more promising by the second. He looked over to his guardian sitting beside him, intending on sharing a quick smile.

But Nicholas was intensely peering at the center of the room, his expression dead serious.

He'd noticed something.

"What happened?" Harry whispered to him, instantly on edge.

"Mulciber," Nicholas whispered back, "He is too calm."

Harry's head snapped towards where the Prosecutor was standing. Sure enough, the man was standing there with a small smug smile on his face, not at all phased by the Defense's seemingly effective statements.

"Observe," he cast, feeling slightly worried.

Markus Mulciber

(Relationship Meter: 0%)

Lv-52

HP-16500/16500

MP-8200/8200

Race-Wizard

Str-15

Vit-28

Dex-31

Int-43

Wis-25

Luc-19

Markus Mulciber is a wizard and a powerful member of Wizengamot. He practices traditionalistic politics, and advocates against muggleborns. He was one of the first Death Eaters ever, and is loyal to the pureblood society. He is a master spellcaster, and is fluent in dark arts. His son is currently in Azkaban.

He is feeling relaxed and confident in his future argument.

He thinks Harry could be a powerful force, but his feelings towards him lean towards antagonistic.

'But what!' Harry thought with frustration, 'what is his argument?!'

Shoving the window away, Harry focused on the center of the room once

again.

Dumbledore had carried on, "Using the available evidence, we can easily see what happened. Argus Filch, who had the habit of collecting dark magical artifacts as a means to feel closer to the gift he was never born with, encountered a dark artifact that he knew was so dangerous and harmful that he knew he could not keep. Fearful of consequences, yet not forgetful of his own resentment towards the school, he let the dark artifact slip into the hands of young Miss Turpin. Unknown to him, the dark artifact contained a dangerous spirit capable of possessing Miss Turpin, which explains her mental state and how she knew spells and potions that no one her age could, as well as how she spoke Parseltongue, despite not having a long wizarding ancestry."

Harry eyed the Prosecution advocate warily, Nicholas's observation sounding more and more worrying in his head. The previous day, the man hadn't allowed Dumbledore a moment of space, continuously attacking and keeping the pressure on them using any means he could, even momentarily risking his own expulsion.

So why was he so relaxed today?

"Possessed by that very spirit," the Professor continued, his voice echoing throughout the silent courtroom, "Miss Turpin was forced to do all these heinous things, made to live a nightmare that was never her fault in the first place. When Argus learned that his actions caused all this, he ran, letting the entire blame fall onto Miss Turpin's head. That is the full story."

The Wizengamot was still skittish, but in light of the complete picture that Dumbledore had just painted, there was no doubt that they were at least considering what he was saying. The few people he knew were solidly traditionalistic-leaning looked resolved, as if their votes had

already been decided, but the people he knew were neutral looked more on the fence than ever.

"It's working, isn't it? Mr. Potter? Isn't it?" he heard Lisa's mum ask hopefully from Nicholas's other side. Harry instinctively turned to reply, only to see his guardian already whispering at her and reassuring her. 'Of course,' he realized, mentally chiding himself for letting the essential little fact slip his mind. Nicholas was known to the public as Nick Potter after all.

Turning back to the court proceedings, Harry dared not feel more than half optimistic as he watched Dumbledore yield the floor to Mulciber. This had been their last chance to convince as many people as possible. Dumbledore had done good work, presenting their side well and clearly, and this entire argument, coupled with Dumbledore's influence over the more progressive side would give them a fairly decent chance to win. Only if the Prosecution didn't have anything big.

It was a pretty fucking big 'if'.

Mulciber swept into the center just as the Judge finished jotting down whatever he was writing on that roll of parchment on his desk and asked in his cold voice, "Is the Prosecution ready to present for the final time?" "It most certainly is," he replied calmly, before taking a step back and turning his head to look up at the entire Wizengamot surrounding him. "While the Defense spent the entirety of the last day trying to work out their next cock and bull theory to feed the honorable Court," Mulciber grandly said, "the Prosecution was spending time looking for the evidence against the obvious culprit here. And if her guilt wasn't plenty obvious by the fact that she is a Parseltongue-"

"Objection!" Dumbledore interrupted, and Harry knew why. Parseltongue was something that Mulciber was trying really hard to push, and letting

him do that wasn't a smart move at all. The Headmaster added, "Even if Miss Turpin was a natural Parseltongue, a lot of great wizards were Parseltongues long before Lord Voldemort came along and sullied their kinds' name. It is an ability they are born with, and it is not one's fault for being one."

"He shouldn't have done that," Harry suddenly heard from beside him over the panicky squeaks that rang around the Hall at the mention of Voldemort's name. Much to his surprise, Nicholas's tone was disapproving.

He was about to ask what he meant, but the question answered itself.

"Objection denied!" the Judge barked angrily, "Her Parseltongue abilities are relevant to the case. And please try to keep the sensibilities of the people in mind when you utter that name, Albus. Some of us have lost family to him."

Dumbledore stared Judge Barnes for a second before nodding.

Mulciber gave Dumbledore a dirty look before he cleared his throat, "As I was saying before I got interrupted, we have collected important evidence for the court in the form of a witness. However, the circumstances surrounding this witness are a bit...unusual. To further explain I would like to ask Healer Motwani of St Mungo's Hospital to take the stand."

The judge nodded his agreement, and a rather swell man in white robes made his way over to the witness stand.

"Healer Motwani," Mulciber said politely once the man had taken the stand, "Would you please explain the case of Mr. Borgin in its entirety to the court?"

"Of course. Marasmus Borgin was arrested and found guilty of buying and trading Class-A Non Tradable items back in October, and was sentenced

to six months of Azkaban," the man said as Mulciber handed what was presumably the court records of the man's conviction up to the Judge's bench, "Two weeks ago, he was found in a right state in his Azkaban cell, screaming with pain in his sleep as he tried to gouge his eyeballs out."

"And what happened next?" Mulciber asked worriedly, though Harry knew that the concern in his voice was for nothing but dramatic effect.

"Well, of course, good sir," Motwani said, inflating his already bulging chest, "He was knocked out and rushed right to St Mungo's. He almost died from the pain, but our people are the best around, and we managed to save him. He woke up a week ago and kept insisting that he wanted to talk to the Aurors and that a 'little girl' had Obliviated him.

"What did the staff at the Hospital do when he said that?" Mulciber asked, ignoring the hush that fell at the mention of the 'little girl'.

"Nothing at all of course," Motwani replied, "We thought the bloke had gone mad! It wasn't until we found out that Miss Turpin being prosecuted for all this that we thought to contact the authorities. He recognized her face from the paper you see. It was mighty suspicious. So we tested him for Obliviation, and sure enough, he was Obliviated!"

"Was?" Mulciber asked, laying the act on so thick that Harry was left wondering why the man hadn't run away to Hollywood and spared him all the headache. The Wizengamot crowd was eating it up though, and the significance of the word left them leaning in for more.

"Oh yes," the Healer replied with wide eyes, "Was. Turns out, the man had done some right strange stuff to his magic, which reacted badly with the Dementors' effect and put him under so much pain that the Obliviate on his mind just shattered."

The whole courtroom erupted in a loud buzz.

Harry was left shell-shocked before he immediately pulled up the

necessary window to confirm what had just happened.

Obliviate/Obliviatius Obscura Revealus

This spell is used to erase the memory of the subject. If the user has a mind arts level of 5 or above, he can rewrite a fake memory above that erased memory. Counter Obliviatius Obscura Revealus can remove the obliviation by causing an extreme amount of pain to the subject.

-80 MP per use

Extreme amount of pain.

That was the key. That was how Borgin's Obliviate broke.

There was no known way to counter the memory charm. The counterspell was something that wasn't known to the Wizarding World at wide. It was something that Harry knew exclusively. But what the Wizengamot had just witnessed was a Healer describing the first public reversal of the Memory Charm. Ever.

And it had happened by accident.

Mulciber swept over to the center of the floor and continued on, "Mr. Borgin made contact with the Prosecution yesterday, and we spent our time working out a deal. A lesser sentence in exchange for him agreeing to take Veritaserum and testify to the court about what happened to his shop and how his partner Caractacus Burke died. His testimony, I assure you honored Wizengamot members, is shocking."

Looking right at the Judge, he said, "The witness has agreed to take Veritaserum, and as such, no vote is necessary. Permission to bring forth the witness for a Veritaserum testimony your Honor?"

"Granted. Aide, call for the Court Administerer. Court Scribe, take note that the following testimony will be said under the willing influence of Veritaserum," Judge Barnes ordered, sending an aide running through the

side door.

It was a testament to how tense the entire room was that not a single sound was made in the time when the weak looking bearded middle-aged man was escorted by two burly Aurors into the room and to the witness stand. The hooded figure of the Veritaserum Administerer appeared soon after that, carrying a small vial of truth potion in his hand.

Borgin willingly showed his tongue as the Administerer dropped three drops onto it, before his shoulders slowly slumped. The Administerer peered at the man's face.

For a naive second, Harry dared hope that the serum wasn't going to work.

His hopes, however, were dashed when the hooded man looked up at the Judge and said, "It is done," before gliding swiftly into the sidelines. A victorious smile flashed across Mulciber's face before he quickly strode over to the witness stand and immediately started asking questions.

"What is your name?"

"Marasmus Borgin," was the flat reply.

"What is your relationship with Caractacus Burke?" Mulciber asked, getting into the actual questions.

"The man was my business partner. He founded Borgin and Burkes back in the 1800s and helped my father and then me run it till he passed away."

Mulciber nodded, plastic sympathy oozing out of his expression, "It was recorded that he died in the Knockturn Alley fire back in the summer.

But that isn't the truth is it?"

"No."

"Then how did your dear partner die, Marasmus? Tell the court everything."

And Borgin obeyed.

He spoke of how a hooded little girl came to the shop, asking for potion ingredients so Dark and illegal that they would make everyday wizards retch with disgust. Of how his partner told her to get out. To leave and never come back again.

He told them of the bone-chillingly cold voice of the girl as she haggled with him, and how Burke angrily grabbed the girl's arm. He described in vivid detail the nightmarish screams that followed from the man he had known his entire life, and how even those screams; that gave him the dubious relief of knowing that his partner was alive as he trembled behind the counter; were silenced with two simple words from that girl's mouth.

He spoke in the same flat voice of how he was forced to get her all she wanted, how his hands trembled as he handed everything to her before she wiped his mind and knocked him unconscious.

And how the next morning, all there was left was ashes.

There was only silence after Borgin finished talking.

Harry's mind was filled with all kinds of horror. Horror at what Lisa had been through, horror at the extents Voldemort could go to, horror at the fact that their defense was probably not going to stand up to this...

"And do you recognize that girl Marasmus?" Mulciber asked quietly.

"I do. It was the girl who is standing trial. It was Lisa Turpin."

Mulciber let that sentence hang in the air before he turned to the Judge, and quietly said, "Lisa Turpin is guilty. I, therefore, demand that she be brought to justice for all her crimes. The Prosecution rests the case, your Honor."

The Judge looked at the Prosecutor for a second, before turning to Dumbledore and asking, "Does the Defense have any questions for Mr.

Borgin?"

"It does."

"Go ahead then," the Judge approved.

Dumbledore swept forward towards the witness stand, immediately asking with an urgent tone in his voice, "At any point during those events, did you see Miss Turpin's eyes?"

"I did."

"And what color were they?" he asked. A wave of curious mutterings spread through the crowd.

"Red. Bright red."

Dumbledore turned to look up at the Wizengamot around him.

"Let it be noted that Miss Turpin's eyes are brown in color and that changing of the eye color into an unusual shade of color is the primary symptom of possession. This more than anything else proves that Miss Turpin was possessed. Do not let an innocent be punished for the crimes of the guilty. The Defence rests the case as well your Honor."

Silence hung in the courtroom as the Judge picked up his quill and noted down some more things on his parchment.

Harry turned to look at Nicholas, who was leaning back with a decidedly proud smile on his face. Harry didn't blame him for it. He was having trouble containing his joy himself.

Dumbledore, the bloody genius that he was, had gotten the last word in and managed to take one of the most devastating things the Prosecution had against them and turn it around to support their side.

The judge put his quill down and broke the silence, his cold voice echoing around the room.

"We have reached the end of today's proceedings. Both sides have presented their arguments for the final times, and both sides have rested

their case. I would like to ask the esteemed members of Wizengamot to take this day to put aside their emotions and consider the evidence in its entirety, as well as decide on their vote. Tomorrow's convening of the court will be final, and we will have a verdict and a decision by the end of it no matter what. I wish to make sure that this is perfectly clear."

He looked around at the people of Wizengamot, as if to hammer the point in, before he continued.

"You can collect a copy of the transcripts of the proceedings from the Court Scribe if you wish to peruse them. Remember to send in your votes by owl if you are unable to attend tomorrow. Please leave in an orderly fashion. Court dispersed!"

Ping!

Due to witnessing a trial to its completion, a skill has leveled up!

Politics Lv- 5 (2%)

This is your ability to maneuver in political situations by methods of persuasion, blackmail, guile, and manipulation. The higher the level, the more chance of success!

(Lv of Lying + Lv of Bullshitting)% chance of success, less based on how extreme the motive is.

Harry quickly waved that window away.

"THUNK!" sounded the gavel, and for all intents and purposes, it was over.

"So this is it?" Harry asked Nicholas as they stood and waited for the Wizengamot members to leave before they could head out of the courtroom.

"More or less. Wizengamot trials are almost always brief," Nicholas replied back in a hushed tone, "The one day break period before the voting is common for almost every criminal case. It is usually done as a

formality. The official reason is to give the voters the time to consider the evidence, but it's mostly used by families to network and bribe and test the waters with their allies and enemies to make sure their vote matches the interests of those who benefit them."

"Is there anything that could go wrong here?" Harry worriedly asked, trying to make sure that Lisa's mum, who was standing on Nicholas's other side, wouldn't hear what they were talking about.

"I doubt it," was the quiet reply, "We have most of the Neutral side convinced, especially since Albus managed to get the last word in with that witness. Other than that, he will be meeting with as many progressive aligned members he can to try and convince them to vote for us. With both the Progressives and the Neutrals in the bag, we should have no problems winning."

That was both good and slightly uncomfortable to hear.

It was just like Dumbledore had said. It wasn't about the law, but about convincing a group of people to side with you. But at the same time, it was uncomfortable to know that there was such an obvious level of bias and corruption in a court of law.

'Oh well,' Harry thought with a sigh. That was a quest for another day.

For now, he was just glad that this whole mess was almost over. It was time to head back home, kick loose, and harass Perenelle for some cake.

Ping!

Quest Alert!

Harass Perenelle for some cake.

Rewards,

Cake

Failure,

No cake

YES/NO?

Finally. A nice quest.

With a smile, Harry pressed yes and followed Nicholas and Lisa's mum as they followed the last Wizengamot member out of the courtroom and up the stairs, before heading up the Department of Mysteries hallway towards the elevator that had a massive crowd in front of it.

They joined the group of plum robed Wizengamot members in waiting for the next elevator, Harry trying to ignore the glances and looks towards him.

A thin plum robed witch with horn-rimmed glasses and greying hair pushed her way through the crowd over to where they were standing, before grabbing Lisa's mum in a tight hug.

"Oh Margaret," she said into the woman's shoulder, "Don't you worry darling. I'm sure little Lisa will be out and about in no time. Don't you worry."

"Thank you Esther," Lisa's mum replied gratefully, hugging back before they separated, "Do you need me to come in today?"

Esther nodded apologetically, holding onto her witch's hat lest it fall off, "You know how it is. Ever since the guard from Azkaban reported this morning that Sirius Black had escaped somehow, it has all been outright chaos. We need all hands on deck to keep those Prophet people from stealing all the documents from the archives."

Sirius Black.

The name had been splattered across the newspapers all morning, with headlines like 'Back in Black!' and 'Escape from Azkaban!' filling up the front page of the Prophet. Harry had heard the name mentioned a few times in the stories he had heard from people about his father, but he hadn't ever thought to look for the man.

"This is Nick Potter." Mrs. Turpin said, dragging Harry's attention back to the present as she introduced them to Esther, "And you know who the young man is."

"Of course I do," Esther said, shaking first Nicholas's then Harry's hand, "Esther McGoogly at your service, gents. I run the Ministry Archives and Library. Margaret here works under my supervision."

"Good to meet you ma'am," Harry said as he shook her hand.

"Likewise young man. Likewise," She said, before her eyes widened as a light bulb seemed to go off in her head, "You know what? You should come down to the Archives sometime. A lot of the pictures in your parent's house were taken by the DMLE as evidence after what happened all those years ago. Nobody's needing them anymore, so you might as well come take them. It's only right that you have them back."

Harry's eyes widened, but before he could do more than look at Nicholas, a loud clang and clank sounded, the elevator once again shuddered to place, and they were carried along with the crowd as they entered the cramped elevator. The grills closed in, and the elevator creaked threateningly, filled well past its safety limit as they headed down.

The next two minutes had to have been amongst the most unpleasant in Harry's entire life.

For the first minute, Harry cursed his stupidly short height as he was squashed in between three plump men from the back and both sides and had to stand with his face in another one's behind, frantically praying to whatever deity that existed that the man in front of him wouldn't develop sudden flatulence issues.

Halfway through the ride, the elevator stopped and quite a few people emptied out.

But before Harry could even take a breath of fresh air, a wizard holding a

large Crup by his side entered the elevator and decided that the spot in front of Harry would be a fantastic place to stand. Harry spent the next minute getting repeatedly smacked in the face by the Crup's wagging tail and glaring angrily at Nicholas as the old man sniggered away mercilessly from the corner he was standing in.

When he finally escaped the elevator out into the Atrium's open-air he propped his hands on his knees as he took deep heaving breaths, not giving a rat's arse about the people who stopped to stare amusedly at him.

Ping!

Due to going through the smacktastic elevator, take a pity point.

Take +1 to Vit!

"Are you alright Harry?" he heard Nicholas ask before he looked up to see him standing with a concerned looking Mrs. Turpin.

"No"

Nicholas turned to Mrs. Turpin, "He's alright. Why don't you go finish up your work and get some rest? Tomorrow will be a difficult day."

Mrs. Turpin nodded, before turning to Harry with a grateful smile,

"Thank you for believing in my Lisa Harry. You and Nick both. Your..."

She looked to Nicholas wonderingly. Harry picking up on it, shot

Nicholas a glare and promptly replied, "I call him Grandpa Nefario."

She gave a chuckle, before continuing, "Your...guardian really helped me get through this yesterday's trial, and you helped Professor Dumbledore defend Lisa. No matter what happens tomorrow, I'm grateful."

She bent down and pulled him into a hug. Harry, not knowing what to do, awkwardly patted her back, trying to keep himself from saying 'there-there' out loud.

"Oh, and just like Esther said," she said after she pulled back, "You can

come along down to the archives anytime you want and take those pictures back. For now, you'll have to excuse me though. I have to go."

And with that, she left, hurriedly walking away as she dissolved into the hustling and bustling crowd.

"Grandpa Nefario? Really Harry?" Nicholas asked from beside him.

"You are a really old man who has a secret identity and collects porn magazines as a hobby. It fits."

"...They aren't always porn."

"Yes, they are," Harry corrected before he turned and looked up at Nicholas, who was standing with his hands folded behind his back, "Can I go down to the archives and get those photos of my parents?"

Nicholas looked at him weirdly for a second, before he pulled out his wand and tapped his head, casting what knew to be a small disguise onto him to hide his scar.

"Just remember to Floo back soon. Molly Weasley has invited us over for dinner," he said, and upon getting a nod back, turned and headed out towards the Floos outside the Atrium, leaving Harry to his own devices.

Harry watched him go for a second before he made a beeline to the small door towards the side with 'Stairs' marked on it.

Fuck the elevators.

Contrary to the last time he had been here, the stairwell up to Level Three actually had people in it. A man was using a brush and a bucket of Sticky Stickler's Sticky Superglue to plaster posters onto the walls.

'HAVE YOU SEEN THIS MAN!' blared the large headline, with warnings like 'APPROACH WITH EXTREME CAUTION' and 'DO NOT ATTEMPT TO ENGAGE THIS MAN' written in bold underneath it, followed by notes written in smaller font like 'Any information shall be duly rewarded' and 'Notify Ministry of Magic immediately'.

Harry made his way up the stairwell to where the worker was pasting the poster, he paused to look at the man's face in the photo, peering at the shadowed eyes. The man had beyond the pale skin and looked more like a rabid animal than anything else in the photo with his matted hair and filthy clothes.

This, according to the morning's newspaper, was the man that was rumored to be Voldemort's right-hand man and had murdered thirteen people with a single curse, and this was the man who had gone to school with his father.

What had happened? How had someone his father used to be friends with ended up like this?

Pushing those thoughts out of his mind, Harry headed up the stairs to Level Three, where the Library and archives were located. Pushing open the stairwell door, Harry let himself into the floor before entering the library doors.

In the librarian's desk sat the familiar Esther McGoogly, whose face lit up as soon as she saw Harry enter. Apparently, Nicholas's simple disguise didn't fool the aging lady.

"Harry!" she said as she waved him over, "Come to take the photographs have you?"

"If it's alright with you ma'am,"

"Of course, of course," She said, waving away his concerns, "Just head over into the archives section will you? Everything is ordered by date in there, and you'll have no trouble finding the files yourself. I'm afraid you're going to have to show yourself around lad. I can't really spare anyone right now."

"That's no problem at all. I'll find my way," Harry assured her and headed into the archives section.

The archives sections were split into five wall-sized shelves, with all the cases arranged chronologically. Something that was recent could be found in the first shelf, but something from a long time past like Harry's case would be placed in one of the other four shelves depending on how much time had passed since the case's closing.

Harry made his way straight to the third shelf, which had a sign with '1980-1990' on top of it.

There were a couple of Aurors in there, looking through case files. Harry weaved his way through them, trying to remain quiet and unnoticed as he headed to the back part of the shelf.

The 1991 section was the thickest section in the entire shelf, probably due to all the trials that had happened after the first Wizarding War. But Harry had no trouble at all finding the file he was looking for. There it was, in a red cover contrary to the plain ones that contained the other files, making it fairly easy to pick out.

When he reached to pull it out, Harry was surprised to see that his hands were trembling a bit. He had heard stories of his parent's life before...he had used them to meticulously handcraft this perfect little image of them in his head as they were in life. Seeking memories of his parents that he never really had.

But this...this was real. This was their death. Something Harry always tried to avoid thinking about.

Trying to keep the apprehensive feeling out of his gut, Harry pulled out the file, and with still trembling hands, opened the cover.

Thankfully, the first thing wasn't a picture of his parents' bodies as he had feared it would be. Instead, what greeted him was a small stack of about six pictures, all of which were of him and his parents. There was one of them standing proudly, holding something that looked like a deflated

football in their hands.

It took Harry a second to realize that the deflated football was actually an infant him.

The next three were of him with his mum, with him looking a bit bigger and plumper each time. The one after that was of him on his dad's shoulders, and the last one was a magical picture of him riding a toy broom at full speed right into his dad's gut. The cameraman, presumably his mum, had managed to catch the exact moment he had made an impact, and the comedically scrunched up expression on his dad's face was caught in all his glory.

Harry picked up the photographs and stuffed them into his pocket before he looked back to the file and hesitated. He'd found the pictures he had been looking for. He could just close the file and leave now. There was no reason to bring back bad memories. No reason to look further in.

And yet, as much as he wished to forever live in the beautiful lie of an illusion he'd crafted of his parents' lives, their death was the painful truth. So he turned the page, and there they were. On one side was a picture of his dad, slumped lifelessly against a drawer, and on the other was his mum. She looked more peaceful, her red hair flaring gently around her almost as if she was lost in a gentle sleep, just waiting to be shaken awake.

Neither of the pictures moved.

Harry turned the page over, not wanting to look at the pictures anymore. Whereas the thoughts and memories of his parents' lives kept him warm every single day, he found no comfort in death.

The next three pages contained a short statement from the Wizengamot and lots of cut-out articles whose headlines triumphantly declared Voldemort's vanquish, each presenting their own slightly different

version of what had gone on in that fateful night. One article that smelt more like propaganda than anything else spoke of how Harry, born with true magic's blessing, was able to reject Voldemort's spells. Another one spoke of how Lily Potter dabbled in dark magic, using fire to fight fire. As the dates on the articles grew, the tabloids eventually reached the same conclusion about Harry somehow reflecting the Killing Curse.

The very last page contained three handwritten notes.

The first one was about Harry.

Harry James Potter has been placed with his closest blood relatives as per the Wilkinson's Custodian Act of 1674.

The second one was, much to his surprise, the Department of Mysteries.

Investigation by the Dept. of Mysteries into the reasons behind the survival of Harry Potter have been put to a stop by executive orders from the Ministry seconded by a Wizengamot vote.

But the third one was the most unsettling one.

RELATED TRIAL: Sirius Black and Peter Pettigrew were known to be close family friends to the Potters, and his case is related heavily to this one.

Trainee Aurors studying this case are recommended to look for Protected File #C34 and peruse it to gain a more complete picture of the story.

Harry closed the file with an uncomfortable feeling between anger and morbid curiosity. So Sirius Black had remained friends with his father after Hogwarts, but had betrayed them and turned for the other side?

There had to be more to this. What had happened?

Putting the file back into its place in the shelf, Harry scoured the section of the shelf, looking through as many case files as he could in his search for anything that had C34 written on it. It was a few minutes before he found it in the bottommost section of the shelf, a thin little file lodged behind a fat file on a case about whether wearing underwear beneath

your robes should be compulsory or not.

Deciding to not look into that particular case, Harry reached out to pull out the C34 file, only to have his hand bounce off.

'That must be what it means by it being a Protected File. It's warded,'

Harry realized, before immediately activating Runic Burnout.

Runic Burnout Lv-6 (21%)

A precise sucking of magic from a ward by using it to refill one's own core. It starts causing damage to HP when magic continues to be sucked after the MP is full. A common way to get around it is to use up mana as fast as it comes in.

Do you wish to use it on: Advanced Locking Ward?

YES/NO

Harry burned a small flame in his hand to keep the mana flowing and pressed yes. A small burst of mana washed his senses, and Harry knew that the ward was gone.

He quickly pulled the file open and started looking at what was in there.

The first page was a yellow page with a warning on it.

WARNING!

This file is marked as restricted by the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. If you are a civilian and have encountered this file, please return it to the nearest Ministry official immediately.

Harry didn't even think before turning the page, and thus was completely caught off guard by a large picture of a finger with a bloody stump on the next page.

File #C34 was very lucky that Harry hadn't eaten a large breakfast that morning.

Quickly turning the picture away, Harry read through the DMLE report on the next page.

DMLE REPORT: FINAL

Sirius Black was arrested on 1 November 1981 after he was found laughing madly surrounded by 12 dead muggles and 1 dead wizard named Peter Pettigrew. What follows is the clearest possible recounting of the events leading up to that.

James and Lily Potter were hiding from You-Know-Who using a powerful concealment charm called the Fidelius. The Potters chose Sirius Black, a close friend, as their Secret-keeper. Barely a week later, he betrayed the Secret to You-Know-Who.

It is speculated that Black was tired of his double-agent role, and was ready to declare his open support for You-Know-Who. However, due to infant Harry Potter mysteriously vanquishing his master, Black was left with no choice but to run.

Witness Rubeus Hagrid placed Black on the scene of the Potter Incident, where Black attempted to take the infant Potter from him. Having failed in his attempt to do so, Black ditched his flying motorbike, presumably because it was too easy to trace, and escaped.

Peter Pettigrew, another close friend of the Potters went after Black himself out of rage. Muggle eyewitnesses tell of how the man confronted Black, throwing angry accusations at him. Witnesses say that he went for his wand, but was too slow. He was blown to smithereens, leaving behind a giant crater and twelve dead muggles as casualties.

The next page was just a bunch of articles, and that was the end of the file.

And even as a fiery burst of hatred flowed through Harry, tinting his vision red, he had noticed that something was off.

Inside every single one of the files he had looked through in his search for #C34, there was always a Wizengamot document of some sort. Either

it was a short statement about the result of the hearing, or it was a long transcript of the trial that was held, but there was always, without fail, a document that talked about the Trial.

File #C34 had none.

Ping!

For making an accurate Observation, take +1 to Int!

And so, Harry was left with a feeling of unrest, knowing that something was off, but not knowing quite what.

Putting the file back into the spot where he had pulled it out from, he patted his pocket to make sure he still had the photos he was supposed to take before heading out of the shelves and towards the Librarian's desk, where Esther McGoogly still sat, peering through her horn-rimmed glasses at a piece of parchment.

"Found your way alright Harry?" she asked, seeing Harry approach, "You were in there for a while."

"I did ma'am. Thank you," Harry said, before pulling out the half dozen pictures he had taken and handing them to her, "I took these ones from the file."

Madam McGoogly took the pictures, pulled out a large binder before she opened it and scribbled something down into it. She looked through the photographs as she made notes in the binder, chuckling fondly at the photo of Harry driving his broom into his father before handing the set back to Harry.

"Thank you ma'am," He said, just as the Library door opened behind him and someone walked in, accompanied with the sound of boots clip-clopping loudly. Harry looked to see who it was and frowned.

It was the Lord Wentworth Wright chap whom he had encountered at the Malfoy Ball and had seen sitting in the shadows in Wizengamot.

"I'll be in the archives Esther," the man said, not even looking at the Librarian as he headed in towards the archives. Harry was pretty sure the man hadn't even noticed him.

Remembering how he was curious about why the man looked so familiar back when he had first encountered him, Harry quickly cast an Observe at the man's vanishing back. And this time, the Observe did show relevant information.

Wentworth Wright

(Relationship Meter: 0%)

Lv-53

HP-15000/15000

MP-8800/8800

Race-Wizard

Str-20

Vit-21

Dex-34

Int-41

Wis-33

Luc-8

Wentworth Wright is a wizard and a powerful member of Wizengamot. He practices traditionalistic leaning politics. He believed his son Johnathon to be dead, only to find out recently that he'd been turned into a werewolf. He has a dead grandson, who he recently learned about, and has made it his life's purpose to bring who he believes to be her killer to justice.

He is feeling worried and troubled about tomorrow's trial result.

He thinks Harry is a growing power but is resentful of him because Harry is coming in the way of him using his political power to

convict the killer of his grandson.

The realization of what he was looking at hit Harry like a slap in the face, and he was left frozen with shock.

"Harry?" Madam McGoogly asked worriedly, having noticed Harry freeze up, "Are you alright?"

Hearing that broke Harry out of his daze. He quickly assured her that he was alright, and promptly left the library, still reeling from shock.

Harry had immediately returned back home after that, and it had taken him the entire afternoon to fully comprehend the information that Observe had given him.

Not only had he found the pureblood Lord who was Dean's grandfather and the father of the man he had accidentally killed all that time ago, but was also the man who was influencing the trial from the shadows to streamline it against Lisa.

There was a nightmare worth of stuff in just that one statement that set Harry on the fence.

Regardless, Harry had immediately sent off a short note to Dumbledore using the Flamel's owl, seeing as Hedwig still had a couple of days before she'd be back to travel worthy.

Professor,

Dean once mentioned to me that his father's name was Johnathon Wright and that he was a pureblood from an old family. Today at the Ministry, I saw a Wizengamot member whose name was Wentworth Wright. It might be a coincidence, but I thought best to let you know in case it was relevant.

Harry Potter

The owl must have caught Dumbledore before he had left the Ministry because his replying letter came within the hour.

Dear Harry,

Thank you for letting me know. That is indeed vital information, and I am taking appropriate steps to counter it.

Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore

Harry felt slightly better after that reply, having made sure that his own moral dilemmas wouldn't in any way be screwing with Lisa's chances of getting out of that mess of a trial.

With that particular load off his chest and the evening fast approaching, he had gotten ready and headed out with Nicholas and Perenelle for dinner at the Burrow.

The dinner was something Mrs. Weasley had organized because she wanted to celebrate Hermione finally getting out of the hospital. The entire Weasley family; except for Charlie and Bill; were all there, along with all of the Grangers and now all the Potters.

They had all gathered up nice and cozy around the dining table, Perenelle and Nicholas fitting in surprisingly well with a group that was young enough to be their great-grandkids and great-great-grandkids.

They talked about this and that, and every time the topic strayed into any uncomfortable territory, the Weasley twins either pulled out some new nifty toy or acted all goofy, diffusing the tension. Ron was feeling more like his usual self, scarfing down his chunk of the huge meat pie Mrs.

Weasley had cooked up so fast that Harry was afraid he'd barf, Hermione was cracking smiles left and right as she admonished Ron, and even Ginny had come out of her shell a bit as she joked around with Fred and George.

It was like a little happy bubble that Harry found himself in, insulated from all the bad things that had been happening. He did his best to enjoy it as much as he could.

After the dinner wrapped up, Hermione and Mrs. Granger found

themselves in a conversation with Perenelle about how medicine differed in the magical and muggle worlds with Mrs. Weasley joining in for good measure, Fred and George decided to pick on Percy, Ron headed off to the bathroom to take a much-needed dump, and Harry was left with Mr. Weasley and Nicholas.

"So you are telling me that everything is made up of infinitely tiny little balls and that Muggles managed to break up those little balls into even tinier little balls? Unbelievable!" Mr. Weasley disbelievingly exclaimed.

"To put it very basically, yes," Nicholas replied with a sigh as he rubbed his temple.

Deciding to drop the subject of how batteries worked, no doubt due to Nicholas's overly complicated explanations involving theories about gaseous state and molecular composition, Mr. Weasley changed the topic of conversation, "I heard from people around the DMLE that the trial got a bit heated today."

"It did, but I think that the good Professor managed to save us quite well. There were a few rough moments here and there..."

Harry sighed. A discussion on the proceedings of today's trial was coming, and he wanted no part of it.

"I'll just be outside in the yard if that's alright Mr. Weasley."

Getting a nod, Harry headed around the kitchen and out of the back door, stepping out into the moonlit yard which opened up into the massive orchard behind the Burrow.

Closing the door behind him, Harry stepped down to sit on the steps.

The thoughts that he had been suppressing all evening started to rise up in him, seemingly unaffected by Gamer's Mind as they mocked and chided him.

'...All those families lost people because of your decision...'

'...Lisa is suffering in a Ministry cell, cold and alone, what right do you have to make merry...'

'...Forgotten about your dead friend already have you...'

"Wheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee"

A shrill and distant noise suddenly rang out, snapping Harry right out of his thoughts.

His eyes snapped to where the sound had come from, watching with wide eyes as the silhouette of a girl wearing an abnormally tall witch's hat riding a broom flashed across the moon.

The back door of the Burrow slammed open behind him, and Ginny's voice rang out loud and clear, "MUM! Floo call Mr. Lovegood! Luna stole his broom! Again!"

Harry looked over his shoulder. Ginny, who had been the one to open the door, hadn't noticed him yet. She turned around, looked up at what was apparently the flying Luna with a tired smile, looked down, saw him, and promptly decided to vocally impersonate a dying rat.

Before she could run away, or worse, squeak, even more, Harry decided to speak up, "Is that actually Luna Lovegood?"

The focus of replying to a question was apparently enough to snap Ginny partly out of whatever tizzy she went into every time she saw Harry.

"Y-yes," she replied, "Sh-she lives nearby, and does that sometimes."

"Fly around squealing in the dead of night with a really large hat on?"

Harry asked, unable to keep some of his incredulity from slipping into his voice.

"She's just a bit different," Ginny said, her stutter vanishing as her tone became defensive.

"I didn't mean anything by that," Harry said, backtracking, "I know she's...different is indeed the word I suppose. I've met her after all. I was

just asking if she does this often."

The redhead weighed his words carefully, before she hesitantly nodded, "Her dad keeps forgetting to lock their broom cupboard, and she likes to fly at night, so..."

"Hellooooooooooooo Mr. Toooooaaadingeeer" came the distant voice, this time clearly distinguishable as Luna's as her flying silhouette did a large loop in the sky, her witch's hat almost falling off. Harry's mouth fell open, and his left eye decided that it needed a good twitch.

"What is she saying?" Ginny muttered incredulously.

"No idea. None. Absolutely none."

She looked at him strangely for a second, probably wondering why he had suddenly developed sweat, before asking, "Are you alright? Why are you sitting out here?"

Harry looked at her, and for a fleeting moment debated telling her about all that plagued his mind. Of all the secrets and dilemmas he was dealing with. To let her know that the Harry Potter she idolized never made it to Hogwarts. That he wasn't someone who deserved to be looked up to.

The moment was fleeting though, and he wasn't so much of a crybaby that he would spill his guts to an eleven-year-old girl who was prone to having fits whenever she saw him, so he instead replied with something that was half true, "I'm fine. I was just worried about the trial results tomorrow. Thinking about if I could've done anything more to help Lisa."

Ginny considered him for a second, before asking, "You did your best didn't you?"

He nodded.

"Then you have nothing to feel bad about. That's what Mum always says."

She smiled at him, her face flushing red as a tomato as Harry smiled back before she quickly stepped back into the house and closed the door

behind her.

Harry sat there for a few more seconds, oddly enough feeling like Ginny had answered more questions than she knew she had.

He had done his best. And maybe sometimes it was just that simple.

He looked at his hands.

Almost without even a single thought, his magic started to pool at his fingertips, flowing fluidly through his body to the spot Harry commanded it to go. The tips of his fingers started glowing brightly from the inside, the light pulsating rhythmically with the beat of his pulse. Closing his hands into a fist so that his fingertips brimming with mana were touching his palms, Harry muttered under his breath, "Healing Touch."

And just like that, the mana left his fingertips and shot through his arms, leaving a pleasant tingle wherever his cuts were, before spreading through his back and doing the same with the injuries he had there.

In front of his eyes, his scars slowly faded away, and the few cuts that still had scabs fully healed over, leaving unblemished skin behind.

Harry looked up at the moon that shone brightly down upon the entire orchard and the dubiously sane girl that was flying around above the orchard doing stupidly dangerous aerial maneuvers.

It was a beautiful night.

"Are you sure about this," the woman asked as she aimed her wand at the man kneeling on the floor of their bedroom.

"I am."

"Is this even necessary?" the woman's voice was concerned.

"You know it is," the man snapped back, "The Dark memory spell I cast on myself broke weeks ago when I saw the girl in person. That was the trigger I'd set for it breaking, and it worked seamlessly as usual. But there are still fragments missing. A thought here, a chunk there that's just out

of my reach. I know I have been Obliviated."

"And this is your way of getting those memories back? Torturing yourself?"

"I know what the Healer said in the court. Pain was what broke the seal on Borgin's memories. It is what will break the one on mine."

"And if it doesn't?"

A smirk split the man's face, but it held no mirth, "It is not as if pain is a stranger to me. It's just a long lost friend."

"If you say so," she said hesitantly, "Crucio!"

Hoarse screams rang out across the Malfoy Manor. A few bedrooms away, shielded from the sounds of the world around him by muffling charms, Draco Malfoy slept on peacefully.

This chapter was 10,000 words long and took ages to edit. Be nice to my sore fingers and leave a review, will ya? Tell me what you thought of Harry discovering that something is wrong with Sirius's case? I'd like to think I did better than many fics do when they just say that Harry discovered he didn't have a trial from the goblins and then started trusting this stranger completely. Bit more detailed, I'd say. Furthermore, Malfoy fucking wised up to Harry's Obliviation as soon as he heard about Burke's Obliviation being broken. So he's back to being a dangerous player on the field. Lemme know what you thought of all that.

38. Book-II:A Strange Day

Chapter 18:

The next morning was slightly more relaxed in the Flamel apartment. Nicholas and Perenelle were idly taking bites out of their toasts as they conversed with Mr. Fortescue, who lived a mere two doors away from their apartment and had come over for breakfast.

Harry, on the other hand, was lost in his own thoughts.

Late last night, Harry had decided not to tell Nicholas and Perenelle about Wright and his interference. It didn't seem right, but he needed to talk to the man before he told anyone else about him. It was a man whose son was dead because of him, and whose grandson was one of his best friends. He couldn't just ignore him. He owed him the truth about who killed Dean, whether he could convince him of Lisa's innocence or not.

Ping!

Quest Alert!

Talk to Wentworth Wright and convince him of Lisa's innocence!

Rewards,

5,000 Exp

2 stat points

Failure,

Lisa's conviction

YES/NO?

Harry pressed yes. Besides, Dumbledore had said he would be able to handle Wright.

"Oh! Nick! Did I tell you about Sir Knucklehead Fudducker McSpazzatron?"

Mr. Fortescue's voice snapped Harry out of his thoughts and into the present, leaving him with a very odd set of questions in his mind.

Firstly, who was Sir Knucklehead Fudducker McSpazzatron?

Secondly, why did his parents hate him so much?

Thirdly, was there anything that could be done to save the poor chap from a lifetime of shame and ridicule?

In pursuit of answers to these questions, Harry decided that starting to

pay attention to the conversation at the table would probably be the right thing to do.

"No you didn't Florean," Nicholas said politely, though it was plenty obvious by the twitch in his jaw that his thoughts weren't too far away from Harry's, "Who is that?"

Mr. Fortescue though, took no notice of that and jovially started his story, "Oh you have to hear it. Last night, after I had closed up the Parlor and locked up the doors. I was about to apparate home, but suddenly, I hear a whining noise behind me. I turn around, look for the sound, and find that it's coming from a small alleyway beside the Parlor. The first thought in my mind was that some hag had found its way out of Knockturn and into Diagon. So I pull out my wand and headed in. But there weren't any hags in there. Instead what I found was a giant heap of fur."

"Just fur?" Nicholas asked, leaning in curiously.

"Erm...It was a dog actually. A big black one."

"A dog with a heap of fur? Was it guarding it?"

"The dog was the heap of fur,"

"That makes more sense. So what did you do after that?"

Mr. Fortescue looked at Nicholas weirdly, before replying, "Well...at first, I thought it was a Grim, and it scared the pants off of me, but when I looked closer, I realized it was just a dog freezing out in the January cold. Poor thing looked like death. Had its ribs sticking out, snow all over his matted fur, shivering like no tomorrow."

"Frostbite, malnourishment, fleas, possible heartworms," Perenelle muttered concernedly, "It sounds really bad. What did you do Florean?"

"Brought him home of course!" Mr. Fortescue exclaimed, "He looked like a grown-up version of the pup I used to have back when I was a kid,

Seargent Barkowitz. I couldn't leave him out there to die. So I brought him home, warmed and fed him up, pulled out those Pet-medicine books out of storage and treated his fleas and heartworm, and even got him to sleep a bit."

"And he didn't bite you or anything?" Nicholas asked incredulously.

"Not at all. He was really well mannered. Did his business in the right place, didn't make a mess at all, did what he was told to. I reckon he might have been house trained before but his owner abandoned him or something."

"Is he still with you?" Perenelle asked.

"Oh yes. He was sleeping when I came over," Mr. Fortescue said, before using his napkin to wipe his mouth and stand up, "Speaking of which, I should probably head back. He must be awake now."

And with that, Mr. Fortescue shook Nicholas's and Perenelle's hands, picked up his hat from the table, and headed out.

Harry looked at the clock on the wall. It was almost eleven now, and if he wanted to find and talk to Wright before the Trial, then he'd have to leave now. Turning to Nicholas, he asked, "Is it alright if I head on to the Ministry straight from there?"

"Ministry?" Nicholas asked with a frown, "The Vote is happening at noon Harry. Why do you want to go now?"

"I..." Harry hesitated, before thinking up a simple enough lie, "I wanted to go down to the Archives again to look at my parents' files again."

Ping!

Lie Successful!

Nicholas's face softened, and he nodded, "Alright. If you get lost or need help with something just ask anyone wearing a uniform. They'll help you. I will see you directly at the Trial."

"Thank you," Harry said, before quickly finishing up his toast, getting up, and heading upstairs to his room.

"Hedwig," he said as he closed the door behind him and turned to look at the phoenix perched on the golden perch, "I'll be gone to the Ministry for a while today. Maybe even till the evening. Will you need anything?"

Hedwig had started to recover from her Burning Day blues and started using the perch again, which was quite nice to see. Her feathers had almost fully grown back, except for the tiny patches on her wingtips and around her neck, and she was almost back to full size again.

"Are you going to talk to that Wright person?" echoed Hedwig's voice in his mind.

"I am," he replied.

There was a moment's silence in which Harry opened his wardrobe and pulled out a robe and his old wizard's hat which had developed a rather droopy brim. The robe he put on, and the hat he stuffed into his inventory in case he needed to stay a bit inconspicuous in a crowded area.

"Can I come?"

Harry raised an eyebrow. Hedwig hadn't wanted to go out four days now.

This was an unusual surprise, but not an unwelcome one, "Are you sure?"

"I don't want you to be alone today," she said concernedly.

Harry smiled at her, "I'm the one supposed to be taking care of you Hedwig, not the other way around."

"You're an idiot if you still think that with the amount of trouble you get into Harry," she said, her tone mocking.

"Shut up," Harry tossed back, before pulling the rim of his pocket open.

Hedwig spread her wings and lifted off of her perch into the air, before diving straight into to Harry's robe pocket.

It was a good thing that Perenelle had lined all of his robe pockets with Undetectable Expansion Charms and the One-Way-Transparency charm that he had created back in his first year. Hedwig could easily fit in there as well as see clearly out of the pocket. Combining that with the fact that Hedwig could now talk to him mentally made the entire thing all the better.

As ready as he could be, Harry jogged off downstairs, said goodbye to his still eating guardians, and headed out of the apartment.

On the way to the tiny room off the corridor that contained the Floo, the only sound that Harry heard was the occasional loud bark, presumably from Mr. Fortescue's new pet Sir Knucklehead Fudducker McSpazzatron which, upon second thought, wasn't that bad of a name.

For a dog.

Ducking into the Floo room, Harry handed the man in green robes a sickle, collected the Floo powder, and stepped into the fireplace.

"Ministry of Magic!"

Barely a second of him and Hedwig passing through a blizzard of flitting lights later, he stepped out of one of the Ministry fireplaces just off the Atrium. Quickly pulling out the hat from his inventory and stuffing it onto his head in an effort to stay inconspicuous, Harry made a beeline for the Atrium. The wizard at the security desk was absent, which was why Harry simply jogged through the crowd towards the small door off to the side that led to the stairs.

The way up to Level Two, where all the Wizengamot offices were located, was thankfully empty, with the only people that Harry passed being a pair of peach robed witches, one of whom was complaining to the other about the Invisibility Task Force strike.

Harry briskly walked on and slipped into the Level Two doorway.

Turning left, he headed into the massive corridor lined with doors that each led to a Wizengamot member's office whose name was engraved on the door. Dozens of purple paper airplanes that Harry knew to be Interdepartmental memos followed the same corridor as Harry, and as soon as they reached their destination doors, they unfolded themselves into flat paper and slipped under the gaps beneath.

It took him a while to find the office he was looking for, especially since it was quite far into the corridor.

Wentworth Alan Wright, Member of Wizengamot

Harry took a deep breath. The chances of this going well were incredibly slim, which was why he needed to be prepared for anything and everything.

"Are you alright? Do you still want to do this?" he heard Hedwig ask worriedly in his mind.

"I am," he said quietly in reply to both of her questions. He then took a deep breath, and steeling himself, knocked on the door three times.

"Come in."

Harry pushed the door open and stepped in before closing it behind. The room was spacious but sparse, with no decorations on the walls other than the fireplace, a bookshelf, torches for the light, and a single portrait of a middle-aged woman behind the big desk at the center of the room where Lord Wright sat.

"Mr. Potter. Can I help you?" Wright asked with a frown as he put down his quill.

There was no point in beating around the bush and Harry knew it, "Lord Wright. I...I wanted to talk to you about Dean."

If Harry would've blinked he would have missed the widening of the elderly man's eyes before he instantaneously schooled a politely curious

expression back into place. "Isn't that the young man who was killed in the Chamber? I remember hearing he was your friend. I'm sorry for your loss. What can I do for you?"

Harry wasn't going to let him make this more difficult, "Please Lord Wright. I don't want to...I know he is your grandson."

Wright's face instantly lost expression, freezing into a stony gaze. The click of the office door's lock sliding into place sounded behind Harry.

"Do you? And however did you reach that conclusion?" Wright flatly asked, standing up from his seat and walking around the desk to lean against the front of it.

There was no other choice now than shouldering on, "Dean showed me the letters he got from your son. He told me about his father. His name was Johnathon Armin Wright. I looked up your son's name from the Ministry Archives. The connection was obvious,"

"And what is it that you want from me?"

Harry took a deep breath, before saying what needed to be said, "I know you've been trying to get Lisa convicted, and I wanted you to know that she is innocent."

The silence that followed hung in the air thick as butter.

"You know a lot more than you should Mr. Potter. And even further more than you understand," Wright finally said.

"I understand wanting revenge from your family's death," Harry replied,

"I understand the anger. I understand the desperate need to get it out of you."

"You're twelve."

"I'm also someone who has lost his entire family, and now a friend,"

Harry's voice rose as he retorted, "I understand more than you think."

"I lost my son a decade ago," Wright spat at him, his mouth twisting with

contempt. Harry had finally got through to him, "I had to watch my wife waste away in her grief. After spending an entire decade trying to fill my wounds, I had to tear open those scars again and find out that not only had my son been living life as a degenerate beast, but had died before I could find him again. And the messenger that came bearing that news was nothing other than my grandson's death. A grandson who I had never even known existed. Do you understand that Mr. Potter? Do you understand the pain of having your entire world ripped to shreds around you, and then after painstakingly stitching a pathetic substitute for it back together, have it ripped apart yet again? Because if you do then you understand my actions perfectly."

Harry stared at the man, guilt and sympathy blending together into an uneasy feeling in his gut. It was a moment before he quietly replied, "Maybe I don't. I never really knew parents after all. But that doesn't change the fact that Lisa is innocent."

Wright sighed, his agitation slowly giving way to plain weariness.

"Mr. Potter. If you are going to spew that same nonsense about possession that Dumbledore is trying to feed the Wizengamot then you can save yourself the effort. That is a desperate effort by a desperate teacher who is too attached to his student to realize when that student has done something horrible, and I am in no way interested in it."

"Not even if I told you that Voldemort was involved?"

Wright froze. Harry knew he had his attention, "It was him. He was the one who possessed Lisa. He was the one who wanted to get a body back. That was what the potion was for."

"That is one hell of a far-fetched story Potter," Wright said unbelievably, although his wide eyes and unflinching attention said otherwise.

Somehow, Wright had already suspected something similar to what Harry

was telling him.

"It's the truth," Harry said, pushing on, "Lucius Malfoy wanted to dispose of a dark artifact in his possession. A diary that held a memory...the spirit of Lord Voldemort. Somehow, he managed to slip the artifact to Lisa Turpin, who wrote in the diary, unknowingly feeding her magic to the spirit inside until it grew strong enough to possess her. He made her do all those horrible things. Throughout the entirety of this school year, he made her brew a potion to get his body back, using the petrifications to get Dumbledore out of the school. And on the day of the Incident, he took her into the Chamber to use that potion. Dean managed to follow her in, and foiled his plan of using the potion."

Harry took another deep breath before continuing, "I came here today because I thought you deserved the truth about who killed Dean, and this is it. Whether you believe it or not is up to you."

Harry turned around, intending to leave.

He hadn't been sure coming into this office what the real purpose of this was. Dumbledore had countered Wright's influence and combined with the previous day's court proceedings, it was almost a sure thing that they were going to win. There was no need to convince Wright to change his mind. And yet something told him that he needed to do this. And now he had. He'd reached the door and was debating whether or not to blow the lock up when Wright's voice came.

"And how do you know all this?"

He turned around, facing Wright again. There was palpable uncertainty in his eyes.

Harry flatly replied, giving as much truth as he could, "When I went into the inner Chamber, Voldemort was still in her. He told me all that before he died, probably from some reaction that potion had, leaving Lisa

unconscious."

Wright's eyes widened, "That is why you were late and weren't able to warn the school. The Dark Lord was stalling in his last moments.

Delaying you."

A sharp spike of guilt ran through Harry's heart, which he immediately squashed down, "More or less."

Wright stared at him for a second, before he swiftly turned and walked back around his desk, leaning down to pull open a drawer from which he pulled out a letter. Opening it, he started reading through it fervently.

"I believe you," he finally said, closing the letter and looking Harry in the eye.

"You...believe me?" Harry unbelievably said.

Wright nodded, "I do. Which is why I will give you this warning Mr. Potter. I am not the one making the moves anymore. As of this morning, a more powerful player has stepped in. Someone whose actions make sense only when seen in the context of your story."

It took a second for him to realize who it was.

"Malfoy..." Harry's voice was filled with dread. Borgin's memory restoration in the court must have tipped him off on how to break the memory charm that Harry had placed on him back in the summer.

"Indeed. As of this morning, Lucius Malfoy has sent dozens of these letters out," Wright said, holding up the letter in his hands, "mobilizing the entire traditionalistic side. He has been calling in favors and using leverages left and right, doing everything he can to make the vote go against Turpin."

"Is that why-"

"Yes," Wright interrupted, "That is why I believe you. The only reason Malfoy would pull out all the stops to end Turpin is if he believed there

was a significant threat to himself from Turpin's survival. Your story fits.

If Turpin is allowed time to heal her mind, then her Veritaserum testimony would not only turn most of his allies against him, it would also land Lucius in Azkaban for life."

"I need to tell Dumbledore," Harry said, panic rising, "If he knows who he is up against then maybe he can stop it."

Wright was shaking his head before Harry even finished his sentence, "As far as Dumbledore's influence in the Wizengamot extends, Malfoy's extends greater. There are no two ways about it. You will lose the vote today. There is no legal way of saving Lisa Turpin now."

Panic was starting to set in, but even through that, Harry noticed something. Something about that last sentence was off.

"No...legal way?"

"You heard me," Wright said as he put the letter back into his, "Tell that to Dumbledore. What he does with that information is none of my business."

Ping!

Quest Success!

Talk to Wentworth Wright and convince him of Lisa's innocence!

Rewards,

5,000 Exp

2 stat points

Behind Harry, the door lock clicked open.

"Now get out of my office."

Malfoy breaking the Obliviate was all kinds of bad, but it wasn't world-ending. A quick perusal of the memory of that day using Gamer's Mind had made sure that he hadn't compromised anything too bad. The only things he had used was Hydromancy and his own fists, neither of which

could give any potentially dangerous information to Lucius.

He had gotten incredibly lucky, but Lisa hadn't. This had happened at the worst time for her.

After getting out of Wright's office, Harry had quickly found the nearest toilet and locked himself in a stall, wasting no time before writing out a quick letter to Dumbledore's office, telling him about Malfoy's involvement and how he had broken through the Obliviate Harry had cast on him as well as about Wright's ambiguous message.

He had sent it off with Hedwig, who had almost immediately come back with a short note clenched in her talons.

Stay where you are

And so Harry stayed, putting down and sitting on the lid of the toilet seat as he asked Hedwig about the vague message.

"What was he doing when you found him?" Harry asked agitatedly for the third time. It had been over fifteen minutes, the smell of piss was getting to him, and from the sound of it, the bloke two stalls away was having a serious bout of explosive diarrhea.

"For the last time Harry!" Hedwig exasperatedly replied from inside his pocket, "He was writing something on his desk when I arrived. He took the letter from me immediately, and instantly after that wrote down the note I gave you and told me to head back and wait for Fawkes. Have a bit of patience!"

"Easy for you to say while you're inside a magical pocket where the stench can't get you," Harry grumbled.

Suddenly, a ball of fire burst into existence in the stall, badly startling Harry off balance, making him bang into the stall wall loudly.

"Oi! Keep it quiet in there mate! We're all tryin to take a quiet shit here!" explosive diarrhoea guy yelled from his stall. Harry ignored him as he

reoriented himself back onto his seat. The ball of fire had coalesced into the shape of a familiar red plumed phoenix who was flapping his wings as he hovered mid-air.

"Fawkes!" he whispered urgently, "What happened? Why did Dumbledore tell us to stay here?"

"Albus sends his apologies," Fawkes replied, "He wanted to talk to you alone and his office wasn't quite private enough."

"Because of the portraits?"

"Indeed. Fortunately, he has found a suitable place. Grab my tail feathers and we will be on our way."

Harry nodded, before quickly standing up and grabbing Fawkes's tail feathers. For a short fleeting moment, fire enveloped his vision as the phoenix teleported him before it receded and Fawkes landed on his shoulder.

Harry looked around curiously. He was in a pure white circular room with no windows or doors. Dumbledore stood right across him on the other side of the room, clad in purple robes and wand held loosely in hand. Wondering where he really was, Harry observed the room.

Room of Requirements

Created by Rowena Ravenclaw, this room can transform itself into whatever the witch or wizard needs it to be at that moment. It cannot create food and has many limitations placed on it by its creator. Any item summoned or created in the room cannot be taken outside the room and it cannot summon living creatures. Its position on a ley-line nexus grants it almost unlimited potential otherwise.

It only appears when the user is in great need of it, but can also be called for by walking three times in front of it and focusing on what

is needed.

Status: The Ley Line is temporarily blocked. (Time remaining on Block Spell: 1 hour)

Just as Harry closed the Observe window with raised eyes, he heard Fawkes's voice echo in his mind.

"I'm sorry Harry."

Dumbledore's wand darted up to point at him. He suddenly felt a tug near his chest, and his front pocket ripped right off. The Expansion Charm on the pocket broke, and Hedwig burst out of the magical space and into the air. Unable to suddenly catch her balance mid-air, she plummeted towards the floor. Before Harry could do anything other than watch aghast, Fawkes took off from his shoulder, catching the falling Hedwig with his claws and bursting into flames in a single motion, teleporting both the phoenixes out of there.

In the same instant, Dumbledore's hand flitted through a dozen wand movements before he brought his hands out in a wide arc. A humongous spout of fire started gushing from his hands and filled the entire height of the room in front of Harry, forming a huge wall of large abnormal flames that licked up against the sides and roof of the room as they took the shape of fiery beasts, dragons, chimaeras, and phoenixes, hiding Dumbledore behind them.

It was as if time itself froze for a moment, letting Harry realize what was happening.

Dumbledore was trying to kill him, and he was using Fiendfyre to do it. Bugger.

Time started again, and the wall of flame started hurtling towards him, the dozens of fiery beasts falling and rising and falling again as the entire mass of undulating raking hot flame and toxic smoke swiftly accelerating

on.

Ping!

Area Sense: Giant fucking wall of flame that will kill you is 6 meters away!

Harry could feel the hairs on his arm singe even as the wall of flame was half a dozen meters away, which was indication enough that he wasn't as immune to this cursed fire as he was to normal flames. It also meant that he couldn't control it. There was no water here to use, the floor was marble and uncontrollable, and while he could use Aeromancy to remove most oxygen from the flame, he was pretty sure that Fiendfyre didn't need it to burn.

Ping!

Area Sense: Giant fucking wall of flame that will kill you is 4 meters away!

Harry pushed the questions about why Dumbledore would do this out of his mind for the moment and focused on how to get out of this situation.

Gamer's Mind took no time in deducing that to the conclusion that Dumbledore had asked for the Room of Requirements to contain him perfectly, and the thrice-damned piece of shit Room decided to work perfectly this time.

Area Sense: Giant fucking wall of flame that will kill you is 3 meters away! Run you twat!

'Run,' Harry thought as he watched the fiery monsters draw ever closer and closer, claws and horns and tails lashed, and the heat was solid as a wall around them. He could use Unicorn Boost and run...but where?

There was no escape from this room. No doors, no windows, no way to get out. He couldn't apparate, and Hedwig had been taken from him.

Area Sense: Giant fucking wall of flame that will kill you is 2 meters

away! How much more instruction do you need!

The heat was starting to grow unbearable as the flames were starting to lick at him hungrily and his sweat started to steam on his skin. Harry remembered something from the Room's Observe.

Status: The Ley Line is temporarily blocked. (Time remaining on Block Spell: 1 hour)

The Ley Line was the reason Harry couldn't use ID around the Room in the first place! That was why the ID Create skill showed Error windows around it! If it was blocked, then there was only one thing left to do.

Area Sense: Giant fucking wall of flame that will kill you is 1 meter away! What the fuck are you doing! Building up dramatic tension?!

"ID Create!"

The raging inferno in front of him disappeared, leaving him in an empty version of the room he was standing in. The sheer suddenness of the silence almost brought Harry to his knees.

Why would Dumbledore be trying to kill him? Had he somehow found out about his Gamer powers and was trying to eliminate him before he got too powerful? Did he suspect something about the violent past he had in the early days of gaining his Gamer abilities before he had come to Hogwarts? Had he discovered something about that foreboding vision he had in the Mirror of Erised last Christmas?

Whatever the reason, with the Fiendfyre gone and his sudden rush of adrenaline subsiding, Harry was left with a choice to make.

Option one. He could hightail the fuck out of here, first head to the Flamels for help, and if by some chance even they turned out to be untrustworthy, then just straight up escape the country and live life as a muggle named Jeff using the money he got by fighting zombies until he got strong enough to get back at the old man.

Option two. He could go back into the Room and face Dumbledore.

There were dozens of reasons to choose option one, and only one to choose option 2.

The old fuckwad still had Hedwig.

Gritting his teeth, Harry pulled out his wand from his inventory and stuck it into his pocket, before pulling Gandiva out and notching a Doom arrow that could easily cave in the entire room if Dumbledore tried anything else.

"ID Escape," he muttered, popping out into the real world, ready to blow the place to kingdom come.

The sight in front of him was not what he had expected. The Room had changed, and the change hadn't been reflected in the ID.

Gone was the pure white circular room and the nightmarish inferno of flame, instead replaced by an office room not dissimilar to the Headmaster's office. The floor was covered by a dark red carpet, and the walls were filled with paintings of rivers and waterfalls. On the other side of the room from where he was, lay a claw-footed desk at which sat Dumbledore, a gentle smile on his face. Off to the side were two golden perches, upon which sat Fawkes and Hedwig, looking oddly calm for someone who had just been kidnapped.

"Apologies for that Harry, though I must say, that's quite the handy ability you have there," Dumbledore said genially, smiling at him over his hands steeped on the table.

It took a second of Harry blankly staring at the old man before he realized what had just happened.

"Fuck"

Dumbledore smiled pleasantly, "Language, Harry."

"Shut up," he snapped, making the notched arrow disappear and turning

his bow back into a ring on his finger. He turned to Hedwig, "Were you in on this?"

"I wasn't," she said crossly, flapping her wings agitatedly as she shot Fawkes a dirty glance, "Fawkes told me after he took me away that the fire was an illusion and that they were trying to get you to reveal your ability."

Harry looked back at Dumbledore, quite a bit angry. What had actually tipped him off? Why would he act on it now?

"Why?" he asked, fixing a stony glare on the Headmaster.

"Take a seat Harry," Dumbledore's smile was gone as he waved his hand, making a cushioned chair appear across the desk from him, "The matter is complicated, and I assure you that you will find the reason more than sufficient. It is about Miss Turpin."

Lisa's name sobered Harry down a bit. Hesitantly walking up to the table, he pulled the chair back and sat down stiffly.

Dumbledore continued, "Thank you Harry. I was making some Floo calls while you were waiting at the Ministry. To confirm whether or not Wentworth was being honest with you."

"And?" Harry impatiently asked.

"He was. Lucius is doing anything he can. Blackmail. Influence. Threats. Bribery. He is leaving no stone unturned in making sure that Lisa Turpin is buried six feet under, along with any proof of his involvement in the Hogwarts Massacre. Wentworth was right when he said that there is no chance of winning this legally."

Harry frowned. There was the same emphasis on the word legally in Dumbledore's voice as it had been in Wright's voice. The kind of emphasis that would spring out like italics amongst plain text if it was written on paper. "What do you mean legally?"

The twinkle in Dumbledore's eyes was back again, "I thought it would be

obvious. Why else would I pretend to attack you and have you reveal a secret that you have been trying to hide for over a year now but for doing something illegal."

Harry's eyebrows disappeared into his hairline. He knew that he should be asking about what he meant by 'illegal', but another part of the sentence grabbed his attention, "You knew that I had the ability to pop in and out of a parallel dimension since last year and you didn't confront me about it?"

"I suspected that you had some sort of ability that allowed you to be at a place and not so at the same time. I knew after I realized what that ring on your finger was, and asked a centaur elder why you had it in your possession. He refused to tell me more than that it was a gift, but he wasn't unwilling to share your aptitude at Scrying and how he had seen you disappear and reappear at will. It pointed me in the right direction," Harry could have slammed his head onto the table right then and there. His abilities were supposed to be secret. Now Dumbledore knew about his wandless magic, his Observe, his highly destructive Bow, and now his ID ability. At this rate, he'd find out all his other secrets, his gamer abilities, and the size of his penis by the end of the year.

Ping!

Due to finally learning some humility, take +1 Wis!

Trying to remain outwardly calm, he waved away the screen and asked, "And you aren't worried about me abusing it?"

Dumbledore chuckled, "Believe it or not Harry. This is not the first I have seen of this kind of ability. I have met the rare few people who have learned to harness this ability and move through dimensions at will.

Although you do seem to be a prodigy of sorts at it, I would have put an end to it if it had been needed."

Harry's eyes widened. The sheer implications of this were staggering. He had already noticed this trend that each one of his skills and abilities was based on already existing magic, but the thought that his ID skills were like that...It had never even crossed his mind.

"How did they learn it?" he asked eagerly, his earlier anger at the Headmaster gone.

Dumbledore smiled, "While your curiosity is appropriate, that is a very long conversation best left for another day. I insist we drop it for now."

Harry was disappointed, but Dumbledore was adamant. He finally asked, "You mentioned that you did all this because you needed me to do something...illegal. What is it?"

"I need you to break Miss Turpin out of the Ministry."

There was a single moment of silence, in which Harry incredulously stared at him.

"You need me to do what?"

"I need you to use your Invisibility Cloak and your ability to pass between Dimensions to get Miss Turpin out of Ministry custody so that we can prevent her from being taken to Azkaban after she is convicted and getting her mind further damaged by Dementors. Your abilities are suited to this, your age allows you leeway, and no place in the world can hold you if this goes south. You are the perfect candidate for the job,"

Dumbledore answered, dead serious.

Ping!

Quest Alert!

Break Lisa out!

Rewards,

6,000 Exp

Failure,

Lisa's conviction

YES/NO?

The sense of unease that initially filled Harry soon dissipated after he pondered the thought for a second. There was no way he was going to let Lisa die or get Kissed by a Dementor, and for some reason, Dumbledore was just as determined to not let her come to harm as he was.

He didn't know what that reason was. Maybe it was because she was his student. Maybe it was because she reminded him of that sister the Flamels had mentioned. But what he did know was that if breaking her out of there was needed, then breaking her out was what he was going to do. Pressing Yes and looking into Dumbledore's eyes, Harry said the only thing that was to be said.

"I'll do it."

Half an hour later, Harry and Hedwig flamed back into the toilet stall they were previously in, now with a clear plan in their minds.

"ID Create," Harry muttered as soon as Hedwig was back in his newly repaired and re-enchanted pocket.

He'd have to make sure that she wasn't seen or used her abilities in front of anyone. There were only two people in the Wizarding Britain who were publicly known to have a phoenix, and both of them would be in great trouble if Lisa disappeared with someone in a burst of flame.

The sun outside the enchanted fake window turned red, and Harry stepped out of the stall before opening up his inventory and pulling out the Wolf jacket. Closing the inventory, he put it on and flipped the hood up. Even if the Invisibility Cloak failed him somehow, he needed to be positive that this wasn't connected in any way to Harry Potter, and the Wolf jacket's illusionary visual and voice disguises were good for that.

"Get ready Hedwig," Harry said, "We're going to be going through the

Auror Headquarters and this is going to be a bumpy ride."

"Let's go save her," came the determined reply.

Activating Unicorn Boost, Harry ran out of the bathroom and boosted down the corridor containing the Wizengamot offices, reaching the end where a set of large heavy oak doors were located. Pushing them open, Harry stepped in and emerged in a large cluttered open area divided into cubicles. What was no doubt a busy and buzzing area in the real world felt almost hauntingly empty in the ID.

A lopsided sign on the nearest cubicle read: Auror Headquarters.

Harry darted through the Auror Headquarters, flitting through the narrow winding spaces between cubicles as he made his way to the opposite side where the door leading down to the Ministry Lockups were located.

The stature of the small black door belied its importance. Harry opened it and stepped into the tiny room it led to.

The room was just a plain box. No doors other than the one Harry stepped in through. No windows. No openings. Just a plain unfurnished room. To the outsider, this would have been confusing. How was this room supposed to lead to a lockup that was said to be able to hold a hundred prisoners at once?

But Harry knew what was needed to be done. Stepping over to the corner, he pulled out his Invisibility Cloak and pulled it tight around him, ready to wait.

"ID Escape," he muttered, letting the buzz of the Auror Headquarters just across the door wash over him as he let his mind wander back to his conversation with Dumbledore.

"The Ministry Lockups are quite fickle. Much like the Hogwarts stairs, their pathways, tunnels, and stairways are ever changing, never leading to the place

you might think. From your descriptions, it appears that your Dimensions do not reflect magical changes to the real world that happen after you have entered it. That means that if you go into your Dimension somewhere in the maze, you might end up inside a wall when you come out. So what you will have to do is follow someone who is experienced in the tunnels to Miss Turpin's cell, grab her, and have Miss Hedwig get you out of there."

"And how am I supposed to know if someone is actually going to her cell and not somewhere else?"

"You wait. Once the Wizengamot is assembled and the vote is cast, the Judge will ask for the accused to be brought to the Courtroom to announce the result to them. Two guards, both bearing the Wizengamot's insignia will be sent to bring her. Follow them."

Harry looked at his watch.

12:05

It was almost time.

Sure enough, mere seconds later, the door opened with a creak and two hooded black robed guards stepped in, the wand and scales insignia embroidered in gold on their right breasts.

Harry braced himself, pushing up as far as he could against the wall to make sure he remained undetected. He needed to mark these two as closely as possible. He pulled up his Sneaking skill.

Sneaking, Lv-67(21%)

Allows you to sneak up on someone.

96% chance of not getting caught.

96% chance of critical strike.

This was good. The Invisibility Cloak's 50 level boost to Sneaking was in full effect. He'd need it. With no second thought, Harry waved the window away and dropped into Sneak mode.

The guards stepped towards the center of the room and tapped their foot six times in succession. Suddenly the floor cracked in a large uniform circle around the guards, and the circular section containing them started to sink down. Quickly, Harry pulled out his wand and snapped *Silencios* at his shoes before jogging up and into the circle that started heading downwards, keeping himself near the edge.

And down they went into the large shaft underneath.

"Hey, Stewie. It's your first time in here isn't it?" the first guard asked.

"It is Benji," the other guard excitedly replied, "I can't believe I'm going down there! Hell, I can't believe they let us be the guards for an actual *Wizengamot* trial!"

"Well, we did help catch those thieves outside *Diagon*. Maybe the Director thought we deserved a break," the guard called Benji replied, fiddling with his hood, "Whatever the case, I'm not complaining. Going through the maze to the lockups is always fun."

"Is it true that it's designed after the *Labyrinth*?" Stewie asked. Harry kept an ear open. Any information was good for someone in his situation, and this Benji guy seemed quite free with it in front of what appeared to be someone new to this thing.

"You bet it is," Benji replied, the grin hidden by his hood obvious in his voice.

With a grumble and trundle and thump, the circular section of the floor they were standing on ground to a stop. With the torchlight from the tiny room above them now reduced to a mere speck, barely anything was visible other than the shadowy forms of the two guards.

'*Mage Sight activate*' Harry thought, and the world around him flared to life. Benji and Stewie glowed a vibrant orange and yellow, and the walls of the shaft around them glowed a soft gentle blue everywhere but in one

position, where a rectangle the size of a large door glowed a harsh orange. Keeping Mage Sight on, Harry slinked alongside the wall closer to the spot, making sure that if the Guards decided to suddenly enter, he'd be able to easily follow them.

Benji and Stewie made their way over to the same section of the wall that Harry had detected something off with and then placed both their hands on it at the same time.

A minute passed. Nothing happened.

"Am I doing it right Benji?" Stewie asked, his uncertainty obvious in his voice. Harry keenly listened for the reply.

"Don't you worry mate," was the reply, "Just let the door work its magic for a bit. There are a lot of spells on it to make sure no one gets in or out without permission."

Another half a minute passed before Benji took his hand off and Stewie followed suit. Suddenly without any warning, the stone wall section melted away into the floor, revealing a wooden door just enough to fit one man in. The Guards opened the door and entered one after another, Stewie following Benji, and Harry surreptitiously following them in.

"Make sure to keep focused okay?" Benji said as they headed straight down the corridor with the stone walls, "The maze messes with gravity, so we'll be walking walls and roofs and you'll see some weird stuff."

"Gravity?" Stewie disbelievingly muttered, turning around and staring right through Harry as the door behind them slid shut.

"They use a bunch of that Limbo mist to make the maze even more befuddling than it already is. It'll be confusing as we head on, so stay focused and follow me."

Stewie obeyed, and Harry followed them both, using every skill he had in his arsenal to make sure he wasn't detected. Silencios, using Aeromancy

to make sure that his movements didn't disturb the air and tip anyone off, the Invisibility Cloak, Stealth skill. He was practically non-existent, and unless one of the Guards actually tackled right into him, there was no chance of him getting caught.

The maze walls, roof, and floors looked to be made of brownstone, with nothing but the occasional torch to light the passage.

The tunnel they were in bent right, and then left, and then a complete U before it forked into two at an interjection. The left tunnel was similar to the one they had been following thus far, and the right one showed a noticeable change in that it was completely made of black marble. Benji stopped, looked at both sides and closed his eyes.

"This way," he said, opening his eyes a moment later and pointing to the right.

"How do you know?" Stewie curiously asked as they headed into the tunnel

"Practice," Benji replied, "Now focus! We have one of those gravity messing parts coming up ahead, and you don't want to be thrown off while you're in its effect."

Realizing something, Harry quickly pulled out his wand and cast sticking charms, sticking his cloak onto his shoes. If the parts that messed with gravity did actually mess with gravity, then he didn't want his Cloak to fall right off of him and expose him in the process. Making sure that the charm stuck, Harry hurried along to catch up with the Guards, who had briskly walked on.

Left they went . . . then right . . . and right again. The material of the walls around him changed from marble to coarse granite, and then brick.

A quick look behind him showed that the path they had come from wasn't there anymore, instead having been replaced with an endlessly

long corridor. The maze was replacing their paths as soon as they passed, and it was unnerving how swiftly it was doing it.

Ahead, a veil of golden mist that hung ominously at the end of the corridor, obscuring the path further ahead of them.

Benji walked ahead unflinchingly as they approached it, not saying a word as he stepped right through. Stewie followed, and Harry, taking a deep breath, readied himself and stepped into the mist.

The world turned upside down.

Harry was hanging from the ground with his hair on end, with Stewie and Benji standing a mere two steps ahead, too close for comfort. Benji's mouth was moving, but the blood rushing to Harry's head was blurring his vision and leaving him with a terrible ringing noise in his head.

Forcing Gamer's Mind to use whatever portion of his brain that wasn't being waterboarded by his own blood to focus on Benji's voice, Harry listened.

"...Get used to the feeling Stewie. We have a couple more minutes left to go," Benji's voice said.

"This...this is just weird," Stewie sounded quite woozy, "You sure that I won't fall if I step ahead?"

"Positive. Now come on. It only gets more disconcerting from here."

"Bugger," Stewie tiredly muttered, and Harry had to agree with the sentiment as his eyes refocused and he saw what the path ahead of them looked like.

The corridor ahead of them wasn't a corridor at all. Instead, it was a perfectly smooth tunnel that looked like the inside of a huge cylindrical pipe. The upside down path they were standing on continued on for a couple of more meters, and then started spiraling around the tunnel like the red stripe on a Christmas candy cane.

Harry's gut sank.

The Guards started heading on, and making his brain get over the thought that taking a step would send him plummeting down to his death, Harry followed, mechanically forcing himself to take step after step. It took few moments before he could move as fast as Benji was, but thankfully, Stewie was just as inexperienced in the maze, which slowed Benji down to the point that Harry could keep up with him and deal with his vertigo at the same time.

And off they went, winding around the tunnel as they walked through the tunnel that went on to slope almost impossibly downward until they were practically walking in a spiral helix around the walls of a tunnel that dropped straight downwards.

Which was probably upwards since the gravity was messed up.

Or maybe it wasn't.

Or maybe it was.

With a start, Harry realized that he had no sense of direction anymore.

It was all very confusing, and he was starting to get a very clear idea of why Dumbledore didn't want him to use ID abilities in here. In an ever-changing place where there was no up and down, flitting in and out of dimensions that might not reflect the changes that were happening in the real world was...a bad idea.

"This is incredible," Stewie muttered, breaking the silence, "I wonder why they stopped using this and started using Azkaban."

It was quite a good question. A place that could keep out someone with as versatile abilities as Harry had seemed like a naturally good choice for a prison. Quite curious himself, Harry listened for the reply.

"Obvious isn't it?" Benji said, pulling on his hood to make sure it was still sitting right on his head, "The Dementors. They're the ultimate guards.

Strong, fast, dangerous. They're pretty much the only thing Azkaban needs to keep people in. No need for fancy magic. No need to have any people there. No chance of prisoners learning the trick to navigating the maze. No risk of escapes. It's the perfect prison."

"Until Sirius Black," Stewie gravely said.

"Until Sirius Black," Benji agreed, and the conversation ceased, leaving Harry with an odd feeling in his stomach. Sirius Black. Someone who was responsible of his parent's death. Someone who he should decisively be furious towards. And he was. He was angry, but that anger was tainted with the uneasiness he had been feeling ever since he had discovered the lack of a trial statement in his file. It was nowhere near enough for him to believe that he was innocent, but the fact that his was the only file out of the dozens he had looked through that lacked any mention of a trial was...unsettling.

The tunnel slowly leveled out into a horizontal cylinder once more, revealing a wall of the same golden mist from earlier at the end of it. With one last twist around it, their path leveled out on the roof, leaving them standing upside down in front of the veil of mist.

Benji and Stewie stepped through, and giving them a second to make sure he didn't smack right into them, Harry followed.

Immediately, the world righted itself.

Ping!

Due to navigating an area with weird gravity with relatively good balance, take +2 Dex!

Ping!

Due to managing to not pass out or die in strange gravitational fields, take +3 Vit!

Ping!

Skill leveled up due to successful use!

Sneaking, Lv-18(1%)

Allows you to sneak up on someone.

71% chance of not getting caught.

71% chance of critical strike.

Harry's knees almost buckled, and his vision blurred again before clearing instantly. He looked around. They were in a long stonewalled corridor with solid iron doors on either side. At the end of the corridor stood a plain wooden desk, at which sat a plump man with a thick mustache who was thumbing through a ledger. Presumably, the person who permanently guarded and kept a record of the prisoners held here, the man hadn't noticed the newcomers into the corridor yet.

He had made it, Harry realized with relief. This was the Ministry Lockup! "Well. This is it Stewie. We made it through your first time in the Maze," Benji said, patting his friend's back who had fallen forward on his knees onto the ground.

While the confirmation was appreciated, there was no time to rejoice.

Harry looked at his watch.

12:22

He had been in the maze for over fifteen minutes now. He needed to be quick with getting Lisa out of this place. Harry raised his fists, ready to slam his knuckles into the two Guards' heads and knock them unconscious, but something made him hesitate.

There was something else he could do to throw DMLE off his track even more.

He had been seen by Aurors wearing his Wolf jacket disguise more than once. Auror Tonks and that partner of hers had both seen him. If he made it look like this 'man in the hood' had broken Lisa out of prison, it would

toss the authorities off his scent really easily. It could be the cover that he and Dumbledore needed to make sure that they weren't suspected.

Mind made, Harry dissolved the sticking charms on his Cloak and took it off, dropping it back into his Inventory.

The firelight caught his form, casting his shadow across the two Guards, making Benji look around. He gasped, which Harry took as confirmation that he had seen him. Both his fists darted out, slamming both the Guards hard on the head, knocking them out cold. The man at the end of the corridor looked up at the noise of them hitting the ground, but Harry was too fast. He quickly activated Unicorn Boost and darted across the corridor in a flash, knocking out the man before he could even pull his wand out.

Quickly rifling through the ledger, Harry found the cell with Lisa in it. Grabbing the keys from the drawer, Harry headed over to Cell #4 and opened it.

The cell was small, with a small rickety bed to one side where Lisa lay asleep, a desk-chair set to the other side, and a sink and a toilet attached to the wall. Harry glanced at her status.

Lisa Turpin (Status: Unconscious)

Lv-7

She was unconscious. That was good. Harry looked at his watch again.

12:24

It was time.

Peeking out into the corridor to make sure that no one was watching, Harry opened his jacket and pulled open his pocket. With a flap of her wings, Hedwig burst out of the magical space and onto Harry's shoulder.

"To the Room of Requirement. Get us out of here girl," Harry said, picking up Lisa with some effort and stepping away from the bed.

"On it."

All the world around him turned to fire for a second, and he reappeared outside the Room of Requirement on the 7th floor of Hogwarts.

The tapestry of Barnabas the Barmy looked away from the trolls he was teaching ballet to and watched curiously as Harry walked back and forth three times, wishing for a safe spot that only Dumbledore and he could access. At the end of the third pace, a hole appeared in the wall, which slowly expanded into a door. Harry opened it awkwardly with his foot and stepped in, letting Hedwig fly in before closing it.

The room was perfect, with a fire burning warm in the fireplace and a bed for Lisa to lie on.

Placing Lisa on the bed, Harry turned to look at the Room.

"Once you have placed Miss Turpin here, ask the Room for my message." That was what the Professor had said.

"I require Professor Dumbledore's message," he said out loud.

A small three-legged, claw-footed stool flowed into existence in front of him, and a small piece of paper appeared with a vaguely familiar silver trinket placed on top of it.

Meet at the Ministry. Half a turn should do it.

A wide grin spread across his face.

Dumbledore had left his Time Turner with the room to give to him! With the blame falling on the 'man in the hood' combined with this Time-Turner, they would be practically untouchable now.

Ping!

Quest Success!

Break Lisa out!

Rewards,

6,000 Exp

Harry picked up the Time Turner, stepped out of the Room, placed the chain around his neck and gave it half a turn.

The world around him dissolved in a blur.

Having gone back half an hour to 11:55, Harry got Hedwig to flame him over to the Ministry immediately, where he had returned the Time-Turner to Dumbledore.

The Trial had gone just as they had expected. The Vote was decisively against Lisa with the Traditionalists and most of the Neutrals under Malfoy's control. The guards were sent, but they didn't return. The Wizengamot was left waiting, first impatient, then uneasy, and then finally worried enough to send Aurors.

The clock had struck 12:30 by then, and Harry knew that he had pulled it off.

The entire Wizengamot had been held for the next half hour, along with Nicholas, Harry, and Margaret who were sitting in the visitor's gallery. Dumbledore had been called aside by two hooded people, presumably Unspeakables, who ran their wands over him. Whatever their spells told them must have been enough, because they were all soon free to go.

By 1:00 PM, Harry, Dumbledore, and Nicholas were riding up the elevator to the Flamel Apartment.

"Let me get this straight," Nicholas said, "You, Harry, can jump between dimensions in addition to Scrying and using Wandless magic. And you, Albus, decided that you would trick him into revealing his abilities and then use him to illegally break out Lisa Turpin."

"Yes..." Harry replied, bracing himself. Telling the Flamels was something that he wanted to do, but he hadn't deluded himself into thinking that it would be easy.

And it wasn't. Nicholas looked pissed.

Thankfully, he seemed pissed at the older one of his apprentices.

"Albus Dumbledore! What the heck were you thinking?! Doing all this without telling us! You've been growing way too out of hand!"

"I assure you, Nicholas, that Harry was quite capable of-"

"Capable my ass! When Perenelle hears about it, I swear she will pull out that cane of hers and I won't be the one stopping her."

Seeing Dumbledore flinch at Nicholas's chastising was oddly satisfying for Harry. Not unsurprising, considering the stunt the old Headmaster had pulled today to get him to reveal his powers. Leaning against the wall, Harry tuned out Nicholas's scolding and Dumbledore's placating in favor of his own thoughts. Today had worked out pretty well. Even if Malfoy wasn't an asset anymore, he had found an ally in Wright, as well as managed to save Lisa. A few of his secrets getting out was a problem, but it wasn't something he couldn't handle.

Despite the tragedies of the year, he still had most of his friends. He had his family. He had Hedwig. As much as Voldemort had crumbled the world around him, he could rebuild it. He would rebuild it.

And he would find a way to take down Voldemort forever.

Ding!

The elevator opened to a sight that at first baffled, and then shocked Harry to a standstill. Mr. Fortescue's apartment door was open; which was an anomaly in itself since Mr. Fortescue was supposed to be in Diagon right now; and in the middle of the corridor sat a large black dog. And above that dog hovered its name.

Sirius Black

Lv-37

Almost subconsciously, Harry cast an Observe.

Sirius Black

Lv-37

HP-15200/15200

MP-8100/8100

Race-Wizard

Str-18

Vit-31

Dex-29

Int-32

Wis-20

Luc-11

Sirius Black, also known as Padfoot or Sir Knucklehead Fudducker McSpazzatron in his Animagus form is a wrongfully incarcerated prisoner of Azkaban. He disagrees with blood purity and fought against Lord Voldemort. When his friend Pettigrew betrayed the Potters, Sirius sought to exact revenge, but Pettigrew was able to frame Sirius and escape before he could do it. After 11 years in prison, he managed to escape unassisted.

He is Harry's godfather and he loves him dearly to the point that he broke out of Azkaban in an effort to make sure he was safe. Right now he is feeling an intense itch that he really wants to scratch.

Sirius Black was innocent, and Pettigrew was alive. That was more than enough for Harry. Almost instantly pulling out his wand, Harry pointed it at the black dog who was obliviously scratching away at his ear.

"STUPEFY!"

Before the dog could even turn around to look at the source of the noise, the solid burst of red light smacked it right on its head, knocking it out and straight into the ground.

Harry slowly turned to look at a befuddled-looking Dumbledore and an

even more befuddled looking Nicholas. His own words sounded weird to his ears.

"You're going to think I'm crazy, but Sir KnuckleheadFudducker McSpazzatron is actually Sirius Black, and he is innocent."

Floating the dog into the apartment and explaining everything to Perenelle took a good long while. Explaining his knowledge of Black's innocence away as his Scrying abilities took some effort, as well as quietly sitting through the fifteen-minute long admonishment about keeping more secrets than it was good for him.

The fifteen minutes after that were easier though. Watching Dumbledore get reamed by someone he was clearly intimidated by was rather funny.

An hour and one Homorphous charm later, they were left with one scruffy dangerous criminal unconscious on their couch, one not-so-dangerous criminal unconscious in a secret room at Hogwarts, and nary an idea of what to do next.

"He is drained and malnourished to the core, and it will be a while before he will use magic as normal. His magic is dangerously cramped up from disuse, and the constant presence of Dementors around him probably made it worse. This is not the kind of healing I can provide," Pernelle muttered, her eyes glowing as she waved her wand in a slow circle of Black's unconscious body.

Harry used Heal on him, wanting to see what was wrong.

Ping!

You are attempting to heal somebody with several ailments! Please choose one to heal:

Malnutrition

Magical Trauma

Harry selected the Magical Trauma, wondering if it was the same as Lisa.

WARNING: Patient has been long subjected to repeated relivings of his worst memories via Dementor exposure, leaving the patient drained. This weakness causes a tendency in the user to avoid using Magic for everyday things, making their core cramp up. Any heal would only be temporary unless he learns to use magic freely again.

Physiotherapy recommended.

Proceed for 6 month heal?

YES/NO

Harry pressed Yes. It was similar to what Lisa had in some ways, but it was different too. Less...severe.

"I will see if there are any ways I could overtly search for Peter,"

Dumbledore said, stroking his beard, "but for now, Sirius's escape might have been a good thing. With all Auror resources devoted to searching for him, Miss Turpin will be safer than ever. Sending them both into hiding would be the best move for now."

"Can we wake him up at least?" Harry quietly asked from his seat, "He escaped from literal hell to make sure that I was okay. He deserves to know that I'm fine."

Perenelle shared a meaningful glance with Nicholas, who nodded. Harry turned to Hedwig, who was resting on his armrest, "Can you help him?"

"I will," echoed the reply in his mind, and Hedwig lifted off and flew over to the armrest of the sofa that Black lay on. She opened her beak, and a soothing song started floating through the room. Fawkes joined in from his spot on the table near Dumbledore, and the room was filled with a melodious medley.

A soft smile spread across Black's unconscious face. "Enervate," Perenelle cast, and moments later, his eyes fluttered open.

The first thing Sirius Black saw when he woke up was a pure white

phoenix staring curiously down at his face.

The first thing Sirius Black did when he woke up was scream like a little bitch.

"AAAARRRRGGGH!"

Hedwig decided that she didn't like screaming, and took off, gliding her way over to the table where Fawkes was perched. Sirius's eyes followed her, before they slid onto Dumbledore, who was sitting on the chair beside. The shock of seeing Dumbledore easily overcame the shock of suddenly coming face to face with an albino super-turkey, and his eyes widened.

"Professor..." he muttered, his voice half hopeful, half fearful.

Dumbledore had a heartbreakingly sad smile on his face, "I know...and I'm sorry my boy. So very sorry...You switched, didn't you? With Peter? Without telling me."

An agonizing expression filled Black's face, "We did. We didn't...know if we could trust you. Such fools we were..."

"All these years...How did you even survive?" Dumbledore asked, keeping Black's focus on him.

"I don't know how I did it," Black said slowly. "I think the only reason I never lost my mind is that I knew I was innocent. The thought...it kept me sane...let me keep my magic. But I was barely getting by" He swallowed, "But when I saw Harry in that newspaper a guard threw at me...saw him in danger...it lit a fire in me...one the Dementors couldn't touch. So I slipped through the bars...I swam and swam..."

His eyes slid over to where Harry was sitting, and contrary to the powerful reaction that he'd expected, the only thing Black did was smile softly.

"I remember thinking about ice cream for the first time in a decade...and

the time I snuck you to Diagon to get you your first one...the thought made me happy...smile...and when I was almost unconscious and drowning, my magic apparated me there," Black kept looking at Harry, and the smile never left his face, "You have your mother's eyes...anyone tell you that?"

Harry's throat had choked up, so he just returned a small smile and nodded.

"Good..." Black said, closing his eyes as he leaned back into the sofa, "This is a good dream...I'll wake up soon in Fortescue's house, and I'll... try to make this a reality...minus the strange turkey."

Hedwig, who Harry promptly decided had no respect for poignant and deeply personal moments, decided to take offense to that. Flapping over to perch on the backrest of the sofa, she slammed her beak right into Sirius's head.

"OW!" Sirius jumped, his eyes flying open as his hands darted up to rub his head.

"This is real you jackass mutt!" Hedwig's voice echoed loud and angry in all their heads.

"She is right my boy," Dumbledore said, smiling amusedly at the grown man and Phoenix having a full blown stare down, "And we have a lot to tell you."

It took another fifteen minutes for them to fill Sirius in on what was going on. Harry decided to go with his gut feeling and tell Sirius about the powers that Dumbledore and the Flamels already knew about, as well as his role in getting Lisa out of the Ministry Lockups. It seemed to be Give-Secrets-Out Day today, so he might as well give to those who deserved them.

"Travelling in between Dimensions..." Sirius muttered incredulously,

"That is..."

"I know," Harry said only half-sheepishly, "It's all a bit strange. I realize I'm probably not what you expected, but I am what I am."

Sirius shook his head calmly. He looked much more stable than Harry had expected him to be. Mr. Fortescue's care must have really helped somehow, "What I expected you to be was injured, half dead and traumatized after what I read in that article. Instead, you are happy... you've found good people...what you are is my Godson, and you're perfect as you are."

Harry nodded with a smile, turning to pay attention to what Nicholas and Dumbledore were talking about.

"Perhaps your friend in Nepal can help us by providing Sirius and Miss Turpin asylum if you write to her?" Professor Dumbledore suggested.

"Yao?" Nicholas said, his voice suddenly defensive, "You cannot be serious Albus!"

"He is not wrong," Perenelle interrupted, stroking her chin, "She can help them heal. Help her heal."

Nicholas shook his head, "She can, but her magic isn't like our Perenelle. Her power comes from a different place."

Dumbledore frowned, "Nepal is outside of Britain's, and even ICW's influence. Both Miss Turpin and Sirius will be safe there, as well as remain accessible to us. Besides, they need to heal, Miss Turpin more so than anyone. You know her magic is suffering and Yao is one of the only ones on the planet who can help."

Perenelle rested a hand on Nicholas's shoulder, "Put aside your ego for a moment Nicholas. Think about them."

The silence hung for a while, and neither Harry nor Sirius dared interrupt. Finally, Nicholas heaved a heavy sigh and agreed, "Fine. But

Albus will be dealing with the girl's mother. I will not have her be left hanging after her daughter has been taken."

"I will handle it."

Dumbledore and Nicholas left for upstairs soon after, presumably to draft that letter to the friend of theirs, while Perenelle left for the Potions lab, insisting on brewing up a few more potions for Sirius's physical health as well as some for Lisa before he left with Dumbledore.

And Sirius and Harry found themselves talking about his school days, Harry keen to hear more stories, and Sirius just as eager and desperate to remember them again.

"Messing up Slytherins' potions was a classic one we used to pull. It got so bad that Professor Slughorn refused to let us take our own potion ingredients into the lab anymore."

"And did he give you detentions?" Harry asked

"Detentions?" Sirius exclaimed, "We'd be amateurs if we let him do that. There is something that every great mischief maker needs to have. Do you know what that is?"

"Great imagination?"

"Oh no. That's secondary. The first thing is a sad backstory."

"A...sad backstory?" Harry hesitantly asked, wondering if he was hearing this right.

"That's right," Sirius nodded, "It's something a great purveyor of mischief has to feed as many people as they can. A decently told backstory inspires sympathy and affection. Sometimes even pity. All of which are essential to make sure that people are more likely to feel bad and not turn you in."

Harry raised an eyebrow, "That's actually pretty astute."

"It is. Mine used to be how my parents and family never understood me.

Now, when I'm free, I'll be using the wrongfully convicted card as much as I can. Pulling pranks. Meeting girls. Making people give me free stuff. I'll be on top of the world. That story is impossible to top!"

It had been a very strange, and in many ways very exhausting day. But the wide grin on Sirius's face as he spoke of freedom was impossible to stay grim around.

Almost as if on its own, a smile stretched across Harry's face.

It was a strange day, but it was a good day.

In case you haven't figured it out yet, I like making references.

Dumbledore mentioning meeting people who can shift between dimensions. A woman from Nepal who practices a 'different' form of magic. Got any guesses about what that's a reference to?

P.S. Don't worry. I've said it before and I'll say it again. This isn't a crossover. I just love making cool references and connections. :-)

39. Epilogue-II: Veritas Nunquam

Perit

Epilogue:

If Novikov's Self Consistency Principle turns out to be correct, then what will this imply about the philosophical notion of free will for humans and other intelligent beings?

It certainly will imply that intelligent beings cannot change the past. Such change is incompatible with the principle of self-consistency. Consequently, anyone that uses Time Travel and tries to change the past would be prevented by Universe itself from making the change; i.e. the "free will" of the being would be limited.

And although this might not be obvious to non-Time-Travelling individuals, this constraint has a more global character. Joffington Douglas of the Department of Mysteries theorizes that if the Universe is always consistent

with itself, then it might not be incorrect to say that it is following a 'set course' of sorts.

The implications of that, are immense.

Harry closed the book and leaned back into the cushioned armchair he was sitting on in the Flamel library. A lot of the theory about Time Travel he had been reading in this book made minimal sense to him, and whatever little that did had too many disturbing implications.

Closing his eyes, he let his mind drift back to the conversation he had with Dumbledore on the Halloween night, the night he had learned that Time Travel was possible.

"Novikov's Principle says that if an event exists that would give rise to a paradox or 'change' the past, then the probability of that event is zero. It is impossible to create time paradoxes. Time turners are built to exploit that... self-consistency of the universe, so as to speak."

"But what if I don't want to obey the Principle? What if I go back in time and kill myself?"

"It won't matter if you want to Harry. The universe will take the path of least resistance, and cut you off from existence. The moment you will turn the hourglass of the time turner with the clear and rigid intention to kill yourself, it would be as if you never existed. You would be...unborn."

The library door opened with a creak, snapping Harry out of his thoughts. Opening his eyes, he looked up to see who it was.

"Harry?" Perenelle called as she stepped in, looking curiously at him, "It's almost noon, and you've been in here since the morning. You didn't even come down for breakfast. Are you alright?"

"I'm fine," Harry assured her as she walked over to him and picked up one of the books he had been reading from the small table beside his chair, "Just a bit stuck on this book."

"Diagramma Chronos. The Diagram of Time," Perenelle muttered, reading the title of the book he had just been reading as she sat down on his chair's armrest, "I didn't know you were interested in Time magic. This is a bit beyond your curriculum isn't it?"

A mocking half-smile spread across Harry's face, "I don't have a curriculum remember. No more Hogwarts this year. Besides, when have I ever stuck to the curriculum."

"Certainly not when you blackmailed Nicholas into teaching you alchemy," was the flat reply.

Harry stilled.

"...you know about that?"

"What? That you threatened to turn over Nicholas's magazine collection to me if he didn't agree to teach you alchemy?" Perenelle said, idly turning over a page of the book she was looking at.

"Yes..." Harry said tentatively.

"Of course I did. You two boys aren't nearly as stealthy as you think you are."

"So why did you put a stop to it?" Harry asked.

"Because Nicholas has wanted to teach someone ever since Albus left his tutelage," Perenelle said, turning to look at him with a smile, "He wanted to teach you, but he is a bit too proud at times for his own good. If you strong-arming him into it was what he needed to get over his ego, then who am I to interfere."

Harry stared at her for a second, before smiling back, "Thanks."

"You're welcome," she said, before curiously asking, "Where did you hide his magazines? I've been hearing him searching everywhere around the house the last few months."

"You know something funny I learned this summer?" Harry replied with a

smile, "Nicholas rarely changes his underpants. He likes to spell them clean."

A look of understanding passed over Perenelle's face before she started chuckling in earnest. "You cheeky little runt. You hid it at the bottom of his underwear drawer didn't you?"

"Yep," Harry replied with a wide grin.

The Flamels' clothing drawers had been warded against summoning and other spells like that, and Harry had thrown in a couple other spells he had learned in the library as well. He could, of course, have kept them in his inventory but where would the fun have been in that.

Half the fun in this was going to be seeing Nicholas's face when he would find out where the magazines had been hidden all along.

Besides, Harry had kept a couple of magazines in his Inventory.

Just as a backup.

It took a while for Perenelle to stop chuckling and start looking at the book again. Once she did, she turned to him and asked, "Which part were you stuck on?"

Harry leaned over and turned the book over to the right page, "That one.

You know how Dumbledore was using the time turner to help save the students' lives right? Well when he told me about it, he mentioned the Principle on that page. Novikov's Self Consistency Principle."

"The language on here seems fairly straightforward. What were you stuck on?"

"It's just," Harry said hesitantly, "If this means what I think this means..."

"You reached the same conclusion as I did when I first read this book didn't you," Perenelle asked as she looked at him with concern in her eyes.

Harry didn't know what conclusion she had reached, but he had a strong

feeling that it wasn't far off from his own. The book and Dumbledore both spoke of a single timeline, and how the Universe was always consistent with itself.

It wasn't exactly hard to see what it all implied.

"Novikov's Self Consistency Principle does more than validate the existence of Time Travel doesn't it?" he said, a soft tremble in his voice showing as he verbalized his worry, "It...it validates the existence of Fate."

He only got a grave nod as a reply.

"Bu-but it can't be true, can it? What does this mean for our free will? Do our choices even matter if everything that happens is actually meant to happen? Are there actual beings out there that are writing out our future, unborning anyone who tries to break the plan? Does this validate the existence of a God?" Harry's voice only got more and more panicked as the questions started piling up in his head.

"You're getting carried away Harry," Perenelle said as she gently rubbed his back, "Calm down. This is not a proven Truth. It's just a theory. And as little as we know about Time Magic, there is a good chance that it is not even correct."

"It's widely accepted though, isn't it?" Harry asked worriedly,

"Dumbledore believes it."

"Albus can be wrong Harry," Perenelle sternly scolded, "He has been many times. Do not fall into the mistake of believing him to be infallible. You of all people should know better."

"But still," Harry muttered, feeling a bit chastised, "Fate..."

Perenelle sighed, before looking at him straight in the eyes.

"The reason Novikov's Principle is widely accepted is that it explains the properties of Time Travel as we know it. It is just a conjecture. Time

magic is one of the least understood types of magic out there, and when we discover more about it, we will discard this Principle and move on to a new one," she said surely, "Magic, much like science, is ever evolving. Sometimes even more so. Nothing is fixed. You have to remember that if you are going to delve into it."

Harry stared at the book in her hands for a second before nodding, "I should probably focus more on the life around me than half-formed theories about obscure magic shouldn't I?"

Ping!

For knowing when to stop focusing on disturbing theories that may or may not be correct, you have gained +1 Wis.

Ping!

For debating about complex magic and theories with someone way above your knowledge level, take +1 Int.

"That's the spirit," Perenelle said, patting his back as she got off the armrest of his chair. "Now get up. You need to have lunch before you and Nicholas head over to the Ministry to give your statement."

Harry pushed himself onto his feet with a grumble, "Why didn't they take statements while they were holding us in the Courtroom for half a bloody hour yesterday?"

"You can ask them when you get there. Now put those books back and come downstairs soon," Perenelle replied as she walked out of the room, leaving Harry with a pile of books to replace into the shelves.

It turned out that the 'Statement' was a fairly routine process that every person present in the Courtroom that day had to come to.

As soon as Harry and Nicholas; secretly accompanied by Hedwig inside Harry's pocket; had arrived at the 2nd Floor where they were told to go to, they had been quickly and efficiently ushered by two Aurors into a

massive waiting room lined with rows upon rows of benches, upon which sat dozens of Wizengamot members, impatiently grumbling their complaints to each other.

The waiting room had only one other door, which was presumably the Interrogation room. A constant stream of people entered and left the room, which probably meant the Aurors were just as eager to get this entire thing over with as the people they were interrogating.

Harry and Nicholas were pointed to sit down on a bench for two and were told to wait for their turn. Occasional mutters and curious looks towards him and his guardian from passing Wizengamot members aside, the entire thing was rather boring.

Twenty full minutes and over fifty rounds of rock-paper-scissors with Nicholas later, Harry's turn came.

The interrogation went pretty smoothly, probably because the spindly looking middle-aged man who was the Interrogator seemed to be glancing at Harry's scar and stuttering over his words a bit too much to actually ask Harry any actually relevant or pressing questions. The entire thing was rather easy and was over in only ten minutes, and soon Harry was out of there.

And then came Nicholas's turn.

As the older man disappeared behind the door of the Interrogation room for what was no doubt going to be a long while, Harry prepared himself for a boring quarter hour of waiting with the only respite being the quiet conversations he could have with Hedwig in his mind.

What he wasn't prepared for was someone clad in dark robes to slide into Nicholas's seat beside him.

"Excuse me. This seat is tak-" he started to say before he saw who it actually was and ground to a halt.

Lucius Malfoy stared back at him with a pleasant smile.

"You don't mind if I sit here for a minute do you Mr. Potter?" he asked politely.

"I don't," Harry said, keeping his voice flat.

Whatever Malfoy was up to, he couldn't do much in a room as crowded as this. The only things that made sense were either threats or attempts at blackmailing, either of which Harry knew he wouldn't take kindly to. Making sure that Gamer's Mind was at the force and ready to get to work at a moment's notice, Harry prepared himself for what was definitely going to be a tense conversation.

"You were quite a naughty boy this last year weren't you Mr. Potter?"

Lucius said, the sharp edge in his voice plenty obvious to Harry,

"Breaking into the manor, forcing my house-elf to betray me, assaulting me, Obliviating me . . . I could land you in a lot of trouble Harry. A lot of really bad trouble."

"You could try," Harry flatly replied. The first line had made it plenty obvious that this was a power play to blackmail Harry, and he wasn't going to let the man get too far with it.

"I will. And I will succeed. The few friends you have left...your new family...you have put them in grave danger. Perha-"

"You can cut the monologue Lucius," he flatly said, interrupting the man,

"If you want to use my actions this summer as leverage against me then you should remember that I am well aware of your involvement in the Hogwarts Massacre, and I will have no compunctions sharing it with anyone I need to."

Harry could feel Malfoy still beside him for a second before he replied,

"Such accusations shouldn't be made lightly-"

"Come on Lucius. Are we going to play this game again?" Harry said,

interrupting Malfoy again. Lucius was a creature of words, and not letting him say what he wanted to say could throw him off more than he'd admit. It was up to Harry to use this to his advantage. "You and I both know that you wanted to test me, and as ill thought out as doing what you did was, test me you did. I'm still here. Not a scratch. Besides, I have a feeling that you knew what you were giving Lisa Turpin. Or at least who it belonged to."

There was no mistaking it this time. Lucius had completely frozen.

"A...diary perhaps?" Harry carried on, "Belonging to your old Master. An artifact that you knew was capable of dangerous things, but didn't know how."

"How do you know what it was?" Lucius asked, his voice considerably lower than before.

Harry smiled. It was time for his bullshitting ability to shine, "I had a nice long chat with the spirit of your old master that resided in that diary before I erased him from existence."

"You what?"

"It was quite enlightening actually. He was quite insistent about his superiority over me right until I destroyed him. I don't presume your Master will be happy about you being the cause of the destruction of such a...valuable artefact...when he returns."

Lucius was outright staring at him now, his eyes filled with fear, "You're lying. You are making this up."

Harry chuckled, ignoring Lucius's statement, "It's rather funny actually. Throughout this entire sequence of events, nothing went right for you. I broke into your home. The Heir started attacking purebloods. You put your son in danger and ended up killing several of your allies' children. Even your desperate attempt at getting Lisa killed failed completely."

Lucius's eyes widened, "It was you. But how? You were in the court at the time!"

"I have my people Lucius, and unlike Voldemort's, mine are actually competent."

"You dare utter his name-" Lucius started aggressively.

"Yes I dare," Harry said, "I dare utter your filthy Master's name in front of you because once word of your actions gets out, he won't protect you...no one will protect you. Voldemort, the pureblood society, Ministry, Death Eaters...they will all turn on you after they learn of what you did. The only one who can protect you is me. Voldemort is your past, Lucius. I am the future."

Sensing it was time to amp up the pressure to a thousand, Harry sent a massive tendril of his mana into his blood, wrenching his blood down to a crawl with as much effort as he could. Malfoy swayed, grabbing onto his cane tightly to support himself.

"You may bear his Mark, but you are my pawn. You have been ever since I laid eyes on you."

Trembles rocked through Lucius's body as the symptoms of low blood pressure really started to set in. His breathing shallowed, and he repeatedly kept blinking to keep his focus on Harry's face.

"What...what are you doing to me?" he stuttered out, trying to keep his balance.

"Showing you power," Harry said, letting a hint of his Bloodlust ability slip into his voice, "Real power. There are a hundred different ways I could end your life right here Lucius. There are a hundred reasons why I should. Be grateful that I'm choosing not to. Go home. Take your time. Try out some more of your pathetic manipulations. And when you fail, learn to embrace the future."

With that, Harry let go of his control over Malfoy's blood.

Ping!

Due to repeated use, you have levelled up a skill!

Wandless Magic Lv- 12 (2%)

Allows you to control your magic in without a conduit. You can try to use it in anyway you wish and it will obey your every command.

Has various discoverable branches.

Branches:

Hydromancy: Allows you to control water in any form.

Cost-65 MP per minute

Pyromancy: Allows you to control fire in any form.

Cost-60 MP per minute

Geomancy: Allows you to control earth in any form.

Cost-70 MP per minute

Aeromancy: Allows you to control air in any form.

Cost-80 MP per minute

Ping!

Skill leveled up twice due to ruthless use!

Blackmailing Lv- 12 (18%)

This is your ability to make another person do something you want by expressly using some sort of leverage against them. The higher the level, the more chance of success!

$(26 + \text{Lv of Bullshitting})\%$ chance of success, less based on how extreme the demand is.

Ping!

You have leveled up a skill once by concentrated use!

Politics Lv- 6 (12%)

This is your ability to maneuver in political situations by methods of

persuasion, blackmail, guile and manipulation. The higher the level, the more chance of success!

(Lv of Lying + Lv of Bullshitting)% chance of success, less based on how extreme the motive is.

Ping!

A skill has leveled up due to ridiculous overuse!

Theatrics, Lv- 10 (30%)

You have a penchant for the grand, a wish to bedazzle and the desire to intimidate. This skill helps you achieve it.

Harry waved away the windows, idly musing on how ridiculous it was that he got more level ups to skills by blackmailing Malfoy than knocking out a sixty foot basilisk and taking down the spirit of a Dark Lord.

At least the amount of exp he'd gotten for that was humongous.

It took Malfoy moment to compose himself, after which he promptly got up from Nicholas's seat and left, drawing quite a few eyes when he almost stumbled and fell on his way out of the Waiting room.

Harry watched him leave with muted satisfaction.

"Are you sure you want to let him be?" echoed Hedwig's voice in his mind, scaring the shit out of Harry, who had almost forgotten that she was even there, "He could make things really hard for you"

"Let him try it," Harry said with a smile once he recovered, "The only thing hard about it is going to be his life if he makes a single move against me."

"It's not a joking matter Harry," Hedwig's voice was reprimanding as it echoed in his mind, "He seems dangerous."

Harry shook his head, before giving her a serious reply, "As dangerous as he is, I am more so. I wasn't kidding when I told him that there are a hundred ways I could end him. If not anything else I could just drop him

into a zombie ID and leave him there. We'd see how Lucius Malfoy fares against a Legion zombie or a Dementor."

"So why not end him now? He is a greedy, power-hungry politician and unrepentant murderer who is also an alcoholic and beats his son. Even I have no wish to see him live on."

"I know," Harry said, frowning as he tried to think of how to best verbalize his intentions, "But I'm thinking long term. He seems on the fence about following me, and when Voldemort comes back again he could be an important asset to have. So far whenever I've met Voldemort, I've had the element of surprise. Next time he'll be prepared, and I need to be too. Lucius is part of that preparation."

"So we are overlooking the bad things he did in favor of the benefits he can give? For the...greater good, so as to speak?"

The accusatory tone in Hedwig's voice was subtle, yet it hit Harry hard. He had been disgusted at first when Professor Snape had told him about Dumbledore working for the Greater Good when the Headmaster had tried to test him by manipulating him into going after the Philosopher's Stone back in his first year. He had even told Hedwig about his discomfiture with the idea.

How was he any better?

He was letting Lucius's crimes slip...he was letting Draco suffer at the hands of his father, just so that he could save more lives later down the line when Voldemort inevitably returned.

"You think I shouldn't?" Harry's voice was unsure when he asked Hedwig this question.

Hedwig's voice lacked any edge when she replied, "I'm not your moral compass Harry. I stay with you as long as you have your heart in the right place. If you would have shot that arrow through Lisa's heart without listening

to me back then, I would still have stayed with you. It's not up to me to decide what is good or bad. I can only see your intention, and your intention every time, even now, has been to do good. The definition of that good, however, is for you to decide. Not me. Not anyone else. You."

Harry thought over it for a while, before he hesitantly replied, "I...I want to do this. For now at least. Logic tells me that Voldemort would be more devastating a problem than Lucius is now. I can counter Lucius, maybe even control him to some degree, but Voldemort is just...destruction. I could just take Malfoy out after Voldemort is gone for good."

"If that is what you think is right, then I'm with you. All the way."

There was nothing but pure honesty in Hedwig's voice when she said that, and Harry appreciated it.

They lapsed into silence after that, Harry pondering the conversation that he had just had with his phoenix familiar and Hedwig going back to whatever she did to entertain herself in Harry's pocket.

As long as she didn't try to peck Harry's nipple off, he wasn't going to complain.

Soon, Nicholas came out of the Interrogation room and they headed out into the 2nd Floor corridor, where Nicholas told Harry to wait for him for a second and promptly excused himself to the bathroom.

As Harry waited, he curiously watched the uniformed people who walked in and out of the door to the Auror Headquarters, levitating baskets full of rocks in front of them.

Inconspicuously walking closer to the stream of people who were walking in and out of the huge pair of doors, Harry listened for any indication of what was actually going on. His answer came fairly soon in the form of a bearded Auror standing just outside the doors who was loudly giving instructions to a younger looking Auror who was apparently a Trainee.

"Oi Jeremy! I need you to get this to the Department of Magical History."

The older of the two said, handing his own basket full of rocks over to the younger Auror, who seemed to be trembling with nervousness.

"Sir! Yes, sir!" the younger Auror nervously said as he took the basket, "If it's alright to ask sir, what are these?"

"Just a bunch of rocks and things from the Chamber of Secrets," the older Auror nonchalantly said, "The guys over at the Department of Magical History are trying to see if any of these are magic or not."

"Sir! Understood sir!"

"Oh shut up," the older Auror grumbled as he headed back into the Auror Headquarters, "Loosen up a little will ya."

The younger Auror looked downtrodden, but Harry didn't have his focus on that. He had something else on his mind.

'The rocks could be magical? What did that mean? Did they have some sort of strange properties? Were they layered with listening charms or something?' he curiously thought.

Quickly switching to Mage Sight before Jeremy the Auror could take the baskets out of sight, Harry looked over the piles upon piles of rocks.

There was no significant glow coming from the rocks that anyone in the stream of people around him was carrying, that could signify any significant magic, but what was interesting was the greenish rectangular shaped glow that shone through the pile of rocks in Jeremy's basket.

Frowning, Harry cast an Observe on it.

Founders Clue #2!

Memory Page (2/4)

A piece of paper capable of showing the user a pre-programmed memory once the paper's password is written on it. This particular memory page was created 982 AD.

Password: Speak to me Slytherin. Scourge of the Hogwarts Four

Harry's eyes widened as he read the Observe screen.

That day, the paper that had been inconspicuously lodged between the rocks of Jeremy the Auror's basket never made it to the Department of Magical History.

Margaret Turpin had mixed feelings about her daughter being kidnapped from her jail cell.

On one hand, it was hard to argue that it was not a good thing, considering the fact that she would surely have been sentenced to Azkaban or even Kissed if she had been brought to the court. But on the other hand, now her little girl was out there alone, hurt and damaged as she was being hunted by the Law Enforcement. And worst of all, she, her mother, had no idea where she was.

All those thoughts and more idly churned through her mind as she washed the silverware for the third time. There was no point to it. No one other than the occasional guest even used the silverware, and she hadn't really had any guests ever since the Trial debacle had started. At this point, the chores were just there as a distraction from the dark thoughts that threatened to take her over every single day.

A persistent knock on the window glass startled Margaret out of her thoughts. Swiftly turning around, she looked at the kitchen window before sighing with relief.

It was Birdabo, her boss Esther's tawny owl.

Opening the window, she let the bird in, taking the envelope tied to his leg before serving up a bowl of water for the avian messenger. With a tired hoot, Birdabo started drinking it up.

Margaret opened the envelope, and a note and a second envelope fell out.

Picking up the note, she read through it first.

Dear Margaret,

You won't BELIEVE this! Oh my goodness, I'm SO happy for you! The letter came in to the office this morning, and I know you're on leave today but I just couldn't wait for you to come back in tomorrow.

Oh and accept it. That's an order. A change of air will do you good.

Love,

Esther McGoogly

Curious about what was in the other envelope now, Margaret tore it open, pulling out the letter inside.

Margaret Turpin,

This is to inform you that due to your exemplary work in previous projects with the Ministry of Magic in the Archives section, you have been chosen as the Ministry's Research Assistant and Ambassador to the Nepalese government.

Since Nepal is not a member of the ICW and is not a region with strong diplomatic ties to Britain, you will be working alongside Albus Dumbledore to strengthen our ties with them while studying their rich culture and magic as well as the ways of the people of that region.

This new promotion comes with several benefits, including a raised salary and Ministry provided housing during your visit to Nepal. However, it is mandatory for you to leave for Nepal as soon as possible for a very long stay there.

Please contact Albus Dumbledore for further details.

Signed: Gregory Marlin (Head of British Ministry of Magic Employment Services)

Cosigned: Albus Percival Wulfric Dumbledore (Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorcerer, Chief Warlock, Supreme Mugwump, International Confederation of Wizards)

Margaret stared at the letter with an open jaw for a moment, before she folded the letter up and looked around at her house.

This house had been her everything for decades now...her husband...

Lisa...All those memories...it felt like a cage at times, binding her to phantom responsibilities and obligations that she no longer had but felt like she did.

She sighed before a soft smile spread across her face.

Maybe Esther was onto something. A change of air might just do her some good.

That night at the stroke of midnight, in a hidden alley in the darkest corner of Hogsmeade, a small ring of green flame appeared, undulating and rotating and flickering free of gravity. The fire twisted and turned upon itself, slowly feeding and filling up the inside of the ring as it grew, casting its flickering light onto the walls of the alleyway.

After a few minutes, when it had grown enough, it halted, stopping its movements. For a moment, it was as if time stood still. And just as suddenly as it had appeared, the flames flared, and the fire's intensity tripled, blinding any onlooker that might have been looking.

And then it disappeared.

The only thing that it left behind in its place was a man who hadn't been there before, lying face down on the snowy pavement.

It was a long while before the man moved, and when he did his movements were weak and tired. His hands trembled as he pushed himself up onto his feet, and his legs shook as they struggled to hold his weight. As much as he looked like someone in his late twenties, his battered and tired state spoke of...something more.

Once he had supported himself on the wall, the man pulled out his wand from his pocket.

"Accio glasses," he incanted hoarsely, and a pair of round glasses came flying from the floor into his hands. By some miracle, they had survived the entire debacle intact. The man put them on, blinking rapidly as the world around him shifted to focus.

Slowly, he moved, step after shaky step as he headed out of the shaded alleyway and into the larger path it linked up to.

Once he made it out into the pathway, the man looked up, searching for something in the skyline that he soon found. Beyond the sloped roofs of the charming cottages and shops that made up Hogsmeade, in the distance rose the Hogwarts Castle, majestically standing proud in the moonlight.

Bright green eyes drank in the sight of the Castle like it was life-saving nectar. Almost as if on its own, his hand lifted up to touch his forehead, his fingers gently tracing the outline of his lightning bolt scar.

Ooooooh baby! Time Travel in Book 3! Yep! An older Harry from the future has arrived back in time, and not all is as it seems with him!

What could he want? What havoc will this situation wreck?! Find out in Book 3! Let me know what you thought of Book 2.

Obviously, I won't be speed-updating Book 3, since I'll be writing as I post, so don't expect any more crazy triple updates, but I hope to keep the updates coming regularly.

40. Outtakes-II:Omake Files

Outtakes:

Omake #1: Understated Tale

Context: Harry is going down the sink in Myrtle's bathroom.

Harry cast a Bombarda on the sink, exploding it to pieces. If he somehow didn't make it, then at least people who couldn't speak Parseltongue; people like Aurors and investigators; would be able to enter the chamber.

He grabbed onto Hedwig's legs as she lifted him up, and together, they descended down into the pipe.

It was like slowly going down a slimy, dark slide.

He could see more pipes branching off in all directions, but none as large as theirs, which twisted and turned, sloping steeply downwards. He knew that they were flying slowly deeper below the school than even the dungeons. It was eerily quiet, with no other sound around except the occasional tip tap of water and the rhythmic flapping of Hedwig's wings above him.

After a minute or so of careful maneuvering, the pipe leveled out, and he dropped down onto the slimy, damp floor of a dark stone tunnel large enough to stand in. Hedwig fluttered down onto his shoulder as he looked around the tunnel.

"We must be miles under the school-" Harry started to say, but suddenly, a loud Ping in his ears interrupted him, and a large black box with white borders, unlike any Game window he had seen, popped up.

PING!

Long ago, two races ruled over Earth: HUMANS and MONSTERS.

One day, war broke out between the two races.

After a long battle, the humans were victorious.

They sealed the monsters underground with a magic spell.

Many years later...

Hogwarts 1993

Legends say that those who fall into the Chamber never return.

Harry read the text with wide eyes. What did that mean? Was the Basilisk the monster that was caged here? Was this not its home...but a prison?

And why was the Game showing this to him now?!

Hedwig tweeted with concern, wondering why Harry had suddenly

frozen.

"It's-" Before he could even tell her what was happening, another window, just like the first one, popped up with a keyboard screen underneath.

Ping!

Name: Name the fallen human.

Hesitating for a second, Harry turned to Hedwig and said, "It's the Game.

Something is wrong with it."

The reply was a curious trill, and Harry merely shrugged before typing in his name.

Harry Potter

Is this name correct?

No / Yes

The window disappeared as soon as Harry pressed Yes, and suddenly, a single yellow flower flickered into existence.

"Er...Are you seeing what I'm seeing Hedwig?" Harry asked disbelievingly.

A confused chirp was all he got.

"Green stalk, yellow petals, white center with a smiley face? None of it?"

Hedwig chirped confusedly.

Suddenly, the Flower looked at him and smiled, and a black box with white edges popped up in front of it.

Howdy! I'm FLOWEY! FLOWEY the FLOWER!

Harry developed a sudden twitch in his left eye.

Hmmm... You're new to the UNDERGROUND, aren'tcha? Golly, you must be so confused! Someone ought to teach you how things work around here! I guess little old me will have to do. Ready? Here we go!

He didn't have the chance to do anything before suddenly yet another large black screen appeared. Just as Harry was about to yell that he didn't request a UI change, yet another black box appeared, this time larger than any of the others.

A black and white version of the Flower appeared on the top half of the screen, and a square with a red heart inside it appeared on the bottom half.

A small dialog box opened up underneath the Flower's image and started showing conversational text again.

See that heart?

"No," Harry said, just for the heck of it. But the game wasn't apparently taking verbal cues today, and the Flower's dialogue continued showing up on the screen.

That is your SOUL, the very culmination of your being! Your SOUL starts off weak, but can grow strong if you gain a lot of LV.

"Great," Harry muttered aggravated, "As if a Basilisk and the school closing down wasn't enough, now I have new game mechanics to learn! Fucking amazing!"

Poor Hedwig was looking around wildly, wondering what Harry was angry at.

The Flower's dialogue box did not have a digestive system, hence it didn't give a shit and continued on.

What does LV stand for?

"Levels"

Why, LOVE, of course!

Harry slammed his hand into his face, grumbling, "Fuck me sideways and hang me up by my anus. Why me? Why now?"

You want some LOVE, don't you?

"Please No. I'm trying to save my school here Game. Don't screw with me."

Don't worry! I'll share some with you! Down here, LOVE is spread through...little white...friendliness pellets.

Suddenly five little white dots emerged from the Flower.

And with that, Harry decided that he'd had was enough. He could go along with stupid dialogue boxes. He could cope with new Game mechanics. He could do many things.

But eating a flower's...love seed...wasn't one of those things.

Powering up a massive fireball in his hand, Harry tossed it at the three dimensional flower that had been standing in front of him through all this.

WHOOSH!

And the flower went up in flames.

Suddenly, time itself crawled to a stop. The water dripping from the ceiling halted midair, the flames from the fire that Harry had started stopped flickering.

Everything stopped.

Two entities, one man and one woman, the same who had given Harry his powers, appeared, undetectable to the world around them. The woman walked up to Harry, and examined the screen in front of him, which seemed perfectly visible to her.

She sighed, "Please don't tell me you were screwing with Harry Potter's powers."

"I...wasn't?"

The woman glared.

"What!" the man muttered the defensively, "I wasn't. I was playing Undertale. That new magical computer I'd conjured up to play it on must

have screwed with the magic somehow. My game's save file must have appeared here."

The woman didn't seem to care for that explanation very much.

"Undertale isn't made until two decades later. Conjuring a magical computer is stupid. Breaking the rules of time to play a video game is...I can't even find the words for how dumb that is! Just fix Potter."

The man sheepishly nodded, before he walked over to look at Harry's screen. His eyes widened and flew to the fire on the ground ahead.

"He..." he muttered, seemingly in shock, "He killed Flowey! At the start of the Game! Now I'm never going to get that Pacifist ending."

"Shut up and fix it!"

"Fine!" the man snapped, before clapping his hands. The fire and the black windows disappeared, and Harry's temple glowed from inside for a second. "There you go. His memory is erased and his powers are fixed.

This should do it."

"Good," the woman said, "Now let's get out of here."

And just like that, they disappeared, and the world resumed again.

Omake #2 Sirius Situation

Context: For the first time Harry saw Padfoot, I had an alternate end planned for his Observe. It was inspired by a comment I saw online and is pretty fucking stupid.

Ding!

The elevator opened, and Harry barely had time to register a giant black dog with a tennis ball in its mouth flying at him before he got tackled down to the floor with an 'Oomph'.

Nicholas's chuckles erased Harry's hopes for a prompt rescue. Stuck, and not being able to see anything, much less see whatever name was hovering above the animal, Harry cast an Observe at the underbelly of

the dog, wondering if this was Sir Knucklehead Fudducker McSpazzatron,
Mr. Fortescue's ill-named dog.

The Observe window popped up close to Harry's face.

Sirius Black

Lv-37

HP-15200/15200

MP-8100/8100

Race-Wizard

Str-18

Vit-31

Dex-29

Int-32

Wis-20

Luc-11

Sirius Black, also known as Padfoot or Sir Knucklehead Fudducker McSpazzatron in his Animagus form is a wrongfully incarcerated prisoner of Azkaban. He disagrees with blood purity and fought against Lord Voldemort. When his friend Pettigrew betrayed the Potters, Sirius sought to exact revenge, but Pettigrew was able to frame Sirius and escape before he could do it. After 11 years in prison, he managed to escape unassisted.

He is Harry's godfather and he loves him dearly

Right now he is thinking :-

"Here's my ball. I like my ball. Would you throw my ball? If you'll throw my ball, I'll fetch it. I like my ball. My ball needs to be thrown. Please throw my ball. My ball is here. Would you please throw my ball? I'd really like to play with my ball. Here's my ball. This is my ball. You throw, I fetch. My ball is here. Did you see my ball? This is my ball.

Here's my ball. Throw my ball, please?"

"Oh dear lord, Sir Knucklehead Fudducker McSpazzatron is Sirius Black,"

Harry muttered, shocked, "And he wants me to play with his balls."

Omake #3 Dobby is free

Context: A stupid scene I wrote while I was half-asleep and too tired to think straight.

It was a rather parched summer day when Lucius Malfoy was busy in his office looking through his copies of Wizengamot trials transcripts.

Manipulating trials often involved taking in a huge amount of information, and that in turn involved a number of hours reading.

Finishing up the transcript of Button v Boobie 1992, Lucius reached out to grab the bottle of whiskey sitting on his table.

Picking it up was much easier than he'd expected, which meant he had finished it without realizing it.

Again.

"Dobby!" Lucius Malfoy called, "Bring me a bottle of whiskey from the cellar!"

The seconds passed, but no shuddering elf appeared with a bottle in its arms. Lucius frowned.

"Dobby!" he called, louder this time, "Where is my whiskey you little pest!"

Nothing.

Irritated, Lucius put a paperweight on top of his transcripts and stood up, walking around his desk and out of the door of his office. He'd go find the little wretch, and then give it a well-deserved lashing.

Soon, Lucius reached the cupboard that he knew the elf slept in and slammed the door open.

"What are you-" he started angrily before he saw the sight inside and

stopped short.

Dobby the house-elf was staring at him, not cowering as he had expected, but with giant bulbous eyes full of determination.

In his right hand he grasped a half-filled plastic- muggle - water bottle, and in his other hand, he grasped a paper with a red wax seal on it.

The Ministry's seal.

Before Lucius could say anything, Dobby brandished the paper at him, "According to pre-arranged contract, I, Dobby does hereby accept the challenge from you, Master Lucius Malfoy sir, to a Duel."

"Challenge from me?" Lucius muttered, before angrily asking, "What are you talking about elf?! Stop rambling and get back to work!"

Dobby grinned, "Dobby doesn't have to obey Master until the Duel is over. Contract says so. Dobby managed to slip this Contract that has Master challenging him into Master Malfoy sir's papers, and much to his surprise, Master actually signed it without looking! Poor Dobby was so happy!"

Lucius's eyes widened with shock before he grabbed the contract out of his elf's hands and read through it.

Sure enough, it was an iron-clad contract with his own signature at the bottom, challenging his own bloody house elf to a Duel! The only way out of this was to duel Dobby.

Throwing the contract aside, Lucius stared at Dobby, hatred burning in his eyes. Pulling out his wand, he brandished it like a whip.

"Fine! I'll duel you, and I will end your miserable little life for attempting to betray me like this."

The grin that split the house-elf's wrinkled face sent shivers down Lucius's spine.

"Not so fast Master. Dobby wonders if Master read the contract at all. It

clearly says the challenged chooses the method of Dueling."

Lucius gritted his teeth, "Fine then. What do you choose?"

"Bottle flipping," the elf said, holding up the plastic water bottle it was holding.

"What?"

"I, Dobby, challenges you to a Bottle Flipping Challenge! You's must flip a half-filled bottle so that it rotates midair and land perfectly upright without using any magics. Does you accept?"

Lucius was staring at the mad house-elf, half angry, half plain confused.

Regardless, he had no choice but to accept. "I do."

Dobby threw the plastic bottle at him, and Lucius grabbed it midair, before holding it by its neck.

'How hard could it be,' he thought, before kneeling down and giving a powerful flick to the bottle, sending it flying up.

The bottle landed on its side with a thud.

Dobby grinned, before running over to pick up the bottle.

Grabbing it by the neck, he took a deep breath and gave it a gentle flick.

And almost as if in slow motion, the bottle flipped, the bottom rotating away from the elf as it slowly rotated upon itself, before arcing down and landing upright with a thud.

Dobby stared at the upright bottle for a second, tears filling his eyes,

"Dobby did it . . . Dobby is...free."

And before Lucius could say anything, or indeed fully comprehend what had just happened, the elf disappeared with a pop and reappeared right in front of his nose.

"Dobby has been pissing in Master's whiskey!" he said with a grin before disappearing with a final 'po'.

HARRY'S CURRENT STATS

Harry Potter

Health-1975/1975

Mana-1675/1675

The Gamer

Title-The Boy who Lived

Level-14 Exp-441990/790000

Race-Wizard

STR-33

VIT-30(+4)=34

DEX-26(+4)=30

INT-44

WIS-48

LUC-27

POINTS-45

MONEY- 14025£ / 3697G 188S 56K

Harry Potter is a wizard, the son of Lily Potter and James Potter. He is a fledgling wizard at Hogwarts. He likes hanging with his new friends and divides his time between figuring out insanely complicated political manipulations and honing his unusual magical skills as the Gamer in secret. Harry loves his parents, and wants to help the world they died protecting.

Status- wizard, giving Harry +4 VIT, +4 DEX and the ability to control magic, talk to snakes, control his appearance and look cool.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Story Questions

Q1 - When will you start posting the next Book?

A - Very soon, hopefully. Prologue is already done and I'm halfway through the first chapter. Hopefully, I'll be able to pull off bi-weekly

uploads. Maybe even weekly. No promises, but I'll definitely try.

Q2 - How do you keep track of all the Gamer Skills and Stats throughout the story?

A - I have a Spreadsheet with everything categorized into Combat, Magic, Mental, and Maxed Out that I use to keep track of the Skills. I also keep track of the Stats, Titles, and Incomplete Quests that way. The spreadsheet gets updated after every single chapter is posted.

Q3 - How long do you think it'll take for all the Books to be finished?

A - No idea. I know that there may not be a lot of people left in the fandom to read once I'm done. I know it might take years. But I'll keep writing. Slowly but surely, I'll complete this. This is my pet project after all.

Q4 - Will all the books continue in this single story?

A -Yes. All the Books will be in this single story, Harry Potter and the Game.

Gamer Questions

Q1 - What was that about Dumbledore talking about having met people who can travel between dimensions? Isn't ID Create a Gamer ability?

A - Almost all Gamer abilities are variations of already existing magic in the Wizarding World. That's something that I've alluded to many times before.

A more 'meta' answer would be that I've always wanted to use IDs in more Plot-relevant occasions. Harry using Zombie ID to beat Riddle was one such occasion. Him not being the only one with the Ability will lead to even more interesting opportunities for me to write.

Q2 - Why don't you put the Gamer Stats at the end of every chapter

so that readers can keep track of them easier?

A -It would have increased the length of the chapters by a lot without adding any content as well as been annoying to a lot of people, and I really didn't feel comfortable with doing long ANs every chapter. As a solution, I'm working to set up a Spreadsheet that you guys can check out to keep track of Stats whenever you want to. I'll link to that in my Profile once it's done and uploaded.

If you have any other ideas then I'm all ears.

Plot Questions

Q1 - Who the fuck was that at the end of the Epilogue?

A - Without giving away too many spoilers, I'll just say that it is an older Harry arriving at the current time. He is also the reason why I'm pants-off-the-wall excited about writing the next Book.

Q2 - Why did you not show more of Luna in this book?

A - Luna is a character whose portrayals are always debated about heavily, both amongst writers and readers. When I wrote Luna, I was pretty unsure of my portrayal, which was why I didn't want to use her too much without knowing if anyone actually liked how I did it.

Thankfully, you guys loved her, and you'll be seeing much more of her in Book 3.

Q3 - This Book was noticeably darker than the first, especially with Dean's death and Lisa's trial arc. Why did you decide to use that tone?

A - I'll be honest. Around the end of the First Book, I was growing a bit tired of the story. I was losing inspiration, and writing and updating was starting to become tedious. But I was determined not to abandon it, so I created an adversary and a plan that would have many ramifications for the story. Ramifications that would allow me to create plotlines that

would span throughout the upcoming Books as well as get my interest back into the story.

Q4 - Have you decided which School Harry will go to next year?

A - I have a tentative idea, but it's subject to change depending on how the plot planning turns out. What do you guys think? Which School would you like to see in the next Book?

Random Reviewer Questions

Q1 - Chapter24 - Will we see more of the Founder's Quest and Founder's memories in Book 3?

A - You will. Founder's Quest is going to be one of the major plot points in Book 3, as well as finding out who gave Harry his Powers. Both are intimately interlinked, and both will be very important.

Q2 - Chapter28 - Your explanation of Alchemy is, as far as I have come across, completely unique. Generally, people focus on equivalent exchange, rather than the deeper scientific route of changing something's atomic makeup. Are there any more ideas you have related to Alchemy?

A - Thank you. I do have many ideas about Alchemy that I'll be using throughout the Books. I wanted to portray Alchemy as a very precise form of magic to give it a very scientific feel, and I have a bunch of ideas in that vein that I'm really excited to write.

Cheers for all the support! Prologue for next book coming within a few days!

41. Prologue-III:Alea Iacta Est

Hello! You made it to Book 3!

That means you made it through Book 2 in one piece! A hundred and a five virtual cupcakes to you for continuing to read so far! I hope you're ready, because Book 3 is going to be awesome!

Book Three: Source Code

Prologue:

It had been a few days since the fateful hour when they'd found Sirius, and things had been going well, if a little monotonous.

Nicholas had been piling on book after book on Harry every day, telling him that his adventures at school had slowed down his Alchemy education by a fair bit. Harry knew that it wasn't the truth; he was running months ahead on his Alchemy; but he also suspected that his concerned guardian was trying to keep him occupied.

Finishing up with *Wands and Wanderers* by Kilote Tsundense, Harry pushed himself off the armchair he had been sitting on and headed further into library. The sound of wings flapping behind him made him raise his arm almost instinctively and Hedwig landed softly on it before hopping onto his shoulder.

"How many more books do you have left to read?" she asked, ruffling her feathers impatiently.

"Just one," Harry replied as he walked past the Charms section, "And if you were feeling so impatient then you could just have kept on sleeping on the back of my armchair you know? I'd have woken you up after I was done."

"I was getting bored of sleeping."

"How does one get bored of sleeping?" Harry asked amusedly as he put *Wands and Wanderers* back into the spot where he had taken it from.

"Well, it's obvious, isn't it? You sleep for too long, and then you're tired of doing it."

"Of course," Harry nodded, deciding not to point out that he had been asking a rhetorical question as he stood on his tiptoes to pull out the copy of *Flailing Your Arms to Do Things*. It sounded more like a weird yoga pose

collection than a book on the theoretical concepts of wandless magic.

He had, of course, wondered why Nicholas had been asking him to read so many books on wandless magic instead of Alchemy, but figuring that questioning the man's teaching methods would do him no good, Harry pretty much did what he was told to. Besides, Nicholas was as much of an expert on Alchemy as anyone could be, and if he wanted to teach him wandless magic before starting on even more alchemy, then it was just fine with him.

"What's that?" Hedwig's voice suddenly echoed in his head, breaking him out of his thoughts.

"What's what?" Harry asked, looking towards where Hedwig was staring. The question, however, answered itself. On the bookcase opposite to the one he was standing near was a book. A dark, thick, velvet covered book with a bright yellow gemstone the size of an egg embedded onto the middle of its spine. The title of the book was written around the gem in hard-to-read curly script, faintly illuminated by the gem's shimmering glow.

Mirrors and Dimensions: A Guide to the Alternate Dimensions

Harry could have sworn that the book hadn't been there when he had come into the library yesterday.

"Quite an interesting title you have there," he muttered as he reached for the book, only to jerk his hand back with a wince as the ward around the book stung him severely.

"You really should have gotten into the habit to look before you touch things you're not supposed to touch," Hedwig's chiding voice rang clear in Harry's head.

"You think I'd have learned by now," Harry agreed, healing the red welt on the back of his hand before extending his magic into the ward and

pulling up Runic Burnout.

Runic Burnout Lv-6 (21%)

A precise sucking of magic from a ward by using it to refill one's own core. It starts causing damage to HP when magic continues to be sucked after the MP is full. A common way to get around it is to use up mana as fast as it comes in.

Do you wish to use it on: Cranciero Locking Ward?

YES/NO

Harry burned a small flame in his hand to keep the magic flowing and pressed yes. A small burst of magic washed his senses, and he knew that the ward was gone. Quickly pulling the book out of the shelf Harry looked it over. Other than the writing on its spine there was no other inscriptions on the velvet hard-cover.

Feeling curious, Harry cracked it open and read through the first paragraph of the Introduction page.

Introductions

In my journeys through the wondrous countries of the far-east, one of the most interesting people I had encountered was Madam Yao. This book I am writing will contain all the knowledge I came upon during my stay under her hospitality.

The moment I lay eyes on her, I knew she was a woman of great power. She was polite, if a bit presumptive; perhaps due to her eastern upbringing; and offered me shelter for however long I wished. She had not heard of the lores of the west before, and was curious about our customs and magic. Her wishes mirrored my own, since I was curious about her magic as well. I told her of our wandcasting, and our timekeeping methods; she was particularly amused to know that the year at the time we met was 1789; and she, in return told me of the Dimensions. Entire worlds existing parallel to our own, some mirroring

our own existence, and some drastically different. Her magic, and that of those she taught, was capable of building a bridge from our own world to one of those parallel dimensions.

One particular Dimension that Madam Yao frequented was called the 'Diastasi Kathrefti'. The Dimension mirrored our own, near identical, but lacking in any moving objects or living beings. Nothing that happened there would ever affect our Reality. She used it for practice and training her students, since the user's Magic flowed better due to the lack of any resisting magic in the atmosphere there.

Harry would have continued reading, fascinated by this account of something that seemed like his own IDs, but a sudden ringing noise broke his attention.

Ping!

Due to reading a specialised book, a skill has levelled up!

ID Create, Lv-8 (16%)

Used to create Instant Dungeons. Higher the level, stronger the dungeon.

Current list-

Empty Dungeon- no monsters.

Monster Dungeon- Zombies

Restriction Dungeon- Random Opponent Spawn

Ping!

Due to constant use, a skill has levelled up!

ID Escape, Lv-8 (16%)

Used to escape from Instant Dungeons.

Harry's jaw fell open. ID Create and ID Escape were two skills that he used beyond regularly. Despite so much use, he had only managed to level up the skills twice throughout the entirety of the last year.

This Book had leveled it up with less than 30 seconds of reading.

'I'm keeping this,' Harry decided resolutely as he opened up his inventory and dropped the book into it. Much to his shock, the book fell right through his inventory grid and smacked into the ground.

Ping!

Inventory Input Rejected!

Error: Object is shielded against Dimensional Magic!

Harry picked up the book and stared at it, completely flummoxed. There was magic to shield against Inventory? Did that mean his IDs could be shielded against too? And was that Madam Yao which the book talked about the same person who was Nicholas's friend? The one who was giving asylum to Sirius and Lisa? The book mentioned the year 1789 as the year the author had met her. Was she just really old or was she somehow staying immortal like the Flamels?

Suddenly, the library door opened with a loud creak, and Nicholas's voice rang through the bookcases, "Harry! Have you finished the work I gave you?"

Harry was already flustered, and he grew even more flustered as he heard the steps nearing his spot. Panicking, he stuffed the book down the first hiding place he could think of just as Nicholas rounded the corner and came into the view.

The elder man was about to say something to Harry, but as soon as his eyes fell on him, he stopped, and he stared.

"I've just got one book left from the ones you asked me to read," Harry said, trying to play it cool.

"You're not fooling him," Hedwig candidly commented inside his head.

"Shut up," Harry hissed under his breath.

Nicholas seemed to have broken out of his tizzy while Harry was having

his little back and forth with Hedwig.

"Harry?"

"Yes, Nicholas?" Harry asked, forcing a polite smile onto his face.

"Is that very obvious book shaped bulge in your pants a very rare book about Dimensions that I acquired in order to better understand your abilities and train you how to use them better which you were not supposed to touch anytime soon?"

"Er...no?"

"What is it then?"

"Well I'm a growing boy," Harry replied conversationally, "Hormones are happening. This is normal."

Nicholas's voice had gone entirely flat, "So you have an erection."

"Yes."

"That is shaped like a book."

"...yes?"

"You have a book penis," Nicholas said, his flat tone unwavering.

"...I feel like you're just mocking me right now," Harry pointed out.

"Really? How could you tell?"

"I don't know," Harry replied, "Something in your tone."

Nicholas sighed, before strictly saying, "If I put a ward around something, it should be obvious that I don't want you to touch it. I allow you leeway with a lot of things, but if you are going to be my Apprentice then you will obey me when it comes to your education. That includes waiting to learn things at appropriate times. Write that down. Memorize it. Tattoo it onto the insides of your eyelids if you have to. Is that understood?"

Harry gingerly nodded.

"I'm glad," Nicholas said, his tone lightening, "Now go put the book back.

You've learned enough theory for now. We're having another practical

lesson today."

Harry's eyes widened. It had been almost an entire year since he had gotten his first practical Alchemy lesson. It had been about Transmutation and its applications in Alchemy, and that one lesson had practically revolutionized the way he saw magic. If Nicholas had really decided to give him another one of those, then he really didn't want to piss him off and make him change his mind.

Quickly putting the book back where he had got it from, Harry excitedly followed Nicholas as he led them both out of the Library.

"Go put your winter cloak on. We're going outside for this one," Nicholas said, sending Harry hurrying off to his room, where he set Hedwig down on her perch and filled her feed bowl with chunks of a Wonko's Chocolate Bar. Once she was occupied, Harry grabbed his thick winter cloak out of his wardrobe and put it on before quickly heading back out to meet Nicholas, who had put on his own cloak.

"We'll be back before the afternoon!" Nicholas yelled up the stairs to Perenelle before they headed out.

"Where are we going?" Harry eagerly asked as they made their way out of the apartment.

"How about I tell you when we get there?" Nicholas said with a smile, closing the door behind them before offering Harry his hand.

With a small smile, Harry took it.

The next instant, hard ground left his feet and the world around him spun, a sudden jolt of pain ringing through his body as if he was being stretched out and then pushed through the eye of a needle. Before he had even managed to fully comprehend the pain, Harry's feet hit the rocky ground, and it was gone. They had apparated successfully to wherever their destination was.

"That was painful," Harry groaned as he rested his hands on his knees and looked around.

They had landed on what looked like a beautiful island beach, with the sun heading down the sky at the oceanic horizon in front of them and a small jungle behind of them. From the way the beach curved out of sight on both sides, it looked like the island they were on wasn't very large at all.

Nicholas, who seemed to be completely fine, replied, "Long distance apparitions often are."

Harry looked up warily at him, "How long is long distance?"

"About 8000 kilometers," Nicholas casually replied.

"What?!" Harry blurted out in shock before quickly starting to throw out questions, "How? Where are we?"

"Practice and experience. We are standing on St. Nickleburg Island. A small hidden island 20 kilometers west of North America."

"And why are we in a small island west of North America?" Harry asked warily.

Nicholas grinned, "To improve your wandless magic, of course."

"My wandless magic?" Harry asked, his wariness disappearing with the prospect of getting trained by Nicholas in one of his most prized skills, "Is that why you were having me read those books?"

"Indeed. More specifically, we will be focusing on earth-magic. Are you ready?"

"You bet," Harry said with a grin.

And so they began. First Nicholas made Harry slowly levitate a rock mid-air, before using enlargement charms to add more and more weight to the rock until he couldn't hold it up anymore despite his best efforts. The rock was of a fairly large size, but it was nowhere near as large as Harry

had expected, leaving him a bit leery. Nicholas, however, seemed to find his performance satisfactory. Then, they headed further into a clearing in the small forest on the island where there was no sand, where he made Harry use the ground underneath to make various constructs and shapes, slowly refining his control and testing his limits with various tests and activities as the sky slowly turned less and less bright.

The more they practiced, the more worried Harry got. He had raised a large field worth of spikes in an ID to clear out a horde of zombies once. Now, the best he could do was control the amount of dirt that weighed about as much as a car. It was nowhere in the realm of being bad, but his abilities seemed... stunted somehow.

After a particularly tiring exercise where Harry had to use discs of hardened soil to block spells Nicholas sent at him, they both sat down on a rock to rest for a bit and drink some water.

"You seemed distracted during the exercises Harry," Nicholas asked after they had both finished their water, "Is there anything on your mind?"

Harry hesitated for a second, before reminding himself that he was trying to be less secretive with the Flamels. Pushing his hesitation aside, he said, "I...I think something is stunting my powers. I've done a lot better than this...before."

Nicholas raised an eyebrow before astutely nailing what Harry was trying to say at once, "Was it in one of your Dimensions?"

Harry nodded, before taking another swig of his water. Nicholas turned to look ahead into the jungle. "How much of that book on Dimensions did you manage to read before I arrived?" he asked, seemingly out of the blue.

"I got about halfway through the Introduction."

"Then you already know why your abilities feel stunted to you," Nicholas

calmly said, as if silently urging him to make the connection himself.

Harry frowned at him, before turning to stare at the ground underneath his feet, using Gamer's Mind to pull forth from his memory what he had read in the book, combing over the few lines he had read looking for whatever connection Nicholas wanted him to make.

And then it hit him.

One particular Dimension that Madam Yao frequented was called the 'Diastasi Kathrefti'. The Dimension mirrored our own, near identical, but lacking in any moving objects or living beings. Nothing that happened there would ever affect our Reality. She used it for practice and training her students, since the user's Magic flowed better due to the lack of any resisting magic in the atmosphere there.

This 'Diastasi Kathrefti' was sounding more and more like an ID the more Harry thought about it. And the phrase 'the user's Magic flowed better due to the lack of any resisting magic in the atmosphere there' was sounding more and more like what he was looking for.

"You understand, don't you, Harry?" Nicholas said from beside him.

"My abilities weren't stunted here," Harry replied out loud, "They were enhanced inside the Dimension."

That was why his abilities didn't match up with the feats he had done in IDs, but matched much better with his previous exploits here in the real world. Feats like making an inclined earthen slide to catch his fall back in his first year when he had jumped off from a bit too high of a spot, and the time he had made a large earthen fist to hit Quirrell and save a Unicorn.

Nicholas nodded, "Your Dimension does not contain magic, which is why your own magic flows free there without resistance. But here, in our world, everything has magic. The very air itself is filled with it, and every

time you use your magic you are fighting against the resistance caused by the ambient magic around you."

Harry breathed a sigh of relief before the implications of this struck him.

"So...that means I'll never be as powerful as I am in the Dimension,"

Harry muttered dejectedly.

Nicholas turned to stare at him for a moment, before getting off the rock and onto his feet.

"Come on," he said, before heading off walking towards the beach.

Confused, Harry followed. They walked through the forest until Nicholas stopped at a spot just at the edge of the forest where the setting sun and the ocean were clearly visible through the trees again. He dropped to his knees, resting a palm face down on the island floor, beckoning for Harry to do the same.

"Close your eyes," he instructed after Harry had knelt too, "and feel."

So Harry did. Closing his eyes, he let his magic spread through the ground, his thinner tendrils of mana following behind Nicholas's own stronger ones as they seeped through the small island's loamy fertile soil, then it's sandy beaches, and then down through the rock and gravel to where it was connected to the ocean bedrock with a giant natural pillar of stone.

Ping!

Due to extended use, a skill has levelled up multiple times!

Area Sense, Lv-5 (10%)

Allows the user to get a sense of the area around him/her. A more permanent version of the Supersensory Charm. The higher the level the more information is provided.

Effective until 50 feet.

Harry opened his eyes, willing the window away before asking, "What

next?"

A wide grin spread across the elder man's face, "Watch."

Suddenly, Nicholas's fingers tensed and dug into the soil as his tendrils of magic tripled in strength, rooting themselves deep into the very structure of the island. Harry watched with wide eyes as Nicholas's brow twitched, and at the same time clearly felt through his magic as the pillar of stone connecting the island to the ocean bedrock shattered.

The entire island gave a giant shudder, and Harry's heart leaped into his mouth. He got ready to pull up his Hydromancy in case the water came rushing at them to drown them.

But to his utter shock, the island wasn't sinking like he was expecting it to...it was rising...slowly but surely floating up into the air.

The deafening roar of the water rushing in to fill the space where the island had been moments ago...the amount of power being channeled through the tendrils Nicholas had spread so meticulously throughout the entire structure of the island as he kept it all together with the sheer force of his will...the sense of the wind whipping up violently around them...Harry was being assaulted by sensory overload through both his magical and his physical senses.

In sharp contrast to his frenzied panicky state of mind, Nicholas had a wide grin on his face, and he looked as if he was having the time of his life.

Their elevation slowly continued on for a full heart-stopping minute, before they came to a stop roughly a hundred feet in the air, where even the lowermost portion of the island was above the water.

Harry stared wide-eyed at his guardian, blurting out the only thing that came to mind, "What the fuck?"

Nicholas chuckled, "It's been a long while since I've used wandless magic

at this scale. It feels incredible."

Harry decided that he must not have gotten through to him and repeated his question, "What the fuck?!"

This time, Nicholas paused to look at him for a second before saying, "Calm yourself down Harry. Feel what I'm doing. Use your magic."

Harry didn't have to do much. His own magic was already spread throughout the island just like Nicholas's, only dozens of times more feeble.

He had a very clear sense of the scale of what was going on.

It was now more than ever before that Harry was seeing Nicholas for what he really was instead of the half-snarky guardian that he usually thought of him as. The centuries old wizard who had been honing and improving his magic since millennia...someone who had tamed Death itself...capable of feats of magic beyond any known to wizardkind.

It was humbling.

"Are you getting a sense of how it works?" Nicholas asked, his voice oddly calm as he kept his eyes fixed on Harry.

He nodded hesitantly.

"Then hold it together!" Nicholas barked, and suddenly let go of his magic.

It all happened within seconds.

The entire island remained suspended mid-air for a second, almost as if it; like Harry; couldn't quite believe what Nicholas had just done.

Then, it gave a humongous lurch and started falling. Instantly, Harry broke out of his shock and his magic, which had been merely observing what Nicholas had been doing suddenly gripped the island in an instinctive attempt to hold it together.

Pain unlike any pain he had ever experienced filled Harry's entire being.

It was as if his muscles were turning into fire, and his bones felt like they were melting. Blood rushed through his ears as his heart started beating like a hummingbird. Through the blood and the rushing wind, he could hear large chunks of rock falling from the bottom of the island into the sea...he could feel the cracks forming through the entire structure...trees falling down around them...flashing red windows popping up in his vision.

Through all the pain and the noise, Nicholas's voice faintly reached Harry's ears, "...remember we are 20 kilometers away from the North American coast...let go then dozens of coastal villages...could drown..."

Had Harry been his normal self, he would have asked some smart questions. Questions like why Nicholas was such an idiot that he gave control to Harry in a place where people could die? Questions like why the fuck wouldn't he catch the island's fall if Harry let go?

However, he wasn't his normal self. He was in a nightmare of pain and magical overexertion.

Brainpower was a little harder to come by while his insides felt like they were being torn apart, so Harry latched onto whichever words in the sentence that made sense and started using Gamer's Mind to focus his entire being away from the pain and onto the sentence.

People were going to die if he didn't hold this fucking island up.

He could faintly hear himself scream, why he didn't know, but it must have done something because the island around him slowed its fall a little.

Ping!

Due to some intense motherfucking use, you have leveled up a skill twice!

Wandless Magic Lv- 14 (13%)

Allows you to control your magic in without a conduit. You can try to use it in any way you wish and it will obey your every command.

Has various discoverable branches.

Branches:

Hydromancy: Allows you to control water in any form.

Cost-65 MP per minute

Pyromancy: Allows you to control fire in any form.

Cost-60 MP per minute

Geomancy: Allows you to control earth in any form.

Cost-60 MP per minute

Aeromancy: Allows you to control air in any form.

Cost-75 MP per minute

At that point, Harry couldn't have cared less about a level up.

The island's fall slowing must have been good enough for whatever stupid sadistic test Nicholas was conducting, because his magic sprang into action and took over the weight from Harry, instantly stopping the island's fall with almost insulting ease.

Now free, Harry's magic snapped back right into him, throwing him onto his back on the cracked island floor, where he lay panting and heaving as he regained his breath as Nicholas gently lowered the island back into place, using his wand to set repair the stone pillar that used to hold the island up back into place.

He was too tired to care what magic Nicholas was using, but a dozen and a half wand waves and foreign incantations later, the beach was restored back into place, the trees were standing back upright, and the cracks on the ground were gone. After repairing everything back into place,

Nicholas sat down on the floor beside where Harry was sitting.

"You did it, Harry," he said quietly, "You held up an entire island mid-air.

Is that proof enough of your real potential? Do you still have any more worries about whether or not you will be as powerful as you are in one of your dimensions?"

Harry almost barfed out his guts as he pushed himself back into a sitting position and formulated a reply, "Next time...just...give an inspirational speech or something."

Nicholas chuckled, "I will. Apologies for how unpleasant it was."

"Apology not accepted," Harry muttered, still feeling a bit woozy as he kept his eyes fixed on the sunset at the horizon to stop himself from throwing up, "I'm going to get my revenge. I'll think of something. I'll rub my underwear over your books or something."

There was a small pause, before Nicholas conceded, "I probably deserve it this time."

But Harry wasn't done. He had just noticed something.

The sun had set.

The sun had set!

"You twat!" he spat at Nicholas, "We aren't anywhere near North America.

It was noon in London and it should be morning in North America. The sun just set here. We're in the Eastern Hemisphere."

Nicholas grinned, "Took your fair amount of time before noticing, didn't you? Of course, I wasn't going to let you kill a bunch of people by accident. We're about as far away from civilization as we can be right now."

Getting lied to, Harry decided, was not fun.

"Get up," Nicholas said, the insufferable victorious grin still plastered on his face, "I need to get you back home. You have that sleepover thing with the Weasleys tonight don't you?"

"It's not a sleepover," Harry said indignantly as he pushed himself to his

feet, and grabbed Nicholas's hand, "I'm staying there for most of tomorrow too."

They turned on the spot, and after another gut-wrenching ride back home, Harry quickly headed up to his room to go get ready to head over to the Weasleys later in the evening.

"Was it fun?" Hedwig asked as Harry quickly put together a couple of clothes and few necessities into a duffel bag and ate the sandwiches Perenelle had left for him in his room.

"No," Harry resolutely replied as he tossed the duffel bag onto his bed before pulling out a change of clothes and laying them out for later. "But it was interesting."

"What did he make you do?"

Harry climbed into his bed. There was just about time for a small nap before he'd have to leave for the Weasleys, and he desperately needed one. Stretching himself out on the bed, he answered Hedwig's question, "Hold up an island with wandless magic. Well...it was more like mildly slow down its fall...I think the man's gone senile in his old age."

"I wouldn't be surprised," Hedwig replied, "Go to sleep if you're tired. I'll wake you up."

"Thanks, Hedwig," Harry said, before pulling the blanket over his head. Idle thoughts floated through his head, some important, some not so, as he drifted his way towards sleep. One thought that floated to the forefront of his brain involved Slytherin's Memory Page...he still hadn't looked at it yet.

'Tomorrow,' he told himself, 'After I get back from the Weasleys...'

The next thought involved Sirius and how he could help keep the Ministry off of his tracks for even longer when he returned to Britain after he finished healing. The ideal solution, of course, would be to find

Peter Pettigrew. But that was easier said than done. He had no idea where Peter Pettigrew was, only that he was still alive. He could be literally anywhere on the planet, and the fact that he was a Rat Animagus made it even worse.

His mind wandered, and he encountered a wild idea that seemed so sinfully tempting.

He could kill a shit ton of zombies, take all the money he got from it, and flood the wizarding market with it. Since the galleons he was getting from the zombies was literally from out of the world, the number of galleons in circulation would skyrocket, and the value of the Galleon would drop like a stone. The economic destabilization would wreak havoc for the Goblins and the Ministry. It'd be the perfect distraction.

Ping!

Quest Alert!

Crash the British Magical Economy Why? Does the reason even matter?

Rewards,

6,000 Exp

Sirius will be freer than ever

Failure,

Goblin Revenge

YES/NO?

Harry stared widely at the window, before shaking his head and pushing the window to the side without pressing anything. Half-woozy and half-exhausted as he was, he wasn't equipped to make big decisions. He'd decide whether or not he'd accept the quest after he was a bit more lucid.

'Crashing the British magical economy...the game must be trying to tempt me...'

Well, here it is. Prologue to this installment of the story. Lots of arcs are in play. Future Harry, Dumbledore, Flamels, Filch and Diademort, Founders' stories, Luna's mother, Madam Yao and her mysterious correlation with IDs, the new school, Harry's attempts at not turning to the dark side, Hermione's arc(which you'll see in the next chapter) and so on. I certainly have no lack of stories to tell.

Let me know what you thought.

42. Book-III:Learning and

Teaching

Chapter 1:

Later that night, after being woken up by Hedwig an hour later than he was meant to wake up, Harry decided that crashing the economy and endangering the lives of hundreds of people in order to cause a distraction for Sirius and Lisa, who were both halfway across the world right now, wasn't that good of an idea.

Pulling up that Quest window, Harry gave it one last read.

Quest Alert!

Crash the British Magical Economy. Why? Does the reason even matter?

Rewards,

6,000 Exp

Sirius will be freer than ever

Failure,

Goblin Revenge

YES/NO?

The quest, while potentially fun, wasn't very practical. With a regretful sigh, he pressed NO.

Still, there was an upside to this. Now that he knew that he could do

something like that, it was now a weapon in his arsenal in case...in case the Ministry was taken over by someone with less than benevolent intentions. Or in case they managed to piss him off enough to make him overlook the potential collateral damage that such a thing would cause. Harry could almost bet that the second one was going to happen sooner or later.

Using the Glamour skill to make sure he looked half presentable; making a mental note to work on evolving that skill later; Harry quickly grabbed his duffel bag and with Hedwig on his shoulder, headed downstairs. He was already late, and there was no time to waste.

Saying his goodbyes to Perenelle at the dinner table, he chucked a plate of salad as hard as he could at Nicholas's face before making a quick escape out of the apartment and into the corridor that led down to the small room containing the building's public Floo fireplace.

"What was that about?" Hedwig asked amusedly as they headed down the corridor.

"I told you, Hedwig," Harry said, "He lifted an island a hundred feet into the air and dumped it onto me. It was painful as all hell, and I want revenge."

"So you decided to start with salad flinging."

"Have to start somewhere right?" Harry threw back, ignoring the snark in Hedwig's voice. She wasn't the one who had just decided to reject a perfectly awesome method of world domination and was then forced to think up an impromptu revenge idea.

"And why are we running like cowards?" Hedwig asked nonchalantly as she preened her feathers.

Harry stopped in his tracks and turned to stare at her, "He lifted an island a hundred feet into the air and dumped it onto me. That's why we are

running."

Hedwig paused in her grooming, before turning to return Harry's flat stare, "Think of better revenge ideas next time Harry. That was embarrassing."

"Will do," he agreed after a small pause, before stepping into the Floo room and handing a sickle to the doorman, who was staring in awe at Hedwig. Harry sighed. This sort of reaction was why he only used to take Hedwig out in public while she was in his expanded pocket.

And then Perenelle happened.

She had sat down with him while he was away from Hedwig and talked to him about how hiding Hedwig like this could make her feel like he was ashamed of her, also telling him about how it wasn't healthy for someone as young as her. And as much as anonymity in public was precious to Harry, it wasn't more precious to him than Hedwig.

Thus, the phoenix's spot during their outside visits had moved from the pocket onto Harry's shoulder.

Shaking off his discomfort at being stared at, Harry grabbed a handful of Floo powder and stepped up to the fire. Hedwig's voice echoed quietly in his mind at the exact moment, her tone grateful, "Thank you for being considerate Harry."

Harry frowned, feeling slightly uncomfortable.

He was sure that he hadn't been that obvious with his efforts to make Hedwig more comfortable. How did she notice?

"You're smarter than you have any right to be," he muttered under his breath, making sure that the doorman wouldn't hear anything, "Has Perenelle been feeding you Wit Potions behind my back?"

"Just accept the compliment and shut up."

And so Harry did.

Throwing the Floo powder into the fire, he stepped in, clearly saying the

Floo address of his destination.

"The Burrow!"

The fire blazed a vibrant green, sending him hurtling through the Floo Network with a whoosh. Flashing lights and darkness overtook his vision for a few moments before his feet suddenly found ground, and Harry clenched every muscle in his body to make sure that he wouldn't lose his balance as he rematerialized in the Weasley household and stepped out of the fireplace.

"Harry!" Mrs. Weasley hustled over to him immediately, hastily dusting off the ash and dust that had gotten on his shirt, "We thought you were going to apparate over with Phoenix travel! Why did you come through the Floo? You've gotten your sweater dirty."

Harry smiled sheepishly as he stood still and let Mrs. Weasley pull out her wand and run it over his shirt and clean up the splotches of dust and charcoal, "I figured you wouldn't want me apparating right into the middle of your living room."

"Well, I appreciate the courtesy, but you needn't have worried about that. You're welcome here any time Harry," Mr. Weasley said, standing up from his armchair with a smile. Harry nodded before he curiously noticed the small trunk that stood beside the chair.

"Are you going out somewhere?"

Mrs. Weasley stood back and looked over Harry's sweater one final time, satisfied with her handiwork, before answering his question, "My great-aunt Muriel has gone down with a bad case of rickety-flu, which is why Arthur has taken a tomorrow off work and we're heading over to check on her."

"The old girl would appreciate the company," Mr. Weasley added.

Mrs. Weasley's face contorted into a harsh frown, "She sure doesn't talk to

us like she does."

"You know how Muriel is Molly. Her heart is in the right place," Mr. Weasley hurriedly assuaged, before turning to Harry, "We put out a bed and conjured up a bird-perch in Ron's room for you and Hedwig. The twins have gone over to their friend Lee Jordan's place for the night, and Percy is in charge while we are gone. Don't think twice about going to him if you have any problems. Everyone else has already gone to sleep, so you can say your hellos tomorrow morning."

Harry nodded before asking, "Has Hermione arrived?"

"She arrived earlier in the evening. She's bedding in Ginny's room," Mrs. Weasley replied before she suddenly caught sight of the wall clock and gave a huge start, "Oh dear! You'll find your way up to Ron's room won't you Harry? It's getting really late and we need to head out."

"I'll be fine Mrs. Weasley," Harry assured her.

And so the two adult Weasleys quickly grabbed the trunk and headed out of the house, closing the door behind them. A loud 'pop' of apparition let Harry know that they were gone.

"They were late because of us weren't they?" Hedwig, who had been silent so far, piped up.

Another one of Hedwig's behaviors that Harry had noticed recently was that the list of people she actually talked to had managed to stay pretty self-contained. There were the Flamels, Fawkes, Harry, and the one time she had talked to Sirius. Even Dumbledore she had never directly addressed. Harry had speculated that it was some behavior unique to phoenixes. That would explain why most people didn't know that Fawkes; or phoenixes in general; could talk.

"They were late because of you," Harry corrected, shaking off his thoughts as he headed down a narrow passageway towards the staircase, "You

didn't wake me up in time."

Hedwig let out a mental huff, but didn't argue as they headed up the uneven staircase which wound its way, zigzagging up through the house. Stepping onto the fifth landing, they reached a door with peeling paint and a small plaque on it, saying RONALD'S ROOM. Harry quietly opened the door and stepped in, curiously taking in his surroundings. He had never really seen Ron's room before.

Nearly everything seemed to be a violent shade of orange; the poster-covered walls, the ceiling, the bedspread, as well as the hair of the boy who was sound asleep on top of the aforementioned bedspread. Ron's school spellbooks were stacked untidily in a corner, next to a pile of comics that all seemed to feature The Adventures of Martin Miggs, the Mad Muggle. Ron's wand was lying on top of a fish tank full of frog spawn on the windowsill, next to a rat cage which seemed devoid of Scabbers, Ron's fat gray rat.

Ron's undying love for his favorite Quidditch team, the Chudley Cannons, seemed emblazoned in the very essence of the room.

A soft chuckle escaped Harry as he walked over to the empty camp bed that had been set up for him and put his duffel bag onto it, at the same time admiring the collection of posters the boy had. If the Chudley Cannons did actually become good, then he could make some serious gold by selling these.

It was a very big 'if' though. Chudley Cannons were solidly at the bottom of the Champion's League.

Hedwig took off from Harry's shoulder and glided over onto the wooden perch Mr. Weasley had conjured for her before closing her eyes and dozing off. Harry knew that Floo travel didn't really suit her, so he just let her be, instead choosing to shake off his shoes and climb into the

blankets himself, ready to sleep off the night and wake up to a fun day tomorrow.

Sleep, however, refused to come to Harry.

Understandable; since he had just woken up from a long nap; but very inconvenient considering he had over six hours left to spend in the night.

So Harry decided to try and count his way to sleep, "One giant squid humping a Hogwarts tower, two giant squids humping a Hogwarts tower, three giant squids humping a tower..."

Even after 258 giant squids had humped the Hogwarts tower, Harry was nowhere near as close to sleep. Giving up on the number thing as well as on his sleep; Harry decided to open up his inventory and organize in order to pass the time.

The first slot in his inventory stopped him right on his tracks.

Founders Clue #2!

Memory Page (2/4)

A piece of paper capable of showing the user a pre-programmed memory once the paper's password is written on it. This particular memory page was created in 982 AD.

Password: Speak to me Slytherin. Scourge of the Hogwarts Four

His original plan had been to wait until he got back from the Weasleys to look into this memory page, but seeing as he had a few hours to pass now...Harry quickly checked Ron's status.

Ronald Weasley Lv - 7 (Status: Deep Sleep)

HP: 400/400

MP: 325/325

After making sure that Ron was fully asleep, he cast a locking charm on the door using Riddle's wand. He then pulled out the Memory Page and a quill from his Inventory and wrote down the password neatly onto the

Page.

Speak to me Slytherin. Scourge of the Hogwarts Four

Just like it had the last time Harry had activated a memory page, the words seeped through the page and disappeared before the ink rose back to the surface and formed a circle about as wide as his hand. The circle glowed with a flickering silvery blue light. Slightly trembling, Harry placed a single finger on the circle. Instantly, the world around him lurched backward; the circle widened, and he was tossed head first through the opening in the paper into a whirl of color and shadow.

A fleeting, heart-stopping second later, he felt his feet hit solid ground.

Slowly but surely, the blurred shapes around him came into focus.

With a lurch in his stomach, he realized that he was standing in the middle of the Chamber of Secrets.

Not the Chamber that he had walked into all mere weeks ago, but what looked like a grander, more livable version. Torches lit every corner of the place brilliantly and the dank moisture that had perfused every inch of the Chamber in Harry's time seemed to be completely absent here.

Something else that was absent from the Chamber was Slytherin's humongous statue. The stone of that wall seemed to be still uncarved and plain, with the only thing on it being a door-shaped opening that Harry knew led to the Inner chamber.

The sudden click-clack of boots landing on the floor startled Harry, and he sprung around, only to see a green-robed man with a neat beard step into the Chamber; the snake engraved stone doors sliding shut behind him with a low thud.

His face was familiar to Harry. He had seen in back in his first year, during his brief stint in the Sorting Hat's consciousness. It was Salazar Slytherin.

With purposeful strides, he made his way through the Chamber, passing Harry as he headed towards the entrance to the Inner chamber. Harry hurriedly followed, bursting into a slight jog to keep up with the man, simultaneously keeping an eye out for anything out of the ordinary. They walked straight across the entire Chamber before stopping right in front of the entrance. Slytherin lifted his hand and lazily waved, muttering an unfamiliar incantation, "Arcania Dissolus"

The stone around the doorway flashed vibrant purple for a single second. Protective wards, Harry recognized. As soon as the glow from the stone stopped entirely, Slytherin headed into the tunnel. Harry followed, now almost certain that whatever this memory was about was going to be inside the Inner Sanctum. The light from the chamber behind them soon disappeared around a bend, leaving them walking forward in the complete darkness.

It was a few moments and couple more bends later that the end of the tunnel appeared; lit by single torch; a solid wall with a snake carved on it.

"Open" Slytherin hissed in Parseltongue, and the wall slid open.

This inner chamber must have been seriously modified in later years, because as it wasn't a small room that Harry had seen before. Instead, it resembled a humongous dome; a hemispherical stone arena capable of containing two full-grown Basilisks with ease! There were no seats, but on every single surface, including the curved walls and roof, were Runes and symbols that glowed gently, casting dim light across the entire arena. Harry could recognize a couple of them, but most of them looked foreign to him.

Engrossed by the runes as he was, Harry was startled when a rumbling sound started right beside him. Realizing that Slytherin had stepped into

the arena and the entrance was slowly sliding shut, Harry quickly stepped in as well.

Slytherin pulled out a thick hard-bound journal and an eagle feather quill from his pocket before throwing them up into the air, where the quill sprung to life, darting to the journal; which had stopped mid-air and opened itself to an empty page; and poising itself with its nib on the paper, ready to write at a moment's command.

"Journal entry number 11. Title, the final experiment," Slytherin dictated, and the quill swiftly jotted down the words before neatly underlining them.

Harry stared at Slytherin, the journal, and the Dictaquill-like quill for a second, before looking back at the arena in comprehension. The runes... the journal...the dictation.

"This isn't an arena," he muttered to himself, "It's an experimentation chamber."

Slytherin's next line confirmed that. "In order to provide context should anyone in the future encounter this journal page in its entirety, I shall now dictate the circumstances that led to the conception of this experiment."

The quill flitted across the page, swiftly noting that down as Harry listened to him enraptured.

"For a great many years, the rivalry between the wand-wielding wizards of England and the magic weaving Celts had been bitter, but it was only in recent decades that those barbarians lashed out in an attempt to destroy our ways and customs. Our warriors were brave, but our numbers were too small, and soon they pushed the last of us back to the Hogwarts castle, killing all that stood in their way. As of three months ago, there were mere hundreds of us left alive. Our supplies were diminishing and

our wards were being whittled down. Hogwarts was our last stand, and we were desperate."

Slytherin paused, giving the quill time to catch up to his dictation.

Harry's mind was running as fast as it could, making connections from this to Ravenclaw's Memory page. The war with the Celts and how the remaining Anglo-Roman wizards had taken refuge at Hogwarts was something Ravenclaw had mentioned as well, though in nowhere near as much detail.

"But desperation is a great motivator," Slytherin continued, "My colleague Rowena of the Ravenclaws weaved mysterious magic, creating a servant race of elf-like creatures that changed the tide of the war. They used their unique magic to get past the enemy's lines and destroy them from the inside. Under Godric's leadership, our forces attacked, and within mere weeks we turned the tables, annihilating the entire Celtic armed force. It was the Celts who were desperate now...and desperation is a great motivator. The Celts brought upon this world something that they did not know the true power of. Dementors, they called them. Of course, being uncontrollable as they were, the creatures turned on them and ended them all. Then, they turned on us...Our spells failed. Our elves were crippled. Our warriors turned into lifeless husks. The Celts were gone, but they left us with something much worse."

There was another pause, and the sound of the quill scraping across the parchment of the book struggling to keep up echoed around the giant room. Harry mentally reconsidered the power he thought house elves had. If they were powerful enough to turn the tides against an enemy that had almost entirely destroyed the wizarding race then maybe his initial intention of freeing them completely required some more thought than he had previously given it.

Slytherin gave a tired exhale, before continuing, "That brings us to this experiment. Eleven days ago, through much effort, I managed to capture a Dementor for experimentation. Since then, I have been trying to find a way to eliminate it.

Quill, end paragraph. Start new section titled Experiment Procedure.

Underline it."

Harry stared as Slytherin gave his instructions and finally paused to give the dictation quill the time to catch up. This was...chilling.

Slytherin dipped his hand into a pocket and pulled out his wand, waving it in a gentle arc over their heads before slashing it down in front of them.

Harry jerked back as the stone around them flowed and twisted, rising up around them to form four walls...then a roof, capturing them both in a small rectangular stone box that the tip of Slytherin's head touched when he moved.

When the room finished forming, he tapped the wall in front of them, turning it transparent.

"Experiment Procedure has begun. I have entered the shielded observation area, and will now bring out the captured Dementor."

Slytherin dictated, sending a chill down Harry's spine.

A section of the floor on the left side of the room dissolved, and a cage with a cloaked figure floating in it rose. The loud rattling breath and the shriveled skeletal hands more than confirmed for Harry that it was a Dementor. He was really glad that he couldn't feel its effects through the memory.

"Prior experiments have shown two things," Slytherin continued, "One.

After the Dementor was starved for three days, it lost its exclusive preference for humans and started attacking young magical animals for

nourishment. Two. It has an instinctive dislike for fire, which signals a potential weakness that could allow it to be killed. Using these two observations, I have set up an experiment that will test if it can be killed with a powerful enough fire."

He paused, before pointing his wand at the other side of the room and giving it another twist.

This time, almost the entire half of the floor opened up, and a humongous cage at least five times the size of the Dementor's cage rose. As the contents of the cage rose into view, Harry's mouth fell open.

Dragons.

An enormous, fully grown, vicious-looking dragon with silvery-blue skin restlessly prowled around a nest of rocks, on the top of which lay a smaller baby dragon with awkwardly small wings and stubby legs.

Harry had a bad feeling about this.

It didn't take long for the mother dragon to catch sight of the creature across the room, upon which she immediately darted onto the pile of rocks and coiled herself around her child, snapping and snarling in the direction of the Dementor, who had reached out through the bars of its cage, clawing hungrily in the direction of the dragons.

That was apparently something that Slytherin expected because a smile spread across his face and he started dictating to the Journal, "The Experiment is as follows. A mother dragon and her child will be used.

The child will serve as the bait for the Dementor, drawing it towards itself and the mother dragon, who wields Dragon's fire, one of the strongest fires known. If everything goes smoothly, the mother dragon will breathe Dragon's fire at the Dementor to protect her child, and that will let us know if fire can destroy it or not."

He waved his hand, and the cages around the Dementor and the dragons

disappeared. The Dementor instantly started to glide across the room towards the dragons, clearly fixated on the younger of the two.

The quiet of it all felt like the calm before the storm to Harry, and he wasn't wrong.

As soon as the Dementor was within reach, the mother loudly snarled before darting out and snapping her jaws at the Dementor, which smoothly rose up into the air, dodging the attack before making a dive for the baby. The mother immediately darted back and coiled her body tighter around the baby; who had started to whimper fearfully; and spread her wings over them both, shielding her child from the Dementor's skeletal hands.

The Dementor, however, remained unfazed. Grabbing one of her wings with each hand, it twisted.

An ear-shattering roar of pain filled Harry's ears, making him wince.

The mother, despite her pain, managed to instinctively swing with her tail forcefully, catching the Dementor across its midsection and sending it flying away. It came to a halt mid-air a dozen feet from the nest, easily righting itself mid-air. The dragon's blow hadn't daunted it at all.

However, instead of charging in again, it paused, considering the mother as if it was seeing her for the first time. The mother dragon painfully dragged herself and her broken wings around her nest to position herself between the Dementor and her child.

The entire world felt like it had stopped for a second.

At the exact same instant the Dementor dove, the mother opened her mouth wide and roared. A large jet stream of white-hot fire erupted out of her mouth and slammed into the Dementor, and for a moment the hot flames hid it from sight.

The tenseness in Harry's stomach uncoiled a bit. The Dragon's fire was

surely going to burn the Dementor down, just as it had both times he had used it, and this stupid experiment would come to an end.

He was in for a shock.

When the fire cleared, the Dementor wasn't even singed. It dove right through the flames and grabbed the mother's neck with both hands.

SNAP!

The dragon fell to the floor, limp and dead.

Harry stared aghast at the Dementor as it pushed the dead body aside and glided its way over to the baby before picking it up.

Beside him, Slytherin sighed, defeated, before starting to dictate, "The experiment has failed. Dragon's Fire failed to have any visible negative effects on the Dementor."

Suddenly, he stopped.

Harry frowned before turning to look at the Founder, whose head had snapped towards the dead dragon. Harry instantly realized why as soon as he looked back.

The mother dragon's chest started to glow with a pulsating bright green light, which upon falling on the Dementor completely froze it.

Slowly, the light floated out of her and coalesced into a ball, which hovered at the place for a fleeting moment before instantly darting into the baby's body, who flashed bright green for a second before going back to normal.

The Dementor unfroze as soon as the light disappeared and continued lifting the child up to its mouth, presumably to perform the dreaded Kiss.

The baby dragon whimpered in terror as it stared into the mouth of its oncoming doom before in a final instinctive attempt at survival, it let out a loud cry.

A small burst of flame, barely larger than a candle, was all that came out.

And the Dementor's cloak caught fire.

Harry watched, just as astonished as Slytherin beside him, as the Dementor dropped the dragon and desperately tried to put out the fire that was spreading faster across its cloak than any fire he had ever seen.

Hoarse otherworldly screams of pain rang across the room as the Dementor flailed around desperately trying to put itself out for the next ten minutes as the fire finally burnt through its cloak; then its flaking skin; then its flesh; until all that was left was just a pile of ash.

It took few more minutes for Slytherin to regain his bearings and wave his wand, making the stone box that had enclosed them vanish. He then grabbed the journal and quill out of the air and threw them back into his pocket before darting towards the small pile of rocks upon which the baby dragon lay unconscious. Once beside it, he dropped down to his knees.

Harry made it to him just in time to hear what he was saying.

"Sleep little one," Slytherin said, and there was a sad smile on his face.

"Sleep, and let me go put your mother to rest in the manner she deserves.

Her sacrifice will forever be cherished by the Wizardkind."

The memory exploded into a blast of color and dissolved into silvery strands, just as a mighty fog swept in and filled everything around Harry. Salazar Slytherin's voice echoed in his ears, "My lesson to you, seeker of our paths, is this. Seek not true power afar, for you will only find it within."

The fog dissolved in a whirl of color and darkness, and Harry felt himself falling. With a soft thump, he fell back onto the bed in Ron's room.

As he quickly regained his bearings and stuffed the paper back into his inventory before laying back down on his bed in ease with himself, thoughts about what he had just witnessed filtered through his mind.

It didn't take him long to use Gamer's Mind to make the necessary connections. So far in this Quest, he was being told the tale of a forgotten war. How the British were losing at first, and then the house-elves turned the tides, which then led to the Dementors being let loose into the world, which in turn led to...whatever happened in the memory.

He really needed to find the remaining two Memory Pages before he could form a complete picture, but one thing was for sure, Harry thought as he pulled up the window for one of his most powerful skills.

He had a strong feeling that he had just witnessed exactly why his Dragon's Breath could kill Dementors.

Dragon's Breath, Lv-2

A concentrated breath of fire mimicking the magical properties of Dragon fire. Capable of burning through almost anything, and can be used for metal work too.

5% level of control

Cost - 950 MP

A mother sacrificing herself to save her child, granting powerful protection to the child. That was entirely too familiar to him after all.

Early next morning, loud thundering footsteps up the stairs woke Harry from his sleep. Just as he had pushed himself up to a sitting position and shared a bewildered stare with Ron, who had been woken up by the noise just like he was, Hermione came barging into the room, slamming the door open behind her.

"You two! Get yourself out of bed and downstairs!" she ordered, "We have letters from school."

That was enough to wake both of them up.

As Hermione left their room and went across the house loudly waking up anyone and everyone who was there, Harry and Ron quickly changed

into fresh clothes.

"What'd you reckon the letter is about?" Ron asked in a muffled voice as he stuffed his head through the hole of his sweater.

"Don't know," Harry replied as he woke a half-disgruntled Hedwig up, "Could be about the end of the year exams. They were canceled once the school was suspended, so maybe they want us to take the exams in the Ministry or something."

"It could also be about which new school we go to couldn't it?" Ron asked hopefully. Harry knew that he wasn't the kind of guy who would be too keen on having to give exams.

"Could be," Harry agreed, "Has your Dad heard anything about which school we'll go to in the Ministry?"

"Dad?" Ron scoffed, "He knows about as many people in the Department of Education as our garden-gnomes do."

"Then I guess we'll find out what the letter is about downstairs."

"I'm not too keen on it though," Ron muttered, before clarifying further upon seeing Harry's curious look, "Don't want to be around Loony Lovegood. That girl is too many kinds of crazy at once."

"Luna Lovegood is here?" Harry asked, a feeling of dread creeping up his spine.

Ron frowned, "Didn't Mum and Dad tell you last night before leaving? When I convinced them to let you and Hermione come over for today, the twins and Ginny revolted. They went on a hunger strike, telling Dad that he was playing favorites. There was a whole episode, and at the end, they agreed to let the twins go over to their Lee Jordan's house and allow Lovegood to come over as well."

That feeling of dread that Harry was feeling creep up his spine decided to stop creeping and instead sped up into a sprightly walk, perhaps even a

light run.

"You look disturbed Harry," Hedwig's voice echoed in his mind as she flapped over onto his shoulder.

Harry frowned before looking at Ron, who seemed to be obliviously putting on socks. He hadn't heard Hedwig's voice, which meant that Hedwig was keeping this conversation between them both.

"It's nothing," Harry muttered under his breath.

Soon, they finished putting on their clothes and headed downstairs, where Hermione, Ginny, Percy, and much to Harry's trepidation, Luna Lovegood were sitting around the kitchen table.

They headed over and found chairs for themselves, Hedwig taking off from Harry's shoulder and flying onto the top of the grandfather clock where she perched herself, proudly looking over the room like an overly self-important guardian angel.

Harry looked around the table.

Percy and Ginny were openly staring at Hedwig, Hermione was looking through a stack of letters that she held, Ron seemed to be fearfully leaning away from Luna, who was sitting next to him with a bright woozy smile aimed right at Harry who was sitting across the table from her.

"Hello Harry!" she said happily once their eyes met, raising her hand into the air and wildly waving at him, "You have a pretty bird."

"Hello Luna," Harry replied, relieved that Luna seemed to have stopped calling him 'Mr. Toadinger' and started referring to him by his real name,

"Thank you."

"You're welcome," she said, before giving him a blatantly obvious wink and a thumbs up. Harry's relief flew down the drain.

Ginny, who seemed a lot less shy since the last time Harry had seen her,

frowned before asking, "What was that about Luna?"

"Well, Ginny," Luna started magnanimously, "You see, Harry is actually an Umdingering Toadinger-"

"He's a what?" Hermione interrupted, looking up from the letters she was arranging, befuddled.

"I think we're getting off the topic here. We need to look at those letters," Harry hurriedly intervened before his secrets and sanity could follow his relief down the drain, looking at Percy as he silently urged him to take charge of the conversation.

Percy, thankfully, cottoned on pretty fast, "Right. Granger, do you have everyone's letters here? Even yours, Lovegood's and Potter's?"

Hermione nodded before passing the letters around the table to everyone, "These letters don't have addresses on them, just our names, so the owls probably ended up finding us instead of going to our homes."

Harry took his letter, before cracking open the Hogwarts wax seal and pulling out the parchment paper.

HOGWARTS SCHOOL of WITCHCRAFT and WIZARDRY

Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore

(Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorc., Chf. Warlock,
Supreme Mugwump, International Confed. of Wizards)

Dear Mr. Potter,

We regret to inform you that Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry will remain closed until an unknown amount of time due to ongoing security and staff revisions. The end of the year exams for the term of 1992-1993 have been suspended, and all the students have been granted passing marks by default. Since our students' education is our first priority, you will be temporarily transferred to another school, where you will receive the same high quality of education that you have come to expect at Hogwarts.

That school is yet to be decided, and you will be notified by owl as soon as it is finalized. Enclosed is a brochure containing a list of the various schools of magic around the world for your information.

Yours sincerely,

Minerva McGonagall

Deputy Headmistress

Harry looked over to peek at Hermione's letter, which seemed to be pretty much identical to his. Soon, everyone else finished reading their letters as well, it didn't take long to confirm that Ginny, Ron, Luna, Hermione as well as Harry had pretty much identical letters. Percy, however, looked like someone had taken the ground out from under his feet.

"Percy?" Ron asked, "What's wrong?"

Percy looked up from the letter at Ron, and then back at the letter, before shaking his head, "It's nothing. I need to go see if I can find some stuff on these schools in my books. You...you lot behave down here alright?"

He pushed back his chair, stood up, and headed up the staircase with a blank look on his face.

Ron stared after him with a frown, "What's wrong with him?"

"Ron you idiot," Ginny admonished as soon as Percy's footsteps were out of earshot, "You know how excited he was about becoming Head Boy next year. He's probably devastated."

"Oh," Ron wilted, "I didn't think. I thought he was still mad at me because Scabbers is missing."

Ginny looked ready to tear into Ron again, which was probably why Hermione quickly interrupted the conversation, "That's all well and good, but what Percy said is right. We should research the schools at first. Wherever we go, we might have to spend a lot of time there, so knowing

about it makes sense."

Suddenly, a window popped up in front of Harry.

Ping!

Quest Alert!

Find at least one previously unknown piece of information about each of the schools on that list only with the assistance from those in the Burrow.

Rewards,

2000 exp

1 stat point

Knowledge about Schools

Failure,

Loss of student reputation

YES/NO?

Harry pressed Yes.

The failure consequences weren't that bad, and even if he did fail the quest then he could just go ask Nicholas and Perenelle about the schools to learn more about them.

Luna, who seemed to have been fascinated by the grains of table's wood until now, decided to speak up again, "Should we start with the brochure that came in the letter then? We probably should, before the Nargles start stealing them and hiding them away."

"Er..." Harry stared blankly at her before saying, "Yeah...we probably should."

They dug into their envelopes and pulled out their brochures before opening them up.

WIZARDING SCHOOLS AROUND THE WORLD

Beauxbatons Academy of Magic is a prestigious school of magic located in

France which accepts students from France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

Castelobrujo is a school of magic rumoured to be as ancient as Hogwarts. Located in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil, it accepts students from all over South America.

Durmstrang Institute is a wizarding school whose exact location is unknown, although many believe it is in Sweden or Norway. It accepts students mostly from northern Europe.

Ilvermorny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is a school of magic located in the United States of America which accepts students from all over North America.

Koldovstoretz is a very mysterious school of magic located in Russia which only accepts students from its own country.

Mahoutokoro School of Magic is an academy of magic located on a volcanic island in Japan which accepts students from all around Asia.

Ugadon School of Magic is a school of magic located in the Mountains of the Moon in Uganda which accepts students from all over Africa.

"Well," Ginny muttered as she finished reading, "They weren't exactly being descriptive, were they? All they told us is where the schools are."

"It does make sense when you think about it," Harry said as he closed his own brochure and threw it onto the table. "They don't want us to think the other schools are better and just transfer away do they?"

"I guess it makes sense, but it does seem like a shady thing to do."

Hermione said with a frown.

"So what do we do now?" Ron asked, trying to completely ignore Luna who was trying to balance the brochure on her head and somehow managing to fail every time.

Harry looked around. It was going to be hard to do it without the

Flamels' help, but there was only one way to complete the quest.

"We pool our knowledge together. I know a fair bit about Beauxbatons, since my guardians are from France. I remember that we read a bit about Castelobruxo and Koldovstoretz from those adverts they were running in the newspapers a few months back."

"I think we still have those newspapers!" Ron chimed up, "Mum probably saved those somewhere, and I bet we could find them if we looked."

That seemed to start their brains rolling. Hermione perked up, before turning to Harry and saying, "Oh! I researched Ilvermorny before joining Hogwarts! My parents wanted to see what other English-speaking schools we had as options."

Harry nodded enthusiastically, "So we have only Mahoutokoro, Uagadou, and Durmstrang left."

"Durmstrang is famous for how secretive it is about where it is and its ways. I honestly don't think we could find much more if we tried," Ginny spoke up dejectedly.

"Oh don't be silly Ginny," Luna piped up in the middle of trying to balance the letter perfectly flat on her nose, surprising them all, "Daddy and I go to Sweden all the time to look for Crumple-horned Snorkacks. I don't know too much, but I've heard some stuff from the odd Blibbering Humdinger."

Wisely deciding to not question what any of those were, Harry said,

"Then there's only Mahoutokoro and Uagadou left. We'll look for more on those later. For now we should pool whatever we know together."

"Why don't you three write down whatever you know while Ron and I go search for those newspapers?" Ginny, said, her voice gaining a slight stutter as she directly addressed Harry.

And so they all sprang into action.

Well...the four of them did. Luna just wandered over to the clock Hedwig was sitting on and started hopping up and down, waving her arms trying to make the Phoenix fall off.

Ginny dragged Ron upstairs to look for the newspapers while Hermione pulled out a notepad and a pen.

"Where were you keeping that?" Harry asked. Hermione's clothing didn't really have pockets in it.

"Don't ask questions you don't want to know the answers to Harry,"

Hermione simply said, pulling the cap off the pen and getting ready to write, "Now tell me what you know about the Beauxbatons."

And so they sat there for the next fifteen minutes, first Harry telling her everything he knew about Beauxbatons, including how the school placed a strong emphasis on etiquette and social graces, believing that it led to more responsible wizards with a stronger resistance to the temptations of the Dark Arts. Then Harry took up the notepad and Hermione tried to remember as much of the research she had done prior to her first year as possible. Amongst the most interesting things Harry noted down was that Ilvermorny had been founded by an Irish witch and a Muggle, which led Harry to believe that this school could be much friendlier to Muggleborns.

They even managed to eventually convince Luna to stop harassing the slightly constipated looking Hedwig and tell them what little she knew about Durmstrang. It wasn't much, and Harry was pretty sure one of the things she said was probably false, but it was something at least.

Ron came through soon after, finding the newspapers that had the advertisements on them, telling them more about Castelobruxo.

Information about Koldovstoretz though, remained very vague.

The best find of the day, however, happened a full half an hour later,

when Ginny came barreling down the stairs.

"I found it!" she declared, tossing what looked like a magazine onto the table before tiredly falling into a chair. Ron looked at her strangely before picking it up.

"This is one of Mum's potions magazines."

"Not just a potions magazine," Ginny said with a tired smirk, "A potions magazine with an advert for the Wizarding Potions Championship!"

Then it clicked.

The Wizarding Potions Championship was an event that was held once every 7 years. Harry had only read of it once before in an old Potions book in the library. It was held between 4 schools. Hogwarts, Koldovstoretz, and most importantly the two schools that they needed information about; Mahoutokoro and Uagadou.

A grin spread across Harry's face, "Ginny! That is an amazing find!"

Ginny turned a bit red, before squeaking out a thank you. Apparently, she wasn't all that much over her crush after all.

The magazine had profiles on all three foreign schools and what their reputations were in the international community, which was pretty much all they needed.

They did, however, run into a problem.

The description for Uagadou was written in English and Swahili since they were both official languages of Uganda. Mahoutokoro's was also written in Japanese as well as English, so they could read that just fine too.

Koldovstoretz's description, however, was entirely in Russian and only had a tiny line at the bottom in English.

The Headmaster of Koldovstoretz refused to allow Potions Weekly to publish a translated version of this description.

"What in the world?!" Ron exclaimed in frustration, "Why would they publish their descriptions in English magazines if they weren't going to publish it in English?!"

"Maybe to protect their secrecy," Hermione mused.

Ron wasn't having it, "But why would they even publish it here if they were so keen on secrecy?"

They had no answer for that. Harry frowned as he pulled the magazine over to himself and ran his eyes over the block of text written in Russian.

It was a right shame that his AllSpeak skill didn't allow him to read languages.

Ping!

Area Sense: Someone is behind you!

At the same instant, Luna, who Harry had last seen disappear upstairs, suddenly materialized behind him and leaned down to look at the magazine over his shoulder, startling Harry and nearly making him fall off his chair.

"Is that Russian? I can help with that," she asked dreamily.

Hermione, who had really gotten into this little Project they had started, eagerly asked, "What does it say? Do you know?"

Luna nodded, rattling her radish earrings, one of which poked Harry in the eye painfully, "I do. Daddy taught me a bit when we were searching for Brazilian Crisslebristlers in Siberia."

"Why were you searching for Brazilian Crisslebristlers in Siberia?"

Luna completely ignored Ron's pointed question as she picked up the magazine.

"Luna I don't think-"

"Let her help Ginny," Hermione interrupted, "If she can do it then it will really be helpful."

"But Hermione-

"Ronald." Hermione frowned at Ron disapprovingly, "Don't be rude. Let her help."

Harry, as he gently his eye, decided that he had a strong feeling they were going to regret this.

Luna turned the magazine upside down and held it right next to her nose, before starting to read, "It says here, 'If at first, you don't succeed, lick a tree and tickle a dog and sniff an Umdingering Toadinger.'"

She then closed the magazine and proceeded to stuff her nose into Harry's hair before taking a big long sniff.

And then there was silence.

"Er..." Hermione was the first one who found her voice. She looked like she had finally grasped why everyone else at the table wasn't keen on letting Luna help. "Are you sure that is what it says Luna?"

"Absolutely," she said, nodding her head so vigorously that her hair shook as if it'd been caught up in a hurricane.

Caught up in a hurricane, coincidentally, was what the minds of the rest of the people in the rooms felt like.

Fifteen minutes later, they found a more reliable translator in the form of Percy, who seemed quite willing to help out once they mentioned they were trying to learn more about the other schools. Translating the entire thing word by word using a dictionary took a stupidly long time and provided them with a very rough translation, but with them all huddled around Percy's desk and helping him, it wasn't too difficult.

As soon as they had finished writing the final line on the list, a window popped up in front of Harry.

Ping!

Quest Success!

Find at least one previously unknown piece of information about each of the schools on that list only with the assistance from those in the Burrow.

Rewards,

2000 exp

1 stat point

Knowledge about Schools

Their list, now complete, read like this:

Beauxbatons - Good at Non-Verbal Magic. Teach etiquette and behavior with heavy emphasis. Take their OWL equivalent at 6th year instead of 5th like Hogwarts

Ilvermorny - Was founded by a Witch and a Muggle. Is protected by elf-like creatures called Pukwudgies. The students are taught mysterious Native American magic unknown to the rest of the world

Durmstrang - Famous for teaching Dark Arts freely. The position of headmaster is held by Igor Karkaroff, who is rumored to be a Death Eater. Known home of the yet to be discovered Garglesnarfling Badooziars.

Castelobrujo - Students are good at Magizoology and Herbology. School is protected by Caipora, small furry spirits who're (according to the advert) good at their jobs. This school is just as old as Hogwarts

Mahoutokoro - One of the strictest and most academically oriented schools in the world. Is openly opposed to teaching Dark Arts. Alongside the normal course, it also provides early basic education since wizards and witches are 7-year-olds

Uagadou - Students are masters of Transfiguration, with many becoming Animagi by the time they graduate. Known to cast spells wandlessly and not use wands at all. Students are also known to score well in Astronomy.

Koldovstoretz - Teaches Dark Arts, although only to older students. Students

are known to be very good at Potions. Strangely, they're known to fly on actual uprooted trees instead of broomsticks in Quidditch.

"They do Quidditch with trees?!" was the first thing Ron exclaimed as soon as he finished reading the list.

"I can't believe this," Hermione muttered exasperatedly, "One of the schools could have a Death Eater for a Headmaster, and the first thing that he talks about is Quidditch."

Harry had been a bit on the fence about that particular piece of information. On one hand, if they ended up being sent to Durmstrang and the Headmaster did turn out to be a Death Eater, he wasn't sure he'd be able to stay his hands and do nothing.

On the other hand, it was Luna who had told them about it, so there was a question mark the size of the Giant Squid on whether or not it was true.

"I don't think Professor Dumbledore would send us to Durmstrang or Koldovstoretz, considering their stance on Dark Arts," Ginny said out loud, pulling Harry out of his thoughts, "He'll probably send us to an something easier to understand, so Beauxbatons or Ilvermorny seems pretty likely."

Harry shook his head, "He might not get a choice. It's all up to the Ministry and the ICW. Besides, this list is still very flimsy. We weren't able to find much."

"That is actually a very decent list," Percy disagreed, "Wizarding schools are really private about themselves, so I doubt you could have found better."

A sudden loud crack of apparition sounded across the house, immediately silencing all of them.

Percy frowned before closing the translator book and jumping off his chair, heading out of his room and down the stairs. The others followed,

reaching the living room just in time to see Percy open the door to the very frazzled looking Mr. and Mrs. Weasley.

"Mum? Dad? What happened?" Percy worriedly asked, "Weren't you going to stay at Aunt Muriel's today?"

"No time to explain," Mr. Weasley said, placing his trunk near the umbrella stand before hurrying past them and rushing up the stairs two steps at a time.

"Just turn on the wireless dear. Your father and I need to head to the Ministry immediately," Mrs. Weasley said, patting Percy on the back before hastily following Mr. Weasley up the stairs.

Probably feeling just as confused as Harry was, Percy quickly headed over to the mantelpiece and turned on the Wireless.

With a crackle and a hiss, a rusty sounding voice filled the room.

"-there has been an attack in South London in which unknown Dark Wizards have used rituals on a Muggle to grant him unnatural strength and released him into the streets, where he has been causing havoc and destruction for the last hour. All Ministry personnel under the Department of Magical Secrecy as well as any civilians experienced in Healing are to report to the Ministry as soon as possible! Everyone else is to stay indoors and raise their Muggle-Repelling Wards."

There was a small pause, and the announcer's voice was trembling when he resumed.

"The Statute of Secrecy is under serious threat. I repeat. The Statute of Secrecy is under serious threat."

Archibald Dundy had been the British representative in the Educational Office of ICW since eleven years, and all those years he had examined and approved International Teaching Licenses for dozens of people, granting them the qualifications to teach at any of the eleven ICW

certified schools.

None of them had ever quite been like this one.

Archibald closed the applicant's file, looked to his left, and shared a look with Amare Kitumba, who was representative from Uganda and a very close friend. Amare, in spite of his naturally unflappable composure, seemed to be sporting a frown.

To his right sat Madam Yao, a bald-headed woman who looked mystifyingly ageless. She was a representative from South-East Asia, which had been a relatively recent addition to the ICW. The three of them were the final examiners; the Tribunal who were supposed to either approve or deny the Application for the International Teaching License that lay before them.

The three of them sat on one side of a large desk going through the applicant's file while on the other side of the desk sat the applicant himself, patiently waiting for their questions. He looked like he was in his late twenties, young for wanting to be a teacher, but he had approved younger.

He called himself Markus Black.

"Mr. Black," Amare broke the silence, his deep voice further amplifying his heavy accent, "You have passed our DADA Teacher's theory and practical tests with excellent marks, and your examiner writes in your file that he has never seen a Patronus cast quite as smoothly before. That is a great compliment coming from someone as experienced in Wand Magic as Monsieur Ferrati."

Markus smiled pleasantly, "That was really kind of him."

Amare nodded before his brow furrowed and his tone turned harsh,

"Indeed. Let me be perfectly honest Mr. Black. I find the lack of information in your file disturbing. You say you are from England, yet

there is no proof of that. You have provided no documentation of your birth. You do not have OWL or NEWT certificates, and nor have you provided us with a concrete mailing address. And despite all of that, you want an International Teaching License in DADA? If your performance in our Aptitude and Character tests hadn't been excellent then I would have thrown this application out without a second thought."

Archibald nodded. He too had seen the lack of any proper documentation in the file, and it had stuck out as disturbing to him too.

"I wish I could furnish you with better documentation, Sir," Markus said as he looked at them regretfully, "But I do not have them. I have been an orphan ever since I was an infant, through my teenage years I was home-schooled, and I have been a nomad ever since I have turned an adult."

"So why this sudden interest in becoming a teacher? You are young, so surely you must want to travel some more." Madam Yao asked, rustling her yellow embroidered robes as she leaned forward in her chair, resting her arms on the table.

Archibald gave a slight start. This was the first time he had heard her speak, and for some reason, he had expected her to have a heavy accent. Her English in reality was pristine and her voice devoid of any accent whatsoever.

"I wanted to become a teacher to be able to make a positive difference in the future," Black started, "I believe it will be a fulfilling challenge: stimulating the next genera-"

Madam Yao's lips tightened before she sharply interrupted his answer, "I asked you a question, and I require an honest answer, not something you rehearsed twenty times beforehand."

Markus stared at her with wide eyes, shocked into silence.

Archibald was impressed. It was the first time Madam Yao had ever

joined a Tribunal, and already she seemed to be tailor-suited for the job.

"I agree," Amare said after a moment.

Their applicant looked at each of them with wide eyes for a moment, before his shoulders slumped. With a sigh, he extended his hand towards them, palm downwards. Archibald frowned, before looking at it closely. It didn't take him long to see what the applicant was trying to show them.

A bright red scar stuck out brightly against the man's pale skin, almost as if the words of the scar had been carved over and over and over into the back of his hand.

I must not tell lies

It took Archibald half a second to recognize it for what it was. His head snapped up to meet the applicant's eyes as soon as he did.

"That is the scar of a Blood Quill," he muttered, horror tinging his voice.

Amare and Madam Yao shared a look. Archibald had no doubt that they knew what it was too.

Markus nodded, steel-faced as he pulled his hand back and tucked it under the table, "One of my teachers did that to me as well as my friends...as a form of punishment. I already knew she was a horrible person before she did it, but my friends...they forever lost their trust in teachers and those in authority. The reason I want to become a teacher is to make sure that no one like her ever gets close to a child again. They deserve better."

There was a small pause before Madam Yao nodded and turned to look at Archibald, "He has the qualifications as well as the motivation. I vote to grant him the License."

"Thank you," Markus quietly said.

In all his years of work, Archibald's gut had never served him wrong.

Right now, his gut was telling him that this applicant wasn't lying, and that was enough for him.

"I too vote yes," he said, getting a grateful nod in return from the applicant.

They all looked at Amare, who was considering the man sitting in front of them gravely. A silent moment passed, and then he said, "You have purpose Markus Black...I approve of that. I vote to grant you the License as well. Congratulations."

"Thank you very much," Markus said earnestly, "You won't regret it."

With their decision made, they passed around the files, each putting their signatures wherever it was required. When the file made his way to Archibald, he noticed something interesting as he signed the third of the dotted lines he had to sign.

"It says here that you have a wand with Thestral tail hair and wood of Elderberry," Archibald said with a raised eyebrow, "You do know how the old saying about Elder wands goes don't you Mr. Black? 'Wand of elder never prosper'."

Markus Black chuckled, "You know what? That probably explains a lot about my life."

Archibald smiled. The man had a sense of humor, which was always good to see in a teacher.

Through the corner of his eyes, he thought he saw that Madam Yao had suddenly frozen in her spot. When he turned to look at her however, she was completely normal and relaxed. Dismissing it as a figment of his imagination, Archibald turned back to his file.

As Hermione finished her dinner, wished her parents a good night and headed to bed, thoughts about what had happened throughout the day were slowly churning in the back of her mind. It had taken Mr. and Mrs.

Weasley a few hours to return from the Ministry, after which they had apologized to her before rushing her back home.

Harry had stayed though. They had mentioned something about Harry's home being only a Floo away while her home not being so easily accessible.

Hermione didn't mind.

Meeting her friends was something she definitely appreciated, and talking with Ginny and advising her on how not to panic in front of Harry had definitely been nice as well, but she couldn't afford to slack in her goals.

The last year of her life had been terrifying, but it had also been very educational.

It had taught her that the wizarding world was dangerous. It had taught her that all the knowledge that she had collected through reading books and through school allowed her to do very little to protect herself and her friends against someone who was determined to wish them harm.

With that realization had come fear.

Fear of losing her friends. Fear of her family, who didn't fully know how horrible the world of magic could be, being hurt. Fear for her own life.

And that fear, in turn, gave rise to determination. She needed to be better...stronger...

Closing the door of her room and climbing into her sheets, Hermione patiently waited until the sounds of her parents talking in bed completely stopped and the silence of the night took its place.

Once it was all quiet, she slid out of her bed and tiptoed over to her school trunk and opened it, dipping her hands into the folds of her school robes before pulling out a thin, plain, dark covered book. Closing the trunk behind her, she quietly made her way back to her bed and climbed

into it before resting the book on her pillow and opening it.

On the first page was the title of the book, followed by the name of the author.

Curtain of Darkness: A Theoretical Thesis on Dark Arts

By - Ralzinys el Sathar

With dull eyes filled with too little sleep and too much of everything else, she read on.

What school do you think Harry should go to? I'm leaning towards Beauxbatons, since Terry is already there and I could integrate Fleur and maybe even Gabrielle into the story. Maybe even delve a bit further into Flamels' backstories.

Let me know what you think about the chapter too.

P.S. Did a double update because I'm too impatient to wait to post after writing. Might take a bit longer on the next chapter though...lots of plotty and actiony stuff to write from scratch.

43. Book-III:Born Without Magic

Chapter 2:

After Hermione had left, Mrs. Weasley had ordered them all back to their rooms, not willing to let them keep listening to the wireless news on the radio and the ominous reports of people being trapped and getting hurt.

After a not inconsiderable amount of protesting, Ron had stomped off back to his room with Harry, Luna, and Ginny in tow.

Together, they had shuffled into the tiny bright orange room.

"It's not fair!" Ron declared as Harry made himself comfortable on the chair by Ron's desk and the two girls took a seat on the bed.

"Sit down Ron. You're turning red," Ginny said dryly, "I'm sure mum is just worried about us."

Ron glared at her for a moment before jumping onto his desk and sitting

down on it cross-legged with a humph, "If some Muggle attacks the house we won't be much safer here in the room than down there, will we?"

An amused trill filled the room.

Ron jumped and almost toppled off the table, before turning around to look at the bird stand that stood near the corner of the room from upon which Hedwig was looking at him amusedly.

"She's very right, Ronald," Luna said nodding sagely, making her earrings bounce, "We are much safer up here together under her guardianship than on our own spread around the house."

Ron and Ginny stared at her confusedly before getting even more surprised when Harry hesitantly nodded to agree with her. "Hedwig was pointing out to you that she's here to get us out of here very fast if necessary."

"I've been sharpening my talons too. If anyone comes for the torchheads and the loopy one, I'll stab 'em," Hedwig's voice added helpfully in Harry's mind.

Ginny noticed Harry staring fixedly at Hedwig and in an unusually perceptive manner, asked, "What did she say to you? She was talking to you right?"

Before Harry could reply to her, Ron scoffed, "Don't be absurd Ginny. Hedwig's pretty smart, but she can't talk."

"She does with me. In my head, using mind arts," Harry corrected, deciding to let go of that trivial little secret.

Ron stared at him before shaking his head. "...Of course she does...why am I even surprised? Does Professor Dumbledore's one talk too?"

Harry nodded, "He's pretty ancient and he talks to pretty much anyone he wants. Hedwig's pretty young and shy, so she only talks to me right now though."

"I am NOT shy. I'm just...private."

"Apologies."

"So?" Ginny asked, "What did she say?"

"Hmm?" Harry asked, before suddenly remembering Ginny's initial question, "Oh, she was saying if anyone tries to hurt you all, she'll stab them."

Ron burst out laughing, before turning to look at the magical bird and instantly sobering up when he caught sight of her eyeing her glinting talons. Luna on the other hand, jumped up from the bed and hopped over to the bird stand before picking up the bird and grabbing her in a tight bear hug. The accompanying indignant squawk set Harry off in a fit of wild laughter.

Ginny smiled at that, before turning to Harry, "Can you...um...tell her that I say thanks?"

"This one is not my least favorite of the seven redheads," Hedwig declared after Luna had put her back down, looking up from preening her ruffled feathers to chirp at the redheaded girl.

Harry grinned, "She understood you just fine. She also says thanks."

Ginny turned red.

They spent some time talking about how Mrs. Weasley had returned back to the Ministry to help out since she was trained in the healing arts and if the Aurors would be able to contain the Muggle or not.

Ron wasn't worried at all. "We get these warnings all the time! Well... maybe not rampaging ritual powered Muggles, but giant coffeepots, dragons on the loose, crups, flying vehicles, and so on. Dad covers half of those. You should see him and the Obliviators at work. He'll have it sorted in no time at all."

Harry wasn't so sure about it.

Soon afterward, upon realizing that during their little knowledge-finding-quest and subsequent wild panic after the radio message the morning sun had climbed upwards in the sky and turned a lot harsher, Ron kicked the two girls out of his room and jumped onto his bed with the intent of taking the longest of naps. Within minutes, he was snoring away on the bed.

Ginny had left shaking her head before heading up to her own room with the loony blond in tow, and the only one left awake and in a distinctly uneasy mood in Ron Weasley's room was Harry.

That message from the radio played itself over and over again in his head.

"-there has been an attack in South London in which unknown Dark Wizards have used rituals on a Muggle to grant him unnatural strength and released him into the streets, where he has been causing havoc and destruction for the last hour-The Statute of Secrecy is under serious threat."

Surely that couldn't be as normal as Ron was making it out to be. Why would the Aurors let the rampage go on for an hour if it was such a regular occurrence? He had read book upon book on the dangers of dark rituals and the mind-melting power and insanity that they bred in people. Surely the Wireless wouldn't be making a big deal about this if it wasn't really dangerous. People could be getting hurt or dying!

'Calm down,' he thought to himself, 'there is no point in procrastinating. The Aurors probably have everything in control already.'

Deciding that he couldn't sleep, he figured that perhaps it was best to try out some of those mental exercises that Perenelle had recommended to him. He needed to calm his mind.

So Harry sat down cross-legged on Ron's desk and closed his eyes, focusing on feeling the mana around him, letting his own magic seep out

of his body and mingle with the air around him. It was a rich environment, the Burrow, potent with years upon years of magic being cast. Not like Hogwarts, but a lot more...homely.

It felt nice.

Slowly, and almost unconsciously, he drifted into a sort of haze, letting all the sound and smells around him pass through his mind freely.

A soft ping sounded in his ears, and it felt like his senses opened up.

Every sound felt louder. Every smell felt distinct. He was sure that if he opened his eyes, he would be able to see a lot further than he could have normally. It felt like Area Sense, but there was no danger around him. He had caused it to trigger on his own and was taking in all the knowledge and sensory power that the skill granted to him, even if it only lasted for a few moments.

A grainy muffled voice reached his ears. The static in between the words was enough for him to realize it was the wireless that Percy was listening to down in the living room. With a bit of intrigue, he listened in closer.

"-situation spiraled wildly out of control when the Muggle managed to make his way into the Diagon Alley. With the Aurors' spells and magical restraints bouncing right off the Muggle and the immense brute strength of the Muggle making it virtually impossible for any Auror to restrain him, there was no other choice than to evacuate Diagon Alley. Most people have been evacuated but many still remain in the Alley cut off from help by the rampaging Muggle wildly charging around in the Alley and destroying everything in its path... hold on...we have just received confirmation that Auror Emmeline Vance has been severely injured in an attempt to rescue a civilian-"

Harry's eyes snapped open and the sensory haze broke. In front of him hovered a level up window and a quest alert.

Due to skillful use, a skill has leveled up!

Area Sense, Lv-6 (30%)

Allows the user to get a sense of the area around him/her. A more permanent version of the Supersensory Charm. The higher the level the more information is provided.

Effective until 55 feet.

Ping!

Quest Alert!

Save the people in Diagon Alley and defeat the Muggle!

Rewards,

15000 exp

10 skill points

Public reputation

Failure,

Death. Of course.

YES/NO?

Harry pressed yes and waved the windows away.

"Alright. That's it. I'm going," he muttered to himself before jumping to his feet.

He put on his shoes before heading over to Hedwig's perch and whispering to her, "Can you stay here and make sure that everyone here gets out of here safely in case something bad happens?"

"I will. But Harry, what are you going to do?"

"What I do best. Meddle in things that are none of my business. Stay safe girl," he replied, pulling out his Invisibility Cloak and Wolf jacket out of his inventory and putting on the jacket and then the Cloak. Knowing that Ron would stay out of it for at least a few more hours, Harry opened the bedroom door and snuck out quietly, before turning around to close the door behind him.

Safely latching the door, he turned around, only to jump out of his skin when he came nose to nose with Luna Lovegood.

"Are you going to the Diagon Alley?" she asked, as if she had decided to ignore the fact that Harry was wearing a Cloak of Invisibility.

Harry took a breath and stepped back, before asking in disbelief, "You can see me?"

"Of course I can see you silly. Why wouldn't I?" she asked, "I heard what the man on the Wireless said. The Blibbering Humdingers have been buzzing with bad news too. Something bad is happening Mr. Toadinger. Are you going to help those people like you helped me?"

Harry stared at her, before nodding, "I'm going to stop whatever is trying to hurt those people."

Luna nodded, before taking off the bottlecap necklace she was wearing and putting it in Harry's chest pocket. It wasn't one of his magical pockets, so the caps all bunched up together and it looked like he had stuffed a rock the size of his fist down his pocket.

"For good luck," she said with a grave look, "Trust me."

Harry nodded hesitantly, before stepping around her and heading downstairs. As he stepped down the stairs quietly and tiptoed to the living room, he caught sight of Percy sitting at the couch with his arms crossed, his eyes tensely flicking from the now silent wireless to the front door again and again. His wand was clutched in his hand.

He was waiting, Harry realized, and guarding. His respect for Percy grew a little bit.

"Sorry Percy," Harry muttered, before pulling out Riddle's wand and pointing it at him and muttering, "Stupefy!"

Red light lit up the entire room for a second and Percy slumped over in the sofa, out cold. He would wake up a couple of hours later on his own,

probably thinking that he had dozed off...or so Harry told himself to push away the guilt.

Opening the door, closing it securely behind him and casting a locking charm on it for good measure, he ran out the front garden past the garden gnomes stealing the potatoes and the pumpkin patches. He didn't stop running until he was far out of the range of the Weasley home wards.

With barely a thought, he turned on the spot and disappeared into nothingness with a silent whoosh.

When he reappeared, he found himself in one of the nooks in one of Diagon's many little side alleys, hidden behind a large pile of boxes.

It was the place he had met Lockhart the previous year.

Taking a moment to get his bearings, he realized that he was hidden near the Flourish and Blotts bookshop, which put him closer to Gringotts than the Leaky Cauldron. The loud noises of destruction and people screaming and shouting spells weren't the best of signs of the safety of the people in the Alley.

Keeping the Cloak on, he snuck along the wall to the mouth of the side alley to take a look at what was going on and get an idea of what he was going to do.

He wasn't expecting what he saw.

The alley was in complete disarray. Ollivander's wand shop and all the shops surrounding it were in complete ruins. The front of the shop had caved in and the old wandmaker was lying in the pile of rubble unmoving.

Harry quickly cast an Observe at the old man.

Garrick Ollivander Lv-88 (Status: Unconscious, Concussion)

HP: 8000/21000

MP: 25/9000

He breathed a sigh of relief. At least he was alive. Breathing a sigh of relief, he turned his head to look at the attacker.

In his head, Harry had pictured a giant burly crazed man with angry red eyes rampaging around the Alley, but this wasn't it. The lithe, almost fighter-like form of a young black haired boy; looking less than 15 years of age; darted across the alley, grabbing chairs and tables and brooms and heavy obsidian cauldrons and throwing them with such force at the group of Aurors standing at the mouth of the Alley that were barely managing to protect themselves, trying to cast shields around themselves and the civilians cowering near the mouth of the Alley. Spells of all colors and types washed over the boy with no effect and the Aurors were clearly outmatched by an enemy that their magic had no action on.

Gamer's Mind immediately noted that there were many people hidden in some of the shops all around the Alley. It appeared that many people who did not know how to Apparate or couldn't Side-Along and didn't want to leave their family behind hadn't been rescued yet.

Finally, propped up on the remains of a wall near the Ollivander's was a familiar wounded Auror, bleeding heavily out of her side. She didn't seem to have her wand-Harry doubted she'd have the mental strength to cast any spells even if she did.

Emmeline Vance.

Ms. Roemmele. His old chemistry teacher. The woman who had guarded him for years, even when he never knew about her. She was right there, and Harry didn't need an Observe to realize that she was dying.

'Alright. Time to move Harry,' he thought to himself.

Gamer's Mind immediately set out his priorities. He needed to get to Vance first. Some of the Aurors were wounded, but their cuts and bruises

were not lethal. He'd have to get to her first, heal her, and then get her out of the Alley.

His eyes darted across the line of Aurors in search of a familiar face.

Nymphadora Tonks was at the back of the group, helping heal and patch up the wounded Aurors, every two seconds she seemed to be casting panicked glances in Vance's direction.

He'd get Vance to her. She was probably the only one that wouldn't shoot him on sight.

He'd get the civilians out next. He could Side-Along a couple at a time, but his Side-Along Apparition wasn't as silent as his normal Apparition at all. It made a noise. That wouldn't do at all. He couldn't run them across the place without risk of exposure either.

He glanced in the direction of Gringotts. The gates had been closed, doors had been sealed and the guards had all retreated. Typical of goblins to not help in any wizarding matters.

He was running out of options fast.

Then it hit him.

The ID.

Right. He could get the people out with the ID and then just get them out of the Alley as fast as he could. Possibly to some medical help.

Then he'd take care of the Muggle.

With the plan of action set in his head, Harry clutched his Cloak tighter around him and activated Unicorn Boost, dashing out of his hiding spot and through the Alley to the other side, ducking to dodge a flying chair thrown in the direction of Madam Malkin's Robes shop before shimmying along the wall to the spot near Ollivander's where Vance was propped up.

He was wading through the dust and the rubble and making his way closer to his old teacher when suddenly her head snapped up in his

direction. "Who's there?" she asked in a faint shivering voice.

Harry frowned. He didn't know if the dust had made him visible or the crumbling of the rubble had given him away, but it wouldn't do to have her panic and attract unwarranted attention. Left with no other option, he crouched down to activate Sneak and swiftly removed his cloak and slid it into his inventory in a swift motion, hoping that his familiar wolf jacket and modulated voice would be enough to assuage her

"It's me. Don't make a sound," he said in his disguised voice and thankfully, recognition sparked in her eyes and she nodded.

Harry stepped over a pile of rubble, crouched down beside her, and checked her Status to see what problems she had.

Emmeline Vance, Order of the Phoenix (Status: Concussion, Bruises, Compound Fractures of the Humerus, Ruptured Pancreas, Bleeding -10% hp per minute)

Lv-22

HP-100/1600

MP-20/2100

She was in really bad shape, but nothing that his Healing Touch couldn't handle.

Harry pulled up the Healing Touch skill and focused a large amount of mana in his hand, making it glow slightly from the inside. Vance's eyes widened as the glow grew more and more potent, before flinching slightly when Harry placed it on her bleeding wound.

A ripple of pure white light traveled across her entire body, making her glow for a second before every single one of her wounds faded away as if they were never there.

Her breathing eased and her eyes widened. "How-"

"Not now," Harry replied, "What can you tell me about that kid there?"

Anything at all will help."

"He..." Vance looked over Harry's shoulder at the rampaging boy who was slowly advancing on the Aurors, "The kid is thirteen. Magic doesn't affect him, restraints don't hold him, and he is strong enough to hold up two grown men with one arm. The older Aurors reckon that he might be a squib or the descendant of a squib that was left with Muggles. We think he had his magic unlocked by some dark wizard and then sent on a rampage. We don't know much else."

Harry nodded. He already had an idea about how he could subdue him.

"Are there reinforcements on the way?"

Vance nodded, "Senior Aurors were away on an international mission. They should be getting back soon. The teachers from Hogwarts should be arriving soon as well. Listen. There are people in the shops. The Menagerie...most of them are hiding in Madam Malkin's and the Menagerie. We can't apparate because we don't want to risk pulling attention. We are practically defenseless."

Harry turned to look at the Menagerie. The animals in there were causing a racket like nothing else.

He swiftly made a few adjustments to his plan.

"Right. If you get you over to the Menagerie, can you get people out of there? The animals should be able to hide the sound of you apparating."

"I can," Vance said, getting up to her feet and testing her fingers. Healing Touch had put her back in peak form, "You'll handle Madam Malkin's then?"

Harry nodded. Vance turned to look at the barricade of Aurors near the Alley entrance, before using her hands to mime a few signs in that direction. Harry turned around to look at what she was doing.

None of the Aurors; occupied as they were; had noticed him heal Vance.

None, except one. Nymphadora Tonks was staring at them wide-eyed, her eyes darting from him and her partner before she turned on the spot and ran back into the Leaky Cauldron.

"Get the people to the Leaky Cauldron. Tonks will make sure no one accidentally shoots you there," Vance said, and getting a nod back, she turned and darted across the Alley towards the Menagerie.

Before any of the Aurors could see her and realize that someone had healed her, Harry visualized the changing room in Madam Malkin's shop in his head and turned on the spot, disappearing from sight.

He reappeared inside said changing room and stepped out.

"AH-" a shrill voice started to scream, but almost instantly cut off. Harry took stock of the room.

There were almost a dozen people scattered around the place, most of them children. Madam Malkin was sitting on a chair, holding her hand tightly on the mouth of a child who sat on her lap. They were all looking at him with wide and fearful eyes.

"I'm here to get you out. Form a ring and grab each other's hands," Harry commanded. There was little time for idling and he needed to get people out as fast as he could. Much to his displeasure, no one moved.

"NOW!" he commanded again, holding out his hand.

Madam Malkin shakily protested, "You can't apparate us all. You'll splinch yourself and everyone else too."

"We're not apparating. Now quick!"

They started to move, Madam Malkin first, and then the rest, forming a ring of people grabbing each other's hands.

"Everyone here? Good," Harry said upon receiving a nod, before muttering 'ID Create' under his breath.

Some of the children shrieked as the world around them turned red and the noises of destruction in the Alley outside stopped.

Harry sighed, glad that it had worked. He had been worried that he wouldn't be able to bring so many people into the ID at once.

Together they all shuffled out of the shop and down the alley, his passengers too scared and confused to ask what was happening. They all got into the bar one by one and formed a ring once again at Harry's command, before he muttered under his breath, "ID Escape."

The red around them shattered and the real Leaky Cauldron took its place.

Harry found himself facing a dozen wand-points at once.

He looked around and took stock of the situation. The Aurors had turned the pub into an impromptu infirmary, where wounded Aurors lay on the floor being treated while dozens of worried family members paced around the edges of the room, awaiting the return of their loved ones.

Tom the barman rushed around the place, helping out wherever he could.

"Relax everyone!" Tonks, who was standing near the bar, yelled immediately. The wands dropped, but the looks of suspicion coming from the Aurors very much stayed.

"You got them out huh?" Tonks said, walking over to him as the children he had just rescued rushed to their waiting parents with cries of joy, "Em too...Thank you. I owe you another one."

A pop sounded behind them as Vance apparated in with the final two people from the Menagerie.

"Is everyone here?" she asked upon seeing Harry and Tonks together.

"Yes," Harry replied, causing half a dozen people around him to flinch due to his voice, "Have the reinforcements arrived?"

Tonks shook her head, "It'll take them some time."

"The Alley will be leveled by then at this rate. Why is he doing this?

Has he made any demands?"

"Only angry calls to bring more Aurors in so that he can kill more wizards."

"Fine then...I'm going in. Hopefully, I can tire him out enough to make it easy to capture him. Can you make the Aurors out front control their spellfire a little? Maybe ask them to try not to hit me?"

Vance and Tonks gave each other a worried glance before they both went over to the fireplace to talk to a purple robed Auror giving out orders. After what looked like a fair bit of arguing, all three came back over to Harry.

"I don't know who you are, but these two trust you and I trust them. If you can do anything at all to help, then do what you need to," a dark-skinned purple robed Auror with a Senior Auror badge attached to his chest; Kinglsey Shackbolt by the window floating above him; said, "I'll talk to the men. It's not as if our spells are doing any good. I'll get them to give you some covering fire."

With that, he stepped out of the pub and into the Alley, presumably to give orders to the Aurors outside. Harry was about to step outside behind him, but a hand on his shoulder stopped him.

It was Madam Malkin. "Thank you," she said, "for saving us."

Harry looked around. Whereas there were still a great many cautious eyes scattered across the room, there were a far greater number of grateful ones.

Harry gave her a nod and stepped outside. The small group of the dozen Aurors defending the Leaky Cauldron parted to let him through and Harry walked forth, ignoring the suspicious murmurs. He quickly cast an

Observe on his new opponent.

Jarvis Thompson (Status: Magical Immunity from most spells and bindings)

(Relationship Meter - 0%)

Lv-7

HP-2500/2500

Race-Squib

Str-76

Vit-52

Dex-48

Int-12

Wis-3

Luc-5

Jarvis Thompson is a squib, a non-magical born of two magical parents who abandoned him. Jarvis grew up in an orphanage and goes to school at St. Middlesbury. He really likes the girl who sits two rows behind him in class and hopes to grow up to be a scientist one day. He has recently discovered that he was abandoned because he wasn't magical and wants to get retribution.

He hates wizards and wants to kill them all.

Harry suspected he would've felt a twinge of sorrow and compassion for the boy had he not just thrown a cast iron bench through his favorite ice cream shop in the whole wide world. His HP was high for his level... unnaturally so...way higher than Harry. Furthermore, his strength, vitality, and dexterity were well above his own stats.

This was trouble waiting to happen.

Magic was ineffective on this guy, which meant that he only had his physical abilities to use. Gandiva, Precognition, Iron Fist, and his own

enhanced strength, hopefully, protected by the Physical Endurance skill.

Gandiva was out of the question, since if Dumbledore recognized it then maybe there were others out there that could, so he had to make do with the rest.

Opening up his own stat windows, he decided to pump some stat points into his physical stats. There were times for saving up stat points, but this was not one of them. After buffing up his stats, they looked something like this.

STR-49

VIT-40(+4)=44

DEX-44(+4)=48

INT-44

WIS-48

LUC-27

POINTS-2

He could make do with having a lower strength. He still had Iron Fist to hit some critical hits, but his biggest strength was his speed. He needed to be at least a bit faster than his opponent, otherwise, he wouldn't be able to land chain hits and critical hits. He also needed to be able to take hits, hence his vitality increase.

He'd had magical fights before, but this was the first time he was going to be in a brawl.

With a deep breath, he stepped out of the Auror shielded barricade and out into the Alley. His opponent sized him up, his eyes twinkling brightly against his dirty white skin.

"Jarvis," Harry started, attempting to talk the boy down first, "You don't have to do this. No one has been lethally hurt yet. You can still give yourself up and you'll be back at your school like nothing ever

happened."

"Your little memory erasers?" the boy snarled angrily, "They said you people would offer that. Shame that your magic doesn't work on me. No one is getting into my head, which means that you'll probably throw me into that prison of yours. Azkaban."

Harry frowned. This was no ordinary squib who had been experimented on unwillingly. He had been talking to someone who had been poisoning his mind...

"Who's 'they'? Who have you been talking to?"

"Who are you supposed to be?" Jarvis asked, ignoring Harry's question, "Some sort of negotiator? If you come any closer I will kill you. Walk away. My fight today is with the Aurors."

Harry stepped closer, "You've hurt normal wizards too Jarvis. I can't let you continue doing that."

Jarvis looked at him with a curiously amused look before he picked up a piece of rubble the size of Harry's head which was lying near his feet and pulled back, chucking it at Harry with all of his might.

Harry didn't move, instead just raising his fist and pointing it towards the incoming projectile.

The piece of rubble slammed into his hand and exploded into a cloud of dust.

Harry smiled. It was a rather well-timed Iron Fist, even for him.

"Finally!" Jarvis said, his eyes wide with glee, "Someone interesting!"

Almost so fast that Harry didn't even realize it, he sprung into a run, dashing towards him with a raised fist aimed for his head.

Ping!

Area Sense: Incoming Punch!

Harry immediately sidestepped the punch before slamming an Iron Fist

into his opponent's gut, sending him stumbling backward. His new strength was boosting his Iron Fist by quite a bit. Activating Unicorn Boost, he dashed behind Jarvis and drove a kick into his spine, knocking him down to the ground. When he was going for another kick though, Jarvis took the moment's opportunity and swiftly turned around, grabbing Harry's foot and pulling with all his might.

Harry slammed into the ground face first and before he could even get his bearings back, Jarvis had jumped up to his feet and slammed his foot into Harry's throat before twisting and landing a full 76 Strength punch right into his heart.

Harry would later realize that had it not been for the mysteriously indestructible bottlecap necklace Luna had given him, that punch would have probably caved his heart in. For now, though, he was in too much pain to care.

His head had snapped backward from the force of the kick and had it not been for the increased vitality, it might have snapped straight off.

Left heaving and coughing, Harry immediately dropped into an ID, performed a quick Heal job on himself and dropped back into the real world behind just where Jarvis had been standing. The boy was inspecting the spot Harry had been lying at, but Harry had reappeared loudly onto a pile of rubble which lost him the surprise advantage.

Suddenly, Harry's hair stood on its end and he tilted his head sideways
Ping!

Precognition active!

Jarvis turned on the spot and drove a fist straight at Harry's head, or rather where it had been a mere second ago. Harry looked at the skill window wondrously, before dragging it to a spot near the periphery of his vision.

He wanted that particular skill very much active during this fight.

The next punch came at his chest, and Harry twisted on the spot and slammed the heel of his palm onto the forearm of his adversary, directing the punch away from himself.

Jarvis stumbled. Harry grinned.

With Gamer's Mind and Precognition, he was learning...adapting...

He couldn't fight this high a strength directly, but he could use it against Jarvis, who seemed to be a rather inexperienced fighter. Redirecting the force and causing him to lose balance would lead to openings in his guard that he could easily exploit. Using the momentum of his twist, he turned a full 360 degrees on the spot and drove a full power Iron Fist to the side of Jarvis's head.

Critical strike! Iron Fist- 200 x 700% times more = 1400 Attack!

"Argh!" Jarvis yelled and stumbled sideways, swaying on the spot. Harry didn't pause. He kept attacking, dodging under punches and sidestepping wild flailing kicks and slamming Iron Fist after Iron Fist into the boy's gut. He took his fair share of hits too, but his Unicorn Boost, Vitality and Physical Endurance helped him hold up.

Slowly but surely, Jarvis's hits slowed, and Harry started pushing him further and further into a corner.

Hopefully, he'd be able to knock the boy unconscious and get him captured.

But a cornered man was a dangerous man, and Jarvis was feeling very cornered. Giving up on his desperate melee assaults on Harry, he jumped, his 76 strength propelling him a solid two dozen feet into the air.

He was trying to escape!

Harry wasn't going to let him go. Concentrating his mana onto the ground below him, he exploded it with a large force and jumped upwards

with all his might, riding the blast of concussive force and sending himself and a barrage of shrapnel-like pieces of stone and rock towards Jarvis.

Much to Harry's surprise, the shrapnel hit Jarvis before he did, and unlike the magical ropes and restraints that the Aurors had thrown at him, the rocks didn't dissolve mid-air, instead peppering his whole body with cuts and bruises.

Harry grabbed Jarvis's midsection mid-air and pulled him downwards, turning around to position him above the boy as they hurtled towards the ground and hit it with force enough to crack the stone pathway. Harry immediately got to his feet and jumped back out of Jarvis's reach in case he decided to throw some hail-Mary punches from underneath him.

Surely his spine couldn't have survived such an impact...

Not even that fall had managed to stop the dark-haired squib.

Slowly but surely, shaking with pain, he got up to his feet. Harry's eyes ran over all the cuts and bruises that the rocks and shrapnel had left him with.

It was then that Harry realized the chink in Jarvis's armor.

With a twist of his hands, four immensely thick tendrils of earth rose up around Jarvis's legs and hands and bound him to the floor. Turning around, Harry yelled at the Aurors, "TRANSFIGURATION! HE CAN'T BE SPELLED, BUT HIS SURROUNDINGS CAN! USE TRANSFIGURATION! BIND HIM USING TRANSFIGURATION!"

It was enough for the Aurors. Under Kingsley's command and with Harry holding him in place, dozens of benches and desks and umbrellas and book twisted and turned and slammed themselves onto the boy. The more he shook off and broke, the more appeared to climb over him, slowly but surely restricting his movement and burying him alive under

the command of a dozen trained Aurors until all that remained visible of him was his face.

Ping!

Quest Success!

Save the people in Diagon Alley and defeat the Muggle!

Rewards,

15000 exp

10 skill points

Public reputation

With his opponent defeated and restrained, Harry slumped to the floor feeling so tired that his arms felt like they were made of lead. Aurors swarmed the makeshift tomb that Jarvis was entombed in, presumably to take him into custody.

"Need a hand?" Tonks walked up to him, offering him a hand. Harry took it and the Auror pulled him up with ease.

"What will they do to him? Afterward?" he asked, getting onto his feet and dusting himself off.

"The damage outside in the Muggle world has already been handled. Obliviators have been putting in a lot of work. Plus, Kingsley says that the Unspeakables are on their way to reverse the ritual on the kid. They'll probably use Veritaserum on him, get some information, and then put him back home. It'll be like nothing ever happened"

Somehow, Harry doubted that.

"He wasn't the one behind this. Someone else has been telling him about the Wizarding World. Poisoning his mind. Giving him powers"

"Well..." Tonks said, "Whoever it was, they just threatened the Statute of Secrecy. They'll have an Auror squad on their case by tomorrow."

Harry looked around.

There was a lot of rebuilding to do, but he could come down as Harry Potter and help out. There was no need for him to stay here any longer like this.

"I think you can take it from here. I'll take my leave."

"Wait," Tonks exclaimed, "What's your name? Who are you?"

Harry simply chuckled and disappeared into an ID.

"No harm in asking," muttered Tonks before a grin spread across her face.

Her sly little trick had worked. She had been gauging the man's weight when she had offered him her hand and she had just learned something very interesting.

He was light.

Incredibly so. Almost like a child. Someone out of Hogwarts or some other school perhaps. She had to give herself some leeway on the weight by assuming it possibly could have been lighter than she had imagined. Perhaps a sixth or seventh year, she thought. The heavy wandless and wordless magic didn't make any sense otherwise.

'It looks like we have a vigilante prodigy on our hands,' she thought to herself as she walked back into the Leaky Cauldron, wishing a quick good morning to the legendary Auror Mad-Eye Moody who had just arrived on the scene and was talking in quiet tones with Kingsley Shacklebolt.

He didn't wish her back.

"Did you see who he was? His face?" Shacklebolt asked.

"No," Moody gruffly admitted, "It's obvious that he is young, but that jacket of his...it was enchanted with the sacrifice of a life. Dark stuff. My eye couldn't see through it."

"So do you think we have a killer on our hand? A dark wizard? We can't assume that. The man just saved a lot of people. Maybe it was an heirloom?"

Moody gave a huff and turned to look at the carnage of the fight that had taken place mere moments ago. "What we have on our hands is an incredibly powerful wizard who knows exactly how to use the power he has. That's the most dangerous kind of wizard out there."

As far as politicians went, Albus Dumbledore considered himself to be fairly agreeable and social. He knew most of the world's leaders and had regular correspondence with them. However, he had only known Madam Yao, Ambassador of the Nepalese Government to the ICW, very briefly and passingly as an acquaintance of Nicholas's. Prior to the matter of providing asylum to Sirius Black and Lisa Turpin, he had never even spoken to her.

That was the reason behind the immense amount of surprise he was feeling as he read through the letter in his hand.

Professor Dumbledore,

I hope that this letter finds you well.

Your former students have both settled in very well here in Nepal. The young one's mother was extremely pleased to be reunited with her daughter and has wished for me to pass on her gratitude to you. Her healing progress goes slow but sure. The elder one appears to be quite popular with our female trainees and seems to be taking to the healing like a charm. I have no doubt that the next time I write to you I will have nothing but good news about them.

However, the reason I write to you today is not just to inform you about my patients, but to invite you to my abode today. I must insist that you join me for tea and a chat this evening. The Floo address has been attached. We have a matter of utmost importance to discuss.

Regards,

Madam Yao

It was a relief for him to know that the two former students he had left in

her care were in good hands. Albus did not know what matters she had to discuss with him, but he did know one thing. When an Ancient like her called, you answered. Yao was almost double the age of the other pair of ancients he knew; the Flamels; and wielded magic that Dumbledore had never been able to comprehend. He did not want to upset someone like that.

He looked up at the clock in his Wizengamot office.

Almost four.

There wasn't much time left if he was going to make it in time for the evening in Nepal. Time zones were such a tricky thing.

Quickly finishing up the rest of his paperwork relating to the Muggle attack in the Diagon that morning, he headed over to his fireplace, threw some Floo powder into it, and stepped in, speaking aloud the Floo address that had come attached to the letter.

Kangchenjunga

The place he stepped out of could have been ripped straight out of a painting. He was in the only room of a simple little house with stone walls colored in bright red. In it was a small shrine to Buddha, the fireplace, a small cot, and a pair of doors, one of which opened up out to the open and the other to a large balcony. Clearly, Madam Yao was not one to enjoy the world's pleasures, preferring to live with the bare necessities.

Albus slowly stepped out of the balcony, taking in the sight before him with child-like wonder.

A sea of clouds lay before him and dozens of mountain peaks peeked from below, the morning sun glinting brightly off the fresh snow that covered their peaks. Gentle snowfall floated on the soft breeze that was running through the peaks and the air was incredibly fresh and light.

Kangchenjunga

He should have realized. It was the name of the third highest mountain in the world, located in Nepal, famous for its ties to Hinduism and Buddhism. He was standing on its peak.

"I am glad you are enjoying the view, Albus," said a voice from his right. It was Madam Yao, dressed in bright yellow robes, sipping on a cup of tea. Feeling it appropriate, Albus gave her a small bow.

"Sit. I have some news for you."

Albus sat, before looking at her with questioning eyes. The temperature was pleasantly cool, no doubt due to some heating magic, and the tea pleasantly tasted faintly of turmeric and garlic.

"Have there been any issues at the ICW?" he asked worriedly. Nepal's integration into the ICW was a compensation that he had been providing the Madam with in exchange for her help with Sirius and Lisa.

"None at all Albus, you have kept up your end of the bargain magnificently. Nepal's integration into the ICW as a separate entity is going well and I have no doubt that my country will benefit massively from this," she said, "However, as you are well aware, I have been around the ICW lately as a member of the instructor selection Tribunal.

Yesterday, I encountered upon a...peculiar occurrence with one of the candidates"

Dumbledore looked at her curiously. "What would that be?"

"That wand of yours," she said pointedly, "I assume you know the reason it is special?"

Albus almost wanted to ask her how she knew of it before he restrained himself. The Ancients were known for knowing things that were beyond them and it was best to not insult them. Deciding not to question it, he nodded, "It is the Elder Wand, the Deathstick, the one that slays all. It is

rumored to have been crafted by Death itself."

Madam Yao smiled mysteriously as if she wanted to make a correction in Albus's tale but was withholding herself, before saying, "Indeed...

Yesterday, I was a part of the Tribunal to evaluate the application of one Markus Black. Orphan. No record of his birth and education. No address. He came in, scored impressively in the Defence field and filed an application for a teaching license."

"That does seem unusual..." Albus muttered, "But why come to me with it?"

"His wand was of a rather interesting composition. The wood of elderberry and hair from the tail of a Thestral. I assume that is familiar to you."

Albus stared at her with wide eyes before swiftly pulling out his wand from up his sleeve and checking the enchantments upon it. It was still very much his own wand. It was also still very much the Elder Wand.

Frowning, he said, "I don't understand. Are you sure about it?"

"I am," she said, "It wielded just as much power as yours does."

This was troubling news. There had always been people who had attempted to recreate the Hallows, but if someone had actually succeeded...Dumbledore thought about it for a second before gravely saying, "I was aware that the wandmaker Gregorovitch had in the past attempted to create copies of the wand, but I wasn't aware that there had been any functional copies made. This Markus Black...perhaps he is from one of the Black family's German lines of ancestry...I will investigate this to the best of my abilities Madam. My gratitude for bringing this to my attention."

"Think nothing of it," she waved his gratitude away, before asking, "How is the boy doing? I so rarely come across children born with the gift of

using our kind of magic instinctively."

"He has a good heart, young Harry," said Albus before chuckling as he was reminded of the report on his desk, "He helped prevent a very large attack in Britain today. Risked his life to protect people, as he so often does. I have no doubt he tried his best to hide his identity, but the description of his abilities given by the people he rescued was a dead giveaway for me."

"Hmm," Madam Yao mused, "Perhaps I should ask Nicholas to introduce him to me sometime."

Albus nodded, but in his mind, many different theories whirled around. He didn't know what to make of this Markus Black, but for the better or the worse, there was a second Deathstick out there, and where the Deathstick goes, death always follows.

In the cold, desolate forest road roughly 30 kilometers away from the Albanian border, an old man slowly hobbled towards the border check-post.

The Thestral that he had commandeered from the Forbidden Forest was a resolute beast. It had lasted through the days of grueling travel across the North Sea, flying him through Germany, Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia. But it was in Montenegro that his journey finally stumbled upon its first great hurdle.

Food.

Not for himself, he had stolen enough of it from the Hogwarts kitchen, but for the massive beast that carried him. The beast couldn't hunt due to having been brought up in captivity, and he had run out of the money he had managed to scavenge from murdering a few passing muggles.

He could no longer provide both for himself and for his beast.

And so he had taken her as far as she could, finally landing near a spot

roughly 80 kilometers away from the Albanian border, ended the beast's suffering with a kitchen knife, skinned it to create a blanket and cut it up into edible pieces for nourishment along the journey he'd be making on foot.

He had walked for a week, spending most of his time cursing his younger Horcrux for having saddled him with such a useless squib's body. It had taken barely a day after his first possession for what was left of the squib's mind to melt away and die and now all of his diadem's magic was focused on keeping this pathetic body together.

He couldn't even apparate!

If he hadn't heard of his Prime soul piece's 'death', he would've declared this to be the worst point in their entire collective life.

A honk and a loud screech of tires pulled him out of his thoughts. He frowned in confusion, realizing that a large lorry was screeching to a halt beside him. Curious as to what this was about, he walked up and looked into the drivers' window.

It was a mustached man with a cap and a thick coat on. He was smoking a cigarette.

"You heading to the border?" the man asked as soon as he came into sight, "Do you need a ride?"

The man spoke Serbian, one of the languages he did speak. Eagerly, he molded Argus Filch's face into the best smile that he could and replied, "Yes please."

Finally, some good luck was coming his way!

The man gladly helped him into the back of his lorry and shut the door behind him. Glad to be away from the cold, he sunk to the floor and immediately drifted asleep. Tired as he was, he did not notice the dozens of cages nor the half-conscious people slumped in them. He did not

realize that he had just climbed into the back of the lorry belonging to a degenerate human trafficker that made his living by picking up stragglers hoping to cross the borders and selling them on the Albanian black market, and he did not realize that for once in his life, he was desperately and completely out of control of his situation.

Blissfully unaware of the pickle he had found himself in, Lord Voldemort slept on.

What skill do you think should Harry get when he reaches 50 in Str, Int, and Wis? If you have suggestions, please do let me know. I could always use the inspiration.

Lots of plotlines are being set up in this chapter. Next couple of chapters will be in a similar vein too. Let me know what you think about the chapter (ESPECIALLY THE FIGHT! I spent 3 hours writing that fight).

44. Book-III:Secrets Laid Bare

Chapter 3:

"What in the world were you thinking Harry?!"

Harry flinched subconsciously, before trying to mask it as a rebellious shrug. It didn't fool Nicholas, who immediately stopped pacing and sat down on the sofa beside Perenelle. Harry didn't dare look into her eyes. He was too afraid of what he would see there.

Instead, he chose to stare at the newspaper that lay on the coffee table before him. It was the day after the attack on Diagon, and the headline was typical of The Daily Prophet. Melodramatic and blown out of proportion.

THE MYSTERIOUS HOOD PREVENTS DIAGON MASSACRE

By Rita Skeeter

The article's contents were...disturbing.

They had noticed and deduced a lot of things. Wandless magic, his unique method of transportation, his ability at hand-to-hand fighting, his strength, his speed. His jacket had hidden him physically, but he had given away a lot more than he had intended to. He had underestimated the intellect and observational skills of the wizarding people. Just because he was smart didn't mean everyone else was dumb, and in his own personal drive for being the savior and not letting more people die, he had made that very critical and stupid assumption.

Nicholas was right. He certainly could've handled the situation better.

"Do you really think so highly of yourself Harry?" Nicholas asked in a much lower voice, drawing Harry out of his thoughts, "You think the Aurors couldn't have figured it out that Transfiguration would be able to stop the Muggle-"

"Squib," Harry interrupted, and Nicholas frowned.

"No Harry. This is where you listen for once. Muggle or squib doesn't matter right now. The people there were just the first responders Harry. They might not have figured it out, but the senior Aurors and teachers from Hogwarts who would have arrived there minutes afterward would have. The squib would have been downed soon enough. He didn't have a chance."

"It was taking too much time," Harry protested, "Half an hour is a long time to dispatch help. The people there were helpless."

"The senior Aurors would've needed to be pulled from their current assignments and the Hogwarts teachers were all at their respective homes. It would've taken time to reach them all, but they would have arrived. The trapped would have been rescued, the injured would have been healed. You have seen magical medicine at work Harry. People recover from injuries in days."

"Emmeline Vance wouldn't have. She was dying."

It was Perenelle who replied to that, "Then you should have healed her and gotten out of there. Instead, you carried a dozen people through your very unique mode of transportation and then punched the squib into submission. A fistfight Harry? Really?"

"It felt...like the right thing to do at the time," Harry replied sheepishly before sobering up, "But I understand. I was caught off guard at the moment and made it up as it went along. I wasn't thinking of you two back then. I didn't realize what this kind of attention would do for you... how it could risk revealing you if it revealed me. I'm sorry for that."

Nicholas stared him in the eyes before he nodded.

"I'm glad you realize that, Harry. I respect you enough to let you carry the responsibility of your own life. I trust you enough to let you carry mine. But my wife...what you did yesterday put hers at risk. That I cannot abide by. Do you realize that?"

"I do now. I promise I'll be careful."

Nicholas nodded before his expression turned fearful as he looked at the half-amused half-angry look on Perenelle's face.

"I don't know whether to slap you for being chauvinistic or kiss you for being sweet," she said.

"I suggest slapping," Harry piped up. Nicholas shot him a dirty look.

"There will be time for that later," Perenelle replied, not taking her eyes off her husband as her smile turning predatory with unsaid implications.

Harry grinned amusedly as Nicholas's expression did a full 180, before he remembered the real reason why he was sitting here in the first place.

"I presume you have questions for me?" he asked gravely, interrupting his guardians' teasing.

Ever since he had gained them, Harry had kept a lot of his powers very

close to his chest. The Flamels knew a few of the big ones, but he hadn't fully confided in anyone except Hedwig. But now, all of a sudden, most of his secret powers were outed to the entire wizarding world. He knew his guardians justifiably wouldn't be very pleased with him. Neither would the old Professor.

Frankly, he was surprised Dumbledore hadn't popped out of the fireplace and started interrogating him already.

Ping!

Quest Alert!

It's time. Tell your guardians the truth. The complete truth.

Rewards,

Peace of Mind

Failure,

Loss of trust from Flamels

Gain of self-hatred

YES/NO?

Harry didn't look at the failures. He didn't care. It didn't matter. Not anymore. He had given telling his guardians everything a fair bit of thought throughout his time at Hogwarts the previous year, and while the circumstances weren't as ideal as he had thought they would be, his decision still held.

He pressed Yes.

"We do," Perenelle replied gravely, "The things you did at the Alley...you were fast...strong. A lot of things simply do not add up Harry. We had always assumed that you were hiding something from us, but once you revealed that you were capable of wandless magic and walking through the dimensions, we thought that was it. But it wasn't, was it? You have a bigger secret. You've revealed parts of it to us. Never the full thing

though."

"I'm sorry," Harry said, hoping that they would understand, "At first, I didn't know if I could trust you. Then afterward..."

"Then what Harry?" Nicholas asked, leaning ahead.

"I..." Harry couldn't put it into words...the reason why kept hiding everything from them. Was it hatred he feared? Was it their disappointment in that he wasn't really a prodigy? Only someone who had lucked out with a mysterious ability. He didn't know. He didn't want to know.

Instead, he shook his head, "It doesn't matter. It was a mistake. What matters that it's time you know everything."

And so he told them everything.

He told them of how he woke up one day with his whole life turned into a Game. He told them of his initial distrust, and he told them how he had started playing it without even realizing it. He told them of his distrust and his panic and his initial theories on how it all worked. Of his life at school and how it had changed everything about the magic.

He hesitated when he got to the darker parts of his story, but he simply snapped on Gamer's Mind and kept pushing through.

This was important. No more secrets.

So, with much difficulty, he told them about his first great regret, killing Wright, the werewolf. He told about how he had let anger take over while saving Tonks. About the time he had almost killed Lisa. About all the times he had lost control.

He told them about the terrifying image that the Mirror of Erised had shown him.

His guardians said nothing, but instead of the judging looks in their eyes like he had expected, there was pity and compassion. Somehow, it made

Harry feel even worse. Halfway through, Perenelle and come over and sat down beside him, holding his hand as he talked about the difficult parts. "My poor boy," Perenelle said as she enveloped Harry in a hug as his story drew to a close. With some surprise, Harry noted that some tears had escaped his eyes despite the hard grip that his Gamer's Mind had on his emotions.

Ping!

Quest Success!

It's time. Tell your guardians the truth. The complete truth.

Rewards,

Peace of Mind.

It felt appropriate. If he had received any other rewards, it would have cheapened his reasons behind revealing his secrets to the Flamel.

"So...a game huh? You are saying that this Game gives you the power you have?" Nicholas muttered, leaning back into his seat pensively once Harry had pulled himself back together.

Harry frowned, "In a way, I suppose. I have long since theorized that all of the Game's powers and skills are based on real magic. Scrying, Remomancy is elemental manipulation, Calligraphic powers are Ancient Runic spells, and so on forth. I don't think that the Game gave me those powers. It told me how to use them and then simply...gamed them...for the lack of a better word. Quantified my skills and attributes and gave a number to them. It had an effect of almost instinctively making me strive to be better at it."

"I'm sure the Quests helped too," Nicholas commented, "This Game didn't give you magic. It just gave you the knowledge and made your growth extremely efficient."

Harry nodded gravely, "It did. I suspect that the stat points I gain by

doing them are simply a small portion of my magical resources that I can allot to my physical and intellectual attributes. How they affect stuff like wisdom and intellect I don't know, but they do, making me better at those attributes. With each level up I grow stronger, faster, smarter... even a bit luckier."

"You don't seem to be pleased with that," Nicholas pointed out, catching the worried look on his ward's face.

"Power corrupts Nicholas. Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

"Is this about that vision in the Mirror of Erised?" Perenelle asked, "You mustn't put so much stock in it, Harry. Surely you know that the Mirror doesn't show the future, nor does it know any bounds of reality."

"I know," Harry replied, his mind almost instantly pulling the image of death and blood that the Mirror had shown him to the front of his mind.

"Then stop thinking about it, Harry. It is not going to happen. Even if it does, there are people who will protect them and bring you back to the light."

"But it's not the thought of it happening that scares you, does it Harry?"

Hedwig, who had been silently sitting atop the back of his sofa, asked.

A stone set in Harry's throat. Hedwig had pretty much hit the nail on the head. Swallowing to clear his throat, he nodded blankly.

"It scares you that the one thing that you would desire the most as the Gamer is to be the best in the world. No matter what the cost. No matter who the cost. You're not worried that you might kill everyone you love, Harry. You're worried that you want to."

Nicholas stared at Hedwig for a few moments before turning to Harry.

"So is that the reason why you keep trying to risk your life playing hero, Harry? Is it an attempt to repent for sins that you haven't even committed yet?"

"I've committed plenty sins, Nicholas," Harry snapped back, "You know about all of them now."

"Not in my eyes you haven't. You have killed for self-defense and when you thought you had no choice otherwise. That is not wrong."

Harry looked into Nicholas's eyes, almost wanting to be angry at him for not seeing him as he did himself. He was objectively a killer. He deserved to be hated...instead he...then he shook his head.

"It doesn't matter. There has to be a reason why this happened to me. Some rhyme or reason to why I was the one who was gifted with these extraordinary powers. If not to protect people then why else? If I have the abilities that I do and still I let people get hurt, then I am nothing but the monster the Mirror showed me."

Perenelle looked like she was about to vehemently disagree, but the pointed look from Nicholas was enough to stop her from pressing Harry further on the topic.

"This...Founder's quest that you are working on," Nicholas asked, changing the topic, "Tell me more about it."

Harry frowned, "It's...complicated. I think it has been about uncovering a lot of stuff on this mysterious war between Anglo Roman wizards and Celtic magic weavers. Ravenclaw created the House-elves to turn the tide of the war, then the Celts retaliated by using Dementors; accidentally killing themselves; then Slytherin figured out how to make use of Dragon Fire to destroy them...there are still two more chapters to the story that I haven't found yet. I don't know where it is leading, but the Founders called it true knowledge. Whatever that means."

Perenelle and Nicholas looked at each other uneasily, before she said, "This sounds...ominous Harry. I wish I could say I know more about this, Harry, but we have rarely ventured into the lore of Hogwarts. That is

Albus's forte. Nicholas and I were educated in Beauxbatons. And even if we had been in Hogwarts, the Founders were well before our time. This is the first we're hearing of this...test."

"But I will send out word through some secure channels. See if I can't uncover some books or other things for you," Nicholas added, "And don't worry. Albus won't know about any of this unless you want him to."

Harry smiled gratefully.

The brick wall hollowed out in front of him as Harry stepped into the Diagon Alley.

Nicholas and Pernelle had gone on for hours asking him questions and asking him to elaborate on his abilities and how he got them. They were rather impressed with his story of fighting a Dementor and using it to get Tom Riddle's soul out of Lisa's body as well as the real account of what had happened in the Chamber. There was a lot to talk about, but Harry was happy to sit there and talk through all of it.

It felt good to get all of it off his chest.

Once they had finished, however, Harry had grabbed lunch and quickly headed down the apartment and in the direction of Diagon Alley. Harry had come to know that the rebuilding efforts had started as soon as early that morning when Mr. Fortesque had popped in for breakfast and to let them know that he was heading out to the Alley to start the repair work on his shop.

The poor man had been downright devastated when Sir Knucklehead Fudducker McSpazzatron had disappeared out of the blue, and it had taken much convincing and Pernelle's warm chicken soup to bring the man back to his former cheery self.

Then a rampaging squib had tossed a cast iron bench through his shop. Besides, there was fear to consider.

The Wizarding Public was no doubt terrified following the events of the previous day. He had heard from Mr. Fortescue that due to the panic caused by the nationwide warning broadcasts, there had been very few people in or around the Alley and that most people were still afraid of coming out of their homes.

Nicholas agreed with Harry's opinion that seeing Harry Potter out and about helping with the rebuilding would at the very least help a little bit with the public morale.

So when the quest had appeared to him, Harry had pressed yes.

Quest Alert!

Help in the rebuilding of at least 2 shops in Diagon Alley. Rewards dependent upon the shops.

Rewards,

15000 exp

?

?

Failure,

Decrease of reputation in Wizarding World

YES/NO?

And that was how Harry found himself stepping into the Diagon Alley, both wands up his sleeve and ready to help with the rebuilding efforts.

He had no doubt that Mr. Fortesque could handle his own repairs, but there were others he could help out, like the much more damaged

Ollivanders' Wand shop.

Harry's mind was brought back to the present by the sight that greeted him when the wall in front of him fully disappeared.

It was...curious.

The Alley-especially the spot where Jarvis had been captured the

previous day-was swarming with wizards and witches dressed in either scarlet red robes, which told Harry that they were from the DMLE, or cloaks that were so pitch black that Harry couldn't look at them for long without his eyes glazing over.

The people in the black cloaks...their faces were hidden...hidden in a surprisingly familiar manner. It was the same kind of cognitive haze effect that he knew his Werewolf Jacket projected.

He hadn't known that the effect was reproducible, but apparently, it was.

"Observe," Harry commanded, looking at one of the black robed people.

They seemed to be working unobstructed by the Aurors, which meant that they had to have been sent from the Ministry.

Observe Unsuccessful!

Error: Target has active Scrying Magic Protection.

'Unspeakable,' Harry realized immediately. There was only one kind of Ministry Department that valued its secrets so much that it would place Spy magic protection on its own employees. With a start, Harry realized that he had never seen an Unspeakable out in public in full uniform before. The ones he had seen in the trial of Lisa had been only wearing normal cloaks and badges.

The wizard whom he had tried to observe paused whatever he was doing and immediately turned around, his head turning from side to side as if looking for something.

Harry, having no intention of being caught, immediately stepped into the Alley and started quietly weaving through the crowd towards Florean Fortesque's Ice Cream Parlor, which seemed to be in much better shape than he had seen it last.

The cobblestone path near the front had been repaired pristinely, the umbrellas had been straightened and put back where they belonged with

the usual chairs and tables set underneath them, and the glass window near the front had been fully repaired.

A man with a bucket of magical golden paint and a tiny brush was drawing lettering onto it, spelling out the name of the shop.

Harry walked into the shop, the bell above the door ringing as he stepped in and closed the door behind him. The insides of the shop were nowhere near as repaired as the exterior. The display counter which showed off many different colors of ice cream was still in pieces; the part where the cast iron bench had smashed through it had been caved in with the bench still very much there; and there were large metal containers of ice cream strewn about, leaking their contents onto the floor.

Mr. Fortescue was sitting in a chair near the middle with a shot glass and a newly opened bottle of Firewhiskey on the table in front of him.

"Parlor's closed for today I'm afraid," Mr. Fortescue said without looking in his direction, his voice sounding rather dejected. Harry frowned.

Seeing the usually cheerful man so down was rather depressing.

"It's me, Mr. Fortescue, Harry. Are you alright?" Harry asked.

"Harry?" Mr. Fortescue asked, turning around to take a look, "What are you doing here young man? Shouldn't you be at home?"

"I came down to help out with the repairs...but er...are you alright sir?"

Harry asked, walking over to him before uprighting one of the fallen chairs and sitting down on it.

"I am alright Harry," he said, before downing the shot of Firewhiskey and pouring another, "It has...It has just been a difficult few weeks, what with Knuckles disappearing and yesterday...I doubt the shop would even be standing if that-whatever the papers are calling him-if that Hood hadn't interfered. People might not return to the Alley for weeks now...how am I supposed to keep the shop open? How-"

He paused, catching himself mid-sentence, before shaking his head and apologetically saying, "It...It's not right for me to be putting all this on you, Harry. I'm sorry."

"It's alright. Ellie says that talking about it helps," Harry said, waving away the apology.

"You're a kind boy, Harry," Fortescue replied with a smile, "But an old man's burdens are his own to bear."

"I...If you say so, Mr. Fortescue," Harry said, dropping the subject as he looked around at the state of the shop around him, noting with a smile that it wouldn't take long to clean the place up. A few Vanishing charms and Scourgios on the floor, Reparos on the display...the half-ton cast iron bench that was wedged halfway through that display could be a problem though...especially since he wasn't allowed to use magic outside school. The Underage Magic Restriction was a restriction he hadn't needed to worry about in a long while, but today, it was important.

His eyes caught sight of the broom stand near the corner of the room with a couple of brooms resting there. If they were magical, they could work.

'Observe' he thought and a window popped up.

Comet 260

The Comet 260 is a broomstick manufactured by the Comet Trading Company. It is to be noted that the Comet 260 looks good but does not offer much in performance compared to other brooms. The broomstick is rather cheaper than other broomsticks, making it the broom you would find in most wizarding households and establishments.

Top Speed: 90 kmph

Perfect.

Turning to Mr. Fortescue, he asked, "Do you remember how to cast a Feather-light charm, Mr. Fortescue?"

Mr. Fortescue looked up, a bit startled and confused by the question before he shook his head. Harry had figured as much. If wizarding-parents didn't use it to lighten the trunks of their students when they went to Hogwarts, it was unlikely that the charm was very well-known. It was a shame, really, since it was such a useful spell to have in one's arsenal.

Standing up, he headed over to the broom stand and picked up the brooms before he grabbed a piece of rope from a nearby shelf and tied both of the brooms to the bench and placed a hand on each of them.

With a grin, he watched the wondrous look on Mr. Fortescue's face as the bench lifted from the floor and slowly floated upwards before settling in a gentle float a couple of inches above the tiled floor. Guiding the brooms and bench with soft pushes of mana and the occasional bit of Aeromancy, he guided them to the door, which was a bit too small to fit his rather unorthodox piece of luggage.

Turning to Mr. Fortescue, he checked his Status.

Floean Fortescue Lv- 53 (Status: Intoxicated)

HP: 15250/15250

MP: 6050/8000

He sent out his mana, letting it seep into the older man before he activated his Healing ability.

Ping!

Do you wish to heal - Status: Intoxicated

YES/NO?

Pressing yes, he asked, "Mr. Fortescue, a little help?"

That seemed to shake him out of his stupor. Pushing away the shot of

Firewhiskey that he had been holding ever since Harry had sat down with him, he got to his feet and pulled out his wand with a grin on his face, his blues seemingly pushed back at seeing Harry at work.

"Of course."

With a spell from him, the door had widened up and Harry had glided the bench through it, floating it all the way across the street and with a stealthy bit of Aeromancy, straightening it and lowering it down onto the ground.

Now, young Harry Potter considered himself very much stealthier than your average wizard, but not even he could float a large bench thrice his size using a pair of brooms across an Alley swarming with people and then set it down without attracting attention. And attract attention he did. Shopkeepers, Aurors, and even a couple of Unspeakables started muttering about, and soon, the whole Alley was buzzing with the news that Harry Potter was here, helping the shopkeepers rebuild.

"Look! It's Harry Potter..."

"What is he doing here? Is he here to help..."

"See how he used the brooms! Ingenious! How..."

And so, an unexpected chain reaction started, much to Harry's pleasant surprise. Seeing him at work, a bunch of the Aurors who were standing there guarding the site of the crime came over and joined in, casting Reparos and helping clean up the Alley and the shops. Seeing his Aurors off their asses and working to fix up the place, an important looking Auror; presumably the Sergeant; approached Harry soon afterward and asked him if he would like a few hours' exemption from the Statute to help with the repairs, and Harry replied with an excited yes.

With his Holly wand in hand and Mr. Fortescue's help, Harry had the Parlor cleaned up in no time.

"Old Ollivander could use some help, I'm sure," Mr. Fortescue had told him when he had asked if any of the other shopkeepers needed his help after he had finished his reward, a large Sundae almost as humongous as his head.

And so Harry had found his way to the Ollivander's Wand Shop, the walls of which seemed to be back in order thanks to two Aurors waving their wands around, making the rubble rise back up and form the walls that they were once a part of.

"Is Mr. Ollivander inside?" Harry drew their attention and asked them, to which they nodded and then proceeded to stare at him as he opened the door and stepped inside.

Other than the cracking plaster and dried paint falling off the still-being-repaired walls, the inside of the shop seemed almost entirely back to how Harry remembered it, empty except for a single, spindly chair where Ollivander matched the wands to their wizards. Upon it sat Mr. Ollivander himself, a rather enormous pile of wands to his one side and a large stack of shiny new boxes to his other.

The ancient magic that Harry had felt the first time he had stepped into the shop was still very much there...entirely unaffected by the destruction and reconstruction of the building around it. Harry's fingers shivered as his hair stood on its end.

The magic was looking him over, pressing down on him, and making sure he wasn't a threat...

"Good morning, Mr. Ollivander," Harry said, drawing the man's attention to him. The magical weight on him lightened as the owner of the shop turned to look at him with a mysterious smile.

"Mr. Potter," he said with a smile, "Holly and phoenix feather, eleven inches, nice and supple, as well as yew and phoenix feather, thirteen and

a half inches, firm. Tell me, have my wands been serving you well?"

"They have, thank you sir," Harry said with a nod, reminding himself that Ollivander was well aware of the fact that he owned Riddle's wand too, before asking, "I heard you were injured in the attack yesterday, Mr. Ollivander. Have you recovered?"

"I have indeed. Thank you very much for your concern," he said, "And I certainly appreciate you coming here to help. I'm sure Mr. Maroon's photographs will do very well to ease the fears of the people and help them return to the Alley."

Mr. Maroon, Harry realized, must have been the Daily Prophet photographer who had been scampering up and down the Alley all day long, taking photos of him and other Aurors helping with the repairs of the Alley. Harry knew that the papers would be publishing those pictures front and center the next day, which was exactly what he wanted to happen.

With a nod, Harry accepted the gratitude and asked, "Is there anything I can help you with, Mr. Ollivander?"

There was indeed.

Ollivander had been sitting there since that morning arranging the wands and placing them into new boxes before sending them off to their respective places on their shelves. Luckily...or unluckily depending on whether you were the one doing the packing...most of the wands had survived the destruction of the building. So Harry transfigured a piece of rubble into a chair, took a seat, and got to work, helping the man arrange and package his wands back up.

It was tedious work, but the old man certainly appreciated the company and was more than willing to share stories and answer all of Harry's questions about wands and their reasons and properties.

"Mr. Ollivander," Harry had asked as he packed his 51st wand, "you keep mentioning how rigid a wand is, every time you meet people. How does it matter when it comes to magic? Isn't that just dependant upon the wood?"

"Partly, yes," the old wandmaker replied, "but mostly when it comes to matching wizard to the wand, the flexibility or rigidity denotes the degree of adaptability and willingness to change possessed by the wand-and-owner pair. But do keep in mind that this factor ought not to be considered separately from the wand core and length, nor the wood itself, as you mentioned. The owner's life experiences and style of magic contribute to shaping a wand as well. That is what makes a wand unique."

"Unique? So there are wands that are more powerful than others?"

A smile spread across Ollivander's face, "I cannot tell you, young Harry, how nice it is to have an inquisitive soul in this shop again. The answer depends on your definition of power. If you call offensive magic powerful, then your wand will serve you well. If you wish to master the stability and control of transfiguration and potions, then another core might suit you better. You must also remember Harry, that all wands are created equal. They only become great through their journeys with their owners."

There was a silence after that particular conversation which lasted for a few dozen more wands, but it didn't take much longer after that for Harry to figure out yet another question to ask.

"What about the lengths? I've seen Hagrid's new wand that he got after he was released from Azkaban. It was humongous. Does that mean that the size of the wand is related to the height of the wizard?"

"To some degree, yes," the wandmaker replied, "but mostly it speaks to

the character of a wizard rather than their stature. In my experience, longer wands might suit taller wizards, but they tend to be drawn to bigger personalities, and those of a more spacious and dramatic style of magic. Neater wands favor more a refined style. Most wands will be in the range of between nine and fourteen inches. While I have sold wands eight inches and under as well as ones over fifteen inches, these are exceptionally rare. Abnormally short wands do tend to select those in whose character something is lacking, though, rather than because they are physically undersized."

Harry's eyebrows rose to his hairline. This seemed like an incredible way to look into the character of a wizard.

Ping!

Due to learning new information on how to categorize Witches and Wizards, a skill has leveled up!

Observe Lv-8 (10%)

By Observing a target one will get information about said object

-Max HP,MP, stats, detailed info, their emotions and will give their opinion of you.

Ping!

For learning about a secret art from its master, take +2 INT

Ping!

For learning how to read a person from their characteristics and wands, take +1 WIS

Such was how Harry spent his time till the evening crept in, learning more about Wandlore and the characters that wands saw in the wizards that they chose. Ollivander told him a lot more of how the dozens of types of wand wood related to a person's character, but not before extracting a promise that he wouldn't reveal all of this to anyone without

his express permission.

His Observe had leveled up two more times by the time they were down to their last few wands leaving him at a solid level 10.

Due to learning new information on how to categorize Witches and Wizards, a skill has leveled up!

Observe Lv-10 (35%)

By Observing a target one will get information about said object

-Max HP,MP, stats, detailed info, their emotions and will give their opinion of you.

Harry didn't know why he was getting the special treatment of being given the permission to know about Wandlore and knowledge that had been kept secret for so long, but he had a feeling that the old man always knew more than he let on.

Those grey eyes almost felt like they were casting a Scrying spell of their own.

When the clock struck seven in the evening, a ping sounded in Harry's ears and the two Aurors who had been helping fix the outside of the shop stepped inside to talk to Mr. Ollivander.

Ping!

Quest Success!

Help in the rebuilding of at least 2 shops in Diagon Alley. Rewards dependent upon the shops.

Rewards,

15000 exp

Ice Cream

Knowledge on Wandlore

Harry quickly waved the window away and listened to what the Aurors were saying.

"Good evening Mr. Ollivander, the walls are pretty much done and dusted, but we couldn't get the paint finished up in time."

"I'm afraid we just received a letter from the Ministry," the other Auror said, "They are about to question the Muggle that attacked the Alley yesterday. They want the whole investigation team back at the Ministry with their findings as soon as possible."

Harry withheld his immediate urge to correct the men with a curt 'squib', knowing that they hadn't revealed that particular bit of information in the papers, and him knowing about it would be extremely suspicious.

Besides, if Jarvis was going to be interrogated, he wanted to be there.

"Mr. Potter," one of them asked, "It's getting really dark and a lot of people have heard of you being here for the repairs. Our Sergeant has asked that we apparate you home before we head back to the Ministry, just for your safety."

Before Harry could refuse, Ollivander intervened, "I'll be seeing Mr. Potter back to his home myself. Please do assure your Sergeant that he will be perfectly safe with me."

"Er...are you're sure, Mr. Ollivander?"

"I am. Now, Mr. Stewart and Mr. Benjamin, grab one of those wand holsters each from the shelf on your right for yourselves, will you? A token of my gratitude for your help today, gentlemen."

They happily thanked Ollivander for his gift and soon left, leaving the two of them alone. As soon as the two Aurors were out of the door,

Ollivander immediately turned to him and asked, "I presume you want to go to the Ministry and witness that young boy's questioning yourself?"

Harry's brain ground to a halt for a moment.

Yep, he thought to himself dazedly, the old man definitely knew more than he was supposed to. Slowly pushing his brain back into motion, he

did the next thing that made sense.

'Observe' he thought, looking at him.

Observe Unsuccessful!

Error: Target has active Scrying Magic Protection.

Ollivander raised an eyebrow, "Really, Harry?"

Harry wanted to push him, but after much hesitation, decided not to. If the old man wanted to out him, he could've done so very easily when there had been two Aurors in the room. Besides, Harry had a strong feeling that he didn't.

"I do not have any interest in revealing your secrets, Harry, just I have never revealed Tom Riddle's identity to the world at large. My work is to observe, not interfere," Ollivander further assured, and upon seeing Harry nod, continued, "I suspect that they will be starting the questioning soon. I'd say perhaps in one of the Interrogation rooms in the Auror Headquarters. Number Two comes to mind. You should probably get going if you wish to make it."

"Good to know," Harry muttered uneasily, wondering how the old man knew all this as he quickly said his goodbyes and left the shop. It was getting rather ridiculous how many people knew about his secrets. That list needed to stop growing immediately.

Stepping into a small side alley, Harry pulled out his Jacket and Cloak, putting them both on before he disappeared, the magic telephone box leading into the underground Ministry as the destination in mind.

He reappeared in front of the visitor's entrance of the Ministry of Magic- the magic telephone booth that stood in front of a heavily graffitied wall.

If Ollivander's hunch was to be believed, he didn't have time to go get Hedwig, nor did he want to risk her being seen somehow.

Not wanting to leave any record of his entrance, he dropped into an ID

before stepping into the booth and blowing up the floor underneath him with a well-powered Iron Fist. As soon as the floor shattered, Harry dropped down an immense elevator shaft. For a brief second, the little square of light above him kept growing smaller and smaller before it gave way into the immense hallway with dark-wood flooring that he knew led into the Ministry Atrium.

Using Aeromancy to catch his fall and land safely, he wasted no time in dashing down the empty hall towards the nearest elevator, inside which he reappeared into the real world with a quick "ID Escape."

Luckily for him, it was the evening and well after the time most people left for home, so there weren't as many people around and the elevator was empty.

Harry pressed the button, and with a rattle and shake, the elevator started moving.

Soon enough, the voice announced, "Level Two, Department of Magical Law Enforcement, including the Improper Use of Magic Office, Auror Headquarters, and Wizengamot Administration Services."

Harry headed out and dashed down the corridor of doors that led to the Wizengamot offices, reaching the end where a set of large heavy oak doors were located. Pushing them open, Harry stepped in and emerged in a large cluttered open area divided into cubicles. Shaking off the hauntingly empty feeling that set in as soon as he had stepped into the enormous room, he headed inwards.

A lopsided sign on the nearest cubicle confirmed where he was.

Auror Headquarters.

Harry darted through the Auror Headquarters; he had passed through the room before when he had rescued Lisa, and he had a good idea of where the Interrogation rooms were; flitting through the narrow winding spaces

between cubicles as he made his way to the right into a corridors with doors on either side with signs on them.

It didn't take him long to find the room he was looking for. It was only the second from the end and had a sign on it.

Interrogation Room #2

Harry stepped inside and squeezed himself into as much of a corner as he could to avoid bumping into someone as he came back into the real world, before taking a deep breath and muttering the command under his breath.

"ID Escape."

Alastor Moody was not good at a lot of things.

He was not a good people person. He was not good at being polite. He was not a good leader. He was not a good runner. But if there was one thing Alastor Moody was incredibly and undeniably good at, it was at being an Auror.

He saw theories and connections where most saw nothing, had the skill to intimidate, and the stomach to do what was necessary. Moreover, he was sharp as a Qatari blade and he was near unbeatable in a duel.

Most of all, he was a man who did his research.

And so, when he took upon himself the task of finding the mysterious Hood as the newspaper had decided to call him, Moody had headed to the archives to start a file and pool all the data he could find on this mysterious person.

Imagine his surprise, when he came to know from the Archivist that someone else had already started a private file on the man and had been adding to it pretty regularly. Much to his further surprise, upon some further digging, he realized that it was a Junior Auror, one less than half-a-year into her time as the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. It

was highly unusual for Junior Aurors to go down to the archives on their own and start cases that they hadn't been assigned; not because they were not authorized to; but because their workload was already extremely heavy from all the paperwork they had to handle.

The case was growing more and more curious by the minute.

He learned the full story from Emmeline Vance, one of the more talented of the newer crop of Aurors. It wasn't something that he had known, so it was displeasing for him to learn the story had been circulating in the Department rumor mill ever since August the previous year.

Apparently, this girl, Tonks, the one whose admission into the Academy and training he had fast-tracked a couple of years ago as a favor to Severus Snape, had been rescued by this mysterious man from a group of smugglers intending to sell her for experimentation. He had then reappeared the next year to bring them a rescued girl that had been abused sexually and physically by her father, almost killing the father in the process. Then again finally at the Diagon Alley attack.

This vigilante had been operating for a while now. He had just been forced to reveal himself due to the Diagon incident.

After even more research and deliberation, he had finally reached an important decision regarding the case and the Auror it seemed to circle around, which was the reason why Junior Auror Nymphadora Tonks stood in his modestly spaced cubicle in the Auror Headquarters.

"D'you know why I had you called here? Do you?"

"No sir, I don't," the Junior Auror replied stiffly.

"Hmm. I'd say so," he gruffly said, pushing a chair in her direction with his leg, which had been sitting unscrewed on his desk, "Sit."

Tonks took the seat gingerly, clearly not very comfortable and still not sure why she had been summoned. Her frequent morbid glances at the

prosthetic magical eye that was jiggling around in a glass of water beside him were more than enough for him to realize that.

Moody wasn't one to dawdle, so he immediately got to the point. "You, Auror Tonks. You've been keeping a file. A file on that kid who beat up and captured the Squib kid in the Alley yesterday. I want it."

The Junior Auror's expression immediately turned from weary to suspicious. "How do you know...it was a kid? And why do you want it?"

Moody smiled victoriously, "Ah, so you've been doing this properly, haven't you? Good. Proves that I wasn't wrong. I want that file because I've found some information on him. Nasty stuff. Want to follow it up and make sure he isn't a psychopathic killer or something."

"What would that be?" she asked, her voice shaking slightly.

"The kid's jacket," Moody said, figuring that he might as well spare that little nugget of information in exchange for the trove he was going to get in return, "It was dark magic. Made by the sacrifice of a magical life.

Dark stuff that even my...special eye can't see through."

Her eyes widened before she leaned back into her seat. With a little bit of surprise, he watched her think for a minute and then shake her head. "I...

I won't give it to you, sir. It's my personal case. I'm not required to give any of it over to someone else halfway through my investigation. The only reason I put the information on file was so that I couldn't be forced out of it by someone above my pay grade. I'm not giving it up now."

Moody stared at her before nodding. He had thought that something like this might happen, despite believing it to be unlikely. The kid was talented. She had some of the highest numbers of convictions in the last decade, ever since his own time as a newbie.

"I figured as much. But do consider it. I've got more resources and contacts than you ever had. I could help you find out who that kid is and

finish this in no time at all."

"It won't matter if I'm not there solving it."

There was a moment of silence filled by nothing but the splashing around of the eyeball jumping up and down in the glass of water.

"Fine then," he finally said, his decision made, "You'll be there with me, solving it."

The girl stared at him, confused, before the meaning of it struck her and her jaw dropped open.

"Let me be perfectly clear," he said before she could burst into tears or something equally dramatic and irritating, "Once we find out who this kid is, there's a bloody good chance that he won't react well to us.

Depending on how he reacts and if he did kill someone, we either take him in or take him down. There is no gentler option. No turning the blind eye to his acts of vigilante justice like beating up people and rescue children if he promises keeps himself in check or some other bollocks. We make sure that he is not a threat. No matter how. Is that perfectly clear?"

"Yes, sir," Tonks said, nodding her head as if she couldn't believe where her pet investigation was getting her.

"You owe this kid your life, don't you? He saved you from those traffickers a couple of years ago. Will that be an issue if we have to bring him in?"

A moment's pause. "No, sir."

"Good. Then I suppose there is only one thing left to do," Moody said gruffly as he pulled out a piece of paper and handed it to her, "Fill that in with your personal details. Have you had a partner assigned yet?"

"No I haven't, sir," she replied, rapidly turning blue as she took the paper from him, "I've been running patrols with Auror Vance, learning the ropes from her."

"I'll smooth things over with her and Bones then. Get that paper to me with your Apparating license and identification. The Transfer paperwork should be finished by tomorrow morning. That's when we start" he said as he finished arranging out some papers onto his desk, before looking up at her with a terrifying grin, "Don't be late...partner."

Moody had to admit, the reaction itself almost made it worth it.

After the girl had recovered from her state of catatonic shock, he had sent her back to her cubicle, popped in his eye and fixed back his leg and headed over to the Interrogation Room.

He had an interrogation to watch over.

Stepping into the dark room, he walked over to the one-way mirror and stood beside Shackbolt, looking into the interrogation chamber through the mirror. The kid...Jarvis Thompson, as they had learned soon after his capture...had been soon stripped of all of his ritual-gained powers by the Unspeakables and was chained to the table by a simple pair of shackles and was being interrogated by one of their best interrogators, Williamson.

"Jarvis, how much do you remember of the day you attacked Diagon Alley?"

"Nothing," the child blankly replied.

"Is he using Veritaserum?" Moody asked gruffly. Shackbolt nodded beside him. Squibs barely had any rights in the Magical Law system.

Giving Veritaserum was the fastest way to get answers...if a bit morally grey. Then again, Alastor Moody had never much cared for morality. He was a practical person like that. It was what had kept him alive all these years after all.

"Tell me what you remember of this man who told you about our world."

"He used to meet me in the park where I would go to play cricket with

the other children at the orphanage. He told me about what my real parents were. Showed me what magic was. He took me one day to see the Alley too. Always wore a cloak. I never saw his face."

"And how did he give you your magical strength?"

"I was angry at my parents, so he told me that I would be stronger and will be able to take revenge on them if I wanted to. He took me to a warehouse outside the city and then asked me to close my eyes and drew stuff all over me. Then...then everything went black and I woke up here."

"Do you know anything about this man, Jarvis? Anything you noticed?"

Anything you gathered from his look-

Before he could even complete the question, however, the door to the interrogation room banged open and the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge walked in, crossing the room to open the door that led into the chamber that held their prisoner.

"I'm afraid we need to wrap this up gentlemen," he announced, "The order for his transfer to Azkaban has been signed."

Moody almost physically felt a killing instinct wash over him, and his head snapped back towards the corner of the room. With a careful frown, he looked back at the Minister.

"What?! By whom?" Shacklebolt asked urgently.

"By me."

"Are you daft?!" Moody yelled, making the Minister shoot a dirty look at him. "We need him!"

"But Minister," Shacklebolt protested, "Surely you can't be serious? He is a child who was coerced and he hadn't even gotten a trial yet. We still need to find who coerced him into-

"It doesn't matter Kingsley. The child is a Squib. Our system does not require a trial for him. The people want someone to blame Kingsley, and

without this kid in Azkaban, it will be you and your squad taking the fall for this. If that happens, then you best believe that I won't be trying to help you then as much as I am trying to help you now."

"But-"

"Tomorrow then," Moody interrupted Shacklebolt, gritting his teeth "We will escort him to Azkaban on tomorrow morning's Newcastle ferry."

The Minister nodded before heading out of the room.

Out of the corner of his eye, Moody watched as the dark figure cloaked by the invisibility cloak; the one whose killing intent he had sensed; curled up his fist in anger before he vanished from the corner of the room. A small smile spread across his face.

He had imagined that the Hood would try and get into the Ministry to see his work finished, especially when he had overheard him being concerned about the prisoner's fate in the Alley, but he hadn't expected that he would be able to make it into the Interrogation room.

It was nice to see someone competent at work for once.

He grinned as he headed back to his cubicle, leaving the Transfer work to Shacklebolt and Williamson. The only good thing that had come out of this interrogation was that the Prisoner Transport to Azkaban was going to become the perfect bait to nail this guy's identity. Inadvertently, the Minister had set the bait for him. It was time now for him to spring the trap and find out who their mysterious guest was, hopefully saving the life of an innocent child in the process.

Let me know if you liked the chapter in a review. Helps motivate me to write.

It's been 44 chapters in the making, and the Flamels finally know Harry's secret. Feels...deserved. We'll see the consequences of that soon enough. Moody is finally in the play, and as one would expect

from him, he is devastatingly competent, especially with being able to see through Harry's cloak without him knowing. We have a lot more action next chapter with him and Harry.

45. Book-III:Harry Meet Harry

Chapter 4:

As it turned out, 'ferry from Newcastle' was a pretty vague thing to look for.

Since the break of dawn that morning, Harry had been crouched atop a container crane that stood in the Port of Tyne in Newcastle, an industrial port that connected to the River to Tyne which then further connected to the North Sea, inside which was where the Prison of Azkaban was located. The Port of Tyne was also the biggest Ministry operated magical port in the northern United Kingdom, so if there was a ferry leaving from Newcastle to Azkaban, as Auror Moody had let slip that it was, it would be leaving from here.

Or so he hoped.

Harry's Gamer's Mind was in full effect, Mage Sight was engaged, and his glowing eyes were scanning across the port, but so far, he was struggling to find anything magical in or around the Port at all.

Nothing glowed in his Mage Sight. No wards, no magical ships, no barrels of magical merchandise, no nothing. There wasn't even a wizard in sight. It shouldn't have been surprising to him, though.

In the early 1600s, wizarding interest in transportation via ships and ferries had started dwindling alarmingly due to the advent of Portkeys and Floo. Due to that reason, politicians at the time had decided to outlaw public use of ships and ferries for transportation, a legislation which had been lumped under the International Statute of Secrecy, signed and enforced by almost every magical nation on the planet.

Thus it was decreed that Wizarding Ports in muggle areas were to be concealed by the use of Illusionary magic and the ships spelled to travel in ways that would not be noticed by anyone either magical or not. Most shipping work, other than the occasional ceremonial ship, had been reduced to the transportation of large amounts of merchandise that even portkeys couldn't carry. Magical Ports had thus been hidden away from the public eye, having become a background process that was taken care of by the people who were in charge of it.

In many ways, ports and ships were sort of like the house-elves to the Ministry. Deadly useful, but never meant to be seen.

Unfortunately for Harry, that had been all he could find about Magical Ports in the Flamel Library. No information on how the Ports were hidden. No information on where. That, he had deduced, he would probably only find in the Ministry archives.

Harry sighed tiredly, his mind drifting to his conversation last night with his guardians as he kept waiting and watching.

"Harry," Perenelle asked, her eyes filled with concern, "Where have you been? You were supposed to be home over six hours ago!"

"I...was," Harry slowly trailed off. Having arrived back home a couple of hours after midnight, he hadn't been able to sneak past his guardians as he had hoped he'd be able to. The new anti-ID wards that they had installed had prevented him from using his IDs to sneak in. Furthermore, he hadn't planned this conversation out very well. How was he supposed to tell his guardians that he was going to do the exact thing that he had agreed to stay away from just that very same morning?

The solution that he had gone for had been to not tell them and handle it by himself, avoiding all the awkward conversation and chastising, but he hadn't been lucky enough to dodge them on his way in.

"So..." he started, "You remember what I said about not doing this whole being a hero and rescuing people thing yesterday, right?"

"Harry," Nicholas asked wearily, no doubt immediately sensing where the conversation was going. "You did mean what you said, didn't you?"

"Absolutely," Harry hurriedly assured, "One hundred percent. My days of breaking into Ministry guarded places and breaking out unfairly imprisoned people are over. But..."

"But what Harry?"

"As it turns out," he said, trying to keep his tone upbeat, "I need to break into a Ministry guarded place and break out an unfairly imprisoned person."

Hedwig let out an amused squawk from the corner of the room.

A moment's awkward silence hung in the air, before, instead of chastising him as Harry had expected, Nicholas leaned back into his chair with a frown and asked, "Why? What happened?"

Glad that his guardians were willing to hear him out before passing judgment, Harry told them of his little spying session at the Ministry which had led to him finding out that Jarvis had simply been a pawn in a larger game, manipulated by a mysterious figure that even Jarvis himself seemed to know little about.

Then he told them of how Cornelius Fudge had popped in and decided to send him off to Azkaban in the name of shifting the blame from himself to someone else.

"I'm not surprised that the Minister pulled something like that," Perenelle muttered, "Even when we first met him to argue for your guardianship he seemed like a rather self-interested fellow. It would make sense from a political standpoint to redirect the public ire towards Jarvis."

"Fine then," Nicholas said after some deliberation, "I'll handle it, Harry. It shouldn't be too hard to reach out to some old contacts through Albus and

mount a rescue-

"We barely have three hours, we might not be able to reach him on such short notice," Perenelle interrupted with a frown, "Didn't you read the letter from Yao, Nicholas? She mentioned that they had met yesterday and that he had left for rural India after their meeting yesterday, looking for trails of Riddle's journey through the area. Owls would take too long to find him. Even through Patronus...no. Our Patroni aren't particularly discreet...besides, it would take too long."

Harry frowned, "Patroni?"

"That's a lesson for another day," Nicholas answered, before turning back to Perenelle, "We can't reach out to any of the old crowd then, not without risking exposure. I...I think that we might have to handle it ourselves."

"I...erm..." Harry interrupted timidly, "I was sort of hoping to handle it all by myself-

The murderous glares he received from his guardians shut him up immediately.

A loud bang to his left dragged Harry out of his thoughts. Instantly perking up, he turned carefully to look towards his left, where he caught sight of the remnants of a bright red muggle firework dissolving into the early morning sky. It was a signal.

Nicholas had found something.

Swiftly turning on his spot, Harry disappeared from the top of the crane.

He reappeared in a small empty room a few kilometers away from the spot where he had been keeping watch, exactly where Nicholas had instructed him to go when he received the signal.

Stumbling a little as he fully rematerialized, he caught sight of Perenelle standing near a corner, leaning against the wall as she too waited for Nicholas to return from his expedition to the Ministry Library in search of the Port addresses.

Sure enough, less than a minute later, Nicholas apparated in with a near-silent swoosh, a large piece of paper clutched in his hands.

"Did you find out where the ships leave from?" Harry immediately asked.

"I did."

Nicholas conjured up a table, spreading the large piece of paper on top of it. It was a map. A map of the harbor. Except it seemed to have another plan drawn right over it, drawn in red ink...roads and winding pathways crossing over lines and buildings and streets that already existed.

"I don't understand," Harry muttered confusedly, trying to make sense of it, "Where is the Wizarding Port? What's all the stuff drawn in red? Is this a misprinted map?"

"No," Perenelle muttered from beside him, peering curiously at the map,

"This isn't a misprint. It's a schematic...three dimensional."

Nicholas nodded and pointed his wand at the paper.

With a gargle and a pop, a soft blue mist erupted out of the tip of his wand and started pouring onto the paper, and from that mist rose a ghostly three-dimensional cross-sectional map depicting the Port of Tyne and all that lay under it.

The cross section of the map depicted a humongous cavern underneath the port that opened up right into the river and if the schematics on the map were to be believed, that was where the wizards had taken the port. Underwater.

"I don't think we have the time to teach him the Bubble-head charm,"

Perenelle muttered as she surveyed the schematic, "Do you have any other kind of magic that would let you breathe underwater for some time, Harry?"

Harry nodded. "I can manipulate air and water well enough to keep myself breathing for at-least a few minutes."

"Good," Nicholas said, "Then your part of the plan still remains the same.

As for us, we will be on brooms, cloaked and within eyesight, ready to intervene if necessary."

Harry nodded, "I'll get into the Port through one of the entrances and get onto the ship. I'll get in, grab Jarvis, handle the Aurors as quietly as I can, and then get out as fast as I can."

"And?"

"I avoid Moody at all costs," Harry said. This was one thing that the Flamels had insisted upon him doing if they were to allow him to go in and get Jarvis out by himself.

"Are you sure it's a good idea for him to go in there?" Perenelle asked concernedly.

"It isn't," Nicholas said with a frown, "We're pretty much sending him into a live trap. But the Squib needs to be freed. We can't reach Albus and we can't wait till we can. A squib wouldn't last even a few hours inside Azkaban and the only point that we can reasonably intercept and rescue him is the ferry."

Harry's mind couldn't help but pull forth yet another one of their conversations from the previous night.

"Don't hold anything back," Nicholas ordered as he paced around the library, pulling out books off of shelves and flipping through them one after the other, "Tell me everything about what happened. Even the tiniest bit of relevant information that the Squib or the Aurors may have let slip could help us make this whole process infinitely easier."

Harry nodded from where he was sitting, closing his eyes and casting his mind backward into the night using Gamer's Mind.

In a singular fleeting moment, the perfect recollection of the Interrogation Room formed in his mind. Without leaving behind any detail, he started

describing exactly what happened in there, starting from how he had heard the two Aurors talk about the interrogation with Ollivander and how he had then snuck into the Ministry and then into the Interrogation room.

Nicholas audibly took note of a lot of little things Harry mentioned, but nothing elicited quite the reaction as Harry's answer to one of his questions.

"The Aurors, tell me about them. Can you describe them? Did you catch their names?"

"I did," Harry replied, his eyes still closed as he recollected their names, "One was Kingsley Shacklebolt, that Auror I met in the Alley before fighting Jarvis, and the other was a strange bloke called Alastor Moody. He had a really scarred face. A fake eye too, I think. Do you know him?"

There was no reply.

"Nicholas? You there?" Harry asked, his brow furrowing.

Nothing again.

Frowning, Harry opened his eyes. Nicholas stood barely a few feet in front of him holding a book, his expression frozen. Slowly, he turned his head to look at Harry, who was growing more and more concerned, and muttered something barely audible.

"What's that Nicholas?" Harry asked worriedly, "I couldn't hear you."

"He knows you're coming," Nicholas said, louder this time, his words sending a chill down Harry's spine, "It's a trap."

Shaking his head, Harry interrupted the fierce bickering that had started between Nicholas and Perenelle.

"It's alright Perenelle, I'm perfectly capable of taking care of myself. If I wanted to get out of there, I could always just drop into an ID or apparate and escape. Besides, with you both nearby, I doubt he could do much."

"Still," she said, "I can't help but think that we should be doing this

instead of you."

"Absolutely not," Harry vehemently said, "Moody knows that I try to protect people. You yourself said that he has a soft spot for vigilantes because he used to be part of a vigilante group in the previous War. He won't go all out on me. But he might not take well to someone unknown showing up. That'd take a lot more explaining and I'm not sure even Professor Dumbledore would be able to convince him to back down from his investigation afterwards."

"He has a point," Nicholas said, "Once Albus is back, we should be able to get Alastor off Harry's trail easily without risking revealing us still being alive. Right now, though, us being directly involved is dangerous."

Reluctantly, Perenelle nodded and after a quick hug, apparated away with Nicholas.

Quickly taking a detailed look at the three-dimensional map of the Underground with Gamer's Mind active to memorize it and mark out where he would enter it, Harry pulled out his wand and pointed at the mist.

"Finite Incantatem"

The mist dissolved into nothingness and Harry grabbed the map before stuffing it into his Inventory. He quickly pulled out his jacket and Invisibility Cloak before putting them on. They might not be much in terms of stealth in front of Moody's ancient magical eye, but they would hide him well in front of others.

He was about to apparate out when suddenly he noticed something strange.

It was awfully quiet inside his head.

With an amused smile, grabbed the seam of his breast pocket and shook it, chuckling at the indignant squawk that came at him in return from

inside the magically expanded space.

"You're the worst," an angry voice echoed in his head, "I was dreaming of flying through clouds made of apples! Do you know how good that feels?!"

"I'd imagine the apples hitting your face as you fly through them would be pretty uncomfortable," Harry pointed out.

"Not if you eat fast enough," Hedwig replied before asking, "Is the boring stuff over yet?"

"I was scoping out the area and making a plan," Harry replied flatly, "It wasn't boring at all."

"You were sitting around brooding on the top a crane for three hours staring at nothing. It was boring enough to make me fall asleep."

"I wasn't brooding!"

Hedwig completely ignored his indignant outburst, asking, "Where are we heading? Did Nicholas manage to find where the port is?"

"He did," Harry replied warily, "It is underground, but I think I have a pretty good idea of how to get in there. Problem is, it might not be very comfortable.

"Seems pretty comfortable to me," Hedwig snarked at him from inside her spacious pillow-padded expanded space in Harry's pocket.

"Just shut up," Harry growled as he painfully struggled to fit inside the narrow cylindrical post box which was barely three feet tall, ignoring the strange looks from the passing Muggles. Closing the door of the box behind him with much difficulty; he could feel a muscle pulling in his leg; he cast an Observe at the box once again.

Entrance to the Magical Port of Tyne

The Entrance to the Magical Port of Tyne is a small post box which requires a Password to be spoken into it from the inside in order to grant passage from anyone who wishes to gain entry to the Port

Cavern. It is small in size because this entrance is only used by house elves working for the Port. This password is given to this large and ugly stone gargoyle which rarely talks but is capable of doing so.

Password - Merlinium Foray

Reading from the Observe and desperately hoping that some sort of expanding charm would kick in once the password was said, Harry quickly shouted out the password, "Merlinium Foray!"

The box didn't expand. Instead, rather unexpectedly, the floor underneath him vanished.

"AAAARRRGHHH!" Harry instinctively screamed as he slid down the pipe-like structure before he realized he was giving himself away and clamped a hand onto his mouth. The slide was long...almost longer than the one at the Chamber of Secrets and just as slippery, but somehow this wasn't wetting him or his clothes as the slime from the Chamber's pipes had.

At first, the drop was almost vertical, but then it slowly leveled into an incline as it twisted and turned and carried him further and further into the ground. He could see nothing at all in the pitch black darkness below him. The sounds of the traffic and the city above faded away as an eerie silence replaced it.

For a moment somewhere in there, Harry completely lost his bearings.

After a few moments, a spot of light appeared below him and started growing rapidly. The tunnel started growing lighter and lighter, the magical dry-slime on its smooth walls becoming more and more visible as Harry tried to look down the tunnel and see what was there to catch his fall. It took his eyesight a second to see it and his mind another moment to put to place what it was.

It was the ground. Solid. Stone. Ground.

Eyes widening, Harry immediately fixed his eyes on the ground underneath and started pushing his own body to turn. It was terribly difficult to find any traction against the slippery tunnel, but despite that he managed to get a spin going, wildly chanting the three D's in his head. 'Determination Deliberation Destination Determination Deliberation Destination Determination Deliberation Destination!'

Just as the tunnel was about to run out, he felt the pressure of Apparition and vanished, reappearing on the spot where he would have splatted down onto, almost stumbling and falling into what he soon realized was a gaggle of the port house-elves who had surrounded the spot and were looking up the tunnel to see who was coming through.

Ping!

Due to use under stressful situations, a skill has leveled up!

Silent Apparition Lv-6 (54%)

Destination, Determination and Deliberation. Apparition is a magical method of transportation and is basically the magical action of travelling by having the user focus on a desired location in their mind. It is by far the fastest way to get to one's desired destination, but is tricky to pull off correctly and disastrous if botched up.

Cost-40 MP per use

Quickly waving the window away, Harry carefully stepped through the small crowd of house-elves and once he was on the other side, dusted his clothes and walked through the stacks of produce boxes that walled the path that led away from the house-elf entrance that he had slid in through.

Moments later, after Harry had lost and found himself three times, the

walls ran out and Harry stepped out into the massive cavern that was the Magical Port of Tyne.

He had to stop for a moment to take in all that he was seeing because the sight in front him had stunned him to a standstill.

"Holy cow..." Hedwig's astonished voice rang in his mind and Harry had to agree with the sentiment.

The cavern was enormous-at least a hundred and twenty feet tall-its roof covered in rocky stalactites and natural rock serrations. The walls were rough and exposed the gorgeous natural patterns of the rock formations, glinting in places where gemstones had been created by the enormous pressure of the earth above them. As many boxes and barrels were scattered around the damp floor as floated around overhead, magically arranging themselves and flying along to wherever they were meant to be stored.

The most incredible thing, however, was the enormous wall of water, blue and churning and powerful, that covered the entire opening face of the cavern. It sounded deafening; like a hundred angry lions roaring at once; the sound made it almost impossible to hear even his own voice. It took a moment for Harry to realize what the enormous wall of water was.

It was the River Tyne, being held back from completely drowning the cavern by an enormous barrier of magic.

The cavern, Harry couldn't help but theorize, must have once been a natural water formation that used to be flooded by the Tyne. When the wizards had come, they pushed the water out to the mouth and then built the floor before repurposing the whole thing into a port.

In the outcrop of water that jutted out from the base of the watery wall and spanned half the floor of the cavern were a bunch of piers, at which

were floating three wooden ships straight out of the 1800s-wooden masts, wooden varnished hulls, enormous mermaid figureheads the size of a decently sized house-the whole deal.

As Harry watched, the mermaid from one of the ships; the smaller one with only one over-deck floor as it's cabin; sprung to life and sprung into the water before rising up near the edge of the water and deftly untying the ropes that anchored it to the port, before diving back in and gracefully leaping out of the water near the ship once again to take her place at the bow of the ship.

Out of the corner of his eyes, Harry caught sight of a house elf waving its hands in sync with the mermaid's movement and marveled at the sheer power that the creatures wielded.

The ship slowly pushed away from the edge and towards the wall of water.

The four dark-robed wizards that stood on the deck, who seemed to be the only ones in the entire port; the whole thing seemed to be run by house elves and pre-determined magic; swiftly hurried into the cabin and shut the door after them just as the bow breached the wall of water and entered the River.

'Wizards ships are actually submarines,' Harry thought amusedly.

Hedwig's voice broke him out his reverie and snapped him back to reality.

"I'm all for staring at giant water walls and admiring them, but aren't we supposed to be getting onto one of those ships? What if the one that just left is the one we're supposed to get on, you dummy?"

With a soft curse under his breath, Harry immediately cast an Observe on the leaving ship, and sure enough,

H.M.S. Charon

Named after the carrier of damned soul to Hades, this ship has been the official transportation vehicle for Prisoners of Azkaban for centuries. Legendary due to having held numerous incredibly powerful prisoners for their trips to the dreaded Dementor Domain including Cruesha the Terrible, Dark Lord Mortimer, as well as many others, it is protocol for this ship to carry four Law Enforcement Officers as well as one Auror along with the twelve member crew to complete the transfer process.

It can last underwater for 15 minutes before it needs to resurface.

"Fuck!" Harry cursed audibly, making a nearby house elf jump and look around confusedly as he sprung into a sprint which sped up into a Unicorn Boost powered run. Jumping over barrels and piles of produce and ropes as well as working house elves, he made a mad dash for the pier as the ship slowly sank midway into the water wall. He didn't slow down as he reached the edge of the pier, instead jumping with all his might as he dove head first straight into the water, spinning himself as soon as he breached the surface as he used Hydromancy to make the water torpedo him towards the ship as fast as he could.

As he neared the edge of the wall, he swiftly turned the direction of his motion upwards, tearing out of the water with enormous force and shooting upwards into the air in an arc, landing on one knee on the back of the ship just before it fully got submerged in the water wall.

Harry had used Aeromancy to cushion his landing a bit and whatever slight thud of his landing had remained had been covered by the roaring of the water of the river. However, being caught wasn't his biggest concern. It was breathing.

Urgently, he moved his hands in a swift circle around his himself, using Aeromancy and Hydromancy in conjunction to create a large bubble

around his head as he entered the wall of water, getting submerged in the river entirely just as the bubble completely formed around his head. It was like being in one of those sensory deprivation chambers Harry had read about.

The turbulent water made it near impossible to see beyond just a few feet in front of him-the noise of the roaring river all around him was deafening him to the point where he couldn't even hear his own thoughts and the mind-numbing pressure of water above him was taking all of his concentration to push back against.

"Harry," Hedwig's wary voice echoed in his mind, "I think your Cloak is malfunctioning or something."

"My Cloak is what?"

Looking down at his hands, he became instantly very aware that his Invisibility Cloak, which had managed to stay on him through his wild running due to the numerous sticking charms he had used, would be of little use underwater. A strange set of distortions had replaced his hands as if he was made of glass.

It wasn't that the Cloak was malfunctioning, Harry realized. It just wasn't built for being underwater. The higher refractive index was causing his invisibility to go awry.

"I need to find a place to hide," Harry muttered as quietly as he could to Hedwig, not because he was afraid of being heard, but because he was trying to conserve the air in his bubble.

Pushing against the low visibility ahead, he pushed his way through the water further towards the back of the ship, and grabbed onto one of the enormous thick piles of ropes that had been secured to the back half of the ship's deck near the stern, grunting as he used them to cover himself and make a makeshift hiding spot.

The Observe on the ship had told him that it could last 15 minutes underwater, which meant that it was bound to surface for air soon. When it did, he would make his next move, but until then, all he could do was wait.

Settling down and making sure to pump more mana into his Hydromancy to keep the water-bubble intact, he hunkered down, waiting for the ship to surface.

The ship was supposed to surface after 15 minutes, but Harry counted almost 20 increasingly breathless minutes before he started to feel the ship incline upwards and the water rush against him downwards.

"Hold on Harry!" Hedwig's voice echoed in his mind, pulling him out of the haze of fuzziness he was slipping in and out of due to oxygen deprivation. Doing just as Hedwig told him to do, Harry held on tightly to the ropes and prepared himself for the ship to hit the surface.

H.M.S. Charon broke the surface with enormous force, hurtling itself out of the water so fast that for a brief second, the entire humongous ship felt as if it had been suspended mid-air by an enormous puppeteer in the clouds.

But that brief second passed soon enough and it crashed down onto the surface, wobbling uncertainly for a minute or two before settling into a smooth sail.

Quickly using a heating charm to dry himself, Harry untangled himself from the pile of ropes and headed towards the forward half of the ship, taking care to move stealthily despite his Invisibility Cloak.

After all, it wasn't much use against Moody's magical eye, which could see through solid objects and Invisibility Cloaks.

The front of the deck was surprisingly awash with activity.

Ropes were tying and untying themselves and barrels and boxes were

moving themselves on their places, jumping and somersaulting around the four dark cloaked wizards who had just stepped out of the main cabin and were stretching their arms and taking in the view of the morning sea around them.

"Take the sun in as much as you can, Morbinson," Harry heard one of them tell the other, "You'll miss it when we get closer to the prison. The elves at the port were saying there's a storm beginning to form there." He frowned. Nicholas and Perenelle were following the ship on brooms. A storm could prove problematic.

With a loud whoosh, the sails unfurled themselves, catching the winds. With a soft jerk, the ship started moving, soft sea breeze pleasantly wafting over the deck. Despite the urgency of the situation, Harry couldn't help but pause for a second to admire the majesty of the vast blue sea that stretched out till the horizon in front of him. He took a deep breath, savoring the peculiar smell of the salty air and the multitude of sounds that assaulted his ears.

The Port of Tyne was a small speck in the horizon behind them, Harry realized with a start when he looked behind him.

The ship was moving much faster than it let on.

Wrapping the Invisibility Cloak tighter around himself, he carefully inched closer to the dark-robed wizards that roamed the front deck, keeping an eye out for any sign of the one-eyed Auror who was no doubt going to be the one in charge of this little mission. A quick look at the titles floating above the wizards' heads revealed that they were the four-member Magical Law Enforcement officers who along with Moody were in charge of the transfer.

They were also, Harry decided, his first targets.

There were many ways to go about taking them out. He could dispatch

them quietly by dropping them all into IDs, but that would mean that they'd be lost forever since every ID Harry created was new and different from the previous one. He could also use Unicorn Boost and his strength to throw them all overboard before they realized what was happening, but that would risk them being able to get back on board by using some form of magic. He could if he was feeling risky and didn't want to keep his stealth for much longer, try and fight them all, but fighting a bunch of trained wizards who potentially had not only been warned against his abilities but also prepared to counter them had its own set of probable issues.

Those were all ways that Harry would have attempted had he been working alone.

Luckily for him, he wasn't.

He was working with a pair of ancient wizards. More importantly, he was working with a pair of ancient wizards who were very good at a particular spell.

Portus

Harry grabbed four marbles out of the small pouch on his belt and took careful aim before one by one hurling them at the wizards with as much force as he could.

Whoosh!

Whoosh!

Whoosh!

Whoosh!

Harry grinned as multiple flashes of color lit up the deck as the four Aurors were carried away by the portkeys.

Yet another reason why Nicholas had gone to the Ministry instead of Harry himself was to set up a broom cupboard with powerful enough

one-sided-locking and silencing charms that even an Auror wouldn't be able to break. Harry's wand casting wasn't at that level yet, so it was for the best that Nicholas did it.

If everything went to plan, the MLE officers, unable to Apparate due to the Ministry wards, would be discovered by the Department of Muggle Affairs janitor a few hours later, unharmed, if a bit cramped.

When Perenelle had first handed him the pouch of marbles and Harry had first observed them, he had been very impressed.

Impact Activated Portkeys

A marble enchanted to be a one time use Portkey. A Portkey is an object enchanted to instantly bring anyone touching it to a specific location. Travelling by Portkey is said to feel like having a hook "somewhere behind the navel" pulling the traveler to their location. This particular Portkey is activated by impact at high velocities.

Destination: Ministry Broom Cupboard #24

It was an impressive bit of magic done by Perenelle with a little bit of Arithmancy to modify the normal touch-activated enchantment into an impact-activated one. It was also something that Harry doubted he would have ever thought of, knowing for a fact that he would have taken the path of least resistance and simply dumped the MLE officers overboard, risking them coming back or getting very hurt.

It was certainly nice to have help.

With the MLE out of the way, the only one he had to worry about was Moody. Harry had been extremely stealthy with the way he had dispatched the officers, so with a bit of luck, the Auror would hopefully none the wiser about his missing underlings.

Carefully, Harry tiptoed over to the door that led into the over-deck cabin of the ship, which had been left open by the MLE officers, and

stepped into it, quietly, taking in the room inside.

The inside of the walls had been lined with obsidian and the room had been split into two parts by a wall of iron bars that seemed like they belonged in a jail rather than on a ship. It was locked by an enormous lock on the door. One part, which the door opened into, was probably for the Aurors. It had spare sets of robes hanging from the walls, a couple of leather suitcases on the floor, and two benches to sit on. The other was where Jarvis lay unconscious in tattered clothes bound to the wall by shackles that bound his wrists and ankles.

The boy looked broken...hungry...nothing like the strong boy Harry had fought in the Alley.

Harry eyed the shackles on him. Judging by the way they glowed even to the naked eye, he had a feeling that they weren't lacking in magical protection.

The room was empty otherwise.

"Where's Moody?" Hedwig asked warily in his head.

"I don't know," muttered Harry as he strode further in and took the lock into his hands, ignoring the sting that his hands felt as soon as he touched it, attempting to crush it with his enhanced strength. It didn't even dent. He tried the bars next. They were also impossible to bend.

Hedwig was quick to catch on. "Spelled indestructible, no doubt."

Harry nodded, frowning, before he activated Mage Sight. A soft yellow ward surrounded the lock as well as the chains that bound Jarvis, which he observed.

Aegean Ward

A very powerful shielding spell used to protect metalwork, locks, and other inanimate equipment from tampering and destruction. It is widely used in security and law enforcement agencies as a

protective ward to contain and secure objects and people. It takes 5 years of learning in the Auror academy to gain skill enough to cast this.

It was Moody's handiwork. Harry had no doubt about that. With a deep breath, he activated Runic Burnout on the Aegean ward.

Ping!

Runic Burnout Lv-6 (21%)

A precise sucking of magic from a ward by using it to refill one's own core. It starts causing damage to HP when magic continues to be sucked after the MP is full. A common way to get around it is to use up mana as fast as it comes in.

Do you wish to use it on: Aegean Ward?

YES/NO

Lighting a flame in one hand, Harry pressed yes.

Ping!

Specified Ward is too complex for your current level. You need to have a minimum of level 8 Runic Burnout to break it.

Harry stared at the message aghast.

He had never encountered such a ward that he had been unable to take down, even ones created by Dumbledore and Nicholas! How could he not take down some protection ward! And with such inconvenient timing!

Was complexity that big a factor in his Runic Burnout skill?!

Distracted as he was, Harry almost didn't react in time when a red window popped up in front of him.

Ping!

Area Sense: Incoming Dangerous Spell!

Eyes widening, almost instinctively Harry blurted out, "ID Create!"

And just like that, a red tint overtook his world and suddenly, the whole

ship vanished from all around him. Harry screamed as he dropped suddenly, hitting the water like a wall of cement.

He sank like a rock, shaking his arms wildly as he tried to swim. It took him a wildly panicky second to get his bearings back and activate Gamer's Mind, which gave him the mental fortitude to use Hydromancy to turn and push himself back towards the surface.

Up at the surface, there was no ship in sight.

"What was that about?!" Hedwig's incredulous voice echoed in his mind.

"The IDs had no vehicles! No moving stuff!" Harry snapped angrily, reiterating one of the few rules that the ID had different than the real world, quite pissed with himself for letting that little fact slip by himself in a crucial moment, "Someone cast a spell at my back and I acted on instinct. I didn't even think!"

"You need to get back there as soon as possible, then."

Agreeing and quickly muttering the counter-command, Harry brought them back to the real world, where the ship had left them a few hundred feet behind.

Powerfully twisting the water under him to propel him forward, Harry quickly caught up with the ship before shooting himself upward with a wave of his arm, catching onto a small ledge on the rear end of the hull before using it to steady himself and find footing below him. Throwing his weight around, he built up a good enough swing before using the entirety of his now immense STR to swing himself upward, grabbing onto the lip of another ledge.

Swing after swing, he propelled himself upwards until he grabbed hold of the railing of the deck and pulled himself up onto the edge, shimmying along the edge for a bit before jumping over onto the deck and sprinting quietly around to the entrance of the cabin.

Carefully, he peeked in with Mage Sight active. Someone had shot a spell at him from behind, presumably Moody, and he had no intention of walking into another trap.

The person inside, however, was definitely not Moody.

It was a taller man, well built, glowing a bright and powerful green in his mage sight. He was holding a wand in his hand, tapping away at the lock.

"Observe," Harry muttered under his breath.

??-?-?-?-?-?-?-?-?-?-?-?-?-?-?-?

Lv-?

HP-?/?

MP-?/?

Race-Wizard

Str-?

Vit-?

Dex-?

Int-?

Wis-?

Luc-?

??-?

Harry's eyes lifted into his hairline as he read the results. This wasn't Moody. He'd been able to read Moody perfectly fine the previous day.

This was someone else much more powerful.

Confirming Harry's suspicions, barely a moment later, the lock opened up with a snap and the gate slid open.

Realizing that the mysterious super-powerful wizard was about to take Jarvis to only heavens-knew-where, Harry decided that it would probably be best to intervene as soon as he could, preferably not violently since he

would probably end up getting destroyed. Thus coming to a conclusion, before the mysterious figure could reach Jarvis, Harry took off his Cloak, stuffed it into his inventory.

"It's a bit rude to introduce yourself with a spell to the back, don't you think?" he asked with his wolf-voice and Bloodlust active as he took a deep breath and stepped inside.

A number of things happened simultaneously the moment Harry's feet crossed the threshold of the door.

The door slammed shut, hitting the heel of Harry's feet rather painfully.

The mysterious wizard turned around rapidly, the tip of his wand glowing bright red. Also at the same instant, large burst of magic engulfed the whole ship and the cabin, washing over his senses and blinding his Mage sight.

Then Time froze.

Not time, Harry realized, as a hidden door beside Jarvis swung open and Moody strode out, his mangled face twisted into a wide grin and the fake eye revolving around wildly.

It was them that had frozen.

"I certainly agree, lad," he said, sounding positively chuffed with himself,

"It does seem pretty rude."

The first thing Moody did after stepping out and saying his kick-ass line, which Harry decided he had probably been thinking up for the last hour while he had been shut in that hidden compartment, was search the mysterious man.

There wasn't much to be found.

The man's wand refused to come away from his hand despite having lost the glow on its tip and he had literally nothing else on his person other than the clothes on his back. His face seemed to be covered with an

Obfuscation charm that made him almost entirely unrecognizable and impossible to place.

Harry could only imagine that he had prepared for the eventuality of being caught, just like he had.

When Moody started searching Harry, he didn't find anything other than the pouch of Portkey Marbles that Harry had attached to his belt, which he yanked free and started to inspect. Hedwig's pocket had been enchanted to be hidden by Perenelle and that was an enchantment that thankfully not even Moody's eye could pierce.

The pouch, though, was carefully made trap. A Portkey that would activate and carry away whoever took it off of Harry's belt. Much to Harry's distraught shock, however, it simply glowed blue in Moody's hand for a second before it imploded into nothingness and disappeared. The Auror, instead of being angry, seemed impressed.

"Clever boy! You knew! You knew that I knew! And your little trap would've worked too if it hadn't been for the Anti-Portkey wards! You, little lad, would have made for an amazing Auror! I'm almost regretting catching you," Moody said, patting Harry's back.

"Now you!" he said, his expression doing a full 180 as soon as he turned from him to the mystery man. "You are an anomaly. You shouldn't have known when the boat was scheduled to leave. You shouldn't have been able to break that Aegean ward. You shouldn't have been able to apparate onto a moving ship either."

He was almost nose-to-nose with the man and his wand was digging into his gut.

"Most importantly, your Obfuscation charm shouldn't be working on my eye. Tell me. Why is that happening?"

With a wave of Moody's wand, Harry's tongue and face unfroze, and he

was able to speak. So was the mystery man, apparently.

"It's nice to see you, Professor," he said, and even through the Obfuscation charm it was obvious that he was smiling. His voice was obviously masked. It had a sort of metallic quality to it that only came from some of the voice modulating charms Harry had read about in the Flamel library.

Moody frowned, "Dunno what you're talking about. Haven't taught anyone anything a day in my life, no matter how much that old Dumbledore wanted me to. Now, do be a lad and stop wasting my time, will you? How is it that your charm works on my eyes?"

"Very well," the man graciously said, "My charm works on your eye because I am using a version of it was modified to subvert Ancient Sumerian revealing spells."

"How?" Moody asked, sounding intrigued, "I've been working on a spell like that for almost a year now."

"You'll figure it out," the man almost sounded amused with himself.

Moody shot him a dirty look, "How about you don't be a smartass and let me know if I'm getting this right, huh? Did you know that you need Auror training to break that Aegean ward? Of course you did, you were weaving through that ward too easily to not have been trained by someone from the academy. I'm guessing you're a rookie...no...you also knew the Azkaban transfer schedule and naval routes well enough to sneak aboard, so you have to be a senior. Maybe retired...no...you're too young...you quit. Am I wrong?"

The man shook his head, "Sharp as always, Auror Moody."

"Good to know. Now you see, Mr. Mysterious, we find ourselves at an impasse. Our young friend there," Moody said, pointing at Harry, "He is here to rescue Mr. Thompson there. That's all well and good, since I was

the one who wanted him to come. You, on the other hand, are not invited. So the only reason you could be here is that you were the one who performed those dark rituals on the poor boy. And now, you're here to finish the job. I, obviously, cannot let that happen. So I suppose that this is where I inform you that you are officially under arrest."

With a twist of Moody's wand, the man's jaw tightened and he could speak no more. Then he turned to Harry.

"You," he said to Harry, "You have become quite the legend at the Auror Headquarters. I don't think the Ministry will prosecute you after you helped stop the attack at Diagon, but your identity will be exposed and your little hero-act will be over."

"Harry! You need to get out of here! If people know who you are then Nicholas and Perenelle would be under serious risk of exposure!" Hedwig reminded worriedly.

Harry agreed. As much as he wanted to save Jarvis, he was a guy who had his list of priorities straight. Nicholas and Perenelle were way too up on that list to risk their lives coming under attack.

Yet even as the thought completed itself in his mind, a guilty weight settled into his stomach.

"Don't worry," Moody assured, unaware of Harry's inner turmoil, "Maybe you could train to...refine...your skills a bit more and then they'll let you join the DMLE. You'd do well there, I'd reckon."

'No,' Harry thought to himself, ignoring Moody's attempts at...whatever he was attempting to do. This was beyond just him and his guardians. If Voldemort found out they were alive he and his acolytes would never stop coming for their knowledge and the Stone, and if heavens forbid they got their hands on them, they would be unstoppable. Not to mention the amount of people who would come after Harry!

Thus, finally making up his mind, Harry started trying every single command he could, keeping in mind what Nicholas had told him about Mad-Eye Moody.

"If you encounter him, get out of there. Don't fight. Don't hide. Don't try to trick him. Just get out. Despite all that you can do, Alastor Moody is one of the most formidable fighters the Wizarding World has ever seen. He is quick with a wand, quicker wandless, and is a master of twelve different forms of offensive magic. The man is sharp, paranoid and very cunning. He has taken down Dark Lords and terrorists and dragons and dementors. If you fight, I can guarantee that you will lose."

That was exactly what Harry was trying to do. Get out. Nicholas was right. Moody was cunning. He had masterfully dissected all of Harry's abilities that he knew of and had come up with a perfect way to neutralize him in a little more than a day.

Unluckily for him though, he didn't know all of Harry's abilities.

When none of his offensive magic or spells worked, Harry moved onto his passive skills. ID failed. Mage Sight was still active, if a little blinding, so when he thought, 'Observe' and a bunch of windows popped up, almost yelped in shock.

Ping!

Magenium Ward

A ward that functions by filling the area inside it with magic to the point where no more magic can be accepted into the surroundings, preventing those captured inside from using magic in any form.

Ping!

Trivyami Anti Transportation Ward

A ward that prevents the use of all Transportation magic such as Dimensional Travel, Floo, Apparition, Portkeys, etc. It is used to

contain wizards and witches and prevent them from escaping a certain confined area. This ward is based upon a Nepali spell.

Ping!

Paralysis Ward

A ward that paralyzes everyone except the caster in the area of effect. It is very difficult and complicated to put together and often takes hours of preparation before it can be put together. Due to that reason, they are rarely used these days anymore.

Harry almost grinned as he read the Magenium Ward description and a plan finally formed in his head. He couldn't push magic out of him, but having exhausted a large amount of his own mana, he had no problem sucking it in.

'Runic Burnout,' he thought, and the window popped up.

Ping!

Runic Burnout Lv-6 (89%)

A precise sucking of magic from a ward by using it to refill one's own core. It starts causing damage to HP when magic continues to be sucked after the MP is full. A common way to get around it is to use up mana as fast as it comes in.

Do you wish to use it on: Magenium Ward, Trivyami Anti

Transportation Ward, Paralysis Ward, as well as 8 more connected wards?

YES/NO

'Eight more connected wards?' Harry thought with a frown. This could really be a bad idea.

A wand poking at the seam of his jacket hood immediately pulled Harry's attention back to Moody. He was running his wand along the edge of his hood, muttering spell after spell, his unpleasant smelling breath washing

over Harry's face after every word he spoke.

Finishing up running his wand over Harry's hood, he moved back a few steps before pointing his wand at him. "It's a powerful piece of clothing, that jacket you've got there. Power of self-sacrifice is a terribly strong bit of magic. Ancient. Tricky too. It took a bit of work to find a way to nullify its protections, but find it I did. What do you say, eh? I reckon it's time we see who is under that hood."

The tip of Moody's wand started glowing an ominous purple and Harry's eyes widened as he realized that Moody had figured out a way to take his hood down.

Finally throwing caution to the wind, he pressed Yes.

Ping!

Due to excessive and reckless use a skill has leveled up thrice!

Runic Burnout Lv-9 (23%)

A precise sucking of magic from a ward by using it to refill one's own core. It starts causing damage to HP when magic continues to be sucked after the MP is full. A common way to get around it is to use up mana as fast as it comes in.

There was a moment of complete silence in which Harry rejoiced at getting the required number of level ups to break the Aegean ward. His plan was to use the level ups he'd get from the Runic Burnout and use them to destroy the Aegean wards on Jarvis's shackles before apparating them both away. He was a bit happy that at least this part of the plan had gone well.

Then everything went to shit.

BOOM!

With an enormous explosive sound that made Moody turn around wild-eyed, the door behind Harry that his foot was still touching exploded

outwards and the wards dropped all at once.

Harry had completely misjudged what taking down 11 wards at once would do to him.

Incredibly light headed, Harry dropped to his knees, barely conscious enough to hear Hedwig's worried cries and watch as the mystery man immediately sprinted over to Jarvis with an inhuman speed as soon as Moody's attention was off him, destroying the yellow Aegean ward with a swift wave of his wand along the way, grabbing onto him, and disappearing. Moody's Stupefies and Diffindoos washed off the man as if they did nothing to him.

Ping!

Quest Failure!

Rescue Jarvis without giving away your identity!

Failure,

Loss of respect from DMLE

Remain in dark about the one behind the attack

Just as only the two people were left in the room, a deep cold sensation settled into the air...into their souls...colder than any cold Harry had ever felt.

Moody's head snapped towards the hole that used to be the door, his eyes terribly full of fear, an expression that seemed almost entirely alien on his face. His voice was shaking when he muttered, "What have you done?"

With his head slowly starting to clear, Harry turned to look outside.

The ship had stopped moving and the sky was no longer the pleasant blue. Stormy clouds surrounded them as far as the eye could see. In the distance, a large dark building towered above them, and descending from that dark building towards them at an extremely alarming speed was an enormous dark shadow.

'No. Not a shadow,' Harry thought.

He had lit his hands on fire, using up all the excess mana from the wards that were blocking his senses and making him feel light headed. Little by little his senses were returning to him, but even despite that, it took his mind a second to place what he was seeing.

Dementors.

Hundreds of them.

Eyes widening as the realization completely set in, he pulled down every shield he had and turned up Gamer's Mind to its fullest extent, pushing down every single positive emotion he had into oblivion before flooding his own mind shields with mana.

Ping!

Ghosting Active!

With his Ghosting skill making him invisible to the Dementors, he jumped to his feet and dashed out onto the deck, where a dozen or so crew members were lying unconscious.

"They must have come up to see what the ruckus was and passed out due to the effect of the Dementors," Hedwig said, her voice distressed.

Moody had lit a lot of the deck, including most of the area around them, on fire, probably to discourage the Dementors from getting too close, and was apparating in, grabbing one of the crew at a time and apparating out. A light blue glowing honey badger Patronus prowled around them, growling in the direction of the rapidly approaching Dementors.

He was apparating them to safety, Harry realized.

"Where are you taking them?!" he shouted in Moody's direction. Moody was barely managing to stay on his feet, struggling more and more every single time he apparated in. Harry needed to help, or else he wouldn't make it!

Moody shot him a dirty look, before yelling back, "The Diagon! Tom's bar!"

Harry nodded before he sent his mana out, parted the fire and dashed through, grabbing one of the crew before apparating away to the Leaky Cauldron entrance and apparating back instantly, not waiting for Tom to acknowledge him or say anything.

He didn't have the time.

When he popped back into existence on the ship, the immense sea of Dementors had descended fully down to the water level and were gliding along the surface, blotting out the sea between the ship and the island.

Hurriedly, Harry grabbed another crew member and disappeared, worriedly noting that Moody was barely managing to stay on his feet. He was going to lose consciousness soon. He knew it.

Sure enough, next time he popped back, Moody was lying amongst the unconscious and his Patronus had disappeared.

"Let me out!" Hedwig said as soon as they saw Moody passed out, "I'll take the remaining people to the apartment! No one will see me! You focus on protecting them!"

"Be careful," Harry said and opened up the seam of his pocket. Hedwig burst out into the open air and let out an encouraging trill before diving down towards the deck, grabbing onto one of the crew, and disappearing in a ball of fire.

Harry surveyed the area in front of him with increasing panic.

The Dementors had reached the ship; one of them had already risen to the deck and heading in the direction of Moody. Steadying himself with a deep breath, Harry activated Iron Fist and dashed forwards, slamming it into the Dementor's chest.

Unlike the Dementor he had beat in the ID, however, this one barely

flinched.

Instead, it turned its head side to side, as if it was unsure of what had hit him. Harry, a bit shaken from the lack of reaction, slammed another Iron Fist into its jaw.

Again. No reaction.

It simply looked around, visibly more annoyed this time. Behind them, Hedwig flamed in and carried away the last crew member, leaving only Moody on the ship. Hoping that he was at least making a little dent, he slammed another Iron Fist into the Dementor's gut with all his might, this time setting his hand on fire for good measure.

Before he could pull his fist back this time, however, it caught his hand in a quick grip.

Its other boney hand came up to him, bits of dried skin flaking off into air around them as he felt the space around him a couple of times searchingly before its hand wrapped around his throat. Behind him, he could feel even more Dementors climbing onto the deck. The stress on his extremely low-level Ghosting skill was growing more and more unbearable.

Harry was struggling with all his might, trying to use Gamer's Mind to push away his fear, but he was no match for a hundred Dementors. He was close to cracking. He could feel it.

As the Dementor's hand grew tighter around him, Harry's heart started beating faster and faster despite Gamer's Mind, and then suddenly, it skipped a beat. A ping sounded in his ears.

Ping!

Ghosting Failure!

Harry's eyes widened.

'No! Not now!' he thought. Hedwig, who had flamed back in after

depositing the last crew member, worriedly flapped around the Dementor in an attempt to reach Harry and flame him out, but it barely even paid mind to her. It was stronger than the Dementor in the ID, better than it, smarter than it...hungrier than it.

It was in its element. It was in Azkaban.

Harry's mother's screams echoed in his ears again...louder this time...He could feel the Dementor lift him up to its mouth with one hand, lowering its hood with another...there was sucking...

Suddenly, the Dementor was yanked backward and Harry dropped to the floor. He caught sight of something bright and enormous circling him...no...there were two of them. The sense of despair in him was slowly being pushed away, but he was still struggling to pull himself together. He didn't have the time to make sense of it. He felt a soft hand on his shoulder and before he knew it, he was being apparated away.

Harry reappeared on a rocky surface.

For the longest of whiles, all that he could make sense of was a female voice...Perenelle...asking him, "Are you alright?" and Nicholas explaining that obfuscating wards around the Azkaban waters and the sudden storm clouds had delayed them from catching up to the ship and that they had come as soon as they had felt the wards go down.

He wasn't all there, but he remembered reassuring them that it was alright.

His legs were too shaky to stand up, but a few moments later, his eyes focused enough for him to see the sight before him.

Shaking slightly as he put weight on his legs, he stood up beside the limp unconscious body of Alastor Moody, wincing a bit as Hedwig flapped down onto his shoulder; she must have rescued the old Auror after all; and his guardians behind him.

"I suppose you were right," he commented with a chuckle, his voice hoarse, "Your Patroni aren't discreet in any sense of the word."

They were standing on a small rocky island about half a kilometer from where the ship had stopped with a glowing ward surrounding them that shielded them from the Dementors' sight. In the distance, two enormous Dragon Patroni; one Hebridean Black and one Welsh Green; flew around the burning remains of H.M.S. Charon as it sank into the rocky sea, battling the swarm of Dementors that were swarming it.

Beyond that towered the dark silhouette of the Prison of Azkaban.

Markus Black popped back into existence in a small, battered-looking living room of an abandoned house and walked over to a half-standing sofa and repaired it with a quick spell before laying the shivering Jarvis Thompson onto it and conjuring a small blanket before wrapping it around him.

"A-ar-are you going to k-kill me?" the shivering boy asked, his eyes wide with fear.

Markus did not reply, instead leveling his wand at the boy and muttering a simple warming charm. Jarvis visibly relaxed, but still eyed him with suspicious eyes.

He didn't blame him.

With a sigh, he cast a Muffling charm around the room and leveled the Elder Wand at the boy's forehead, watching as his eyes widened and he started shaking again.

"P-please. I didn't do anything. P-please don't h-hurt me."

"I'm sorry Jarvis," he said, a tinge of regret leaking into his voice, "But this may hurt. Obliviatu Obscura Revealus!"

The boy screamed as the memory-repairing charm went to work under the expert guidance of the Elder Wand carrying out its master's orders,

stitching back together thoughts and memories that his own Obliviate had dissolved into nothingness. Due to the legendary wand casting the spell, the boy's recollection of all that had happened would be perfect to the tiniest detail, but as an auxiliary effect, the pain would also strike him tenfold.

Jarvis's screams lasted for a good fifteen more minutes and he didn't stop convulsing uncontrollably for the next thirty. When he finally stopped shaking and felt strong enough to sit up, Markus was sitting on a rickety wooden chair in front of him with a bowl of soup, which he handed to him.

With a hoarse, shaky voice, Jarvis asked, "Did I hurt anyone permanently while I was not...you know...while I didn't remember everything? Or worse?"

"No."

"That...is a relief. So tell me, did the distraction work? Did you get what you needed from the Ministry?"

Markus nodded.

"Good. That's good. I was worried I'd done all this for nothing," Jarvis said, chuckling slightly.

Markus didn't share his humorous demeanor. After a moment of silence, apologetically, he said, "I'm sorry you couldn't get to see your mother. I had hoped that after all the hubbub you kicked up in the Alley, she would see fit to handle such a high profile case personally, but apparently, I hoped wrong. I miscalculated and I am sorry."

"It's alright Markus," Jarvis said before pausing to sip on a spoonful of soup, "I saw her a couple of times...I couldn't recognize her then because you had my memories locked away, but...she seemed nice...kind..."

Markus nodded, "She is that. Selfless too. She was forced to abandon you

due to societal norms and so that she could keep her job, but she has spent her life climbing up the DMLE ranks to the very top, trying to do good, and help people. I've known that since I met her for the first time in my Fifth Year at Hogwarts and I wanted you to see that too."

There was a moment of silence broken only by the crackling of the fire.

"And my father?" Jarvis asked, "You knew him too?"

"I did," Markus said with a smile, "He was one of the best men I ever knew, if in retrospect a bit loopy. He would give his life for those he loved. Unfortunately, he never knew you existed. I'd hoped that had you made it to Azkaban, you would've been able to see him for a bit before I rescued you, but..."

"But what?"

"I learned mid-way through your transfer that apparently he had found a way to escape from the prison some time ago. It...shouldn't have happened. Caught me off guard. I didn't manage to track him down," Markus said, sounding incredibly troubled, "I tried my best, Jarvis, I promise I did."

Jarvis smiled, before reaching out with a shivering hand and patting Markus's back and saying, "Your best is enough. Besides, I think it's time I let go of this grudge against my parents. They seem like they were good people. I... I suppose that it's best for me to move on."

Markus could almost physically feel a weight lift off his chest.

Grabbing the empty bowl of soup out of Jarvis's hands and setting it onto the floor, he grabbed a file off the nearby table and handed it to Jarvis, who gave him a questioning look.

"Ms. Bathilda Bagshot from the wizarding village of Godric's Hollow is an old lady with no other family. She has taken in many foster children throughout her life; both squib and wizards; throughout her life, but she

lives alone now."

Jarvis started to interrupt but Markus held up a hand, asking him to wait.

"She was reluctant to take you in, especially because I was a complete stranger who showed up begging her to take in a child she knew nothing about, but once I talked to her over a cup of tea and explained your parentage to her she agreed to keep it a secret and give you a place to live till you are eighteen."

The young boy seemed stunned into silence, so Markus continued speaking.

"She is a nice lady and she'll take good care of you. If you are willing to listen, she will have many stories to tell. Once you are eighteen, you'll be able to access the account I have set up for you in the Bank of London. It has enough funds to give you a good start on whatever life you choose to have. I haven't forgotten my promise either, Jarvis. I will find a way to help you meet your father. I promise. But until then, I hope tha-

He was cut off as Jarvis leaped out of his seat and grabbed him in a tight hug, his body shaking with sobs. Markus could do little but hug back.

It took Jarvis a while to get his bearings back, but once he did, Markus handed him the Portkey and the documentation that he would require upon reaching his destination, patting him on the back one last time as he said his goodbyes and thanked him. The young boy had taken a huge risk and endured a lot for him and while Markus knew he didn't deserve such loyalty, he appreciated it incredibly.

With a soft whoosh and a burst of color, the Portkey carried him away to his new home.

Markus walked over to the right of the room and stared out of the window of his childhood home into the streets of Godric's Hollow. While Jarvis's new home wasn't too far away from The Potter Cottage, but it

was for the best that he didn't know where Markus had been lodging for the last few days.

In the future, Jarvis Thompson's dark life as a revenge-obsessed wizard killer and then his eventual suicide had weighed heavy on Markus, especially after he had discovered who his parents were. Redirecting his life into a better direction wasn't a huge change to the timeline, but it was something Markus was proud of nonetheless.

Besides, it wasn't as if he had been entirely selfless. He had been on his own mission while Jarvis had been out laying waste to the Alley.

That mission had been incredibly successful.

The diversion at the Alley had, despite having gotten slightly out of control, worked, and he had been able to break into the most secure wing of the Department of Mysteries and steal the item he had needed to acquire. A bracelet that not only blocked Scrying, Spying, and Divination magic but also produced false results that gave him near-complete anonymity. He wouldn't have been able to step foot near Dumbledore without raising a dozen red flags without it, so acquiring it was a great leap forward towards his overall goal.

Despite the good news, however, he had also realized that he had suffered from an incredible setback.

He had come back in time hoping that he could use his knowledge of the past to prevent the dire fate that awaited them in the future, but apparently, he wasn't the only one who was intent on changing the flow of Fate.

There had been changes...modifications...events that didn't line up...

Higher forces had been meddling with the timeline in ways that it shouldn't have been meddled with, creating unforeseen situations for him that made all his foreknowledge useless. Someone else had been messing

with the past and they had managed to score a hell of a head start on him.

His eyes drifted down to his ring finger, upon which rested a golden ring that held a small dark gemstone. The triangular mark set deep into the stone glinted in and out of sight, barely visible in the dim light.

It was time to go have a chat with an old friend.

I'd love to hear your thoughts on the port and the end scene with future Harry and Jarvis. The chapter was very experimental. New locations. New characters. New reveals. New setups. I'm very curious to hear your thoughts.

Next chapter will be Harry and co. visiting the French version of Diagon Alley. If you have any ideas for shops, magical items, traditions, easter eggs, references, or characters that you'd like me to put in, let me know. I'll try my best to put them in as worldbuilding details and fill out the new locations with lots of details and quirks as I always try to do.

Внимание! Этот перевод, возможно, ещё не готов.

Его статус: идёт перевод

<http://tl.rulate.ru/book/100904/4637798>