

As Tom waltzed down the stairs of the shop, wand in hand, he felt power surging through him, like nothing he had ever felt before. Another group of his greatest rivals had been removed from the competition, another hurdle had been jumped and another battle had been won. When he saw the sight of his handiwork before him, a smirk appeared on his face, he was invincible and he wasn't stopping anytime soon. Nobody was yet to defeat him and nobody ever would, he held more power than any wizard before him, other wizards would be a fool to even challenge him.

Despite the best efforts of his victims, they were weak, they stood no chance against him, the same as all of his previous victims. They were all mere toys to him, he could manipulate them, play them, challenge them, he could do whatever he wanted so that's exactly what he did. He could end their lives in a split second but that removed from the fun of the experience, that removed the thrill of the chase. As Tom had taken the lives of more of his foolish challengers, he had become more creative with his methods, exploring a variety of options and never repeating methods.

Since his days at Hogwarts, Tom had only become stronger. The Knights of Walpurgis had expanded and before he knew it, Tom had bred almost an entire generation of soldiers, waiting to follow his every command. He was in control of everything, he had no worthy opposition, he had an army of loyal followers, he had everything.

Within a split-second, Tom apparated out of the shop and found himself outside of his property; Malfoy Manor. A home passed down through generations that had been donated to him by his followers and had quickly become the Knights of Walpurgis' base. He strolled across the cobbled path, through the front door, and took his rightful seat at the head of the table, glaring down at an array of his most loyal of followers.

"Master," they called, bowing before him and their seats at the dining table.

"Black, any new recruits since the latest recruitment party?" He began, looking down the table until his eyes locked on Astrea Black.

"Yes Master, we have over thirty new possible members wishing to be accepted by you. Each one has a significant amount of wealth they are willing to donate to the army, in exchange for acceptance. Many also have rather useful ties to employees at the Ministry of Magic which I believe may be useful for later missions, they are all waiting in the basement for your approval."

"Very well, I will approve the useful and kill the weak as soon as I am done here," He nodded at Astrea, a sparkle appearing in her eyes from the moment he opened his mouth.

"Malfoy, what's the news on my position at Hogwarts?" Tom called, rising from his seat and glaring straight down into the eyes of Abraxas Malfoy.

Despite Malfoy being the longest standing and most loyal servant of Tom, his lip still quivered when he spoke, "Master, there seems to have been a miscommunication between me and Professor Dumbledore, he seems to believe your job at Hogwarts is a question rather than a statement, he is adamant that the position cannot be yours. I believe he is not fully understanding the repercussions of his actions, a problem which I would be honoured to resolve." He bowed whilst muttering his final sentence, looking down at the table to avoid the glare of his Master.

"Malfoy, this has been a problem for days and you are still yet to resolve it," He began, slamming his hands against the wooden table and sending a shiver down the spine of Abraxas Malfoy. "Since you seem to be utterly incompetent, I will take the matter into my own hands and pay a personal visit to Professor Dumbledore to ensure that he fully understands the situation, something that you have clearly been too foolish to complete yourself. Another failure like this Malfoy, and we will be having much larger problems than this," He warned, waving his wand and sending a surge of magic rushing towards Malfoys hand, crushing the bones with one swift motion.

Malfoy knew better than to react, he had become used to feeling regular pain since leaving Hogwarts and the safest way to react was not to react at all. "Yes Master, absolutely." He bowed once more, clutching his hands to his chest and returning his vision to the table before him.

Tom gave his followers the once over before calling them all to rise before him, "Tonight, we will ambush a muggle village to the east and we will not take any prisoners. We will not show any mercy, we will be ruthless and you will follow my every command. You will serve me, and soon I will take my rightful place, ruling over all magic and non-magic folk. Soon I will be immortal."

His army of followers bowed before him, "Yes Master," they echoed across the room before following him out of the Malfoy Manor.

The army marched in synchronization, following loyally behind Tom who stood at the front, leading his army to a bloodbath. His arm raised to the side of him and he shot out vibrant red sparks from the tip of his wand, warning everyone of the hell he was about to unleash.

The revolution had only just begun.

Carnage followed Tom wherever he went. His siege in Nottingham went exactly as his previous battles had gone, successfully.

Thousands of muggles and wizards were cornered with nowhere to go. Tom's army was invincible and nobody stood a chance against him. Those who were smart fell to their knees and surrendered, those who weren't were pushed down, with barely the chance to breathe before they were hit with a flash of green.

Over the years of building his army, Tom had learnt exactly how they worked. Like an army general, he had intensive battle plans that always worked. He knew where his subjects' strengths lay and he made them do exactly that. Information that could be taken was and for those without information, Tom was more merciful. He needed nothing from them, they were simply pawns caught in the wrong game of chess, but leaving them alive could give them the power to kill the Queen.

Tom almost enjoyed being involved in the action. Despite being unable to feel joy, he assumed it would feel similar to how he felt after taking a life. The electricity that surged through his body would debilitate anyone but for him, it enhanced his power. After each kill, he was stronger. After each muggle fell to the ground, he rose higher up. Watching people fall gave him the steps he needed to reach the top and he wouldn't stop until he controlled everything. As each body fell to their knees, he used them as steps to reach his next goal. No death was useless to him, he planned strategically in a way that few others could. He wanted people to know his name but he wasn't ready yet. He knew there was nobody else with skills like his, but hiding his identity in a siege was easy: he left not a single witness.

Tom knew he would soon be ready for the world to know his name, but whilst he wasn't, he used copycat tactics in battle. He would march on towns and cities in ways he had seen before, he would kill in the sorts of ways he could only ever have imagined, he would leave no one left alive.

As he walked through the burning streets of Nottingham, he felt power surging through him. Heat from the flames travelled through his body, igniting a fire in his heart and a thirst for more. Power was something he knew he could have, he knew there was almost nothing out of reach for him and he knew others would give themselves up rather than fight him but that wasn't what he wanted. He didn't want it easy, he didn't want to be handed his success on a plate like thousands of others before him, he wanted to take what was rightfully his, no matter what the cost.

Watching a muggle plead for their life made him feel in control. He could manipulate them to feel however he wanted, he could make them do whatever he wished and that gave him the power he craved. He knew he could simply kill them with one fell swoop of his wand, but that gave him no satisfaction. He enjoyed the feeling of taking rather than receiving. He needed to make a statement with each death, each siege grew bigger and more elaborate than the one before, drawing the attention that Tom craved. He was an artist and he didn't want his work going unnoticed.

Flashes of green flew across the muddy battlefield, each one barely covering the sound of the screams that came before. With each flick of his wand, another muggle fell to the ground and his body count grew higher. Tom edged forwards with each kill, his army following close behind, pushing forward to the centre of the town where his objective was awaiting. Sieges were never particularly difficult for Tom, he and his army could take out a whole town in minutes, leaving nothing but rubble behind. But Tom was a performer, each siege was a show and he demanded a standing ovation. He wanted the crowd throwing roses and calling out his name as he left and that's exactly what he got. Every siege got front page media coverage, after each siege he grew more and more powerful. Hundreds of wizards and witches would

pledge their life to him, to the future that he promised for them, without a second thought. They worshipped at his altar and threw all the roses he demanded.

As he entered the centre of town, his objective was in sight. With his army keeping his objective free of bystanders, he knew it would be an easy retrieval. He navigated through the narrow, winding streets, disposing of all passers by with the simple silent flick of his wand. He followed the exact route he had memorised until he found himself at the bottom of the stairs of the Town Hall. Wand poised, Tom made his way up the cobbled steps and waltzed straight in through the front doors. He could instantly tell that the infrastructure had been designed by muggles, the architecture was far inferior to that of the Malfoy Manor and the design had no logic. Pillars stood where pillars shouldn't, causing Tom's annoyance at muggles to grow further. They were by far inferior to him, even unable to build simple infrastructure without making tremendous architectural mistakes.

The hall was deserted. Papers flew across the cobbled floor, with each gush of wind sending them flying further and further away. Tom knew the kind of information he needed wouldn't be written down, he knew exactly who would hold it and he knew they would be waiting for him. From the way the siege had begun, any bystander would be able to tell who was behind it, any wizard who read the knees would know the flee the scene but he knew this one wouldn't. He knew this one would want in on the action.

Despite the loudness of the screams from the streets, Tom could clearly hear one pair of footsteps upstairs, rushing across the building from room to room. . Closing his eyes, he locked onto the sound, almost able to picture exactly who was moving upstairs. As a predator, Tom had always enjoyed the adrenaline that came with a chase, but after hours of chasing worthless muggles, he was tired. He wanted what he came for and he wanted it now.

"You cannot hide." He called, his voice echoing through the building. "I will leave here with exactly what I want. You will either surrender the information to me, or I will take it by any means necessary. We both know you don't want to die." With each word, he took a stride closer to the grand staircase before him. "I'm coming up now, you best be ready and willing to sacrifice the information you have, I'm not feeling all too lenient right now."

Tom rarely spoke to his victims. When the siege began, they knew it was them that he was here to find, they knew what he wanted and that their fate was already sealed. Pleading for their lives was futile and they knew it, but Tom knew this one was different. They weren't ready to die yet, he needed them to collect more information for him, and he knew that they would. Even though they wouldn't know what they were doing, he knew all too well that they would oblige.

He made his way up the staircase, his shoes colliding with each step, warning his victim of where he was and how fast he was approaching. By the time he was at the top of the stairs, the footsteps running around had stopped. Not a single sound came from the inside of the Town Hall.

Tom drowned out the sounds of the battle unfolding in the streets. Every death was meaningless to him until he got what he wanted. He had come to Nottingham with the sole hopes of retrieving confidential information and he wouldn't leave until it was his. Tom followed the corridor in the direction he last heard footsteps, his wand ready to strike if he felt any resistance. He stalked silently along the corridor until he came to a door, held shut with only a simple spell.

Tom, like the brightest witches and wizards, could use non verbal magic. With a simple flick of his wand, the door unlocked with a clicking sound, revealing an office. Tom entered the room, observing his surroundings with a quick glance around it. Rows upon rows of documents were laid out on a wooden table, stacked neatly into piles, the word confidential printed across each and every sheet. Tom fumbled with the documents, flipping the pages over and scanning each one. He knew what he needed would not have been written down but nevertheless, his curiosity took control.

After carefully scanning each pile, he inched forwards towards the monstrous bookshelf that lined the walls. Books were strategically placed upon the shelf coordinated by colour, with each muted tone fading into the next, all stood tall like a soldier reporting for duty, all except one.

As soon as Tom manoeuvred the novel, he heard a click identical to the one that had opened the door. On command, the wall of bookshelves began to pull apart, causing Tom to raise his wand in preparation for the guest on the other side. When the bookshelves had parted all that they would, Tom took a step forwards, and then another.

He saw her almost instantly after the first step forwards. Her auburn hair tumbled down her shoulders and her face took on the exact expression he had expected, fear. Neither of them said a word as their eyes locked onto each others and the girls face fell.

"It's been far too long Evelyn."

Evelyn didn't utter a word. Her bushy eyebrows raised as she gave Tom the once over, unsure of what she was truly seeing. She'd read the news, she knew what he was after but she never truly expected to see him.

In the silence, Tom's eyes began to wander until they settled on the wall behind her. Newspaper clippings, school photos and official documents were plastered across the wall, each and everyone with his face on. "Someone's done their homework," He whispered, taking another step towards her. "Quite an impressive collection you have here, it seems you've been following me well. Nice to see you're interested in my life after Hogwarts but it's a shame you haven't kept up to date on anyone else." Tom knew all about her. He'd been trailing her for months and he knew exactly what was going on in her life. "Although I guess not everyone else is as interesting as me Evelyn."

Evelyn didn't move. Not a single muscle in her body reacted to his presence until on instinct, she drew her wand.

"Evelyn, I'm not sure your skills in Charms are enough to disarm me. In fact, I'm not quite sure anyone's is." Before Evelyn even had a chance to think of what spell to use, Tom swished his wand and disarmed her, sending her wand flying into his hand. "I think it's time to get down to business."

Finally, she spoke. "The Ministry told me that you'd be looking for me." Her voice was different than Tom remembered, deeper and more mellow.

His expression shifted as if remembering something. "I did was expect them to warm you when they told you what they did. I thought you'd be a bit happier to see me after all these years though Evelyn, we shared such magical years together at school."

"We didn't speak." She spat at him. "You didn't get involved with anyone outside of Slytherin because you were too superior for them, didn't want to be mixing with anything other than royalty, did you? All I remember is you getting that poor boy Rubeus suspended for something I highly doubt he did."

"Hagrid got the punishment he deserved for keeping such a vicious beast at school. The punishment suited the crime, I mean he did kill someone Evelyn, or don't you remember?"

"Everyone at Hogwarts now knows that's a lie. I don't know how you kept us all wrapped around your finger for seven whole years." Although Evelyn still felt fear, she felt herself allowing her body to relax, even though she was in the presence of a known killer. "We both know what you're here for and we both know I'm not at liberty to give you that information so let's cut to the chase."

Tom almost smirked as Evelyn began to dominate the conversation. He recalled their days at Hogwarts when she had attempted to do the same but with much less success. Although Tom had much to say, he found himself keeping his mouth shut as Evelyn began to talk again.

"By now, the Ministry will know about where you are and they'll have sent a team ready to take you down." Evelyn found herself pacing up and down as she spoke, as though she were concocting some sort of plan. "They've sent teams before and by the time they get here, you're always gone so by no doubt, you'll do the same this time. If I give up this information willingly, I'll lose my job."

"If you don't, you'll most likely lose your life," Tom added.

Evelyn noted how uncertain Tom seemed to be, slowing down her pacing and halting before him. "Most likely doesn't seem very decisive. If you wanted me dead, I'm sure you would have done it by now."

"Good observation Evelyn, you never used to be this observant during our time at Hogwarts. But nonetheless, I do need the location of Hepzibah and I know you've been tasked with hiding her."

Evelyn already knew what would happen. When she was tasked with hiding Hepzibah, she was made fully aware of what would happen when Tom Riddle came looking. Not if, but when. She thought he would have killed her already, but for some reason, she was still alive. "What do you need with Hepzibah?"

"You really are the same as at Hogwarts aren't you? You just go along with whatever the Ministry tell you and get nothing in return. You don't ask enough questions and you clearly don't get enough answers." He said, his eyes scanning the wall behind Evelyn.

Instinctively, Evelyn turned herself to face the wall behind her. Years of hard work were sprawled out across it, each one providing a clue into Tom Riddle's new lifestyle after Hogwarts.

"Hepzibah has something of interest to me. I heard she'd been collecting treasures and I do enjoy someone that shares a similar passion to me. Perhaps we'd be able to have a discussion about them together, maybe share our findings and favourite treasures."

Evelyn knew all about Hepzibah. She could recall everything that Hepzibah had been doing for the past two years but she couldn't put her finger on what Tom needed from her. She was elderly, with nothing other than money in her possession and Evelyn knew Tom Riddle didn't need money. He didn't buy things, he simply gained possession of them in other ways.

"Well, you won't be getting her location from me, Tom. I suggest you look elsewhere." Evelyn felt her fingers sliding into her pocket, looking for her wand to strike him. Once she realised it was empty, her face fell, her eyes locking onto her wand laying flat on the ground on the other side of the room. She wasn't getting out of this easily.

"I enjoy you, Evelyn. Although you might not remember, we were closer than you thought at Hogwarts and it does truly pain me to do this, but you have left me with no choice."

Before Tom could even say the word, Evelyn knew what was coming. She knew that he would use an unforgivable on her, however, she almost hoped it would be the worst.

With his wand poised, Tom recalled the one word Evelyn did not want to hear, "Crucio."

Evelyn didn't even have time to blink before she fell to the floor. Her whole body writhed in pain as though a razor blade was slowly slicing through it. Each second was another cut, sending electricity flowing through her body, enough to make her think she might explode. Her thoughts were racing faster than the speed of light, her eyes unable to focus on a single thing.

Tom watched on at Evelyn as her body began to almost convulse on the floor. He had seen the effects of the Crucio curse many times and was unsurprised by what he was watching, however, he felt a peculiar interest in watching. He was interested in the way her body seemed to move, as though a rhythm was flowing through her veins, attempting to escape.

Although Evelyn had promised herself that the information wouldn't come from her, she felt words slipping to the end of the tongue, ready to be spoken. "B-" She began, a sharp grunt cutting her off.

"Ready to talk?" He questioned, ending the curse and staring down at her. He crouched down to her level, observing his handiwork. Beads of sweat had collected on her face, blending into a peculiar mixture with the salty tears that fell from her face. Although the pain was over, her body still shook uncontrollably.

Evelyn shook her head at Tom. She wouldn't give in just yet, there was still some fight left in her. She knew she wasn't yet at breaking point, her mind was too strong for him to simply explore it and extract the information he desired.

"I guess we can go again then," And with that, the pain started again.

Evelyn felt as though her skull was shrinking, putting pressure on her brain and forcing information to the front of her mind; she knew it wouldn't be long now until he could penetrate her force field. Soon Tom would have access to the unlimited information stored inside of her mind, the information she had been told to guard with her life. As the pain shot through her body, each and every one of her muscles spasmed in turn, the respective part of her body twitching as the pain moved. Evelyn never had, and never would again experience pain like this.

Evelyn began to feel herself fading away, her eyes becoming heavy as the pain became too much. She was a candle without any flame left in her, the only sign of life left were the embers surrounding her, fading away as the light began to leave her eyes. At this point, she knew Tom was inside her mind.

As she closed her eyes, she began to see again. The inside of her mind was wide open and Tom Riddle had taken her inside. She stood watching as he scoured for information regarding Hepzibah. His hands traced the countless bookshelves that lined her mind, his eyes scanning for the book that he required. His eyes floated back and forth between the bookshelves and the screen that seemed to be replaying Evelyn's memories before him. He saw her greatest achievements flashing across the screen, as though they'd been recorded by someone else and then inserted into a DVD player. He saw her opening her OWL results, becoming a prefect and getting



her job, each one presenting her with a glorious smile, the kind he could only imagine.

As his eyes flickered back to the bookshelf, he found himself grinding to a halt, his feet stopping dead in their tracks and his hands reaching forwards towards exactly what he had been looking for. His fingers curled around the spine of the book he knew Evelyn had sworn to protect as he swooped the information into his jacket and disappeared.

Evelyn watched on as he faded from her mind, vanishing as though he had never been there. She felt herself turning to face the screen, almost compelled to revisit her memories, a sense of longing filling her body. If this was how she died, she wanted to go out remembering what she'd sworn she would never forget. As her eyes locked onto the screen, she watched herself prying open an envelope she recognised all too well as her OWL results. She watched as her past self pulled out the results with tears filling her eyes as she saw each and every result coming out as Outstanding.

Then, she saw herself with her parents. Holding their hands as she discovered magic for the first time, hope glimmering in her eyes as she grasped hold of her first wand. As the memory began to fade away, she longed for it to return, for her to be able to spend one last moment with the people she loved, but alas the image shifted.

As the image of the Christmas Ball at Hogwarts began to form, Evelyn remembered the event all too well. A fiery glow covered her as she danced with her best friends, fairies fluttering around her as she swayed along to the beat of the band. Suddenly the image shifted as though her mind experienced an error in the memory. Instead of Evelyn dancing with her friends, she saw her own hand being taken by Tom Riddle. The man who was about to kill her had just placed a kiss on her extended arm. As his hand interlocked with hers, the image faded from the screen as Evelyn began to feel lost in her mind.

Working at Borgin and Burkes was exactly what Tom Riddle had needed after leaving Hogwarts. Although he was offered all sorts of positions of higher importance to society, Tom had quite contently taken a job at Borgin and Burkes. Tom knew that the job suited him far better than any other ever could. Every day, he successfully attempted to convince wealthy witches and wizards to part with their valuable heirlooms, from trophies to lockets.

During his time working there, he had been able to secure hundreds of valuable items into his possession, assessing each one before deciding whether or not he would swipe it for himself. Valuables that he took were kept in a vault at Malfoy Manner, ready for a second assessment closer to the creation of each one of his horcruxes.

After his siege in Nottingham, Tom Riddle knew exactly where to find Hepzibah Smith and with one quick piece of mail, he had been able to convince her to meet with him at Borgin and Burkes to assess the possible prices of her valuables. As

usual, Tom was expecting to use his charm to convince Hepzibah to hand over her valuables to him. He had spent months prior investigating all about Hepzibah's life and had found her perfect.

Tom Riddle's charm worked with almost everyone, but he found females especially were far easier to manipulate. Those older than him were also easier than individuals younger than him, they were less agile, less able to defend themselves against his attacks. They were often more open to his charm, more willing to talk with him and share information about their lives. Hepzibah was the perfect target for him.

Tom began his day at work as he always did, early. Twenty minutes before he was expected to be there, Tom was already stood behind the counter. Coming to work early allowed him to inspect the collections from previous days that he had not been able to see. He was able to identify how much each item was worth and how valuable it would be to him, allowing him to swipe anything that took his fancy without anybody else noticing.

Today's collection was rather bare, with only a few new necklaces in the chest below him. Each one almost identical: a long silver chain with small diamonds studded along it, the chains meeting together at a spherical metallic ball. Although they were hideous to look at, he could just by looking at the diamonds that it was expensive.

"Good morning Tom. Early for your shift again?" A male voice bellowed as he entered the room.

"Morning Mr Dragee, I enjoy admiring the new additions to the collection before everyone else you see." Tom smiled, something he had been able to perfect during his time at Hogwarts. Despite not enjoying smiling, he found it made others more open to him and being more open made them more easy to manipulate. Whilst at Hogwarts, Tom had practiced social interactions with his teachers, each year coming back more charming than before after a summer of watching others and mimicking their actions. As the majority of his teachers had grown fond of him, Tom had found them easy targets to practice social interactions on, always willing to talk and more excitable by Tom's false compliments. His practice at school had come in handy at work more often than not, however, when it came to his other life, social skills were not compulsory.

"Ahh..." Mr Dragee sighed, going to join Tom behind the counter. "Rather hideous to the natural eye but reach in my boy, let me show you."

Upon his command, Tom slid his hand into the glass display unit, looping his fingers around the chain and pulling it up to extend it. Mr Dragee took the metal sphere in his hand, pushing his finger closer to Tom. "Unlock it." He whispered, his voice almost giddy with excitement.

Although Tom was all too skilled at non-verbal magic, he preferred to keep that skill more hidden. With one swift movement, he had his wand out of his pocket, "Alohamora." He manoeuvred his wand in the appropriate way and the sphere began

to change. The once smooth metal now had one continuous slit down the side of it that popped open, splitting the sphere in half and revealing the centre. Floating in the centre of the hollowed-out half was a small phial, filled with a clear liquid to the brim. Instinctively, Tom reached his hand out and then stopped, looking at Mr Dragee for permission as though he was a schoolboy again. With one swift nod, Mr Dragee gave his permission and almost immediately Tom's fingers grasped the phial.

He pulled it close to him, twisting open the lid and bringing it to his nose. "Not too close, it's powerful stuff." Warned Mr Dragee, watching Tom with an eager eye as he lifted the potion to his face and leant in for a sniff. His whole face recoiled in disgust at the stench. "Poison."

"A rather powerful one as well Tom. I have studied poisons and potions for years and even I do not recognise it. I assume it to be foreign or made by house-elves who simply cannot understand instructions." He said as he took the phial from Tom's hands, a little too aggressively, and began to reassemble the necklace.

"What kind of effects would it have on its victim? Do you think it would be fatal to consume?" Tom asked quickly.

"Well," Began Mr Dragee, opening up the glass cabinet to secure the necklace again. "Judging by the strength of the smell, it would kill almost instantly. However, the victim would almost certainly have to willingly drink it due to the pungency of the poison."

"Do you believe the stench could be covered up though, perhaps by the smell of cocoa or tea?" Tom leaned in closer to Mr Dragee.

"Well, perhaps my boy but as I am yet to see such poison in use, it would be almost impossible to guess." He rushed the last few words, clearly ready for the conversation to end at once. "Could you open up, I have a few pieces of business to attend to?"

Tom nodded, flashing Mr Dragee his usual charming smile and heading towards the front door. With one flick of his wand, the sign flipped to display the 'Open' sign to passers-by. He quickly returned to his post behind the glass cabinet, reaching beneath it to ensure that the money bank was still there, safely locked away.

Work was usually slow for Tom; with not many wealthy witches and wizards left alive, very few people entered and exited the shop. Most customers usually just came to browse, or if they were more elderly sometimes they just wanted to chat, often with made-up stories about their past to prolong the discussion. Tom wasn't one for small talk and he was usually able to see immediately whether or not a story was genuine, if it wasn't he would direct them to any other employee, however on the rare instance that they told the truth, he was more than willing to listen; getting to know powerful witches and wizards was highly beneficial for his extracurricular activities.

At the sound of a bell Tom's eyes locked onto the front door of the shop which swung open gracefully to reveal a rather plump, old lady. Despite knowing full well had entered the shop, it took Tom a double-take to truly recognise them.

"Young boy, is it you that I am here to see?" She hobbled in through the door, a small house elf following closely behind her.

"I do believe it is." He met her halfway across the shop floor and extended his hand. "Tom Riddle."

"Hepzibah Smith, and that young fool is Hokey."

On Tom's fifth visit to Hepzibah Smith, he got what he had been waiting for.

"Hurry up, Hokey!" said Hepzibah imperiously. "He said he'd come at four, it's only a couple of minutes to and he's never been late yet!" She quickly powder puffed her face one last time, looking in the mirror with a pout. "How do I look?" said Hepzibah, turning her head to admire the various angles of her face in the mirror.

"Lovely, madam," squeaked Hokey.

When the doorbell rang, both Hepzibah and Hokey jumped. "Quick, quick, he's here, Hokey!" cried Hepzibah and the elf scurried out of the room with difficulty, narrowly avoiding the large piles of lacquered boxes, orbs, globes and various flourishing potted plants in brass containers.

The house-elf returned within minutes, followed by a plainly dressed Tom, a bunch of roses tucked underneath his arm. He picked his way through the cramped room with an air that showed he had visited many times before and bowed low over Hepzibah's fat little hand, brushing it with his lips. "I brought you flowers," he said quietly.

"You naughty boy, you shouldn't have!" squealed old Hepzibah as though she had not been expecting them, but the empty vase prepared on the nearest little table said otherwise. "You do spoil this old lady, Tom...Sit down, sit down...Where's Hokey? Ah..." The house-elf had come dashing back into the room carrying a tray of little cakes, which she set at her mistress's elbow. "Help yourself, Tom," said Hepzibah, "I know how you love my cakes. Now, how are you? You look pale. They overwork you at that shop, I've said it a hundred times..." He smiled mechanically and Hepzibah simpered. "Well, what's your excuse for visiting this time?" she asked, battering her lashes.

"Mr. Burke would like to make an improved offer for the goblin-made armor," said Tom. "Five hundred Galleons, he feels it is a more than fair —"

"Now, now, not so fast, or I'll think you're only here for my trinkets!" pouted Hepzibah.

"I am ordered here because of them, I am only a poor assistant, madam, who must do as he is told. Mr Burke wishes me to inquire —"

"Oh, Mr Burke, phooey!" said Hepzibah, waving a little hand. "I've something to show you that I've never shown Mr Burke! Can you keep a secret, Tom? Will you promise you won't tell Mr Burke I've got it? He'd never let me rest if he knew I'd shown it to you, and I'm not selling, not to Burke, not to anyone! But you, Tom, you'll appreciate it for its history, not how many Galleons you can get for it."

"I'd be glad to see anything Miss Hepzibah shows me," he inched closer to her, watching as she gave another girlish giggle.

I had Hokey bring it out for me...Hokey, where are you? I want to show Mr Riddle our finest treasure...In fact, bring both, while you're at it..."

"Here, madam," squeaked the house-elf, carrying two leather boxes, one piled on top of the other.

"Now," said Hepzibah happily, taking the boxes from the elf, laying them in her lap, and preparing to open the topmost one, "I think you'll like this, Tom...Oh, if my family knew I was showing you...They can't wait to get their hands on this!" She opened the lid. "I wonder whether you know what it is, Tom? Pick it up, have a good look!" whispered Hepzibah, and Tom stretched out a long-fingered hand and lifted the cup by one handle out of its snug silken wrappings.

For a moment, Tom's eyes gleamed red, his expression curiously mirroring Hepzibah's. "A badger," he murmured as he examined the engraving "Then this was...?"

"Helga Hufflepuff's, as you very well know, you clever boy!" said Hepzibah, leaning forward with a loud creaking of corsets and actually pinching his hollow cheek. "Didn't I tell you I was distantly descended? This has been handed down in the family for years and years. Lovely, isn't it? And all sorts of powers it's supposed to possess too, but I haven't tested them thoroughly, I just keep it nice and safe in here..." She hooked the cup back off Tom's long forefinger and restored it gently to its box, too intent upon settling it carefully back into position to notice the shadow that crossed Tom face as the cup was taken away.

"Now then," said Hepzibah happily, "where's Hokey? Oh yes, there you are — take that away now, Hokey." The elf obediently took the boxed cup, and Hepzibah turned her attention to the much flatter box in her lap. "I think you'll like this even more, Tom," she whispered. "Lean in a little, dear boy, so you can see...Of course, Burke knows I've got this one, I bought it from him, and I daresay he'd love to get it back when I'm gone..."

She slid back the fine filigree clasp and flipped open the box. Thereupon the smooth crimson velvet lay a heavy golden locket. Tom reached out his hand, without

invitation this time, and held it up to the light, staring at it. "Slytherin's mark," he said quietly, as the light played upon an ornate, serpentine S.

"That's right!" said Hepzibah, delighted, apparently, at the sight of Tom gazing at her locket, transfixed. "I had to pay an arm and a leg for it, but I couldn't let it pass, not a real treasure like that, had to have it for my collection. Burke bought it, apparently, from a ragged-looking woman who seemed to have stolen it, but had no idea of its true value —"

She reached out to take the locket back. "So there you are, Tom, clear, and I hope you enjoyed that!" She looked him full in the face, her foolish smile faltering slightly. "Are you all right, dear?"

"Oh yes," said Tom quietly. "Yes, I'm very well..."

"I thought — but a trick of the light, I suppose —" said Hepzibah, looking unnerved. Tom knew he had seen it; he had seen the red gleam in her eyes and there was little hope left for her. "Here, Hokey, take these away and lock them up again...The usual enchantments..."

Tom Riddle already knew that he would kill Hepzibah before he even met her. He had been planning it for months and when inspiration had struck in the morning, he finally had his weapon.

"I do apologise for her, she's reaching her expiration date." She smiled at Tom, looking back at the house-elf behind her who seemed to be caught in a daze. "Now, where are we going?" She looked around the small shop, returning her gaze to the boy shortly after.

"Do follow me." He led her up a short winding staircase into the attic. "Hot chocolate?" He asked, turning to her and pointing her towards a seat.

"Oh absolutely boy. I always appreciate a warm drink before a discussion." She took her seat and watched as Tom Riddle prepared her drink, adding various powders and liquids into a large mug. She took a swig of her hot chocolate. "Wonderful cocoa you've made me. You must tell me the secret ingredient, it tastes divine." She gulped again from her mug. "Let's get down to business then boy, I have places to be."

"Well, I wouldn't have reached out to you if you weren't of interest to me. You see, I have a great interest in ancient treasures or historical artefacts and once I heard about the ones in your possession, I simply had to verify it. Although Borgin and Burkes would be filled with pride if you sold or donated your artefacts, simply viewing them would be such a great pleasure. It would be interesting simply to hear about them if you would feel comfortable with that." He crossed his hands in his lap, leaning forward as though he were interested in what Hepzibah was about to say.

"Alright boy. Listen closely because I likely won't repeat this, when my parents were made aware that I was descended from Helga Hufflepuff, they were killed almost instantly. It was put down to a random killing, but you and I both know that wouldn't be true."

Sensing now would be the time to be empathetic, Tom placed a hand on her shoulder. "I know how you must feel, I never knew my parents. I didn't even know I was a wizard until I was invited to Hogwarts."

"Oh my boy, it is tough isn't it?" Her hand held his on her shoulder momentarily. "Anyway, soon after that, people started knocking on my door, powerful people that I wasn't ready to deal with yet. For most of my life, I've had to run from those who wished to exploit me. Relatives even taught me dark magic to protect myself on the rare occasion that I might need it. A few years ago, I opened my door and sat outside was a giant parcel. No note, no nothing which I found to be rather rude of the sender mind you. Inside that parcel was Helga Hufflepuffs cup and nothing else. I expected a note or something but nevertheless, I knew that it being in my possession meant that it was mine to protect. With a bit of help, I kept it locked up at Gringotts, protected by rare magic so that nobody could take it."

Tom leant in further, hoping she would divulge the details of the security enough that he would be able to bypass it and simply swipe the cup.

"Anyway my boy," She started to get up from her seat, making a few attempts before being able to lift herself fully. "Thank you for the hot chocolate but I really must be going, Hokey and I get agitated without our morning nap. Maybe in a few days, I'll return to tell you the rest."

Sure enough, she did. A few days later, Hepzibah Smith waltzed in through the shop doors with Hokey still trailing behind her. "Any more of that hot chocolate left?" She smiled at Tom who was waiting behind the counter impatiently, as he had been since she left.

"For you, of course." He gave her his winning smile and followed her upstairs to the attic once more. As they had done previously, Hepzibah took her seat and watched on as Tom made her drink.

"Where was I last time?" She asked, beckoning Hokey to sit beside her.

"You had just mentioned how you kept the cup at home, you were given it rather mysteriously weren't you." He finished making her hot drink and brought it over to her.

"Ah yes!" She recalled the memory from just a few days ago. "Well after I kept it there for a while I began to read about a series of vaults being broken into and although I knew the cup would likely be safe, I didn't fancy risking it; now I keep it somewhere nobody can find it."

Just as Tom felt himself about to ask where that was, he found himself stopping, afraid of off-putting Miss Smith. "If you were to leave it with me here at Borgin and Burkes, I would be able to assure it's security with absolute certainty."

"That's a very large if boy." She took a sip of her hot chocolate, staring down the mug at Tom. "Now I have nothing to do with the old things. I expect they'll likely be given to whoever else is a descendant once I pass."

"Miss-" Tom began.

"Please, call me Hepzibah."

"Hepzibah, I can assure you Borgin and Burkes would be willing to pay a very large sum of money for those treasures. You could bring them in tomorrow for me to assess and I'm sure would be able to come to a more than reasonable price." He was so close he could almost taste it.

"I suppose I owe it to you to at least consider whatever offer you make when I bring them in. You have listened to me natter for far longer than most others would. Come on Hokey let's go and get them, I'll be back before you close." Hokey and Hepzibah rose from their seat, going as fast as they could down the stairs and out of the shop.

Several days ago, he had pocketed the necklace found downstairs in the glass cabinet and taken the poison, replacing it with something far weaker when he returned it. Tom stayed in the attic as he waited. Shop traffic was slow enough that being downstairs was unnecessary. He watched the hours tick by on the clock that hung firmly from the attic walls, rising every few hours to check if Hepzibah was waiting for him downstairs.

Eventually, he heard the door swing open and instantly he knew it was Hepzibah. She bounced up the staircase, with Hokey running behind her to keep up the pace. "Tom, as soon as I get another one of your marvellous hot chocolates, I'll be able to show you my treasures again, I know how much you were excited by them last time. It took me quite a while to find them so a hot drink is exactly what I need." She took her usual seat again, as Tom fell into his routine and began preparing the hot drink.

Tom took his time making the drink, getting all of the ingredients out as slowly as possible. "Why don't you start taking them out for me to assess, the drink is taking a particularly strange amount of time to perfect?" He shot her a charming smile.

"Of course dear," She turned to Hokey, who sat beside her glaring mindlessly at the walls of the attic. "Do help me out Hokey."

Hokey took her time, slowly grasping the objects from Hepzibah's bag and placing them on the table. As soon as both the cup and the trophy were on the table, Tom knew it was time to strike. He slipped a slither of poison into the hot chocolate, mixing well to hide the stench that he recalled all too well.



"Here you go Hepzibah." He handed her the mug, watching eagerly as she took her first sip. "Drink it all up, I made an extra special batch for this occasion." She eagerly took another large gulp, taking in the majority of the drink.

"Oh, Tom you do treat me well, in fa-" Before she could muster another word, the mug fell from her hand, crashing against the attic floor. Hokey stood watching, frozen, as the light drained from Hepzibah's eyes.

"Oh dear Hokey," Tom smiled deviously. "What have you done?"

Evelyn awoke in St Mungos screaming. Her scream was primal, piercing through the entirety of the Hospital Wing, vibrating off of every possible surface. As it cut through, every conversation was silenced, patients and staff turning to look at her. She felt as though there was a fire burning within her, pulsing through her body and she had to let it out. Her whole body was jerking as each surge of fire sprinted through her body, her arms and legs flailing in every direction. It wasn't long until the Healers began running towards her: each one grasping one of her limbs forcefully and pushing it down against the bed. It was only now that Evelyn truly felt crazy.

Despite all their force, the Healers couldn't contain the fire within her, it was burning bright and their force was only catalysing it. She couldn't put the fire out herself, and they couldn't either. It was hours yet before the fire even began to settle down, litres upon litres of calming draught before she could even begin to feel the effect and she fell into the deep slumber she had been craving since her encounter with Tom.

Evelyn had been in St Mungos for the past two months, waking every day with the same look of terror in her eyes, the same scream echoing across the hallways, the same Healers pinning her down. She had been living each day on repeat: pressing the pause button at this point seemed impossible.

She hadn't had a single visitor, no family, no friends, nobody. Evelyn had been left all alone. She had sobbed and sobbed for someone to hear her but it was futile, the Healers weren't there to fix her, they were there to manage her but the fire couldn't be managed.

When Evelyn awoke again, the fire had faded; all that remained was the smoke that lingered in her mind. This was one of the good hours, she didn't have many but when she did, she savoured every second of them. She could finally read, talk, breathe, think. Her mind could finally comprehend what was going on around her.

"Evelyn." Began her Healer, Madame Fluke, as she sat down on the end of her bed. "You have a visitor today." As soon as she said that, Evelyn's eyes lit up, the clouds in them shifting aside and allowing the light to come through. "He's coming through in a minute. I recommend you take a calming draught just in case, we don't want anything going wrong today. I think this could be good for you." Madame Fluke squeezed Evelyn's hand tightly, "This is a good thing." She gave Evelyn a welcoming smile before heading away to tend to other patients.

Evelyn wasn't sure how to react. She wasn't sure who would be visiting her, or why, but nevertheless she knew it was something she needed. Whilst she waited, she watched the wall, watching as the minutes ticked by, as her visitor grew closer. She watched the clock for what felt like hours until she saw the mysterious silhouette entering through the double doors.

"Professor?" His face had changed but she knew it was him, Professor Dumbledore stood at the end of her bed with a smile.

"Evelyn Rivers, it's been too long." He sat down at the end of her bed, glancing at her face and inspecting it: she didn't look at all like she did all those years ago at Hogwarts. Evelyn looked as though she hadn't slept, despite the numerous draughts and potions that were supposed to make her sleep, deep purple bags were etched under her eyes. Her entire face was sunken, her cheek bones protruding from her face as though they were ready to cut her flesh. "I must say, I never expected you to be the one to end up in St Mungos. You had some challenging times at Hogwarts, but never this challenging."

"I have to agree." Her fingers tapped the bed beside her, pressing into the tough mattress she had found herself up against for far too long during her stay. "I thought everything would be far different from how it is now in all honesty."

"Oftentimes, our lives do not play out as we expect. We have to embrace the change Evelyn. I'm sure you weren't expecting to be in the Daily Prophet for anything other than your service to the-

"I was in the Daily Prophet?" Evelyn had always wanted to be in it, she had read every issue since her parents' death. It was one of her lifelong dreams.

"I wouldn't read it, Evelyn." He warned her. "Although they were very kind about your parents, the new writers seem to have shifted their tone. It wasn't the easiest to read."

"Well, that's a shame."

"Evelyn, I'm sure you're wondering why I came to see you here today." She wasn't at all, she was too grateful for the company to truly care. "I wondered if you might join me at Hogwarts tomorrow, I have some things you might be interested to hear, things which are perhaps not suitable for an environment such as the one we are in. You could get the Hogwarts Express up to Scotland if you wished, it leaves for the start of term at 11 o'clock."

"Oh Professor, I don't think I'm allowed to leave the hospital." As much as she wanted to, she wasn't sure that she would be safe to, even to Hogwarts where she had never felt safer during her time there.

"Evelyn, I have a feeling you will be soon. For you see, dark times lie ahead of us and you have the flame we need to guide us back into the light." He had a whimsical impression plastered across his face as he looked at her. "I feel as though the fates are changing for you."

"I hope they are Professor. I want to find Tom Riddle and I want him to pay. He can't get away with what he's doing." Evelyn knew there would come a time when his reign would be over, it was impossible for him to live forever.

"Evelyn, I know. Soon there will come a time when someone challenges his power, he cannot remain invincible forever. He may be the strongest wizard alive now, but he won't always be." Dumbledore reached into his robe pocket, smiling at Evelyn as he did, and pulled out a small, glass sphere. "I got you a remembrall Evelyn, I thought you might find some use for it. If there is something you have forgotten, the smoke inside will turn red. It's an awfully wonderful tool for those of us who are prone to forgetting."

Evelyn wasn't sure why he had given her a remembrall, she thought her memory was phenomenal but nevertheless she took the remembrall in her hands, her dainty fingers twisting it around. "It's lovely Professor." She kept it in her hands, passing it between the two as she spoke. "Do you really think I'll be allowed to leave tomorrow?"

"Absolutely. I have a feeling that one way or another, you'll make it to Hogwarts for we always find a way of getting ourselves home." He stood up from her bed, shooting her one last smile before he made his way out of St Mungos.

Evelyn watched as he left and as he did, she felt more hopeful than she had throughout the entirety of her stay at St Mungos. She felt as though the flame within her was reigniting, but instead of burning with fear, it was burning with hate. Her flame was burning and she knew that Tom Riddle wouldn't be able to put it out.

Evelyn's remembrall was glowing a violent red as soon as she woke up. She stared at it intently as she passed it between her hands; what had she forgotten?

Before she had gone to sleep, her Healer had come to tell her the good news: she was going home. Albeit just for a trial period, but she was finally allowed to leave, just as Dumbledore said. Whatever he had to say to her, she was ready to hear, she wanted to hear it. Evelyn craved some normality in her life and she thought talking to Dumbledore would give her just that. Despite his whimsical personality, he reminded her of happier times, of easier times.

She had always dreamed of returning to Hogwarts, to teach, to visit, to simply explore. After receiving her NEWT results, she had applied for the role of the Charms Professor but had unfortunately been turned down by Headmaster Dippet and asked to reapply in a few years. Once she was accepted by the Ministry to become an Auror, she hadn't looked back.

"Evelyn, are you ready?" Madame Fluke asked her with a smile, extending her hand.

"I think I am." Evelyn was ready to leave, whether that be to Hogwarts or not, she was finally ready. She took Madame Fluke's extended hand, her bony fingers wrapping around it like a Koala attaching to a tree. Evelyn felt as though she was clinging on for her life, she almost was, stepping outside of St Mungos meant that her life could begin again. She could finally press the play button after being on pause for so long.

"We'll apparate down to King's Cross and then I'll send you away, on your own. You do feel safe to get the train, don't you?"

"Of course I do." She wasn't sure if this was true, the Hogwarts Express held far too many memories for her liking but she didn't want to risk not being allowed out: she needed to leave.

"Well, are you ready to go then?"

"Yes." Evelyn smiled, she had to be ready. Madame Fluke began leading her away from her bed and towards the exit of St Mungos. Evelyn couldn't help but feel emotional to be leaving, as she watched on at all the patients that were just beginning their healing journey she felt grateful that she was ending hers. She had living in a bad chapter for far too long but the moment she stepped outside, she knew that the chapter was closing. Better times were coming.

Evelyn walked closely behind Madame Fluke, holding her hand as a friend, rather than as a patient. The two walked in silence until they found themselves outside of the Hospital Wing where Evelyn had resided for the past two months. "Have you ever apparated before Evelyn?"

"Yes." Evelyn had never enjoyed travelling using apparition but she knew it was by far the most efficient method of travel. "Although I don't quite enjoy it."

"Me neither dear. In fact, it might be my least favourite aspect of magic. Anyway, do hold on tight, we wouldn't want any accidents." Evelyn quickly obliged, her hands claspng as tightly as they could to Madame Fluke's arm. From what she remembered about apparating, holding on tight would be the best decision she could make.

In an instant, Evelyn felt Madame Fluke's arm twisting away from her. Her whole body felt as though it was being split in two, her arms being pulled in opposing directions as though she was toy being fought over. Evelyn felt immense pressure, her eyeballs squeezing deeper inside her head, her eardrums ready to rupture, her skin about to split. Everything was black as her body was being torn in every direction, Evelyn couldn't breathe.

Abruptly, her feet hit the ground and a rush of relief overcame her. Evelyn clung tighter to Madame Fluke, attempting to regain her balance as she felt the relief slowly transitioning into anxiety. Evelyn finally had to rejoin the real world, the world she had been protected from for months, the world that had caused her admission, the world that had broken her. She knew she would never feel ready, but when Madame Fluke had come to her with the news of her period at home, she had hoped she would feel more prepared.

"We're here now Evelyn, it's okay, you're safe" Madame Fluke did her best to reassure her, but Evelyn's mind was irrational. She kept her arm attached to Madame Fluke's, afraid to let go and have the loneliness overwhelm her. "It's okay." Madame Fluke knew that she wouldn't be able to reassure Evelyn but from what she had learnt from being her Healer, she could at least attempt to help Evelyn reassure herself.

"I'm okay. I'm okay. I'm okay." Evelyn shook herself off, her grip tightening around Madame Fluke's arm once more. Madame Fluke was the only constant Evelyn had had for the past two months and she needed her now more than ever before. "It's almost eleven, the train leaves soon." Evelyn couldn't afford to miss the train, Hogwarts was waiting for her.

"Evelyn, I'm not coming on the train with you." Evelyn's face fell almost instantly, she needed someone with her, she needed Madame Fluke. "Dumbledore and I both agreed it was for the best, you need to regain your independence." Madame Fluke knew Evelyn wouldn't want to go alone, but she had to. She couldn't crawl any longer, she had to learn to walk.

"But-"

"Evelyn, I must go now." She handed Evelyn her ticket, giving her one last embrace before wriggling free from her grasp and apparating away.

Evelyn felt the panic begin to rise inside of her once Madame Fluke had left, she was all alone now. Anxiously, she clutched at the ticket, pressing it close to her chest as she breathed in the familiar air of King's Cross Station, a place she remembered all too well from her days at Hogwarts. She made her way towards the barrier almost instinctively, as though her body was recalling this exact moment only a few years ago. Evelyn closed her eyes and with a brisk run, she ran straight through the barrier and onto Platform 9 3/4.

Everywhere she looked there were students, rushing around the platform without an ounce of regard for personal space. It was the sort of situation that would usually have made her uncomfortable, but the prospect of going back to Hogwarts made her feel unusually calm. Steam from the scarlet engine of the Hogwarts Express flooded the platform, casting a haze over the platform and causing the students to all fade away from Evelyn and lose themselves in the smoke. Like ghosts, they manoeuvred through the mist and onto the Hogwarts Express, Evelyn following closely behind a gaggle of students and making her way into an empty carriage.

Once Evelyn was inside the carriage, the tiredness overcame her. Every inch of her body craved sleep and she was happy to oblige. Evelyn slept as though she hadn't in weeks, she slept as though Tom Riddle didn't exist, as though he was simply a creature of her nightmares.

As the train rolled up, Evelyn saw the familiar sight that was Hogwarts: standing tall in all of its beauty. Hogwarts had remained the same after all these years, ready to welcome her back with open arms.

As soon as Evelyn stepped off the train, she felt at ease. Hogwarts was her home and had been ever since she first stepped inside all those years ago. Her body ran on autopilot as she began to make her way towards the thestral drawn carriages waiting outside the station.

"Are yeh the last one 'ere?" Evelyn squinted as she heard the voice, attempting to sharpen her eyesight enough to see more than simply a large figure stood at the end of the train platform.

"I think so." She shouted down the platform to him, her response causing him to jog briskly until he was level with her.

"Rubeus Hagrid." He extended his arm, his hand clasping over almost the entirety of Evelyn's forearm as he shook it.

"Evelyn Rivers."

A few moments of silence passed over the pair as they both clambered into a carriage, that until her sixth year at Hogwarts, Evelyn had believed to be charmed rather than pulled by thestrals. Evelyn sat opposite him, her eyes wandering across his face in an attempt to decipher where she knew him from.

"Are yeh here for the teachin' job?" He brushed a collection of wiry hairs behind his ears as he spoke.

"No, I'm just here to see Professor Dumbledore, I'm an old student of his." Evelyn smiled at Hagrid, she hadn't wanted to be alone, especially not before seeing Dumbledore, an event she knew would be important. "I remember you, you're the boy that got expelled."

"It weren't my fault. I never did what they said. I weren't doing anything wrong and then suddenly I was out. Said my aragog was dangerous but he weren't, he's the sweetest beast I ever kept." Evelyn wasn't sure if she could believe him. Everything he said seemed plausible but the distinct memory of his expulsion was all too compelling for her liking.

"What have you done since being expelled?" Evelyn wasn't sure if she really wanted to know, she just needed something to fill the silence.

"Well, I been 'ere, haven't I? Dumbledore's been training me to be a gamekeeper, a mighty good one at that. Ain't nowhere else I'd rather be you know? Hogwarts is where the magic is." He wasn't wrong. Although there was magic everywhere, the magic surrounding Hogwarts was different, it was special. Hogwarts held a special place in many magical folks hearts. "What have you been doin' since you left? Still runnin' around after that Riddle b-" Abruptly his cheeks began to flush a violent red, "I shouldn't have said that. I should not have said that."

"Pardon? What do you mean Hagrid? I barely spoke to that boy, why on earth would I want to be affiliated with someone like that?" Evelyn felt sick at the mention of his name. He was a monster, he was vile, he was not the sort of boy Evelyn would ever chase after.

"I expect Dumbledore will be waitin' for yeh. Anyways I got places to be..." He spoke with such speed, barely enunciating each word let alone the syllables that made it up. He gave Evelyn one last smile before jumping out of the carriage and making his way into the castle.

Evelyn wasn't sure how to respond. She wasn't sure what she had just heard, or what she was about to hear and it didn't bode well with her. The unknown had always made Evelyn anxious but as she made her way towards Hogwarts, it gave her more anxiety than ever before.

Usually, stepping into the place she called home would have been enough to calm her nerves, but today it made them worse. Evelyn's body ran on autopilot as soon as she entered through the castle doors, her legs taking her towards Dumbledore's office without a second thought. As she strolled through the familiar corridors, she felt her heart begin to sink in her chest, further and further with each step. Hogwarts may have been her home all those years ago, but it certainly didn't feel like it today.

Despite knowing she was safe, Evelyn found her hands running up her legs, edging closer to the wand protruding from her pocket. Her fingers coiled around it, clutching it as though she were a snake strangling her prey: she needed her wand. She may have felt safe now, but who knew what could happen. Evelyn couldn't predict the future, as much as she wished she could, so she had to be ready for any changes that could happen around her. When Evelyn arrived at Dumbledore's office, it was empty: the door was open but there was nobody inside. She knew it would be strange to go inside without permission, but Evelyn needed to be inside, she needed the safety of the familiar location to help ease her nerves.

As soon as she stepped inside his office she felt her heart rate begin slow, her grip on her wand beginning to loosen with each step she took: everything was as she remembered it. Gryffindor red accents were splattered across the room, an almost empty bowl of liquorice laces sat on his desk; Evelyn was glad to be here. Everything felt right, it felt familiar, safe.

Evelyn took a seat on the chair opposite Dumbledore's desk, closing her eyes. "I hope I'm not disturbing you, Evelyn." Once she opened her eyes, she saw Professor

Dumbledore sat opposite her, his hands fumbling inside the bowl of liquorice laces. "Would you like one? I often find that something sweet helps me to think."

"No thank you, Professor." She had never particularly enjoyed liquorice laces, the taste they left on her tongue often made her feel nauseous.

"Well, Evelyn. I believe we have much to discuss." He popped the liquorice lace into his mouth before he could say another word. Evelyn hated this, as she watched him, she felt as though she was reliving every conversation she had ever had with him. He seemingly enjoyed leaving Evelyn with questions that he wouldn't answer, often due to the liquorice lace in his mouth.

"We do?" Evelyn still wasn't sure what he intended to discuss with her. She was no longer a student and therefore had no real reason to be inside Hogwarts unless he was about to offer her a job, something she knew he wasn't likely to do.

Dumbledore paused before he spoke. Even after he had finished his liquorice lace, he waited before he uttered another word to Evelyn. "I have some information I think you would like to hear, it's about your time at Hogwarts."

"Well, what is it, Professor?"

"Evelyn, I am no longer your Professor, Albus will suffice." He popped another liquorice lace into his mouth.

Evelyn felt uncomfortable at the thought of calling her Professor by anything other than his proper title, he may have not taught her for years but he was still her Professor. He wasn't Albus to her. "Tell me. Stop eating your bloody sweets and tell me. You can't have got me released from St Mungos just to make me watch you eat liquorice laces."

"Indeed I did not. Would you like a liquorice lace though? I always recalled you having a strong dislike for them but it would be rude not to offer." Dumbledore placed a liquorice lace in his hand, extending it towards Evelyn.

"I don't want one!" Evelyn could feel her patience wearing thin. "I want to know what you have to tell me, please."

"Evelyn, do you remember how you spent your Christmas holidays in your sixth year at Hogwarts?"

"I don't know. I was probably with my grandparents but that was years ago." She tried to recall the memory but it wasn't there.

"Your grandparents wrote to me that year to tell me you hadn't returned home. You weren't with them."



Dumbledore's voice was beginning to annoy Evelyn. She could feel her breaths beginning to grow closer together. "I don't remember then."

"You were in Albania. You spent your Christmas with another student, running around Albania." Dumbledore locked his eyes onto Evelyn's. "You do remember this don't you?" He knew she wouldn't, Dumbledore knew everything.

Evelyn looked down, breaking their eye contact. "No, I don't. Why was I in Albania?"

"You were looking for something, you were helping someone else find something of importance to them, something that they believed they needed." He tilted his head to the side as he watched Evelyn, Dumbledore usually prided himself on his ability to read others, but he couldn't read Evelyn. He had no idea what she was thinking.

"Who was I with?"

"Tom Riddle." As soon as Dumbledore said his name, her face began to redden, tears forming in her eyes: she was remembering

It came back in flashes but Evelyn was sure it was coming back. Flashes of her and Tom Riddle stood side by side in Albania, in Hogwarts, in the Gaunt Shack. Every time she blinked a new memory appeared.

Evelyn couldn't breathe. She could see the breath she wanted to catch but she couldn't quite grasp it. "Evelyn, it's okay." Dumbledore's voice was calm in a way that Evelyn couldn't quite comprehend. His voice didn't falter, it stayed strong as he dropped down to her level. "You've known for some time Evelyn, it's been waiting in the back of your mind for you to call the information forwards. I don't think you've truly wanted to remember until now."

Evelyn could feel the thoughts rushing around her head faster than she could process them. "I think I remember." She almost wished she hadn't, she almost wished she could go back to St Mungos and simply forget it all. But as she sat and re-lived it all, she knew she couldn't. "Why do I remember?"

"Evelyn, I think you're going to need to be sat down for this." He took her hand, gently lifting her back up until she sat on the chair. "Your time at Hogwarts was far different than you remembered, what you remembered wasn't exactly what happened."

"Tell me. Tell me what happened." Evelyn couldn't sit still, her leg bounced in time with her heartbeat, her fingers tapping against the arm of the chair in a synchronised manner.

"Have a liquorice lace first." Dumbledore opened up the lid of the jar containing his supply. "It will help you process everything."

"I don't like them, you know that. Just tell me." Evelyn wanted to know, she needed to.

"Take one first."

"No! I don't want a sweet for Merlin's sake. I want my memories." The volcano inside Evelyn had erupted and she couldn't stop the lava from running. "Put your sweets away and help me!"

"Evelyn, do something for me and I will give you something in return. Have a sweet and I will tell you everything you need to know." He extended his arm, hovering the jar of liquorice laces below her face.

Evelyn grasped one from the jar, throwing into her mouth. "It's disgusting, can we start now? You're wasting my time!" She sucked on the sweet, clenching her eyes shut as she swallowed it down.

"Evelyn, it usually tastes different. I put a calming draught in it to keep your nerves at bay. I often find myself needing one in times that challenge me, I thought you might need one before I spoke." He quickly shut the jar and moved it back to the side.

"Professor-"

"Albus." He corrected. "I am no longer your Professor."

"Professor." She raised her voice louder this time. "Are you going to tell me anything?"

Dumbledore hesitated for a moment before placing both of his arms on the desk before him. "I'm going to tell you everything, Evelyn. And in return I need you."

"Me? What do you need me for? I'm crazy."

"I need you to join the Order. In the next few years, I am developing a group of witches and wizards to combat Tom Riddle. Together, we will crush the rebellion." He took a deep breath in, "I need you to help me."

"I'll do anything at this point. I just want him gone."

"Well then let me begin." He quickly waved his wand, closing the door to his office. "I think this conversation is one best had in private Evelyn."

She nodded in response, shuffling to the edge of her seat and leaning in towards him.

"In your fifth year at Hogwarts, I came to you with a task Evelyn. I showed you a memory obtained from the future, a memory displaying the terror and destruction that would occur should Tom be allowed to continue on the path he was on. I asked you to stop him."

Every word that Dumbledore spoke acted as a segment of the puzzle that Evelyn was slowly piecing together in her mind. "But I never stopped him, he's still a monster!"

"Evelyn, but you tried. You delayed his path to darkness, you steered him away from the evil that was growing within him. Your task isn't over yet Evelyn, there is still plenty of time for you to stop him. Have another liquorice lace." Dumbledore picked up a liquorice lace, passing it over to Evelyn who happily obliged.

"Why did you pick me?" She fumbled with the sweet in her hand, passing it between the two before dropping it onto her tongue.

"Evelyn you had something Tom needed. You had a soul, you had abilities he could only dream of. There are things I cannot yet tell you, but you had a link to Tom, a link I had to let him use in order for you to be successful."

"But I wasn't successful, I failed."

"You will be."

Evelyn knew it best not to question Dumbledore, he had far more wisdom than she could ever dream of. He held the memories she did not, she had the questions but he had all of the answers.

"It took you a while to fully immerse yourself into the task, you were very hesitant at first, quite rightly so, but eventually you were all in. Sometime after the Christmas Ball, a switch flipped in your head and you committed yourself to him. You joined his ranks, worked alongside him-"

"I worked with him? I helped that monster?" Evelyn cut him off.

"You have to understand, back then things were different. You were both two very different people. Evelyn, you were committed to completing the task." He explained to her with a smile. "You were adamant you would stop the boy. You did things you would never have done only a few months earlier, as much as I hate to admit it, Tom helped you. He helped you grow as a person Evelyn, he helped you evolve. You acted as his second, you went all the way to Albania for him. "

Evelyn's mind flashed back to all those years ago. "I remember the blood, it was everywhere." She looked down at her hands, remembering the crimson liquid that covered them that night. "I killed somebody, didn't I? I'm a murderer." Evelyn felt her body slipping towards the floor, a grounding technique she often used in times of

crisis, but in this instance, she wasn't convinced it would work. "I killed someone. I'm just as bad as Tom." Her breaths quickly became raspy, little air making it out of her lungs before she sucked it straight back in. "You put poison in the sweets, you wanted to lure me back here to kill me for what I did."

"Evelyn that is simply not true. I brought you here to help you." He spoke loudly but Evelyn didn't react. She was locked in her own little bubble and nothing he said could pop it.

"I'm dying. You're killing me, you want me kept quiet, you want me dead." Evelyn couldn't catch a breath, she could feel her heart pumping faster than a heart ever should, she could feel herself dying.

As Dumbledore extended his arm to comfort her, he realised he had made a colossal mistake. Before he even got close enough, Evelyn let out a bloodcurdling scream that didn't seem to stop. All of the breath she had previously been unable to catch had been caught all at once. Evelyn couldn't stop screaming no matter how much Dumbledore tried to comfort her, the bubble she was trapped inside was impenetrable.

"Take me back to St Mungo's."

Dumbledore was unsurprised when he saw Tom Riddle walk into his office ten years later: he had been expecting Tom would return to Hogwarts sooner or later. "Good evening, Tom," said Dumbledore easily. "Won't you sit down?"

"Thank you" He began taking the seat to which Dumbledore had gestured. "I heard that you became headmaster." His voice was colder than Dumbledore could remember from his time at Hogwarts, his features seemed almost distorted from all the darkness running through his veins. Dumbledore could sense the change. "A worthy choice I believe."

"I'm glad you approve." Dumbledore smiled at him, taking a liquorice lace. "May I offer you a liquorice lace or a drink?"

"A drink would be welcome. I have come a long way to see you"

Dumbledore waltzed over to the tall cabinet he had kept in his office ever since earning the title of Headmaster. He poured himself, and Tom, a goblet of wine before returning to his desk. "So Tom." He paused. "To what do I owe the pleasure?"

"They don't call me 'Tom' anymore. These days, I am known as-"

Dumbledore quickly cut him off. "I know what you are known as, but to me, I'm afraid you will always be Tom Riddle." He smiled pleasantly at Tom. "I guess that is one of

the irritating things about teachers. I am afraid they never quite forget their charges' youthful beginning." He raised his glass, as though toasting to Tom.

"I am surprised you have remained here so long," Tom said after a short pause. "I always wondered why a wizard such as yourself would never wish to leave school."

"Well, to a wizard such as myself, there can be nothing more important than passing on ancient skills, helping hone young minds. If I remember, you once saw the attraction of teaching too."

"I see it still." Said Tom. "I merely wondered why you—who are so often asked for advice by the Ministry, and who have twice, I think, been offered the post of Minister—"

"Three times at the last count, actually." Dumbledore smiled. "But the Ministry never attracted me as a career. Again, something we have in common, I think."

Tom inclined his head, taking another sip of his wine as he soaked in the silence. "I have returned," he said, after a little while, "later, perhaps, than Professor Dippet expected. But I have returned, nevertheless, to request again what he once told me I was too young to have. I have come to you to ask that you permit me to return to this castle, to teach. I think you must know that I have seen and done much since I left this place. I could show and tell your students things they can gain from no other wizard."

"Yes, I certainly do know that you have seen and done much since leaving us," he said quietly. "Rumors of your doings have reached your old school, Tom. I should be sorry to believe half of them."

"Greatness inspires envy, envy engenders spite, spite spawns lies. You must know this, Dumbledore."

"You call it greatness what you have been doing, do you?" Dumbledore could feel himself begin to tiptoe in the conversation rather than stride.

"Certainly." As he spoke, his eyes began to turn red. "I have experimented; I have pushed the boundaries of magic further, perhaps, than they have ever been pushed—"

"Of some kinds of magic," Dumbledore corrected him, placing his goblet down on the desk. "Of some. Of others, you remain, forgive me, woefully ignorant."

At this, Tom almost smiled. Rather than a look of happiness associated with a smile, what Dumbledore saw was a taut leer, verging on the edge of rage.

"The old argument," Tom spoke softly. "But nothing I have seen in the world has supported your famous pronouncements that love is more powerful than my kind of magic, Dumbledore."

"Perhaps you have been looking in the wrong places," suggested Dumbledore.

"Well, then, what better place to start my fresh researches than here, at Hogwarts?" said Voldemort. "Will you let me return? Will you let me share my knowledge with your students? I place myself and my talents at your disposal. I am yours to command."

Dumbledore raised his eyebrows. "And what will become of those whom you command? What will happen to those who call themselves — or so rumour has it — the Death Eaters?"

"My friends," He began, for want of a better word. "Will carry on without me, I am sure."

"I am glad to hear that you consider them friends," said Dumbledore. "I was under the impression that they are more in the order of servants."

"You are mistaken," stated Tom.

"Then if I were to go to the Hog's Head tonight, I would not find a group of them — Nott, Rosier, Mulciber, Dolohov — awaiting your return? Devoted friends indeed, to travel this far with you on a snowy night, merely to wish you luck as you attempted to secure a teaching post."

"You are omniscient as ever, Dumbledore."

"Oh no, merely friendly with the local barmen," said Dumbledore lightly. "Now, Tom . . ." He drew himself up in the seat. "Let us speak openly. Why have you come here tonight, surrounded by henchmen, to request a job we both know you do not want?"

"A job I do not want? On the contrary, Dumbledore, I want it very much." He looked coldly surprised, an emotion Dumbledore had previously not seen him express.

"Oh, you want to come back to Hogwarts, but you do not want to teach any more than you wanted to when you were eighteen. What is it you're after, Tom? Why not try an open request for once?"

Tom sneered. "If you do not want to give me a job —"

"Of course I don't," Dumbledore cut him off. "And I don't think for a moment you expected me to. Nevertheless, you came here, you asked, you must have had a purpose."

Tom stood up. As he stood Dumbledore could see how little he truly looked like himself, he looked less like himself than ever before. "This is your final word?"

"It is." Dumbledore stood himself up as well, matching Tom's positioning.

"Then we have nothing more to say to each other."

"No, nothing," said Dumbledore, and a great sadness filled his face. "The time is long gone when I could frighten you with a burning wardrobe and force you to make repayment for your crimes. But I wish I could, Tom. . . . I wish I could. . . ."

And with that, Tom walked away.

Tom left the office briskly, he had business to attend to, he couldn't have Dumbledore holding him up any longer. As soon as he was out of the office, his body took him where he needed to go without him even having to think. It didn't take him long before he found himself on the seventh floor, opposite the all too familiar tapestry. He paced in front of the wall three times, eventually revealing the Room of Requirement.

Whilst at Hogwarts, Tom had used the Room of Requirement for all sorts. He had used it as his safe haven, his place to call home. Every free moment he had was either spent there or in the library researching one of his extracurricular activities. Now, he was in the place he had always dreamed of, he had the power he had craved all those years ago and he felt truly indestructible.

As he walked deeper into the Room of Requirement, unwanted memories of his time at Hogwarts began to bombard him. Every book meant something to him, every inch of this room was filled with memories from his life. He had grown up in this room, he had experienced firsts and lasts within these four walls. Hogwarts was more of his home than anywhere else, even Malfoy Manor.

Tom reached his hands into the bag he had been clutching to his chest for the past few hours and pulled out the item he had gone to such lengths to collect: Rowena Ravenclaws Diadem. He slipped out the blue velvet case, placing it on a chest of drawers in front of him. His hands toyed with the metal clasp, eventually sliding it open to reveal the Diadem in all its glory.

He could almost feel the corners of his lips turn upwards as it was revealed. Part of his soul resided in the diadem, it was the key to his immortality. Every Horcrux he made was a stepping stone to the immortality he had been craving for years and the Diadem was no different.

Hesitantly, he shut the box again, concealing the Diadem. As he looked around the room, he knew he had chosen the perfect place to hide it. Nobody would ever find the concealed part of his soul: he believed he would truly live forever.

Mountains upon mountains of furniture were stacked all across the room, table legs sticking out from all angles. The room looked like a disaster zone, it appeared as though a hurricane had struck straight through the room. At first glance, it appeared as though every item was destroyed but upon closer inspection, Tom could see a muggle chessboard stood untouched in the corner of the room.

Tom knew he had to hurry up, if he didn't leave soon he knew Dumbledore would know: Dumbledore knew everything. He scoured the room, searching every corner for the perfect location to hide the Diadem but his attempts were futile. Nowhere matched the standard he was looking for but he knew it never would. He knew the room's defences were enough to keep it safe, but he still desired an extra level of safety. He needed a net that he could fall back on.

Immediately, his eyes locked on to a crevice deep within the room. It was surrounded by various Hogwarts textbooks, laying in a disorganised manner around it; he had found the place. Tom was quick in dropping the Diadem, he slid it into the crevice with ease and made his way past the muggle chessboard towards the exit.

As he shut the door, what Tom didn't notice was the king slowly toppling over off of the board.

In 1970, Evelyn was finally released from St Mungos. All those years passed without her stepping outside, without her using magic, without her truly existing. Of course, Madame Fluke had welcomed her back with open arms, but nevertheless she was not happy to be there. Once she was in, no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't leave. It took years of persuasion that she was sane enough to be released, to be allowed home. And although Evelyn couldn't wait to leave, she had nowhere to go: she hadn't had a home since her grandparents died, the cottage wasn't home without them.

Evelyn knew that there was only one place she could always turn to, Hogwarts. The castle had been her home for seven years, it was where she made some of her best friends, where she truly found herself as a person, where Dumbledore was waiting for her. When she returned to St Mungos, Dumbledore had given her the promise of a teaching position at Hogwarts once she was released, and although it was many years later, she was praying that the offer still stood. All throughout her years at St Mungos, she had dreamed of returning to Hogwarts, even just to visit and now that she was free, it was finally a possibility again.

Madame Fluke had arranged for Dumbledore to collect her from the hospital, fearing what would happen if Evelyn was allowed to roam freely without any guardian to watch over her; she knew sending her back to Hogwarts was exactly what she needed. When he arrived, Evelyn could feel herself glowing. Seeing a familiar face, albeit aged, after all those years made her feel as though she had been given a safety blanket. When she looked at him, she remembered the good, she remembered the magic of Hogwarts. Everything felt safer once he arrived.



"Evelyn, are we ready to go?" He said, waiting by the end of her bed.

Her eyes scanned her bed, the place which she had spent the majority of her life, the place in which she had had her heart broken and built back up again. Every memory she had created in the past decade centred around St Mungos, it felt as though it was her identity. As much as she didn't want it to be, St Mungos was everything she knew, it was all she could truly remember or at least all she wanted to. "This was my home." She whispered to herself.

"Evelyn," Dumbledore placed his hand on her shoulder. "It was, but it no longer is. It was once the place you needed but it no longer will be. Hogwarts will be that place, Hogwarts will be your home."

Before St Mungos, Hogwarts had been her home. It had been her place of comfort, of safety, but she wasn't sure it would feel the same when she returned. "Hogwarts has changed, it won't be the same."

"Change is not always a bad thing. Many aspects of Hogwarts remain the same as when you were a student there, those that have changed have done so to improve the school." Dumbledore said. "Are you ready?"

She looked on at the place she had spent the majority of her life, blinking hard. With one last smile at the place that had contained her all those years, she turned and walked away. "Let's go."

Silence overcame the pair as they made their way towards the exit and down into the alleyways below. It wasn't until they came to a screeching halt that Dumbledore spoke. "We'll be apparating to Hogwarts today. I'm not one to enjoy the train." He held his hand out for Evelyn to grasp onto.

"But, you can't apparate into Hogwarts." Evelyn raised her eyebrows at him.

"No Evelyn, *you* can't." He smiled at her, lifting his arm higher as if to hurry her.

Before she had a chance to reply, Evelyn felt herself being pulled in every direction as though she was a present on Christmas morning. She could feel her eyes sinking to the back of her head, her eardrums being pressed until they almost ruptured, all she could feel was immense pressure. It felt like she was drowning.

As soon as she felt her feet hit the ground, a wave of relief overcame her. She was glad it was over, but more importantly, she was happy to be home. "Welcome back Evelyn," Dumbledore said as he led her into the castle. "I think the other Professors will be happy to have you joining them, you shall be working alongside a young Professor Flitwick."

Evelyn felt herself beaming as he spoke. Everything she had been dreaming of during her time at St Mungos was becoming a reality. "Thank you so much." Words could not express how grateful she was, she owed Dumbledore her life.

"No need to thank me. I simply gave you the role you deserve." He shot her smile. "With grades like yours at N.E.W.T level, there isn't anybody else who would even begin to compete with you for the position."

Evelyn could barely remember sitting her NEWT exams but she remembered the feeling of awe when she opened up her results to reveal all 'Oustandings', something that was almost unheard of at Hogwarts. "Where are we heading?"

"I thought I would show you to your living quarters. Since you'll be teaching Charms, you luckily have the largest living area."

Evelyn smiled, grateful to have finally been told what position she would be teaching. She had always found Charms an interesting subject and with current affairs, she knew it would be useful for students to learn how to properly use their wands. "I can't wait." All of her dreams had surrounded Hogwarts since she was just a young girl.

"You will be an asset to the school."

The two walked in silence throughout the castle, keeping a brisk pace as they made their way towards the third floor. Despite everything looking different, Evelyn's body still knew the way; Dumbledore barely had to make a sound or gesture and she still knew where she was going. Although she wasn't sure she would be able to remember her way around Hogwarts, it seemed to be stored deep in her subconscious, ready to re-emerge when she finally came back.

Despite knowing she hadn't arrived at the classroom yet, Evelyn found herself stopping beside a large cabinet. Her eyes scanned it until she settled on something she remembered all too well. Front and centre in pristine condition was Tom Riddle's Special Award for Service to the School: the award he had received for turning in an innocent boy, punishing him for a crime he did not commit.

"I often find myself pausing here when I trail the castle." She heard Dumbledores voice from behind her. "We really ought to do something about this."

Evelyn turned to look at him but she couldn't tell if she was talking about the award or the boy. Either way, something had to be done.

Tom Riddle knew he would win over the giants before he even stepped foot in the mountains; even if he couldn't win them over with his charm, his magic was enough to make them second guess their refusal to join his ranks.

As soon as the sunlight left Malfoy Manor, he and his band of followers set off on their quest. He took with him who he considered his most loyal followers: Abraxas

Malfoy, Astrea Black and Theodore Nott, the original Death Eaters. Despite some of them being almost incompetent, they had proven themselves loyal by never leaving his side in all his years. Since their days at Hogwarts had ended, the four had remained together no matter what, they were almost a family.

"Nott, Malfoy, Black, come with me. We have business to attend to." He called as he made his way out of the Manor, his followers trailing closely behind him.

Not a single word was spoken on their journey to the mountains, the group walked in silence, Tom at the front with the rest of them following silently. He wore a hooded cloak, as he always did to meetings, in an attempt to further invoke fear in those who saw him.

As soon as the altitude began to climb, Tom knew he was entering giant territory. Mist covered the mountains, but even with it, he could still see the silhouettes of a group of giants waiting deep within the forest.

"I am Lord Voldemort, I mean you no harm." He called out as he entered. "With me are my followers, Death Eaters, a group which I hope you will come to join. I should hope you are wise enough to hear me out."

From behind the trees, a group of giants began to emerge, with a clear leader at the front of the pack. Although they didn't seem angry yet, Tom knew giants were temperamental. At first, it seemed as though there were only a few giants making their way towards him, but as his eyes began to focus, he noticed what seemed like hundreds.

"Big crowd tonight my Lord," Theodore spoke from behind him. "No challenge for you of course," He added quickly after.

"Who is your leader?" He called out to the group of giants.

As one began to emerge, another placed their arm in front of him. "Anything you say to one, you say to all." The voice bellowed, echoing throughout the forest.

"Very well." Tom took several steps forwards. He lifted his wand up to his throat where it acted as a microphone, ensuring the giants were able to hear his voice. "As I am sure you are all aware, I am Lord Voldemort. Similarly to you, I have been outcast by the Wizarding World, as have my followers. I come to offer you a chance to join me in my quest. I want to take back what is rightfully mine, what is rightfully *ours*." He paused to take a breath, a smirk playing on his lips; nobody could deny his charm.

"For too long, giants have been outcasts of society for one reason alone, your difference. Wizards are afraid of something they cannot understand and you are that something. But here's where others have gone wrong, you can be understood, just

like me, if only one is willing to put in the effort. I am willing." He heard several of the giants begin to mumble.

"Together, we can take down the Ministry, we can claim the positions of power that were stolen from us, we can break down the barriers built to keep us out. A future with me is a future you want to see, I can assure you of that."

He spoke directly to their supposed leader, making eye contact as he spoke. "Your people deserve better than this," He gestured to their dark surroundings. "I give them that."

"Forgive me, boy—"

"I am no boy, I am a Lord." He added sharply, curling his lips upwards in an attempt to conceal his annoyance, he thought this task would be easy.

"Forgive me, Lord," He exaggerated, "for not believing you when you seem so convinced of yourself but where is your proof? Where is your army? Where is proof of your actions? All we currently have to go by is what you say."

"Have you not read of the recent sieges? Have you not seen my mark appearing in the sky? All my revolution needs to move forward is you." He could feel his followers shifting behind him, ready to put their backup plan into action. A Lord never went somewhere expecting things to go as planned, especially when those plans involved unreliable beasts such as trolls. If Tom gave the command, his army would strike.

"Those marks in the sky," said the leader, glancing briefly up at the sky. "They were you?"

Tom scoffed lightly. "Of course they were. No other witch or wizard has the skill to create such a sign of power. The spell you see was created by me, my mind barely had to think and it appeared. My mind combined with your power is enough to take down the Ministry once and for all."

"What would we gain from this exchange? I give you all my finest warriors and what would I receive in return?"

Tom didn't miss a beat. "Power. Power like you could never imagine. Within my ranks, nobody would think to question you, you would have all your needs tended to: house-elves would wait on you every hour of every day. You would be free from persecution, you could live a life outside of these mountains, a life with no limits."

"But how long for? Nobody can live forever, soon we would be forced to come back." The giant stepped forwards, his voice quickly becoming more intense.

"I can. Death is no friend of mine, we shall never greet one another, we shall never cross paths. I am immortal." With that, he knew he had won them over, he knew by the silence that overcame the mountain that he had done it, the giants were on his side.

"Well then my Lord." The giant kneeled down, attempting to get closer to Tom and his followers. "I believe we have an agreement."

Soon after inviting them to join his ranks, Tom began to understand why the giants had been outcasted from society. He did not come to regret his choice, but he came to quickly second guess himself, and Tom Riddle never second-guessed himself. Giants were far more brutal than Tom could ever have imagined. Immediately once they had joined his ranks, Tom and his followers were almost stunned by their power; with one flick of their finger, they could take down a house. Once he saw their handiwork, he knew taking down the ministry would be no trouble at all.

Since joining forces with the giants, havoc had overcome England. Sieges took place all over the country, with Tom leading his army of Death Eaters to victory every time. Throughout the early years of the war, Tom grew his army. He knew he already had the power, but without more affluence in his army, he would get nowhere. He spent years recruiting members of pureblood families, wizards with enough power and affluence to help him win the war. Tom won battle after battle, nobody could even come close to defeating him and he thought they never would.

Tom Riddle knew his followers would do anything for him, if not for loyalty, they would do it out of fear for their lives. Despite knowing that his original Death Eaters were the most loyal, they lacked what he needed.

When the sun rose deep into the winter, Tom made his way into the hall of the Malfoy Manor where his followers waited obediently at the table. As usual, the moment he entered the hall it silenced. His followers rose from their seats, tilting their heads down towards the floor, not a single eye catching Tom's until he was sat down at the head of the table.

"Be seated." Tom drew his wand from his pocket, placing it down on the table beside him. He turned to face a disturbed looking woman who sat beside him, her eyes locked onto his with something almost more intense than the fear plastered on the faces of his other followers. "Bellatrix, how has your mission been coming along?"

"My Lord," She bowed her head down graciously. "No problems at all, very soon it shall be completed I assure you."

"Well, I should hope so. Keep me waiting any longer and you will earn yourself another punishment. I have reached the end of my tether with some of you. Considering we are in a war, I would expect a greater sense of urgency."

"Yes my Lord. Not to worry-"

"I can assure you there is no worry from my part. In fact, if anyone around this table should be worrying, it should be you Bellatrix. I will not tolerate another failure from you." He turned to face the rest of his followers. "The same goes for all of you."

His followers nodded in agreement, their heads tilting down towards the table to avoid his piercing gaze. "Lucius." He called down the table.

A long-haired man near the end of the table looked up, his eyes catching Tom's for a split second before shifting their focus elsewhere. "Yes, my Lord."

"I require something of you, Bellatrix you too." He glanced at the peculiar looking woman sat beside him. "Everyone else must leave."

Without another word, his followers almost jumped from their seats, rushing towards the exit with great haste. Lucius and Bellatrix rose from their seats gracefully, making their way towards the head of the table where Tom sat peacefully.

"Bellatrix, go tend to our prisoners while I speak with Lucius. I wouldn't want you hearing anything that could put you in danger now, would I?" Bellatrix left slowly, glancing back at Tom frequently until she left the hall.

Tom turned to face Lucius who stood tall in front of him, no trace of fear lingering on his face as he came eye to eye with him. "My Lord, what was it you required?"

"Lucius, you are one of my most loyal followers as I am sure you are aware." Lucius bowed his head. "I require something of you." Tom pulled out a small black diary from his robe, placing it on the table before him. "What you see before me is my old diary. It is cleverly charmed in a way that when taken onto the grounds of Hogwarts, it will cause the Chamber of Secrets to be reopened. Once the Chamber is reopened, the Basilisk will continue on its task of purging the school of all mudbloods and it will be made known that I am the true heir of Slytherin."

Tom lifted the diary in his hands, "Lucius, you must hide this diary. You must keep it away from prying eyes, nobody outside this room can know of its existence. You guard this with your life." He commanded, passing the diary over to Lucius.

"My Lord I assure you I will not fail. I will guard this diary with my life, I will not fail you." Lucius bowed down before him.

"When required, I will alert you of your next steps. But until then, keep the diary hidden." Tom spoke sharply as Lucius raised his head once more. "You will not fail."

Abruptly, the doors to the hall swung open, causing Lucius to quickly pocket the diary and turn away. "I shall leave you now my Lord." He quickly turned towards the door, walking out of the hall with urgency.

"Bellatrix," Tom called out to her as she entered the hall.

"Yes my Lord." She paced towards him quickly, stopping herself once she was a few feet away. "What is it you require of me?"

"I require your Gringotts vault. I require you to hide something of mine inside. I require you to protect it with your life. Defend your vault so that it is impregnable, use whatever enchantments you desire, but the item must be secure. Nobody should ever be able to find it, and if they do, they should not be able to leave with it alive. I expect you shall be able to complete this task." Tom proclaimed.

"Without fail my Lord." Bellatrix grinned at the thought of being given such a task from her Lord. She had been waiting for an opportunity to prove herself and this was just that. Bellatrix considered herself well versed in the art of protective enchantments and with such devotion for her Lord, there was no way she would allow herself to fail.

"If you fail me, there will be consequences," Tom stated.

"I expect nothing less, my Lord. If I fail, I deserve all the punishment you see fit." Although Bellatrix hoped not to fail, she knew that if she did, any punishment designed by Tom would be appropriate. If she failed her Lord, she would accept anything Tom sent her way, she knew she would deserve nothing less.

Tom pulled out the Hufflepuff cup from his other robe pocket, its gold exterior glistening in the daylight that shone in through the windows. "Protect this with your life. I expect you at Gringotts for at least the rest of the day enchanting your vault." He handed over the cup to an eager Bellatrix who manipulated it in her hands before sliding it into her robe pocket. "Now, leave before you bore me."

Bellatrix knew to oblige, she stormed out of the hall of the Malfoy Manor and disappeared in an instant.

A short while after Bellatrix had left the hall, Tom rose from his seat, his robes trailing behind him as he made his way out of the hall. He made his way up the vast staircase in the Manor towards the bedrooms in which his most loyal followers resided. "Regulus." He called as he made his way up.

Instantly, there was a quiet scuffling sound coming from one of the bedrooms, followed by a door swinging open. Regulus Black appeared in the doorway of the bedroom, "My Lord, what is it you desire?" He bowed briefly before him before rising to look Tom in the eye, something few of his followers could muster the courage to do.

"I need your house-elf."

Tom Riddle knew his followers would do anything for him, if not for loyalty, they would do it out of fear for their lives. Despite knowing that his original Death Eaters were the most loyal, they lacked what he needed.

When the sun rose deep into the winter, Tom made his way into the hall of the Malfoy Manor where his followers waited obediently at the table. As usual, the moment he entered the hall it silenced. His followers rose from their seats, tilting their heads down towards the floor, not a single eye catching Tom's until he was sat down at the head of the table.

"Be seated." Tom drew his wand from his pocket, placing it down on the table beside him. He turned to face a disturbed looking woman who sat beside him, her eyes locked onto his with something almost more intense than the fear plastered on the faces of his other followers. "Bellatrix, how has your mission been coming along?"

"My Lord," She bowed her head down graciously. "No problems at all, very soon it shall be completed I assure you."

"Well, I should hope so. Keep me waiting any longer and you will earn yourself another punishment. I have reached the end of my tether with some of you. Considering we are in a war, I would expect a greater sense of urgency."

"Yes my Lord. Not to worry-"

"I can assure you there is no worry from my part. In fact, if anyone around this table should be worrying, it should be you Bellatrix. I will not tolerate another failure from you." He turned to face the rest of his followers. "The same goes for all of you."

His followers nodded in agreement, their heads tilting down towards the table to avoid his piercing gaze. "Lucius." He called down the table.

A long-haired man near the end of the table looked up, his eyes catching Tom's for a split second before shifting their focus elsewhere. "Yes, my Lord."

"I require something of you, Bellatrix you too." He glanced at the peculiar looking woman sat beside him. "Everyone else must leave."

Without another word, his followers almost jumped from their seats, rushing towards the exit with great haste. Lucius and Bellatrix rose from their seats gracefully, making their way towards the head of the table where Tom sat peacefully.

"Bellatrix, go tend to our prisoners while I speak with Lucius. I wouldn't want you hearing anything that could put you in danger now, would I?" Bellatrix left slowly, glancing back at Tom frequently until she left the hall.



Tom turned to face Lucius who stood tall in front of him, no trace of fear lingering on his face as he came eye to eye with him. "My Lord, what was it you required?"

"Lucius, you are one of my most loyal followers as I am sure you are aware." Lucius bowed his head. "I require something of you." Tom pulled out a small black diary from his robe, placing it on the table before him. "What you see before me is my old diary. It is cleverly charmed in a way that when taken onto the grounds of Hogwarts, it will cause the Chamber of Secrets to be reopened. Once the Chamber is reopened, the Basilisk will continue on its task of purging the school of all mudbloods and it will be made known that I am the true heir of Slytherin."

Tom lifted the diary in his hands, "Lucius, you must hide this diary. You must keep it away from prying eyes, nobody outside this room can know of its existence. You guard this with your life." He commanded, passing the diary over to Lucius.

"My Lord I assure you I will not fail. I will guard this diary with my life, I will not fail you." Lucius bowed down before him.

"When required, I will alert you of your next steps. But until then, keep the diary hidden." Tom spoke sharply as Lucius raised his head once more. "You will not fail."

Abruptly, the doors to the hall swung open, causing Lucius to quickly pocket the diary and turn away. "I shall leave you now my Lord." He quickly turned towards the door, walking out of the hall with urgency.

"Bellatrix," Tom called out to her as she entered the hall.

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"I require your Gringotts vault. I require you to hide something of mine inside. I require you to protect it with your life. Defend your vault so that it is impregnable, use whatever enchantments you desire, but the item must be secure. Nobody should ever be able to find it, and if they do, they should not be able to leave with it alive. I expect you shall be able to complete this task." Tom proclaimed.

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"I need your house-elf."

With a spring in her step, Evelyn made her way towards her classroom. Despite it being the first period on a Tuesday morning, she felt full of energy.

By the time Evelyn arrived, her classroom was full of eager first-year students, sat muttering away at their desks. "Good morning Professor Rivers." They called out to her as she took her usual stance at the front of the classroom.

She beamed down at the class. "Today we will be beginning our work on the wand lighting charm, now can anyone tell me the name of this charm?" The first years murmured quietly amongst themselves, "If nobody knows the answer, I will be able to offer my assistance, it is alright to not know everything, especially at your age."

A few students nodded silently at her, cueing her to begin the segment of the textbook she had memorised the night before. "To illuminate the end of a wand, the caster must call out the incantation "*Lumos*." If correctly incanted, the end of the wand will then illuminate and cast light in the immediate vicinity of the caster. It can also be used to illuminate unseen entrances."

"Lumos is one of the simplest yet most useful spells. This light is fairly warm however and risks flammable things, including your wand if you are careless enough. But do not let that put you off, the movement is simple, as is the incantation; I expect no incidents in today's classroom!"

Turning to face the blackboard behind her, Evelyn drew out the hand movement required to cast *Lumos*, "So, whenever everyone is ready, lift up your wand, complete the hand movement and recite the incantation."

Despite some of her class being more advanced than expected at this stage in their education, not a single wand illuminated with the first attempt. Nor the second. Nor the third.

"Right, nobody get disheartened!" Although Evelyn could barely contain her disappointment, not in the class, but in herself. She had been teaching for many months now and although she had found it enjoyable, she did not seem to have the knack for it. "We'll just keep trying."

It was almost the end of the lesson by the time anyone succeeded. In the corner of the room, Jocasta Briggs has managed to shoot a thin stream of light from the tip of her wand. Almost instantly, the class erupted in applause.

"Jocasta, that was marvellous. 10 points to Hufflepuff," Evelyn beamed at the girl, "Now before we pack away, I would like to explain to you the three types of wand illuminating spell. First, we have *Lumos Maxima*, which will produce a bright light, one brighter than produced with a typical wand illuminating spell. Next, we have *Lumos Duo* which produces a focused beam, similar to what Jocasta produced just now, and finally, we have *Lumos Solem* which produces sunlight. Each spell has a similar incantation however the hand movement varies which is why there is such importance in your hand movements as it could completely alter the spell you cast!"

Evelyn wiped away the drawing from her blackboard, sensing that the class was moments from ending. "Now for your homework, I would like you to practice this charm. I expect you to be able to produce at least some light from your wand by next lesson, please!" Evelyn hoped at least one other student would be able to complete the spell, although she had not found it difficult during her first year, she knew that not everyone had magic come easily to them.

Evelyn found that her other lessons were by far more successful. Her third-year class were all able to produce the cheering charm with ease on their first attempt and by the end of the day, she felt far less like a failure. After a hot evening meal, Evelyn found herself relaxing in her quarters once again, dozing off on the sofa she had recently invested in.

Evelyn awoke with a start.

The nightmares that she had experienced whilst at St Mungo's had begun to make their return. Evelyn felt out of control, her body did what it wanted, lifting her off of the sofa and leading her away from her quarters. Her legs followed a route that they knew, but her mind was lost. She knew the layout of the castle well, but wherever she was going she could not predict. She wanted to scream, call out for help, make any noise possible but she could not.

It was a few minutes before Evelyn found herself somewhere she recognised. As soon as her hand gripped onto the door handle, Evelyn knew she was entering the Room of Requirement, however, why she did not yet know.

Yet without the freedom to move her body as she pleased, she trailed through the room, her eyes glancing around at the various collections of knickknacks. Evelyn's legs finally stopped controlling her as she found herself beside a peculiar looking muggle chessboard. Despite the game having been finished, nothing had been put back where it belonged, her eyes found themselves wandering towards the floor where she found the king. Undamaged from the fall, but away from the game.

Instinctively, Evelyn picked up the piece and manipulated it in her hands. Now with the control back over her body, Evelyn planned to simply put the king back on the board and leave. But as she lifted the piece and prepared to return the king home, something silver glistening in the distance caught her eye.

Severus Snape sat quietly at the Hogs Head Inn. It was a place he usually enjoyed a late evening firewhiskey after he returned from the Malfoy Manor; the burning feeling as it trickled down his throat was something he was rather fond of, at least it meant he was feeling something.

Every evening at the Hogs Head was the same, he drank his firewhiskey in an empty pub, thanked the barman then made his way back to the Malfoy Manor. As soon as Snape witnessed a peculiar looking woman enter the pub, he knew it would not be a usual day, nobody but him was ever in the Hogs Head. The woman introduced herself as Sybill Trelawney to the barman and made her way up the creaky stairs into one of the rooms, within a few seconds of her entering the room, a man Snape recognised all too well as Albus Dumbledore followed her inside.

Severus was already aware that anyone entering the Hogs Head was suspicious, but two individuals, one of which famously defeated Gellert Grindlewald, well that was certainly not a coincidence. Although unable to make out what was being said upstairs, he could hear their voices chattering away rather politely.

As Severus took the last swig of his firewhiskey he glanced around the room, the barman had gone. Identifying that this would be the perfect opportunity to head upstairs and assess the situation, he crept as silently as possible up the stairs and stationed himself outside the door. Putting his ear up to the door, he could hear everything.

"But could you not predict something for me?" He heard the deeper voice belonging to Albus Dumbledore ask.

"That is not how The Sight presents itself," Sybil spoke hurriedly, her words all mumbling together.

"Well, then I am afraid you will have no position teaching at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Do not worry, the visit was not entirely useless as I have now discovered I am rather partial to a glass of Knotgrass Mead."

Severus heard the chairs scraping against the, signalling to him that the conversation had been terminated and immediately jumped, making his way down the staircase with fear, he did not wish to be caught. He waited halfway down the stairs for a sign of movement from upstairs but it did not come, had they been aware he was eavesdropping and attempted to trick him?

"You fool." He muttered under his breath to himself as he made his way back up the staircase.

Before he was even all the way up, he heard her. A voice that seemed almost artificial spoke in the clearest possible way, "*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....*" But that was all he heard before he felt a firm hand on his shoulder, tugging him back down the stairs.

"Get out of my pub!" He roared angrily at Severus, increasing the tightness of his grip. "You should do well not to return here, we don't want your lot." Spitting down on the floor, he released his grip on Severus, pushing him to the floor and slamming the door on him.

But Severus had heard all he needed. Sybill Trelawney possessed The Sight, whatever she had prophesied was almost certain to come true and he knew his Master would be more than grateful for his work.

Severus span in his spot, envisioning the Malfoy Manor and within a split second, he was there. "My Lord," he called out through the hallways. "I have but the most urgent news."

Lord Voldemort quickly apparated before him, "yes Severus?"

Severus looked around him at the lingering Death Eaters, "I believe you would rather hear this news without eavesdroppers."

"Well, you would be correct." He glanced quickly at the Death Eater lingering in the corner, "Avada Kedavra." He didn't even pause for a moment to recognise the seriousness of his actions. Instead, he spoke again, "Severus, what is it you have to tell me?"

"There is a prophecy, of a boy with the power to defeat you."

"A boy could never defeat me." But Severus could tell he wasn't so sure. "Who made such a prophecy?"

"Sybill Trelawney," Severus responded.

"And what exactly did this Sybill say? Recite it for me."

Severus was glad in that moment to be blessed with immaculate memory. *"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...."*

"Well, the fate of this boy has been sealed by this Sybill. It will be a shame he never got to thank her." Voldemort lifted his sleeve and pressed his bony finger onto the dark mark embossed on his skin. "It seems I have a job for you all," Voldemort began as his followers began to appear before him.

"Severus has just informed me of some rather important news about a prophecy." He glanced towards Severus who stood blankly glancing around the room. "It speaks of a boy, a boy who threatens me, who holds the power to vanquish me."

"Impossible!" Bellatrix Lestrange cried out, jumping forwards with passion.

Voldemort simply sighed, "Crucio." He pointed his wand at her, watching her convulse on the floor. "Do not speak out of turn Bellatrix."

He stepped over her body and addressed his remaining supporters. "I require you to find a child. He shall be born at the end of July. Find out who he is, find his parents and report directly back to me. Fail and you will die." Voldemort nodded at Severus before disappearing into thin air.

"You heard him," Severus began monotonously, "I expect you all to find this boy, find his mother, find his father, find his house. Offer whatever rewards these vermin might seek for their information. The boy shall not live."

Evelyn was a curious being, but she was also human. And despite her desire to identify the object she saw glisten, her tiredness was a far more prominent need. "Another day," she whispered to herself as she made her way out of the room. She would be back, but right now she needed sleep more than she needed to find out what she had seen glisten.

As soon as Evelyn left the room, she realised how late it truly was. The corridors were pitch black and utterly silent, "Lumos." She whispered, causing a bright white light to emerge from the tip of her wand, illuminating the corridor before her.

Although Evelyn knew her way through Hogwarts in the daytime, she could not say the same for during the nighttime. Every corridor simply looked the same. Evelyn felt like she was walking for hours before she saw something remotely familiar but the second she did, she heard footsteps.

"Who's there?" She called out, "It is far too late to be out of bed."

It was a few moments before anyone spoke but when the figures emerged from the shadows, Evelyn flushed coral. "I was not aware that you dictated when I went to bed." Albus Dumbledore called out.

Evelyn could feel her cheeks flushing deeper red by the second. "Oh Albus, it's you." She had finally gotten used to referring to her old Professor by his first name, it may have taken her many months but it was progress nonetheless. "My apologies," Evelyn looked up at the dishevelled woman stood beside him.

"No need to apologise Evelyn." Dumbledore pulled out an item that Evelyn recognised from her textbooks as a Deluminator, a device used to remove or return light from its sources. From the tip of his Deluminator shone a bright light and as soon as he lifted the cap, the light escaped, travelling around the corridors and lighting up the dark space. "This is Sybill Trelawney, she will be joining us to teach Divination, would you be able to show her to her quarters?"

Dumbledore gestured to Sybill to move closer but she hesitated. Sybill glanced at Dumbledore with doe eyes before eventually stepping towards Evelyn. "Would you be able to come to my office when you have finished?"

"Of course," Evelyn replied, and with that, Dumbledore disappeared down the corridor. "So, what made you want to work at Hogwarts?" Evelyn asked, hoping that small talk would fill the uncomfortable silence on the walk to the Divination quarters.

"I am unable to discuss such matter dear." She replied curtly.

"Oh, okay then." Evelyn felt rather taken aback. "Well, what made you choose Divination?"

"Well, that I can discuss. I have always known I was destined for such subject, in fact, my great-great-grandmother was Cassandra Trelawney." Evelyn knew all too well who that was from her days as a student, not a single Divination lesson had gone by without the mention of her name. "I am the first since her to possess The Second Sight, it was only right that someone would employ me to teach the important subject of Divination."

Evelyn knew that Divination was by far the least popular subject at Hogwarts, very few students had taken it whilst she was a student and even less during her months of teaching. In fact, she was almost certain that Dumbledore had been looking at removing the subject from the Hogwarts syllabus altogether.

"How do you know that you possess The Second Sight?"

"Pardon?"

"Well, how can you tell?"

"I should hope you are not questioning my abilities. You have done nothing but offend me in the short time of seeing you. Now, if you don't mind, I can find my way from here." Sybill huffed, turning hot on her heel and entering the quarters before Evelyn could say another word.

"Oh," was all Evelyn could say. When she woke up earlier this morning she had certainly not expected her day to turn out anything like this. Pushing aside her confusion, Evelyn made her way towards Dumbledores office, stopping once she reached the stairwell Gargoyle. "Peppermint frog." She called out, triggering the Gargoyle to begin to turn, allowing her access to the office.

"Albus?" Evelyn spoke in a hushed voice, she never had felt comfortable in the Headmasters office.

"Come on in." She heard him reply.

Evelyn made her way into the centre of his office, navigating her way through the collection of trinkets he seemed to have placed far and wide throughout the room. "Why did you wish to see me?"

"I require something of you, I would like you to assist me in finding someone." He unwrapped a sherbet lemon and dropped it into his mouth.

"Who am I finding?"

"That," he paused to swallow his sweet, "I am not yet sure of." Dumbledore began to pace around his office in front of Evelyn. "Now you will recall I arrived at a peculiar time of night with Sybill Trelawney by my side, are you wondering why that maybe?"

"Well, I must admit I was at first, but in the politest of ways, you tend to act in a peculiar manner ordinarily. Tonight was merely a shock, but I can't say it was too surprising." Evelyn perched herself on the edge of the desk.

"I must find I do agree." He reached for another sherbet lemon. "Regardless, I was interviewing her for the position of Divination teacher," he began, "and although she did not seem deserving of the position at first, she changed my mind."

"And how did she do that, with her supposed Second Sight?" Evelyn found it amusing that Dumbledore had bought into Sybill's story, he had never been the fondest of Divination and she hadn't thought her would be a believer of her Second Sight.



Dumbledore sighed. "So you do not believe her?" Evelyn shook her head. "Neither did I, not until she prophesied something I do believe to be true. She spoke of a boy who could defeat Tom Riddle, who could stop him from everything he has become."

"And you believe that?" Evelyn rose from the desk, her eyebrows raised as she glanced at Dumbledore.

"Indeed I did. Now, I require you to help me find this boy, I require you to help me stop Tom Riddle."

Although Evelyn had been working for the Order for months, she had never before been set a task that truly piqued her interest. She had always been left to remain in the castle, researching pureblood lineage, tracking down whom Tom might target next. As much as she enjoyed it, she knew that if she found the boys, she might be able to finally get involved and feel as though she were truly fighting the War.

It took Evelyn months to discover whom the prophecy could be referring to and in the end, it was not the conclusion she had hoped. With such strict criteria, Evelyn had barely been expecting to find one boy, but instead, she found two, Harry Potter and Neville Longbottom. Both boys were similar, almost too similar for Evelyn's liking but with one striking difference, Neville was a pureblood whereas Harry was a half-blood, just like Tom.

Evelyn barely slept over the months that it took her to identify the families. By the time she knew who they were, she was unrecognisable; purple bags were heavy under her eyes, her hair was a dishevelled mess and she had lost more weight than she would like to admit.

As she burst into Dumbledore's office, she knew she had done it. She had done what Dumbledore had asked of her, she was going to finally stop Tom. "I found them!" She called out.

"Miss Rivers, we have company." He nodded at the gentleman stood before him. "This is Remus Lupin." They shuffled uncomfortably. "It is quite alright, she is aware of everything." Though this didn't seem to reassure him enough, Remus maintained a rigid position, watching Evelyn menacingly as she made her way into the office.

"Well, I found them both Albus." She had spent days working out who the two boys were but now came the more challenging decision, how did they know which one he would choose?

"Very well."

"What happens next?" Evelyn had barely thought she would get this far.

Remus stepped forward. "Well," he began, "we have moved James, Lily, and Harry, they are safe. We took them to a safe house and assigned a Secret Keeper."

Evelyn knew what this meant, the secret was safe. "Will they need protection? I can assist in any way required."

"We are as of yet undecided," Remus said bluntly.

"What about the Longbottom boy? How has he been protected?" Remus shuffled uncomfortably, avoiding Dumbledores eyes. "Do not tell me you are unaware of his protections? Remus this cannot be, I understand your closeness to the Potters but both families are in grave danger, we cannot choose favourites!" Evelyn had never seen Dumbledore angry, but the look on his face seemed as close to anger as she might ever see. "Evelyn, you must go to the Longbottom house and set up enchantments, the parents are Aurors so they will have set up some already but you cannot have too many." Dumbledore began to pace up and down his office.

"Where are the Longbottom family?" Evelyn had been unable to locate either family during her research, she had only been able to secure names.

Dumbledore waved his hand over a piece of parchment before handing it to her. "Here, apparate outside of it and when it is decided, the parchment will name the boy you are to protect, understood?"

Evelyn pocketed the parchment, "yes, Albus." The boy's life was now in her hands and she would not be responsible for his death, she would far rather be responsible for Tom Riddles downfall. Without another word, Evelyn apparated away to the Longbottom house.

It appeared like any other house on the street, semi-detached and far too expensive for Evelyn's liking but she knew it was the one. Looking inside the window, Evelyn spotted the Longbottom child, crying in his crib, "you really can't die." She whispered to herself, pulling her wand from her pocket to begin the enchantments.

"*Repello Muggletum.*" She whispered as she began to pace in front of the house. Regardless of what happened, she did not need any muggles wandering into the property, it would be unjust.

"*Protego Maxima. Fianto Duri. Protego horribilis. Salvio hexia.*" Evelyn spoke as she walked. She looked inside at the crying Longbottom child. "*Protego Maxima. Fianto Duri. Protego horribilis. Salvio hexia.*"

She knew this wouldn't be able to stop Tom but it would slow him down, that's all she really needed. It would slow him down enough for Neville's parents to be able to prepare for a fight, it would let them know he was there, and then they could prepare.

"*Protego Maxima. Fianto Duri. Protego horribilis. Salvio hexia.*" It would all be okay, it had to be. Evelyn could not be responsible for someone's death, especially not that of a child.

Evelyn repeated the enchantments one last time. *"Protego Maxima. Fianto Duri. Protego horribilis. Salvio hexia."*

When Evelyn was done, she knew it was time to check her parchment, she needed to be ready to protect whoever Dumbledore had assigned her. Taking a deep breath in, she looked down at the parchment. "I will keep you safe," she whispered as the name appeared.

It was Neville Longbottom.

Evelyn waited for hours for something to happen, but it never did. She didn't know which day Tom Riddle would choose to attack but she would be ready whenever he did. Members of the Order of the Phoenix offered to take over for her, but Evelyn couldn't agree to it, she wanted to keep this boy safe. It had to be her.

Evelyn was close to falling asleep when she heard a voice she had almost forgotten.

"Evelyn" She felt his breath on the back of her neck. "It's been too long."

"Stu-" but before Evelyn could finish, he had whipped the wand out of her hand. "Tom." But it no longer looked like him, despite the black cloak covering his face, Evelyn could still see parts of it and they did not belong to him. He looked nothing like the boy she had met all those years ago at Hogwarts.

He leant down, picking up her wand from the floor. "I go by another name now."

Evelyn knew this, the whole wizarding community knew this, but to her, he would always be Tom. "I know." The more Evelyn looked at him, the more she thought his new name suited him, he no longer looked like a Tom, certainly not the one she had known all those years ago.

Tom pocketed her wand, tilting his head as he analysed her. "I want to talk to you."

"You are."

"Properly."

He took a step forward. She took one back. Her hand instinctively reached for her wand but it was no longer there, she was defenceless.

"I don't trust you anymore." She stated truthfully, although she wasn't sure if she had ever truly trusted him.

"It seems we feel the same way about one another." Before Evelyn could even think to respond, his hand was on her forearm and she was whisked away. Her surroundings changed in an instant, she was no longer outside for starters.

Evelyn wriggled her arm free from his grasp. "What was that for?!"

"I told you I wanted to talk to you." He stated as he watched her.

"What was wrong with where we were?" Evelyn no longer recognised where she was, but wherever it was, it felt detached from the rest of the world.

Tom took a seat at his table. "There were too many prying eyes." Evelyn did not know to whom Tom was referring, but at least if there were eyes, somebody knew she had been taken, somebody would be coming to get her back. "Welcome to the Malfoy Manor, I've been wanting to have you around for longer than you might think."

Evelyn thought back to Hogwarts at the sound of the name. "Malfoy, as in Abraxas?"

"Yes, his family leant it to me. It seemed I had greater use for it than they did."

"And what would that be?" She knew what it was, but she wanted to hear it from him, she wanted to hear him admit to it all, so she could once and for all know he was a monster.

"I'm sure your copy of the Daily Prophet could tell you that, you do still read it every day, don't you."

Evelyn felt her cheeks flushing before she could stop them, he had remembered. "So, what did you want to talk to me about?" She huffed as she made her way to the seat beside him.

"You."

She didn't understand. "Why would you want to talk about me?"

"I want to know things, Evelyn. I have been keeping tabs on you over the years and I want to know how you remembered." Tom had never failed to successfully complete a spell, he saw no reason as to why his encounter with her would have been any different.

"Dumbledore said-"

Tom rolled his eyes, "Dumbledore, yes that would make sense.

She took a deep breath in, "Dumbledore said it had been waiting in the back of my mind. All of the memories were there, I just couldn't unlock them." If Tom had a quill

and parchment, she could have sworn he would have been taking notes. "He said your spell wasn't strong enough, there wasn't enough conviction behind it. He said you had to have truly wanted me to forget for it to work."

"I did." But he was lying. He needed her to forget, but it was certainly not something his heart desired.

Evelyn felt her shoulders relax, the more she spoke to him, the more comfortable she felt. Although he looked nothing like the Tom she had known before, he still sounded the same.

"I started to remember, it all started coming back but..." She paused, "it was hard."

"And that's when you went to St Mungo's."

"How?"

Tom enjoyed feeling more powerful than Evelyn. Even though he knew he would beat her in a duel, he enjoyed knowing things that she did not, he enjoyed having his secrets. "I told you I was keeping tabs."

Evelyn furrowed her brow, "but why?"

"When we split ways all those years ago, it felt as though a part of me, however small, had gone with you; knowing what you were up to all those years helped return that part to me. I was curious."

"Curiosity killed the cat," she said before she could stop herself. "You said that to me once."

"Indeed I did, but you kindly reminded me that satisfaction did indeed bring it back."

"Why did you bring me here?"

Tom stared at her, "I thought you might have questions, about all those years at Hogwarts, I thought you might wish to speak with me."

Evelyn rolled her eyes, "you thought wrong. Those are distant memories, memories I do not think I wish to relive."

He leaned in closer to her, "I'm sure there are some you might want to relive."

"Tom, you never did know me very well though, did you?" She shook her head at him.

"Oh Evelyn," he leant in ever closer until he was close enough to feel her breath, "I knew you better than you thought. I knew everything you thought you have kept hidden, I knew the things that even you hadn't put together in your mind, I knew it all."

"You didn't though, you still don't know it all, I don't think you ever will. You can't feel the things I felt, you cannot truly know it." Evelyn pulled away from him, sighing deeply.

"I tried." He said simply.

Evelyn breathed out, "not hard enough Tom, it was never enough and I don't think you ever wanted it to be enough. You didn't want to let yourself feel the things I was feeling, you didn't want to open yourself up like that, you didn't want to be what you thought was weak but you were wrong. Feeling all of those things, it didn't make me weak, it made me so much stronger."

"I can see, you have done a lot for yourself, you did well Evelyn, truly."

"What have you done to yourself?" Evelyn looked up and down at Tom, the longer she spent looking, the more unrecognisable he became.

Tom pulled down his hood, "Evelyn, I have fashioned myself a new persona. I am no longer Tom Riddle, I am Lord Voldemort."

Evelyn thought back to their school years, the adventures, the magic, the horcruxes. "You made more didn't you?" Tom simply nodded. "How many?"

"I'm afraid I cannot tell you that, but I made enough. Evelyn I will not die, I am immortal now." He sighed, "you could have had this too, you could have followed me a joined me."

"I tried, I came with you to Little Hangleton, to Albania!" Evelyn struggled to catch her breath, the worlds tumbling from her lips rapidly.

"You did, but you were never really there, your intentions were never to truly join me, as much as you want to believe that at one point you really would have, I know it isn't true. I know you Evelyn, you wouldn't have let yourself commit, and I needed someone who could."

Evelyn rose from her seat, "so I take it that's what this is then?" She gestured at the large table, with chairs scattered everywhere around it, "are these people committed to you? Are they what I could never be?"

Tom tilted his head, glancing at her. "Yes." He stood up, "these people truly want the same as I do, they have the same beliefs, the same desires and dreams. We want the same thing, and people like you are stopping that from happening."

Evelyn thought back to the news that played every night, detailing how the Ministry was falling, how Tom was well and truly winning. "We aren't anymore. You've almost won and you know it. The Ministry is close to falling, your Death Eaters have infiltrated almost everywhere, there is nothing left."

"There is one thing left."

Evelyn knew at once what he meant. "The boy."

"Yes, the boy. He cannot live, you know that?" Tom spoke just like when he was a child at Hogwarts.

"But he is just a child-"

"A child that could destroy me, a child that could ruin everything I have ever worked for. He must be destroyed, you know that Evelyn, deep down," Tom said, with a look in his eyes like no other.

"Tom you really have become a monster, you are nothing like the boy I knew all those years ago." Evelyn felt the tears beginning to form in her eyes.

"Time changes people Evelyn, it changed you."

"Time didn't do that, you did."

"Evelyn come here." He ordered her, his voice soft.

"Why?" For once, she wasn't afraid.

"Just do it," and she did. Evelyn made her way towards him slowly, Tom smirking as she got closer. "Get closer," Tom could see deep into her eyes, and he knew in that moment, she truly wasn't afraid. "Don't look away, it's going to be okay."

Evelyn's eyes fixated on Tom's, they were not the eyes of the boy she loved all those years ago, they had changed. As she looked into his snake-like eyes, everything around her melted away, it was just them, and nobody else.

"What's that sound?" A familiar slithering sound entered the room.

Tom put a finger to her lips, "don't. It's okay."

"Goodbye Tom," she knew it had to happen.

"Goodbye," he planted one final kiss on her lips.

"Nagini, kill."