

A/N- Here you have the sequel to "The name is Potter Black!". Though I did a very small recap at the beginning of this chapter I won't be summarizing the last story, just continuing it, so if you didn't read "The name is Potter Black!" first you will be extremely confused and there will be spoilers in the little recap, so I suggest you close your eyes tightly and hit the back button and go check "The name is Potter Black!" first.

Hope you have fun and I present to you, no wait...he, he, he, almost forgot:

Disclaimer: I do not own the rights to Harry Potter!

And now I really present to you:

"Life goes on"

By PadyandMoony

Chapter 1- Guilty until proven innocent

"Hello Neville, how are you doing?" Minister Fudge asked kindly as if he was talking to a favorite nephew.

Neville shrugged from the chair in the middle of the round courtroom in front of the whole Wizengamot, the Minister's entourage which consisted of his Under-Secretary Dolores Umbridge and his assistant Percy Weasley, the defendant Severus Snape and his lawyer Ted Tonks. Neville was the first witness called by the prosecution in the trial of Severus Snape for Death Eater activity and murder. At the end of June Severus had answered a summon from Lord Voldemort to a graveyard in Little Hangleton. Now, you ask yourself, why would he answer, or even better, receive a summon from Lord Voldemort if he wasn't a marked Death Eater? Maybe he is guilty and Fudge isn't all that crazy.

If you thought that you would be severely mistaken. Severus Snape answered that summon because Harry Potter had been kidnapped along with Cedric Diggory, and not long after Severus felt his Dark Mark burn, signaling the return of Lord Voldemort. Now, Severus actually liked the quiet Hufflepuff, he was an okay student, but he wasn't the main source of Severus' worries that night. No, his worries were centered on one black haired, bespectacled boy with a lightning bolt scar on his forehead. Severus, former Death Eater, Greasy Git from the Dungeons, the fear of every Hogwarts student both past and present, became quite soft when said boy was involved. So, in an attempt to save his adopted nephew, the son of his first and only true love, Severus went to Voldemort and tried to convince him of his loyalties. Well...that didn't go exactly as planned and Voldemort tried to kill Severus, but for Severus' luck and horror Harry threw himself in front of the Killing Curse aimed at him. Due to a combination of Harry having a piece of Voldemort's soul inside him and Voldemort using Harry's blood in a ritual to get

a body back, Harry did not die and Voldemort ended up dead by his own rebounded Killing Curse when it collided with a disarming charm from Harry.

And here you say, well now that Voldemort is dead all our heroes' troubles are gone. And I answer; no. Why? Because there are idiots like Fudge in the world. After defeating Voldemort, Harry was attacked by a psychotic Azkaban escapee Bellatrix Lestrange and Severus killed her, defending Harry. Quite clear, if you ask me. Not according to Fudge though. In an attempt to prove that his supporters Alexander Nott and Lucius Malfoy were not loyal Death Eaters, and therefore save his reputation and post, Fudge declared that Voldemort hadn't really been alive, and that Severus orchestrated the kidnap to try and resurrect Voldemort with a ritual. That it was an Inferi that all the witnesses saw in the graveyard that day and that Nott, Malfoy and every other Death Eater apprehended with the exception of Severus and Karkaroff were there to save Harry. He also proceeded to discredit Severus' biggest supporters: Albus Dumbledore and Harry Potter. Fudge pressured the Daily Prophet into printing articles that badmouthed Harry and Dumbledore, calling the first an attention-seeking liar who dived in the Dark Arts and saying the second was losing his touch with age.

This is why we find ourselves here today, at the trial of Severus Snape, with Fudge questioning poor Neville Longbottom:

"Neville, we need your help. We heard Mr. Snape here is quite intimidating-"

"Madam Bones, Mr. Longbottom was not at the scene of the alleged crime and so I don't see the relevance of his testimony," Ted Tonks exclaimed from his seat next to Severus.

"I will have several witnesses who will prove this man is not the hero the defense is trying to portray Madam Bones. This serves to attest to the defendant's character and inclinations," Fudge roared pointing at Severus.

"I will permit your line of questions Minister," Madam Bones, the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement said. "But please do remember that the Minister of Magic does not preside these proceedings. This situation is quite unusual and was formed by your demand, but I still have the maximum authority here. By demanding to prosecute this case you are putting yourself under my ruling no matter who you are."

"Of course Madam Bones," Fudge said with a false smile, "May I proceed?" She nodded and he turned kindly to Neville, "As I was saying, isn't it true that Mr. Snape is intimidating and cruel towards his students? That he often threatens you to the point that, in your third year when you faced a Boggart, it turned into him?"

Neville opened his mouth and closed it. He glanced at Severus and biting his lips he answered, "Yes, but Harry said he was just playing a ro-"

"Yes or no answers will do Neville, thank you," Fudge said. "Is it true that Mr. Snape often gives harsh and unfair detentions?"

"Yes," Neville said in a small voice.

"And is it true that he especially persecutes Harry Potter and his group of friends, yourself included?"

"Yes but-"

"That's all," Fudge cut in.

Ted stood up and swooped down the stands toward Neville. When he arrived, he smiled gently.

"Neville, you were trying to elaborate on the Minister's questions; you may do so now."

"Harry said that Professor Snape was playing a role because he was a spy and he couldn't be seen being fatherly to the Boy-Who-Lived. All Death Eaters hate Harry and if he didn't seem to hate him they would suspect him of turning on them. And I believe Harry."

"Why is that?"

"The morning after Harry was kidnapped, when he was in the Hospital Wing, we went to see if he was okay and Professor Snape was holding his hand as he slept. And you could see it in his face that he cared for Harry. I'd never seen him look like that. He smiled when he looked at Harry. I didn't think Professor Snape knew how to smile," he finished apologetically glancing at Snape who had a blank mask in place.

"Thank you Neville, you may leave," Ted said friendly.

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"Mr. Karkaroff, is Severus Snape a Death Eater?" Fudge asked.

"Yes," Karkaroff answered from the chair that he was heavily chained to.

"Was he planning to kidnap Harry Potter in a ploy to bring back You-Know-Who from the dead?"

"Yes. He planned it all, we were only pawns."

"And why did he kill Mrs. LeStrange?"

"Because she, like myself, would have testified of his guilt. I was lucky I was caught by an Auror before he could kill me."

Ted rolled his eyes and Severus kept his sneer firm on his face. His black eyes surveyed Karkaroff with profound coldness that made Karkaroff shiver as their eyes met.

"Thank you," Fudge said with a triumphant smile.

Ted got up and said to Madam Bones, "I request the witness be interviewed with Veritaserum."

"Objection, the defense has no right to demand Veritaserum!" Fudge cried standing up.

"The defendant is obligated to be questioned with Veritaserum if the prosecution requests, but the witnesses to the defense are protected and it is against the law to force them to witness under Veritaserum," Ted countered. "The witnesses called by the *prosecution* however are requested to submit if asked by the defense since they are attesting to the participation of a crime. Mr. Karkaroff is saying my client is the master mind of a kidnapping, my client has every right to make sure he is stating the truth."

Madam Bones nodded and said, "I'll allow it," Fudge fumed and was about to protest when she cut him off, "I already warned you once Minister. There are rules to be followed."

Ted smiled and waited for the Ministry official to administer the Veritaserum that had been tested both by the Defense Potions expert, who was in this case the defendant, and the Ministry's Potions expert.

As Karkaroff's eyes went unfocused Ted asked, "Was Severus Snape in any way involved in the planning of the events that happened on the 24th of June at the graveyard in little Hangleton?"

"No."

"Who was?"

"Bellatrix Lestrangle, Peter Pettigrew, myself, Barty Crouch Jr. and the Dark Lord."

"You-Know-Who was involved? Wasn't he dead?"

"No, the Dark Lord did not die in 1981. We all knew it, we still had the Mark and it grew darker and clearer this year. After Barty Crouch Jr. was revealed, I received a letter from the Dark Lord by owl saying he would give me a chance for forgiveness if I executed a task for him. The letter was a timed Portkey and it had instructions for me to meet him at a specific date in February, during a Hogwarts Hogsmeade weekend. I knew the Dark Lord would kill me for betraying him all those years ago. This was my best chance. If he was being truthful I could live and I knew he must have needed someone to complete whatever Barty and Pettigrew had been up to so I went. He had a semblance of a body he managed to create, but it wasn't enough; he needed to be tended to all the time. He told me to turn the cup into a Portkey to take Potter to him so he could use the boy's blood to regain a body. So I did and I put Victor under the *Imperius* so he would take Diggory and Delacour out of the way. When Viktor was caught by Potter and Diggory I knew I had to leave, so I started making my way out with the excuse of tending to my champion but instead I left Hogwarts grounds. When I felt the dark Mark burn, I Apparated to the Dark Lord. He had regained his body and received me well."

"And how does Severus come into the picture?"

"Severus Apparated long after we were already there. The Dark Lord was playing with Potter. He was torturing him before he killed him and when Severus turned up, he forgot all about Potter. Severus tried to convince him that he was loyal but the Dark Lord didn't believe him and shot the Killing Curse at him. Potter threw himself between the Dark Lord and Severus and took the curse. I don't know how he survived but he did. I didn't see what happened next because the battle started. I only saw the Dark Lord fall and my inattention cost me my capture."

"Did you see Mr. Snape killing Bellatrix Lestrangle?"

"No."

"Why did you lie before?"

"Because I made a deal; I testify against Snape and I'll be out in ten years instead of life in Azkaban."

"Thank you," turning to the Wizengamot Ted said, "This proves Severus Snape is not a loyal Death Eater and therefore this trial is quite useless."

Before Madame Bones could talk Fudge bellowed, "There is still the matter of Bellatrix Lestrangle's murder. And how can we be sure Karkaroff didn't fight the Veritaserum?"

"Unfortunately, Mr. Tonks there are ways around the Veritaserum and there is still the matter of establishing why Mr. Snape killed another human being," Madam Bones said as if she wasn't all that sure this wasn't a waste of time. "So we will proceed. But before we do so, I want to state that any deal has to go through the Wizengamot, meaning your deal Mr. Karkaroff is not valid and you will be sentenced only at your trial where we will be discussing with whom you made this deal."

Still in a drugged haze as he was being hauled off the courtroom Karkaroff didn't react. Later that day the Ministry guards would swear they heard howls of fury coming from Karkaroff's cell.

Fudge's witnesses were all in the same avenue; he called Draco Malfoy and Theodore Nott who attested that their Head of House was one nasty piece of work who hated Harry Potter. There wasn't much Ted could do there. They weren't outright lying just embellishing the truth, and as they were underage he could not force Veritaserum on them which would have only proved that Severus was stricter to every student except the Death Eaters' children like the two witnesses. And he had already established that.

Fudge also called a few Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws who echoed Neville's statements about Professor Snape's strictness objectively without the added input the two Slytherins gave. Alexander Nott was not called to the stands even though he had previously been enrolled as a witness. Fudge said he was content with the testimonies he had; however, Ted knew that after the Karkaroff fiasco Fudge didn't want Nott incriminating himself under Veritaserum.

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"Auror Shacklebolt, you were present at the Little Hangleton graveyard on the night of the 24th of June correct?"

"Yes."

"Did you see Professor Snape kill Bellatrix Lestrange?"

"Yes."

"Did you see why he did it?"

"Yes, Severus was holding Harry, who was injured, at the time. Lestrange shot a cutting curse at Harry and was about to send a second hex when Severus slashed her throat with another cutting curse."

"As an Auror why didn't you arrest Professor Snape at that time if he had just killed another person in front of you?"

"It was a clear act of defense of others. Harry would have died if Snape hadn't acted."

"Thank you," Ted smiled.

"Minister," Madam Bones asked.

"The prosecution rests," Fudge said with a scowl.

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"How long have you known the defendant?"

"Twenty-four years."

"Is it true that you two hate each other?"

"No."

Shocked whispers were heard.

"Professor Black, please elaborate. The Snape-Black grudge is widely known even to people outside of Hogwarts," Ted said.

"In our school years we hated each others' guts. Neither of us would waste a good opportunity to hex the other. When I came to teach at Hogwarts and brought my son with me, Harry was three and he didn't understand how people could hate each other. Severus is always scowling and bad tempered and Harry asked Remus why that was. Remus, ever the proper person, made up some excuse instead of just saying Severus was a git. I think he said that Severus was always in a bad mood because the dungeons were dark and gloomy. So Harry made Severus a picture to put some color in his dungeon. He kept making pictures and eventually Severus mellowed and remembered that Harry may be his rival's son but he was also his best friend's son. During the years, we started having a more civilized relationship because of this little person we both loved and it turned into a friendship. Of course, we were always careful not to let anyone know."

"Why is this?"

"Severus is a spy for Dumbledore. He had to make the Death Eaters that evaded capture believe he was still faithful to be able to bring back information about them and what they were up to. He also needed to be able to go back to Voldemort when he returned in order to keep our side informed in case of another war. He couldn't do that if he was my friend or if people knew he was the Boy-Who-Lived's Uncle Sev."

"So when Professor Snape belittled Harry in class he was playing a role? They both were?"

"Yes."

"Would you trust your son's safety with Professor Snape?"

"I already have. Harry has spent time with Severus at his house many times. As a matter of fact, the Ministry has a register of one of those times when they mistook a House-elf doing magic for Harry doing magic and sent a warning."

"I heard that the evening of the 24th of June was not the first time Professor Snape saved Harry's life."

"That's correct. On the 4th of June of 1992, Severus saved Harry from Professor Quirrell who had, at that time, been sharing his body with Voldemort and had tried to steal the Philosopher's stone that was guarded at Hogwarts and almost killed Harry in the process. Severus' untimely arrival and promptness to take Harry to Madam Pomfrey saved Harry's life."

"Thank you Professor Black," Ted said.

"Your brother Regulus Black was named as a Death Eater in the war's trials wasn't he Mr. Black?" Fudge asked.

"What does that have to do with anything?" Sirius asked icily.

"Answer the question Mr. Black."

"Yes," he hissed.

"And you were the late Bellatrix Lestrange's cousin were you not?"

"Yes."

Fudge smiled, "Your father Orion Black was quite outspoken in his support for You-Know-Who back then.

We were never able to prove any connection but he had no qualms in letting people know his views."

"No he didn't," Sirius answered, trying his best to rein his temper that was escalating rapidly.

"Objection Madam Bones, the witness' family history isn't on trial here," Ted called.

"Do you have a point Minister?" Madam Bones asked.

"Yes, I am trying to assert the witness's credibility. He comes from a long line of Dark Wizards. Who's to say he's not a supporter of You-Know-Who that we didn't know of and is trying to free his colleague with false allegations."

"Sirius Black was a highly decorated Auror, Minister. I think he has already proven what side he is on," Madam Bone said. "Unless you have questions pertinent to what happened on the 24th the witness is dismissed."

"I haven't," Fudge said after a brief pause.

"You may go Mr. Black," she said.

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"He saved my life. He's always been my Uncle, my mother's best friend. I love him like I love my father. He made a mistake in his youth and he has spent years repaying that mistake. He is no Death Eater," Harry finished his deposition. They had just watched many memories of Harry's childhood that were projected out of a Pensieve. Severus playing with Harry, reading to him, and teaching him how to brew potions. Classical happy family moments. And after that they played the happenings of the graveyard from the moment Harry was transported to the graveyard to the moment he was transported out of it. Sirius had demanded Harry be taken out of the courtroom for that and his request had been granted. Harry had left his memories of the talk with his parents out.

Afterwards he came back and answered the same questions as the others in the company of his lawyer, Andromeda. Yes, it was all role playing. No Severus is not a Death Eater, etc. Now it was Fudge's turn.

"Well yes Mr. Potter....*Black*," Fudge said with a wicked smile. "That's the word of one felon defending another now isn't that?"

"What?" Harry asked astonished.

"Are you or are you not an Unregistered Animagus? Please remember that on the night of the 24th, during the Third Task of the Triwizard Tournament, I and hundreds of others saw you transform into a stag. So you are breaking the law-"

"Actually he isn't," Andromeda said calmly and Harry smirked. Oh, Fudge was going to get it now. He just sat back to enjoy the show.

"Mrs. Tonks, the law clearly states-"

"That to train as an Animagus one has to have at least one registered Animagus as their teacher and to submit the paperwork to either the Ministry or a schooling institution. Harry had; he was trained by Sirius Black and his paperwork stating it as an independent study was submitted to Minerva McGonagall, another registered Animagus, and Headmistress of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The law further states that overage and out of school Wizards have up to three years after they master their first full transformation to register. Harry has mastered his in April, just a few months ago. Furthermore, Wizards that are still attending school have three years after they graduate said school, which means Harry still has six years before he is actually breaking the law. Punishment for being an unregistered Animagus is a hundred Galleons per year of failed register. I hardly call that being a felon."

"But I do call it having a propensity to lie," Fudge pointed out. "Failing to tell people he can turn into a stag. Letting some poor unsuspected person be lured by an animal when he is a wizard."

"You have a very active imagination Minister. Harry merely followed, legally, a family tradition."

"Yes, and what a tradition it is, was Sirius Black not an Unregistered Animagus who failed to make his due date?"

"By a few months, which is understandable since we were at war at the time, and as an Auror Professor Black tried to bring the Light side every advantage he could."

"If I recall correctly Mr. Black's fine was higher since he also failed to submit his study paperwork," Dolores Umbridge said sweetly. "And everyone knows the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. As a matter of fact the Black family has quite an interesting history, wouldn't you say Mrs. *Tonks*?"

"The Black family's history, Madam *Undersecretary* is not in trial here. Nor is Harry. What is on trial here is the fact that Severus Snape went to that graveyard to save two innocent children and killed, in self-defense and defense of others, a known Death Eater and escaped felon."

"Your sister," Umbridge offered.

"Unfortunately," Andromeda smiled. "We did share blood, and nothing else. I am actually quite grateful to Severus for stopping her from killing my beloved nephew no matter how he did it. Is his testimony finished?"

"There is still the matter of Diggory's memory," Fudge started.

"As I said previously, Harry isn't in trial here and the Diggory's are not pressing any charges. Far from it actually, so I am sorry to inform you that is not of your concern Minister. Do you have anything else to ask Harry pertaining Severus Snape's *innocence*?"

"No, Severus Snape's *guilt* is still to be seen," Fudge said. "Witness dismissed."

Andromeda helped Harry up and Sirius rushed up to assist her. Harry swayed and Sirius picked him up. They passed Severus and Ted, and Andromeda smiled. She couldn't have asked for a better way of leaving the room. The sick Boy-Who-Lived-Twice leaving in his father's arms after vehemently defending Severus. Most of the witches and Wizards of the Wizengamot would not forget to what lengths the boy went to defend his Uncle.

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Dumbledore was called in and basically repeated what all the others had said. Fudge didn't dare ask him anything, knowing he would have it turned around on him. He had already tried to disqualify Dumbledore as a witness because he was a member of the Wizengamot, but that had come back to nip him in the butt since he had already managed to disqualify Dumbledore as a judge and had him removed as Head of the Wizengamot because of his personal interest with the case. Now they were at the last testimony. Severus and Ted had requested Severus be interrogated under Veritaserum by both parties. Fudge fumed and argued but Madam Bones just reminded him it was Severus' right.

"Are you a Death Eater?" Fudge asked.

"Yes," Severus answered from the chair in the middle of the courtroom to where he was chained. Ted had protested the chains but Fudge argued that Severus was a suspected Death Eater and should be treated as such.

Fudge looked like Christmas had come early and he continued. "Did you kill Bellatrix LeStrange even though you are not an Auror?"

"Yes."

"That is all I had to ask," he said happily, sure he had won.

"Are you a faithful Death Eater?" Ted asked.

"No."

Murmurs went around and Ted asked. "Why did you say you were a Death Eater?"

"I joined the Dark Lord by my free will and was marked. You can't get unmarked."

"But you were no longer faithful to You-Know-Who?"

"No."

"Were you working against him?"

"Yes."

"Were you working for his downfall?"

"Yes."

"Why did you go to that graveyard?"

"Harry and Cedric had disappeared as soon as they touched the Triwizard Cup. We had knowledge the Dark Lord had plans to kidnap Harry. When I felt my Mark Burn I knew he had come back and that he had Harry. So I answered my call and Apparated to the Dark Lord in hopes of bringing the boys back. I tried to convince the Dark Lord I had remained faithful so I could get an opportunity to save the boys."

"What happened then?"

"He didn't believe me and shot a Killing Curse at me. Harry jumped in front of me. I thought he was dead. I wanted to die with him so I just held him. I couldn't believe it when, moments later, I felt his breathing and heard his heart beat. The Dark Lord shot another killing curse and Harry shot a disarming spell with his second wand that he had in his wand holster. The Dark Lord had been using Harry's wand

and the curse rebounded on Harry's *Expelliarmus* because a wand won't kill its master. The Dark Lord died. Bellatrix Lestrange went mad and cursed Harry. She was going to hex him again and I didn't think twice. I was not going to lose my boy. I killed her."

"Why?"

"Because I love Harry more than anything in this world."

"Why are you so cruel to him then?"

"I have to be cruel in public. If people knew I loved him they would know I wasn't faithful to the Dark Lord. If the Dark Lord had managed to come back we would have another war and the Light would need a spy."

"Is your affection towards Harry the only thing you've had to hide?"

"No."

"Who is Sean Evans?"

"Sean Evans is an alias I created to be able to develop the Permanent Wolfsbane without raising suspicion towards my loyalties."

"You mean you are the creator of the Permanent Wolfsbane?"

"Yes."

"The potion that helps werewolves keep their minds and prevents them from feeling immeasurable pain forever?"

"Yes."

"And you received no public recognition for this immense breakthrough?"

"No."

"All of this to serve the light?"

"Yes."

"Thank you Severus."

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"Veritaserum can be overcome, memories can be altered. There is no question that an accomplished wizard as Mr. Snape could easily do both and instruct his accomplices in the means to doing so. The fact is that Mr. Snape is a known Death Eater. He didn't even try to deny he joined You-Know-Who by his own free will. He has always been a shady character and now has lured the Boy-Who-Lived into his activities. Yes, the boy defeated You-Know-Who as a baby, but after being raised by a man who comes from a known Dark family and having the influence of a known Death Eater growing up, can he be trusted? I say no. The defense is basing themselves on this boy's word and memories. Can we trust him? Of course not. Severus Snape killed someone, and it doesn't matter who he killed but why. And he did it to save his freedom, so she couldn't talk about Snape's sordid plans of resurrecting You-Know-Who. For that I request the Dementor's kiss."

Whispers went around and Severus and Ted paled. They were not expecting this. This whole trial had been ridiculous; Fudge hadn't proved any of the accusations against Severus, he just raised doubt on the veracity of their defense. But unfortunately, Ted knew that in the Wizarding world it was usually guilty until proven innocent and not the other way around. So when he rose and walked to the front of the courtroom he prayed to all the gods he knew that he managed to convince the Wizengamot otherwise.

"Minister Fudge has been unable to prove his allegations. I have given you proof that not only has my client redeemed his past mistakes -- because that was what he made, a mistake of youth, but he was lured by the promise of power. When he realized what the cost was, he came back to the Light and risked his own life to grant us victory by giving us valuable information. When the Dark Lord was gone in 1981 he did not shed his role thinking his job done like many did. He did not rest. He kept it up knowing one day he would be needed, as he was, and thanks to that You-Know-Who was defeated. And for that he sacrificed everything. He is hated by most of his students because he had to keep his role. He is unable to demonstrate affection to those he loves publicly or get recognition for his conquests and his good acts. All people see is the façade he keeps. No one sees the man that brought relief to over seventy people already and will bring to hundreds more. He has earned the right to enjoy these things and not be deprived of his soul. A very rich soul. Yes he killed Bellatrix Lestrange, but he did so to defend a boy's life, a boy who has already sacrificed much and to whom, together with Severus, we owe the final defeat of You-Know-Who. I urge you to be fair and do this man justice for the first time in his life."

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A/N- If anyone is interested my original title for this story was **"Same family, new troubles. A Potter-Black-Snape-Lupin tale."** But then I realized it spoiled some of the cliffies for new readers so I changed it.

I want to thank you all that came back for my sequel and that read "The name is Potter Black!"

Huge thanks to all of you who reviewed I was so happy that I was able to please so much.

Thank you SWaddict1986 for betaing.

This story is dedicated to Sarah, aka rowanHOODofTheROWANWood, who has had a tough time lately. I hope this helps cheer you up.

Chapter 2- Big Misunderstanding

Sirius was pacing, Remus was sitting on a chair he had enlarged so Harry could lie down and sleep with his head on his lap and was absent-mindedly running his fingers through Harry's hair. Andromeda, in true Black fashion, almost bumped into Sirius about five times as she paced. Finally the door opened and first Ted came out alone and their hearts fell. Ted looked at them and grinned, right behind him Severus exited the courtroom looking dazed.

"The majority ruled he is not guilty and was acting on defense of others," Ted said grinning. "A few hands went up at guilty, Umbridge and Fudge being two of them, but they weren't enough."

Sirius ran to Severus and pulled him into a fierce hug. The man looked shocked.

"Knew you'd be alright," Sirius said and let Severus go. Andromeda followed Sirius' example and, maneuvering around Harry's head so as not wake him, Remus got up and was next in line. He commented:

"For someone who knew Severus would be fine you were doing an awful lot of pacing Padfoot."

Sirius waved him off.

"I have to confess," Ted said. "I was worried. Fudge kept alluding to Severus' past and with the testimonies about Severus' character I thought the Wizengamot wouldn't believe my defense that Severus had to keep up the act in order to spy. But when Harry came in and started calling him Uncle Sev, the same Harry who they had thought Severus hated, they were thrown. And him having come even though he is still bedridden made it more powerful. And we had them the second Sirius lifted Harry up. Even with Fudge trying to smudge Harry's image."

Severus seemed to come out of his daze and finally looked at the sleeping boy, "He shouldn't have come."

"He wouldn't take no for an answer," Sirius said smiling lightly.

Severus walked to Harry slowly and asked, "How is he?"

"He is still taking energizing potions everyday. And the one to counter the effects of the Acromantula bite along with painkillers. His leg still isn't a hundred percent better and it hurt's often. Poppy expects him to be recovering all summer long but she thinks he might be ready when school starts," Remus explained softly as Severus kneeled and ran a hand through Harry's hair.

"Right now he takes two short naps a day and the rest of the day he stays on the couch. He was bored of the bed. We had to take him to the Dursley's to renew the blood protection. Albus says that with Malfoy and Goyle still out he may need it. So I paid Vernon and Dudley a two-week Disney World vacation. Told them to go do a little father son bonding and you know Vernon, he wouldn't say no to a luxury free trip. We only needed Petunia, and Harry was in bed the entire time. But we needed her to let us both be there, and Vernon would never have it. I think when she saw Harry's state she mellowed. Not much mind you. She even consented to have Twinky there, can you believe it?" Sirius said. "We had to take turns sleeping because Harry was having a lot of nightmares. He would fall asleep and less than an

hour later he would start thrashing. We found out soon that if we woke him as the nightmare started there was a better chance of him going back to sleep and therefore rest sooner and easier. Otherwise it took a while to get him calmed down. He would wake and think he was still in the nightmare."

"About Voldemort?" Severus asked.

"About not reaching you in time. They'll lessen now since you are here and can convince him better that you didn't die. That was the hardest part of bringing him back to reality. Reminding him you were fine without proof," Remus said.

"I know how that goes," Severus said tightly and they all figured by the deep black bags under Severus' eyes that he must have had the same dream with Harry, but unlike Harry, didn't have anyone to calm him down.

"You're going home with us Sev," Sirius said squeezing his shoulder. "You are going home."

Severus nodded and picked Harry up, careful not to wake him. They slowly walked to the Apparition point and as they entered the Ministry Atrium, a horde of reporters was waiting and flashes started going off. They did not stop for them except for Ted, who gave a quick statement. The next day the *Quibbler* had an enormous picture of Severus carrying Harry out and a huge article about how Severus had been done wrong by the Ministry. How he saved their savior and how the Ministry was putting both Severus and their Savior through extreme trials. There was also Ted's statement printed; "My client should be hailed and given the Order of Merlin for his services, instead this is the thanks he gets," and a piece about the PWA's work and Severus' role in it.

The *Daily Prophet* on the other hand had a picture of Severus being escorted to the trial in handcuffs and a picture of Dumbledore with the heading: "Who is teaching our children?" They went on about how Severus got out on a technicality after a shady deposition by Harry Potter who was known to make tales and act against the law. Claiming Harry was a Parselmouth, an illegal Animagus who was too young to have mastered the transformation without aid from Dark Magic, and had been adopted into a Dark family, they raised doubt about his character and his allegiances. The fact that Severus was so interested in werewolves was also questioned: "Is he helping them or forming an army of dangerous creatures?" the article asked.

They also raised doubt on Dumbledore's choices for staff and how protected the children were, having been taught by Death Eaters, Dark Wizards (Sirius Black) and Half-giants. The Daily Prophet also had a statement from the Minister saying he would start taking a closer look at their children's future and Dumbledore would not be able to keep running loose like he was. "Dumbledore's free reign is about to end!" he was quoted.

Severus folded the paper grimly and dropped it on the table as he leaned back in his chair. He was staying at Grimmauld Place because Lucius Malfoy had been at Spinner's End before and they were worried he and Goyle or one of the wives of the arrested would try something. Remus absentmindedly

pushed the paper away from the books he was doing research in as he wrote a new article for the magazine *"Magical Creatures: Do we understand them?"*.

"Things are looking grim for Hogwarts' future," Severus said with a grimace. He looked at the couch where Harry was reading letters from his friends that Hedwig had just delivered. "Do you at least have good news?"

"Yeah, Hermione said she is enjoying her internship. She had to fight with her parents because she wanted to work and help out while Uncle Ted worked your case, but they wanted her to take a vacation first. So instead she is going with them to Bulgaria for a short while in August. Neville says he is fine and all is the same old same old, and Ron actually has exciting news. He says Percy had a fight with his dad about believing Dumbledore and moved out. That sucks. I never thought Percy would be such a git. But he has good news too. You'll never guess! Charlie is getting married next summer," Harry said waving the letter at them.

Remus head snapped up and he cried, "What?"

"Yeah," Harry grinned. "Apparently Charlie has been dating in secret for years and now decided to tie the knot and Ron said that Bill will already have company for the wedding because Fleur Delacour got a job at Gringotts to 'eemprove 'er Eenglish' and Bill is giving her private lessons. He applied for a transfer after all that has happened; I guess he got scared that Voldemort almost came back and he was far away from his family. Cool eh? Who would have thought Charlie Weasley would be getting married?"

"Great," Remus said thorough gritted teeth sinking his quill in his parchment. "Perfect. Hope they live happily ever after." The tip of the quill snapped and Remus irritably threw it away and stalked out of the room muttering about getting another quill.

"What got into him?" Severus asked bewildered.

"Beats me," Harry shrugged.

Xxxx

"I don't take treason lightly Severus. Why is it you betrayed me? Was it for the Mudblood? The one whose life you begged me for? The one you handed to me?"

Voldemort raised Harry's wand and cried, "Avada Kedrava."

The beam of green light hit Harry and his body sagged into Severus' arms. His eyes were wide open and lifeless.

Severus woke up with a start sweating and breathing heavy. He groped around for his wand and uttered "*Lumos*." The lights went on but they were not enough to calm his racing heart. He stumbled out of the bed, disentangling himself from his covers. He walked out into the dark hall. No matter how much Sirius decorated this house, by the light of the moon it still looked eerie. He walked decisively towards another door and entered. He went towards the bed and saw the figure in there thrashing in his sleep. He

deposited his lit wand on the night table and, with trembling hands, reached out to wake Harry and he was grateful to be touching the flailing limbs.

"Harry, wake up. It's just a nightmare," he said as he shook the boy.

Harry bolted upright. With wide eyes he looked at Severus. "No," he shook his head. "You're dead."

"No Harry. I'm here see?" he said taking Harry's face into his hands and looking into his glazed eyes. Seeing Harry was not reacting to this he held Harry close to his chest and murmured into his hair. "We are both fine. We are both alive," he repeated as a mantra both to him and to Harry until he felt the boy's shaking and mumblings of "I'm sorry" and "All my fault" subside.

"None of what happened was your fault you know that right?" he asked softly. Harry just shrugged.

"Why would it be your fault?"

"Cause you wouldn't have gone there if I wasn't there."

"And why were you there?" Severus pressed.

"Cause Voldemort wanted me."

"Exactly, Voldemort is responsible for what happened. Not you. Voldemort, Barty Crouch Jr., Bellatrix Lestrange, Igor Karkaroff and Peter Pettigrew were the ones that created that situation. Voldemort sent that Killing Curse and the Memory Charm that hit Cedric. You and I were victims."

"I missed you Uncle Sev," Harry said quietly.

"I missed you too," Severus smiled. "And your letters helped me a lot. Helped me remember I'd be okay in the end."

Harry nodded into his chest.

"How have you been?" Severus asked trying to lighten the mood.

Harry shrugged not looking up, "Didn't do much. Aunt Poppy wouldn't let me out of bed. I got letters from my friends and Susan."

"Ah, Susan. How is Ms. Bones?"

"She's fine," Harry smiled, "She's traveling with her parents. I won't be able to see her before school starts because even after Aunt Poppy lets me out of bed she will still be traveling. And dad didn't even let me get a goodbye kiss! Can you believe that? So unfair."

"Ah! To be young again and in love."

Harry looked at Severus, "You're not that old Uncle Sev."

"Thank you for the *that*."

"I've never heard of anyone special in your life Uncle Sev. Dad's had girlfriends; well, more like flings. Even Uncle Moony has an interesting love life. We're trying to get him and Tonks together."

"Yes, the whole Wizarding World has noticed Sirius' not-so-covert attempts," Severus snorted.

"What about you, don't you fancy anyone?"

"I'm fine the way I am now," Severus said a little flustered.

"I think you need a lady friend," Harry nodded wisely.

"No I don't."

"Have you ever had a girlfriend?"

"Of course I've had you know- relations- in the past. None important. And because I don't flaunt my love life, or lack thereof like the mutt doesn't mean I need you to start some campaign."

"Have you ever loved someone?" Harry asked curiously.

"Yes."

"Do you still love her?"

"Yes."

"I think she'd want to see you happy."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Severus said, not quite meeting Harry's eyes.

"I'm talking about my mom," Harry said and Severus stared at him incredulously. "I'm not as thick as Hermione may think. And I'm pretty sure my mom wouldn't mind if you found someone else to love again."

"I'll never find someone like her," Severus said sadly.

"I hope not. Then you'd just be replacing her with a clone and it wouldn't be fair to the poor woman. No, you'll find someone that will occupy a different spot in your heart."

Severus eyed Harry and then smacked his head lightly, "I am going to limit the time you spend with Albus. You are sounding too much like him and one of him is more than enough."

Harry chuckled, Severus scowled, and both of them failed to see the dark-haired figure at the door who smiled to himself and went back to his room, deactivating the alarms that would let him know if Harry's sleep was agitated. Tonight he knew Severus had it all covered and he could sleep soundly without worrying, confident that the healing would start for all members of the family.

XXXXXX

Remus was helping Tonks put away the provisions that had been bought for the next week when the PWA would be full again.

"I'm glad everything ended right. I couldn't believe when Fudge has us arrest Severus. I mean, he is not my favorite person but I knew he was on our side!" Tonks said. "Dad was very happy with the result; apparently he had been worried because Snape wouldn't let him say why he changed sides and people always react better to hearing a reason than just saying, 'changed my mind.'"

"Hum," Remus mumbled distractedly as he put things away.

"I heard there were people wanting to make donations after they read about the association in the *Quibbler*," Tonks tried to strike a conversation again. "Isn't that great?"

"Great," Remus murmured distractedly. He looked at her and commented nonchalantly, "I heard about the wedding."

"Did you?" Tonks asked. "Oh, right. I bet Ron told Harry.'

"So," he smiled tightly, "Getting ready?"

"Of course, I have to find a perfect dress," she said happily. "It can take ages and I have to look my best don't I?"

"Of course you have to," Remus said in a false, cheery tone.

XXXX

The front door banged. Sirius looked at Harry. Harry shrugged and turned back to his homework and Sirius went to look for the source of the noise. As he ventured downstairs he heard more banging and when he entered the kitchen he found Remus abusing the pots and pans.

"Looking for something?"

"Tea," Remus hissed and Sirius looked puzzled. What brought this on?

"So, did you hear the news?" Sirius asked happily.

"No Sirius, I didn't because I have better things to do than gossip around," Remus growled and now Sirius was really curious. He thought his friend would be doing somersaults at hearing that Charlie and Natasha were tying the knot and thus leaving Tonks completely free for him.

"You know what?" Remus asked turning around and brandishing a spoon. "People shouldn't lead others on. They shouldn't bring them hot chocolate and be all cute and nice and laugh at their jokes if they are not interested. But people are just cruel, they enjoy seeing us suffer."

"Because we are not people?" Sirius asked slowly.

"You know who I am talking about!"

"No," Sirius shook his head.

"THEM SIRIUS! THEM!" Remus bellowed and left the kitchen, spoon in hand and leaving a very confused Sirius behind.

XXXXXXX

A/N- Thank you for reading and reviewing.

Thanks SWaddict1986 for the huge help!

Chapter 3- The next DADA teacher

Remus decided he was going to be the better man and lose gracefully. Thus he Apparated to the Burrow to congratulate his opponent. So this was why he found himself standing in front of Charlie Weasley, who had come to tell his family in person about the wedding and spend a couple of weeks with them.

"I heard the news, and I wanted to extend my and of course the rest of the family's congratulations," he said politely.

"Thanks Remus," Charlie said grinning widely.

"You seem excited," Remus said forcefully.

"Of course I am. What's not to be excited? She's smart, beautiful, we have tons in common and I just love her so much.

"Of course you do," Remus said, his hands in tight fists and his nails digging in his flesh.

"She's perfect," Charlie said dreamily.

"Yes she is," Remus said under his breath. But he Remus John Lupin was above all a gentleman and as such he opened his fists and extended his hand to Charlie, "I wish you both all the happiness in the world and please take care of her."

"Of course I will," Charlie said smiling and shaking Remus' hand.

"Nymphadora is a very special woman," Remus said firmly.

"Yeah, Tonks is," Charlie said puzzled. "But I thought we were talking about Natasha."

"Natasha?" Remus asked puzzled.

"Yes, my fiancée."

"You mean the brunette dragon handler?" Remus asked grinning widely. "You are marrying her?"

"Yes," Charlie answered slowly.

"You are not marrying Tonks?"

"No, what gave you that idea?"

"But you two at the cup... and Sirius said...and Harry said... and she said she needed a dress!"

"Yeah, she is going to be Natasha's bridesmaid," Charlie explained getting more confused by the second.

"Natasha doesn't have any close female friends, since she is a bit of a tomboy and Tonks is my best friend. Like my sister."

"Like your sister," Remus smiled and hugged a very shocked Charlie Weasley.

"Hum, Remus, mate, are you okay?"

"Better than fine," Remus said smiling. "I have to go. Have to kill Sirius you know? See you." And with that Remus John Lupin left the Burrow a very happy man.

XXX

"SIRIUS ORION BLACK!" was the roar heard inside Black manor.

"Quick Harry, hide me," Sirius said ducking behind the couch.

"But dad, I am supposed to be sick remember? Aunt Poppy has only now authorized me to limp around a little- Oh hi Uncle Moony," Harry smiled innocently.

"Where is your father Harry?" Remus asked with a scary smile.

"I don't know," Harry said pointing backwards with his thumb. "Haven't seen him."

"Severus?"

"Down in the lab."

"Good, he'll be busy and won't interfere," Remus said quietly rubbing his hands. He looked at Harry and smiled dangerously, "Why don't you go to your room or to the kitchen or anywhere but here? I thought you were tired of sitting on that couch."

Harry smiled widely; he would love to see this but he complied nonetheless. He got up gingerly, his new nerves and muscles still a tad tender and, with the help of a cane that Poppy left behind and ordered Harry to use until he was completely finished with the treatment, he limped out of the room. Remus calmly walked around the couch and raised an eyebrow at Sirius who was crouching there drumming his fingers on the back of the couch.

"Care to tell me why you led me to believe Charlie and Tonks were an item?"

Sirius smiled sheepishly, "I never said they were."

"Yes you did, at the world cup. You said you trusted Charlie!"

"I said I trusted Charlie will always make sure Tonks is happy. I never once said they were together," Sirius said straightening up. At Remus' glare he said, "I may have let you make your wrong own conclusions in the hope that you would be jealous and act before you lost the girl, yes, but this little talk just proves I was right. You fancy Tonks and she fancies you. That's perfect!"

"She doesn't fancy me Sirius," Remus said bitterly. "Why would she?"

"Lots of reasons," Sirius said ticking off with his fingers, "You're smart, you're funny, you have that all 'I'm a perfect gentleman' going on for you, and according to Hogwarts female and male population you are quite handsome. Couldn't say so myself because you're not up my alley but I do know for a fact that Tonks has had a crush on you for at least the last year and a half, maybe longer."

"Oh yes, and how do you know that?" Remus asked crossing his arms.

"She told me," Sirius grinned mischievously.

"She did?" Remus asked hopefully.

"Yup."

Remus bit his lips, "But I'm too old for her."

"Moony! You are thirty-five, she is twenty-two. That's a thirteen year difference. That's nothing for us."

"But I'm-"

"What? Dangerous once a month? Haven't been for a year now and even before that, you were fine when you took your potion."

"People will look down to her if they know she is involved with a werewolf."

"Moony that ship has sailed," Sirius said making a motion with his hand to emphasize his words. "Everyone knows you are part of my family, and by extension hers. If they ever find out about you, which they won't, she'll be involved even if you never get together. Besides that is her choice to make not yours. You've run out of excuses."

"Well," Remus flustered. "I don't know. Just let me think and stop meddling! And don't think I didn't figure out you brought Albus in your little schemes. Security, humph."

Xxxx

Albus called a staff meeting to prepare the school for the students who would be returning in three weeks. They discussed all little matters regarding the school and discussed where Cedric Diggory would be placed since the Diggorys had owed Albus to say he would be returning to school. It was decided that during the first couple of days of classes, each teacher would test Diggory to find out what level of knowledge he retained in each subject. At the end of the staff meeting Albus turned to Severus.

"Severus, you haven't applied for the Defense Against the Dark Arts position this year," he said calmly. The other staff members all stopped what they were doing to hear the young man's response. It was well known that Severus Snape applied for the DADA position every single year. Some students had started the rumor that Snape was the one to jinx the position.

"Of course not," Severus answered.

Albus looked lost, an unusual look for him, "Why ever not? With Voldemort dead the curse will have been lifted."

"Exactly," Severus said calmly.

"I don't understand."

"You no longer have a reason to deny me the position," Severus smirked.

"Exactly, now I can give you what you want."

"Whoever said I want it? I am quite happy with the one I hold now."

"But you applied every single year."

"Yes I did," he answered smiling.

"Why?"

Severus looked at him and smirking, calmly answered, "To annoy you Albus."

Albus Dumbledore, supreme Mumgwump and Chief of the International Confederation of Wizards, scowled, pouted like a child and glared at Filius Flitwick who was laughing shamelessly and Sirius Black who was beaming and saying how proud of Severus he was.

Xxxx

"So what is he going to do for the Defense teacher?" Harry asked.

"I'll take the position temporarily while he finds a suitable candidate," Remus answered. "Since the job isn't jinxed anymore he could take his time to look for someone who is good. And this year no one applied. He has to go after them."

Harry nodded, it was understandable, with the job's reputation. And he knew Remus liked his tutoring position because it allowed him more time to do research and write his articles than being responsible for seven years worth of students. Aside from that, this year Remus had the added responsibility of tutoring Hagrid, who after procuring himself a new wand had started getting ready to take his OWLs.

"I want to see Grandpa's face in a Pensieve," Harry said dreamily.

"I highly doubt Albus will be lending his Pensieve for that," Severus snorted.

"Ah, he will, Uncle Sev. He already has. It's upstairs in my room. I asked him if he could lend it to me so I could show you the memory of being with mom and dad. He doesn't need to know what else we see," Harry said mischievously.

Sirius bounded out of the room and practically ran upstairs and entered Harry's room where the Pensieve was sitting innocently on Harry's desk. He took it and went back to the drawing room at a more sedate pace. He put the Pensieve on the coffee table.

"Go on. It's already there. I put it in when Grandpa gave it to me," Harry said and Sirius, Remus and Severus all entered the Pensieve. Some time later they all came out and their eyes were shining. Severus coughed, Sirius complained about the dust irritating his eyes and Remus hugged Harry.

"Thank you cub."

When he had managed to control his voice Sirius said to Remus, "Told you James would never tell me to let Harry date. Puft!"

XXXX

Harry was eating the left over chocolate sauce from the pan that Twinky had given him in the kitchen. He loved scraping the pans when Twinky made cake. Twinky had a soft spot for Remus, probably because in the Black household Remus was the one that gave her less work, so every now and then Twinky made his favorite dessert: chocolate cake, with chocolate filling and chocolate sauce.

"Now young man, did Madam Pomfrey approve that?" came an amused voice from the kitchen's door.

"Grandpa," Harry smiled and extending the wooden spoon he had been licking asked. "Chocolate sauce?"

"I think I might have some thank you," Dumbledore said as he took a seat and summoned a spoon. He dipped the spoon in the pan and scraped some chocolate. "I love the left overs. They're crunchy."

Harry smiled, "What brings you here today Grandpa?"

"I would love to tell you I came for a social visit but I am afraid I have some bad news to deliver to you, your father and Uncles. Are they around?"

"Like they'd leave me here alone," Harry snorted bitterly. "It's not like I am fifteen years old and can take care of myself when they're gone. Nope, I'm pretty sure I am a toddler."

"It's understandable that they are a little overprotective after all that has happened," Dumbledore said with a smile.

Harry frowned, "I don't get it Grandpa. I know why the first Killing Curse didn't work but what about the second? I thought there was no deflecting the Killing Curse."

"Ah, that Harry was a mistake of Voldemort's. He used your wand. Remember when I told you that when you win a wand you become its master?" Harry nodded. "A wand recognizes its master and won't work properly against him. So when your disarming spell hit Voldemort's Killing Curse, it made his curse rebound on him. If he had used his wand, your wands would have connected in Prior Incantatem since you used your original wand at the graveyard. But if you had been using the wand you won from me you would have been struck by his curse."

"So it was luck?" Harry said.

"Yes, and a little arrogance from Voldemort's part."

"How so?"

"Remember when you told me Voldemort was interested to know where you got that wand?" Harry nodded. "I am guessing he recognized it as being the one I usually use and thought that by using the wand of a powerful wizard he would be unbeatable. Just like he thought putting pieces of his soul in trinkets belonging to the founders would render him immortal," Dumbledore said. He was confident that Voldemort had never had any interest in the Deathly Hallows to know that it was actually the Elder wand, but had been in his presence enough times to actually know his wand well. "Lord Voldemort often enough failed to realize the small things in life. He had your wand but he never thought he had to actually win it from you, which he never did. He just picked it up off the ground."

Harry nodded thoughtfully and then smiled, "I'll go get the others." He got up and limped from the room. In the hall he bellowed, "DAD! UNCLE MOONY! UNCLE SEV! GRANDPA'S HERE!"

He limped back as they heard another bellow, "HARRY JAMES POTTER BLACK, NO GRANDSON OF MINE SHRIEKS LIKE THAT! THEY DEMAND A HOUSE-ELF GO FETCH THE REQUIRED PARTY! ACT BEFITTING TO THE HEIR OF THE MOST ANCIENT AND NOBLE HOUSE OF BLACK!"

"Oh mother, do shut up! Harry isn't even listening!"

Sirius, Remus and Severus walked inside the kitchen and Remus quickly sat next to Harry and summoned a spoon. Harry started swatting his hand away and brought the pan protectively towards himself.

"That's mine, you got a whole cake there. Stop stealing my chocolate Uncle Moony!"

"I expect you didn't call us here to watch Remus drool Albus?" Severus drawled as he took a seat.

"No," Albus said grimly. "Unfortunately Remus you will keep your school obligations as they are. The Minister has just passed an Educational Decree where the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher has to be Ministry appointed."

"What?" Sirius cried.

"He says that with Defense Against the Dark Arts being such a sensitive subject, it needs to be Ministry approved. Especially considering my lack of capacity in keeping a teacher for more than a year and the fact that I hired two teachers that thought they were working for Voldemort, as he puts it."

Severus sneered, "I am surprised he didn't add Potions to that list."

"Fudge is desperate but not that stupid. If he sacks you right away you will become a martyr. No I bet whoever he appoints will be instructed to keep close watch on you so they can find a valid reason to do kick you out," Remus said grimly. "You'll have to be careful."

"Not only Severus," Dumbledore said without the usual twinkle in his eyes and staring straight at Remus, "Fudge has appointed Dolores Umbridge to the post."

"Bloody hell," Sirius blurted.

"Indeed" Dumbledore agreed.

A/N- I read that JKR said that Voldemort wasn't interested in the Deathly Hallows and only became interested in the Elder Wand after he failed to kill Harry with Lucius wand. So he wouldn't know how to recognize it but since he had been around Dumbledore many times I figured he would recognize Dumbledore's wand. And Voldemort was one to put a lot of value on objects possessed by powerful wizards so, *in my story*, he would have loved to have Dumbledore's wand even if it hadn't been the Elder Wand. That was why he was interested in it. The Deathly Hallows won't play a big part in this story except for being useful (Invisibility Cloak), a Horcrux (stone) and a way to prevent Prior Incantatem (wand) and for being something Dumbledore coveted in his youth.

Thank you all for reading and huge thanks to all my reviewers!

Thanks SWaddict1986 for correcting this!

Chapter 3-The next DADA teacher

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"Indeed," Dumbledore agreed.

Chapter 4- Fruits of hard labor

"And you're all right now?" Hermione asked for the umpteenth time.

Harry rolled his eyes and answered, "Yes. Madam Pomfrey checked me yesterday and gave me a clean bill of health. My leg is completely healed, I am not limping anymore nor am I taking any potion to re-grow muscle tissue and nerves, and I've been off pain killers for about a week now. The last dose of the energizing potion I had to take was yesterday."

"How come it took so long?" Ron asked.

"Because of my leg. The Acromantula Venom kind of ate away muscles and nerves that had to be re-grown but since they're very sensitive tissues and connections, it has to be done slowly, not overnight like they do with bones. But the problem is that the potions use my energy and magic to work. So on top of having been weak thanks to my injuries, the little energy I had was being used by the potions. So I wasn't regaining my strength at the speed I would have if I hadn't had the Acromantula's bite; and on the other hand the potions didn't have all that much energy to draw from. It was a vicious cycle. Each injury slowed down the recovery for the other one. But now I am one hundred percent back and ready."

"We're glad you are." Neville said smiling then he turned serious. "I am also glad everything worked out for Professor Snape. I was worried my statement had harmed his chances."

"No it didn't. As a matter of fact Uncle Ted said that you talking about finding Uncle Sev in the Hospital Wing helped. Fudge tried to paint him as the villain and all he got was confirmation that Uncle Sev is a hero. Poor Uncle Sev, his reputation is ruined," Harry laughed.

"But now that he is not a spy he'll be nicer," Ron said and Harry stared incredulously, leaned forward and said in a low tone:

"Ron, Uncle Sev believes in discipline through intimidation. He thinks that if the students are scared of his wrath they will take care to make fewer mistakes. The only difference now is that the Slytherins that previously ran free will get punished now too."

Hermione huffed, "That's not a good way of teaching."

Harry shrugged, "Potions is a dangerous class. One mistake can blow up a potion and cause serious injuries and some times actions have to be taken on the spot. Like when a potion is going to explode and Uncle Sev barks an order to a student to add an ingredient to prevent it from blowing up. When

Uncle Sev gives out an order to students they obey instantly; if they didn't a whole lot of accidents could have happened. That's Uncle Sev's style. Each teacher has one. Dad is all fun and games, Uncle Moony is patient and nurturing, McGonagall is strict. They do what works for them and they all balance each other. They can't all be fun and games or all strict and demanding. Uncle Sev is demanding and intimidating; but has he ever failed to explain a concept? Has he ever failed to answer a question?"

"No, but he could be nicer when he does," she argued

"He could, but that's just not him. You have to understand that his dad wasn't a nice man and then when he came to school he was looked down upon for being a poor half-blood. He built up this persona to protect himself and won't let it go. But if you stop and pay attention, it's quite easy to notice when he is really being mean and hurtful and when he is just being Snapeish because he doesn't know any other way," Harry said. "But he will stop being unfair with us now that he doesn't need to anymore. So things will improve. So, how was your summer?"

"You know, visited a lot of family," Neville shrugged sighing. "Unfortunately they are all my great-something."

Hermione on the other hand lit up, "Oh Bulgaria was so wonderful. Viktor showed us everywhere and served as a translator. Mom and dad loved it." Harry noticed that Ron was scowling and his ears were a tad on the red side. "And my internship was great. Mr. and Mrs. Tonks were great bosses and seeing how they work was so interesting. I'll still be doing the research for them during the school year but being there and seeing the dynamic of the office and how they discuss stuff was completely different. I wish I could have seen Mr. Tonks in action during the trial."

Harry nodded a little overwhelmed. Hermione had said the last part about the internship all in one breath and it reminded him of when they met. He turned to Ron with a questioning look.

"Oh, you know. I stayed home. Charlie came for two weeks to visit with Natasha so they could spring the news and she could meet the family. Charlie said Professor Lupin stopped by to congratulate him and thought Tonks was the bride," he said looking at Harry who burst out laughing.

"Oh, that's dad's doing. Dad has been trying to get Uncle Moony and Tonks together but Uncle Moony is so difficult that dad thought that if he got jealous he would act. So he made Uncle Moony think Tonks and Charlie were together. You should have seen him when he came back from the Burrow. He almost skinned dad alive."

Hermione huffed and tapped her foot annoyingly at the laughing boys, "It's not a laughing matter. Poor Professor Lupin. Professor Black shouldn't have done that," she finished, working very hard on her twitching lips not to laugh. Harry's suspicions that Hermione had never really believed Skeeter's claims on his dad and Uncle were right. She was just making fun of them, tsk, tsk, tsk, he was a bad influence on her. Back in first year Hermione Granger would never dream of making fun of a teacher. "Well," she said importantly, "I was also made Prefect."

"And that was a surprise because?" Neville asked. "Kidding, congratulations Hermione."

"Me too," Ron said showing his Prefect badge.

"Well done Ron," Neville said and Harry smiled at him sincerely. It hadn't always been sincere. Harry had been a little put out when he got Ron's letter saying he made Prefect. Harry had thought he himself had been an honest candidate for the badge and surely a better one than Ron since his grades were better, but Remus had told him:

"There is more to the assignment of Prefects than just good grades. If that was true Dean Thomas should be the obvious choice since his grades are better than both yours and Ron's. Albus must have seen something in Ron that makes him a good Prefect or as something Ron needs. When I was assigned Prefect, I think Albus saw someone that could exert some sort of control of James and Sirius. And even though I think I failed Albus assures me I didn't," Remus shrugged. "Then he named James Head Boy. James spent most of his free time in detention, you'd think there would be many better candidates but you know what, Head Boy duties were just what James needed to grow up. It's not always obvious why he chooses them but there is always a reason, and that reason doesn't mean that those not chosen aren't worthy."

Harry had grunted and shrugged, and it did help his mood but he had still sulked for a while. Not that he really wanted to be a Prefect, but he did want to make his family proud and being a Prefect was very important. And his mom, Remus and Severus had been Prefects. He thought they would expect it from him and he didn't want to disappoint. His dad hadn't been:

"Being a Prefect takes the fun out of life," he had said ruffling Harry's hair.

The door of their compartment slid open and the last person he wanted to see came in. Harry tiredly stared at him and asked:

"What do you want Malfoy?"

Malfoy looked at him with a sneer on his face, flanked not only by his usual cronies but for the first time he was accompanied by a boy Harry only knew by name, Theodore Nott.

"You think you can just get our parents arrested like that and run around freely Potter?" Malfoy sneered.

"That you won't pay for it?"

"I didn't have anyone arrested. They got themselves arrested Malfoy. And last I heard your daddy wasn't one of them."

"No, but he is on the run and unable to be with his family. Persecuted unfairly."

"UNFAIRLY?" Harry cried standing up and summoning his wand to his hand. "He had Muggle-borns petrified and almost killed Ginny. He should have been locked up two years ago!"

"Harry," Hermione said nervously. "He's not worth it."

"Yes," Malfoy sneered. "Listen to the little Mudblood or I can cause you trouble."

"Congratulations Malfoy," Ron who had stood up too growled. "You managed to lose points for Slytherin before you even stepped foot in the castle. I don't even think Fred and George ever managed that. Twenty points from Slytherin for foul language."

"You can't take points!" Malfoy shrieked.

"I, unlike you am a Prefect. Professor Snape will be delighted to see you. Now scoot before the rest of you lose points too."

Xxx

Sirius dropped on the couch tiredly and rubbed his eyes, "This is going to be one hell of a year."

Remus, who had been slumped on the same couch already, looked at him and nodded grimly, "Umbridge will do her best to make sure the Ministry gets a strong hold of Hogwarts if her little speech is anything to go by."

The whole day and night had been exhausting. They not only had to endure Umbridge's speeches about pruning where things were wrong and changing things where change needed to be done but had to endure her at the staff meeting too. Sirius had been unnerved the entire time. Umbridge had deliberately used her little fake sweet voice that made you want to bash her head into the wall to jibe at Severus all throughout the meeting. She had managed to remind Sirius of the Black's history again and although she mainly ignored Remus, Sirius had had an irrational fear that she would find out he was a werewolf just by standing next to him. And Hagrid, poor Hagrid. It was clear by the way Umbridge talked to him that she thought he was not only under-qualified to teach but a complete moron.

"Kingsley told me that Fudge is pushing the trials farther ahead and of course since, unlike Sev, the others are quite guilty and prefer the Ministry holding cells to Azkaban, they aren't complaining," Sirius scowled.

"Fudge wants time to see if he can undermine Harry and Dumbledore enough to forego the trials all together and let them free," Remus sighed rubbing his temple. "Is he even looking for Malfoy and Goyle?"

"No," Sirius said. "Kingsley said he and a few others have been looking for leads in their spare time but that Fudge has ordered Scrimgeour to do a bunch of useless and ridiculous investigations. Aurors are taking care of stuff that usually is handled by the Misinformation Office, or Muggle Relations. Simple things that do not need the Auror Office's help."

"He wants them busy so they can't go after the free Death Eaters. At least we can be sure Malfoy and Goyle won't do anything while they still have a chance to walk free. Especially Malfoy; if he walks free he will be quite happy Voldemort is dead after the diary fiasco. Right now we don't have to worry about them. They'll become dangerous when they have nothing to lose."

Sirius nodded silently, frowned, sighed and said, "I talked to Harry after the feast, to remind him to be careful around Umbridge. He told me Malfoy Jr. and his goons stopped to threaten them on the train. Harry wasn't worried. He thinks they are just talk, and right now I believe they are. It's like you said, they still have a chance to walk and won't ruin it, but if they lose that chance I think we should keep an eye at them."

Remus smiled, "Oh yes. I heard about that," at Sirius' look he said. "Didn't you notice Slytherin started in the negative points? Apparently Ron took points from Malfoy for foul language. Ron told me so I would inform Severus why he took the points and Severus was livid when I told him. I think Mr. Malfoy will be called to duty for the first time in his school life and he will be quite shocked."

Sirius smiled, "About time."

Xxxx

"Slytherin," Severus said in a low voice as he paced in front of his whole house that was assembled in the Common Room. Normally he left the little speech for the Prefects to give the first years, but this year he wanted the whole House there to understand things had changed. "Has a very bad reputation. Three-thirds of this school views us all as Dark Wizards. And do not fool yourself into thinking you will escape that label once you graduate because the British Wizarding World puts a lot of stock in the House you were sorted into, even a hundred years after you graduated." He stopped in front of them and made eye contact with a few. "There are very few out there that realize that Slytherin, just like the other Houses, holds good and bad eggs. Unfortunately, the bad eggs have been so prominent that they are all they remember. For that reason, we present a united front. We take care of each other and our spats do not leave the House. For this reason I keep your punishments private, but that does not by any means mean that you will get away with anything. If you break the rules you will be punished accordingly to your infraction."

He let that sink. His Slytherins, baring a few which he would correct now, all knew he did not accept misbehavior, "I intend to change how people view this House. I intend to clean our name," and here he stared straight at Malfoy. "If you have been following the news, you will know that I was a spy for the light. I made one stupid mistake in my youth which I will do my best to ensure none of you repeat, and have spent the last two decades repairing said mistakes. Because of my position I've had to let some improper behavior slide in the past. That won't happen anymore. You will all be held accountable for your actions no matter who your parents may be. And for the ones who have been treated as so from the beginning and saw how biased I had to act towards other members of this House, I apologize and assure that will not happen again. If you break the rules, you will pay the price. If you bully a member of this House or of any other House for whatever reason, you will pay the price. If-

"We don't need to listen to a traitor," Malfoy sneered and Severus smiled dangerously:

"Oh, but you have to Mr. Malfoy," he said as he walked closer to Malfoy. "Because this traitor is your Head of House and as such has authority over you. I believe you have already lost your House points on the train for foul language, haven't you? Apparently that wasn't enough for you to learn to control your tongue. You will be joining Hagrid for a detention tomorrow so you will learn to respect your elders."

"I won't go anywhere with that oaf-"

"You will or you can pack your trunk and head back home, and that is two nights detention now for disrespecting yet another teacher," Severus stalked to the front of the room satisfied. He couldn't have

asked for a better beginning. Malfoy made sure he was able to demonstrate just how things had changed. "I believe I have made myself clear enough. The Prefects will accompany you to your dorms and my office hours are posted on the notice board. If you need me at any other time ask a Prefect, they will know how to reach me. Don't be afraid to ask for my help, I may demand the best behavior from you but I'm not here just to punish you. I'm here to help with what you need. No matter who you are," he finished looking at Malfoy again. He hoped the boy understood that if he wanted to be different from his father Severus was extending a hand, but by the mutinous look on the boy's face he wasn't all that hopeful.

Xxxx

His return to Hogwarts wasn't looking all that good, Harry thought. The previous night there was an altercation with Seamus because Seamus' mother believed the *Daily Prophet* over the *Quibbler* and almost didn't let Seamus come back to school. Seamus and Harry had exchanged words and only didn't start dueling because of Ron. In the morning, Harry found out Seamus wasn't the only Gryffindor with that opinion. Though truth be told Seamus only spoke of what his mother thought, but never said anything about what he thought. Lavender Brown on the other hand had said she believed the *Prophet* to Hermione. Harry was not happy.

When he went down to breakfast he was met by the same ugly stares from students of all Houses alternated by stares of awe from some students who obviously believed he had once again defeated Lord Voldemort. Harry wasn't sure which he hated more. He didn't think he was a hero; he was completely convinced that he had defeated Voldemort by pure and utter luck. In his opinion his dad, Uncles and other Order Members who had gone to that graveyard by their own free will were the heroes. He had been lucky Voldemort used his wand and only that. Furthermore, he was not all that chuffed about killing someone even if that someone was Voldemort. Though he hadn't said anything because he knew his dad and Uncles would say he had been right, just like when he killed Quirrell.

The one good thing that happened was Susan and Hannah walking to them and saying they believed him. Harry and Susan even managed to exchange a few kisses behind the entrance to the Great Hall before Ron whistled and Harry turned to see that his father and Uncle Severus were walking towards the Great Hall conversing lowly. Harry did notice at breakfast that many students kept shooting glances at the Head Table where Sirius, Remus and Severus had been talking nonstop. Harry smirked at that; now that the truth about Severus was out, they didn't have to wait until no one was around to talk if they needed to and were taking advantage of that, shocking the entire student body in the process. They had never witnessed the Potions Master talking civilly, let alone amicably with the Marauders. As a matter of fact they were used to Severus being silent during meals just switching between glaring at the students and at the Marauders. And if there was conversation between them it usually involved either insults or pranks from either party. This was a whole new experience to them and they were having trouble adjusting.

To top Harry's displeasure, in their very first class they were once again reminded of their OWLs and how important they were. In History of Magic, Sirius used the opportunity to exert his Deputy Head of House duties and explain how OWLs affected the classes you could take at NEWT level, and that in turn affected what career you could choose. He explained that during the upcoming year he and Professor McGonagall, and Professor Flitwick for the Ravenclaws also in his class, would be available for any career advice but there would be an official meeting after Easter so they would talk even if the students didn't come to them.

Harry found it quite irritating that he had to start thinking about careers at fifteen. His first father and his dad had been Aurors, and from the stories he heard and the looks Sirius gave him, Harry figured that was the path he was supposed to follow. And he didn't want to see disappointment in Sirius' eyes. No, he definitely didn't. But did he want to be an Auror?

Sirius wasn't the only one to approach the OWLs subject. Their second class of the day also started with a similar speech:

"This is your OWLs year and as such I will grade your work using the same standard," Severus said coldly glaring at the fifth year Slytherin and Gryffindors. He then sighed in annoyance and drawled, "Scratch that, I will use the OWL grading system but I will not lower my standards. As such I expect *all* of you to scrape *at least* an Acceptable on your OWLs. I do not accept anyone in my NEWTs class that has acquired less than an Outstanding on their OWLs. And that is only because unfortunately Outstanding is the top grade, I don't agree with half the Outstandings they hand out, so don't expect me to think it was your brilliance and not their substandard that granted you entrance in my Advanced Potions class," Severus finished drawing his wand, causing potion's instruction to appear on the black board. "Well? What are you waiting for? Me to guide you by the hand to the storage cupboard?"

Ron leaned over Harry and whispered, "I still can't picture that being Uncle Sev."

Harry chuckled lightly.

Class was fairly peaceful for Potions with the Slytherins. Harry noticed that Malfoy and his little gang kept shooting Severus evil looks and looked ready to pounce him but Severus ignored them completely. They however did not pounce him or even utter a word during class, which was unusual for them, and left Harry a little on edge. He preferred having Malfoy act more normal. He knew how to handle usual Malfoy.

What did surprise everyone in the class was what happened when Severus passed over Neville's potion, which looked a little off color. Neville was shaking and bracing himself for the usual tirade when Severus looked almost bored at the potion and drawled:

"Too much syrup of hellebore. Add a pinch of powdered sopohorous to counteract it and write me a three feet-long essay on why this herb counteracts excess of syrup of hellebore without changing this potion's property. Apart from that, it's almost acceptable." And he wrote an A next to Neville's name on

the roll parchment he always used when inspecting the students potions. There wasn't one closed mouth in the room expect for Harry's who looked smugly at his friends.

After class, as they were all putting their things away, Severus approached the two benches where Harry, Neville, Ron and Hermione were and said in a low voice:

"Mr. Potter Black, Mr. Longbottom, Mr. Weasley and Ms. Granger, I expect you at seven tonight for your detention."

"What detention?" Hermione spluttered.

Severus smiled evilly, "I have new batches of Bicorn horn and Boomslang skin that need to be sorted. There will be some nasty cauldrons to clean too. I have first years today." With that he swooped away, robes billowing behind him.

Three glares turned towards Harry.

"I was under duress! Under duress!" Harry cried. "It slipped!"

XXX

"Yes Ms. Granger?" Umbridge asked sweetly and Harry shivered at the tone.

"How are we supposed to perform the spells properly during our OWLs if we never practice them?"

Umbridge smiled sweetly and said, "If you study the theories properly you should have no problem performing the spells you need for your OWLs- do you have something to add Mr. Potter?" she asked, as Harry had just snorted.

Harry looked at her and seriously pondered the possibility of slapping that little fake smile off her face, but he knew he couldn't. He had been warned about Umbridge and all the grief she could cause so he shook his head, "No Professor, I think I may be coming down with a cold or something," and he made a show of taking a hanky and blowing his nose.

Hermione stared at him incredulously but Harry just stared back hoping Hermione would get the message. No such luck since Hermione once again raised her hand and said, "We can't possibly master these spells only with theory. Any spell takes practice and it's clearly the school and teacher's duty to allow-"

"I think Ms. Granger," Umbridge said tightly, "That the Ministry of Magic has a better grasp then you of what is and what is not the school and teacher's duties, and unless you want to find yourself in detention I would start reading."

That shut Hermione up; she had a clear record with four years worth of school and no detention, or well, she had until this morning's potion's class when Severus decided to punish them for stealing ingredients in their second year, and she intended to keep it that way.

As soon as class ended Harry was astonished to see that the entire class had the same thought in mind. Without exchanging a word, all of the Gryffindor fifth years went as one not to the Great Hall for dinner but to Remus' office. Hermione, who apparently had been chosen also silently as spokesperson, knocked at the door and opened it when she heard the words "Come in." They all entered defying any Physics law

about space. Harry would have never thought they could all fit. Hermione was about to open her mouth when Remus cut her off tiredly:

"Save your breath. As I have already told all the students that have had class with Professor Umbridge today, Educational Decree Number 22 not only states that the Ministry of Magic has to appoint the new Defense Against the Dark Arts Teacher but it also states that only the Ministry appointed teacher can tutor students in that subject. I can help with any other subject except Defense."

"But Professor," Dean said. "We are going to fail our OWLs. You are way better than her, heck you're the best we've had so far!"

Remus smiled fondly and Harry noticed that he blushed a little, "Thank you Mr. Thomas. But if I tutor you against the Educational Decree I will not only be putting myself in a position where Professor Dumbledore would have to fire me but I would be breaking the law, and I really don't want to know what the Minister has stored to whoever breaks his Educational Decrees."

XXX

"What are we doing?" she whispered into Sirius' ear from behind him. Sirius gave a start and glared at the dark haired witch.

"Hestia, don't give a bloke a heart attack will you?" Sirius hissed and then he resumed his position crouching behind the kitchen door and trying to peek through the keyhole.

"Seriously, what are we doing?" she asked eagerly.

"I don't know what you are doing," he said dismissively, "But I am gathering the fruits of my hard labor."

"What hard labor?" she asked unrolling a very long flesh colored string.

"Why are you being so nosy?" Sirius asked. "I don't remember you being so nosy."

"You haven't talked to me decently in ages. We had gone years without seeing each other before the World Cup. You can hardly say you know me all that well," she said calmly as she maneuvered one end of the fleshy string under the door and put the other in her ear.

"What's that?" Sirius asked curiously.

"I don't know the name. Last full moon Molly had a bunch of these that she confiscated from her twin sons. It's an invention of theirs. From what she told me they are highly useful. Want one?"

"What do they do?" he asked suspiciously. Sirius was well acquainted with the twins' inventions.

"Hear for yourself."

As the Gryffindor he was Sirius put an end of the string to his ear and was pleasantly surprised when he started hearing the conversation inside the kitchen as if he were there. Inside the kitchen and quite unaware of their audience, Remus cleared his throat.

"So, hum what will you be doing this Saturday?"

"The usual," Tonks said casually as she pointed her wand at the soapy dishes.

"And that would be?" he asked curiously.

"Oh, I have a hot date with my pajamas, a bowl of popcorn and a rented movie," she grinned. "You?"

"Well, I was wondering... thinking if maybe... in the event there was nothing planned or that it wouldn't be disagreeable... there's no need to accept if you don't want to. I would completely understand. It was stupid of me to think of it. Of course you don't want to. I am sure you rather go out with friends, young friends. Forget I said anything."

Unaware that there was a very distressed Animagus moaning and shaking his head outside, Tonks surveyed Remus and asked grinning, "Why don't you tell me what exactly you were wondering and then I'll tell you if I am so disagreeable or not."

"Oh," Remus blushed. "I didn't actually say it. Yes, right," he cleared his throat nervously. "Well, I thought we could go out. We, as in you and me. In Muggle London. I know you like it. To dinner and then maybe to a movie. I know you like those and there's a new one with that actor you like," he said all this in a rush and then kept very still as if bracing himself for a blow. His eyes kept darting around and after a small silence he blurted. "As in a date."

Tonks was divided if she should laugh or coo at Remus. He was utterly adorable and looked like a teenager asking a crush out. She decided that his frail ego would not endure either so she just answered, "I think I'd be highly agreeable to this date of yours. What do you say you pick me up at my flat at eight?"

Remus mouth turned into a smile from ear to ear and he stuttered, "Yes, of course," he turned around to leave and then came back and grabbed Tonks by the arms and kissed her cheek and said, "Thank you! I'll go now."

She smiled wildly and caressed her cheek as Remus walked towards the door opening it, and left the kitchen, never noticing the scrambling pair or the fleshy strings that were rolling back to the guilty party that was whooping in joy. As he passed a young boy carrying a broom he said:

"Good morning Charles. How are you this beautiful day?"

"Fine," the boy answered a little confused, "Er- Mrs. Weasley asked me to put this away," he finished pointing at the broom.

Smiling like there was no tomorrow, Remus patted the boy's head and said, "A noble quest," and continued his way towards the exit.

"Weird bloke," Charles mumbled as he walked towards the broom closet. He opened the closet's door and gave a start. From inside two people exited.

"That closet is in very fine condition Ms. Jones. Definitely passed inspection."

"I agree with your assessment completely we should go check the rest of this house Mr. Black."

Charles gaped at the retreating pair and shook his head.

"This place is full of nutters."

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A/n- Thank you for your kind words and of course for reading.

Thanks SWaddict1986 for correcting this.

Chapter 5- Rules and Common Sense

On Friday morning Harry was pleasantly surprised as he entered the Greenhouse for Herbology. Before he entered, Ernie McMillan pompously announced that he believed Harry. Though he did it in a way reminiscent of Percy Weasley, Harry appreciated the words. As usual, he, Ron, Hermione and Neville took their places at one side of a work table and when the Hufflepuffs arrived, Harry smiled as Susan and Hannah took places in front of them. To his surprise, sitting right next to Hannah and directly in front of him was none other than Cedric Diggory.

"Hey Cedric," Harry said. "Didn't know you would be in this class."

Cedric shrugged, "I tested differently for various subjects. In some I remembered enough to just repeat a year and having them with the Sixth years. Some I tested only for Fifth year and am going to have to take those OWLs again, not that I remember taking them in the first place," he made a face.

"That must make a difficult schedule," Hermione said sympathetically.

"Yeah," Cedric said. "Herbology is one of the few classes I'm taking with Hufflepuffs. If I had tested all classes on the same level they could have just put me with the Fifth or Sixth years, but this way sometimes I have to be in classes where I'm the only Hufflepuff," Cedric looked around with a bitter expression and said in an undertone. "At least it's a break."

Harry was a little confused by that comment. He would have felt quite awkward if he had to enter a class with not only younger students, but where he didn't know anyone very well. With the House system you usually knew at least the faces of everyone in your House, but quite rarely made very good acquaintances with people from other years of other Houses. As a matter of fact, the people Harry knew well from other Houses were either in his year or older because when he wasn't a student he had roamed free through the Houses.

"At least you tested for seventh year in Defense," Hannah said helpfully but Cedric frowned grimly.

"Yeah, I was so excited about that. Thought it would make my parents a little less worried. They've been beside themselves about me coming back. They wanted to home school me."

Harry nodded sympathetically. He knew that his dad and Uncles only didn't think of that because they teach here and Harry would be under their eyes anyway. Not that it had prevented everything that had happened to Harry, but it made them feel better. Sometimes though Harry envied the other students who were able to do what they wanted without their parents watching them all the time. It was a tad suffocating.

"But then I had my first class and I'm starting to think Umbridge thought that I could be a seventh year because I *can't* remember my hexes and curses," Cedric continued. "I'm worried. Umbridge may not want us having practical experience but she's not the one that will test us in our NEWTs. What am I going to do then if I don't remember how to perform them? And they made it so that I can't even ask Professor Lupin for help. Dumbledore scheduled appointments for me with him twice a week so he can

help me in case I have any problems, and when I asked him about Defense he said that he can't tutor me. I thought he would be able to, since I'm a special case you know? None of the other students are obligated to see him, but then he told me that when Dumbledore tried to argue my case with Umbridge and the Minister, since it's actually a law and everything, they said if I had any trouble Umbridge would be delighted to give me extra attention. Like that will help!"

Harry nodded with Cedric. His dad had told him when he went to rant to him about the absurdity of a theoretical Defense class that according to their sources, Fudge doesn't want students trained for battle. Harry had laughed at the absurdity of the thought; what they learned in school was hardly training for battle. But, apparently Fudge thought Dumbledore was training the students so he could use them to overthrow the Ministry. In Harry's opinion Fudge needed to be tailored for a nice straight jacket and be held in St. Mungo's.

"Cedric has a point," Hermione said grimly. "If it is up to Umbridge and the Ministry we won't be prepared for our OWLs and NEWTs. The testing committee doesn't answer to the Ministry, just like before Hogwarts didn't answer to the Ministry, and they won't lower their standards just because our Minister has gone mental. And if we fail our OWLs we can't take the classes we need to take in our sixth and seventh years in order to enter our chosen careers. The same goes for the NEWTs students," Hermione said nodding towards Cedric who nodded back, "If they fail the Auror Academy or the Healer program or anything else, they won't be accepted either. The Ministry can't toy with our future that way."

"There's not much we can do though," Susan shrugged.

Harry got shivers down his spine at the little evil smirk that was forming on Hermione's mouth and realized Ron and Neville had also sensed danger. But, whatever Hermione had in mind was left to be discussed later as Professor Sprout entered the Greenhouse and started the OWL lecture.

xxx

Saturday night in downtown London]a crowd was exiting a movie theater chattering with each other. In that crowd a couple could be seen walking out slowly. Tonks stealthily slid her hand in Remus's. He smiled at her and asked:

"Did you like the movie?"

"Yes," she grinned back.

"I know you like that actor a lot," he said nonchalantly.

"Uh, huh," she nodded biting her lips to stop smiling. *He was so cute!*

"Fancy him much?"

"Pretty much," she said and at his scowl she giggled and leaned on him. "Want to know why?"

"Not particularly, no."

"Never pegged you for the jealous type Remus Lupin," she grinned then whispered in his ear, "He reminds me of you."

He shivered and smiled, biting his lip. He moved his face to look at her and his lips found themselves inches from hers. His hands moved upwards, cupping her cheeks as he leaned forward and locked his lips with hers while she leaned in the kiss and encircled her arms around him.

Xxxx

"So Ron was chosen as the new Keeper?" Sirius asked as he threw popcorn up in the air and caught it with his mouth.

"Yes," Harry asked grabbing a handful off popcorn and stuffing it into his mouth. Sirius and Harry were lounging on the Marauder's Quarters' couch with their feet on the coffee table and stuffing their faces with popcorn as they exchanged how their week had been. "He wasn't the best choice, but he was the most committed."

Sirius frowned, "I've seen Ron playing Keeper before and he's not bad. I'd actually say he is quite good."

"I know. Playing at the Burrow he's great, never misses, but with the audience that came he was all nervous and kept missing catches I know he was able to catch," Harry sighed. "How is he going to handle the Slytherin's taunts?"

Sirius chewed thoughtfully, "I think young Ronald needs Padfoot's crash confidence course."

"What?"

"You don't know this, I never said anything and if you tell him I told you I'll deny it firmly," Sirius said seriously then leaned over to Harry and whispered conspiratorially. "Moony played as a Chaser for a couple of games when we were students."

"Uncle Moony doesn't care for Quidditch," Harry said disbelieving.

"Nope he doesn't," Sirius agreed. "But in our Fifth year one of the Chasers had gotten injured and it wasn't one of those injuries that Poppy can heal in a second. It took months. I don't recall what he did, but it doesn't matter. The problem was that James called tryouts and couldn't find one decent replacement, especially one that he could teach all the tactics in time for the first game that was a week away. But you see, Moony may not like Quidditch but when the four of us were at the Potter's he always caved in and played with us and he is quite good. James was always exasperated about that. Called it wasted talent. There was also the fact that since both me and James were on the team, Moony had gotten into the habit of studying in the bleachers while we trained, so he always heard James yell different orders, he knew what our tactics were."

"So dad asked him to play."

"Oh, Harry," Sirius laughed. "You're so nice. James ordered him to play and when Moony said no he stole all Moony's clothes while he was showering until he said yes because he was restrained to the showers. Couldn't even go back to our room because James didn't even leave a hand towel. The problem is that Moony doesn't like being on the spot. Right at the first training session he was embarrassed about the other Gryffindors who were watching. We couldn't have that. He was missing passes he knew

like the back of his hand, so, Prongs and I organized a little intense crash course in tuning everyone out."

"You stole his clothes again?"

"No, but we did steal his wand and performed a sticking charm on his broom so he was stuck. Then we told every Gryffindor in our dorm to go to the bleachers and throw every insult they could think of at Moony during practice. James told Moony that he could only get his wand back and get unstuck when he got his game back, and since Moony was too embarrassed to tell a teacher why he didn't have his wand and had a broom stuck on him he caved. We stayed there hours; it was gruesome but in the end each time someone said something Moony got this glint in his eyes like he was going to prove them wrong and did."

"You think that will work with Ron?"

"A modified version. Ron needs to learn to tune everyone out but he also needs self-confidence. Moony may think people will hate him when they find out about him but he does not lack self-confidence. He knows what's he is capable of. Always has. His problem is that he is shy and gets embarrassed easily. Ron however doesn't believe that he is capable of doing this, or at least not well. So we also need to bust Ron's ego a little beforehand. Don't worry," he winked at Harry. "I'll think of something. I want to see that cup in my office."

"Daaad, you're deputy-"

"Well I happen to think that is a very unfair rule. Why does Minnie get the cup? Huh, huh?"

Harry shook his head and chuckled.

"So, what else is going on?"

"Not much, everyone was gobsmacked about Uncle Sev's attitude. I mean, he is still his charming self, but he has actually been fair to Gryffindors and even has given us points and everyone comes back from class shocked. We've had to throw a few glasses of water on some people. Oh, and the rumor that was running around was that the Slytherin's tryouts tomorrow are for *all* positions," Harry said with a smirk as he grabbed another handful of popcorn. "You do realize Uncle Moony would never approve of us sitting here and stuffing our faces like this? By the way, did you put a ton of butter in here?"

"S'good right?" Sirius smiled chewing his popcorn.

"Yeah," Harry chuckled.

"Besides Moony is busy and doesn't need to know what we are up to."

Harry and Sirius continued talking and eating popcorn, and occasionally throwing popcorn at each other until they heard a knock on the portrait door. Sirius looked at Harry and shrugged. Who would be knocking at this hour? Both Severus and Albus had the password and were the only ones who would come so late. Sirius opened the door and almost groaned.

"Yes Professor Umbridge," he said grimly.

"Hem-hem, it has come to my attention that Mr. Potter...Black," she added with a little smile staring at Harry, "is not in his dormitory and that is a clear violation of curfew and as so should be duly punished. I think a detention is in order, don't you Mr. Potter?"

"What?" Harry asked. "I'm not violating curfew."

"Harry is in my quarters. He is not roaming the halls after hours."

"Your quarters aren't his dormitory Professor."

"I have always spent the occasional Saturday or Friday night in my old room," Harry said.

"Well, the students are supposed to sleep in their dorms Mr. Potter, not where they please."

"Yes, but Harry has a father as a teacher and therefore is able to spend his nights here when he wants. He is not the first student to have a parent on the staff and do so," Sirius answered tightly trying his best not to snap at Umbridge.

"Just because others have broken the rules before it does not mean Mr. Potter can," she said sweetly.

"I'll expect you at my office at five on Monday Mr. Potter...Black. Shall I escort you back to Gryffindor Tower?"

"No," Sirius cut her off. "I will." And he motioned with his head for Harry to follow him as they walked past her and shut the portrait very violently in her face. Sirius was seething and Harry was between anger and disbelief.

"She can't do that dad!" Harry said angry.

"Yes she can. She's right; the rules state that students have to be in their dorms after curfew. But usually the teachers have used common sense that if a student has a parent in the staff we accept that if they are in their quarters it counts as well. For instance, Minnie's daughter was a seventh year when I started Hogwarts. Gryffindor of course. At the time around her NEWTs she claimed there was no way to study in the common room and slept with her parents in their quarters during school days. No one said anything. Vector's kid too, remember? He was already a second year when we moved here."

"So there's nothing you can do?" Harry asked.

"No," Sirius said frowning. "We may have to change our plans for tomorrow too. Umbridge seems to be keeping too close an eye on you."

Xxxx

As Remus entered the Marauder's quarters with a goofy smile plastered on his face, he said a faint, "*Lumos*" and almost jumped out of his skin. He glared at the mutt that was seated at the couch staring at him and wagging his tail with his tongue falling off the side of his mouth. A soft pop was heard and in a second Remus was glaring at a grinning Sirius who was wriggling his eyebrows.

"So? How was your hot date?" he asked eagerly.

"What part of me being a gentleman and not kissing and telling did you fail to understand in the twenty-four years that we've known each other?"

"So there was kissing!" Sirius jumped exited, "And?"

"None of your business," Remus answered inspecting his fingernails.

"Aw, Moony. I'm your pal, your brother your Padfoot. Come on?"

"Nope."

"Just one little detail."

"Don't think so."

"At least tell me if there will be a second date!" Sirius begged.

Remus smirk turned into a huge smile and he said, "Most certainly."

"YES!" Sirius jumped punching the air. Remus just chuckled at his friend's antics. As he shook his head he stopped and smelled the air.

"What's that smell?"

"Huh?" Sirius said looking like he had been caught with his hand in the cookie jar. "Nothing," he said innocently.

"No it's not nothing! It smells like oil, no wait butter-- I know butter and popcorn! Sirius," he finished giving Sirius a hard look.

"Really?" Sirius said. "Imagine that."

"Did you stuff your face with a very unhealthy load of popcorn and butter?"

"I wouldn't say popcorn is unhealthy, it's corn. And I think corn is a kind of cereal maybe even a vegetable so you see, it's quite healthy and butter is milk, protein.... Maybe I did," he finished in a small voice at Remus' glare.

"Alone?"

"Maybe Harry was with me."

Remus sighed rubbing his temple wearily, "What am I going to do with you? Is Harry asleep already at least, or is he reading in his room?"

"Wouldn't know since I had to escort him back to the tower," Sirius grunted.

"What?"

"You won't believe this," Sirius said as he recounted the whole Umbridge debacle.

"I'll have to have a talk with Harry. Umbridge will use that detention to try to get Harry in trouble. I bet she is just itching to find an excuse to get him expelled, and if she gets Harry to say something against one of us she'll just be happier."

Xxx

The little first year Ravenclaw made her way towards the second floor bathroom. She had heard stories from her dorm mates about this bathroom but she had no choice but to go in there now. Valiantly she entered it and looked around. No one was there and her shoulders sagged. What would she do now? She let out a yelp as a translucent face appeared right in front of hers.

"Who are you?" the ghost asked.

"Julie," she said frightened and wide eyed.

"Oh," Myrtle said annoyed. "What are you doing here?"

"Using the loo," she answered.

"Middle stall," the ghost drawled. "They never come for me!" she wailed as the girl entered the middle stall.

Once inside, little Julie looked around but saw nobody. Suddenly she felt a soft fabric dropping around her and she squealed as she saw a freckled face grinning down at her. He put a finger to his lips and whispered.

"Shhh."

"You're not Harry Potter," she whispered. "I was told to meet him".

"I sure hope I'm not him," the boy said. "I'm so much more handsome. Imagine being a near-sighted midget," he whispered and shivered theatrically.

She giggled and he opened the stall's door, "He sent me here. Shall we?" He motioned for her to follow him.

"Where did you come from?"

"The same place you went to."

"What?"

He pointed at the mirror and she jumped at what she saw, or better, at what she did not see. The two of them were not there even though she knew she was standing right in front of it.

"Let's go," he said ushering her forward. "Bye Myrtle."

"Bye, tell Harry I say hi. Remus too. I'm here if they want to stop by," Myrtle called after their retreating backs.

The boy guided Julie through the Hogwarts halls and Julie was amazed at how no one saw them. Not even her friends when they passed them. This was so cool! They stopped in front of a portrait and stood there for a while. Julie was about to ask why when she saw Professor Lupin walking towards them. He opened the portrait without a second glance at them but took his time closing it so they could go in after him. As soon as the door was closed she felt the fabric leave her and the freckled boy fold something that looked like a silvery cloak.

"Welcome to the Marauder's Quarters Ms. Perry," Professor Lupin said kindly.

"This," a new voice said and Julie saw Professor Black for the first time pointing at a doorway, "is my son's room. You can use it to change your clothes and sleep there if you want. Moony prefers the living room rug though. Harry emptied a drawer so you can leave some clothes there so you don't have to bring your bag every time."

Julie nodded as she watched Professor Black approach with a pair of scissors. He caught a lock of her hair and cut a small piece of it.

"I hope I don't unbalance your hair cut but we need this for the Polyjuice Potion that one of the teachers will be taking to cover for you in your dorm on the full moons."

"Okay," she said warily.

"Don't look at me like that," Professor Black smirked. "We promise not to do anything to tarnish your reputation."

"This way people won't notice you are not around," Professor Lupin explained to the small eleven-year-old Ravenclaw. "On the night of the full moon, like tonight, you'll be with me at our Quarters but one of the teachers who knows about you will take your place at your dorm."

"Not always though," Professor Black said. "There may be times when there won't be anyone available so either someone from the PWA will come or that day you'll have to do something awfully wrong in class and get sent to the Hospital Wing. I know, I know. Ravenclaws are flawless, but it may be needed. We'll find something suitable," he winked and Julie giggled. She thought Professor Black was funny ever since she met him at the PWA.

"You have to be careful though. Thanks to the fact that you already had the Permanent Wolfsbane Professor Dumbledore didn't have to run this through the board of governors like he did when I attended Hogwarts," Professor Lupin explained but was cut off by a wide-eyed awed cry.

"You did? WOW!"

Professor Lupin smiled and Professor Black said proudly, "Hogwarts' biggest bookworm. Only one to ever come near him is Hermione Granger and I think they are at a tie."

"And that's tough to beat," the freckled boy said in a suffering tone. "Believe me."

Professor Lupin rolled his eyes and continued, "This year, how can I put this?" he said frowning. "Not all the teachers are trustworthy. Er, Professor Umbridge is very much against half-humans and we don't want her to suspect you of anything. So we have to be very careful in smuggling you to our Quarters. Harry was supposed to bring you here but Professor Umbridge seems to have decided to keep tabs on him so young Ronald here volunteered to do so in his place."

Ronald puffed his chest and the little girl looked at him in awe.

"Thank you sir. You were so cool coming out of nowhere."

Professor Black sniggered and Ronald mouthed "sir" gobsmacked.

Professor Lupin cleared his throat, "Well, Harry has this very interesting heirloom," he pointed at the cloak in Ronald's hand, "that will enable Ron to bring you to our Quarters undetected. So, on the day of the full moon after your last class if it's a weekday, you go to the second floor bathroom just like today. Ron will be waiting for you there with whoever will Polyjuice into you that night. If it's a weekend we will tell you what time to be there, since we don't want to establish a pattern that someone will notice. Today we did it a little different so we could explain things to you. But this way if someone sees you going in they will also see you going out. In the morning you will go out with Harry's cloak and meet with your clone at the same bathroom. Give the cloak to whomever is there and they'll see that Harry gets the cloak back. Once you are more comfortable with Hogwarts' corridors, you can come here under the cloak."

"Now," Ron said. "Why don't I show you Harry's room and your drawer before I leave with Professor Black?"

"Thank you sirs," Julie said brightly with a huge grin on her face and her blue eyes shining brightly. "I never thought I'd be able to come to Hogwarts much less have so many people helping me keep my secret."

"Hopefully you won't be the last one," Remus smiled as the little girl was ushered to Harry's room where Ron started showing her where to put her things, and Harry's books and games.

"Harry said you could use any of these that you want when you're here," the two Marauders heard Ron say.

Sirius looked at Remus who was looking at the bedroom doorway with distant eyes and nudged him, "See, we are making progress already."

"I remember being in her shoes. Thinking I'd never come and then getting the chance. Always afraid someone would notice. Except she has a better chance than I did to keep it quiet."

"Maybe she'll get lucky and her dorm mates will be like yours. Then she won't need to be smuggled out because all she'll have to do is go to sleep early and the rest of the house won't notice."

"Hopefully," Remus smiled and threw an arm around Sirius shoulder, pulling him closer. "I was very lucky!"

"Awwwww, see that Julie? And then they try to deny Rita Skeeter's claims!"

Remus and Sirius turned to see Ron and Julie snickering from the doorway. Sirius didn't waste time. He transformed into Padfoot and after a yelp Ron tried to run, but was thrown to the floor by the dog that started licking his face.

"YUCK! This is very unprofessional! Julie help!"

Julie seemed to not know what to do and Remus just ushered her to the living room.

"That's what happens when you know Sirius outside of school," he said casually.

"Okay, that's enough now Professor!" was heard from the bedroom.

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A/N- Thank you all for reading and reviewing.

Thanks to my beta SWaddict1986

A/N- At the start of this story I dedicated it to Sarah, aka rowanHOODofTheROWANWood, who was in a car accident not long ago. I wished for my story to be a relief on a difficult time in her life. I was informed by one of her friends that Sarah passed away from complications of her injuries, and it is with extreme sadness that I dedicate this story in her memory.

She will be missed by her family and friends and by the writers around the world that were not lucky enough to know her personally but who she encouraged with her reviews. I was always eager to read what she thought of my story and will miss her encouragement dearly.

Farewell Sarah.

Chapter 6- Detention

As Monday evening approached so did Harry's detention with Umbridge. Remus had **come to** him the day before and told him to be careful because Umbridge might try to use the detentions to goad Harry and try to pry information from him that could get one of them in trouble. Though Harry **knew** the seriousness of the situation, it was the fact that Remus appeared in the secluded area of Greenhouse 5 where Harry and Susan had been snogging quite happily **that** made Harry's heart jump into his throat at the time. He had looked warily at Remus who had smiled back and beckoned Harry to come out with him for a talk. Remus had told him to be careful and told him about Umbridge being too interested in Harry's whereabouts. Harry told Remus to relax that he had all plans covered. Ron told him later that Remus and Sirius acted quite unsurprised when they saw him instead of Harry and had quickly acted as if that was their plan all along.

Now Harry was walking to Umbridge's office and his unease at Remus' warning was starting to build up again. Harry **knew** that Umbridge was very against half-breeds, and had tried to pass some laws that would have made it impossible for Remus to get a job. Harry may not like politics much but he always read anything that concerned his Uncle's well being. At the time Umbridge hadn't **received** enough support, **but** that had happened at the end of his third year, and Harry **knew** that if word that an untamed werewolf had been on Hogwarts' grounds the night he was kidnapped by Bellatrix and Pettigrew had gotten out, a lot of people would have supported her law. Harry wasn't stupid; Umbridge and Fudge may have been attacking only Sirius and Severus, but if **either one** had something on Remus too **they** would be delighted.

He vowed to control his temper, just like he had done in class. He **knew** the stakes. He inhaled deeply and knocked **on** the door of her office. He heard the "come in" and entered and was almost blinded by the amount of pink **and the abundance of cats** in that office. Umbridge looked at him with that fake smile of hers and gestured to a desk in front of her desk.

"As you can see Mr. Potter, you will be doing lines."

Harry sat at the desk and noticed that parchment and a quill were already out. That was weird, normally teachers had the student use their own supplies, to drive that they were to be accountable for their actions even further.

"I have supplies Professor," he tried to say politely. Maybe he'd score some points, who knew? "You don't have to waste yours."

"Oh, no Mr. Potter," she smiled, "Mine are special."

Harry nodded and shrugged internally; *suit yourself*. He picked up the black quill on the desk and positioned himself. "What should I write?"

"I must not tell lies."

"But I didn't lie!" Harry protested. "I'm here for being outside my House tower after curfew."

"Oh, but Mr. Potter, I must correct all your misbehaviors. Not only regarding your spoiled attitude, thinking you have more rights than other students, but your tendency to lie to authority figures too. That all comes from the same notion that you are not as accountable as other people are."

Harry narrowed his eyes, "tendency to lie to authority figures!" She was talking about the trial! Harry swallowed a retort and said through gritted teeth.

"Of course ma'am. How many times?"

"As many as we need to let the lesson sink."

Harry nodded jerkily and turned to dip the quill in ink. He stopped and cleared his throat, "There is no ink. Should I fetch mine?"

"Oh no, Mr. Potter. There is no need for ink."

Harry had a bad feeling about the situation but started writing anyway. As he wrote the first letter he felt a sharp pain in his right hand and when he looked at it he saw the letter "I" had been carved in the back of his hand and was healed instantly. He looked at the parchment and saw he had written in his own blood. This was a blood quill! Harry could have kicked himself. He should have recognized it. He saw one at Grimmauld place once when he was little and his father was gathering the dark objects he was going to turn in. Harry knew this was illegal and he decided to show his outrage.

"You can't do this! I'll tell my dad!"

"Oh, please do Mr. Potter. Please do tell your father and your Uncles," she smiled sweetly and dangerously and Harry understood and fumed inside: that was what Umbridge wanted! She wanted for his dad and Uncles to come after her so she had an excuse to act. And either she got that or she got to break Harry, she won no matter what he did. At least from her point of view, because Harry vowed not to break and not to let her touch his family. He gritted his teeth and kept writing as the words were carved in his flesh and healed.

Umbridge just continued smiling falsely and sat at her desk surveying Harry as he wrote. After a while a knock came at the door and Harry inwardly smiled. He hoped it would be one of the teachers that would recognize his quill. His hope was taken away when with a swift movement of Umbridge's wand the quill

was replaced by a normal quill and a pot of red ink appeared on the desk. Harry looked at the pot in shock as Umbridge got up. He examined his hand and saw nothing there. Umbridge opened her door and said sweetly, "Yes, Professor Lupin, how may I help you?"

"Hello Professor," Remus said in his most cordial voice as his eyes scanned the room stopping on Harry.

"I heard a commotion and thought it came from here," he finished looking back at Umbridge smiling.

"Commotion?" Umbridge asked poking her head outside the door and scanning the hall. "I didn't hear anything."

As Umbridge was busy looking for misbehaving children, Remus met Harry's eyes and silently asked if everything was fine. All Harry wanted was to yell *no*, but Umbridge made it clear that she was after an excuse to get his family. And if she found out what Remus was, she could make his life hell a lot easier than she could touch Sirius or Severus. He wasn't even sure she couldn't take Harry away from Sirius since he had lived with Remus all his life. So, strengthening his resolve to protect his family Harry gave Remus a smile and cleared his throat,

"Should I go back to my lines Professor?"

Umbridge was taken by surprise as she looked back in and said, "Oh, yes," she turned to Remus, "As you see, Mr. Potter here is in the middle of a detention and he should go back to it or else the message won't sink in."

"Sure," Remus smiled tightly. "I merely *thought* you were in need of assistance."

"Well, thank you for your concern Professor Lupin," she said as she closed her door. Another flick of her wand and the *blood* quill was back in Harry's hand and the back of said hand was once again looking irritated.

XXX

After hours of writing in his own blood Umbridge decided the message hadn't sank yet and he should come back for detention the rest of the week. Harry didn't falter; he nodded and grabbed his things. As he was leaving Umbridge flicked her wand and with her fake smile she said:

"You were very smart earlier. Let's keep it that way."

Harry looked down and saw his skin looked perfect and unharmed. He felt the back of his hand and could feel the cuts and the pain of his irritated skin; a glamour. Umbridge put a glamour *on* his hand so no one would see. Harry was conflicted, at the same time that he wanted someone to find out what happened he was glad for the perfect way to keep this from his family. He walked purposely out of her office and down the hall. He jumped in fright when he turned a corner and almost bumped *into* someone.

"She kept you late," Remus asked worried. "What was she doing?"

Harry looked at his Uncle. He had never outright lied to him *about* important things; denied the truth when he did something wrong, yes, fibbed that he hadn't gone out in the snow when he wasn't allowed while he tracked it in, sure, but lied when he knew they would believe him, no. So he said the truth.

"Just lines Uncle Moony."

"I felt the bond Harry. She **was** harming you, you had to be in danger."

"Well, maybe the bond perceived Umbridge as a danger because she is. I mean, she's here to try and sack Grandpa and everyone **who** agrees with him, that includes you and dad, and get Uncle Sev back in jail. I mean, you said yourself earlier that she would be using these detentions to get something. So maybe that's why the bond activated, because I felt threatened."

Remus eyed him skeptically, "The bond never activated for less than danger of bodily harm."

"How did it feel?" Harry asked curious. "Did it feel like when I was taken by the cup or even Pettigrew?"

Remus shook his head frowning, "No, more like in your Quidditch matches when you can get hurt by a Bludger or something. Usually I just ignore it when it's like this because it's normal **kid** stuff. But there was no reason for it to be activated on a detention, that's why I came."

"Maybe that's like I said. When I'm playing Quidditch I may get hurt and you feel it. Here **it was similar, and** I was afraid she may do something and you felt it **so, I think it's safe just to ignore it.**"

Remus didn't look convinced, "You'd tell me if she did anything wouldn't you Harry?"

Great, he had managed not to lie until now just omit the truth. After all he was scared she might do something, "Of course. I'd tell you if I needed your help." There, not exactly a lie. He **could** handle this.

Remus nodded but didn't look happy at all with ignoring his instincts. He put a hand on Harry's shoulder and ushered him to the Gryffindor Tower.

Xxx

The week did not improve for anyone. Harry kept going to detention and taking his **punishments** stoically. Umbridge kept staring at him the whole time as if she was just waiting for him to explode. Harry made sure not to let her win.

Severus was having more and more trouble with his Slytherins. Malfoy had barely made the cut for the team and had let his displeasure be known by disrespecting Severus every chance he got. Severus was issuing detentions to him and taking points on a daily basis but it did not stop him. Malfoy had spent almost every night with a different teacher but it seemed to be doing him no good. It culminated in **one Potions class when** Severus **had** to break his golden rule of disciplining his Slytherins in private when Malfoy purposely, and not even a little bit covertly, threw something **in** Seamus Finnegan's potion making it explode and hit the boy, causing his skin to burst out in boils.

"Thomas, take Finnegan to the Hospital Wing," Severus bellowed. "NOW!" he added **!** as Dean hadn't moved from fear of his fuming teacher. Dean quickly helped Seamus out as Harry signaled for him that he would take care of their bags.

Severus strode towards a smirking Malfoy, "Fifty points from Slytherin Mr. Malfoy and two weeks detention in the Hospital Wing so you can have first hand experience with the results of such careless

behavior. I will be speaking to the Headmaster. You are lucky that Finnegan was hit only on the arms or you could have caused him permanent damage. Consider yourself under probation."

Both Gryffindors and Slytherins were shocked; Professor Snape had never taken so much as one point or reprimanded a Slytherin in public and here he was warning Malfoy that he better start behaving or he'd be kicked out in front of not only other Slytherins but Gryffindors as well.

Severus cleaned the mess from the cauldron with his wand and ordered everyone back to their work. Malfoy had finally gotten rid of his shock and was starting to glare at him. When he was about to open his mouth Severus added, "Do you think you need another detention Mr. Malfoy?"

Malfoy fumed but grit his teeth and said, "No sir."

"Then finish your work before I hand you a failing grade."

At the end of the class Severus called Hermione up to him and asked her to tell Dean and Seamus that they could come later to finish their potions. Harry gave him a sympathetic nod as he left; he knew Severus was getting strained. Malfoy may be the most outspoken but he was definitely not the only Slytherin giving Severus trouble. Crabbe and Goyle did everything Malfoy ordered and Theodore Nott, who until now had been quite a quiet student, had started skiving Potions and when confronted by Severus he refused to answer.

When Harry came back from his last detention of the week, his hand was throbbing but at least Harry was satisfied that he had won. All he had to do was be careful not to be given detention again. He entered the common room and found that his friends were the only ones there and looked as if they were waiting for him by the fire. He took a seat and asked.

"What's up?"

Neville looked at the others and said, "Well, Hermione had an idea."

"What?"

"Cedric was right," she said. "The OWL and NEWT testing committee won't care that we did not have a decent teacher. We can't rely on our DADA classes for our OWLS."

"And what do you suggest?" Harry asked tiredly. *Like that was news?*

"That we do it without Umbridge knowing. Like when you were getting extra training last year."

Harry gaped at her, "But if any of the teachers get caught helping us they will get sacked!"

"We weren't thinking of a teacher. You have had all that extra training Harry. You can teach us. It will be like a study group and that's totally legal." Neville said.

Harry stared at them and pondered. They were right. Defense had always been a class where he was top of the class easily because he had extra training since he was young. He did know more than any other fifth year. He could easily help them prepare for the OWLS. But he thought that if Umbridge knew he was doing that she would whip up some new Educational Decree forbidding study groups.

"Who would be part of this group?" he asked.

"Anyone that wants to," Hermione said. "And not just fifth years Harry."

"I can help fifth years but seventh? There is no way I know more than them!"

"That's because you don't bother to read the curriculum," Hermione said annoyed. "Many hexes and jinxes that I saw you use in the maze are seventh year curriculum. The Patronus Charm is seventh year extra curriculum, for those who want extra points. Anything you can help them with will be more than what Umbridge does. We can ask each group to research what they want to learn and if you don't know it you can always ask your father to show it to you. She may control what a teacher shows the students but she can't have a say on what your father shows you during his spare time. As long as it is before curfew you can go to their quarters and ask. Then you can show the upper years how to do it."

"Where would we do this and when?" Harry asked cautiously.

"I don't think Umbridge should know," Ron said and Harry was happy to know he wasn't the only one to think that. "We should meet in secret which makes us only be able to tell people we know we can trust."

"We should have a meeting with people we think would be interested and then decide from there what to do. We could do it next Hogsmeade weekend at the Three Broomsticks," Neville said.

"No, better at the Hogs Head. It's less frequented. Less chance of being overheard," Hermione answered.

"If we do it in the Room of Requirement we have even less of a chance and we don't have to wait until the next Hogsmeade weekend," Harry offered and explained about the room.

"How do we go about calling people? It would look strange if we start talking to people from other Houses and years," Ron asked.

"We could ask someone from each house to approach people they think would want in. Like we can ask Hannah, Susan and Cedric to talk to the Hufflepuffs. And doesn't Ginny have friends in Ravenclaw? And I could talk to Blaise Zabini the Slytherin Prefect. I knew his older brother and he was okay. They're a neutral family. There's also a seventh year Adrian Pucey. He is okay."

"Slytherins?" Ron asked disgusted.

"Yes, Slytherins. They're not all bad. We just have to be more careful with them because we don't want word getting to Malfoy and his gang. I wouldn't ask Pansy Parkinson for instance," Harry said annoyed.

"Harry is right. They have as much right as we do to study for their exams. Besides, if we show we want them to join maybe they'll start appreciating Professor Snape's efforts to clear the Slytherin name and will stop giving him a hard time" Hermione said wisely. "I overheard two first years saying that most Slytherins are confused. They don't know if they should go against Malfoy or Snape. They are not happy with Malfoy putting them on the bottom of the Houses in points but they have a lot of self preservation instincts and until now when Malfoy bullied others Snape didn't do anything so they just went along with Malfoy so they wouldn't incur Malfoy Sr.'s wrath. But now they have to choose between one of the two and since no one knows if Malfoy Sr. will walk free yet they are in the middle. Maybe this is the push they need to choose Snape."

Ron looked skeptical but Harry was pleased with Hermione. She was right and Harry personally thought that excluding the Slytherins would be reinforcing prejudice against them. Besides, it would hurt Severus if Harry acted that way and OWLs or no OWLS Harry would never chance that.

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A/N- Thank you all for reading and reviewing

Thanks SWaddict1986

Chapter 7- Umbridge

The weekend had been busy with contacting members of other Houses for the first meeting, which Harry and Neville also used as an excuse to spend some quality time with Susan and Hannah. It was decided that the best time to meet would be the next Saturday so everyone would be available. Later at the meeting they could establish a better way to meet. It had made Harry feel better to know that he had found a way to defy Umbridge without getting his father and Uncles involved. He could just picture her shock when, after a year of teaching nothing, a bunch of students did well in their DADA OWLs and NEWTs.

The weekend wasn't just full of pleasantness though. Ron received a letter from Percy that had him extremely annoyed. Percy basically had praised Umbridge and said Ron should distance himself from Harry. Harry hadn't said anything against Percy to Ron but had been quite saddened at the fact that someone who had known him closely since he was nine thought he was as Percy put it "unbalanced and dangerous". Harry's spirit did rise though at Ron's reaction to the letter; burning it after tearing it to pieces.

The twins and Ginny were informed of the letter and had not liked it one bit. Harry hadn't known before, but Ron told him that Percy leaving had affected his parents a lot. None of the Weasley children were happy about Percy telling his father that it was his fault they were poor and that he was fighting against Mr. Weasley's bad name after Mr. Weasley told him that he had only been promoted because Fudge knew the Weasleys were close to Dumbledore. At the time of the fight, all of the Weasley children were there and apparently Charlie and Bill had not let Percy finish his tirade. They told him to take a walk and think very deeply on what was more important to him, his career or his family. Percy took said walk, came back and packed his things saying he'd make it clear he didn't want anything to do with a family that was loyal to Dumbledore and not the Ministry. Harry had the feeling Percy would regret this decision deeply but even if his parents took him back, Harry had no doubt about Mrs. Weasley's capacity to forgive her brood, but his brothers and sister would not be that easy to win back.

But Percy's letter did alert them about something important that would happen and Harry found out from the *Daily Prophet* on Monday morning that Dolores Umbridge had been named High Inquisitor of Hogwarts, giving her power to inspect and then dismiss Hogwarts' teachers. Harry looked up at the High Table and saw the somber looks on his dad and Uncles' faces. And true to their fears the very first inspected class was History of Magic with the fifth year Gryffindors.

Umbridge entered the class with her fake little smile and her annoying cough and sat down at one of the desks. Sirius did his best to ignore her and continue his lecture but he was soon interrupted by said fake cough.

"Yes Professor?" Sirius forced a smile.

"How long have you been teaching History Professor Black?"

"Twelve years."

"And why were you hired?"

"Excuse me?"

Umbridge smiled sweetly and asked, "What were your qualifications for the job? You were previously an Auror not a scholar."

Sirius bristled, she was right. Dumbledore gave him the job as a means to keep Harry at Hogwarts and according to Dumbledore anyone would be better than the Ghost Binns who still haunted the castle except now he mainly bored the other ghosts not the students. Sirius had only one classification and he had no choice but to say it.

"The Black family traditionally did not rely on the teaching of History from Hogwarts. Therefore it was part of my proper pureblood education to be drilled in History long before I entered Hogwarts. If you check the OWLs and NEWTS from the time I was in school and from the time Professor Binns taught you'll find that all Blacks scored Outstanding whereas the average for History was Acceptable, and even that was because of the students' own effort and not the teacher. I had Outstandings in History both on my OWLs and NEWTs and Professor Dumbledore felt that that qualified me more than Professor Binns for the job. Since I first received this offer I have furthered my studies and obtained my mastery in History."

"But not when you were admitted for the job though. Back then your qualifications were the Black Family," she said with a derisive sort of smile.

Sirius jaw clenched but he couldn't lie. It was a matter of public record after all, "Yes."

Umbridge scribbled on the pink clipboard that she had brought, which made Sirius want to gag, and turned to Lavender Brown, "Do you feel Professor Black is under-qualified to teach?"

Sirius gaped at her shocked. No one had ever complained about his teaching. He had raised the students OWLs and NEWTs to an average of Exceeds Expectations since he first started teaching and he was voted every year in the unofficial, very secret, student poll that every teacher got their hands on, as the favorite teacher every year. Except two years ago when he tied with Moony. He never forgave him for that. As a tutor Moony didn't qualify anymore for the poll.

"No," Lavender answered. "Professor Black is my favorite teacher I love to come here and look- I mean- hear him teach us. I mean how he lectures- er- he is really ho- I mean nice."

"I see," Umbridge said and scribbled muttering, "Inappropriate teacher-student behavior."

Sirius wanted to groan; couldn't she have asked one of the boys or at least Hermione or Parvati who are less girly than Lavender? Sirius had never been inappropriate with a student but he couldn't stop them from having crushes on him.

Then she turned to Terry Boot and asked, "And do you feel Professor Black favors his son?"

"No," Terry said a little too quickly. "Harry has good grades but that must be because Professor Black gives him extra attention – no that's not what I mean he teaches him outside of class too, I mean he gives us plenty attention too. Er-"

She muttered "nepotism" as she scribbled once again and Sirius had to bite the inside of his cheeks to stop from yelling at her. Unfortunately, Harry was not that restrained.

"He would never favor me!" Harry cried. "He just made sure I knew this before and is actually stricter with my essays than with the others. You just have to compare them! I am not even close to being top of the class with this many Ravenclaws and Hermione."

"I think another detention is in order for speaking out of turn don't you agree Mr. Potter...Black? But since you are so interested in giving your opinion are you implying Professor Black made sure you are acquainted with the Black Family's *tradition*?"

"Professor Black taught me how to be a proper wizard despite what the Blacks thought made a proper wizard," Harry answered through clenched teeth after glancing at Sirius who had clearly made a sign for Harry to leave it be.

Umbridge turned to Sirius with her little smile and said, "I'll just sit back and enjoy your lecture, *Professor*."

You had to grant it to Sirius though, he continued his class as if the irritating woman was not there scribbling like mad. There was nothing like years of conditioning with his dear mother to make him able to pretend annoyances weren't there.

Xxx

"So she inspected both of you coincidentally when you had Harry in your classes?" Remus asked from the couch. "Big surprise there."

Severus snorted as he paced the Marauders' Quarters, "She asked why Dumbledore had denied me the DADA position and when I said it was because of the curse the Dark Lord put on the job she lectured me *in front of the students* about spreading lies and bringing up inappropriate topic in front of the students. Asked if I was trying to recruit them to the Dark. Can you believe the nerve? Then she actually had the gall to criticize my safety measures. Like I *ever* had any serious accident in my class in these fourteen years of work. Never, *never* has a student had to spend more than a couple of hours in the infirmary with minor injuries and even so my average is a lot lower than bumbling Slughorn's was!" he finished working himself up into a tirade.

"Did she accuse you of favoring Harry?" Sirius asked and Severus smiled satisfied.

"Yes, and that blew up nicely in her face when Parvati Patil said I actually had always been unfair with Harry and favored Draco Malfoy and the other Slytherins. I was very tempted to give her points. Umbridge had this expression on her face where it looked like she'd explode since she actually had to hear in front of witnesses that her little protégé was the favored one, and when Thomas asked if she

wasn't going to write it down I could sing. Poor kid, lost points for that. I gave them back for a properly cleaned spoon."

Sirius and Remus snorted, Severus never gave away points freely like that. The students must have been in shock.

"At least Harry kept quiet in your class," Sirius said grimly. "He earned another detention with her during my inspection."

"He learned," Severus agreed. "But I know that look he had. He was restraining himself by a thread. Especially when she went on criticizing my choice of curriculum. Saying that there was no need for students to learn such dangerous potions. Tell me, how will they learn to recognize a poison or a dangerous potion if they never see them?"

"Do you really think logic will work with Umbridge Severus?" Remus snorted.

"I told Harry to keep his head down in front of her after my class," Sirius said. "I understand him. At his age I wouldn't have kept quiet. Heck, I have trouble now. But there are just some battles you have to let go as to not lose the war."

Xxx

Sirius approached the Quidditch pitch followed by a very confused group of Gryffindors. He had called students from all years and asked them to follow him. As they got closer to the Gryffindor Quidditch team all geared up and listening to Angelina's orders, Sirius cleared his throat.

"Professor Black," Angelina said smiling and then her smile turned into a scowl. "Harry isn't here. He is in detention!"

"I know," Sirius said. "Ms. Captain, I am here to offer my help to our esteemed team." He bowed over-dramatically.

"Your help?" Fred asked confused.

"Yes, young Frederick, as you know it is my dream to see that shiny Quidditch cup in my office," Sirius said with a faraway dreamy look.

"Sir, the cup goes in the Head of House's office," Hermione tried to explain but Sirius glared at her and she quickly shut up.

"As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, to achieve my goal I need the perfect team," and he walked in front of the team. "And we have one," he beamed proudly. "Three great Chasers that have an exquisite ballet in the air," Angelina, Katie and Alicia blushed at the praise. "Two thumping good Beaters who are the terror of every other team in this school." Fred and George beat their bats together. "A, right at this moment missing, incredible Seeker who has never failed to catch the Snitch as long as no Dementors are near and," Sirius stopped beaming proudly in front of Ron, "A Keeper who I've seen play myself since he was yay high and who has never let the Quaffle pass. Not even when I, an experience adult and former Gryffindor full time Beater and reserve Chaser, played against him." After the incident in fifth year James tried having reserves for every position but only found decent Beaters and Seekers,

so he tested them in other positions to see how they could move around. Maybe if Oliver had done the same Ron would have been more prepared to face the public now.

Ron's ears went red when all the assembled students started clapping vigorously and whistling.

Sirius' beam diminished as he continued, "Though, I've been told that our perfect Keeper has had some problems adapting to the public. But never fret, that is a perfectly acceptable issue that the most famous Quidditch players have had to face. So, I decided to use a method that worked on another public phobic that played several years ago. If you want to spread the word and not reveal the source, it was Professor Lupin," he finished with a significant look towards the Gryffindors.

"No way! Professor Lupin played Quidditch?" little Denis Creevey exclaimed.

"Only for a couple of games but he sure helped us win. Now, young Ronald," Sirius said putting an arm around Ron, "what we will do with our beautiful captain's consent, is in every practice from now on these volunteers, who want to see that cup in my office as much as I do, will stay in the bleachers and act as the opposing teams' audience. They will be ruthless with you but you cannot let what they say interfere with your game. Understood?"

Ron looked a little on the pale side but nodded.

"Good," Sirius said clapping his hand. "We even have props," he said motioning to bags that Neville and Dean were carrying.

The team looked warily at the props as the Gryffindors headed to the bleachers. Once they were in the air they saw that mostly everyone was wearing a green and silver scarf or banner and a few had blue and bronze or yellow and black. The practice started and so did the insults. Sirius was quite impressed with the creativity of his little lions. As predicted Ron was letting the insults get to him but Sirius never thought he'd get better from only one session.

Xxx

The week went on quickly for some and extremely slowly for others. Umbridge, as Harry had expected, decided during his first detention that he should come for the rest of the week. And the hours of slicing his hands dragged away. He had started to apply some murtlap essence after the detentions to soothe the cuts, nothing like knowing your potions.

Ron had yet another two practices with "Padfoot's special crash course" and though he was still a tad self-conscious he was doing much better at ignoring the crowd. Sirius was positive he would be ready for the first match against Slytherin and could often be seen daydreaming about the cup.

Neville had been able to spend some of his free time with Hannah and used the opportunity to send Harry's apologies to Susan, since thanks to his detentions his time with Susan had been cut short.

Hermione apparently did not notice or was not bothered by the boys' absence since she was immersed in some project in the library. As Saturday afternoon approached the boys found out what had her so occupied.

Harry couldn't believe the turnout that they had in the Room of Requirement, and even those in the younger years came. The room had been spacious with cushions instead of chairs and all sorts of aids for the training of Defense. Susan, Hannah, Cedric, Ernie Macmillan, Justin Finch-Fletchley, Zacharias Smith, a couple of seventh years who were friends with Cedric and three sixth years from Hufflepuff. Ginny's friend Luna Lovegood, who Ginny introduced around and even though Harry had the impression she was a little airy she also reminded him of his dad in a way. She didn't seem to care what people thought of her just like Sirius didn't care if people thought he was immature, or as Remus called him, a thirty-five-year-old teenager. Padma Patil, Cho Chang, Terry Boot, Michael Corner, Anthony Goldstein and Roger Davies from Ravenclaw. All the Weasleys, Angelina Johnson, Lee Jordan, Alicia Spinnet, Katie Bell, Colin and Dennis Creevey, Dean Thomas, Parvati Patil, Lavander Brown, for all she said she didn't believe Harry from Gryffindor and being eyed with a little suspicion from the others Blaise Zabini, Daphne and Astoria Greengrass, Tracey Davies, Graham Pritchard, Malcom Braddock and Adrian Pucey from Slytherin. Harry thought this could not go on so he addressed that little problem first.

"Thank you all for coming. You are all here today because we trust you," murmurs could be heard as Harry had said that looking straight at the Slytherins. "Trust is very important in our endeavor today because, although what we are doing here is in complete compliance with Hogwarts rules we all have been able to see lately how the rules can change quickly. So, we decided to keep this group secret in order not to have it banned sometime in the future."

"What are we doing?" the dirty blond with Cho Chang asked.

"We are studying," Harry answered simply. "Cedric Diggory over there and Hermione Granger here pointed out once that the testing board for our OWLs and NEWTs do not answer to the Ministry and will not lower their standards to match the Minister's. So, if we want to do well on our exams we are left alone. Before when the DADA teacher was incompetent," at this Ron started coughing something that sounded like "Lockhart," "we still had the option of going to Professor Lupin for help. Now the Ministry has taken that option away from us. So, basically this is a study group where we teach ourselves what we'll need."

"And what makes you think you can teach us?" Zacharias Smith asked with a sneer.

"Everyone in this school knows that Professors Black and Lupin have taught Harry more than we learn in class. Or did you keep your eyes closed during the third task?" Ron asked irritably.

"What everyone doesn't know," Harry said trying to dissipate the bad tempers, "Is that Professor Snape taught me too." Harry could see the appreciative looks on the Slytherins faces and even on some of the other students' too. "I don't proclaim to know everything but as Hermione pointed out to me the Ministry can control what the teachers teach the students but not what a parent teaches his son. If we encounter something I don't know I can ask my *father* to teach me in his spare time. Without telling him why I want to know so he can have plausible deniability," Hermione had added that little tidbit later.

"How very Slytherin of you," Blaise said.

"According to the hat I was suited for all the Houses. It went by exclusion, and apparently I'm too reckless for Slytherin," Harry said simply and loved the shocked looks that went around.

"As Harry said," Hermione brought them back to the topic. "We are a study group. I thought Harry would be the best to teach us Defense but he does not need to be the only one. I have here," she shuffled some parchment. "A list of the hexes and curses tested in the OWLs and NEWTs in the past twenty years. If there is some hex here that one of you knows better than Harry then you will be the teacher the day we do it. We are here to help each other. As Harry also said we will do better to keep this secret, so I have charmed this parchment in a way that will prevent anyone from telling anyone about this group without us knowing. Don't worry," she said looking at the suspicious faces. "It's nothing life threatening but it can be unpleasant. Everyone that wants in has to be committed and loyal and has to sign this. If you don't want this I am really sorry but I will have to *Oblivate* you of the memory of this meeting."

"Is that really necessary?" Cedric asked warily.

Hermione smiled sympathetically, "I'm sorry Cedric. But the Ministry has gone bonkers. If we were only doing this behind a teacher's back I wouldn't do this but with the way things are escalating rapidly, the consequences can be dire. Don't worry though. I know what I'm doing and I will only erase the knowledge of this meeting."

Cedric nodded a little resentful.

"So whoever wants in come up front and sign this parchment. We'll continue after this is all signed," Hermione said.

Blaise Zabini was the first to take the quill and sign the parchment nodding towards Harry. After him, the other students the parchment one by one. Zacharias Smith and Cho's friend were the last ones standing who hadn't signed and they were quite reluctant to do so. Ernie said something to Zacharias, which Harry heard only as "OWLS," "important" and "future" and Zacharias finally signed the parchment. Cho's friend on the other hand shook her head.

"My mother works at the Ministry. What if she loses her job because of this?"

"Then you appreciate why we have to *Oblivate* you," Neville said gently. She nodded her head and Hermione escorted her out saying:

"Start deciding meeting days and I'll be back after I take her to Ravenclaw tower."

As Hermione left, they all sat in a big circle and started figuring out how to schedule their first meeting without clashing with Quidditch matches and Prefect duties. Ginny suggested they should have a name, and Graham Pritchard suggested The Defense Association and D.A. for short and Harry laughed. When asked why, he said:

"That could stand for Dumbledore's Army. It would be ironic since that's why the Minister doesn't want us trained in battle."

"Battle?" Michael Corner asked.

"He thinks Dumbledore is training us to overthrow the Ministry," Harry answered.

Ginny took the Parchment they had all signed and wrote on the top, "Then Dumbledore's Army it is."

"We should also decide the order we learn these," Cedric said as he examined the list of tested hexes and curses. After some chaotic shouting, Ron whistled and copied the list on a blackboard that had appeared.

"Let's vote on the order. Knowing Hermione she already wrote them in the order she thinks best so we just have to vote if we agree or not with hers first and then we vote where the remaining ones should go."

When Hermione came back they were still voting. After a very long discussion of why this first why this second, Hermione handed around fake Galleons that they would use to tell people meeting times. As they all left Harry couldn't help the satisfied feeling he had.

In another part of the Castle though someone was about to have their very pleasant afternoon turn into an unpleasant evening. Tonks had come to visit her boyfriend, how she loved to call him that, and they had spent a very enjoyable afternoon together in the Marauders' Quarters. That is, after throwing Sirius out because he kept making cooing noises and giving them dreamy looks.

Remus had been quite happy with the visit. He had been growing incredibly irritable for the last two weeks from ignoring the bond with Harry. He had again asked Harry if everything was fine and Harry had once again told him that Umbridge had him doing lines. But every night from the second Harry entered that office to the second Harry left Remus felt the cold shiver that signified the bond. It never developed to the pain of when Harry was in serious danger but it still had him on edge. But Tonks' visit made the edge go away and he forgot all about annoying toad-like witches.

As the time approached that young Nymphadora had to leave, Remus, the gentleman he is, decided to escort her to the Apparition point outside the wards. As they left the safety of their quarters hand in hand talking and giggling softly they heard the sound Remus had learned to dread coming from behind them.

"Hem- hem."

"Yes Professor," he said in a strained smile turning around.

"I don't think this is appropriate behavior," Umbridge said sweetly.

"Excuse me?" Tonks asked gaping at Umbridge.

"And you Ms. Tonks have no business being here."

"She came to see me," Remus answered shortly.

"She is not faculty."

"She is my girlfriend."

"And that's not faculty. Students shouldn't be subjected to your flings Professor."

"Professor Vector's husband lives here," Tonks said flatly.

"Exactly, her husband. You two on the other hand are not married and therefore shall leave your romantic rendezvous to your spare time outside of school grounds," Umbridge said smiling. "Now, I think it would be more appropriate if I accompany Ms. Tonks to the Apparition point, don't you Professor?"

Remus grip on Tonks' hand tightened and he clenched his teeth.

"Is this going to be a problem?" Umbridge asked innocently.

"No," Tonks answered quickly letting go of Remus' grip. "Let's go Professor Umbridge," she said politely and as they walked away from a stunned Remus, Tonks turned back and mouthed that she would firecall him.

Remus turned around and stalked back to his quarters. He kicked the portrait open and made Sirius, who had just come back in, jump.

"What?"

Remus went straight to an ugly vase they had that Albus had given them as a welcoming gift when Sirius first moved in and smashed it to pieces. He then proceeded to jump on it to make sure no *Reparo* could fix it. Once he was done Sirius patiently asked:

"What happened?"

"Umbridge!" Remus snapped and Sirius sighed. He wondered when she'd start on Remus too.

A/N- I loved all my reviews. Thanks!

Thanks SWaddict1986 for betraying.

Chapter 8- Boiling point

Each passing day Harry hated Umbridge more. He had heard about Remus not being able to see Tonks until his night off. He had also learned from Blaise Zabini that, buoyed by Umbridge inspecting Severus and her protest against his probation to Dumbledore and Severus, Malfoy had started bullying the Slytherins into disrespecting their Head of House and the little progress Severus had made when he and Dumbledore put Malfoy on probation was undone.

As Hermione had said they were divided. Slytherins were cunning and did what was best for them and right now they had no idea what that was. Severus was being attacked by the Ministry and could lose his job and Malfoy Sr. was a fugitive of the law until either the Ministry decided he was guilty and captured him or they decided he was innocent and then he was back with full power. Things could sway any way and they had no idea who to chose. Right now, they were doing their best to keep neutral. Except Theodore Nott who, according to Blaise, didn't want to follow his father's footsteps but he was afraid of what could happen to him if his father walked and learned that he had not followed his orders. Nott Sr. had ordered his son to undermine Severus and Harry the best he could. So, Theodore's way of avoiding that was skipping class so he wouldn't have to interact with Severus. But that made it worse since Severus had sent him several summons to see him in his office to which Nott hadn't responded.

Harry didn't want to tell his Uncle what he learned through the D.A. members and break their confidence. He thought that the D.A. was very fragile and could not afford not to be able to trust their members. But he didn't want Nott to feel like he didn't have an option, so Harry told Blaise to schedule a meeting between Harry and Nott and he approached his Uncle in his office one afternoon.

"Hi Uncle Sev," he said innocently.

Severus, well acquainted with Harry's innocent smiles, raised an eyebrow. Harry slowly sat down and decided not to dawdle.

"So," he started. "Let's say there is a student who is missing classes. If he hands in his homework through someone and keeps up with his work, could the teacher, let's say, overlook the fact that he doesn't attend class?"

"What do you know Harry?" Severus asked suspiciously.

"I can't tell you," Harry said. "Or I'd be breaking someone's confidence. But if someone really couldn't go to classes, could he do that?"

Severus sighed and rubbed his temple, "Harry, I need to know what you are up to."

"I am just trying to help someone."

"Why don't you leave that problem for the teacher to solve?"

"What if the teacher is part of the problem?" Harry asked hoping his Uncle would just say yes. "He wouldn't be able to solve it, and maybe, if he was a little flexible he could help someone who wants to be helped."

"Yes Harry, but this is a problem that an adult should be handling," Severus said slowly.

"I'm fifteen. I'm not stupid and am not walking into a Death Eater's trap if that is what you think," Harry said offended. "You, dad and Uncle Moony taught me well and I am not doing anything dangerous. I am just trying to help a schoolmate. Can't you just trust me on this one? If you leave someone without options they may have to take the only one they have and that may not be good for them. I am trying to give this person an option. That's all."

Severus looked at him and sighed again.

"Fine, if Nott hands in acceptable work I'll stop summoning him. But Harry, don't forget for a second who his father is. Don't be alone with him."

Harry sighed and nodded, "I won't." What could Nott possibly do at the school? He wouldn't dare attack Harry. But trust his Uncle to think Harry couldn't take care of himself.

xxx

The D.A. was meeting as much as the members could make time for it, which considering that they had to balance everyone's schedule was about once or twice a week. At the first meeting they had after Harry's talk with Severus, Blaise told Harry Nott's answer.

Nott and Harry met in an unused classroom with Blaise as mediator and Harry offered to tutor Nott if he needed help.

"And what do you know about potions?" Nott sneered.

Harry rolled his eyes and answered, "I've been learning about them since I was little. I am way ahead of our curriculum. I down played it in class until now because of Professor Snape's position. I'm not saying I'm a genius, far from it; I just had a head start on everyone. Perks of having an Uncle who is a Potions Master."

"I can study by myself," Nott said.

"Suit yourself," Harry shrugged, actually that suited Harry better since he was already swamped. "If you need help you know where to find me. Give your homework to Blaise and he'll give it to me. I'll hand it to my Uncle outside of class so no one will notice that he is receiving more essays than the number of students in class."

"Why are you doing this?" Nott asked suspiciously.

"Everyone should be given options. I don't think my Uncle had any when he was younger. He was surrounded by Death Eater friends and caved to the pressure. Maybe if he had someone to help him he wouldn't have made that mistake. I'm giving you an option, what you do with it is up to you."

Nott looked puzzled but nodded and left the room with Blaise. Harry had been honest. He felt like Severus hadn't had an option, but he never understood why his mother hadn't helped him. Wasn't she

his best friend? And wasn't she fighting against Voldemort? But for all his Gryffindor bravery Harry didn't have the guts to approach that subject with Severus. From what he heard from whispered conversations, Harry had gathered that something had happened between Severus and Lily and that at the time of his parents' death they were not speaking to each other.

Harry was willing to help Nott out, but as he told Severus he wasn't about to trust the Slytherin blindly. Nott had never been one of the Slytherins who caused trouble. He had mostly kept to himself. But he was still a Death Eater's son. So, Harry would not call him to the D.A. until he was sure Nott could be trusted. The D.A. meetings were rapidly becoming Harry's favorite times. Just the thought that he was doing something that went against what Umbridge preached helped him through the days of looking at her. And he was seeing more and more of her lately.

She seemed to be scheduling her inspections according to the fifth year Gryffindor's schedule and according to Ron she had inspected Trelawney's class and had turned the Divination teacher into a puddle of nerves. It was a mark of how much Harry hated Umbridge that he actually sympathized with the loathed Divination teacher.

She has also inspected McGonagall's class but hadn't managed to cow the Transfiguration teacher; as a matter of fact McGonagall put Umbridge in her place quite effectively. Harry didn't know if that was a good thing or a bad one. Umbridge did not seem happy when she left the class.

She had also attended Hagrid's class on Thestrals and had made him look as if he was not suited for the job. Harry personally had thought that by Hagrid's standards it had been a very good class. Of course, Harry had already known about Thestrals since Hagrid had told him when he was younger and had asked how the carriages pulled themselves. He had been a little shocked when he first saw them on the way to the castle but he knew that was because of Voldemort and had decided to keep quiet then so no one would bring the subject up. Unfortunately Hagrid had asked who could see them and Harry, knowing everyone would know he could, raised his hand and Umbridge just had to remind everyone:

"Oh, yes Mr. Potter. You saw Professor Snape kill Bellatrix Lestrange."

Harry couldn't help it. He knew he should have bit his tongue but she asked for it.

"No, I was unconscious when Professor Snape saved me. I saw Voldemort die from his rebounded killing curse."

Umbridge had bristled at that comment and had promptly said in her sweet threatening voice, "I think we still have to teach you not to lie don't you Mr. Potter? Apparently our detentions haven't been enough. I expect you back at my office for another week. You know the time."

And thus, Harry had gone back for another five nights of detention.

That was how the two next months of school passed. Even though after Hagrid's class Harry did his best not to rise to the bait, Umbridge found other reasons to give Harry detention. He didn't raise his hand when she asked a question to the class, no matter that he wasn't the only one. He was walking too fast in the corridor, which could be constituted as running. And so on. Harry was spending at least two to

three nights a week in Umbridge's office. Considering he also had Quidditch practice and DA his homework was suffering greatly. Something that had not gone unnoticed by his father and Uncle.

"Mr. Potter Black, please stay behind," Sirius said with a grim expression.

Harry shrugged to his friends and walked to the teacher's desk. As the last student left Sirius waved his wand closing the door and putting up a Silencing Charm. He took a roll of parchment from a stack and asked:

"Could you please enlighten me as to what this is?"

"Er-" Harry shuffled his feet nervously as he recognized the parchment. "The essay about the war with Grindelwald you asked for."

"Yes, this is a copy of Ms. Granger's essay," Sirius said annoyed. "Not even a good one. I had a lot of trouble deciphering this chicken scratch that you call handwriting as of late."

Harry winced. With so many detentions his right hand was constantly aching making it hard to write.

"Do we have to go back to calligraphy lessons Harry? And why would you start copying homework now? You never did before and you know we would catch on to you. Severus told me your Potions essays have been sloppy, look rushed, and that you have not expanded on explanations he knows you know. At least with him you haven't been copying."

Harry winced again at the hurt tone in his father voice. He didn't want to seem like he didn't care about what he handed his father or Uncle. Or that he valued Potions more than History. It's just that he knew more Potions because Sirius, Remus and Severus had taught him more Defense and Potions outside of class than History.

"I'm sorry," he mumbled.

"I don't want an apology Harry. I want an explanation," Sirius said sternly.

"I didn't have time," Harry said avoiding Sirius' gaze. "And I rushed through all my homework. I didn't have time to do the research and Hermione's essay was just sitting there. I thought I'd just look at it as research but I ended up copying almost everything."

Sirius sighed heavily and rubbed his forehead, "Is this about your detentions? I know you have a lot with Umbridge on your case. But this is getting out of hand Harry! I'm going to have to talk to her-"

"NO!" Harry cut him off desperately. "Don't you see dad? That's what she wants! She wants you to interfere so she can say you are favoring me and have an excuse to sack you!"

"But she only puts you in detention Harry! She is blatantly persecuting you. There are rules to follow. Half her excuses make no sense whatsoever!" Sirius cried slamming his hand on the desk.

"She hasn't been able to find a plausible reason to put you, Uncle Moony or Uncle Sev on probation like she did with Hagrid and Trewlaney. So she is trying to force one dad! Don't play into her game. I can handle her," Harry begged.

Sirius sighed and looked hard at Harry who was biting his lips worried that Sirius' overprotection would speak louder.

"Moony has been on edge every time you are with her. You promise that all she is doing is having you write lines?"

Harry nodded. There was nothing he wanted more than to be able to tell his dad but he had vowed to handle this himself and he would. So he just ignored that little voice that sounded an awful lot like Uncle Moony saying he was making a stupid, stupid mistake.

"Fine," Sirius said against his will. "But I cannot in good conscience let your work and future be harmed. This is your OWL year Harry! Your studies are important. If you don't want me to confront her we'll have to make time some other way."

Harry's eyes widened at the implication and Sirius continued. "If by the end of this term your work is still suffering you'll have to quit the Quidditch team."

"Dad, no-" Harry exclaimed gaping at Sirius.

"Harry, I'm sorry son," Sirius said with a pained expression, "But I just can't let you go on like this. I'll give you until December. This way if you haven't been able to pick up the slack you still have time before your OWLs."

"But dad, I promise I'll try harder," Harry begged desperately and Sirius laughed bitterly:

"I know you already try hard Harry. The day only has twenty-four hours. How could you manage? Cutting back sleep? I can't let that happen either. And don't think of doing it, I'll know."

Harry gripped his hair desperately. He knew he had no choice. He wasn't about to bail out of the D.A. and there was no way he was going to let the toad win by having his father lose his job so he accepted and hoped he would not get more detentions. He knew his hope was in vain. He nodded despondently and Sirius got up and embraced him.

"I'm sorry son," he whispered pressing his face in Harry's hair.

Xxx

The first game of the season was approaching fast with the beginning of November. Gryffindor was confident with their team. After two months of "Padfoot's crash course" Ron was acting his best no matter what the others said. The Slytherin- Gryffindor rivalry was at its peak but the Slytherins were getting very nasty surprises. When before Severus would turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the Slytherin's attempts to hex the Gryffindor players, this year at the first attempt by Captain Montague and the beater Warrington he again took points from his own House in public, having given up the privacy act after enduring his House rebelliousness in the last few months. He had decided that they needed to be publicly scolded or they would not respect him and in the privacy of the full Slytherin Common Room he made it clear to the whole team that the next person to try to hex a Gryffindor player would be out of the team before they could say "Quidditch."

"I thought I had made myself clear two years ago when Mr. Malfoy, Mr. Crabbe, Mr. Goyle and Mr. Montague tried a low trick to undermine the Gryffindor team," he hissed slowly pacing dangerously in

front of the team. "I want everyone to know that Slytherin won the Cup because we are the best not because we cheat the best. What part of cleaning the Slytherin name did you not understand?" he asked as he stopped facing them. None of the players answered as they were all scowling deeply.

"I have booked the Quidditch field for your practices almost every day and I expect that that practice is what's going to make you win. And I expect not only a victory but a clean victory so no one can doubt us. Do I make myself clear?" he asked raising his voice for the first time and all the players except for Malfoy, who was scowling furiously, nodded vigorously. Severus turned to Malfoy, "If you intend to keep playing on this team Mr. Malfoy you better start agreeing with your fellow teammates," and with that Severus swept from the Slytherin Common room to leave behind seven embarrassed players and a House full of hushed conversation.

The name calling kept going on until it was time for the match but no more hexes were involved. It wasn't the cleanest game Harry had ever played but he had to admit the Slytherins were making a lot less fouls than he expected. With the obvious exception: Draco Malfoy. Malfoy had tried every dirty little trick he knew. The Slytherin stands were singing a very rude song about Ron

"Weasley cannot save a thing, He cannot block a single ring, That's why Slytherins all sing: Weasley is our King."

"Weasley was born in a bin, He always lets the Quaffle in, and Weasley will make sure we win, Weasley is our King"

Harry was very happy to see that Ron was not letting the song affect his playing. As a matter of fact he seemed to be using it to fuel his game. Slytherin hadn't managed to get one single shot through his hoops and Gryffindor was ahead when Harry caught the Snitch a few feet from the ground. He raised his hand to show the snitch and heard Madam Hooch's whistle signaling the end of the game. As he was watching his team approach he was suddenly hit squarely in the small of his back by a Bludger and he flew forwards off his broom. Luckily he was not too far from the ground. Angelina, who was the closest, came to him and asked:

"Are you all right?"

Harry got up nodding. He was a little winded and sore but he was generally all right.

"It was Malfoy," Alicia said joining them and sure enough Harry saw Malfoy's smug face as he handed Crabbe back his bat and landed close by with his sneer on his face.

"Can't take a little Bludger Potter? Need the women to care for you, little baby?"

"And apparently you can't take defeat like a man. You need to send a Bludger after the whistle," Harry hissed and turned his back on Malfoy to join the rest of his team that was landing next to him except for Ron, who was a little farther away being congratulated by Hermione and Neville. Malfoy apparently did not like that because he insisted:

"Did you like my lyrics Potter? We wanted to write another couple of verses!' Malfoy called, as Katie and Alicia hugged Harry. "But we couldn't find rhymes for fat and ugly - we wanted to sing about his mother, see -"

"Talk about sour grapes," Angelina said casting a disgusting look at Malfoy. "Why don't you go lick your wounds somewhere else? Or better, why don't you go hide? Professor Snape is coming this way and he doesn't look happy. I heard he doesn't approve of cheating, like, let's say, attacking the other team's Seeker after the game."

Malfoy glanced back and sure enough both the Gryffindor and Slytherin Head of Houses were making their way over to the little group. Malfoy sneered and decided to give them one last thought:

"We couldn't fit in useless loser either - for his father, you know -"

By this comment Fred and George had realized who Malfoy was badmouthing and had both flanked Harry who had turned back to face Malfoy fuming.

"Leave it!" said Angelina at once, taking Fred by the arm. "Leave it, Fred, let him yell, he's just sore he lost, the jumped-up little -"

"But you like the Weasleys, don't you, Potter?" said Malfoy, sneering. "Spend time there and everything, don't you? Can't see how you stand the stink, but I suppose they remind you of how your mother's house stank, the Weasley pigsty -"

That was too much and though Angelina and Alicia were holding Fred back, George and Harry were too much for Katie and they launched themselves at Malfoy. Harry had the fulfilling joy of landing the first punch with his left fist, which was still enclosed around the Snitch. All they could hear were the girls' yells of:

"Harry! George! No!"

Harry paid no mind and completely forgot his surroundings. All he wanted was to cause Malfoy as much pain as he could and apparently George was right there with him. The fight did not last long and Malfoy was rescued after a couple of punches when George and Harry were flung off him to the opposite side. As he landed on the ground Harry could see Severus' and McGonagall's livid faces as Severus put away his wand. In a dangerous low voice Severus hissed:

"Mr. Weasley and Mr. Potter Black follow your Head of House. Mr. Malfoy, follow me to the Hospital Wing and then to my office."

Harry and George turned on their heels and marched behind McGonagall. From the corner of his eyes he saw Sirius and Remus following them and Harry was too furious to even acknowledge the stern looks the two adults had. They reached McGonagall's office in what seemed like seconds and she furiously waved

her wand opening the door and striding in. They followed but did not lose their righteous scowls nor did the appropriate "I am very ashamed and regret what I did" pose. Harry was ready to defend his actions. "I am ashamed that two of my Gryffindors would result to Muggle brawling like that. Explain yourselves!"

"He provoked us," Harry said stiffly.

"And that gives you the right to start throwing fists? He just lost a game 180 to zero. Of course he provoked you! But nothing he said could possibly justify-"

"He insulted my parents and Harry's mum!" George cried in defense.

"And why didn't you wait for me and Professor Snape, who were already on our way and in hearing range, to deal with him? No, instead you two decided to give a little Muggle dueling show! That is not the Gryffindor way-"

"Hem, hem."

Harry and George both turned around and found themselves face to face with Umbridge. Behind her Sirius was looking grimmer than before and said tightly to McGonagall:

"I tried telling her you were busy disciplining our students Minerva but Dolores seems to think she can help."

"Help?" McGonagall asked raising an annoyed eyebrow.

"Yes," Umbridge said sweetly. "Lend you a little extra authority."

"If I needed extra authority I would have called my deputy and you may have noticed that he was waiting outside without me having to tell him to!" McGonagall said walking to Umbridge and then turning her back on her, "Now, listen closely you two. I don't care if Malfoy insulted every member of your family, your behavior was disgusting and I am giving both of you a week of detention. Don't look at me like that Potter Black! You deserve it and if either of you-"

"Hem, hem."

McGonagall turned around inhaling deeply and asked, "You are still there Dolores?"

"Yes," she answered. "I agree with you that Professor Black is not suited to discipline these students-"

"I never said that!" McGonagall said outraged and Sirius gaped at Umbridge.

"But, I am. And I think a week of detention is not nearly enough for these boys' action."

"Fortunately, that decision is mine not yours Dolores," McGonagall said as she turned back to Harry and George.

"Actually," Umbridge continued as if McGonagall had not turned and rummaged in her bag. "Oh, where is it. Oh, here," she said happily producing a scroll of parchment that had an official looking seal. "When Professor Dumbledore refused to hear my concerns about how young Draco was being handled by his Head of House I had to take my concerns to the Minister and he agreed with me that things could not go on like this." She cleared her throat and started reading, "Educational Decree Number Twenty-five."

"Not another one!" Sirius moaned.

Umbridge continued unfazed, "You see, the Minister agreed with me that the High Inquisitor has to have more authority than a common teacher and therefore override their decisions."

"Except Malfoy wasn't put on probation by a common teacher. Only the Headmaster has that power, he merely took Malfoy's Head of House's suggestion in consideration and agreed with him," Sirius said tightly.

Umbridge smiled tightly and said, "Yes, I know. But Mr. Malfoy's unfair persecution isn't being discussed now." All other four occupants of the room gaped at her. Malfoy being unfairly persecuted when she had Harry in detention every other night? Wisely none of them said anything. "As I was saying," she cleared her throat again and read:

"The High Inquisitor will henceforth have supreme authority over all punishments, sanctions and removal of privileges pertaining to the students of Hogwarts, and the power to alter such punishments, sanctions and removals of privileges as may have been ordered by other staff members. Signed, Cornelius Fudge, Minister for Magic, Order of Merlin First Class, etc., etc."

She rolled up the parchment and put it back into her handbag, still smiling.

"So... I really think I will have to ban these two from playing Quidditch ever again," she said, looking from Harry to George and back again.

"What?" Sirius spluttered.

"Oh, and his twin too. After all, the only reason he wasn't engaged in attacking Mr. Malfoy was because he was being held back," she smiled sweetly.

"You, can't ban us from playing ever again," Harry said in a strained voice.

"Yes, Mr. Potter I think that ought to do the trick."

"And off course your brooms shall be confiscated. I will be keeping them safe in my office," she continued turning to a stock still McGonagall, "I see no reason for the rest of the team to be punished; after all they didn't show signs of violence. Well, Good afternoon, I have somewhere else to be now." She smiled and walked out the door.

"Professor," George said to McGonagall. "She can't-"

"Apparently she can Mr. Weasley," McGonagall said grimly. "You two go back to the tower."

George and Harry nodded but Sirius stopped Harry as they were leaving, "You come with me Harry."

Xxxx

In the Hospital Wing Madam Pomfrey had just healed Malfoy's bruised jaw. He wasn't seriously injured since Harry and George hadn't had time to do much. Once she left, Severus barked, "Explain yourself," as he leveled a glare at his student who stared defiantly back at him but didn't say a word. "Nothing to say? You seemed to have a lot to say out there in the pitch."

Malfoy sneered, "So this is about me badmouthing your Mudblood lover," Severus clenched his fist and held his breath and Malfoy smirked satisfied. "Oh, yes. Mother told me all about you being rejected by a Mudblood. Being second best to Potter."

"Watch your language Mr. Malfoy," Severus snapped. "I will not tolerate such disrespect towards anyone, living or dead. And this is not about your foul language no."

Malfoy just continued smirking delighted and Severus' eyes narrowed. He would not let the brat rile him up.

"What part of my speech did you not hear Mr. Malfoy? Did I not say that cheating would not be tolerated?"

Malfoy kept his sneer on and said nothing.

"You cheated throughout the entire game. And since you weren't happy with that, you made an illegal move with the Bludger clearly intending to injure the other team's Seeker after the game was over. I warned you Mr. Malfoy. You are hereby banned from the Quidditch team. "

"Hem, hem."

Severus inhaled deeply and prayed for patience. He turned his body in a way that he was still clearly facing Malfoy but could see Umbridge by turning his head slightly.

"Yes?"

"Well, as I have just informed your colleague, Professor McGonagall, thanks to Educational Decree Number Twenty-five, I have ultimate authority on punishments. And I just think it's most unfair for the victim to be punished, so unfortunately I will have to override your decision and cancel the ban. Mr. Malfoy will still be playing Quidditch if he so pleases."

Severus turned fully around, "If you undermine my authority like that every student in this school will feel free to disrespect their Head of House because you will waltz in and save them."

"Oh, no. Professor. I plan to cancel only the unfair punishments."

"Mr. Malfoy cheated and I was clear that that would not be tolerated," Severus hissed.

Umbridge chuckled falsely, "That's part of the game Professor. I think you are persecuting Mr. Malfoy, maybe to get back at his father who you have falsely accused of horrible activities. And I just can't let that happen."

Severus inhaled deeply and tightened his jaw. He threw a glance at a smirking Malfoy and stalked away from the room. He marched forward furiously and mechanically, and was not aware of how he found himself banging the Marauder's Quarters portrait open and hearing Sirius growl:

"What were you thinking? When have I ever told you that violence was the way?"

Harry was standing with a mutinous expression in the middle of the living room and Sirius and Remus were both pacing around him.

"He offended mum. I was not going to have that!"

"You knew Umbridge has been using any excuse to get at you and you hand one on a silver platter!"

Remus cried.

Severus sighed. Yes, Umbridge was definitely turning their lives into hell.

A/N- Thanks for reading and reviewing.

Thanks SWadict1986 for betraying.

Some of the dialog comes from "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix"

Chapter 9- And the water spills

Severus sat down and observed the fifth year Gryffindors and Slytherins. He never sat down in class but today he frankly was just fed up with everything. Word of Umbridge bailing Malfoy out had spread like wildfire and his Slytherins had decided that it was clear that their Head of House held no power whatsoever. Of course, they weren't as stupid or bold as Malfoy to confront him directly, but he had received complaints from almost every teacher about at least a couple of students in every year causing trouble.

Harry hadn't been happy about the lecture he got and even less happy with the punishment. Since Umbridge had already taken his broom privileges away, Sirius was left with free time and he decided to hit two birds with a stone. Harry was to go from class to the Marauder's Quarters until curfew where he was to study unless he had other engagements like detention for a week. Harry had fumed and had said he needed an hour free on Wednesday. Sirius pushed but Harry said he couldn't tell them why and Sirius assumed he wanted time to meet Ms. Bones and was firm about the punishment. Every free time next week was to be spent studying and bringing his grades back.

Severus glanced at Harry and frowned. Harry was cutting the ginger roots with his left hand. As a matter of fact he seemed to be doing everything with his left hand lately. Severus thought back to the game and realized Harry had caught the Snitch and punched Malfoy with his left hand too. Why?

The bell rang and he was brought back from his musings.

"Put whatever you have in a labeled jar and leave it here," Severus growled.

The students rushed to do as they were told. The Slytherins may be rebellious but not even they dared to annoy him further on his turf when he was already in such a bad mood. No, they waited until they were outside his classroom.

"Mr. Potter Black stay behind."

Harry waved to his friends and as the last one left, Severus waved his hand much as Sirius had done the previous week.

Harry put his vial on the desk and fetched another one from his bag and handed it to Severus with his left hand.

"Is your right hand hurting?" Severus asked as he took the vial he knew to be Nott's.

"What?"

"You punched Malfoy and caught the Snitch with your left hand. You've been favoring your left hand lately."

"Oh," Harry said his eyes growing wider. "Hum, no. I just, bumped it the other day and it was hurting a bit. Nothing much."

"Then you should see Poppy," Severus said narrowing his eyes. Harry was lying and he wanted to know why. Harry very rarely lied and he wasn't so good at it.

"No, it's nothing serious Uncle Sev. Just a stupid bump."

"Let me see it."

"What?" Harry squeaked.

"Your hand Harry," he said annoyed.

Harry brought his left hand up with a sheepish smile and Severus just raised an eyebrow. Harry showed his right hand and Severus couldn't see anything wrong with it. He took the hand in his hand and turning it palm up he inspected the fingers and pressed the palm.

"It doesn't seem broken or swollen. You're probably right. But if you are still feeling pain tomorrow go to Poppy."

"Sure Uncle Sev," Harry said hastily and, Severus could swear, relieved. *Yes, definitely something going on there.* He hastily left the office and Severus missed Harry touching the back of his hand relieved where Severus had not touched.

Xxx

"I think you should get together anyway so you can practice. The older students could show the younger ones some more difficult spells," Harry said in the Common Room that night.

"Harry has a point," Neville said. "We don't have much time for meeting as it is and we can't miss one just because he is grounded."

"You can see what hexes you might want to know that I don't know and tell me and I can ask my dad while I'm grounded. I can tell him I want to prepare for my OWLs. This way he'll be happy and we get what we need."

"Fine, we'll go through the list with the older students and see what they don't know. Then I'll pass the list to you and you ask Professor Black about the ones you don't know," Hermione agreed. "We'll also try to schedule a meeting for Monday so maybe we can squeeze two next week."

As they were putting together the last details they saw Fred and George's happy faces come in the Common Room and smiled. Fred and George had decided to start exacting revenge on Umbridge and for the first time in their school career no teacher was doing anything to try and stop them. Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes forms were being filled continuously by students, who had the pleasure to see them in action many times a day.

Xxx

She was walking down the halls of Hogwarts with a twisted smile on her face. This week she had her evenings quite free since she hadn't assigned Potter any detention. So, she decided she would catch those horrible students who were causing mayhem in her school. Oh, yes, she had noticed how the pranks seemed to go off near her and not any other teacher. If she caught Potter at it just the better. After all, Sirius Black reputation's as a prankster in school was well known. It was obvious Potter was the one behind this. And she knew the other teachers knew that. They shared secretive looks every time a damn firework exploded on her face. And they were helping him, if only she could prove it.

She turned around a corner and frowned. She could swear she saw a shadow moving. She pointed her lit wand towards the spot but it was empty. She shrugged, turned around and froze. Her blood felt like ice and she did not want to move. Black eyes were looking at her hungrily. Bared enormous teeth were being shown and a low growl was being emitted. She was going to die! That creature was going to eat her! With an undignified screech Dolores Umbridge turned around and started running for her life crying, "Wolf!" The next day all the portraits made sure the right people knew and Professor Snape, very concerned, asked uncharacteristically loudly at breakfast:

"Dolores, why did you run like that yesterday? Did something happen?"

"What?" she asked as if she was in control of the situation. *How did he know?*

"You ran Dolores?" Professor McGonagall asked in a clear voice that carried away as never before. "From Severus?"

"Oh, I don't know why, Minerva. I was just patrolling the corridors in my Animagus form as you, I and Sirius do often and when Dolores met me she looked like she had seen the Dark Lord himself," he said in a cornered voice. "Where you feeling ill?"

"One would almost think you were afraid of Blackie," McGonagall chuckled and some students mouthed 'Blackie'. Severus glared at her but said in a no nonsense voice:

"Of course she wasn't, Dolores knows that was me."

Throughout the whole conversation Umbridge said nothing. How could she? She would either confirm she had been scared or say she forgot Snape was an Animagus. No, she thought it was best to stay quiet and let the situation blow off. It didn't though and the whole school talked about how Professor Umbridge was scared of Professor Snape. Students swore Professor Snape could be seen smiling slightly afterwards and he received considerably less complaints from the other teachers about unruly Slytherins.

xxxx

Thursday afternoon found one Sirius Black and one Harry Potter Black sitting at the table in the living room of the Marauder's Quarters each immersed in their work. Harry bit his lip and swayed his left leg that was on top of his crossed right one. He cleared his throat and Sirius looked up.

"Dad, er, since we're here and I'm supposed to study, do you think you can help me in Defense?"

"Harry, you know the teachers are forbidden-"

"I'm asking my dad for help not a teacher," Harry smirked and Sirius' smirk formed too.

"You do have a point."

Harry produced a sheet of parchment with Hermione's neat handwriting and gave it to Sirius. Sirius glanced at the list and raised an eyebrow.

"Some of these are NEWT level."

"Yeah, I'm interested in thinking ahead."

"You're barely keeping up with your OWL work for other courses."

"Never hurts to think ahead where I am already ahead," Harry said happily and Sirius had a look that he wasn't buying it. "Please dad!" Harry made his best puppy eyes. Sirius could never resist Harry's puppy eyes, really he shouldn't have made them so often for Harry to copy and improve them.

"Fine. If you finish all the homework you have piled up I'll teach you what I can."

Xxxx

"Minerva, I don't think this will work," Umbridge said entering McGonagall's office with a sheet of parchment.

At first McGonagall could do nothing but gape at the gall of the woman to enter her office without as much as a knock on the door. The toad was still speaking in front of her desk and McGonagall had to force herself to pay attention.

"What won't work, Dolores?"

"This schedule," Umbridge said shaking the parchment in front of her. McGonagall took it and looked it over.

"It's the teacher's days off and rounds schedule," she said in a bored tone.

"Yes, and do you not see it?"

"What?"

"How there is one day a month when there are an incredible amount of teachers off. That can't happen," Umbridge shook her head with fake innocent eyes. "We will have to change that," she smiled with a little shrug. "You'll see I have already marked in red the teachers that can't have that day off," and she turned around with a little spin and practically skipped out of the office.

McGonagall rubbed her temple and looked at the parchment again, "Of course," she muttered.

Xxx

"Which teachers did she forbid from volunteering at the PWA?" Albus asked wearily from his desk.

"Take a guess," McGonagall said handing him the parchment from her seat across the desk.

"I need to be there to monitor the patients," Severus scowled as he paced the room.

"And I bet she imagines that since the work of the PWA was described in the *Quibbler*, it's not all that important," Remus said flatly.

"Poppy can monitor them Severus," Albus said. "We have bigger problems. Umbridge forbade all three of you of taking that night off and has you doing patrols so she knows you're here," Albus said showing Sirius the parchment.

"Bugger," Sirius muttered.

"Me?" Remus squeaked.

"Yes, you," Albus said tiredly.

Xxx

"Professor Lupin," Umbridge said pleasantly when they met in the third floor corridor by one of the big windows. "I'm glad to see you doing your work," she said her smile being illuminated by the full moon.

"I'm almost done with my rounds," Remus smiled pleasantly and walked away. He turned slightly as he passed her. "Oh, by the way Professor, Sirius and Severus are doing theirs. Just so you know and don't get scared if you meet them in the dark," he finished in a concerned tone.

Umbridge bristled but said nothing. Her gait as she walked away could constitute a stalk. Remus smirked. He walked back to the Marauders' Quarters and entered quietly. He sat down on the couch and glared at the two werewolves by the fire.

"You know you owe me big time don't you?" he said to Moony. "Look at me," he extended his arms. "I'm almost as pale as a ghost! Ugh, if the girls knew I exchanged my beautiful ebony looks for this skimmed milk skin," he moaned as the door opened and Sirius entered.

"Oh, come on Kingsley, Moony isn't that ugly that you can't stand a night as him!"

Remus/Kingsley glared at him and took a sip of his Polyjuice potion. He patted the cub werewolf that had padded towards him and gotten on the couch and was butting her head against Kingsley's hand in a reassuring manner. "Only you understand me Julie," he said dramatically.

Sirius sat down and sighed, "I hope everything went okay at the PWA even with fewer volunteers. If someone had a bad reaction to the Wolfsbane...I don't even want to think about it."

"Hasn't happened yet," Kingsley said firmly, "By the way, where is Severus?"

"Oh, he wanted to do a last round as Blackie," Sirius smiled dreamily.

From far away, a scream could be heard and a black wolf could be seen smirking after he had jumped in front of the toad like witch from a dark corner.

xxx

There had been no bad reactions and even with fewer volunteers than werewolves, everything went peacefully that night at the PWA. For some reason, maybe because she thought she had given Harry the ultimate punishment by taking his Firebolt, Umbridge did not give Harry detention for an entire week. That would have been great had he not been grounded by his father. At least Harry managed to get his late homework up to date and he even managed to get Sirius and Remus to show him the more complicated NEWT hexes and curses movements that he hadn't known. He hadn't mastered them, but knowing the wand movement to show the DA allowed the others to work from there on Monday evening. After an exhausting but very fulfilling session, Harry instructed the DA members to leave in groups of three or two as he checked the Marauder's Map to make sure the coast was clear. Cedric and Harry were the last two appointed to leave the Room of Requirement. They were waiting for Filch to finish his round on the seventh floor corridor.

"So, how are things going?" Harry asked. He had noticed Cedric had been looking quite annoyed every time he saw him.

"It's going."

"What did you mean by you at least have a break?" Harry asked. "In Herbology that first day when you were telling us about your schedule."

Cedric looked awkward, "Don't tell anyone please," Harry nodded. "Every one of my friends keeps either expecting me to remember stuff we did or looking at me like I'm going to break. So yeah, at the beginning I had a hard time remembering stuff, and I'm not talking about the last two years. The Healers think that part of my memory is gone for good and it's best if I don't try to force myself to remember. I was having trouble retaining new memories. Sometimes I would forget stuff that just happened. It's getting better though and the Healers are positive that it was just the force of the curse, nothing permanent. That's why I have fixed sessions with Professor Lupin, the teachers can't give me the specialized attention I need so we go over what I learned in class, to help me remember it better. I haven't forgotten stuff lately, but my friends were there when I just woke up and would space out."

"And they don't realize you got better," Harry said. "I know, my dad and Uncles also wouldn't let me out of their sight the whole summer. I was surprised they let me ride the train. I think Dumbledore had to convince them."

"Yeah, I know. At least when I'm with the other Houses, since they don't know me that well, they don't expect anything from me like that. They don't expect I'll space out or expect I remember what we did before I was obliviated. I get a break. Cho is the worst," he bit his lip, "I mean, she is great and she was there for me when I woke up but I don't remember asking her out even. And she gets all teary when she remembers our first kiss anniversary or some rubbish like that and I don't. I know it's not easy for her, and that's mainly why I am still with her. I feel bad breaking up with her since she was so helpful and everything. But sometimes it's suffocating."

"But it's not fair to her to just keep going if you don't want to be with her. The longer you lead her on the worse the break up," Harry said.

"And since when are you an expert on girls and dating?" Cedric teased.

"I'm not but I've heard my dad and Uncle talking about my dad's flings loads of times. Once my dad was dating this woman that he was afraid to ditch because apparently she was a little nuts and got scary when she was upset. So my dad kept going out with her for months and my Uncle kept telling him to break up with her gently but dad couldn't muster his Gryffindor courage. So finally he decided he had enough when she came one day with a wedding planner to their date."

"A wedding planner?" Cedric laughed.

"Yes, mind you. I just heard him telling my Uncle that since I never met the woman. Well, dad still thought she was nuts so instead of breaking up gently as my Uncle told him to he sent her a letter."

"He broke up by owl?" Cedric gaped.

"Yes, even I knew that was not a smart move and I was just nine at the time. You just don't do that!"

Harry shook his head.

"What happened?" Cedric asked curiously.

"The woman got revenge in the same fashion. She kept sending dad cursed letters. And they were pretty nasty curses too. Dad had to start scanning all his mail and redirecting the owls so no student got hurt. She only stopped because dad called his Auror friends after she send a letter that had a borderline illegal curse and they threatened to arrest her if she kept that on. Dad never heard from her again."

"I don't think Cho is that extreme," Cedric pondered.

"Still, it's not right to let her think you are in to her when you can't stand being with her."

"It's not that I can't stand her," Cedric shrugged despondently. "It's just, I don't know. It's uncomfortable. I'm uncomfortable most of the time with everyone. Not just her."

Harry smiled sympathetically, "I'm sure things will get better."

"I hope so," Cedric shrugged.

Xxxx

Unfortunately for Harry his luck from the previous week had apparently run out and he met Umbridge on the way back into the Tower. She gave him detention for being outside after curfew. When Harry pointed out that he was still five minutes under curfew, she said that it's the teacher's watch that counted and his talking back would grant him another detention. So, Harry was once again engaged in slicing his hand for two evenings that week. Right when his hand had stopped throbbing thanks to the break and he had been able to use it better under Sirius' watchful eye. He had a feeling that Umbridge knew that Sirius would be looking at Harry closely that week and that was why she gave him a break. But now that his grounding was over he was game again.

Umbridge had a particularly vicious smile during the first detention and she kept Harry longer than usual. As he left she told him to send her regards to his Uncle and Harry knew she was getting back at Severus for the whole Blackie episode.

The next morning, Harry went to Care of Magical Creatures not expecting anything much to happen. Hagrid gathered the class around a table that he had set on the ground. On the table he had a huge upturned box and Hagrid called Harry before he opened the box.

"I 'ave a Runespoor here to show the class 'Arry. Could you translate between us so she doesn't get scared and attack?"

Harry shrugged, "Sure." He'd do anything for Hagrid's class to go smooth especially since Umbridge had been inspecting his every class making Hagrid a puddle of nerves."

Hagrid lifted the box and Harry approached the bench as the rest of the class took a step back from the three headed snake.

"Hello," Harry said but the Runespoor kept twisting madly around and hissing. Harry frowned; he could not understand the hissing at all.

"'Arry, talk in Parseltongue not English," Hagrid prompted. "Explain that I just want to show 'er not 'urt 'er."

"Okay," Harry nodded going closer. Parseltongue had always come in automatically and Harry thought maybe he was too far away from the Runespoor to talk. He was touching the bench when he said, "My friend wants the students to see you and he wants to make sure you know we won't hurt you."

"Harry!" Hermione cried from the distance. "Stop speaking English!"

Harry turned around abruptly and cried lifting his arms, "I'm trying!"

That was a bad move because the Runespoor obviously thought he was attacking and attacked first, sinking her three pairs of fangs in Harry's right arm and hand. Harry cried out in pain and fell to the floor. In one swift movement, Hagrid had taken the Runespoor in his hand and trapped it in the box again. Harry could only hear the chaos of the students crying around him when he felt Hagrid lift him up and rush him to the Hospital Wing. He did see Umbridge's gleeful smile from the corner of his eyes.

A/N- Thanks for reading and reviewing.

Thanks SWaddict1986.

Chapter 10- The downfall

Later Harry didn't know if he was relieved or angry that he hadn't managed completely on his own.

Poppy shook her wand once again as if she was trying to make it work properly when the double doors to the Hospital Wing were thrown open and in stalked Sirius and Remus.

"What happened?" Sirius cried. "Hagrid said he was bitten!"

"Yes, he was but Severus here already provided the antidote," Poppy pointed annoyed at Severus who was sitting at the edge of the bed. *When would people learn not to barge in her territory as if the castle was on fire?* "I am just closing the wounds," she finished with a frown as she waved her wand over Harry's arm and hand.

"What was Hagrid thinking?" Sirius groaned.

"He wanted me to talk to the Runespoor dad! But I couldn't! I don't know why. This was not his fault!" Harry tried to defend Hagrid.

"Unfortunately that is not what professor Umbridge thinks," Dumbledore said as he calmly entered the ward. "She just came to inform me that with this incident she has no choice but to let Hagrid go."

"But- this was not his fault!" Harry cried. "I couldn't talk to the Runespoor!"

"I suspected you would have lost that ability along with Voldemort's soul Harry. I should have told you sooner but it just slipped my mind. I know this was not Hagrid's fault but unfortunately Umbridge has already sent the owl requesting his dismissal to the Minister," Dumbledore said grimly. "And I can't do anything. Cornelius gave her that power."

Madam Pomfrey shook her wand once again and Remus asked worried:

"What's wrong Poppy?"

"I keep getting this reading wrong," she said turning Harry's arm around. "I don't see any more cuts but my diagnostic charm tells me he is still wounded," she waved her wand again and stopped at the back of Harry's hand, "Right here."

Harry's eyes widened and he tried to recover swiftly, "You're probably just tired. It's stressing work taking care of all of us students here. It's okay. I'm fine." He patted her and tried to get out of the bed but was stopped by Severus.

"Let me try Poppy," he waved his wand over Harry's squirming hand, which he held firmly in his and nodded. "Yes, there's something here."

"I can't see anything," Sirius frowned.

Remus looked firmly at Harry and asked, "Harry, does this have anything to do with you favoring your left hand lately?" *Shoot, he knew Severus would tell on him!*

"No," Harry tried to fake a puzzled face. "You are obviously doing this wrong- er- Grandpa, there's no need for that."

But Dumbledore just waved his wand in a complicated pattern and nodded. "Concealing charm. Quite strong one," he muttered. "You haven't learned this kind yet Harry," he stared into Harry's eyes and started chanting while waving his wand over Harry's hand.

"No," Harry pleaded and tried to bolt but Sirius grabbed him in a firm embrace and Severus did not let go of his hand.

"What are you hiding pup? What's wrong?" Sirius asked worried.

Dumbledore kept chanting and to Harry's horror angry red words started appearing on his hand, which looked inflamed. The words hadn't been healing like the first night for a long time now and you could see the scabs around the wounds.

Severus was livid as he turned Harry's hand over and read, "I must not tell lies! Where did you get a blood quill Harry? Why would you use one?" he hissed dangerously and Remus swore.

"LINES!" Remus cried. "You promised me she was just having you do lines Harry! That's why the bond kept activating; she was slicing your hand!"

"Technically I was slicing my hand," Harry tried joking. *Okay, those scowls and glares tell me they can't joke about this yet!* "I didn't lie, they are lines."

"Why? Why didn't you tell us?" Sirius asked lost and then growled getting up, "I'm going to kill that bitch!"

"No dad!" Harry cried grabbing Sirius around the arms and holding him tight, "That's what she wants! When I said I would tell you she was practically jumping up with glee begging me to have you confront her! I can handle this!"

"Harry," Sirius said with a pained look at Harry's pleading face and cupping his cheek. "You shouldn't have to handle this. We are the adults here. It's our job to protect you not the other way around."

Harry shrugged and said, "You three have always protected me. This time it was my turn," his eyes were begging them to understand, "She could send Uncle Sev back to jail or if she found out about Uncle Moony, she could have him executed or something. And what if she found out about little Julie? She was trying to break me dad, and I wasn't going to let her."

"Your intentions are noble Harry," Dumbledore said and lifted up a hand to silence Severus and Remus who looked ready to yell at him, "But your execution was poorly done. What she did was illegal, and had you come to us sooner, we could have gotten rid of her right away, no matter who she has behind her. But I think maybe you can help now."

"How?" Harry asked. "If I report her she'll just say I'm lying. That I did this to myself."

"I think I have just the way," Dumbledore smiled mischievously.

xxx

"You know Mr. Potter," Umbridge said smiling sweetly as she lifted the glamour that Dumbledore had reapplied while Harry sat at his usual desk and took the blood quill. "I almost thought of letting you off

this detention after the help you gave me today. By this time tomorrow your friend Hagrid will be gone from this school."

"I wasn't planning on helping you Professor," Harry said through gritted teeth.

"But you did none the less," she smiled and stared at Harry who was frozen on the spot. "What are you waiting for Mr. Potter? Start writing."

"Are you sure I should use this quill here? Not one of mine?," he said pointing at the blood quill.

"Yes Mr. Potter. Just like in every other detention you had, you will use my quill," she said sweetly. "I want the message to sink in."

"Okay," Harry said. "I just wanted to make sure," he touched the tip to the parchment when a voice from behind came. , "That will be enough Mr. Potter Black!"

Umbridge jumped as, from thin air, Madam Bones and Auror Shacklebolt materialized. "Shacklebolt, please arrest Madam Umbridge for possession of illegal artifacts and child abuse."

"What?" Umbridge spluttered shocked as Shacklebolt waved his wand swiftly disarming her and was at her sides handcuffing her in a second. "You can't do this! Cornelius will hear about this!"

"Oh, yes. I truly want to hear why the Minister approved of illegal dark objects being used on the students."

"What! No, Cornelius didn't-" she was silenced by a wave of Madam Bones' wand.

"You have the right to an attorney when you are interrogated Dolores. If I were you I would use that right because this is not looking good for you or our dear Minister," Madam Bones said in a false friendly tone as she bagged the blood quill and gave Harry back his Invisibility Cloak.

Harry couldn't help but skip happily behind Madam Bones as they left the office and Madam Bones waved her wand sealing the office, "My forensics team will come examine this office later to make sure we have all evidence. You did well contacting me Albus," she said to Dumbledore who had been waiting outside with a scowling Sirius, a calm Remus and a smirking Severus. "You, young man," she said turning to Harry in a stern tone, "Should have reported this earlier but I do commend your noble reasons and your acting skills. You managed for Umbridge to confess without suspecting you. Well done, if you ever think of following your parents' footsteps please talk to me."

"Yes, well," Sirius said puffing his chest out proudly. "Harry has to go see Poppy about that hand. She couldn't heal it earlier or Umbridge would have suspected something."

"I'm afraid there will be scarring," Bones said grimly. "Dark Objects tend to leave scars that magic can't take away but she will be able to heal the inflammation." She smiled slightly and nodded to Harry, "We will see you at her hearing then Mr. Potter Black. It seems you have been visiting us enough so please stay out of trouble."

"I'll try," Harry sighed and Sirius ushered him towards the Hospital Wing muttering under his breath.

"What's that dad?"

"I said, I wanted to have a go at Umbridge, but no, I'm an adult Moony says. I have to this by the law, he says."

Harry shook his head.

"Severus had his fun, why couldn't I?"

"Because Uncle Sev was very Slytherin about it."

"Yeah, speaking of being Slytherin," Sirius smirked. "He made sure to order everyone from his House to be at the Entrance Hall right in time to see the toad escorted out."

"He had already gained some respect back after the "Blackie" incident. Most students were backing off with their misbehavior," Remus commented from behind and Sirius jumped.

"MOONY!" Sirius cried. "I thought you had stayed with Albus."

Remus shrugged smirking, "As I was saying. Only Malfoy's gang had kept going, and I have a feeling their self preservation will stop them."

Harry looked skeptical, "Only if the Minister goes down too."

"Oh," Sirius smiled. "He will. By the way Harry, Ms. Skeeter is waiting for you after we see Poppy. And afterwards you and me are going to have a long lecture about why keeping secrets from your dear father is *very* wrong, and when you absolutely *have* to come to us for help. Hum, Moony, Hospital Wing is over there." He finished pointing towards the stairs when Remus made to turn towards the staff wing.

"I know," Remus smiled. "You have that under control. There is someone waiting for me at our quarters."

Oh, by the way Sirius, please do take your time." And he skipped off.

Harry smirked, "Uncle Moony and Tonks sure did not waste any time."

Xxx

Remus had been correct; like magic Severus regained the reigns of his house, especially after the *Quibbler* had printed all the sordid details of Harry's detention and Dolores Umbridge' arrest. They were now asking if Minister Fudge would dawdle with her trial as he was doing with the suspected Death Eaters. In answer to that Madam Bones had declared, "The Minister is implicated in this trial since he appointed Madam Umbridge himself. As a subject of investigation he is forbidden to have any say in this trial. And we at the DMLE and Wizengamot want to make it clear we do not condone child abuse. Madam Umbridge will be prosecuted as soon as possible. And she will be questioned with Veritasserum to establish the Minister's involvement."

"Even if he did not order the use of a blood quill, Minister Fudge's judgment is quite clearly questionable. Should he still be able to lead the Wizarding World as if we were a dictatorship?" was Skeeter's closing question.

As she had been dismissed with just cause all Professor Umbridge's decision's had been revoked, very much to Angelina Johnson's pleasure since she hadn't been able to find good replacements for Harry and the twins. The players she had found didn't quite cut it but Harry pointed out they should stay as

reserves so they could be prepared for next year after the twins graduate. And Ginny, who had been chosen as Seeker, could be a Chaser replacement as well.

Remus had been nominated temporary DADA teacher while Albus looked for someone. He assured Remus he had already been negotiating with someone but this person could only start after Christmas. Apparently Albus had never thought Umbridge would last long.

Even though the *Prophet* had been quiet about the case, the public, especially parents were demanding some explanations. Not many believed Fudge's claims of ignorance, after all Umbridge was his second in command. Things were looking grim for the Minister and after being inundated by Howlers the day after Umbridge was tried and declared guilty and sent to Azkaban for five years, the Wizengamot asked for a vote of no confidence.

Wizards and witches everywhere did not agree with Umbridge's statement of "I did what was necessary to keep the Minister safe. The Potter boy had to be eliminated." And even though she said Fudge had no knowledge of her methods, the wizarding population believed a leader should be aware of what someone he granted so much power to was doing.

Thus, Fudge lost horribly and the Prophet miraculously came back to life and to Harry's side claiming Harry had been saying the truth all along and he had defeated Voldemort, and Umbridge was clearly unbalanced and deserved to be locked up for trying to maim their savior, and wishing new Minister Amelia Bones good luck in her post after printing her statement that she would be making drastic changes with the way the Ministry worked.

Sirius snorted as he let the paper fall on the Head table.

"Yeah, now that Fudge was voted out they are back on our side."

"The Prophet has always gone with the Ministry. Its views depend on what the current Minister thinks," Minerva snorted. "But I do think Amelia will be a good change."

"She is a fair woman," Remus nodded and eyed the Slytherins.

"How are things going with your House Severus?"

"They have been better since the 'Blackie' episode but after Umbridge left and I was able to instill the punishment I had dolled after the Quidditch match, they have been leaning towards me. Especially after Minister Bones stated that after Umbridge's trial the captured Death Eater's trials were the most pressing order of business. I think Karkaroff and Nott's are scheduled for next week. And with that, little Malfoy lost a lot of support. If that served to make him behave I'd be happy but he is acting as if everyone is being utmost unjust with him. He broke the rules and I did what I said I would. Had it been any other player they too would lose their position."

"We know that," Sirius said flatly. "But Malfoy was raised to think everyone owes him everything. Believe me, I know. I was raised like that too. But Minnie here showed me I was wrong in no time. And at first I thought it was an absurd idea. Remember?"

"I definitely do. You were one pampered little prince. I remember your outrage the first time I sent you to detention. Started spluttering about writing to your father," she snorted and then she glared. "Don't call me Minnie."

"Yes, but you changed. I hope we are not too late for him," Severus said grimly.

Xxx

"Thank you for coming Mr. Lupin. I know you have a hectic schedule with trying to undo what Umbridge did," Minister Bones said as she ushered Remus inside her office.

"Not as hectic as I imagine yours is," Remus said pleasantly as he took the offered seat and Minister Bones smiled as she took hers.

"As you may have heard I am making some very much needed changes. Karkaroff and Nott's trials have already passed and they have been sentenced to life in Azkaban, and we learned a lot of interesting things such as the former-Minister making deals with Karkaroff to implicate Severus."

Remus nodded and asked, "Is action being taken?"

"Aside from losing his post, there is nothing we can do. Fudge didn't actually tell Karkaroff to lie. He just said that if Karkaroff could help to put Severus away he would be granted a deal. He never asked what Karkaroff would do. Deals are often made to get a bigger fish. It's not against the law. If he had instructed Karkaroff to lie it would be another thing. Fudge was also questioned about the campaign support he received from Malfoy and Nott and he had no knowledge of their crimes, only suspect them. So he can't be implicated legally even if he was morally wrong. But believe me, Fudge won't ever be elected for anything after this disaster and he has been run out of the Ministry completely. He has also been fined heavily for disregarding conduct. The Wizengamot decided that even if Fudge was unaware of Umbridge's methods he aided her. That wasn't enough for Azkaban but for someone who is currently jobless and has no prospects of being able to be hired in the wizarding world, his fine was quite damaging."

"I'm glad to hear that," Remus nodded. "And Nott?"

"Aside from confirming his crimes which are enough to put him away for life, he also named all the others in the graveyard that day, including Malfoy and Goyle. I have already put a warrant out and the Auror Office has their search as a top priority. Malfoy and Goyle Manors are once again under surveillance and Madam Malfoy was questioned under Veritasserum about her husband's whereabouts. She doesn't know."

"I didn't expect her to. They would be smarter than that, and Goyle is a widower right?" Remus pointed out.

Minister Bones nodded and continued, "As I was saying. I also plan to have other changes. I want a better relation with Muggleborns and I think the way to get that is a better relation with Muggles. I have therefore granted a better budget to the Muggle relations office and made changes in staff. The former

head was a pureblood who thinks all muggles are brainless idiots. A friend of Fudge. I still have a pureblood in office but one who actually is very fond of Muggles."

"No way. You mean-" Remus began smiling fondly.

"As of yesterday, Arthur Weasley is the Head of Muggle Relations and as deputy we have a very interesting young Muggleborn that has a lot of interesting ideas about how to deal with Muggles."

Remus beamed, "Couldn't have happened to a more deserving person."

"I also have another available position in where I want to make changes," Bones started cautiously. "I was approached by Amos Diggory who asked to be transferred to England's Magical Embassy in France. Apparently Cedric is having a hard time with being around people who are always expecting him to remember things he can't. So they have arranged for him to attend Beauxbatons with Professor Dumbledore's help and the Diggorys want to be near by."

Remus nodded. He knew all about that. He had helped Cedric through his hard decision. He had tried all semester long to adapt, but the stress was affecting his schoolwork and Remus suggested that maybe some distance could help him. Cedric had decided to finish this term and start the next one somewhere else. Since he was fluent in French, Beauxbatons seemed the logical choice. And he could understand the Diggory's. After almost losing their son sending him abroad would be hard.

"That leaves me without a Head for the Control and Regulation of Magical Creatures," Bones said meaningfully and Remus' mouth fell open in shock.

"You can't possibly mean..."

"I do actually. I think you'd be the best man for the job."

"Madam Bones, you were my mother's best friend and you were-"

"There the night your parents rushed you to St. Mungo's at her side and every other time she worried about you. I know what you are Remus and that is one of the reasons I want you. Not the main one, but one. As a magical creature yourself I know you will be fairer than some bigoted full human. But that is not only why I want you. I have accompanied your work," she smiled coyly. "You have a very unique style of writing that you picked up from your mother and I would recognize anywhere. No matter what the name signing the article is. You are fair but not blind. You ask for better treatment for magical creatures but do not turn a blind eye towards really dark creature like Dementors. The problem with this office is that either we had bigoted morons like Umbridge who want every magical creature enslaved to us or we have idealists that think there should be no control whatsoever, and we can't have that. From your articles you agree with me that laws should be changed. Some creatures deserve more rights and some need a tighter reign. That is why I want you for the job."

"What if someone finds out?"

"I will answer for my choices."

Remus looked at her seriously and said, "I'll need some time to think. I have already made a commitment with Hogwarts until at least Christmas and I have to see if they can do without a tutor."

"I will give you the time you need. Amos is staying until Christmas anyway."

"Thank you Madam Bones. I promise to think very responsibly about this."

A/N- Umbridge is gone and you all can finally celebrate. I still have two big conflicts left (Lucius Malfoy and Severus' secret) that will take most of sixth and seventh year to solve. The end of fifth year is mostly setting up for that. I think I'll have a couple more chapters of fifth year and a little over 10 chapters with the last two years. They will go quicker than the other years because I don't have much conflict left and I don't like to drag things out.

Thanks for reading and reviewing.

Huge thanks to SWaddict1986 who was the first to have the pleasure of seeing Umbridge and Fudge sacked.

Chapter 11- Change

"We'd be working in the same building," she said nuzzling close to him on the couch. "It would be nice to be able to go out for lunch together every day."

He smiled and kissed her, "I know. But what about Harry, Sirius and Severus? And I kind of...I don't know."

"Are scared of giving up a stable position that you've had for over a decade?"

"Well-"

"That's basically what you've had. One way or the other you've worked at Hogwarts for thirteen years. It's understandable to be afraid of change. Especially considering what you have at stake. Not many people would give you work, and to say goodbye to one of those people who have always been there with you can be scary."

Remus shrugged but he had been thinking exactly that, and he had yet to tell Sirius, Severus and Harry. That's why he called a family meeting and was just waiting for the other three in the Marauder's Quarters. They didn't have to wait much longer though as the three in question strode in. Or better said, Sirius bounced in while Harry and Severus entered calmly. Though Severus did have quite a scowl on his face.

"Problems?" Tonks asked as the three took seats.

"Yes," Severus said grimly. "I had to separate a hex fight between Malfoy and Nott. Apparently Nott very smartly convinced his mother to declare that the Nott family did not approve of Nott Sr.'s actions. Theodore will be seventeen at the beginning of October next year and until then his mother acts as Head of the family since Alexander did not have siblings. Theodore, smart boy that he is, tried to salvage the family's reputation and therefore his future. Draco did not agree with Theodore abandoning his father like that. To that Theodore answered and I quote; , 'It would be foolish of me to continue in a lost cause and bury my family in shame and consequent poverty. Start thinking straight because yours is not far behind.'"

"I take it young Draco didn't like that," Remus asked.

"No, he didn't," Severus answered. "After sending both to the Hospital Wing, I issued detentions for them. Nott has a night with me, and Malfoy has one with McGonagall. I hope Minerva can work her miracles again," He finished motioning towards Sirius.

"So, what did you call this family meeting for?" Sirius asked in a mock important voice.

"Hum, well, er-"

"Remus has some interesting news to discuss with the family. He just came back from a meeting with the Minister," Tonks said squeezing Remus' hand.

Harry asked, "What?"

"Well, you see. The minister is making some changes and she asked if I want to be Head of Control and Regulation of Magical Creatures."

Severus nodded impressed, "That's interesting. It's quite revolutionary. Does the Minister know about your condition?"

Remus nodded but Harry asked bewildered, "What did he say?"

"He has been offered a job as Head of the Control and Regulation of Magical Creatures Department," Severus answered and at Harry's baffled look he added, "Do you know how many misbehaving students use that technique when confessing?"

"That's great Uncle Moony!" Harry beamed and launched himself to hug Remus. "You can work to make better laws for werewolves and don't forget House-elves. Hermione would skin you."

"You're okay with this?" Remus asked.

"Why wouldn't I be?" Harry asked and Sirius who had been oddly quiet, answered with a sulking tone:

"Because he is abandoning us! That's why!"

Remus sighed and looked at Sirius who had crossed his arms in a defensive way and was glaring at the floor with a scowl.

"I haven't answered yet."

"Where do you get that idea dad?" Harry asked bewildered.

"Exactly," Tonks said. "Remus will still live here. He'll just Floo out every day. So you will still see him."

"Yeah, that's what you say now," Sirius mumbled.

"Stop being a child Sirius. This is a great opportunity for Remus," Severus scolded. "We are wizards, all it takes to be at the other end of Great Britain is a second. No need to be overly dramatic."

"Yeah, yeah, I want to see you say that when it's been months and we haven't seen Moony!"

"Vector sees her husband every day and he works in London. He comes back every night," Remus pointed out.

"Well, sorry if I don't take your reasoning seriously since you obviously have already decided!" Sirius spat and stalked out of the Marauder's Quarters banging the portrait shut.

"That went well," Remus remarked dryly.

"Dad will come around," Harry said hopefully.

"You're not the only one scared of change," Tonks whispered to Remus.

Remus nodded, biting his lips. He looked at Harry, his frown turning into a light smile, "By the way Harry, Madam Bones told me that..."

xxx

"I find it quite ironic that your teenaged son has accepted this and you haven't."

"Albus! I came here for you to agree with me not them!" Sirius cried.

"I can't agree with you when you are being irrational," Albus said calmly from his desk, where he was observing Sirius pacing the room, sitting back on his chair with his hands folded on his stomach.

"Don't you see? This is just the first step," Sirius said miserably. "What happens when he and Tonks decide to get married?"

"You are the one who got them together."

"When it was a given they would live here because he works here. Why would they live here if they both work in London? Everything will change!"

"Life is full of constant change Sirius," Albus said. "Your situation was unique. You graduated and roomed with Remus and spent every possible moment with your friends. Then you moved here with Harry and Remus and it was like you never left. This way the change is gradual. Change will happen. And in a couple of years Harry will be the one moving out."

"I don't want change," Sirius said flopping dejectedly on a chair.

"I know." Albus said sympathetically.

Xx

Harry ran to the Gryffindor tower and spotted Ginny talking with some friends. He ran over her.

"Ginny I need to talk to you. Stay here," and not spotting the other Weasleys, he ran up to the dorms.

Ginny just gaped shocked and confused at him and turned to her friends.

"What was that?"

The other girls she had been talking to just shrugged and decided to keep going on their conversation. A short while later, Harry came barreling down followed by Ron and the twins. They went over to empty seats by the fire and Harry turned exasperated at Ginny.

"Ginny. Talk. Now. Important!"

Ginny sighed in annoyance and nodded to her friends. She dragged her feet to where Harry was taping his foot impatiently and raised an eyebrow.

"What?" she asked annoyed.

"Take a seat," Harry said sitting down.

"Yes master, something else?"

Harry rolled his eyes, "If you don't want the juicy news that I know your parents won't tell you, you can just go." That perked Ginny up and she asked Harry with a calculated look:

"What news?"

Harry grinned and rubbed his hands, "So, the new Minister called Uncle Moony to offer him a job."

"That's great Harry. Good for Professor Lupin," George beamed. "What does that have to do with us?"

"And she told Uncle Moony your dad-"

"Got a promotion," Fred interrupted. "We know that. Why would you think our parents wouldn't tell us that?"

"Will you let me finish?" Harry cried. "So, because your dad was promoted, his assistant, Perkins, Perpkins-"

"Perkins," Ron offered.

"Yeah, Perkins, got promoted to Head of Muggle-Artifacts and-"

"What are you guys doing?" Hermione asked from behind as she and Neville approached and Harry groaned.

"I'll never finish this way!"

"Harry is telling us something," Ginny said.

"He is taking an awful lot of time doing so too," Fred offered and Harry scowled at him.

"Come listen, sit down," Ron said and Hermione and Neville took a seat each.

"So, as I was saying, with your dad's promotion-"

"Your dad got a promotion?" Hermione asked happily.

"Yeah, Head of The Muggle Relations Department," Ron said proudly.

"Hum, hum," Harry cleared his throat annoyed.

"Oh, yes," Hermione said. "Continue."

"Perkins was promoted to your dad's old job and therefore needed an assistant."

"And that's your news?" Ginny asked annoyed and Harry started bashing his head against the back of the seat.

"Why don't we let him finish?" Neville said diplomatic.

"It's Percy," Harry said.

"PERCY?" all six cried at once.

"Yeah," Harry said pleased.

"But-but- he was junior assistant to the Minister and now-" Ginny started.

"He is assistant to one of the Heads of a subdivision of the Muggle Relation Departments making your dad ultimately his boss. Apparently he got a cut on his paycheck too since he was technically demoted," Harry said.

Hermione and Neville had sympathetic looks that were completely lost on the Weasleys as the twins smiled evilly and Ron and Ginny were rolling in laughter.

"So dear Percival and his extreme love to the Ministry didn't last long, I see," Fred said in a fake concerned voice.

"Nope, apparently Minister Bones changed all her immediate staff. Something about rule number one of succession "You don't keep your predecessor's staff. It's asking for spies." Especially in the way her predecessor was voted out of office," Harry explained.

"Serves him right," Ron said firmly. "Even his regulation on cauldrons job was higher."

"Percy tried to argue his case, that he had been loyal to the Minister and was a good assistant and Madam Bones answered, and I quote from a quote: 'My dear boy, loyalty should start a lot closer than the Ministry. When you have learned that maybe you can have another chance to the Minister's office, until then you have a lot to learn.' Uncle Moony said Madam Bones wasn't impressed with Percy turning his back on his family and said that someone who turns his back on a family that has always treated him with so much love because of a job can't be trusted not to betray her if it's convenient for him."

"The Weasley family may not be in the high society circle but there isn't a witch or wizard that hasn't heard of how tight you are. I bet that was why Fudge wanted Percy in the first place. He thought that closeness would get him information on Dumbledore. I bet he didn't count on Percy walking out and couldn't just confirm everyone's suspicion by sacking him," Neville said.

"Well, at least now that he will be ultimately under your dad maybe Percy will have a new understanding of him," Hermione said hopefully. "And will come back to the family."

"Dear Percival will have to sweat a lot to get our forgiveness," George said in an ugly tone.

Ron nodded, "He can't just waltz back in after saying what he said."

"Unfortunately he can," Ginny said. "At the first sign of wanting to come back mom will have him."

"So it's up to us to show him the error of his ways," Fred smirked evilly and Harry shuddered, and was very happy not to be Percy right now.

xxx

"How come you're fine with your Uncle changing jobs?" Susan asked as she and Harry perused the Hogsmeade shops for Christmas gifts, hand in hand, during the last Hogsmeade weekend before Christmas.

Harry shrugged, "Doesn't change much for me. I mean, I can still see him in the evenings if I want to. Yeah, I will miss having him always there and seeing him at the staff table but I usually don't see him much during the day anyway because I am in class and he is busy. For dad it's different because they eat together and both go to staff meetings. They work together at the staff room or in their quarters. The amount of time they spend together will decrease a lot."

There was also the fact that Harry knew this was huge for Remus. Sirius had started working as a teacher because of Harry but before that he had been an Auror on his own merits. Severus was a teacher on his own Potions merits too. Albus could have easily helped him and kept him safe by other means. Remus on the other hand had been called to at first tutor Harry because he was available and Albus thought Sirius could use the help of the sensible Marauder in raising Harry. Yes, he was a good teacher and very knowledgeable but he had kind of taken the job that was available through Albus Dumbledore's generosity. Madam Bones was hiring him on his own merits. She wasn't doing any charity and that was a huge step for Remus. And like it or not Sirius knew that. He was just scared, and therefore still sulking. But even sulking he had actually started to realize this could be good for Remus. Unintentionally he had started drawing up a way to divide some of Remus tutoring responsibilities among the other teachers. Mainly Hagrid's continuing education. He was in the process of doing that when a visitor entered his office unannounced.

"Hello," Kingsley said sitting back on a chair and resting his feet on Sirius' desk. Sirius raised an eyebrow.

"What brings you to Hogwarts?"

"Oh, I thought I'd invite you and Remus to dinner since I just got this promotion you see. I'm Head of the DMLE. Bones named me even though I'm the youngest ever to be named. She said she liked the fact that I was more interested in the truth than in politics. Scrimgeour had a fit because she passed me over him," he said gleefully. "Anyway, I have this big paycheck raise and can splurge around and flaunt my new hefty paycheck in your face."

"You do know I'm stinking rich?"

"SIRIUS! Don't spoil the flaunting!"

"Arthur got a promotion too. Head of the Muggle Relations office. You're not the only one, and Moony-"

"SIRIUS!"

Sirius chuckled and said, "When is the celebration?"

"Tonight at the Leaky Cauldron. I've invited a few Auror friends as well as Order Members. We are doing a triple celebration. It's my promotion and Arthur's. We are also giving Hestia a farewell party. She is leaving the Auror work as of the first of January, and since that's just a few weeks away, and in a week it's Christmas and everyone will be worried with the holidays, we are doing that now."

"Hestia is retiring from the field? Why?"

"She has been wanting to for a while," Kingsley shrugged. "She joined because of the war but I don't think that was her first choice. And now she had an offer to do something else."

"What?"

"No idea. She's keeping it a mystery. Wanna come? That's a good way to make up with Remus."

"How did you know about that?" Sirius asked shocked.

"Hey, Tonks talks!" Kingsley raised his hands defensively.

"Humph, who says I want to make up?" Sirius scowled.

"Oh, come on. You know you do," Kingsley coaxed.

"Fine, I'll go," Sirius huffed. "But I am taking Severus too. That man needs to learn that Potions experimenting does not constitute fun."

"And you're going to kiss and make up?" Kingsley teased. Sirius glared at him.

Xxx

A/N- Thanks you all for reading and reviewing. Thanks SWaddict1986 for betraying.

Chapter 12- Moving forward

He was lost in dancing with her, drowning in her scent when someone poked him in the back. Remus looked backwards and raised an eyebrow

"Done avoiding me?" he asked.

Sirius scowled, "Can I have a word?"

Remus looked at Tonks and asked, "What do you say?"

"If he says the magic word," she grinned mischievously and looked at Sirius still in Remus' embrace.

"Please?" Sirius scowled even deeper.

"When asked with such enthusiasm how can I say no?" Remus said pleasantly and followed Sirius to a little parlor. Sirius stood rigidly and inhaled deeply. He mumbled something.

"Didn't catch that," Remus said.

"I said I'm sorry," Sirius hissed.

"See, that wasn't hard," Remus teased.

"I don't want you to go because I don't know how to be without you constantly there. I never learned how to be alone like that and I realize that is very selfish of me so if you really want to accept the position, I'm fine with that. Well, no I'm not. But I'll try to be."

Remus smiled and pulled Sirius into a hug, "Thanks."

Sirius shrugged and pulling away asked, "So, when do you start?"

"I have to ask the Minister when I accept."

"What? Why? Haven't you already?" Sirius asked bewildered.

"No Sirius, I was waiting for you to be fine with it. I wouldn't have accepted if you and Harry hadn't wanted."

"But that's daft!" Sirius cried.

"No, that's family," Remus said squeezing Sirius' shoulder. "And no matter what, we'll always be family. Wherever we are."

"I hate it when you make sense!" Sirius scowled and Remus laughed.

Xx

"So, where are you going to be working now?" Sirius asked as he flopped on the chair next to Hestia's and took a sip of his firewhiskey.

"That, Mr. Black is none of your business," she answered not sparing him a glance.

"Oh, come on. I deserve to know; after all we have shared a closet," he said cheekily leaning in.

She eyed him with disdain and drawled, "Do not repeat that in public again Black or people might think I have lost all common sense and have become one of your conquests."

Sirius, not realizing he was trading on dangerous water, snaked an arm around the back of her chair and smiled, "Then we better make sure they are correct."

Without a second's hesitation Hestia got up and dumped her martini in Sirius' hair, "The day I lower myself for a Casanova like you Black is the day you can commit me into St. Mungo's permanent ward!"

"But-but- the closet!"

She leaned forward and said in a low tone, "You may be friend material Sirius but I would have to be mad to go out with you," in a whisper only he could hear she added, "Especially in public."

Sirius, wet and with his dignity hurt, crossed his arms and glared at the snickering crowd.

"She should have been a Slytherin," Emmeline Vance remarked from the other side of the room.

"Excuse me what?" Severus who had been next to her asked horrified. "After that public display! A Slytherin would never do that."

"You really did not pay attention did you?" Emmeline smirked, "But, then again, Slytherins wouldn't have been that smart. No wonder she was a Ravenclaw. We do know how to use our brains better than you."

"Did you happen to see the same thing I did?" Severus snapped, offended.

"Yes, I unlike you, saw all of it," she sneered superiorly and glided away snapping her long blond hair in Severus' face as she turned.

Severus coughed confused and watched her go. Kingsley came behind him and clapped a hand on his shoulder, "Having fun?" Severus glared at him and walked away still thinking about the blond who had just out-sneered him. *What the bloody hell was that? That had never happened to him before!*

Xxx

A few days later, Harry was carrying his rucksack towards the Marauders Quarters. They were going home for Christmas and Harry welcomed the change after this hectic term. Next term there would be some changes, yes, but Harry hoped things would go more calmly for him. He had said goodbye to his friends and Susan and was going to meet his dad after he oversaw the Gryffindors who were boarding the coaches.

"Harry!" he heard and turned around to see Cedric coming to meet him.

"I am glad to have caught you before I had to leave," Cedric said smiling.

"You are not coming back right? My Uncle told me," Harry asked.

"Yeah, Professor Dumbledore arranged with Madam Maxime for me to transfer to Beauxbatons and my dad got a transfer too so we will move to France. A new school with a bunch of people who have never met me before."

Harry smiled; he knew Cedric had tried but the stress of readapting was getting to him and had started affecting his schoolwork.

"Do you think it's selfish of me to leave my friends and Cho behind instead of sucking it up?" Cedric asked.

"No," Harry answered sincerely. "Sometimes we have to do what's best for us not others. Besides, it's not like you won't keep in touch with them. I'm sure you and Cho can work out a long distance

relationship too. If they don't understand you need your space right now then they weren't good friends to begin with."

Cedric smiled and extended his hand and Harry took it.

"I hope I can keep in touch with you Harry. You helped me a lot."

"I didn't do anything," Harry shrugged.

"Exactly, you just treated me normally. Didn't tread around me. But I'm not talking just about this year. I'm talking since we've met. When you were just a little midget."

"Hey!" Harry scowled playfully.

"No seriously," Cedric smiled. "You've always been nice to me even though I didn't always treat you fairly."

"You weren't the only one three years ago who thought I was a Dark Wizard," Harry shrugged.

"Yeah, but I can't talk for others, just me and I'm sorry!" Cedric said firmly and Harry nodded even though Cedric had already apologized before, he wasn't about to say so. That was exactly the problem.

"Good luck!" Harry said.

"Thanks and tell your Uncle my dad wishes him good luck on his post. Merry Christmas."

"Thanks! You too."

With that Cedric ran away, probably to get his trunk, and Harry smiled. Yes, things were looking good.

Xxx

Christmas went by uneventfully. Severus came by a few days before Christmas and ended up staying the rest of vacation since no Slytherin had stayed in the castle. All in all Harry was basking in the quiet and normal life. On the first night back at Hogwarts they were presented with a surprise at the staff table when the new DADA teacher was announced.

"She was until now a highly decorated Auror that left the field by my request to lend her knowledge in the classroom. I'm afraid you will find more dangers here," Dumbledore said pleasantly to Hestia and laughter was heard. "Please welcome Professor Hestia Jones."

Harry clapped first, having heard about Hestia from his father and uncles, and seeing that the Boy-Who-Was-A-Target-To-All-DADA-Teachers approved of the choice the rest of the student body felt confident that this time they might finally have a keeper.

Xxxx

Their prediction had been true and soon all students realized that Professor Jones was, for a change, not only a very competent teacher as she actually knew what she was talking about, but she was also fair. She was in between McGonagall's and Severus' strictness and Sirius joviality. She was light hearted in class but unlike Sirius who reigned his students mostly because they liked him and therefore had very few times in his years of teaching had to become stern with them, she was able to quiet down a class immediately with just a stern look. As she had said at the first class she might be a nice teacher but she was *the* teacher.

There wasn't a person in Hogwarts that wasn't pleased with the new addition, or almost none. For some very weird reason Sirius seemed to be very grouchy with her. The fact that the little episode of her dumping a martini on his head had been mysteriously vastly known by everyone at Hogwarts, including portraits- the Fat Lady had had the gall to look at him in a pitying way!- did not help at all. But Harry was of the opinion that once again Sirius didn't like to have his favorite teacher post threatened. Ah, well! You can't have everything. Besides he was really looking forward to what would happen the next morning. Remus had decided to go later to work just for that and Harry had promised to bring pictures back to his friends.

Xxxx

The first thing Sirius realized was that he was suddenly pulled out of his nice dream to feel cold and wet. The second were chuckles. He opened his eyes and saw a grinning Harry and Remus holding a bucket. There was a flash of light and Harry put away a camera.

"Happy birthday dad!"

"Come on Sirius, we are celebrating this joyous occasion with a very nice brunch, then we are going to lazy around and tonight all your friends will come to praise such a wonderful day," Remus said happily.

Why was Remus so chirpy?

"We never have birthday parties since my birthday is in the school year," Sirius said.

"Yeah, dad, but this one is important!"

"What? Why?"

"Because Siri, you just turned thirty-six."

"No I didn't!" Sirius cried outraged.

"You have officially entered your late thirties very soon you will be entering-"

"NO I WON'T!" Sirius cried. "That's lie! A lie! I am still young and beautiful and I turned twenty-nine!"

"Hum, dad, I'm fifteen...and a half, and if you were twenty when-"

"Twenty-nine Harry! Twenty-nine!" Sirius cried jumping off the bed and clamping a hand over Harry's mouth. With wide, mad eyes he added in a whisper, "Twenty-nine."

Sirius kept repeating firmly that he was turning twenty-nine to whoever asked. When the cake came later on at the party being held in the staff room and to which all the teachers and Harry's friend had been present, he had tried fruitlessly to change the little thirty-six in the candle to a twenty-nine but the number just grew larger each time. Sirius swore he saw Severus smirk.

Xxxx

Time kept moving and life went on. Remus was very happy with his new job and was working avidly, even at home he would suddenly have an idea and write it down in a little notebook he had been keeping with him recently. His relationship with Tonks was going wonderfully and he was more in love with her with each passing day, Harry on the other hand wasn't feeling so into his relationship anymore. Now that he wasn't dealing with Umbridge and had more free time he and Susan were seeing more and

more of each other and Harry was starting to feel like it was becoming too much. He saw her out of class, in class and at the D.A. meetings. He really didn't know what to do; he liked her all right, he just didn't like her as much as he did when they started, and he had no idea how to solve his little conundrum.

xxxx

In the beginning of February, when the teachers were lounging in the staff room as they were prone to, one teacher approached another.

"So, I hear your son is leading a little rebellious studying group and I want to see how they are fairing. So if you could please convince him to let me participate in a meeting I would thank you," Hestia told Sirius and was quite surprised when he just gaped at her. She couldn't help herself, and laughed. She was also regretting not having a camera to record Severus Snape choking on his tea.

"A what? He has a what?" Sirius asked.

"You didn't know?" she asked skeptically.

"Harry has no such thing," Severus said firmly.

"Yes he does," Hestia said simply.

"No he doesn't," Sirius stated.

"Look, I thought it was strange that even with the toad here most of the students from fifth year above are not only up to date in what they should know had they had a competent teacher, but the younger years actually know more than they should. I gave all years a standardized test considering the very unstable teachers they had. I wanted to know how much they knew no matter what grade they were. So I gave all years the same test, letting them know that they should answer only what they knew. Of course I knew first years wouldn't answer much and seventh years would have hopefully most of the test answered. But I got one huge shock when looking through fifth and sixth years and some fourth year tests. So I questioned a few of the students that scored too high and they were extremely tight lipped saying they couldn't tell. Being the Auror that I was I did my job. I kept an eye on them and followed them straight to the Room of Requirement where to my surprise every single one of the students that marked high entered. Including your son. Now, I knew Harry would score high because you trained him but this just reeks of Marauders. So I asked around. The ghosts happen to know a lot and keep quiet most of the time. After assuring Sir Nick I only wanted to help, he told me what he knew about Dumbledore's Army from when he floated unseen in the Room."

"He floats unseen?" Flitwick asked.

"Apparently a lot. You should watch yourselves," she said shuddering.

"Dumbledore's Army?" Sirius squeaked.

Hestia smirked, "You seriously did not know? They had been learning behind Umbridge's back. Sir Nick told me Harry has even asked your help to teach him hexes so he could show the group."

"No he never ask-" Sirius eyes went wide, "The little Slytherin bugger."

"Actually, he is a Gryffindor," Severus pointed out.

"This is all your fault!" Sirius cried.

"Mine?" Severus cried outraged.

"Children, don't fight," Dumbledore said patronizingly as he took a seat, "Tell me more Hestia, I find myself very interested in a group with such an interesting name."

Hestia snorted, "From what Nick said the students were afraid of failing their OWLs and NEWTs and decided to join around Harry, since Harry did get extra training in that area. There are students from all Houses, which surprised me," she sent an apologetic look to Severus.

"Which Slytherins?" he asked.

"I saw Blaise Zabini and Daphne Greengrass, but there could be more. They could have had already been inside."

Severus nodded rubbing his chin, "Yes, Harry was a friend with Zabinni's older brother. It makes sense he'd use him as an ambassador. Also explains another piece of knowledge Harry had about my Slytherins."

"Are you going to share?" Filius asked.

"No," Severus answered. "Suffice it to say that Harry helped one of my snakes who was in a tight spot."

And he had, thanks to Harry's scheme Nott had maintained his grades and was able to return to class without any trouble after his father was convicted.

"Yeah, apparently Harry has been very sneaky this year," Sirius grumbled.

"Oh Sirius, he is a teenager. It's normal. What did you expect? Do you think our student's parents know everything they do?" Filius laughed.

"I know everything my son does, or at least used to," Sirius said annoyed.

"Harry was bound to grow up and start taking care of what he thinks is his business alone," Dumbledore said. "Sometimes he may make a mistake as in the blood quill incident but I don't think this time he did. I am quite proud of him and of my other students for finding a way through adversity."

Sirius just scowled harder.

Xxx

"You called?" Harry asked as he bounced in the Marauder's Quarter's happily and sat on the couch.

"Where's Uncle Moony?"

"He called to let me know he would be working late," Sirius said irritably as he sat in front of Harry and pinned him with the coldest of stares. "Anything to tell me?"

Harry looked around and shrugged, "No," he said without the slightest clue of what his crime was.

"No, didn't do anything? Didn't have any secret meetings? Didn't mislead your poor innocent father?"

Harry's eyes went wide and his mouth formed an 'o' but he quickly recovered. "Say what now?"

"Confess! I know everything about your little 'Army!'" Sirius cried annoyed.

"Okay," Harry said raising his hands in a defensive way. "But I can't tell you."

"WHAT?" Sirius cried standing up.

"I can't."

"Can't or won't."

"Can't."

Sirius' eyes narrowed and he asked, "Is there something stopping you from telling me?"

"In a way," Harry said simply.

"Fine! Don't tell me!" Sirius scowled crossing his arms.

"I want to dad! But I can't! It was for your protection at first you know? Plausible deniability and all!"

"I don't need that!"

"I know," Harry shrugged. "But we didn't change that detail after Umbridge left. Look, I can see with the others if they let me tell you okay?"

"Fine," Sirius said pouting as he sat back on the table. "Professor Jones, who by the way was the one who found out and enjoyed oh so much making me look like a fool, wants to participate in a meeting so she can gauge your level and maybe integrate your little group with her classes."

"Oh," Harry said rubbing his chin. "We never thought of that. I'll tell the others."

"You do that. But let me know first!" Sirius warned.

Harry smirked and asked, "So dad? Are you upset because I didn't tell you or because Professor Jones knew before you?"

"Because you didn't tell me," Sirius said with a 'isn't that obvious tone'.

"So she didn't make fun of you?"

"No."

Yes she had. She had been annoying him all the time in the staff room later about the most stupidest things. "Oh I saw Harry eat a carrot today. Did you know?" "I think he sneezed, how could you have missed that?"

"And I want in on that meeting too! I can help! I was an Auror!"

"I know dad," Harry tried to bite back his laughter.

Xxx

After calming his father down and trying to wait for his Uncle to come back, Harry had to give up and go back to the dorm or he'd be late for curfew. He was walking through the halls thinking of the best way to break the news to the DA when a movement caught the corner of his eyes and he hastily moved out of the way missing a spell by inches. Turning around Harry found himself face-to-face with none other than Draco Malfoy and his two goons Crabbe and Goyle.

Wand posed in defense Harry asked evenly, "What do you want Malfoy?"

"To make you pay," Malfoy sneered as he walked closer. "No one to help you here is there? Just you and me."

"And your goons," Harry corrected and Malfoy smirked.

"You are going down Potter. I don't care if the whole world thinks you're a hero," with a quick movement Malfoy cried "*Sectusempra*" and Harry rolled out of the way just in time for the spell to miss his chest and just graze his arm.

"*Stupefy!*" Harry cried but missed Malfoy who ducked and hit Crabbe instead who had been raising his wand at Harry.

"One down, two to go," Harry thought as he jumped to his feet and sought cover in a suit of armor.

"You'll get expelled for this Malfoy. I know that curse!" Harry tried to reason.

"Oh do you? Do you know the traitor invented it?" Malfoy cried gleefully and Harry let the jibe pass. Yes he knew. He knew many spells Severus created and it had been with great anguish that his Uncle confessed to have invented that spell this summer when he wanted Harry to learn how to close the wound if he was ever cursed by it again.

"Then you'll know your Head of House will recognize it!" Harry cried out.

"Why won't you come out and play Potter? Where is your Gryffindor courage?"

"Courage shouldn't be mistaken with stupidity Malfoy. I am outnumbered."

"Not anymore," came a new voice as a flash of light rushed towards the general direction of Malfoy's voice.

Turning around Harry saw Nott and Zabini approaching and he decided to risk it. If Nott really wanted to clear his family's name he wouldn't harm Harry.

"You!" Malfoy cried. "Have you no shame? Aligning with Gryffindor's!"

"Doing the smart thing," Nott said firmly. "Now why don't you do the same before a teacher comes and spare yourself a detention?"

"No, I think I'll teach you blood traitors a lesson. Goyle!"

Goyle threw a hex at Zabini who raised a shield while Malfoy launched hexes at Nott and Harry. While Malfoy and Goyle had been aggressive Harry, Blaise and Nott were trying to keep on the defensive side. The hexes flew until they were interrupted by water splashing them all and they all turned to face a livid McGonagall.

A/N- Thank you all for reading and reviewing.

Thanks SWaddict1986 for betraying.

Chapter 12- Moving forward

Goyle threw a hex at Zabini who raised a shield while Malfoy launched hexes at Nott and Harry. While Malfoy and Goyle had been aggressive Harry, Blaise and Nott were trying to keep on the defensive side. The hexes flew until they were interrupted by water splashing them all and faced a livid McGonagall.

Chapter 13- Last Chances

"Draco is out of control. Nothing stops him. Not even the fact that his father is as good as convicted. I've tried everything. I've lost the count of how many times he has been in detention and since he is on probation, this should be grounds for expulsion!" Severus railed.

Dumbledore looked gravely at him, "And his mother will send him to Durmstrang instead. Karkaroff may not be Headmaster anymore but his successor is not much better than him. You would just be sending him to an environment where his tendencies would be encouraged."

Severus nodded with a scowl and slumped back on his chair. From his seat next to Severus, Sirius said slowly, with his elbows resting on the chair's arms and the tip of his fingers touching, "I may have a solution. A last resort, really, but I would need Narcissa's help for this."

"What are you thinking of doing Sirius?" Dumbledore asked.

"That is between me and Narcissa. Family business, if you will Albus," Sirius smiled. "As a favor to me, please don't expel him yet. At least let me give her a choice. If she accepts my proposition let him come back next year."

"Next year?" Severus asked.

"Oh, I do think he needs a good shock and as you said detentions aren't working," Sirius said seriously.

"Suspend him for the rest of the year. Let him take his OWLs at the Ministry and study with a tutor at home. Make sure he understands that this behavior will not be tolerated."

"We are in February, that is almost an entire term of suspension," Dumbledore pointed out.

"I know," Sirius nodded. "But Malfoy's behavior is escalating and he needs to be stopped. Maybe after a term of confinement at home far from his friends he will stop."

"What about Crabbe and Goyle?" Dumbledore asked.

"Detention for a month. Loss of Hogsmeade privileges," Severus said. "Malfoy was the leader and if we suspend them as well, the families will just have them tutored together defeating the loneliness point."

"I'll escort young Draco home so I can talk to Narcissa in person. If she accepts you'll know what my idea was."

Xxx

"What do you want for him Cissy? Do you want the same fate as Lucius had? Because that is where he is headed right now," Sirius pleaded with Narcissa. They were seated at the drawing room of Malfoy Mansion. Sirius accompanied a silent and scowling Draco to his home where he handed Narcissa the scroll signed by Dumbledore informing her of Draco's suspension. He then had asked for a word in

private after Draco stalked to his room. "Do you want him groveling at the feet of the next self proclaimed Dark Lord?"

"What do you suggest?" Narcissa asked tightly from her chair.

"He doesn't respect his Head of House and you never enforced any discipline. That has always been Lucius' job. He needs a firm hand with authority over him. Let me be that person. Let me take charge as his Head of the family."

"The Head of his family is Lucius," Narcissa hissed.

"Not if you renounce him as a convicted criminal. The Wizengamot already has enough evidence to convict him. His arrest warrant has been issued and his trial is a mere formality. If you renounce him as Head of the Malfoy family for being a criminal I will become by default Draco's Head because I am Lord Black. Our lovely medieval law system sees to that. And under Wizarding law he will have to answer to me while he is under age."

"You are asking me to forsake Lucius?" she asked outraged.

"I am asking you to think of your son," Sirius said. "Lucius will still be granted a trial when he is captured and, if he can, he will prove his innocence and therefore be pardoned and restored. But we both know that won't happen don't we?" he raised an eyebrow but Narcissa did not flinch. "According to our law if you forsake him, as a Black you come back to my protection and order. And as a minor so does Draco. You still have maximum authority as his mother. But if you tell him that he has to obey me, Cissy. I can act as his primary authority. I will have rights that can be overruled only by you. This is all about your position both in society and with Draco. You are the one that can give me the authority to do with him as I please."

"And I should let you? How can I know you won't abuse that authority?" Narcissa spat.

Sirius looked at her tiredly, "Because a long time ago Cissy, before the whole family branded me as a blood traitor and you as a good daughter stopped talking to me, you actually liked me. You knew me, and you know that even though he has been attacking my son I am willing to still try and save Draco. Or I would just have let Dumbledore expel him. He used a Dark Spell on a fellow student. He has been attacking students left and right and not long ago he caused what could have been a very catastrophic explosion if Severus hadn't acted fast. We don't persecute him for fun. We are trying to help him. The same way I was helped. The same way Regulus wasn't, and look how he ended up. He was just like Draco, remember? And he was encouraged to be so."

Narcissa said nothing and kept her mask on. Sirius sighed and said as he got up, "I'll go now. You have until the end of term to decide. Dumbledore will only let him back if you accept and we need time for the formalities. Think hard about this. Even if you accept, it may be too late as he will have just a few months under my control. He turns of age in March of next year doesn't he?"

Narcissa nodded and as she elegantly stood she said, "I want what is best for my family. You may not believe this but I happen to love Lucius."

"Do you love him more than you love Draco?"

"No."

"Lucius is a bastard but he has always struck me as a good father. A son wouldn't be so determined to be on his father's side if he wasn't loved. Maybe Lucius will eventually appreciate his son being helped. Even if he doesn't see it now."

"I will contact you with an answer later. I need to think," Narcissa said flatly.

"Do that Cissy. Think carefully," Sirius said and he swiftly left Malfoy Mansion.

Xxxx

With Draco Malfoy away from the castle, life had taken a positively peaceful turn in Harry's opinion. Severus had been right; Crabbe and Goyle had been nothing more than henchmen, who without Malfoy to lead had no idea what to do. They were still bullies who picked on younger and weaker children but they were easily stopped by a teacher handing them a detention or even a student who was more proficient than them in spells.

After discussing it with the rest of the D.A., Harry told Sirius that if the teachers wanted to watch one of the sessions they could, but the group was going to continue to be strictly a student based study group. Most of the D.A. felt they were more comfortable with the group of students they had now to express their ignorance in some subject or another, which previously they had done with Remus. For their part, the teachers agreed after all the Heads of House, Sirius and Hestia observed one session. Hestia asked to be kept informed of what the group was studying so she could keep her classes in accordance to her student's levels and know which students had more training than others. She also offered to help if they needed it. Sirius had also said he would help too.

The D.A. agreed but didn't foresee the need to call them since Hestia was actually a good teacher who was actually teaching, and since she had started they had been mostly revising and practicing what she taught in class. They had also expanded to other classes where someone was having trouble and someone from the group could help. They actually had more time because they no longer had to teach themselves from scratch. They had showed the ever-practical subject schedule Hermione had brought up at the beginning of term when they noticed they didn't need to use all their time with Defense.

Severus had suggested for them to open the group to other years, but they felt that if they enlarged the group too much they wouldn't be as comfortable in expressing their ignorance. Luna Lovegood did present a solution to that though. She suggested they have an open session to show how they worked so that if the younger years wanted to create a group of their own they had an example.

The professors agreed and it was decided that from now on there would be two different study groups, one for first to third years and one for fourth to seventh. This worked since as the seventh years graduated and new first years arrived the third years would be moving to the higher years' group. The D.A. did agree with the teachers to advertise the group to whoever in their years wanted to join, as they mostly thought that whoever would want in was already there. Harry was glad he had talked to the

others about the new addition to the group when they had voted if the teachers could or not come and Hermione lifted the no talking hex from the list. This way Theodore Nott knew he had been called for the D.A because Harry wanted him to join and not because they opened the group; as a matter of fact he had been a part of the decision process.

xxx

Sirius was seriously getting annoyed with the new DADA teacher. And to make things worse everyone loved her. He tried complaining to Harry and what did he get?

"She's the best we've ever had. Apart from Uncle Moony obviously."

He tried complaining to Moony but he was almost never there. Moony had been staying late for work loads of times now and although Sirius knew he was doing good things, Sirius missed his brother. Remus was cleaning up the Department. Amos was a good man but he thought Wizards and Witches were better than any creature could ever be, and most of his staff was like that. Remus had to relocate most of the department and get more open-minded people. Though he could do that during office hours, Sirius thought bitterly. So he honestly had had no other choice.

"And she infuriates me. I mean, she thinks she is *so* good just because she was an Auror. Well so was I!"

Severus just stared at Sirius pacing. He really was at a loss at why he was being subjected to this.

"And she criticizes everything I do. *You don't show proper authority,*" he mocked in a high voice, "*They think you're their friend not their teacher.*"

Severus nodded. He quite agreed with the woman.

"And the nerve of her to show up for a staff meeting dressed like that!"

He tried to remember what she was wearing in the last staff meeting and he had to agree that her robes showed a fair bit more legs than customary, and what legs at that. But there was nothing wrong in having a nice view in an otherwise boring meeting. He really did not see what her choice of wardrobe had to do with anything. He sneered, "Is there a reason why you are telling *me* this of *all* people?"

Sirius turned around.

"Because you are here. Moony is working late *again*. I told you that would happen. I have to tell someone!"

"And you chose me! I still don't see why you must annoy me just because the wife is working late."

"Ha, ha, Severus. Very funny! Help me!"

"With what?"

"On getting her to stop annoying me!"

Severus smirked as he thought back to the interactions Hestia had with Sirius since she arrived. He couldn't really remember her ever being antagonizing towards Sirius apart from the martini incident, and he had a slight suspicion that Sirius was being in one of those irrational "I get annoyed when you

breath" phases people are prone to. "If I recall correctly, Hestia Jones was one of the few girls at school that didn't succumb to Sirius Black's charms."

"Which just proves her lack of taste and good sense," Sirius huffed.

"Or," Severus said, "It proves she's actually worth it."

"I don't follow."

"You will, eventually."

Xxxx

Splash! Remus woke with a start completely wet, and glared at the grinning Sirius.

"Now, Remus, as you said this is an important date. You are turning thirty-six, entering your late thirties--"

"I knew you'd get revenge!"

"I didn't see you doing that to Severus, you just said happy birthday and gave him a gift, no water, no reminding him of his age," Sirius whined.

"I happen to value my life!" Remus growled.

Xxxx

"Dad, I need your help!" Harry came barreling into Sirius's office one afternoon.

"Of course you do. How may I help you with my infinite wisdom?" Sirius asked putting down the essays he was grading.

"How do I break up with someone?" Harry asked biting his lips nervously.

"Excuse me?" Sirius asked raising his eyebrows in shock.

"Well, you have a lot of experience in that field so how do I go about breaking up with Susan?" Harry elaborated and Sirius scowled at the remark. Then what Harry said seemed to sink in and he said in a very fake off-handedly way:

"Oh, you want to break up with her, what a pity."

"Yeah, right dad. I'll pretend I believe you," Harry rolled his eyes. "It's just. She's great. And funny and we get along fine but," he sighed. "I don't know... Lately it's just..., it feels like a chore."

Sirius smiled kindly, "It's okay Harry. No one expected your first girlfriend to be the love of your life. Be honest. Make sure she knows it's nothing she did or about her. I can't guarantee she will be fine with it. It can turn ugly sometimes but I assure you that if you keep going when you don't want to any more, it will end up badly," he shuddered remembering the letter hexing nut-job he dated. "This way you may have a chance that you can still be friends."

XXX

"So, er... I mean... You're great," Harry said awkwardly at their secluded place in one of the greenhouses.

"You too. You're funny and smart. And nice," Susan said a little nervously.

At the same time they both blurted, "It's not you, it's just-" they stared at each other and burst out laughing.

"I'm sorry," Susan said wiping her eyes. "I didn't mean to laugh. I guess you don't want to go on either."

"No. I mean you're great, I just don't think we're all that great together lately," Harry said apologetically.

"Me neither," she smiled. "I've been fretting on how to tell you for some time now. I was afraid you'd hate me."

"Me too," Harry grinned. "So, still friends," he stretched his hand.

"Still friends," Susan smiled and shook Harry's offered hand.

Xxxx

Life went on, Easter came and went with Mrs. Weasley's famous chocolate eggs and with the passing of Easter came the dreaded career advice sessions. Harry was scheduled to talk to McGonagall at the end of the week and he was in turmoil. He honestly didn't have a clear idea of what he wanted, just a vague thought, but he did know what he did not want and that was his biggest problem. He was also dreading having to tell McGonagall the little secret he had been keeping since third year. He had only ever told one person and she had promised not to tell anyone, anyone being Sirius and Remus. He wasn't the only one thinking of his career advice session though.

When Remus entered the Marauder's quarters that night he had to do a double take and make sure he had the right room. He had been presented with a very odd sight; Severus and Sirius had their heads together and were discussing some pamphlets. He had seen Sirius in that position many times, but it had usually been with James and never boded well for anyone. He cleared his throat and the two black haired men looked up.

"What are you two doing?"

"Well, Minerva said I can't give Harry his career advice session," Sirius pouted. "So, we are preparing what Minnie will tell him."

"I think," Remus said slowly sitting down and shuffling through the discarded pile. "That was Minerva's point, so she didn't leave out any career Harry may be interested in like lets say, Aurors, curse breaking, Dragon handler," he finished holding up some of the discarded pamphlets and then shuffling through the approved ones, "I notice a pattern here."

"We haven't," Severus said innocently.

"All these are tame and preferably desk careers," Remus said evenly.

"So?" Sirius asked.

"Except this one," Remus lifted a pamphlet.

"Hey, I took that one out!" Sirius cried grabbing the pamphlet.

"You were being narrow minded," Severus drawled. "There is no danger whatsoever."

"Of course there is. There can be horrible accidents when testing," Sirius cried.

Remus watched the other two men bicker, and putting the pamphlet to Potion's Mastery back in the pile, he cleared his throat effectively silencing the duo and said, "I think we'll let Minerva decide what she presents to Harry and what she doesn't."

Xxxx

"Whatever I tell you, you can't tell my dad right? We have like doctor patient confidentiality right?" Harry asked in his advice appointment.

"You could say so." McGonagall said worried. *What was going on?*

"I don't think I want to be an Auror like dad and my first dad," Harry said as if that was the biggest shame in the world.

"No?" McGonagall asked sympathetically. *Good because that was among the careers Sirius didn't want Harry having.*

"No," Harry said miserably biting his lips. "Dad will be disappointed."

Oh, my, she may not tell the contents of the talk but she would be having a word with Sirius, "I'm sure no matter what you do your father will be proud. Have you given a thought to what you want?"

Harry perked up a little, "Yes, you see. I know I'm good at Defense and I do like learning new spells and stuff but I actually enjoy it more when we dissect how they work in Arithmancy."

McGonagall knew that. She had Harry's grades and what all the teachers had said, and Vector had especially praised not only Harry's eagerness to understand the mechanics behind magic but his creativity in trying to improve it. So had Severus with his potions and Filius with his charm work. She herself had seen that, even if Harry was not at the top of her class he did like to understand why the transfiguration worked. She shuffled her papers and brought out those reports, "According to Professors Flitwick, Vector and Snape you have always shown an interest in creating new potions and spells."

Harry nodded, "I like potions too. I do intend to keep my studies in that maybe even get a mastery like Uncle Sev- er-Professor Snape but I like more the whole calculating how much of a swish you have to do for a spell to be perfect, how strong it has to be."

"Have you given a thought of working in the research of new spells?"

Harry shook his head.

"There is a whole Department in the Department of Mysteries dedicated to that," McGonagall took out the pamphlets, "For that you'll need preferably Charms, Transfiguration, Arithmancy, Potions and Ancient Runes. Basically all the base of our magical system. I see you don't have Runes but it's not a requirement, only a preference. I do advice you to do maybe an independent study of Ancient Runes. You can take your OWLs and NEWTs for that on a later date and if you are studying it they will take that into account."

"I didn't know you could do that," Harry said.

"You don't really think we have you chose what you will do for the rest of your life at thirteen do you? All electives have an option to be taken again after your OWLs and of course you can always learn anything by yourself and test at any point in your life. Like Hagrid is doing."

Harry seemed to perk up at that and was looking over the pamphlet eagerly. Not forgetting his earlier worries, McGonagall decided to throw a bone at him. "Before they had to go into hiding, that was exactly what your mother did."

"What?"

"You didn't know?"

Harry shook his head, "No, I knew she had worked at the Ministry."

"Yes, she did. As an Unspeakable, which would explain your father's and Uncle's lack of knowledge of what she did. But even though I may not know the details I do know that she worked in the Charms division of that department. She was quite talented Harry and no matter which path you chose she would have been proud. They all will. And between you and me maybe not being an Auror will be good for Sirius' heart," she winked.

Xx

"Have you talked to your dad?" Hermione asked in the common room.

Harry's eyes widened, "He'll hate me!"

"No he won't," she said matter of factly.

"You don't understand Hermione," Harry said desperately, "My dad is always going on about how my first dad was a great Auror. That's what he expects from me. He was one too and Tonks is one."

Hermione was about to comment when Neville entered the room shocked.

"Nev?" Harry asked worried as he and Hermione guided Neville to a chair.

"McGonagall-"

"What?" Hermione asked.

"She-she-" Neville stuttered lost and Hermione and Harry shared worried looks. "I can take Potions NEWT classes," he finally blurted.

"Sure you can," Harry said and Hermione winced.

"Neville, Professor Snape only takes students with an Outstanding," she said cautiously and Harry rolled his eyes.

"That's what I thought," Neville said, "but McGonagall said different."

"But Professor Snape-" Hermione said.

"Has two upper year classes," Harry cut her off. "He gives that speech to frighten us in studying but he won't deprive students that don't have Potions as the love of their life of being Aurors or any other career that requires potions. So he has two classes, one for students who got Outstandings, which in his eyes are the students who will be more interested in potions and one for those who got Exceeds

Expectations. Anyone with an Acceptable though, he refuses to accept. He says that NEWT level potions are too delicate for anyone who doesn't care enough to get even an EE. But it's best if you get an Outstanding. He loves to go on about how he is sacrificing his precious time on students who are beneath him in the other class and he frightens them into not telling the younger years about that class."

"Well, that's more reasonable than not accepting them. He could be nicer though," Hermione said.

"Uncle Sev doesn't understand how people could not love potions and don't want to spend every second of their life dedicated to them," Harry said knowingly.

Xxx

"Sirius," McGonagall said politely as she invited herself to his office and sat on a chair.

"Do come in," Sirius said from his desk. "Problems?"

"Yes, you do have them," she said evenly.

"Excuse me?" he raised his eyebrows.

"I had a very interesting career session with your son," McGonagall said.

"You did convince him to get a safe a desk job, didn't you?" he said firmly.

McGonagall winced; creating new spells wasn't all that safe. Lily had ended in St. Mungo's more than once but that wasn't the point here. "That's private between me and Harry," she said in a tone that dissuaded any argument on the matter, "Now, *you* need to reassure Harry that you don't want him to follow in his father's footsteps. That you will be proud even if he isn't a mini- James."

"Hey," Sirius cried offended. "I never made Harry think he has to be a mini-James. I am proud of him!"

"I know," McGonagall said raising an eyebrow, "But does he?"

Sirius opened his mouth but said nothing.

xxx

Sirius perused the bookcase once again and swore loudly. He grabbed his cloak and strode out of the Marauder's Quarters at a quick pace. He hated having to go to all this trouble for one lousy book. But it was a Black family's book that would not be found in the library and he needed it for his Seventh year's class.

Xxx

"What about this one?"

"I was riding my bike with some Muggle friends and the pedal had these spikes for a better grip. Except, with my gracefulness, I lost the grip in full speed and when the pedal turned it got my shin, spikes and all."

He kissed the spot on her shin where the scar was and moved upwards.

xxx

Sirius walked past the gates of the school and Apparated away.

Xxx

"And this one?" he asked stroking a spot in her shoulder with his finger.

"Oh, that one is special," she smiled. "I was seven and I was coming down the stairs and tripped and fell right on a wobbly chair that ended up breaking. One of the splinters got in my shoulder because I was wearing a tank top. This very nice boy- young man," she corrected making a face, "Magicked the splinter out and disinfected the wound. He put some gauze on it and then he gave me a chocolate frog from his never ending stash. Mind you, this was all while my cousin and his soon to be a father best friend were panicking; I felt so sorry for Harry then," she sighed and he chuckled, remembering the event. "Afterwards mum offered to close the wound but I wanted a reminder," she leaned forward and whispered in his ear, "I still have the wrapper and the card. Woe to whoever dares touch it."

He smiled and kissed her shoulder, working his way up her neck until he reached her mouth and she kissed back.

xx

Sirius appeared at Grimmauld Place and concentrated. The Black Manor appeared for him and he strode inside. He went straight to the library and started looking for his book. His head snapped up when he heard a thump.

He swiftly had his wand in hand and silently made his way upstairs. He heard muffled voices in the one of the bedrooms, but couldn't make them out. He kicked the door open and pointed his wand at... Remus and Tonks...Remus and Tonks on Remus' bed... Remus and Tonks on Remus' bed hastily trying to cover themselves... A very naked Remus and Tonks on Remus' bed hastily trying to cover themselves up.

"Oh hello Sirius. What brings you here?" Remus asked conversationally.

"I would ask the same, except I don't need to!" Sirius cried annoyed. "Weren't you *working* late?"

Remus looked at him and opened his mouth and then closed his mouth blushing. He stuttered, "Well- er- I- you see-"

"We were having hot sex, or more like in the process of having hot sex, until you so rudely interrupted us," Tonks said nonchalantly.

Sirius choked and spluttered, "What- you – my- no- little Nymphy!"

"Excuse me, you were the one who was constantly trying to get us together," Remus said defensively.

"But I didn't need to see or know!" Sirius moaned. He turned to them. "Now you have to get married!" and he stalked away.

"Excuse me, what?" Tonks shrieked outraged going after him and taking the blanket with her.

"Nymphadora!" Remus cried, trying to grab some of the blanket.

"What the hell are you going on about?" Tonks cried. "We are almost in the twenty-first century!"

"Don't care! Now I know! Now you have to get married!"

"So if you didn't know we didn't need to get married?"

"Exactly, ignorance is bliss and I wanted to remain ignorant!"

A/N- Thank you all for reading and reviewing.

Thanks SWaddict1986 for betraying.

Chapter 14- Wedding bells

Severus leaned back in his chair, interlocking his hands and resting the back of his head on them. He sighed happily. This had been one hell of a year but it was finally over. The last exam had just been held. The last OWL and NEWT had been taken, and he wondered how Harry had done. The boy had been a wreck of nerves. But Sirius and Severus had only seen him outside the testing areas. Parents of students taking OWLs or NEWTs couldn't be involved, so Sinistra took his overseeing duties. Pity, Severus had wanted to see Hagrid taking the exams.

He saw him exiting and it was a sight to see the half-giant comparing notes and answers with the other students. Next year he would continue his education to take his NEWTs. He wanted to have a Mastery in Magical Creatures. Personally, Severus thought no master knew more than Hagrid, but he understood the need to be able to say he was qualified for the job after Umbridge tore down on him for his 'under-qualifications.' Severus smirked; he would gladly take a trip to Azkaban to shove that piece of parchment on her face.

Slytherin had lost the Quidditch cup to Gryffindor, since their reserve Seeker wasn't that good. But they had scored a good second place with clean games. Every student had commented on how Slytherin was playing fair and Severus smiled. After Malfoy left, Severus had regained the reign of his students and they even managed to recuperate from Malfoy's loss of points getting the House Cup this year.

Severus sighed happily as the door to his office opened. He was so content he wasn't even going to berate the kamikaze that entered his office without invitation. His relaxed stance melted when he saw Sirius' grim face.

"What? No, I was happy!" he complained.

Sirius took a chair and dropped heavily on it.

"Tonks called. Goyle has been spotted."

"They caught him?" Severus asked shocked.

"No, by the time the Aurors got there he and whoever was with him was gone. They found some food, old Daily Prophets and beddings in an abandoned warehouse."

"So Malfoy was there too. Where?"

"London," Sirius said.

"Bold."

"Not far from Grimmauld Place," Sirius added.

"You think they were waiting to get Harry?"

"He has nothing more to lose. He may be bent on revenge," Sirius said worried.

"Grimmauld Place is still under a Fidelius Sirius. He can't find it," Severus stated.

"But he knows the general location. It's house arrest again and Harry won't be happy."

"He will understand," Severus said. "Don't tell him today. Let them party. I know the Weasley twins have a farewell party planned. I know I'm celebrating their graduation."

"Should he go to the Dursley's by portkey?" Sirius asked.

"He'll want to be on the train, it being the twins' last ride and all. Let him go, and we will apparate from inside King's Cross instead of outside. I'll go with you since this year Remus is working. Give Tuney my love."

"Sev!"

"What?" he asked innocently.

"No hexing the Muggles," Sirius said sternly.

"Of course not," Severus answered mildly. He gave Sirius a little unconvincing smile.

Xxx

"That was not funny Harry! Petunia is doing us a favor!" Sirius cried as Harry rolled on the bed laughing.

"Come on dad! And you call yourself a Marauder? Besides, she will never know!"

"People may tell her," Sirius said through gritted teeth.

Harry looked at him and burst out laughing again. After getting to King's Cross, Sirius and Severus had Apparated him to Privet Drive where Severus made sure to accompany them to their bedroom before he left. He had been overly polite and smiling. Petunia should have figured something was not right by that. When he left Petunia's hair was purple, that is for everyone else who looked but her, Dudley and Vernon. Severus assured them it would only last a couple of days, enough for the gossipers to see.

Sirius sighed deeply. Severus could hold a grudge and he hadn't forgiven Petunia for the nasty treatment from two years ago. Petunia had been better last year but this year she had been her usual charming self and when she saw Sirius and Severus there instead of Remus she threw a fit, which both of them had politely endured. Severus had explained that Remus had a new job and therefore wouldn't be available to stay with Harry for two weeks. Truthfully Remus could have come and just Apparated to the Ministry everyday, after all, knowing he would be back was enough to keep the Dursleys in line. But they didn't think the Dursleys would take to the idea of the neighbors asking where and how he went. She had huffed and stated that the conditions for their stay were the same as when Severus had been there. Apparently she didn't trust Sirius:

"Last year you were too busy with the boy to cause trouble. This year I don't see anything stopping you."

Sirius hoped Petunia did not figure the whole purple hair thing. She would certainly blame him.

Xxx

About a week later Narcissa Malfoy strode the halls of Hogwarts. When she did not find who she was looking for she went towards the dungeon and knocked at a door.

"Come in."

She entered and was greeted by a raised eyebrow.

"Narcissa, what brings you here?" Severus asked.

"I've been looking for my cousin. He was not at his office and I don't know how to find him during the summer."

"Did you try owling him?"

"I do not want to discuss this business by owl," she said indignantly.

Severus regarded her and nodded. He summoned a chair and invited her to sit. She did so stiffly.

"Sirius is away with Harry but I have means of contacting him. Shall I tell him you wish to meet with him?"

"Yes please."

"Will you accept his proposition?"

"He told you," she hissed.

Severus shook his head, "No, he merely said he had an option for Draco and if you accepted, he asked Dumbledore to accept him back. How is he?"

"How do you think he is?" she asked him haughtily. "He had to take his OWLs at the Ministry like some dropout. The shame that brought him."

"He brought that shame upon himself," Severus pointed out. "I gave him many more chances than other teachers would. The mere fact that he hasn't been expelled yet proves that."

"Well, tell Sirius I accept and for him to come see me," she sniffed proudly. With that she got up and turned away stalking out, her nose high in the air. Severus shook his head and took the two-way mirror from his drawer.

"Sirius," he called.

"Hello," a happy voice answered.

"You're not Sirius."

"No, I'm much cuter."

"Give me that," Severus heard Sirius saying and Harry's face disappeared. "No he's not," Sirius said and asked. "Was' up?"

"Narcissa came looking for you. She says she accepts. What exactly is she accepting?"

"Did she tell you if she wants to see me?"

"Yes, she does. So, what are you doing?"

"I'll tell you later," and with that Sirius was gone and Severus huffed slapping his hand on the desk.

"Idiot!"

Xxx

Sirius entered Malfoy Manor in full Lord garb. He was once again wearing his formal robes and his velvet black cloak with the Black Family's crest and carrying his cane. Sirius had left Harry at the Dursley's with orders not to go out. He could have asked Narcissa to do this at the end of the week but he did not want to give her time to change her mind.

"At least you remember how to dress yourself," Narcissa noted dryly.

Sirius rolled his eyes and answered, "I may not like the pureblood costumes but I do know them 'Cissy. Shall we go to the Ministry and fill out the forms?" he asked opening his arm and motioning to the door with a small bow.

She nodded, but before they left she turned to Sirius, "I am doing this for Draco."

"I know," Sirius said softly.

They both Apparated to the Ministry where Narcissa filled out the necessary forms to renounce Lucius as Head of the Malfoy family due to illegal activity. This meant that when he turned seventeen Draco would be the Head, but until then he would have to answer to the Head of his mother's family, Sirius. If Narcissa didn't have a Head of her family she would have become temporary Head, as what happened with Mrs. Nott when she did the same to her husband.

As Head of the Black family Sirius had to be present to support Narcissa's claim and reinstate her protection by the Black family. He was basically responsible for them now. Of course, with the Malfoys that was a mere formality since they would not need any financial support, but what Sirius was interested in was in the power to discipline Draco.

After filing everything, Narcissa and Sirius went back to Malfoy Manor where Narcissa summoned Draco. Sirius began to pace while waiting in the drawing room. As Narcissa and Draco entered, Sirius stood tall and watched his new charge who also stood tall in front of him staring him squarely and quite haughtily in the eye.

"I expect your mother explained what has happened with you," Sirius said and Draco nodded. Sirius was a little disconcerted at the lack of any angry outbursts.

"Professor Dumbledore accepted you back at Hogwarts under the condition that I am responsible for you. You shall answer to me. You are still under probation and any misconduct in your part will result in immediate expulsion Draco. It should have been so last term but as a favor to *me* Dumbledore granted you this chance. I will not tolerate any disrespect from you towards your teachers, your Head of House or your peers. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes sir."

"I will use the same rules I have for my son."

Draco snorted and Sirius was glad to see some reaction, "Despite what you may think I do discipline Harry. You may have noticed he was grounded for fighting after the match. Depending on your misconduct, your punishment may vary from loss of Hogsmeade privileges to losing your allowance or your broom. I will never strike you. I think you are too old for a mild spanking and I never hit a child. I am not doing this to punish you Draco; I am doing this because if you follow on the avenue you are going you will be very hurt once you enter the real world. The Malfoy name does not hold as much prestige as it once held thanks to your father, and if you are banking on it to counteract your attitude you will fall hard."

Sirius looked at Draco carefully. Apart from the snort Draco had held a mask of indifference throughout the whole speech and Sirius was worried about this compliance.

"Will you want to come back to Hogwarts or do you wish to be home schooled?" Sirius asked.

"You are giving me a choice?" Draco asked.

Sirius nodded, "I think you are old enough to choose."

Draco stared at him firmly and answered, "Hogwarts."

"Then I expect you to see me on the first of September," Sirius said and nodded his goodbyes.

Xxx

"Are you out of your mind?"

"Respect your father," Sirius said sternly. "I had my reasons to do so." He finished as he sat back against the single chair in the bedroom back at the Dursley's. He had gone back to Grimmauld Place to change since he knew the fit he would encounter had he come back in his Lord garb.

"So what? Is he like my brother now?" Harry asked mutinously from the bed.

"No," Sirius said. "You don't need to interact with him at all but he does need to answer to me as Head of the Family. At least until he turns seventeen."

"You're nuts. Life was a lot easier with him gone," Harry said and Sirius sighed.

"Harry," Sirius said slowly. "The only thing that kept me from being just like Draco was your father and Moony. I want to give him a chance to change before he realizes it's too late like Regulus."

Harry deflated; he understood this was Sirius' way of doing things right by his brother that he couldn't save. But Harry knew Malfoy was no Regulus or Sirius. He was just like his father. Lucius Malfoy was cruel and Draco had reveled in what was happening to Muggleborns during their second year. Sirius didn't hear him gloating to Crabbe and Goyle, Harry had. Sirius would never do that, no matter how spoiled he was. It is one thing to think you're better than others, another is delight on their suffering, torture and death.

"Fine, but I don't trust him."

Xxx

After the mandatory two weeks at the Dursley's passed Harry and Sirius went back to Grimmauld Place, Sirius inwardly rejoicing the fact that Petunia never figured out why the neighbors had been whispering behind her back and giving her odd looks. He had admitted that seeing her miffed and trying even harder to be the perfect, normal role model to see if the gossip stopped had been fun. Charlie's wedding was approaching and Sirius had gone out to get all of them new dress robes. Harry had protested at not being allowed to go personally but Sirius had none of it. He did promise that if nothing happened, when Harry's Hogwarts letter arrived they could go to Diagon Alley, as long as he was escorted.

Being cooped up at Grimmauld Place and having no homework because he had just sat his OWLs, Harry had started finding other forms of amusement. In one of those stints of boredom that makes people

think the stupidest things, Harry approached Remus and sat himself seriously in front of his Uncle at the kitchen table.

"Mr. Lupin," he started formally. "Father has informed me about the workings of our wizarding system. Being the heir to the title of Head of the Black family I will someday be responsible for our fair maiden Nymphadora." Remus nodded seriously and hid his twitching lips behind his hand that was propped up by his elbow on the table. "As such, I must ask your intentions towards her and of course let you know you will be under my ruling."

"I see," Remus said evenly. "I do foresee a little catch there though sir."

"What?" Harry asked.

"Well, if I marry Nymphadora, she will become a Lupin, to which I am Head, and since I magically adopted you, you became my heir, meaning that as my wife, until you are of age, she will be responsible for you."

Harry scowled and huffed. He slumped his face on his hand and shook his head, "When I think I have something over someone! This happens!"

"There is also the fact that even though the Tonks' aren't an old wizarding family, or have any title of nobility, Ted is still the Head."

"Uncle Moony! No need to rub salt on the wound!"

Xxx

The day of Charlie's wedding had arrived and the Burrow was unrecognizable. Harry felt like he was back at the World Cup with the amount of foreign languages being spoken. All of Charlie and Natasha's friends from the Dragon Colony had come and so had all of Natasha's family from Russia.

"Arry!" Harry had heard as soon as he had arrived, and he and Sirius had been assaulted by a very excited Fleur Delacour who apparently was still grateful for them saving little Gabrielle and was at the wedding as Bill's date.

As Ron approached their party to show them to their seats he eyed Severus warily, pushing Harry to the side he whispered in his ears.

"I didn't know he owned anything that wasn't black."

Harry looked at his Uncle who was sitting next to Andromeda and Ted in his dark green robes and snickered.

"Dad bought everyone new robes. Including Uncle Sev. He had no choice because Grandpa hid all his old dress robes. He was not a happy man I tell you."

Ron's respect for Sirius and Dumbledore rose to new levels and he shot glance to where Dumbledore was speaking with Mr. Weasley. You had to be either very brave or very foolish to do that to Severus Snape.

Harry sat down next to his family and they were soon joined by Neville and Mrs. Longbottom. A little while later Hermione came hurriedly from inside and told Ron to get to the front where the rest of his

family would be because the bride was ready. Harry smirked inwardly as he noticed that Ron kept shooting back glances at Hermione, who Harry had to admit was very pretty in her pale yellow dress robes.

For the first time Harry looked at the aisle and saw Charlie there looking very nervous. The music started and from inside the house Harry saw Tonks and Ginny coming out. He had the shock of his life when he saw them. Ginny was dressed in a light blue robe that was identical to Tonks', but honestly Harry did not notice that. She had her hair held back in a ponytail by flowers and some strands were loose, forming curls. She had some very light make up on and Harry thought to himself when the hell Ginny had started wearing makeup. That wasn't the only thing Harry had been wondering when it happened as his gaze went definitely downwards from Ginny's face. He never saw the smirk in Tonks' face when she passed by and noticed Harry's open mouth.

Harry could not tell what happened after that, how the bride entered, what the minister said, what the bride and groom said; he had been in this very weird place where all he could see was Ginny and wonder where she had been all this time, this was definitely not the Ginny he had known for so many years.

Xxxx

"Oh, no, we broke up last year and decided just to be friends. Long distance relationships don't work all that well and..." Hermione said as she eyed Ron who was talking to one of the twins in whispers. "Well, Viktor and I are still friends and we correspond. But I'm not going to Bulgaria this year. Mum and Dad are taking me to Italy and afterwards when I come back I'll be ready to work, Mrs. Tonks. Don't worry."

"Oh, I never worry about you Hermione," Andromeda laughed. She, Ted, Sirius, Harry and Hermione had been sitting at one of the tables talking for a while now. Or Andromeda, Ted and Hermione had been talking because neither Sirius nor Harry had been very talkative. Harry had been staring shamelessly as Ginny danced with one member of her family after another and Sirius had also been staring at someone, with a scowl and drinking firewhisky. Andromeda had been tempted to tell him not to worry because she doubted that Dumbledore dancing with Hestia was very threatening, but she had already heard from her daughter who heard from Remus that Sirius had been quite oblivious to the happenings of his own heart as of late.

"Is that Percy Weasley?" Ted asked pointing to Percy who was standing quite peacefully near his father with a huge sign hovering over his head saying, "I am a dork!"

"Yes," Hermione snickered.

"Hasn't he noticed?"

"Oh he has," she said. "Because of his pay cut Percy wasn't able to afford the flat he had in London any more and of course Mr. Weasley heard that he had been sleeping on the couch at a friend's house and told Percy he could come home. Didn't even ask for an apology. Percy accepted and apologized on his own. Said that after having to deal with so many cases of Muggle-baiting with charmed Muggle objects

he understood why his father thought his job was important. Of course, Mr. and Mrs. Weasley said it was water under the bridge and forgave and forgot, but the twins, Ron and Ginny aren't so forgiving. A day doesn't go by without them pranking Percy. Today they went mild because of the wedding. But they are getting frustrated because instead of reacting to the pranks, Percy just bears them as just punishment for what he did. The twins have been complaining that the pranks lose their fun if he just bears them."

"I passed by their store the other day and it's always crowded," Andromeda said.

"Oh yes, they are a huge success. They are even living in a flat above of their store because they have been working so much. Mrs. Weasley isn't even complaining any more."

Xxx

Remus twirled around with Tonks and she laughed, "I love weddings."

Remus smiled at her and, shooting a glance at where Natasha and Charlie had been dancing completely absorbed in each other, he said:

"Why don't we have one of our own then?"

Tonks looked at him skeptically and chuckled, "Remus, just because Sirius said-"

"I don't care what Sirius said. I want you for the rest of my life," he told her staring into her eyes. They stopped dancing and she asked shocked:

"Really?"

"Really."

"Yes!" she cried happily hugging and kissing him.

He kissed her back encasing her head in his hands and when he pulled back he asked, "Are you sure you don't need time to think? I mean, marrying me you marry Padfoot, Harry and Severus too."

"Like I didn't know that," she rolled her eyes smiling. "There are worse families to marry into."

Remus smile could split his face. She continued, "We could live at Grimmauld Place so this way we can have some privacy but still kind of live together since the others come by on the holidays, and when Harry graduates he will come live with us-"

"Unless he goes to Auror school."

"Hum- yeah," Tonks said vaguely, "unless- though that was a no-no pamphlet, so really what are the chances? Anyway, as I was saying, he can come live with us until he decides to get married with Ginny-"

"Ginny?" Remus barked a laugh. "Where did you come up with that insane idea?"

"Oh, the idea is not that insane," Tonks said shooting a glance to where Harry was shamelessly ogling Ginny. "So when do we do it?"

"I'm thinking next summer. I always liked summer weddings-"

"Next summer! And wait for all that time?" she pouted.

Remus looked at her pout fondly, "Do you really want to deprive your mother of planning the perfect wedding for her only daughter?"

"Humph," Tonks huffed pouting, "No."

"See?"

Tons nodded reluctantly, "Yeah, well, this way Siri has time to adjust to change too," she said looking at her cousin and frowning, "That isn't his first glass."

"Nope," Remus said worried, "It's not his third either. I lost count after the fifth glass."

"Is he glaring at Dumbledore?"

"Yes."

"Oh my."

Xxx

Severus handed the lady a glass, "You looked thirsty," he said politely.

She accepted the glass with a polite nod and as he sat down next to her she eyed him calculatingly. "I didn't expect to see you at such frivolous occasion."

"I attend parties," Severus said defensively.

Emmeline Vance played with the straw of her drink and said, "I never said you didn't. I merely stated you don't strike me as the party type."

"Well, I am," he lied smoothly. "And I just came here to point out that your fellow Ravenclaw, whose fines you boasted about, is currently in the way of getting drunk."

Emmeline eyed Hestia who by now was chatting happily with a crowd of people and had another drink in her hand and stared back at Severus.

"She doesn't usually let herself go but when she does there is no stopping her," Emmeline said evenly. She eyed Severus and said in a calculating tone, "I heard at the last PWA meeting that Italy and France are interested in the Permanent Wolfsbane."

"Yes, Albus has told me. I will have to enhance the amount I brew."

"You'll need help."

"Probably."

"I'm not a bad brewer," she said offhandedly.

"I know."

"How?" she asked suspiciously and he smirked.

"When I assumed Slughorn's post I checked how his students' scores were for several years. You were just a couple of years behind me which means you were among the students I checked. If I recall, you had Outstandings on both OWL and NEWT levels."

"And you remember?" she asked impressed.

"You make an impression," and so she did. Severus had been so impressed by her sneer at the Leaky Cauldron that he went back to those scores to make sure he knew them. He had also very subtly asked Hestia about her since he knew they had been school friends. "Are you interested in assisting me?"

"Yes," she said. "I took my masteries in Potions, as you most obviously know by now, and work with research at St. Mungo's. To know how to brew this potion is a dream for a researcher."

Severus pruned at the compliment.

"I would be privileged to have you help me."

"Of course you would," she smirked.

Xxx

Hours later, at a more secluded area of the Weasley's back yard. A man and a woman had their faces inches apart.

"I did nothing of the sort!" she growled.

"You danced with every man in this party! That is not appropriate behavior for a teacher!" he slurred.

"I did not!"

"Did too!"

"Did not!"

"Did too!"

"Did not!" she yelled coming closer to his face. "You know, your lips are very yummy looking," she said drunkenly.

"Yours too," he said.

Suddenly all talk ceased as they grabbed each other in a fervent kiss. Coming out of the kiss breathlessly she said, "You're still a Casanova."

"Okay," and he kissed her again. "Just for the record, I think this is public."

"Who cares?" she said as she grabbed him again. Nothing else mattered to the two and they never noticed when later a teenage boy passed by them and stumbled away in shock.

A/N- Thanks to SWaddict1986 for betraying. Thank you all for reading and reviewing.

Chapter 14- Wedding Bells

"Okay," and he kissed her again. "Just for the record, I think this is public."

"Who cares," she said as she grabbed him again. Nothing else mattered to the two and they never noticed when later a teenage boy passed through them and stumbled away in shock.

Chapter 15- The morning after

Rays of sun came through the window and Sirius groaned as his head pounded. He tried to pull his pillow over his head but there was something heavy preventing that move. He grabbed harder and his eyes shot open when his hand touched flesh. He cautiously moved his head and jumped when he saw her lying next to him. He looked around dazed as he did not remember getting back to his room; he did not remember getting back to Grimmauld Place at all. He peered under the covers and quickly covered himself again in shock. A groan from beside him caught his attention.

"Oh, my head!" Hestia said as she rubbed her head. "Where am I?" she looked around and jumped as she saw Sirius. "What are you doing here?" she demanded. "Am I naked?"

"Yes, and I live here."

"What?" she asked and looking around, her eyes widened as she saw the room, the clothes strewn around, the picture of Sirius, Harry, Severus and Remus on the nightstand. She turned to him and said, "What did you do? You hexed me!" she accused.

"Hey! If someone was hexed that was me! I have no recollection of what happened! You obviously Obliviated me and took advantage of my fit body!" he cried outraged.

"Hardly!" she cried as she got out of the bed taking the covers with her.

"Hey! Bring those back!" Sirius yelled as he frantically tried to grab the covers.

She hastily grabbed her clothes from the floor and ran into the bathroom, "You will pay for this Sirius Black!" she yelled as she slammed the door shut.

Angry Sirius got up and yelled, "No you will!"

The door of the bedroom suddenly opened and Remus poked his head in, "Why are you shouting?"

"Moony! Where were you? Why didn't you save me?" Sirius asked desperately.

"From what?" Remus asked calmly, too calm for Sirius' taste.

"From her!" Sirius cried and pointed at the bathroom door that opened at that moment to reveal a dressed Hestia.

"Yes, good question, why didn't you save me from him?" she demanded crossing her arms.

"I didn't think there was any saving needed to be done," Remus answered calmly rocking on the balls of his feet.

"He took advantage of me and dragged me to his bed!"

"She took advantage of me and dragged me to my bed!" They both yelled in unison.

"First of all," Remus said calmly to the fuming pair, "from what Harry, who is quite traumatized by the way, told me, you were both very much active participants of the making out session you had at the Burrow. But nothing more than that happened. You see, you were both highly drunk and it wasn't long before I found both of you slumped on the ground snoring on top of each other. And I brought you here," he finished flatly.

"But- we were naked," Sirius spluttered and Remus scoffed:

"Hardly, the spell I used removed only the robes, the underwear stayed."

"Excuse me?" Hestia asked angrily. "Why would you put me in the same bed as him and take off my clothes?"

"I did not take off your clothes like that!" Remus defended himself blushing. "I covered you both and then magically removed the clothes. I am a gentlemen and did not see you naked."

"That didn't answer her question!" Sirius growled crossing his arms.

"Oh, Dora and I thought it would be funny." Remus smiled innocently.

"What?" Sirius asked "Why?"

"Didn't I just say?" he asked and repeated slowly, "Dora and I thought it would be fu-nny."

"You what?" Hestia spluttered.

"I could have just left you on the Weasley's lawn to be found by Molly in an undignified drunken hip if you would have preferred," Remus shrugged.

"Well, er," Hestia fumbled with her shoes as she put them on, "Er, I normally don't drink like that see. I couldn't be held responsible for my actions- understandably I did things that were- er -debatable."

"Excuse me? Making out with me is not debatable!" Sirius shrieked indignantly.

"Well, thank you Remus for preventing someone else finding me in less than desirable company, see you," Hestia said as she scuttled away, her cheeks tinged of red.

"Bye, bye," Remus waved while Sirius spluttered and pointed.

"She- she-"

"You do know you are wearing only boxers," Remus called out when Sirius had stalked out of the room after Hestia. Seconds later, a scowling Sirius returned and glared at him.

"Stop laughing Moony!"

Xxxx

Harry watched as the front door closed and turned back to his breakfast. He eyed Tonks and asked:

"If Professor Jones doesn't like dad why would she kiss him like that?"

"Who said she didn't like him?"

"Were you eavesdropping on the same conversation I was?" Harry asked pointedly waving the extendable ears that had been on the table and then put them away.

Tonks smirked, "You see Harry, Hestia has never liked men that were- how can I say- think they are Merlin's gift to humanity."

"That's dad," Harry nodded.

"But, although Sirius is like that, he does have his qualities, but Hestia could never admit that after she so vehemently said she would never date someone like him. I've known her since I started Auror training and I believe me, she has always put men that come on to her like that down. And she always said she would never date someone like that. As a matter of fact most of her boyfriends have been the opposite of Sirius. They were responsible, very courteous men. But I believe that Professor Jones may just have a slight crush on the epitome of what she considers the bane of her existence and she is in quite a pickle."

"Women, you make no sense," Harry snorted. Tonks just burst out laughing.

Not long after that a smiling Remus came to the kitchen followed by a scowling Sirius. Remus sat next to Tonks and kissed her as Sirius dropped dejectedly next to Harry. Harry handed Sirius a piece of parchment.

"What's this?"

"The therapist estimate of how much it will cost to un-traumatize me. Really dad, there are things I just don't need to know you do very much less see!" Harry cried dramatically. Sirius' eyes widened and he grabbed Harry's head and held it close to his chest, covering Harry's eyes.

"What? What did you see? Where's the therapist address? Let's go now!" he said standing up and dragging Harry.

"Dad! I was kidding!" Harry tried to reason.

"But Harry! You're just a baby! I shouldn't have- I really don't know what got into me. We have to discuss this, professional help can be useful. I don't want you to think that is appropriate behavior."

Seeing from the broken tone that Sirius was not acting and that he really was uncomfortable with having broken his golden rule of never dating where Harry could catch him, Harry stopped the teasing.

"Dad, it's okay. I'm not baby anymore and I don't mind if you date Professor Jones."

"I am not dating that-that- *woman*! She drugged me!" Sirius defended himself.

"I think he got drunk all by himself," Remus whispered to Tonks, who snorted and covered it with a cough lest Sirius notice.

"Okay dad," Harry said soothingly rubbing Sirius' back. "Why don't we sit and have breakfast? I believe Uncle Moony and Tonks have news for us," he finished, helping Sirius sit on the chair.

"What?" Sirius asked dazed.

Tonks held her hand in front of Sirius and he just stared.

"Dad- don't you see anything new?"

"No," Sirius asked and Remus banged his head on the table.

"Don't you see anything you helped me pick up?" Remus asked slowly.

"Yeah, she's wearing the ring you dragged me all over London for days to find."

"You really did think this through," Tonks said gushing as she kissed Remus.

"Yeah, I- er- had this whole dinner planed but then the moment just felt right and- er- I didn't have the ring with me so I just gave it to you later," Remus blushed.

"When did he ask her?" Sirius asked.

"At the wedding," Harry said happily.

"MOONY! That's cheesy!" Sirius moaned flapping his arms in a defeated manner. "You had booked London's finest restaurant and you ask her at someone else's wedding without the ring?"

"Hey, you all knew?" Tonks asked.

"Of course we did," Harry waved dismissively at her. "Who do you think gave him the idea to go to a Wizarding restaurant where the Weird Sisters played once a month to ask you on the day they played? Now that's all for nothing!"

"We can still go," Tonks said throwing her arms around Remus, "Besides, I loved the way you asked me."

"Still," Sirius sighed. "All that planning. And that compulsion potion Severus suggested to make sure she agreed. All wasted."

"I wasn't going to use the potion Sirius," Remus glared at him and Sirius shrugged.

"So, you two are fine with this?" she asked.

"Tonks," Sirius whined. "This is what my master plan was aiming all along!"

Harry nodded.

"Don't flatter yourself, you had nothing to do with this Sirius Black!" she said shaking a finger at him.

"As if," Sirius snorted.

Xxxx

"And I think Harry should enter bringing the rings, that would be just adorable," Andromeda said to the tired couple in the kitchen of the Tonks' house.

"Hum, honey, I believe Harry is a little old for that," Ted chuckled.

"Oh," Andromeda's face fell and she started looking at the huge planner she had taken after Remus and Tonks had announced their engagement three hours ago. Apparently Tonks' wedding had been almost completely planned for ages. Though by Tonks' looks a lot of things in that planner would be discarded.

"Where can we find a cute kid to borrow?" Andromeda wondered and Tonks rolled her eyes.

"Remus, why don't we leave the ladies at this and you and me go for a walk in the back yard?" Ted asked and Remus sat straighter, his eyes wide.

"Er, hum, okay," he said feeling like a teenager.

After leaving the two women to discuss why Tonks would not be wearing her normal hair color that day, thank you very much, Ted accompanied Remus outside.

"Dora is my most precious gift Remus."

"I know," Remus nodded as they paced the back yard.

"I won't lie to you. I come from Muggle upbringing and even having been in the wizarding world for so long sometimes the fact that we live longer escapes my grasp and I had imagined someone younger for my baby."

"I know Ted, that's why I had reserves about dating Dora-"

"Do you love her?" Ted cut Remus off by turning around and staring him straight in the eyes.

Remus nodded firmly, "Yes, like I never thought I would love someone."

Ted nodded seriously, "I owe your mother the very fact that Dora is here Remus, but that does not mean that I will repay that debt with her happiness. If you ever hurt her, debt or no debt I will hurt you."

"I know and you won't have to," Remus said firmly.

"Good," Ted beamed and clapped Remus' arms. "With the cliché warning out of the way I can welcome you as my future son-in-law. At least I know she chose a good man with whom I can hold a conversation. Her last boyfriend before you ..." Ted shuddered. "Best leave him alone"

Xxx

Harry eyed the letter in front of him with distrust. He of course had already received a squealing phone call from Hermione and more sedated floo calls from Ron and Neville informing him of the contents of their letters and asking if they could meet in Diagon Alley to buy their school things. Harry didn't know if his dad, who had still been slumbering, would let him go. Since the owl had left, Harry had been seated at the kitchen table glaring at the closed envelope, sometimes receiving sympathetic looks from Twinky. Remus had been observing this rather strange behavior in his opinion from the stairs for quite a while and was loathing having to go out for work before Harry managed to gather the courage to open the envelope but there was nothing he could do. He was already incredibly late and could not wait any longer. He went upstairs, woke up Sirius and told him to go straight to the kitchen with no more explanation than that.

He passed through the kitchen door once more and sighed as Harry had yet to move. He hoped Harry did soon because he knew Severus would be Flooing soon to know the results and he had a slight suspicion that Harry needed to talk to Sirius before that happened.

When Sirius came down Harry was still in the same position. Sirius sat down, grabbed his coffee and started drinking.

"Did that envelope insult you?"

"Maybe." Harry answered.

Sirius peered over the envelope, "Ministry seal. Oh," he said knowingly. "Dawdling won't change the results."

Harry bit his lips and shot a quick worried glance at Sirius who did not miss it. He inhaled deeply and opened the envelope quickly. He scanned the parchment and sighed in relief; he scanned the other parchment and bit his lips. Sirius plucked the first parchment from Harry and beamed.

"Well done son. Exceeds Expectations in most subjects, and Outstandings, in DADA, Potions, History and Arithmancy. Must be the History teacher."

"The History teacher was responsible for my good grade in Arithmancy?" Harry asked.

"Of course," Sirius scoffed and looked at the other parchment. "What's that?"

Harry bit his lips, "I have to choose my courses."

Sirius looked at him cautiously and said, "Well, you did discuss with Minerva your options. My advice is keep your options open, I know you can't take everything but don't just take what will let you have only one career." There was the biting of his lip again, "No matter what you choose Harry, I will be proud." he said seriously.

"You were an Auror."

"Yes."

"So was my first dad."

Sirius nodded and looked at Harry. "I know I tell you all these stories about James Harry, and sometimes I comment on how you are alike but that's because I knew him and you didn't. When I tell you that you are like him with something it's because that way you can have a better grasp of how he was, not because I want you to be like him." He smiled and walked around the table sitting next to Harry and turning Harry's chair around so that their knees touched. "I love you son. You are much more than some part of James to me. Yes I love the parts of James and Lily that you give me back, but I also love the parts that you get from me, from Moony and even some things you caught from Sev. But most importantly I love the Harry parts, the ones that are you unique to you and that come from that mixture of persons and your experiences. I love you Harry and I want you to be happy ...and safe," he added as an afterthought.

Harry bit his lips, "I kind of wanted to take Arithmancy, DADA, Charms, Transfiguration, Potions and start Runes," he said quickly. "I like working out how spells work and Aunt Minerva said there is a department that works with that."

"Yes, there is," Sirius said, *and that was one of the no-no pamphlets. Didn't Minerva see Lily after one of her accidents?* he thought. "If that is what you want I will support you," *and have a calming draught and the emergency floo number at hand.*

"Really?" Harry asked hopefully.

"Of course," Sirius smiled kindly. "But I would like if you could keep History. I mean , my own son dropping me. Besides, you have to know History to know what has been done."

"I'll try dad," Harry hugged Sirius fiercely and grabbed the parchment and ran to his room.

"Congratulations," came a silky voice from behind.

"Severus!" Don't scare me like that.

Severus entered calmly and sat down, "I have to confess I was worried about how you would handle Harry's issues about not being James."

"And how do you handle him not being Lily?"

"Just as you said, even if what attracted me to him was her in him now I love the whole Harry. But the issue with James is stronger since he looks so much like James," Severus said calmly as he sat down.

Xxx

"I thought your dad wouldn't let you come like in third year," Hermione said as the group walked towards Flourish & Blotts. Harry had met with Neville, Ron, Hermione, Ginny and her friend Luna at the Ice Cream shop a few moments earlier.

Harry glanced at an old lady that was shopping near by, "Yeah, he was persuaded to let me come. Even dad can't be that neurotic- Ouch!" Harry rubbed his head and glared at an empty space behind him.

"You okay?" Neville asked staring at him oddly.

"Yeah," Harry mumbled as they entered the shop.

Shopping for their school things had gone quite peacefully, even when they encountered Narcissa and Draco Malfoy at Madam Malkin's. The Malfoys had been extremely polite to all of them and Harry couldn't shake the feeling of unnaturalness of Malfoy not trying to provoke him or insulting Hermione. That was just not right! After Madam Malkin's, they went to see the Joke shop Fred and George had opened and Hermione looked at him oddly when he paid a lot more than for what he had taken. Fred and George on the other hand had not missed their products vanishing into thin air. They had tried to refuse Harry's money but Harry had quickly mumbled that he and Cedric were silent partners and if they didn't let Harry pay word could get to Mrs. Weasley, and even though she had apparently been mollified with the twins' success Harry would rather she not know where they got their starting money.

Everything was going quite wonderfully and Harry was quite ready to tell his dad "told you so" when they got home, when on their way back to the Leaky Cauldron Harry felt someone grab his collar and pull him backwards into an alley. The hard feeling against his neck told him there was a wand digging into his flesh.

xxx

A/N- Thanks for reading and reviewing.

Thanks SWaddict1986 for betraying.

Chapter 16- You can't hold me forever

Sirius had almost completely relaxed as the kids' trip was nearing the end and nothing happened. He quietly patted the shrunken products he had in his pocket and that would be used to exert some revenge on a certain engaged couple for their little "fun" at his expense and Hestia's, when suddenly Harry was pulled into an alley.

Harry had been hanging back in thought, and if Sirius was right quite a little admiration of a certain young lady, so the other teens did not notice. A quick glance backwards and an old lady missing told Sirius that he wasn't the only one to notice. He quickly drew his wand and ran to the alley. There he found a cloaked figure pulling a struggling Harry.

"Stop the fidgeting brat or I will hex you!" Lucius Malfoy's voice came into a hiss as another figure approached him and Sirius recognized Goyle Sr.

"Stun him!" Goyle said.

"No, I want him awake," Malfoy said with an almost gleeful tone to his voice and Sirius shuddered to think what he had planned. Sirius could see that Malfoy's wand was digging into Harry's neck and knew he had to take Malfoy out at once or any hex he cast could be disastrous to Harry. He proudly realized that Harry knew this too, as even though Harry was struggling against the grip he had not tried infuriating Malfoy with words or tried to get his wand that was in his holster. Sirius had an advantage and he planned to use it. As quietly as possible, he approached the trio and readily stunned Malfoy when he had a perfect aim.

Lucius Malfoy slumped to the floor and Goyle Sr., who apparently had more brains than his son, quickly sent a hex his way.

"Who's there? Show yourself?" he cried as he reached to grab Harry but Harry had been faster and had dived away as soon as Malfoy slumped. Harry had his wand in hand when Tonks fired a hex at Goyle from the corner of the street behind him but he ducked and fell over the stunned Malfoy. Sirius pulled away the Invisibility Cloak and the two Wizards and witch were closing on Goyle and Malfoy.

"Surrender Goyle," Tonks said. "It will look better for you."

"So what? Instead of the kiss I get life with the Dementors?" he growled.

"Changes are being made. The new Minister is against Dementors in Azkaban. She will take them from the prison soon," Sirius tried to reason while shooting significant looks at Harry to back away. No such luck; even though he hadn't cast anything yet, Harry had his very much underage wand hand trained on Goyle.

Goyle's grip on his wand tightened and he growled, "I'd rather not chance it." He moved suddenly and both Sirius and Tonks shot hexes but he and Malfoy vanished into thin air. Running to where they were, they met nothing.

"Portkey," Tonks mumbled. "That's what Goyle took from his pocket."

"Why didn't they use it to take me away then?" Harry asked.

"The Portkey was probably keyed only to their magical signatures so they wouldn't bring any unwanted company with them. I guess they learned from you taking Cedric with you," she said grimly. "I have to secure the area and call this in."

Sirius nodded as she started chanting around the area and pulled Harry with him back to the main road.

The other teens had by now noticed Harry's absence and were running towards them.

"We'll explain later. Now I'm taking everyone home," Sirius said firmly and gave Harry a look that promised some punishment for not backing away.

Xxxx

"So your father and Tonks had been there the whole time?" Hermione asked. "We never noticed."

"Yeah, Tonks was the old lady who was following us," Harry grumbled. "And afterwards dad grounded me! Can you believe that?"

Ron and Neville nodded sympathetically but Hermione huffed, "Well, what did you expect? He was trying to protect you and instead of backing away to safety and let him only have to worry about Malfoy and Goyle, you jumped right in the middle of the fight."

"They were outnumbered!" Harry protested. "He trained me himself, he should have more faith in me."

"Yet, they still managed to escape didn't they? He trained you because he didn't want you defenseless not because he wanted you to fight. No parent wants that," Hermione said knowingly raising an eyebrow. Harry just huffed louder in that way people do when they know they lost the argument.

Sirius had forbidden Harry of riding the train again as punishment, and secretly as a security measure. After all, what else could he do since Harry was already under house arrest? Harry had only met his friends at the Welcoming feast and afterwards they had retreated to the Gryffindor Common Room to talk. At least he had some time to talk to Hagrid before the feast and explain that he had to drop Care of Magical Creatures because of his schedule. Hagrid had been upset but was thankful that Harry explained his reasoning. Harry reminded him that Neville was still keeping the class. Neville wanted to work with Herbology and said that understanding all living creatures and how they affected their environment was very important to a Herbologist.

"Well, at least he didn't take away your broom privileges," Ron said.

"Only because I was made Captain and he doesn't want to lose the Cup. By the way we have to have a meeting with the team members. We already have Ginny for sure and Ritchie Coote and Jimmy Peakes for Beaters who Fred and George trained, but we still need another Chaser.

"So, you will have try outs only for one position?" Ron asked.

"No, I'll have try outs for all because I want reserves, but I'm not changing the ones that already work together well," Harry said.

"That is wise," Neville said. "You don't change a winning team."

Xxx

"Come again?" Harry asked bewildered.

"You heard me," Severus said annoyed.

"But you never cared before," Harry interjected.

"Well, I do now," Severus huffed and crossed his arms. Harry sighed and ran a hand through his hair.

"Wait a moment," he said and ran out of Severus' quarters. Severus stood planted on his living room floor, staring at the door. He huffed, he paced, he cursed Harry for just leaving him there at such a crucial moment of his life and he paced some more. After about 10 minutes Harry came back accompanied by a very reluctant Hermione Granger who froze at the door entrance. When he noticed she had not entered Harry looked back and went to her. They began whispering furiously.

"Come on. It's okay."

"I'm not sure about that," she said shooting glances at Severus.

"What is the meaning of this?" Severus asked sternly. Why would Harry bring a student to his private quarters? Harry pushed Hermione in and closed the door.

"Well, I don't know about what you asked me but Hermione does," he said happily. "Go on," he prompted her. "Uncle Sev doesn't bite."

Hermione looked like she very much doubted that. "Er, hum," *Hermione Granger out of words? That's a first!* Severus thought. "Harry said you wanted to now about hair care, sir?"

Severus narrowed his eyes and said in his most dangerous voice, "Contrary to popular belief I do wash my hair everyday, sometimes twice a day. But working with potions turns my hair extremely oily and greasy no matter what I do. I want a solution and am no expert in hair care."

"Oh, sir," Hermione said eagerly. "There are a variety of both Muggle and wizarding hair products that deal with oily hair," and she started listing shampoos so quickly that Severus was surprised. He never would have expected that such a bookworm would have known so much about hair products. He expected Brown or Patil to know but not Granger. After Hermione managed to combine the best treatment for Severus' problem she left to owl her parents for the Muggle products, reassuring Severus she would not tell who they were for. Alone in Severus' quarters, Harry asked with a smirk:

"Uncle Sev, Why the sudden interest?"

Severus narrowed his eyes, "None of your business brat."

Xxxx

"So he has been behaving?" Sirius asked. He had come to see Severus in his office alone since he thought it was better than talking in the staff room.

"Perfectly well," Severus said. "He has even stopped Crabbe and Goyle from bullying as well."

Sirius nodded. He had talked to Draco when he arrived from the train and Draco had been a perfect gentleman and extremely compliant with Sirius' rules. He hadn't even complained when he was told that Severus had decided to keep his Quidditch ban; after all, a ban is a ban and Severus had warned Draco.

"Does it feel wrong to you too?"

"Yes," Severus nodded. "I expected some rebelliousness. Albus would say he has learned his lesson with the suspension."

"And you?"

"I'm keeping my eye on him. If he keeps on this path, great, that's all I want, but I won't lower my guard."

Sirius nodded and hopped Draco was really changing.

Xxxxx

The students exited the class once the bell rang and Sirius started rearranging his papers.

"Hem, hem."

He heard and turned to see Harry looking sheepishly at him.

"May we speak Professor?" he asked.

Sirius raised an eyebrow and nodded, summoning a chair for Harry. Harry cleared his throat and started.

"After cooling down I understand why you grounded me but-"

"Harry there are no buts-"

"Let me finish," Harry cut him off raising a hand. "I understand that you wanted to protect me but you have to understand, dad, that I'm not a child anymore and you trained me well. You have to understand that I couldn't leave two people I love fending for themselves against Death Eaters when I know I can help. I know you are scared of losing me, but I am scared of losing you too dad! That time in my third year when I disobeyed you and ran towards you and Uncle Sev was the time I was most scared in my entire life. And it wasn't fear for me. It was because I was scared of losing you two. I wasn't that scared not even with Voldemort, and I was scared a lot then. The only other time I felt fear like that was when Voldemort almost killed Uncle Sev. So you have to accept dad that I won't run if you or someone else I love is in danger."

Sirius regarded Harry solemnly and nodded, "I can't accept that Harry. No matter how old you are I will want to protect you. My first priority will always be you. But I do understand, and I want you to understand and trust me to know when you are in over your head. And Lucius Malfoy is above your skill and obviously bent on revenge."

"And that is why I didn't leave. Lucius Malfoy is sneaky and it was better to outnumber him and Goyle even if one of those numbers was less experienced than them. Malfoy could have hurt you if he shook off the stunner dad, and I couldn't just leave you and Tonks to him," Harry pleaded. Sirius got up and kneeled in front of Harry's seat. He grabbed Harry's shoulders and smiled sadly.

"I guess I can't carry you around my arms forever," he said hoarsely. "I wish I could Harry. I wanted to be able to protect you forever."

"I know dad," Harry said leaning forward and hugging Sirius. "But you can't."

Xxx

Severus finished buttoning his robes in front of the mirror and smoothed his now thankfully oil free hair thanks to a combination of Muggle and wizarding hair products courtesy of Hermione Granger. His hair now fell in waves instead of clinging to his scalp and even looked shorter. He smoothed his robes and rolled up his sleeves. He ran a hand over his unblemished left arm and stared at the white skin.

Not long ago he wouldn't wear short sleeves for anything in this world. Trying to hide the marks of his poor choices, even though the marks were still out there. The mark of his poor choice was in Harry's very own name; Potter Black. Had he not gone and eagerly told Voldemort about the damn prophecy, Harry would have his parents and be just a Potter. But he did, with only the thought of pleasing his master, and he couldn't lie to himself, he never thought of the consequences, never thought Voldemort would go and kill a baby, a whole family. And when he found out he was after the Potters his thoughts had been of Lily and only her. Dumbledore had said he didn't care what happened to James and Harry, that he didn't care if they died. It wasn't true, as much as he hated James he never wished for his death, but Dumbledore was right that at the moment all he was worried about was of saving Lily and he hadn't spared a thought about the fact that James and Harry were in danger too.

Lily, Lily who said she forgave him, but did he forgive himself? And now he was here, getting ready to... what? Was he replacing her? Did he have that right? What would Emmeline think if she knew what Severus did?

Severus shook his head to get rid of his depressing thoughts and took one last look at his appearance. He never had been a vain man and, to be honest after Lily died and before Harry came back to his life, he had let go a little. He had started taking care of his house and health better once Harry called him "Uncle Sev". There was someone that needed him to be there, but his appearance wasn't a top priority and he never much cared about the effects the potions fumes had on his hair and teeth, which, once again thanks to Miss Granger, were as white as when he was a teenager. He had to concede, he wasn't the height of beauty but he wasn't too bad either. And he had noticed that the female students and a few males had noticed his changes as well. One well-placed glare stopped the giggling.

Severus walked out of his quarters and to his private lab that was in the dungeons near his office. He set all the cauldrons needed and before he managed to finish separating all the ingredients a knock came on the door. He opened it and found himself being goggled at by the blond beauty in front of him.

"Good evening," he said.

"Er, what? Oh, yes, good evening Severus. You look- I mean are you good- well? Are you well?" Emmeline stuttered a little and Severus was taken aback at her nervousness.

"Yes, thank you," he nodded motioning for her to enter. "I have everything ready for the potion. I thought it best to explain it to you before we started."

"Of course," she said as she entered and started examining the ingredients and shooting furtive glances at Severus.

After the initial awkwardness and once both of them entered in the familiar territory of potions brewing, the evening progressed very pleasantly and Severus was quite disappointed when they arrived at the stage that they had to let the potions rest for 24 hours and would only be meeting again the next day.

A/N- Thanks for reading and reviewing and humongous thanks to SWaddict1986 for correcting this!

Chapter 17- Complications of the heart

"Hey, what are you doing?" Sirius asked outraged when he was shoved into a broom cupboard forcibly and quite unexpectedly.

"Shh," Hestia said as she waved her wand to cast a Silencing Charm. She turned to him and pointing her wand at his face she said flatly:

"You don't breathe a word about this to anyone, clear?"

Sirius nodded a little frightened and was shocked when she grabbed him and pushed him against the wall, kissing him fiercely.

"I thought-" he started saying as he pushed her away a little.

"So yes, I might be physically attracted to you, but that is all and no one will know about our little encounters, clear?"

"What if I don't want to be used like that? I'm feeling a little objectified here," He said crossing his arms.

"Oh, do shut up," she said and kissed him again.

"Okay," Sirius gasped as he pulled her towards him.

Xxxx

Harry was fuming. *How dare he?* And the worst part was, Harry actually had to take him on the team as a reserve. *And, oh, yes!* He had to remember to thank Ron for the heads up. *Yeah, thank him so much!* Harry was so engrossed with his fuming he did not see where he was walking and bumped straight into someone.

"Where's the fire?" came the familiar chuckle.

"Uncle Moony!" Harry cried. "What are you doing here?"

"I still live here during term Harry," Remus reminded him.

Harry rolled his eyes, "I know, but I thought you'd spend Saturdays with Tonks."

"She's on duty," he said slowly throwing an arm around Harry's shoulders and walking with him through the halls. "Now, please enlighten me with what has you so preoccupied."

"Oh, nothing," Harry said vaguely.

"Nothing," Remus repeated.

"We just had tryouts."

"And..."

"Good team. And reserves too. Dean Thomas is a reserve."

"Good for him," Remus beamed.

"And he is dating Ginny. Yeah, they kissed each other congratulations and everything afterwards. Was quite disgusting," Harry said. "All that mushiness."

"Oh, yes. Mushiness," Remus wisely agreed. "I thought she was dating a Ravenclaw."

"Ron said they broke up last year after we won the Cup from them. Apparently he is a sore loser. Now he tells me," Harry muttered.

"Must have slipped his mind; after all, why would you be interested in such gossip?"

"Because Ron is my best friend and this affects him and I am concerned for him!" Harry said outraged.

"Of course," Remus agreed knowingly. "You know. I think that maybe, if you started spending more time with Ginny she might notice you."

"Why would I want to do that?" Harry asked uncomfortably.

"Oh, so she can take you seriously when you are concerned about her because of Ron," Remus said calmly. "I think you guys and Ginny drifted apart a little after you started Hogwarts, which is natural. She made friends in her own year and you in yours, but maybe you should rekindle that close friendship you had before. Who knows what might come out of that," he winked and Harry wrinkled his forehead in thought. That was a good plan, and then maybe Ginny would notice how Dean Thomas was obviously out of her league and that Harry was a much more thoughtful and interesting person. And of course, Ron would be all for it since Harry was his best friend. Harry didn't fancy getting the dirty looks Ron was throwing Dean.

Xxx

Remus entered the Marauder's Quarters cautiously peering around. He had tried to ask Harry what exactly Sirius had bought at Wesley Wizarding Wheezes so he could gauge if Sirius had used all his assortment but Harry said with a straight face that he was Switzerland. *I'll give you Switzerland, more like Siriusland.* Remus was getting quite annoyed of walking somewhere just to see people staring at him and find out later he had bright green and silver dots all over him.

He ran his wand around casting detection charms but found nothing out of the ordinary. Satisfied he picked up his book and sat down to read peacefully.

He was quite engrossed with his book when an out of breath and disheveled Sirius entered the room.

"What the hell happened to you?" Remus asked.

"What? Nothing," Sirius said startled. He obviously hadn't seen Remus there. "Why are you here?"

"Should I post a notice about still living here?" Remus asked blandly. "Dora is on duty today."

"Oh, okay," Sirius said absentmindedly as he walked dazedly to his room. Remus was staring to get worried.

"Padfoot? Are you okay? What happened?" he asked getting up and going after Sirius.

Sirius turned around and said a tad too quickly in a higher than usual voice, "Nothing. Nothing happened."

"You are all rumpled," Remus pointed to Sirius' clothes.

Sirius looked down and tried to straighten his robes with his palms, "Oh, yeah- er- I was helping Hagrid- with er- a rebellious Threstral- yes, a very tetchy and uncontrolled mare. Gotta go take a shower. Bye

Moony." And with that Sirius ran so fast to his room and closed the door that Remus almost missed it.

Oh, yes, Sirius was definitely up to something.

Xxx

"You're back," Severus said as he opened the door.

"Of course I am. We still have to finish the potion," Emmeline said with twitching lips.

"Yes, well," Severus said obviously flustered. "I was just using an expression. Like 'Hello', or 'How are you doing'. We use them to start conversations."

"Of course," she said with a smirk. "So, shall we continue?" she asked pointing at the cauldrons.

"Yes," Severus nodded and both promptly started working again. He did manage to insert some non-potions related conversation in their brewing and found out that she loved Italian food. He couldn't explain exactly how he managed it, but by the time she left they had a date to eat at an Italian restaurant in London and Severus was very much looking forward to it.

Xxxx

"Potter Black!" Harry heard a voice call him in the corridor and turned around. His wand was instantly in his hand when he saw the owner of the voice.

"Yes," he said tightly. Draco Malfoy walked calmly to him, showing he was clearly unarmed as he made a point of by raising his wandless hands.

"I wanted to talk to you."

"About?"

Malfoy got near him and sighed, "Look, I know I haven't been the nicest guy towards you but I want to change. The time that I spent at home alone allowed me to think and I realized that I have been acting as if the world owed me everything and I owed no one anything. I want to apologize for what I did and start a new leaf," he finished extending a hand towards Harry. Harry eyed that hand suspiciously and said simply.

"I don't trust you."

"I gave you plenty of reason not to," Malfoy nodded.

"For reasons beyond your understanding, my father wants to give you a chance. And because of him and only him I will give you that chance. But muck this up Malfoy, hurt my father and you will pay for it. Do I make myself clear?" Harry said with a stony expression.

"Crystal," Malfoy answered and Harry couldn't decide if the expression Malfoy had was of sincerity or if he was planning something. Harry took the extended hand and shook it. He was going to give Malfoy a chance; he didn't know why, but he was.

XXXX

"They were in a relationship Ron," Neville said tiredly for the hundredth time. "Of course they kissed. But Ginny only said that to rile you up because you were annoying her!"

Ron glared at Neville from his bed. It was only the two of them and Harry in their dorm and had been since Harry and Ron had very uncomfortably stumbled upon Ginny and Dean Thomas snogging. Harry couldn't get that horrible image out of his poor innocent mind.

Ginny had been annoyed at Ron and yelled at him that he only pestered her because he was the only one in the group to have never snogged, and threw in that even Hermione had snogged Victor Krum.

"You know Ron, if instead of fuming here you actually made a move like you have wanted to for the last- oh- two years at least, we wouldn't be having this discussion." Neville said.

"I don't know what you are talking about," Ron mumbled.

"I am talking about you and Hermione. You obviously fancy her and she fancies you. You can see it by the longing looks she gives you. But she won't do anything until you grow up, or at least tell her how you feel. And fuming like that is not very grown up."

"You think so?" Ron preened up a little.

"I know so. Ron, you're my mate, so I say this not to criticize but to help. You are hot headed and if you don't stop letting your temper get the best of you you'll end up doing something stupid and losing Hermione. So, take some advice. Start calming down and paying attention to the girl."

"Easy for you to talk, you have a girlfriend and apparently can do no wrong," Ron mumbled.

Neville burst out laughing, "You think me and Hannah don't fight? We do loads of times! We're both growing up. I'm lucky to have found someone who complements with me so well, and so young, but believe me: it's not easy at all. But nothing worth keeping is."

Harry's attention picked up at this and he started thinking that maybe, maybe, something worth keeping was worth overcoming the obstacles, mainly Dean Thomas!

Xxx

Time sped up as it is prone to. Hours became days, days became weeks and weeks became months and before Harry noticed Christmas had come and gone and he was no where near to reaching his goal. Even Ron and Uncle Sev, blunt, insensitive Ron and grouchy, snappy Uncle Sev had managed to get girlfriends.

After heeding Neville's advice Ron started to stop and think before he snapped and bickered with Hermione. He even started noticing her needs and brought her snacks when she was studying or refilling her parchment stack when it was low. This, of course did not go unnoticed and resulted in Hermione asking Ron out on a date one Hogsmeade weekend and now they had been a happy couple since Halloween.

Then there was Severus; he had tried to keep it secret but a student's mother had spotted him and Emmeline out on a date in London and told her daughter who told a friend, and well, we all know how that goes. Severus Snape's image was almost ruined once people found out the not-so-greasy any more bat of the dungeons was dating a living, breathing human being. Of course, when an unaware innocent student stumbled upon said girlfriend accidentally and she sneered and commented on his clumsiness in

the best impression of Severus Snape, people understood why he was dating her; he found his female version and must be in little bat heaven.

Harry didn't know how to feel about his Uncle dating. He had nothing against Emmeline, she was like Severus alright, exactly like him. Her snappiness and sarcasm was a defense like his and if you were patient you got to know a very kind woman. But she was an outsider, and yes he said they needed to find a lady friend for Severus, but with the fact in front of him, Harry was feeling a tad threatened. At least he could count on his father in his steady bachelorhood. You could count on the fact that Sirius could go out and meet a hundred of women and not bringing a single one into their tidy little world.

But, as Harry pondered other people's love life he came to the same fact, Ginny Weasley and Dean Thomas were still dating, and for all of Harry's rekindled friendship with Ginny he had gotten nowhere. Yes, he had started to interact more with Ginny, especially since he found himself left on his own by his three dating friends more often than not. But she was still with Dean, and Dean was always there when they were together. Dean wasn't a bad bloke and Harry actually liked him and felt bad for wanting him to be dumped, but alas, thus is life and love.

Harry needed drastic measures, he needed an expert; he needed his dad. He decided to visit him on this nice Saturday morning and walked towards the Marauder's Quarters. He crossed paths with Malfoy and as had become habit in the past months Malfoy politely greeted him. Harry still felt unsure but he had to grant it to Malfoy: he had exemplar behavior and had tried to make amends, he even apologized to Hermione, Neville and Ron! A few weeks back he asked if he could join the D.A. and after much deliberation and vouching of the Slytherins members that Malfoy had been behaving the same way in the privacy of their dorms, they had accepted.

Giving out the password, Harry entered the Marauders Quarters to find Sirius brooding on the couch.

"What's up dad?" he asked flopping down.

"Nothing," Sirius mumbled and shook his head as if to clear something away. "What brings you here son?" he asked in a bright tone as if he had never had a frown in his face. Harry himself frowned but answered:

"I need advice."

"And of course you came to the wisest person around," Sirius said extending his arms.

"Nah, Grandpa and Uncle Moony were busy so I came to you," Harry said with a straight face and Sirius shoved him a little.

"Ha, ha, very funny."

"So dad. I have a problem."

"Which is?"

"Dean Thomas."

Sirius stared at Harry and frowned, "I thought you and Dean were friends. He never was a problematic student. Is friendly to everyone. Did you get into a fight?"

"No!" Harry moaned. "That's the worst part! He's a great guy. If he was a git this would be much easier."

Thoroughly confused, Sirius asked, "What would that be?"

"Breaking him and Ginny up!"

Sirius raised his eyebrows in surprise, well to be honest he wasn't that surprised, but he wasn't about to let his little baby know he had realized Harry had developed a little crush and done nothing to stop it. Especially since he hadn't been worried because Ginny was involved with someone else. But this changed matters. Sirius sighed and threw an arm around Harry.

"Let's face it Harry. You're just going to have to give it up as a bad job," he finished shrugging. Harry's mouth dropped and he stuttered:

"What?"

"It's too complicated. Dean is your friend and you don't want to ruin a friendship over a girl do you? And you know, they're probably getting married and having little Thomases. You can't get in the way of destiny."

"DAD! I came here for strategy on how to get them apart not a lecture in giving up! Would you give up on a girl just because it's complicated?"

"Well, er- we're not talking about me and H- anyone. We're talking about you Harry James and you're young, why tie yourself up? Enjoy life!"

Harry groaned, he honestly should have known better than to ask relationship advice from his dad. Yes he was a player and had immense experience with the opposite sex but he was also his dad, the man who didn't want Harry in a relationship before he was two hundred.

"Do you know if Uncle Moony is getting home soon?" Harry asked hopefully.

Sirius eyed Harry suspiciously, "He went out with Tonks to see something about the wedding. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. Nothing at all," he'd try his Grandpa then. Not that he was all that hopeful considering the last dating advice Dumbledore gave him. "So dad? What had you brooding?"

"I wasn't brooding."

"Yes you were."

"No I wasn't."

"Yes you were."

"No I wasn't."

"Yes you were."

"No I wasn't."

That went on for a while until Harry gave up on finding out why Sirius Black had been in a mood to match his last name when he entered the Marauder's Quarters.

Chapter 18- Suspicions

After Harry left, Sirius pondered his love life, lack thereof, or lack of definition. He was truly and absolutely confused and worst of all he could not seek out his friends for advice because of the secrecy. His rendezvous with Hestia had continued through the months and he didn't know how she felt, she was a mystery, but he was head over heels, completely in love with that crazy witch. But she insisted on keeping things a secret and at the same time she started arguments like the one from last night.

"Severus took Emmy to the opera," she had said while running her fingers through his hair.

"Hum," he mumbled into her stomach where his head had been resting. They had taken advantage of the fact that Remus was at Grimmauld Place tonight and had for once stayed in his room instead of her quarters. He did like his bed better.

"You never take me to the opera," she complained and her hands were becoming a little forceful. Sirius opened his eyes and thought "What the hell!"

"You want to keep this secret," he politely pointed out.

"Humph! Excuses, excuses! You're just not romantic like Severus!" she cried, threw him off of the bed making him land on his bum, jumped off the bed, got dressed and stormed away in such speed that Sirius was dizzy.

And now he was here, confused. But he knew whose fault it was and he was going to give them a piece of his mind. He strode towards his destination and banged the door open. He was met by a glare but paid no heed. He walked to the cauldron.

"You Severus Snape are making us look bad! Stop that at once!" he yelled and stormed out.

"Us who?" Severus faint voice reached his ears as he was stalking back towards his room.

Xxx

"So you agree with me that he has been acting odd lately?" Remus asked worriedly to his other two companions. He turned to the oldest who was seated behind his desk and asked. "What do you think is going on?"

"Remus my dear friend, unlike people may think I am not all knowing," Albus said calmly.

"Maybe he's been Confounded or given some sort of mentally unbalancing potion," Severus pondered from the chair in front of Albus' desk. He turned to Remus and asked, "Has he been alone with anyone untrustworthy?"

Remus fidgeted a little and said uncomfortable, "I'm away most of the day and sometimes I stay with Dora at Grimmauld Place, you know? We're trying to get you all used to me being away little by little. I don't know Sirius' every move anymore."

"But you suspect someone?" Severus narrowed his eyes. "The same person I suspect?"

"I don't want to be unfair. He has been behaving exemplary and we are supposed to be giving him a second chance."

"Yes, but Malfoy does meet with Sirius regularly to appraise him of his school progress and as Sirius wants to use those meetings to guide Malfoy and maybe have him confide in him I know for a fact he always makes them tea sessions," Severus said. "Sirius told me himself."

"I think we should investigate further before we accuse young Malfoy of drugging Sirius," Albus said cautiously.

"But Albus, you don't understand! Sirius barged to my lab and started shouting at me about doing something that makes God knows who look bad and stormed out! That's not all. He keeps disappearing and making lousy excuses for it and sometimes he spaces out like he is in some other world! His mind has obviously been addled with!" Severus cried.

"I have found you spacing out recently too Severus," Albus said with twitching lips.

"That's different," Severus said uncomfortable.

"And if that was Sirius' case I'd know about it," Remus agreed. "He'd tell me if he met someone. Besides, that's not how Sirius acts when he is with someone."

"Last year you two were quite convinced that Sirius was infatuated with Professor Jones," Albus pointed out.

"Yeah," Remus waved a hand dismissively. "But nothing happened there and they still bicker like old ladies. I think we might have seen something because we wanted Sirius to settle down. They would never go out together. No this is something else and I'm worried."

Xxxx

"I heard Harry asked Albus for dating advice but I believe he was disappointed. There was something about asking Dean Thomas for a duel that Harry didn't quite like," Severus said casually to Sirius as he sat on one of the armchairs in the Marauder's quarters. It hadn't escaped Sirius notice how Albus, Severus and Remus seemed to be finding more time to spend with him and were watching him oddly.

Did they know? Oh, Hestia would be so angry! But they weren't watching her.

"Yeah, well. Harry asked me for advice but I wasn't about to give it to him!" Sirius protested. "Then he'd start dating Ginny Weasley, and eloping and we'd never see him again! I told him to give up."

Severus raised an eyebrow from his chair and sneered, "Oh, yes, because that would work perfectly. You've known your son for how long now?"

Sirius glared at him and Severus continued, "Have you stopped to think that Harry will date and eventually get married no matter what you do? Perhaps if you help him you can at least have some control over the situation. At least you know Ginny Weasley. What if he meets some foreigner and decides to go live with her in China? Ever thought of that?"

Sirius eyes went wide and he started hyperventilating at the thought of his baby all across the world. Soon after he was bolting out of his quarters to look for Harry for a much needed advice session and Severus was congratulating himself on his well honed Slytherin skills.

Xxx

"I couldn't help but notice that you and your dad were conspiring in a corner while watching Ginny Weasley and Dean Thomas avidly the other day," Professor Jones said conversationally to Harry at her office desk while they were discussing the material the D.A. had covered.

"Oh, er- that was nothing," Harry said awkwardly. Professor Jones was okay and he enjoyed their time together but he wasn't about to discuss his love life with her!

"Do you want a piece of advice?" she asked but didn't wait for an answer, "Whatever tips your father gave you, forget them. Dean and Ginny will end it soon enough without any interference. Dean is too, how can I say- old-fashioned for Ginny."

"Do all the teachers discuss the students' love lives?" Harry asked horrified.

"Of course we do, gossip is entertainment. We have bets going on how long couples will last. By the way your friends Hermione and Ron better get married because I have good money on that. So make sure they do."

Harry was absolutely horrified and was going to have words with his dad and Uncles for never letting him in that little secret of teacher-hood.

"Anyway, if you wait patiently, you'll get what you want without making an enemy of a friend and if you position yourself properly, you'll be there when she is all alone."

"You make it sound like a chess game."

She smirked at him, "Everything in life is a chess game."

Harry decided to take both pieces of advice; after all, they were the same, but he wasn't about to tell Professor Jones that she and Sirius Black had agreed on something. He valued his life thank you very much.

Xxx

Between Quidditch, the D.A. and classes, time passed by as Harry left Ginny and Dean alone and was rewarded around May when they broke up because Ginny was getting annoyed with Dean's exaggerated gentlemanly ways, which according to her bordered machismo. Harry was there promptly with an ear to lend and a hidden notebook to take notes of what not to do.

Sirius and Hestia were still keeping their relationship secret and Sirius was getting quite annoyed with that. He had managed to say the dreaded and sometimes very embarrassing "I love you" one night and he had been ready to be thrown out of the room or *AKed* right there but he was not ready for what actually happened.

They had been once again in his bed, and the memory of that fight about not being romantic was still fresh even though it had been months before, and Sirius had looked straight into her eyes and blurted out without thinking:

"I love you."

At the realization of what he had just did, he tensed and was almost getting ready to reach his wand to defend himself when Hestia smiled, and not one of those dangerous 'I am about to kill you slowly and painfully' smiles, but a true smile.

"I love you too," she said and kissed him. Sirius was confused but happy and grinned like a maniac after the kiss and said.

"I can't wait to let everyone know that we're together."

"Oh, no we won't," she said simply. "We are still keeping this a secret."

"But what? How? Why?" he asked bewildered.

"For one, you have a son," she reminded him.

"Yes, and for the first time in his life I want him to meet someone who I am involved with," he said firmly.

"But he is my student!" she cried. "Things will get awkward. I work with Harry alone a lot because of the D.A.. Can you imagine if he starts seeing me as his father's girlfriend? No, no way. We're keeping this between us."

Sirius slumped down on the bed defeated. *WOMEN!*

Severus and Emmeline were also going strong. Severus never thought he'd be so happy with someone who wasn't Lily but he could honestly say he also was in love. As Harry had said, she wasn't occupying Lily's place, she had one of her own, that didn't make him forget Lily but was as strong as Lily's had been.

Remus and Tonks, of course had almost everything ready for the wedding that was only a month away. They were to get married in the first week of the summer vacation and the preparations were getting into that frenetic stage where you think you won't have time for anything even if you are on schedule. Remus also had come home one day with his first victory in the Care of Magical Creatures Department. They had finally passed the law that substituted the Dementors in Azkaban with human guards that had started to be trained as soon as Madam Bones assumed the Ministry. The Dementors had been rounded up by most of the Auror corp.'s Patronuses and had been escorted to a deserted island that they had found. They had been contained there by a field similar to a large Patronus that surrounded the island that the Department of Mysteries had developed. This way they ensured that they could get rid of them without unleashing them on the population. They had estimated that without means to feed on human emotions and therefore breed they would eventually die out. It seemed harsh but Dementors were truly dark creatures and dangerous.

On the other hand Remus was also putting together two other bills that he was quite proud of and hoped to be able to pass. One granted more rights to half-humans and forbade employers to discriminate them because of their status. If someone was found to be denied an opportunity or fired because he or she was half-human the employer would be punished; depending on the size of the infraction he or she could get fined or even do some time in Azkaban.

The other bill was one protecting house-elves, and one he had asked Hermione's help for with the research. They had talked to many house-elves and he knew that the idea of freedom was horrifying to them, but he managed to ensure that even as slaves they had rights and no master would be allowed to abuse their house-elves by inflicting corporeal punishment or withholding food. They would be obligated to provide proper clothing, like the togas the house-elves of Hogwarts used, and have decent living arrangements for them as well as giving them a day off. If someone was found abusing their house-elf, like Dobby had been, the house-elf would be freed and the owner would be sentenced to a stint in Azkaban.

Those were two very bold and polemic bills that both Remus and the Minister agreed had to be presented with care. They hoped that in the next few years they would be able to pass them.

Harry and all the other students were preparing for finals, and in some cases O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s, and you could see stressed out teenagers everywhere in the castle. It was in this frenetic state of end of the year stress that Draco Malfoy convinced Harry to a one-on-one game to relax. Malfoy had approached Harry and said casually:

"Congratulations on the Cup, though let's face it. It was an easy win; after all you didn't have real competition this year."

"Oh, I remember winning the Cup even when you were Seeker," Harry playfully said back. It was weird to talk civilly to Malfoy and even joke with him but it had become a common occurrence lately.

"Care to make it a bet?" Malfoy asked. "You and me after the Snitch?" he asked producing a Snitch from his pocket.

"I thought you were banned from Quidditch," Harry pointed out.

"From the team, not from playing for fun. So, scared?"

"You wish," Harry smirked and both boys went to get their brooms.

Xxx

"Wake up sleepy head," Hestia murmured while kissing Sirius' slumped form on the couch. She had come to see him after his weekly tea with Draco and found him asleep and with the tea tray still out. Honestly the man could be a slob. She continued kissing him but he didn't stir. She started getting worried and shook him forcefully. Nothing.

Xxx

Harry had to concede. Draco Malfoy had always been the best competition. He was a good Seeker and Harry had a tough time racing him to the Snitch, but Harry wasn't the youngest Seeker in a century for nothing and he beat Malfoy to the Snitch. His mind had time to notice that it was weird for Malfoy to be smirking triumphantly when he lost, and as Harry caught the Snitch and felt the familiar pull around his navel, he only had time to think "Bugger!" before he was pulled away.

Xxx

In his office at the Ministry, Remus stood up in the middle of a meeting when he felt the familiar shiver that meant Harry was in danger. Excusing himself but not giving any explanation Remus bolted from the office and ran towards the Apparition point. Kingsley Shacklebolt, who had been walking by a corridor and almost was knocked out by the frantic werewolf, decided to let Tonks know what he'd seen. Soon, Tonks was the one hurrying towards the Apparition point.

Xxxx

"Sleeping draught in his tea," Severus said as he sniffed the tea. Hestia had flooded Poppy and Albus when she couldn't wake Sirius and they had brought Severus.

Poppy nodded after her diagnostic scan and said, "He will stay out for at least twelve hours. But he is not in any danger."

"But why would he take a sleeping draught in the middle of the day?" Hestia asked very much aware that probably he hadn't taken the draught willingly.

Severus looked around and then at the other three awake occupants of the room, "I'll go look for Draco to make sure he is not up to something."

He was about to leave when they all heard a frantic shout from the bureau's drawer, "SIRIUS!"

"That's Remus," Albus said worriedly and walked quickly to the bureau. Opening the drawer he found Remus' worried face in the two-way mirror.

"Remus, what's going on?"

"I felt the bond and Apparated. It took me to a deserted forest area. What's going on? What happened to Harry? I've cast detection charms but haven't found trace of living people anywhere in the area. There is something wrong here."

"Is the bond at its strongest?" Albus asked.

"No."

"Good," Severus said relieved.

"There may be wards concealing whoever took Harry and because the bond isn't at its strongest you can't get past them. Can you find out where you are and let us know? We'll put together a rescue team."

"I'll call soon. Where's Sirius?" Remus asked.

Albus looked solemn, "I believe young Malfoy played us all. He managed to incapacitate Sirius for the next few hours. Don't worry he is not in danger. He was given a sleeping draught."

"Good. I'll figure out my coordinates and call you back."

As soon as Albus put the mirror in his pocket Tonks came barreling through the door.

"Remus left in a hurry and said nothing!" she said out of breath taking in the scene of her unmoving cousin and the three worried people in the room.

"Call Kingsley Nymphadora and let him know we will need Aurors. Lucius Malfoy probably has Harry. Tell Kingsley he was probably aided by his son and we need someone to secure Draco. Remus is about to let me know his location and I'd like the Aurors to meet me there."

Tonks nodded and took out her Auror communicator. Before she called Kingsley she said dangerously, "I'll secure my little cousin. We don't want to give him time to flee."

"Tonks," Hestia called. "Do everything by the book or his lawyers will use both your relation to Draco and to Harry to get him free."

Tonks nodded as if all she wanted was not to get Malfoy by the rules but she knew Hestia was right. She left calling for Kingsley, while the others started organizing themselves. Severus had a horrible sense of déjà vu.

A/N- Thanks for reading and reviewing and humongous thanks to SWaddict1986 for her help and tips.

Chapter 18- Suspitions

Tonks nodded as if all she wanted was not to get Malfoy by the rules but she knew Hestia was right. She left calling for Kingsley, while the others started organizing themselves. Severus had a horrible sense of déjà vu.

Xxx

Chapter 19- Talking with the enemy

Harry eyed his surroundings and his company. Lucius Malfoy was looking at him with a twisted sick smile on his face. His usually elegant long hair was dirty and matted giving him an insane look and his robes were torn in places. Two years on the run obviously did him no good. Goyle on the other hand, even though he was dirty and had the signs of someone who had had a rough time lately, was much more composed than Malfoy.

"Did you like my little trick Harry? Did you really believe Draco would just betray me like his mother did?" Malfoy asked him.

Harry said nothing. He wasn't exactly sure where he was. He could see it was some sort of cave but he could not see the entrance and he needed more information if he wanted to escape. He needed to know if he could just Apparate out- thank God for the Apparition lessons given during the past term-, or if he would be splinched because of the wards put up by Malfoy and Goyle.

"He has always been loyal and in touch with me. He let me know you were in Diagon Alley," Malfoy said producing a mirror just like the one Harry's dad had. "I was the one to tell him to pretend he was agreeing with Narcissa's and Black's plan in order get near you and your father," he said approaching. "Your daddy won't be coming," he laughed and Harry's blood ran cold. What had Malfoy Jr. done to his father? "And no one will find you. I worked for months to completely ward this place. I even have the Fidelius Charm on it and Draco is the Secret Keeper. That's why the Portkey worked for you, because I taught Draco how to do it. Your little rescue team can get their noses an inch from this cave but they won't hear your screams, and you will scream; *Crucio!*"

Harry withered with pain as he fell to the floor, and just like the last time he had been under this spell he bit his lips so as not to cry out and give Malfoy the satisfaction. Once Malfoy lifted the curse Harry laid panting on the floor and evaluated if he should draw his wand. There was no way he could take both Malfoy and Goyle on his own. He'd be overpowered and lose his only weapon if they remembered he still had his wand in his wand holster. Malfoy said they were under the Fidelius, that no one could find them, unless...

"This is your entire fault Potter! My life was ruined because of you and you will pay. Oh, I'll kill you alright, but not before you beg for death, and I have all the time in the world," Malfoy said in a deranged

tone that reminded Harry of Bellatrix Lestrange; maybe his grandparents weren't the only ones to marry cousins in the family?

"That's assuming I won't escape, after all your boss decided to play with me last time too and we all know how that ended," Harry spat trying to provoke Malfoy into wanting to kill him.

"*Crucio!*" Malfoy cried and Harry was once again taken by pure agony. Once he took the spell off, Malfoy hissed dangerously, "That was the traitor's fault. I did my homework Potter. If you hadn't taken that curse for that vermin you wouldn't be here now. Oh, yes. Dumbledore may think no one figured out what happened, no one figured out about the Dark Lord's protection but I did," he laughed but Harry had stopped listening at vermin and his blood had been rushing in his ears. He didn't even hear Goyle ask:

"What protection? Are you keeping things from me Malfoy?"

"Shut up Goyle!"

"My Uncle is not vermin!" Harry cried standing up with shaky limbs.

Malfoy turned to him smirking, "Oh, he isn't is he? Your precious Uncle?" he sneered. "Do you really think he loves you?"

"Yes he does," Harry said through gritted teeth, his fists balled up.

"Oh," Malfoy said innocently tapping his wand against his cheeks. "So here is a little tidbit you and your daddy don't know: Your precious Uncle Severus Snape was the one who eagerly relayed the prophecy to the Dark Lord."

Harry had no idea what prophecy Malfoy was talking about but he would not show ignorance in front of him, "So?"

"You don't care?" Malfoy asked surprised.

"No," what did Harry care if his Uncle Sev told Voldemort something? He knew he had to give Voldemort some information to keep up his spy role.

Malfoy smiled dangerously, "You are a mystery Harry Potter. Good thing we will have plenty of time to unveil you."

Harry was getting frustrated with all the talk. He figured that by now after his initial abduction and all that time Malfoy wasted just smirking at him when he first arrived, his dad and Uncles would have had time to call for help. It was time to let them know where he was. So Harry did the stupidest thing he could think of. He launched himself at Malfoy summoning his wand and crying, "*Sectusempra.*"

He, of course didn't manage to catch Malfoy who jumped aside and he was also, of course restrained by Goyle in a second, but he did manage to anger Malfoy who now sported a bleeding arm. Malfoy quickly healed his arm and turned to Harry.

"You know what? You're right, I won't dawdle. I'll kill you now, but don't worry, I'll make sure the curse I use not only kills you but does it slowly and painfully," he raise his wand and cried "*Viscus Fervefacio*" when about half a dozen witches and wizards appeared out of nowhere.

Hestia quickly threw a stunner at Malfoy making him topple over and forcing his curse to miss Remus who had been right in front of Harry by inches and also Harry when Goyle pulled him back. Hestia quickly bound Malfoy while Severus, Remus, Albus, Kingsley and a young Auror had their wands trained on Goyle who had his wand digging in Harry's throat.

"Let me go and he won't get hurt," Goyle said.

"Don't be stupid Goyle," Severus said. "You are outnumbered. If you hurt him, we'll kill you and you can't Apparate out of here. I can feel the Anti-Apparition ward."

"You Apparated," Goyle said flatly.

"We had special help," Remus said simply, there was no need to elaborate on the fact that by provoking Malfoy into trying to kill him, Harry activated the strongest link in the Lupin bond enabling them to Apparate through the wards.

"If you surrender yourself without harming Harry that will be taken into account," Kingsley said.

"You didn't hurt me," Harry tried to reason. "Only Malfoy did. And you pulled me out of the curse's way. You looked like you didn't want to be here."

"No I didn't," Goyle growled. "I wanted to have left England long ago. But Malfoy is a strong Wizard and is the one who has money outside of England. I don't, so I needed him to get to his money. But he wouldn't leave. He was obsessed with revenge and we had to live like bums for almost two years," his anger turned into disgust and he said, "That curse makes you melt from the inside out. No one deserves that. You're the same age as Greg."

"Yes, think of Gregory," Albus pleaded. "Do you really want his father to be dead?"

"No," Goyle huffed. "But I don't want him to have an insane father either."

"The Dementors are no longer in Azkaban. We have human guards now. We have started to look into the way Muggle prisons are run and tried to copy their style. They are more humane with their prisoners. The only difference is our prisoners have a magic binding band now so you won't be able to escape. There is no need to drive you insane in order to suppress your magic anymore. I worked myself on this project," Remus explained. "You won't be free, Goyle, but it won't be torture either and your son will be able to visit you."

"He will?" Goyle asked hopefully.

"Yes," Kingsley nodded.

Slowly Goyle's wand went down and he dropped it as he released Harry. Remus and Severus quickly pulled him towards them and Kingsley and the young Auror secured Goyle.

"What happened to dad?" Harry asked worriedly into Remus' chest.

"He's just sleeping," Remus assured him wrapping his arms around Harry. "He'll be in a right mood when he finds out he missed the action."

Harry smiled and Severus said, "Let's take you to Poppy."

"I'm okay."

"Yeah, right," Severus snorted at Harry's slightly shaking limbs.

Xx

Sirius was in a right mood all right, and Draco was lucky that the Aurors had escorted him to a holding cell at the Ministry before Sirius woke up. As Draco was already seventeen he would be tried as an adult and probably sentenced as an accessory to kidnapping and attempted murder. Questioned under Veritaserum, Draco coped to having aided his father but also confessed that his father had ordered him to poison Sirius and kill him, but he didn't have the guts to do it and decided to just knock him out for a few hours. On one hand Harry was grateful for his father but on the other hand Draco knew he was handing Harry to be killed. So the bottom line was, Draco didn't have the courage to kill himself but had no problem if someone else did the job for him.

The trials had been swift and Lucius Malfoy got life in Azkaban in the maximum-security war and Draco got a fifteen-year sentence since he just didn't pull the trigger but had conspired with murder. But the fact that he hadn't killed Sirius and this was his first offense counted towards his favor. He'd get out of Azkaban when he was thirty-two and would be able to build his life again. Narcissa Malfoy had to be taken out of the room after the sentencing as she was hysterical. Sirius arranged for her to stay at a clinic that would take care of her. After all, both male Malfoys confessed to her not knowing anything and she was still a Black. But he disowned Draco. He didn't want to have anything to do with the boy ever again. He had tried his best but in the end Harry was right; Draco didn't want to change. He was no Regulus no matter how much Sirius may have wanted him to be.

Goyle Sr. was tried for this crime and for his previous crimes as a Death Eater. Because he gave himself up and because it was discovered that he had shown mercy in some of his Death Eaters raids, he was sentenced to fifty years in Azkaban. He would be an old man of over ninety when he got out but Wizards tended to live to be two hundred so he wasn't terribly upset with his sentence.

Sirius had become a mother hen again after he woke up in the Hospital Wing with a dosed Harry next to him and a haunted Remus and Severus at their bedside. He had also been surprised that both his bed and Harry's had been attached to each other, and in the middle of them Hestia was sitting and holding his hand and Harry's. She turned to him and said:

"Scare me like that again Black and I'll kill you. And by the way this is your fault," and she kissed him right there.

Remus and Severus did not look as shocked as he expected.

"She had to explain what she had been doing in your quarters when you wouldn't wake up and how she had the password to get in," Severus shrugged and then scolded Sirius. "You could have told us. We thought you were going mental!"

Sirius hadn't left Harry's side for the rest of the school year unless he had to teach; he had even put an extra bed in the Gryffindor's sixth year dorm when Harry refused to stay at the Marauder's Quarters to

the dismay and discomfort of the other four boys in the dorm. And he had lectured Harry to never, ever again accept a Quidditch game with a former enemy.

The rest of the term and its finals passed by quick enough, and soon everyone found themselves at the decorated garden of the PWA where Tonks and Remus had decided to hold their wedding since it was where they had started socializing more often and had helped in their relationship so much. Besides, Tonks would never forget the place where Remus first asked her out.

Friends from the Ministry, the Order, the school and the PWA were gathered together. The former five-year-old, now seven-year-old girl named Christie who was on the first group of werewolves to be given the Permanent Wolfsbane, entered carrying the rings.

Her parents watched her proudly from where they were seated next to Mrs. Weasley who they were forever thankful for the attention she gave to their scared little girl at the time.

Sirius was once again standing proudly as best man and Albus had commented, "Always best man, when are you becoming the groom?" and he stared pointedly at Hestia. Sirius scowled.

"She doesn't want to be tied up by an institutionalized ceremony. She believes a piece of paper won't keep people together."

"I'm sure you'll manage," Albus said simply patting Sirius shoulder.

Hestia had started spending some nights at Grimmauld Place but she didn't want to move in. Especially since Harry had been a little uncomfortable with the new addition. When Ginny had asked him why when he was over at the Burrow, since he had no problem with Tonks, he shrugged.

"I dunno. Tonks is family; she was always there. This is just different and strange. I like Professor Jones, don't get me wrong, so I don't know why this bothers me but it does."

Standing next to Sirius in the mounted up altar, Remus' face lit up completely when Ted Tonks entered escorting his daughter. Her white dress was beautiful and Remus could not help but chuckle at the fact that her long curly hair was the same shade as Andromeda's. After all the fights Tonks put up she finally conceded in wearing her normal hair color.

The ceremony was beautiful and Andromeda had been a fountain of tears through the whole thing. She had especially bawled at Remus' vows:

"You were not the only person that accepted me as I was but you were the one who scared me the most by doing that, because then I would have no reason not to open my heart to a woman's love and that was totally unknown territory for me. You were kind and funny while you guided me in this new land and I hope to walk this land with you forever."

Tonks had been choked after that and had smiled through her own tears, "You were a tough one to get Remus John Lupin. I'm not as good as words as you but I just have this to say, you were worth all the trouble."

They had kissed and been pronounced husband and wife- and Sirius, Harry, Albus and Severus had clapped and cheered loudly from the altar. When he realized what he was doing- Severus promptly stopped and glared at the students who were in the crowd pointing at him.

This party had been quite different from the last wedding they had been. For one Sirius and Hestia were not drinking and fighting. They were in fact dancing with each other, as were Severus and Emmeline, Ron and Hermione, Neville and Hannah and many other couples including Harry and Ginny. Harry had quickly asked Ginny to dance before anyone else could and he did not let her go until the end of the party when the Weasleys started getting ready to leave. Before they stepped through Harry made a bold move:

"May I do something?" he asked.

"What?"

"You'll see."

"Okay," she shrugged and he instantly caught her lips with his for a quick kiss. Once he pulled back he smiled sheepishly, "Well if you enjoyed it you know where to find me." And he ran out of the room leaving a bewildered Ginny behind who had no time to react as her mother came close and started ushering her towards the Floo.

Xxx

A few days later when Ginny Flooed to Grimmauld Place and demanded answers, Harry said simply, "I've been wanting to be your boyfriend for over a year now. What do you think about it?"

"Well," she said, "We could try."

And thus started a blossoming relationship that had both of them Flooing back and forwards between the Burrow and Grimmauld Place. Remus and Tonks had been delighted to hear the news when they got back from their honeymoon in Paris.

Fortunately, this year Harry was spared from spending two weeks at the Dursley's as the protection was about to expire anyway and the summer seemed to fly by and before he knew it- Sirius was being rudely awakened one morning:

"Dad!"

Nothing. Harry shook Sirius again.

"Dad! Wake up!"

"Hum," Sirius mumbled burrowing in his pillow. "Where's the fire?"

"Come on or I'll go alone."

"Where?"

"Ministry!"

"Why?"

"Apparition license."

"What?" Sirius asked confused.

"I'm seventeen!" Harry said gleefully and Sirius bolted upright:

"NOOOOOOOOO!"

"Come on dad, you knew this day would come."

"Nooooo!" Sirius cried again hugging Harry's head to his chest tightly.

After his initial denial- Sirius couldn't ignore the huge banner proclaiming Harry's birthday, or the nice breakfast the girls, Twinky, Dobby and Kreacher, who had come from Hogwarts especially for the occasion, had made for Harry. Or the fact that the Weasleys, Dumbledore, Neville, Hermione, Andromeda, Albus, Ted, Severus and Emmeline had come to have breakfast at Grimmauld Place. After all, breakfast at Grimmauld Place was not that popular unless there was a good reason, and apparently his son becoming of age was a good reason.

After breakfast he and Harry went to the Ministry where Harry passed the test with flying colors and now was the proud owner of his Apparition license and could disappear from Sirius' view in the blink of an eye. After that they headed towards Gringotts where the official papers for Harry claiming his inheritance were signed. He also wanted to go to his vaults and to the Potter's vaults where he knew James had left something for Harry. In his own, he scooped up a box that he hadn't touched for sixteen years since he recovered the item from within the ruins of Godric's Hallow. In the Potter's vault he and Harry took a letter addressed to Harry. Once back in the bank's atrium Sirius said hoarsely.

"Tradition states you should get a watch on your seventeenth birthday. A long time ago I decided you'd get a used watch," he opened the box and took out a pocket watch and gave it to Harry, "This is the watch your grandfather gave your father on his coming of age."

Harry took the watch reverently. It was like his cloak; something that had been touched by his first dad, something they could both share.

"This," Sirius said producing the envelope he took from the Potter's vault, "Is a letter to be given to you on your coming of age. The Potter's had a tradition for a father to write a letter for his son's coming of age on the day of his first birthday. This is yours. James wrote this on the day you turned one," Sirius said smiling sadly. "I wasn't there on that day. I was on a mission. I thought we'd have plenty of your birthdays to celebrate together," he shook his head as if to clear away the sadness, "but I came later and James told me in case something happened to him," Sirius voice broke and he and Harry both had tears in their eyes. "He wanted to make sure I knew you had to read this today and to give this to you."

"You did dad," Harry said hugging Sirius.

Once they got home Harry closed himself in his room and with trembling hands opened his letter from James. His dad's last words for him. He never expected what he found out.

A/N- Meaning of Malfoy's the spell: viscus: flesh, internal organs, bowels, entrails, heart

fervefacio: to heat, boil, melt.

Thanks for reading and reviewing.

Thanks SWaddict1986 for betraying.

Chapter 19- Talking with the enemy

Once they got home Harry closed himself in his room and with trembling hands opened his letter from James. His dad's last words for him. He never expected what he found out

Chapter 20- The past revealed

Dear Harry,

When I envisioned myself writing this letter I always thought I would be writing to you about how you got cake all over your face today and how I expected you to be able to eat your seventeenth birthday cake without smearing your face. But unfortunately times make it necessary for me to take a serious tone. I hope to be able to laugh about this with you while you read this and I moan about my paranoid self but I know there is a big chance that won't happen. So instead of telling you what I dream for you I'll tell you what I want you to know.

I want you to know that your mother and I love you more than life. That you are our most precious gift and that all I want for you is to live a healthy, happy and long life. But I know that before that happens you will have to overcome a horrible destiny.

I'm not one for divination myself but I know better in that that even if we don't believe in a prophecy, Voldemort will believe enough to ensure that it is fulfilled.

Dumbledore told us about the prophecy that was made about either you or Neville a while ago when he asked me and Lily to retire from the Order and to go into hiding in order to keep you safe. Because of that safety I won't write the prophecy down, and none of the other Marauders know about it, but you can either ask Dumbledore if he is still around or go to the Hall of Prophecies in the Ministry and hear it. Only those who the prophecy was made about can do that. It basically said either you or Neville will have the power to off the bastard.

Dumbledore has a source that says that Voldemort decided you are the one the prophecy refers to, and as I said, I know he can become obsessed enough to make sure the prophecy fulfills itself. So, if you still haven't accomplished killing him and the bastard is still around son, I have faith in you and know you can finish him. You only need to have faith in yourself too.

Live your life; don't let the war rule it. Take care of your uncles Padfoot, Moony and Wormtail and never forget we love you.

Love forever,

Your dad.

James Anthony Potter

Malfoy's words came rushing back, *"Do you really think he loves you? Here is a little tidbit you and your daddy don't know. Your precious Uncle Severus Snape was the one that eagerly relayed the prophecy to the Dark Lord."*

His Uncle Sev, his beloved Uncle, the man who had loved his mother, the man he considered one of his fathers, he was the reason his parents were dead! He was the one that sent Voldemort after them. Voldemort had told Harry as much hadn't he? When he confronted Severus and told Harry he was after him not his parents.

"Why is it you betrayed me? Was it for the Mudblood? The one whose life you begged me for? The one you handed to me?"

Was it true, did Severus beg for his mother's life? What about his father and him? Did he not care if they died?

Harry couldn't think properly. He was shaking with rage and confusion. He bolted out of his bed and stormed downstairs where his dad, Uncles and their significant others were and burst in the room and demanded answers, throwing the letter at Severus.

"Why did you do it? I thought you loved her! I thought you loved me?"

Severus shakily took the letter and read it to realize one of his worst fears was on that page staring at him. Harry knew!

"I don't know," he said shakily.

"You don't know! That's your answer! You killed them and you don't know why!" Harry spat.

"Harry James Potter Black!" Sirius cried angrily. "Calm down and show some respect."

"He killed them! He sent Voldemort after my parents!" he cried pointing at Severus. Remus, who had taken the letter from Severus, said:

"There isn't mention of Severus in this letter, just a prophecy, which actually explains a lot but not of-"

"Malfoy told me he was the one to tell Voldemort about the prophecy!"

Severus who had uncharacteristically shrunk into himself nodded miserably as the others stared. Sirius couldn't contain himself and punched Severus who did not react at all as he fell on the floor.

"How could you?" he hissed dangerously.

"I didn't think. I was young and stupid and had been enthralled by the promise of power. I wanted to please my master! I didn't think! You should know all about regretting a decision made without thinking Sirius!"

Sirius stepped back from his rage but he could not manage to say anything. You could see by his rapid breathing and his clenched fists that he was still furious.

"Remus?" Severus pleaded from the floor in a small voice but Remus shook his head. He also could not say anything.

"I need time," he said in a soft shaky voice.

Severus looked for Harry but the teen was not in the room anymore. He didn't even see him leave. Emmeline walked to him and he readied himself for the blow when she crouched down and extended her hands. "Let's go Sev. Everyone needs time to digest this." She helped him up and towards the Floo, "We'll be at Spinner's End," she said to the rest.

Before he left Severus stared hopelessly at the others and said, "I lost everything because of my stupidity; am I about to lose everything again?"

"No, Sev. We just need time," Remus said softly. And he meant it. He knew that, as he had forgiven Sirius for the Whomping Willow incident, he would forgive Severus. The difference between the two was that Severus hadn't been as lucky as Sirius.

Xx

Harry though was in no mood to forgive Severus. He had never known his parents, he had to rely on other people's stories and memories to know them and that was all Severus Snape's fault. He had left the drawing room after Sirius punched Severus not wanting to hear excuses. He had left the house and Apparated legally for the first time to Hogsmeade. He then proceeded to stalk to the castle where he planned to hear about a certain prophecy and give his grandfather a piece of his mind for keeping something this huge from him.

An unbidden memory of the meeting with his parents came to mind, *"Tell Sev I forgive him"* well she shouldn't! He is the reason she is dead!

Before he knew it, Harry was barking the password to the gargoyle and facing one very surprised Albus Dumbledore.

"Harry-"

"I want to know the full contents of the prophecy," Harry said stonily.

"Harry," Albus said sadly, "There is no need for that. Voldemort is gone, the prophecy has been fulfilled why open closed wounds?"

"I want to know why my parents were killed. Did you know *he* told Voldemort? Did you?" Harry asked narrowing his eyes.

Albus eyes dimmed and he sadly nodded. He had hoped this day would never come but unfortunately he knew exactly what Harry had asked.

"That is his biggest regret Harry and he has worked tirelessly to repair his mistake. He is the one who alerted me to make your parents go into hiding."

"AFTER HE SENT VOLDEMORT AFTER THEM!" Harry yelled. "I want to hear the prophecy now!" he said slowly gritting his teeth. Albus sighed once more and took out his Pensieve. Slowly and warily Albus put a memory inside and the form of Sybil Trewlaney emerged:

"The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches ... Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies ... And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have

power the Dark Lord knows not ... And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives ... The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies..."

"Severus was waiting for an interview for the position he holds today. He heard part of the prophecy before my brother Aberforth caught him, and then relayed it to Voldemort. He was young and misled in those days. When Voldemort decided he would kill you and your parents it was the first time Severus had first hand experience with the war. He had been in the backstage all along because Voldemort wanted his potions skills and he had never witnessed the destruction the war caused. It's easy to pretend that what you are doing isn't bad if you don't see the results Harry and Severus lied to himself. Once he woke up he was horrified with himself, and not only because of your mother. I was with him after his initial contact begging me to protect her, when he finally started noticing what Voldemort and his Death Eaters were doing. Believe me, no one in this world blames him more than Severus himself. He has been atoning for his mistakes ever since and has never forgiven himself, and I doubt he ever will. But never forget Harry, the blame rests on Voldemort; he decided to kill based on a Seer's word. He killed them, not you by being born at the end of July nor Severus for telling what he heard. He decided all by himself and took two lives."

Harry shook his head; he was not ready to hear this. He turned around and walked away. He wanted to be alone and Albus understood as he did not call him back. He decided instead to stop by Spinner's End and see how one of his boys was doing.

He Flooed in just in time to see the hem of a robe turning the corner of the stairs and he followed but as they were slightly ahead they reached the bedroom without noticing Albus. He came close and from his point he could see Emmeline guiding a dazed Severus. She sat him on the bed carefully and he looked at her lost.

"I thought you'd leave too." Emmeline gave Severus one of those soft smiles that held no sneer or mocking that only those close to her got to see.

"I was in the Order the first time around remember Sev? I've always known you had been a willing Death Eater once and unlike Harry I lived the war. The concept of a Death Eater wasn't something theoretical to me. I know what you were Sev. I knew when I chose to be with you not to care for what you once were but for what you are now. And now you are a good man. A man that hides behind a mask but who loves very fiercely, and I know you regret your past. I've seen it in your eyes when you let your guard down. In time Harry will remember that, but he is seventeen and hurt. He is feeling betrayed. Give him time Sev and he'll forgive you, and your relationship will be stronger because there will be no horrible secrets waiting to be exposed."

Severus nodded but Albus knew he didn't truly believe her, "Sirius and Remus-"

"Will forgive you too. Probably sooner than Harry. Just give them time love," Emmeline leaned forward and kissed Severus and Albus decided that Severus was in good hands. He thought probably the last two

of his boys were in good hands too but better be safe than sorry. His next destination was Grimmauld Place where he found a frantic Sirius and Remus and two worried looking witches, who were to their credit a little calmer than the men and were getting an address book and discussing possibilities.

"The Grangers? We already tried the Weasleys?" Hestia said to Tonks.

"You could try again," Albus said and all four of them jumped in fright. "If you are looking for Harry he left my office just a little while ago. Considering he had to go through Hogwarts to the Apparition point he must be getting to wherever he's gone right about now."

Sirius slumped on the couch and hid his face in his hands.

"We just noticed he was gone," Remus said shakily. "We thought he had gone back to his room and when Sirius and I tried to talk to him there and didn't find him, we were terrified."

Albus nodded, "I'm sure Harry will be fine. The threats to his safety are gone and I believe he just needs some time alone. I highly doubt he went to meet anyone but if you think he might have, then to try."

"No," Sirius shook his head. "You're right. He just needs space. If he doesn't come back by sundown we'll go looking for him."

"And how are you?" Albus asked. Remus looked lost and shrugged.

"I want to be able to hate him," Sirius said shaking his head. "But I can't, he's my brother now. Just like Moony and James. But I don't know how to just keep going as if nothing happened. As if his actions didn't cost us all so much."

"Remus?" Albus asked and Remus stared at him burrowing his hands in his pockets, "I know how to. I've done it before, but it's not magic Albus. I need time to cool down. To be able to look at him and not be reminded of what he did."

"You'll all have a month," Albus said. "I'll advise Severus and Emmeline to use the last month of summer to get away, just the two of them. And when you meet again I hope you can all discuss this with clear heads and move on."

And so it was. Emmeline and Severus decided to get away from Great Britain and spent the rest of the month in a Villa in Italy. It wasn't that it was bad, they had time alone to get to know each other well, they visited places, but the shadow of the impending meeting always followed them and Emmeline could see the smile that Severus was sporting one minute escape for a fraction of a second into a pained expression that he would shake off and pretend everything was fine. They visited the Italian version of the PWA's and were quite satisfied with how they were working, and made reports to bring back home.

In the Black household the family also tried not to think much about the matter and attempt to let the pain decrease. Harry did come back that night but said nothing of where he'd been. He had stayed all day at the playground he had seen in Severus' memories and that Severus had pointed out to him so many times. He hoped that being at the place where Lily and Severus' friendship was born would bring him answers but he honestly did not know what to do.

His dad and Uncle Moony said nothing about his disappearing act and mostly said nothing about Severus. Harry figured they too were confused. The only mention made to the subject was on the day before classes started when his dad had already left for Hogwarts and Remus came looking for him to see if he was packed. He had sat on Harry's bed while Harry finished and out of the blue he decided to tell Harry about a story of the Marauders they had never told him. A story about when Sirius was fifteen and out of stupid hot headedness told Severus to prod the knot at the base of the Whomping Willow the night of the full moon.

Harry had sat next to Remus during the account and asked.

"How did you forgive him?"

"I loved him," Remus said. "He did something terrible Harry, but he was sorry for it. Making a mistake did not make Sirius a bad person."

"Did you forgive him then?" Harry asked and Remus knew he was not talking about Sirius. "Do you want me to?"

"I want you to remember the man you love while you think about it. For a while when I was fifteen and angry at Sirius, I forgot all that I had done with my brother. Don't forget all you lived with Sev."

Harry nodded, "Voldemort wouldn't have come after my parents if I wasn't the prophesized child."

"Voldemort came after your parents because he was sick. There was no way he could have been sure you were the boy the prophecy referred to. I don't blame you Harry; your parents didn't either, Sirius nor Severus do and you shouldn't start. We've been through this before when you heard their last moments because of the Dementors, remember? Your parents made a choice to protect you and Voldemort made a choice to kill all of you. You had no control over anything and therefore this is not your fault."

Harry knew that. He had already come to terms with that years back but he still wanted to be able to rationalize the irrational so that maybe he could find a way to exonerate his uncle.

September first came and Harry wasn't any closer to being ready to face Severus then he had been a month before.

Xxx

A/N- Thanks for reading and reviewing.

Thanks SWaddict1986 for betraying.

Chapter 20- The past revealed

September first came and Harry wasn't any closer to being ready to face Severus than he had been that first day.

Chapter 21- They're what?

The teachers all rose after Albus dismissed them to their duties. The first staff meeting of the year had just been held and the students would be arriving in a few short hours. Severus waited nervously as one by one the teachers left the staff room. The last one to leave was Hestia who kissed Sirius and whispered something in his ear. Sirius turned to Severus and said:

"Moony was going to wait for us in the Marauders Quarters," and he turned around. Severus found himself following Sirius like a small child waiting for his punishment. As they entered, they found that Remus had been sitting at one of the armchairs slumped forward with his elbows resting on his knees and his hands entwined watching a spot in the carpet. He raised his head and nodded in acknowledgment to Sirius and Severus. He got up and walked towards the latter.

"I once told you that no one is perfect, we all make mistakes, and sometimes, to be able to still be with the people we love, we have to look past those mistakes and go on with life. The same that was true for what Sirius did in our school years is valid here Sev. I can't forgive what you did."

"I don't forgive myself," Severus said tightly looking down.

"But we forgive *you* Sev," Sirius said and Severus' head shot up.

"What? No, you can't! What I did was unforgivable!"

"Lucky for us that's not your call. We chose to keep you in our lives Severus, and for that we forgive you," Remus said putting a hand on his shoulders.

"You were right Sev. I did something stupid that almost got three people killed because I didn't think of the consequences. You were stronger than I was. I had to rely on James to fix my mistake for me. You went for Albus for help and even begged Voldemort to spare Lily. And because he did give Lily a choice Harry is alive today. Albus explained it to us," Sirius' jaw was tight as he nodded. "Maybe you weren't able to completely stop the tragedy but you did your best to and vowed to take care of Harry even before you liked him. No one's perfect," Sirius laughed bitterly, "Me less than anyone. I almost got sent to Azkaban for not thinking. I almost condemned Harry to a life with the Dursleys for not thinking, and I almost killed you for not thinking. I was just luckier than you were," and he finished pulling Severus into a three way hug with Remus. After a while Severus asked quietly:

"Harry?"

Remus shook his head sadly, "He needs more time Sev. But he will come through."

Severus nodded resigned.

Xxx

When the students had entered the Great Hall for the feast Harry avoided looking at the Head table. When he left the Hall he avoided looking sideways in case Severus was there and their eyes met, and it just so happened he was quite good at avoiding Severus all week. Unfortunately sooner or later the time would come that they would have to interact and it came in the form of Potions class. Harry was positively dreading the class and literary got sick to his stomach from his nerves. He wasn't the only one nervous though.

During class, he realized he was also being ignored. Severus addressed the class, but did not come near Harry or make eye contact and said nothing when Harry sent his corked vial with Hermione. Harry was a little disappointed when he left. He had expected Severus to force them to talk but instead he just pretended Harry wasn't there.

Severus on the other hand had to control his impulses not to run to Harry, shake him and beg for forgiveness. He had stayed up late talking to Sirius and Remus and they had agreed to let Harry come to him in his own time. He did his best not to look at Harry or he would crumble. He was in his most snarky mode and even he had to agree that he was a little too harsh when he pronounced Macmillan's work a pile of dragon dung. He hoped Harry forgave him soon because he did not know how many more of these stressful hours he could endure. He didn't know that something else would soon add to his stress that would be announced to him Saturday morning.

Xxxxxxx

Remus and Tonks entered the Marauder's Quarters grinning widely. Their grins faded as they took in the scene in front of them. Sirius was fanning Severus who was prostrated on the couch with unseeing eyes.

"What happened?" Tonks asked joining Sirius on the coffee table.

"Don't know, I found him this way."

"And you didn't think to call anyone?" Remus asked sternly.

"I didn't think he'd like to be seen like this. I ran a diagnostic spell and he isn't hurt," Sirius hissed and was shocked when a hand grabbed his robes and he was pulled towards Severus.

"I'm going to be a father," Severus rasped.

After prying himself from Severus' grip Sirius beamed, "That's great news! I'm going to have a nephew and this time Uncle Paddy gets to spoil not raise."

"That is really great news Severus," Remus said grinning. "I didn't know you and Emmeline were that serious."

"We aren't," Severus choked lost, "Was an accident...accident."

"Oh, well," Sirius said a little flustered, "Hum, doesn't matter. You'll be a great father," he patted Severus' shoulder and looked at the other two for help. Sirius did a double take when he saw Tonks scowling with her arms crossed.

"What?" he asked.

"He totally stole our thunder!" she cried.

"Thunder?" Sirius asked bewildered and Remus cleared his throat and announced grinning widely:

"We are pregnant too!"

Sirius jumped and clapped happily.

"Yes, twice Uncle Paddy!"

"See, Severus. Your baby will have company," Tonks offered and Severus said in a small voice:

"Baby..."

Suddenly Severus stood up and started pacing;

"I can't be a father! Me! A father! That is utterly ridiculous! I am the greasy git from the dungeon, how on earth will I raise a child without traumatizing him or her?"

"Severus..." Remus tried.

"I have no qualification whatsoever! I don't do small children! Everyone knows that!"

"Severus..." Remus tried again and glared at Sirius' retreating back who had gone to his room, abandoning them.

"I terrorize them, I don't do fatherly lov-" he stopped as Sirius, who had just come back, held a picture of Severus reading to a four-year-old Harry in front of his face.

"I think you'll do fine and we're here to help."

Xxx

"And then Tonks said she was pregnant too. Can you believe that? What are the odds?" Sirius laughed and Hestia fidgeted on her side of the bed.

"Yeah, odds...hum Siri?"

"Yes love."

"Now, you'll find this funny."

"What?"

"Remus and Severus will be Uncles again."

"I know. That was what I said."

"From you."

"No, from Remus and Severus."

"You too."

"What?"

"Yeah."

"You sure?"

"Pretty sure."

"I'm going to be a father again?"

"Yes."

Sirius sat on his knees and stared at her. Then suddenly he envelope her in a hug and kissed her,

"Thank you."

"So, you're okay with this? We didn't plan."

"I didn't plan Harry and he is the best thing that ever happened to me," he smiled and kissed her again.

Xxx

"What's up dad?" Harry asked as he sat down. Sirius had called him earlier to the Marauder's Quarters and Harry frowned as he saw the shrunken boxes piled up on the desk.

"What's that?"

"Oh," Sirius said looking at the boxes, "That's part of why I called you. You see, Hestia is moving in," he announced happily.

"Oh," Harry said uncomfortable; what else could he say?

"Yeah, well, I wanted to get married but she doesn't want to- you know- failing institutions and all- well there's other news to."

"What?" Harry asked not knowing what else could happen.

"You son, will be a big brother! Three times! At once!" Sirius beamed but he did not expect the reaction he got.

"WHAT?" Harry shrieked and Sirius took that for delighted shock.

"Yes, Tonks, Hestia and Emmeline are all expecting and should be due about the same time around April. Isn't this great?" he asked grinning widely.

"Great?" Harry asked disbelievingly. "Oh, wonderful. Truly spectacular. Now why don't I leave you to your unpacking?"

Sirius had been quite airy since he got the news, but he did not miss the sarcastic tone of Harry's voice or the banging door. He frowned but chalked it up to the bad mood Harry had been in since the fight with Sev.

Xxxxxxx

Harry liked being with Ginny; she didn't force him to talk. Hermione had been pestering him about his attitude towards his Uncle ever since they arrived and why they were both ignoring each other. She wanted to know what happened but Harry didn't want to talk about it with anyone, not his friends, not his girlfriend, not his dad, Uncle Moony or Grandpa, nor Tonks and definitely not Emmeline and Hestia who had also tried. *Them!* Yeah, they who had come to change everything. Deep down Harry knew he was being irrational but let's face it, he bet his Uncle Severus didn't even care anymore if Harry ever talked to him again. Not now that he would have a real son... "Tough", Harry thought *"I didn't want to forgive Severus anyway,"* he wanted to stay rightfully angry at Severus. Yes he did, Severus betrayed his best friend. She would have never betrayed him. A little nagging voice asked Harry why they hadn't been talking at the time of her death and told Harry that even if they had been apart Severus still tried to protect her, but Harry squashed that voice. He bet Severus was at fault there too.

He moved to get more comfortable while he read and Ginny looked down and smiled. They had been next to the tree by the lake reading. Harry was lying down with his head on Ginny's lap while she absent-mindedly ran her fingers through his hair. He smiled back. He liked being with Ginny. That first time he went to the Burrow after they started dating and all the Weasley men abducted him for a talk about how they would hurt him if he hurt her was kind of scary, but they had been great afterwards.

They were studying Potions; Ginny had said she needed to study because she had no idea how she managed to get into Severus' prime class. So that's what they had been studying and that was why Harry's mind kept taking him back to the subject of his Uncle. It was annoying, but at least Ginny didn't ask him questions. She just sat there studying Potions and sometimes smiling knowingly at him. Sometimes he felt like he was missing something.

To herself Ginny was wondering if she would have made a good Slytherin.

Xxx

"But we have to start deciding now!" Severus cried for the hundredth time over hundreds of pamphlets that were strewn in his quarter's living room table. "Have you any idea how long this will take?"

"Last time I checked we had a little thing called magic on our side," Emmeline said flatly.

"But we need one here, and one at Spinner's End and one over at Grimmauld Place, and that's not counting that we need to multiply all that by three."

"I think Remus and Tonks, and Hestia and Sirius can manage theirs."

"As if! They're morons! They will remember only after the poor children are born and the babies will have to sleep in drawers!"

Emmeline couldn't help herself and burst out laughing.

Severus scowled, "This is no laughing matter Emmeline."

"We still have almost seven months before the babies are born and last time I checked Remus and Sirius actually have experience in building a nursery."

At the silent mention of Harry, Severus stiffened and started shuffling pamphlets. Emmeline sighed and went to him. She sat on his lap and kissed his forehead.

"He will come around."

"He's been back for over a month and he does a mighty job of ignoring me."

"If it makes you feel any better Hestia told me Harry hasn't been by their quarters either."

Severus shrugged, "You talked to him."

"I did, last week."

"And?"

"He said he didn't want to talk."

Severus nodded and rested his chin on her shoulder. She picked up a pamphlet and tried to take his mind out of these depressing thoughts.

"What about this one?"

"My daughter will not be sleeping in a miniature race car!"

"Who says you'll have a daughter?"

"I do!"

Xxx

"Harry!" Sirius called in the halls and ran towards Harry. "Hey son. Haven't seen you outside of classes."

"Yeah, you know. NEWTs aren't called Nastily Exhausting for nothing," Harry lied.

"Of course," Sirius smiled throwing an arm around Harry's shoulder. "I remember my NEWT year. But you should come to the Quarters; we were looking over cribs and trying to plan the nurseries for the babies. We voted and decided to have one for all of them in each house. You should come and see what our options are."

"Yeah, well. I'll try. Gotta go dad. See you!" Harry said rushing away and Sirius was starting to get annoyed with Harry's attitude. He had no idea how annoyed with Harry's attitude he would get.

Xxxx

A/N- Thanks for reading and reviewing.

Thanks SWaddict1986 for betraying.

Chapter 21- They're what?

"Yeah, well. I'll try. Gotta go dad. See you!" Harry said rushing away and Sirius was starting to get annoyed with Harry's attitude. He had no idea how annoyed with Harry's attitude he would get.

Xxxx

Chapter 22- Acting out

"Dungbomb"

A small hand passed dungbombs to a slightly larger hand, which passed the dungbombs to a slightly smaller hand, which placed the dugbombs strategically.

"Filibusters Fireworks."

The process was repeated with the fireworks.

"Ready?" the girl asked and the two boys nodded. The girl used her wand to ignite the fireworks and yelled, "Run for your lives!"

All three children ran

The black haired man paced in front of the two second years and the five-year-old.

"So you three want to convince me that you had nothing to do with the little bomb that exploded in the Charms hallway?"

Three soot covered faces nodded.

"I find that hard to believe. That will be twenty points from Gryffindor, twenty from Hufflepuff, no broom for a week and detention for the three of you," the man said simply pointing at each of the accused.

The three children's eyes widened in horror, "But Siri- I mean Sir. You have no proof!"

"I believe Nymphadora that your face says enough."

"You can't give Harry a detention he is not even a student," the freckled boy protested.

"I'm not a student daddy!"

"If you could join Ms. Tonks and Mr. Weasley in this little escapade then you can join them in the punishment," Sirius said flatly and grabbed Harry's little hand and pulled him to his side. "Now say goodbye to your partners in crime. They are going back to their dorms. You'll see each other tomorrow in detention."

"Bye Charlie, bye Tonks," Harry waved miserably as the other two children left. Tonks glanced back and murmured, "Hypocrite."

"Care to make that two weeks Ms. Tonks?"

"No sir! Thank you sir," she yelled and ran out.

Sirius pursed his lips, rested a fist on his hip and glared at Harry. Harry just grinned widely back.

xxx

"Where the hell did he get the idea for that?" Tonks asked.

"It was one of our pranks back in the day. But Harry never was a prankster," Remus said but then looking at Tonks he amended, "Unless goaded to, so there was no harm in telling him," he finished explaining and flinched at the looks Hestia, Emmeline and Severus were giving him who had all been affected by the Marauder's prank the first time.

All three of the couples were discussing Harry, the flooded Great Hall after it started really raining inside, the drenched students and Harry's month long detention.

"I don't know what's gotten into him. I mean he never was a surly teenager. He had never acted out! I thought we had lucked out and now he starts! He's all moody and drenches everyone in the school," Sirius cried.

"Maybe he's been hexed," Severus pondered.

"What hex could cause this kind of change in behavior?" Remus said thoughtfully.

"Or maybe," Hestia said with a raised eyebrow, "He is just being normally insecure."

The three men and Tonks looked at her as if she had grown an extra head.

"Harry has never been an insecure child," Sirius scoffed.

"Oh honestly, do you work hard at being daft or does it come naturally?" Emmeline sneered. "It's obvious he is jealous and, as Hestia put it, insecure," she rolled her eyes and explained, "Look at it from his point of view: you three are suddenly going to have your own children."

"Harry is ours, there won't be any difference-" Remus started but Emmeline said forcibly.

"I said *his* point of view not *yours*. I know there won't be any difference between these children and Harry. I'd hex you all to oblivion if there was."

"Hormones," Severus mouthed but cowed at a glare.

"As Emmy was saying, you three not only are having children who will be your own flesh and blood from the start and not through adoption right after Harry turned seventeen and is about to graduate Hogwarts. Right when any guardian's duty would end. So here he is fretting that you won't want him anymore since you're not obligated to care for him and don't need him anymore because now you have your 'real' children," Hestia explained making quotations motions with her fingers.

"Harry wouldn't think that," Sirius huffed. "He knows that he is the most important thing in my life."

"But he won't be anymore," Tonks said finally catching up. "I don't mean he won't be on the top of the list Siri," she explained at his glare "but he won't be the only one you three have. He will be tied with these children and maybe he is fretting that he won't actually tie, that he will be second place and eventually forgotten. I hadn't thought of that."

"That is because just like these three imbeciles you are too close to the problem," Emmeline drawled.

"Then we go find him and tell him he's being utterly ridiculous," Sirius said, starting to stalk away.

"Oh yes, and get the boy on the defensive side," Emmeline said sarcastically and Sirius stopped. "You can't act like he is being a naughty child. That will only make him even more insecure if all of a sudden

you start lecturing him when up to now you've always been more of a best friend. You'll prove him right."

"So what do you suggest oh genius one?" Severus glared with his arms crossed.

"Simple, show him through actions that nothing will change," she said.

"But that's not true," Remus said. "Things will change. Not just for us but for Harry. Once he graduates he'll start whatever he wants to do in life. He'll probably stay in London or at least move out."

"What she meant is, things won't change in your relationship," Hestia said. "Do things with him like you've always done that are about Harry and not the babies. Include him on the stuff about the baby and show him how important he'll be as an older brother, but also talk to him about stuff that has nothing to do with the babies, things that maybe have only to do with him or even nothing to do with him. Talk about the Chuddley Cannons' chance at the Cup. I know we've all been overwhelmed as of late and may have forgotten that there is more to life than these three children coming, and maybe Harry thinks that because all we've been able to think about is this then we won't need or have time for him anymore. Especially since, as Remus pointed out, he won't be around so much."

"Well," Remus smiled. "He will be with us at Grimmauld Place," his smile was wiped out at Sirius' jealous look. "I mean, that will help, to show he is still a very important part of the family and as much our son as these children."

"Yes," Emmeline nodded and bit her lips. "I think this might have been bad timing. But I bet Harry's reluctance to forgive you Sev may have been inflated by the news that you'll be a father."

"You mean he may think I don't care for his love anymore?" Severus said aghast.

"We all have tried to talk to him about you except for you," Hestia said. "I know we told you to give him space but maybe it's time to go after him. Show him you're still here when he is ready to forgive you."

Severus nodded and his stomach started churning at the thought. He decided he would ask Minerva to be the first teacher to oversee Harry's detention. There was nothing like a solid hour to talk when Harry had nowhere else to go.

Xxxxxxxx

"Come in," Severus called from the teacher's desk. Harry entered at once but stopped abruptly when he saw who the teacher was. He looked back as he was quite sure he had entered the Transfiguration Classroom.

"Your Head of House had other commitments today so I shall oversee your detention. Please take a seat," he said pointing at the closest desk. Harry did so without uttering a word but didn't take his eyes off Severus. He had a defiant expression on his face that didn't go away.

"Please take your quill and parchment and write this line that is on the board," Severus said pointing to the line: "The Great Hall is a place for peaceful meals and not for raining."

"How many times?" Harry asked.

"For an hour," Severus said simply and went back to grading the papers he had been working on before. Harry stared at him wondering when Severus would breach the elephant in the room but nothing happened. He took his quill and parchment and started. His nerves where starting to grate at the silence but he said nothing. *So that was how Severus was going to play? Well then he would not win!* His stomach clenched at the iciness of Severus' lack of acknowledgment.

When the hour was up Severus told Harry to stop writing, and took the parchment. He nodded and said, "Very well." Harry quickly started putting his things away and was about to get up when Severus held up a hand.

"I have not dismissed you."

"But I thought the detention was over."

"It is," Severus said calmly motioning for Harry to seat back and pulling a chair and sitting down. "But I'm not done with you. I just wanted to get your first detention out of the way so we can talk."

"I don't want to--"

"But I do. So you can stay quiet if you want, or not, but I want you to listen."

Harry crossed his arms and set his jaw in a scowl but said nothing.

"I could tell you about my abusive father and make excuses for my choices but I won't. I chose to be a Death Eater. I was lured by the promise of power and revenge on the people who had wronged me. I was wrong but in my arrogance I did not see that. I had a very comfortable position you see? I was excellent at potions and the Dark Lord coveted that. He thought me too precious to risk in raids when I could be of more use in the lab. So even though I heard about the raids I did not see them. I could easily fool myself that I was doing nothing wrong. The first time I realized the price my actions were having on the world was when Voldemort decided to interpret the words I had taken to him as a need to kill a baby, and his family. When he said the words "the Potter's baby" I knew he meant my Lily. For the first time the war touched my doorstep and that was a wakeup call as no other event had been before. Then I stopped and really looked and saw the destruction I had helped cause, Harry. I never said I was innocent. I am guilty of much, including letting you romanticize my role as a spy. When I relayed that prophecy I was thinking only of pleasing the man I considered my mentor. But when my eyes were finally opened I realized he was my master and I was nothing but a slave. Nothing will change what I did. I can't bring your parents back no matter how much I atone for my sins. I have to live with that and so do you. But nothing will change how I feel for you, not what I did, not what happens next, not anyone. Even if you never forgive me, I'll forever love you as a son even if you never speak to me again."

Severus saw the fine trembling of Harry's jaw but also saw Harry's determination not to show anything.

"I'll be waiting for you Harry. No matter how long it takes," Severus finished and moved his hand forward as to touch Harry's knees but aborted the movement. "However long you need son," he finished

huskily, getting up and summoning the papers he had been grading. He took one last look at Harry and left the boy to himself.

Once Severus left Harry lost his control and sobbed, bringing up his feet on the chair and burying his head in his knees.

XXXXX

A week had passed and Harry had been in one gory detention after the other. That first day of lines was probably just to fool him. He had spent all the other detentions cleaning parts of the castle the Muggle way that he was sure the house-elves had forgotten about for centuries. Harry wondered if his dads had had the same punishment but he wasn't about to ask. On Saturday, which thankfully was detention free as McGonagall had stated weekdays for a month, Harry was surprised by Remus showing up at the doors to the now quite dry Great Hall.

"Hey there cub!"

"What are you doing here?"

"Can't I visit my old home?" Remus asked in mock hurt throwing an arm around Harry. "Now, I managed to convince one very stubborn Sirius Black that he was not allowed to punish you for school infractions, especially school infractions that were inspired by his tales, so even though he still has water in places he never knew he had, he authorized me to take you to the movies."

"The movies! Really?"

"Yes, since you are of age now you are allowed to leave on weekends as you please. So I thought we could go to London and watch *Titanic*."

Harry's expression quickly changed from astonished to horrified, "*TITANIC!*"

Remus burst out laughing and wiped his eyes, "Oh, if you could see your face right now. No the main actor is the same but we are going to an action movie, *The Man in the Iron Mask*."

"Yes!" Harry said excited.

"So, I saw the trailer and we have ourselves an afternoon of Musketeers and a lot of sword fighting," Remus said pleased, leading Harry towards Gryffindor tower. "Go put on some Muggle clothes and I expect you'll want to let your girlfriend know where you are."

"Okay," Harry said. "So, will Tonks be meeting us?"

"Nope, it's just us men today," Remus shook his head.

Xxx

"So, did you have fun at the movies?" Sirius asked while Harry was polishing the suits of armor.

"Yes," Harry answered as he scrubbed hard. He had a great time with Remus. They had fun at the movies and Harry was able to tell Remus all he had been doing this term, how things were going with Ginny and even explain the execution of the prank. That had not been easy and he had had to persuade the very reluctant Dobby and Kreacher to do it perfectly. Sirius of course knew this. Remus had been

voted to be the one to give Harry a day out that was only about him and Sirius was voted to show Harry how he would be involved with his new siblings. "Professor."

"I don't see why we can't talk while you do your detention, you clean with your hands not your mouth," Sirius said twirling his wand. "Moony didn't even invite me!" Sirius pouted.

"You know why you are forbidden of going into Muggle theaters in general," Harry pointed out.

"Oh, yeah. Look who's talking "I like to make it really rain in the Great Hall." So yeah, I misbehaved once, or twice in the movies. But honestly, people are supposed to stay quiet in the movies you know? All I did was silence a few chattering annoying people!"

"DAD! You struck them with a Silencing Charm and then you stuck another couple to their chairs with a Sticking Charm."

"No one needs to go to the bathroom that often!" Sirius defended himself pouting. Harry snorted. Sirius watched him as he cleaned.

"You know, I've missed your visits and our popcorn sessions," Sirius said.

"Thought you'd be busy," Harry mumbled.

"I'm never too busy to spend time with my son. No matter how many sons I have," Sirius added. "You know, people manage more than one quite often. Arthur for instance, he manages seven."

Harry just shrugged.

"We were thinking of names for your brother and I need your help? Hestia is very intimidating. I need protection. I want to honor Reggie but she thinks that Regulus is a name that will get your brother laughed at."

"It is," Harry agreed.

"Hum, Harry, I don't think you understood quite how you are supposed to help *me* in the fight, not Hestia."

"I don't want a brother that will be scoffed at because of his name. If you name him Regulus I'll kidnap him and move to Brazil and name him John or the equivalent of John there. Then you'll never find us and he'll be able to live a normal, bully-free life."

"It's João and you wouldn't go live faraway from your daddy would you?" Sirius asked in a whiny tone then his eyes got a strange glint in them and he narrowed them and asked, "This was Ginny's idea wasn't it?"

Harry looked at Sirius and couldn't help but laugh. He had to concede, brother or no brother his dad was still insane.

"Besides, Regulus is much better than Cassiopeia!" Sirius protested.

"No one is naming a sibling of mine Cassiopeia!"

"Oh, no? Last time I checked that was on Sev's list!"

Sirius was pleased to notice that through Harry's mumblings about loonies in his family choosing ridiculous names he had not once flinched, or scowled at the mention of Sev. The evening ended with Harry letting Sirius know he would be drafting a list of acceptable names to be discussed.

Xxxxxxx

After the month of detention was over and Harry had yet to approach Severus, Albus decided to call Harry in for a little talk. He had noticed that Harry had passed the stage of rightful anger and was at that stage where he wanted to forgive but did not know how to.

After sipping some tea in silence Harry said quietly. "You want to talk about Uncle Sev."

"No," Albus said. "I want to talk about me. I want to tell you a story Harry."

"What?" Harry asked bewildered. He had been sure he was in for another lecture about forgiving.

"Do you recall how I told you about Arianna's death?"

Harry nodded solemnly.

"I am about to tell you, Harry, a story about me and a young boy named Gellert Grindelwald," Albus said simply, and Harry's jaw dropped and stayed down through the whole story of how Grindelwald and Albus met, became friends, studied the Deathly Hallows, how Harry even possessed two, one which Harry had left in his Potter Vault not being comfortable possessing Albus' wand, and the third had been destroyed and disposed of by Remus. Albus explained they thought what they were doing was for the Greater Good, how Albus fooled himself that he didn't know what Grindelwald wanted and how that led to Ariana's death and Aberforth's estrangement from Albus.

"The worst mistake of my life is the reason why even though my only brother lives in the same village as I do we only meet when business needs to be taken care of Harry. Don't let that happen to you and Severus. No one is perfect. We all make mistakes and sometimes these mistakes have horrible consequences, but what separates an evil person from a good one is the ability to learn from those mistakes and Severus learned, in the worst way possible. He did what he could to prevent the fatal outcome of that mistake, he begged me to protect you three-

"Just my mom," Harry said and Albus smiled sadly.

"Back then I said the same thing to him but today I know that is not true. The fact that you and James were in danger wasn't in the forefront of his mind as Lily's peril was, but Severus never wanted you harmed. He wanted all of you protected, even if he didn't phrase it well. He did beg for only her life to Voldemort because there he knew he couldn't ask for anything else and that he was already risking everything by merely asking for her, a Muggleborn witch. Without knowing it, Severus saved your life. Had Voldemort not given your mother a choice, Harry, her protection wouldn't have been cast by her sacrifice and you would have died. Voldemort only gave her a choice as a gift to one of his favorite servants. I know that does not change what he did, but what he did does not change how he feels about you. He made a mistake, as I once did and as your father once did too that almost cost James, Severus

and Remus' lives. As you see, no one is perfect. Do you hate me too now? Do you hate your father because of his youthful ignorance?"

Harry bit his lips and shook his head. Albus nodded satisfied but did not expect the next question.

"Why did they fight? I heard here and there that Uncle Sev and mom weren't speaking when she died. Why did they fight?"

Albus sighed. He truly did not think it was his place to tell this story. He had heard it of course, back when it happened from the portraits and afterwards, just after her death during the few times Severus got drunk and was in a self-pity bout. Before Harry entered his life. But he thought that Harry should understand everything to be able to fully forgive.

xxx

Harry was thoroughly pissed off and this time he was angry with his mother. How could she not listen to Sev? How could she just give up on him like that? She could have saved him. He once told Theodore Nott he thought his Uncle never had someone to help him stay away from Voldemort and now he knew why: because Lily Evans just gave up on him. You don't give up on friends when they need you!

So yes, he called her a horrible name. But who has never called someone they love a horrible name in a fight? He was sorry! And let's face it; there is nothing more humiliating for a teenage boy than being rescued by a girl!

Harry stalked towards the dungeon and didn't even knock when he opened the door to Severus' private lab. He suddenly covered his mouth at the fumes that filled the place and stepped back outside for a gulp of fresh air. Quickly summoning a Bubble Head Charm, he went back inside to see why there were so many toxic fumes around. His blood froze when he spotted feet next to a cauldron and he rushed to the unconscious person's side.

Xxx

A/N- Thanks for reading and reviewing.

Thanks SWaddict1986 for betraying.

Chapter 22- Acting out

Harry stalked towards the dungeon and didn't even knock when he opened the door to Severus' private lab. He suddenly covered his mouth at the fumes that filled the place and got back outside for a gulp of fresh air. Quickly summoning a bubble charm he went back inside to see why there were so much toxic fumes around. His blood froze when he spotted feet next to a cauldron and he rushed to the person's side.

Chapter 23- My name is...

"Oh, no, no, no!" Harry cried out as he hoisted an unconscious Emmeline in his arms. He was quite grateful for his growth spurt and that his dad had been right when he said Harry would end up being as tall as James. As he left the lab he placed a containment charm around the air so the fumes wouldn't dissipate and harm someone else and ran as fast as he could towards the Hospital Wing.

"AUNT POPPY!" he yelled at the top of his lungs as he burst open the infirmary's doors.

"What is the meaning of this Harry James- oh my God, put her here," Poppy said as she motioned him to a bed.

"There were fumes in the lab. I couldn't breathe for even a second. I don't know how long she was there," Harry said panicking as he deposited Emmeline on the bed.

"I need you to go back there and find out what she inhaled Harry. Find Severus. He will know."

"She's pregnant!" Harry said worried, he didn't want to let go of her hand.

"I know." Poppy said putting her hand on Harry's shoulder. "Now what both your Aunt and your new sibling need is for you to find out what Emmeline breathed."

Harry nodded and ran as fast as he could. He sent a Patronus to wherever Severus was with the message to meet him in his lab. He was extremely grateful for badgering his father into showing him how to do that.

He was at the lab's door in a blink of the eye and had once again cast the Bubble Head Charm around his head. He quickly strode to the cauldron and put a sample of the potion in a flask. He went to the table and started examining the contents.

"Harry! Harry, are you here? Oh, God what happened here?" he heard Severus cry and soon his Uncle was by his side with his own Bubble Head Charm.

"Emmeline inhaled this. Aunt Poppy needs to know what this is!"

The color in Severus' face drained and he started appraising the cauldron, "It's the permanent Wolfsbane. She added too much aconite. She must have gotten nauseous and spilled too much in the potion. I told her not to brew! She was having trouble with the odors!"

Harry stopped Severus' ranting by grabbing his hand and pulling him out of the lab, "We have to let Aunt Poppy know so she can counteract the effects. You have to explain to her what too much aconite does! Let's go!"

Severus nodded and let himself get steered. Once at the Hospital Wing he almost fell at the sight of Emmeline on the bed, unconscious and so pale, but Harry held him.

"Uncle Sev, the effects. Explain."

It was Harry calling him once again Uncle Sev and not Professor that got him out of his shock and Severus started listing effects and how to counter them to Poppy, without taking his eyes off Emmeline. In a group effort, while Poppy cast healing charms and barked orders for potions that Harry and Severus fetched and passed her, the three of them managed to negate the poison and Emmeline's cheeks quickly regained color.

"What about the baby?" Harry asked worried when Poppy pronounced that Emmeline would recover.

"I had already shielded the baby from the effects of the poison when you brought her and I scanned her. He hadn't been affected yet and I was able to place the protection charm around the womb. But had you waited much longer, I would have to magically transfer him to someone else's womb to protect him and that is always very risky.

"Him?" Harry asked and Severus, who had been sitting next to the bed embracing Emmeline and thanking God that she and the baby were fine, suddenly lifted his head.

"Him?"

"Oh, yes. You'll have a healthy baby boy Severus. I know you only wanted to know at the birth but well, you can understand how I slipped."

"But, but- I only thought of girl names!" Severus said lost.

"No sister or brother of mine is going to be named Cassiopeia Uncle Sev! You are here forth banned of choosing names."

"I'm the father!" Severus protested. "You can't ban me!"

"Banned!" Harry repeated and Poppy smiled at their banter. It was as if the last few months never happened.

Xxx

Severus had taken Emmeline back to their rooms as soon as Poppy allowed her to go. She had told Emmeline to rest for at least two days and Severus was catering to all her needs. She had been eating voraciously off a tray he took to the bed when he just gazed at her and blurted.

"Marry me."

"She looked at him with a sandwich half to her mouth and said while munching, "I'm not just marrying you because we're having a baby."

He scooted closer, took her sandwich from her and looked into her eyes as he held her hand and rubbed his thumb on the back of it.

"I love you. I love you so much. I know I never say it. But I'm just like that. I don't know how to express my feelings so well. But today my heart went cold when I thought I'd lose you both. And it was the both of you, not just the baby," he smiled.

"I think you said it well enough," she said snaking her arms around him and kissing him. "Yes."

"Really?"

"But only after I can fit properly in a dress," she said seriously and snatched her sandwich from him to devour it.

xxx

There was a knock on the door and Severus' breath caught in his throat when he opened it and saw Harry. He was afraid that after the scare Harry would go back to hating him.

"How's Emmeline?" Harry asked awkwardly. Harry had never been awkward with him and that brought a pang to Severus' heart.

"She's recovering well. She agreed to stop brewing until the baby is born."

Harry nodded, "Can I come in?"

"Yes, sorry," Severus said and he motioned Harry inside. Harry turned to him and said, "Uncle Moony once told me that a bad decision doesn't make a person bad. I guess I forgot that lately. I also forgot my mom said I had to listen with my heart when you told me what you did, and that she forgave you and that I'm not perfect either, I've made mistakes, I've also killed," Harry said fumbling with something in his pocket and he looked down.

"Harry-" Severus started but Harry cut him off.

"Let me finish. I know what you're going to say; that I had no choice but to kill Voldemort and Quirrell and I know that, I understand that, but I will never be fine with that and I guess that is something I have to live with the same way you have to live with what you did."

"What you did wasn't a mistake Harry what I did on the other hand-"

"Was stupid and wrong and I wish you hadn't, but if you hadn't I wouldn't be here today nor would Voldemort be dead. I know they can't compare. I know we would change everything if we could but we can't and even if I had no choice, if I did the right thing what I did was still horrible but you didn't stop loving me because of that. Grandpa told me about why you and mom fought and I guess she made a bad choice too. She abandoned you in a sense because she gave up on you. She could have helped, maybe prevented you from joining-"

"I am responsible for my choices Harry."

"I know," Harry said in a desperate tone, "but what I'm trying to say is everyone screwed up and I guess I don't want to be mad at everyone or at you because it hurts, and I miss you and I can't stand looking at you and not being able to talk to you and thinking you'll just forget me because you don't need me anymore now that you have a son and-"

"I'll always need you," Severus said taking a step forward and embracing Harry.

"I know. Now I know. I was scared when I found Emmeline. I was scared of losing a brother I haven't even met yet and didn't even know I already loved until I almost lost him," Harry said grabbing the fabric of Severus' robes with his fists.

"I was scared too Harry."

Harry gulped and pushed away and tried to compose himself. "I told you that you were one of my dads," he said. "And dads are for life. And I want you to know I really mean that I am your son and proud of that," he finished producing a vial from his robes. "I brewed this myself and already added my blood, got the recipe from the library and I know this is the one dad and Uncle Moony used. I only need your blood. That is if you want to."

"Harry that's-" Severus said eyeing the vial with astonishment.

"I'll understand if you don't want to. You don't have to just to prove anything to me," Harry said.

"No, Harry. I do. I always have. Since you were a little child. But this is a huge step. You shouldn't do this just because of a fight."

"I want to Uncle Sev. And dad and Uncle Moony know because I told them and they agreed with me. I want to be your son in every way."

Severus nodded swallowing a lump and took the vial from Harry. He sliced his finger with his wand and squeezed some blood in the vial to mix with the adoption potion. The mixture bubbled and turned a vivid purple. Harry grabbed it and gulped it down. The potion quickly took effect and he fainted and Severus caught him. He carried him to the couch and watched mesmerized as Harry's skin became a tad lighter and his eyebrows arched a bit more, and his ears rounded. There wasn't much of a change but Severus figured that was because physically he, Sirius and James had been quite close. After all, Severus knew the Potters related to the Blacks a few generations back, and Severus was sure that if he bothered to check the Prince line he would find a Black or two. They were everywhere! He regarded his son as he slept, because now Harry was his and no one could say any different. He had tears in his eyes and he never saw Emmeline enter.

"If you're going to bawl like that at all your son's births I am banning you from the delivery room."

"You people have to stop banning me, Harry already banned me from choosing the name!"

"Thank God!"

Xxxxx

The months passed by and before they knew it Harry and his fathers found themselves at St. Mungo's maternity ward for the third time in three days. Emmeline, Tonks and Hestia had given birth exactly one day apart from each other in that order, and Sirius was convinced that they timed it like that on purpose. Harry peered at the pink and wrinkled sleeping bundle in Hestia's arms and wrinkled his nose.

"Not what you'd call a looker."

Hestia and Sirius snorted.

"Since you said the same about Teddy AND Albus we're just going to let that slide," Sirius said. "So, what are we going to name her?"

Harry looked at Hestia who looked back at Harry.

"Hestia, dad asked what you are going to name her!"

"Nope, he asked you. We decided you would get to name her when we were choosing names and you said we would have to see her to know if she looked like a Juliet or an Elizabeth. So now that you've seen her, name her."

Harry's jaw dropped.

"What?"

"It's your duty as her brother come on," Sirius said and Harry's heart lightened up a little. If he was her brother it meant he was still Sirius' son.

He looked at the red baby with jet black hair and said, "Well she looks like a carrot with a wig but I guess we can't call her that," Sirius and Hestia rolled their eyes and Harry bit his lip, "Regina."

"Regina?"

"Yeah, well, I remember when you still didn't know the sex, dad asked you if he could name a boy Regulus for Uncle Reggie. I don't think that works for a girl but this way she can still be named after him see, Regina, Reggie for short."

Hestia looked at her daughter and mouthed, "Regina." She smiled and nodded, "I like it."

Sirius smiled his eyes bright and kissed Hestia, "Thanks. Then he kissed Regina and when he lifted his head he pulled Harry in and kissed Harry.

"DAD! I'm almost eighteen!"

"And still my baby. Now I have two babies."

"Oh, Regina. If how your dad was with Harry when he was first dating is anything to go by, you'll have a lot of trouble."

Harry and Sirius looked at Hestia as if she was crazy.

"She's not going to date," Harry said pointedly.

"Well, when she is a teenager-"

"No," Sirius said with the same tone as Harry's.

Hestia sighed.

"Yeah, and if any boy dares come near her, I'll just remind them I am the defeater of Voldemort. Oh, and all those poisons Uncle Sev taught me are sure come in handy."

"Yeah," Sirius said with a calculating glint in his eyes. "You know, we better start training Teddy and Albus to scare any stupid boy away."

Harry nodded and Hestia sighed in defeat.

"You know the worst don't you? I had three parents, the three of them will have six!"

Xxx

"Ted?"

"Yes," Tonks and Remus answered beaming.

"Ted?" Ted Tonks asked again dazed and a little confused.

Andromeda came from behind Ted and hugged him and rested her chin on his shoulder, gazing lovingly at her grandson in his mother's arms. "I think that's a lovely name."

Remus, who was seated next to Tonks on the hospital bed grinned.

"Ted?" Ted asked again.

"I think we'll be here a long time," Tonks sighed. "Dad, this is your grandson, who is named after you because Remus and I wanted to honor you and mom, actually."

Remus cleared his throat, "You two worked relentlessly on the PWA, not only in putting the Association to work, but in aiding werewolves with their legal problems. I know that it may seem you haven't aided me but by helping people that weren't as lucky as I have been it was like you were helping me. We had decided that we would call our child either Andromeda or Ted depending on the sex. So, here you have Ted Remus Lupin."

Andromeda couldn't hold herself back and launched herself at her daughter and son-in-law with tears in her eyes and Ted just said faintly:

"Ted?"

Tonks smacked her head in defeat as Harry entered the room.

"What's up Uncle Ted?" Harry asked patting the man's back. Ted looked at him and mouthed, "Ted."

Before Harry could say something Remus said quickly:

"Glad you're here cub. We have to talk."

"About?" Harry asked sitting on a vacated chair next to the bed.

"Well," Tonks said. "We decided that despite your young age you would be the best choice."

"For what?" Harry asked.

"Well cub," Remus said. "We know you'll protect your brothers and sister no matter what," Harry nodded proudly sitting a little straighter, "So we decided ..."

Xxx

Harry sauntered in the Gryffindor Common Room and stared at Hermione, Ron, Neville and Ginny, who were studying at a table, with a superior look.

"What?" Ginny indulged him.

"I am here to impart my wisdom."

"Since when is he wise?" Neville asked the others and Ron shrugged.

"Uncle Remus and Tonks asked me," Harry said pointing to himself, "To be young Theodore's godfather.

Thus I am now a godfather and wise by default," he finished throwing up his chin.

"You forgot a tiny detail Harry," Hermione pointed out.

"What?"

"Before he became your father, Professor Black was your godfather," Ginny smirked as Harry's face fell, and he huffed and sat on a chair, crossing his arms and pouting.

"Bugger!"

Xxx

A few days later, when the couples and children were back at Hogwarts, or Grimmauld Place in the Lupins' case, the Snapes received a visit.

"So we were thinking," Sirius said from the couch where he was holding Hestia's hand. "A godfather is someone you would trust to raise your kid in your place."

"Yes," Severus said from where he was seated with Emmeline. "That is why we chose Remus and Nymphadora."

Sirius looked at him shocked.

"You chose Moony and Moony chose Harry. What about me?"

Hestia poked him.

"The moment is not about you. Besides you were already made godfather once before."

"Humph, okay. So as I was saying, in choosing our child's godparents we thought of the people we would trust with her safety."

Severus nodded, "Remus is a good choice. I'd say Albus, but he is quite old, and if he had to take care of the child he wouldn't be up to keep up with the child. There's Andy and-"

"He's not getting it!" Sirius moaned.

"Honey," Emmeline said. "I think they are asking us!"

Severus gaped at her and then burst out laughing, "Of course they aren't."

"We are!" Hestia and Sirius moaned together.

"You are?" Severus looked shocked.

"Yes, Severus," Sirius looked at him. "After all this time how can you still be shocked when you realize you have friends. You have a family. I trust you with this child in the same way I've trusted you with Harry."

Severus swallowed painfully and squeezed Emmeline's hand and look at her for reassurance before nodding, and said huskily:

"We would be honored."

Xxx

"So, you decided to do it?" Ginny asked.

"Yes, Tonks and Emmeline will help," Harry said and he gave her a quick peck on the lips. She snaked her arms around his neck and sighed, "This place will be so boring with you away."

"I'll come visit on weekends. Don't forget two of my dads, step-moms and my brother and sister live here."

"I still can't believe Snape named his son after Dumbledore," Ginny giggled and Harry giggled at the memory.

Severus had come barreling into Grimmauld Place's living room with three very pregnant women who were being catered to by Sirius, Remus and Harry. They were all due at any moment and since Flooing or Apparating from Scotland could be bad for the babies they had all decided that staying near St. Mungo's was better. Sirius had even borrowed Arthur's Ford Anglia and left it next to his bike waiting for the moment to use it. He and Severus Flooed back every night from Hogwarts where Dumbledore had taken over Hestia's classes during her maternity leave. Harry made good use of the fact that students seventeen years or over were allowed to go anywhere on weekends and stopped by when he could; after all, he couldn't just leave Ginny all alone in a Hogwarts full of hormonal teenage boys.

"I've found the ideal name!"

"I thought we banned him from choosing names?" Remus said bewildered.

"Especially after Astrophil," Emmeline agreed and Severus scowled.

"This one is a good one!"

Sirius sighed deeply and sat defeated next to Hestia on the couch, "We better listen to the next atrocity he's come up with."

Severus pouted, crossed his arms and pursed his lips. Harry went to him and rubbed his back.

"Come on Uncle Sev. Say the name, we'll just say no, and life can go on."

Severus glared at him and said simply, "I thought we could honor the person who gave me a chance to change."

Emmeline raised her eyebrows in appreciation.

Harry chuckled again at the memory, "It's really amazing that he took so long to come up with that." He looked down at his watch and groaned. "I have to go and get Nastily Exhausted."

Ginny smiled and kissed him, "Good luck!"

"Harry time ter go!" Hagrid boomed from the doors to the great hall where he entered.

"Yeah, yeah, I'm coming! God, he's as bad as he was on our OWLS!"

Xxxxxx

Two weeks later:

"What's this?" Remus asked from the desk in his study where Tonks had come with a bunch of parchments for him to sign.

"Just some paperwork," Tonks said. "Just sign them so we can go. We're going to be late and you don't want to be late today of all days do you?"

"No," Remus shook his head and asked while he signed without reading, "What are they about?"

"Fatherhood."

"I never thought Teddy would need this much bureaucracy," Remus muttered as he signed. He failed to see Tonks' smirk.

Xxx

"I don't see why you have to shove me papers to sign today of all days," Severus groaned as he wrote his name on each paper in the stack presented to him. When he was finished Emmeline, who was putting Albus on the pram, Summoned the papers and said angelically:

"I'll just put these away."

Xxx

The crowd was assembled; the Heads of House had positioned their students in line and had gone to sit with the rest of the staff in the chairs in front of the lake looking at the stage that had been erected. The Tonks, Emmeline, Dora and all the babies were all seated next to the staff members. Andromeda had her handkerchief out and was already bawling even before Dumbledore had made his speech about the bright future ahead of the graduating students and started calling the students up in alphabetical order by last name. The Grangers, Weasleys and Longbottoms were a few rows behind them, and Sirius finally met Neville's famous Great-Uncle Algie.

"Harry James Potter-Snape-Lupin-Black!" Dumbledore called and Harry got on the stage smiling and waving at his guardians. His grin widened when he noticed Remus' and Severus' gobsmacked expressions.

"You know," Sirius said as he clapped, "People should really read what they sign."

"I know," Emmeline said. "Can you believe a former spy trusting something just because his wife handed it to him?"

"Preposterous," Tonks agreed.

Harry had finished shaking hands with Dumbledore and McGonagall and had gone to stand by his classmates. Once all speeches were done he hurried to his guardians and Sirius and the girls promptly hugged him.

"You two alright?" he asked the two still-shocked men a little worried they wouldn't like his surprise.

Severus swallowed painfully, smiled, nodded, and pulled Harry in and said, "Thank you son!"

Remus joined the hug and kissed Harry's head with tears in his eyes. Feeling left out, Sirius joined the hug.

From the corner of his eyes Harry could swear he saw a silver doe and stag at the outskirts of the forest.

Chapter 24- Epilogue- Life Goes on

"Black, Lupin and Snape stop this instant," the furious man approached the accused.

"Now, I want to know how you three managed to turn everyone's hair blue but your own."

The three first years looked at each other. One was wearing Gryffindor colors, one Slytherin and the other Ravenclaw.

"Did Harry give you the map and the cloak? That's the only way you could have gone out unnoticed at night"

"Uncle Padfoot! How can you accuse our brother of something like that?" asked the Gryffindor.

"A law abiding, upstanding member of our society. Father of three," said the Ravenclaw in a shocked tone.

"Next thing you know you'll be accusing Uncle Sev of giving us the potion that changed the hair color dad!" said the Slytherin.

Sirius Black narrowed his eyes at his daughter, "I know Severus would never do that Regina." Then he eyed the other two, "Now Teddy, Albus, have you anything else to say?"

Albus Snape, proud Gryffindor that he was spoke up, "I have no idea whatsoever about who may have put a coloring potion in the pumpkin juice, Uncle Padfoot."

"Yes," Teddy Lupin said innocently, "We just didn't drink the juice because we weren't thirsty,"

Sirius surveyed the three and crossed his arms. He huffed, "Fine. You may go."

The three hugged him.

"Love you," they said. Sirius smiled.

"Love you miscreants too," he hugged them back and they left.

"I can't believe. A Snape as a Marauder," came a voice from behind him.

"I can't believe you supplied the potion," Sirius eyed Severus who smirked. "We're doomed with those three," he shook his head as they both started walking.

"If you're worried with those three what will happen in six years when John and James start school?"

Sirius' head snapped to the side and he looked at Severus with wide eyes, "Can't we convince Remus and Harry to send them to Beauxbatons?"

"No, you cannot send your godson and grandson to Beauxbatons."

"Durmstrang?"

"No."

"But they are evil, they are worse than the Weasley twins," Sirius whined.

"They were trained by the Weasley twins," Severus said evenly.

"There's a good wizarding school in Australia."

"SIRIUS!"

xxx

Harry had married Ginny when he was twenty-two and a year later she had gotten pregnant with their son James. Being the brave Gryffindor he was, Harry had decided that the best way to break the news that Sirius was going to be a grandfather would be to let Reggie and Albus do it for him.

"Daddy, daddy," little five year old Regina Black had run inside the staff room at Hogwarts. Most of the staff, including Hestia and Severus, were there. Remus, Emmeline and a pregnant Tonks and Teddy were there too, all having received a note from Harry to meet them there.

Sirius picked Reggie up and asked, "What?"

"I'm an Aunt!"

"Me too!" Albus cried.

"I wanna be an Aunt!" Teddy whined and Harry said to him smiling and patting his head:

"You will! But I think the word for you and Albus is Uncle!"

"What are you two going on about?" Sirius asked bewildered. "No you're not an Aunt and Uncles."

"We so are!" Albus pouted crossing his arms, "Harry said so."

"Oh my God! Really?" Hestia squealed fanning herself enthusiastically, and Harry nodded excitedly.

"Really what?" Severus asked.

"Congratulations," Emmeline said hugging Harry.

"I don't get it," Remus said a little frightened of the women's behavior.

"They'll be going to Hogwarts together," Tonks grinned patting her still quite small bump.

"Who is going to Hogwarts?" Sirius asked and Hestia huffed:

"Your grandson or granddaughter."

Sirius gaped at her and blurted, "What?"

"Ginny's pregnant," Harry grinned widely. "Two months now, and we did the spell to know the gender and it's a boy. We have a name already; we're honoring my first dad. You're all going to be grandparents!"

"Grand-" Remus spluttered.

"I'm too young to be called grand anything! I'm only twenty-nine!" Sirius shrieked looking at Severus who had gone white.

"Oh no," Emmeline said. "Déjà vu."

"What?" Tonks asked, and not a second later Severus fainted right there in the middle of the staff room.

A worried Minerva McGonagall went to see if he was breathing.

"He did the same when I told him I was pregnant," Emmeline snorted.

xxx

After little James was born, Harry and Ginny had another boy named Arthur and a girl named Lily. Ginny joked that Harry's family was very intent in honoring everyone they know. He worked as an Unspeakable, creating new spells and wards; Ginny on the other hand had gone and played professional Quidditch, stopping only for maternity leaves. Having a stay at home grandmother who was intent on

mollycoddling her grandchildren a Floo call away was very useful, and Harry and Ginny left the children with Molly often.

To Sirius' happiness, Albus Dumbledore had assigned Dobby to help him and Hestia, Kreacher had gone to stay with Harry and Ginny in the house they bought in London, Twinky stayed with Remus and Tonks, and Winky was assigned to Severus and Emmeline.

Albus was still headmaster and when asked why he didn't want to retire, he said he hoped he could still see another generation of Marauders graduating. McGonagall on the other hand, who had seen those three grow up together as Teddy frequently visited Hogwarts before becoming a student, was having to take calming draughts quite often.

Neither Teddy nor John had lycanthropy, something Remus had been afraid of. Actually, they had discovered that none of the werewolves who had taken the Permanent Wolfsbane Potion had produced werewolf children. Emmeline and Severus, who had married the summer of Harry's graduation, studied exactly why that had happened and finally found their breakthrough and a cure. There were currently no more werewolves in Britain, and the PWA was working in protecting the former werewolves' rights. That was almost true for the rest of the world, especially since Auror Ron Weasley had captured Fernir Greyback a few years back, which largely diminished the number of people who were infected on purpose. Remus had gone to Greyback's trial and had had the pleasure of watching him be sentenced to life and sent to the same ward as Lucius Malfoy.

Remus had also managed to pass his two more important bills protecting house-elves and half-humans and included a clause that forbade discrimination against former werewolves too.

Hermione and Ron had also married, and they had two children, Hugo and Rose. She was a brilliant lawyer and was now a partner with the Tonks, Tonks & Granger. There was no way Andromeda was letting her go to the competition.

Neville had done his Herbology Masters and when Professor Sprout decided to retire he was invited by Dumbledore to teach in her place. However, he was the one teacher that did not live in the castle. He and Hannah, whom had married right out of school, lived close to his grandmother for years and Neville didn't want to have the children move, especially since his two twin girls, Lizzie and Julie, names he got from Harry, didn't seem to understand that Lily Potter-Snape-Lupin-Black would still be just a Floo away. Hannah, who had also become a Herbologist, worked at the Ministry's Botanic Garden.

All in all life went on, they laughed they cried, the only difference from Harry's Hogwarts years was the lack of life-threatening situations.

The End

A/N- I want to thank everyone who has read my story. I want to especially thank those of you who have taken the time to review and help me improve my writing. This has taken almost a year and is my longest work. I am very proud of this series and am a little sad to see this end but at the same time extremely satisfied.

I want to thank SWaddict1986 who not only corrected my work but gave me tips and improved my writing so much. This would not have been possible without her!