Across The Time
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**Fandom:** harry potter

**Summary:** An opportunity comes along that will enable him to make the change and once again reunited with the woman he truly loved. But circumstances have its own plan. A sacrifice would have to be made that will make or break everything he work so hard for. This is the story. Attention: Time Travel. Disclaimer: The usual bla3x..

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1. Chapter 1

Prologue

The weather was cruel on that fateful day. England's annual winter seasons were relatively cold and windy, lasting up to three months the longest. It did not always bring snow actually but that year was an exception. Winter that year brought snow and along with it, pain.

But of course, not all of UK inhabitants saw that as a disaster.

Near the outskirt of the small town of Godric Hollow, out in an open playground covered by pure white snow, children and adults alike can be seen playing within the knee deep snow, building snowman and having snowball fight. Everyone was having fun and frolics during the short lived annual winter season.

Well, nearly everyone.

From the kitchen window he stood and watched as a group of children were having an intense snowball fight. The children's laughter could clearly be heard from where he stood. It was certainly infectious to anyone who watched. But somehow this year, he was totally immune to all of that. Like the weather, the winter this year somehow was different than before.

He was pulled out from his reminiscent by the sound of coughing coming from the bedroom. He quickly gathered a bowl of water and a soft towel and walked towards the bedroom. Carefully placing the bowl of water on the bedside table, he turned his gaze towards her.

Victoire, Dominique and Louis were already there. They arrived at Godric Hollow that morning together with their respective families. With the exception of Louis, both Victoire and Dominique had children.

Laid on the bed, all feeble and shrunken was a woman whom to his eyes was the most beautiful woman in the world. But now, only traces of it were left. Her sunken face belied the suffering she endured due to the bastard named cancer.

He sat right beside her. Wetting the soft towel he brought with him, he began to wipe his wife's face, her hands and her feet, hoping that it will help to contain the excessive body heat generated by the flu she contracted a few days ago. That flu certainly did quite a number to her already severely weakened body.

And as he did that, he began to recall the conversation he had with Cassandra Osman three days ago...

Saint Mungo's Hospital, three days ago...

From the entrance to the ward, Harry watched solemnly as Healer Osman ran a series of diagnostic on Fleur. His wife contracted flu a few days ago. Due to Fleur's condition at that time, he was unable to bring her to a magical clinic at Godric Hollow. He had to call in Healer Osman, who happened to be their neighbour and a good friend of Fleur, for help. Osman advised him to take Fleur to the hospital, telling him that it would be the only way to deal with the sickness. Harry objected at first, seeing how weak Fleur was due to her cancer treatment, worrying that she may not be able to make it. He finally relented though after Fleur's condition worsened.

Healer Osman finished her diagnosis and wrote her findings into a piece of parchment. After making sure that the drip was in good order, one of many muggle's inventions that was finally adapted by the magical community, she walked towards Harry.

"How is she, Cassy?" asked Harry.

Cassandra sighed. She took off her glasses and looked at Harry intently. "The virus that infected her came from a common strain flu virus. Fatalities only occur in extremely rare cases. Usually, a person with decent strength of body immunity would be completely cured within four to five days, a week top. But Fleur no longer has any of those defences within her. That cancer treatment she underwent literally wiped everything off her. She was already severely weakened even before she got the fever, Harry. The flu makes it even worse."

Harry took a glance at his wife, who was lying unconscious on the bed not far from them. Without taking his eyes off Fleur, he said, "And here I thought magic can solve everything."

Cassandra, knowing what he meant, shook her head, "There isn't much difference between us and the muggles, Harry. Most diseases could still kill us. The only respite that we have, if we're lucky enough, is that our normal lifespan is far longer than them."
"Isn't there anything you could do? Anything?" asked Harry hopefully.

"At this point, there isn't anything else I can do, Harry. I could give her something to ease the pain, but everything else will entirely depend on her."

"Cassy, please. She needs help."

"I know that, Harry. What do you think I'm trying to do? We have done everything we can based on what we know about the flu but right now and like I said before, everything else will entirely depend on her. I hate to say this Harry, but her will to live could be the only thing that would ensure her survival. That's the only thing that could save her, Harry."

Harry sighed. Strangely enough, for some unfathomable reason, he already saw what was coming. Feeling dejected, he said, "I'm not ready to lose her, Cassy. She's the only one I got."

"You still have your children, Harry," reminded Cassandra, a little bit sternly. "I know how much you care for her. I care for her too. We have long been best of friends even before you came along. Like you, I also don't want to lose her. But being a healer and after seeing so many deaths, taught me to become more pragmatic."

Harry shot her a look. "What do you mean by that?"

"Harry," said Cassandra softly. "Fleur is already more than 95 years old. She's older than even you. She is not as strong as before, you know that. She could only suffer so much."

Harry didn't say anything at first. He simply stared at her. "You're asking me to let her go?"

"No. I'm asking you to be prepared. Despite the level of advancement we achieved this few hundred years, there are still things that we can't control. You know what I'm talking about. You have taken good care of her, Harry. Even better than what I had imagine. You have loved her; you cherished her and you've protected her all these times. You held resolutely to your vow you made on your wedding day. You have been a good husband to her and a good father to your children. They grow up beautifully because of you."

Harry didn't say anything.

Cassandra took the advantage of Harry's silence and continued, "Harry, at this point, Fleur will need another service from you. Something in which only you as her husband would be able to give. Be strong for her, Harry. Let her be at peace."

After a few moments of silence, Harry finally nodded.

Cassandra smiled. "Thank you, Harry," she muttered. She gave him a tight hug before she left for her office.

Harry's gaze followed Cassandra until she disappeared around the corner. Sighing, Harry slowly entered the ward where an unconscious Fleur was kept and took a seat beside her bed. He reached for her hand and began to caress it. It was still soft, but Harry could feel that it was no longer as strong as the first time he touched it.

Present...

That conversation kept on playing inside his mind as he continued to attend Fleur.

That night, Fleur started to have breathing difficulties. Harry quickly administered the inhaler to her but her condition did not improve. Her breathing kept getting worse until at one point, she literally had to breathe through her mouth. Her chest continued to heave with every breathe she took.

Harry knew that the time had come. He quietly asked his children, with the exception of their spouse and his grandchildren, to gather inside the room. Both Victoire and Dominique were silently crying. Louis, their only son, didn't cry but traces of sadness lingered on his face as his eyes transfixed on his mother.

Harry sat beside Fleur on the bed. Slowly but lovingly, he cradled her head.

Fleur's eyes fluttered opened. Her eyes found him and despite her conditions, her lips managed to form a smile.

"Harry."

Her voice was still soft, just like the day the first time he heard her voice. Properly of course. It was right after he 'saved' Gabrielle. But now, that beautiful voice had frailties lining it.
Harry forced a smile. "Everything is going to be fine, honey. You're going to be fine."

Fleur smiled further. "You're always the more optimistic one, Harry. But one day, you'll learn not to speak things that have no truth in it."

"Fleur."

"I heard what Cassy said to you the other day. I'm willing to accept what is coming to me, Harry," said Fleur softly. "And you should too."

Harry didn't say anything.

With much difficulties, Fleur turned to look at her children. Her frail hand reached out for them. Victoire was the first to grab it. The other two immediately moved closer to her.

Fleur bright blue eyes travelled between the three of her children. She could see tears lining up the cheeks of both her daughters. Her only son didn't cry, but she knew he was on the verge.

"Don't cry."

Victoire looked up. "Maman?"

Fleur croaked up a smile. "Don't cry for me sweetheart for I will be going to a better place. I will be going home where your grandmother and grandfather were already waiting for me. And someday, you will be home too and I shall be waiting for the day all of us together once again."

Both Victoire and Dominique sobbed even harder. Louis had traces of tears lining his cheek.

"Until that time my love, be strong for your children. Be strong for your love ones. Be strong for your father. Promise to me that you will endure all the pain and suffering of this world with your head held high, just like your father and I did."

It took a while, but Victoire, Dominique and Louis finally nodded.

Fleur smiled further. "Thank you," she softly said, not once her eyes wavered from her children. "Thank you for being such a wonderful children. Thank you for being the light of my stars that shine through the night. Thank you for all the happiness and the love all of you have given me. I hope that I have been a good mother and I hope that everything that I did will be enough in your eyes. Forgive me for not being able to do more."

Nobody said anything. Her daughters continued to cry. Harry had to look away. He did not want Fleur to see him failing to conceal his own anguish. He tried very hard to fight back his tears.

"Now," Fleur's voice was heard once again, "There's something that I need to say to your father before I go. Could you-?"

Luckily her children understood. They each gave her one last tearful kiss and hugged her very tightly before filing out of the room.

The door clicked to a close. Harry retook his seat on the bed beside his wife and took her hand into his. His green eyes stared deeply into her blue ones.

"Harry?"

"Fleur?"

"Harry," she said softly. "I have loved you for the past 70 years and if given the chance, I will gladly do it all over again. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for being a good friend and a good father to our children. I truly can't ask for more."

"I tried my best, honey," said Harry as he continued to caress his wife's hand.

"Indeed you have," said Fleur. "And the best was what you have always given me. I am so proud of you, Harry."

Harry said nothing.

Fleur took the advantage to continue. "Harry, there are so many things I want to say to you. So many things I want to tell you, but I'm going to wait until we're together again." At this point, her face took on an angelic quality like she was heaven sent as she spoke the last words Harry knew he would hear from her on this earth. "With you, the spring would forever in bloom and whenever we're apart, it would be the winter in my heart."
Harry's body began to quake as he tried with all his might to stop the tears that were coming.

"Harry," said Fleur. "You know where I'll be waiting. I love you, Harry."

"I love you, sweetheart," said Harry.

"Kiss me."

It was her last wish and Harry dutifully obliged. He bent down and kissed his wife's lip for one last time.

As if on cue, Fleur's breathing began to slow down and moments later, she drew her last breathe. Her eyes were completely shut and a small smile concocted on her lips. She was finally at peace.

And Harry continued to hold her throughout the night, weeping for the beacon of his life that had extinguished forever.

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**Godric Hollow cemetery, eight days later...**

**Fleur Isabelle Potter**

**1977 - 2072**

"With you, the spring would forever in bloom and whenever we're apart, it would be the winter in my heart."

It was five days after the funeral and for five days straight, Harry never failed to show up at his wife’s grave. The funeral was a simple affair, attended by few of the couple surviving friends. Cassandra was one of them. Hermione came alone. Her husband Ron passed away five years prior due to heart complication. Neville and his wife Luna attended too. But the most surprising attendance would be Draco Malfoy. He changed a lot after the second Great War. Harry never really considered him as a really close friend but Draco’s change of attitude was most welcome.

Fleur was laid to rest beside the grave of his parents and every day he would gaze at the tombstone that decorated Fleur’s grave for hours and silently wept. His tears continued to fall but he never made any effort to wipe it off. It was strange. He was standing close to her and yet he could not see her. But he knew that Fleur was sleeping peacefully beneath the snow, not knowing nor caring that her husband stood so near. At this moment, the sense of hopelessness completely engulfed him that Harry truly wished that he was sleeping under the snow with her.

That day was the same as before. That morning, like every morning before it and with the help of his walking stick, he walked three miles from his house towards the cemetery. It wasn't easy, especially for a man of his age. But he endured it anyway. He never really likes being parted from his wife for so long. And like everyday before, he would stand beside Fleur’s grave for hours.

That night, Louis came into his bedroom. After their mother’s death, all of them took turn to look after him. Harry didn’t like to bother his children, knowing that they’ll have other priorities. But like always, his children insisted. Fleur certainly did her job well. None of their children neglected their parents.

They chatted for a few moments and upon feeling satisfied that everything was in order, Louis decided to take leave. He kissed his father’s cheek and climbed into the fireplace. And emerald green fire erupted and Louis disappeared.

Harry went back to his bedroom. He turned off the lights and went to bed. And he laid on the bed, he began to reminisce everything that happened throughout his entire long life and just before sleep took over him, he turned to look at the empty space beside him.

His lips formed a smile. "Good night, love," he whispered.

But something happened just as he closed his eyes. A white blinding light engulfed his body and seconds later, he was gone.

"Harry! Harry! Harry!"

Someone was shaking his shoulder. He blinked a few times just as a bright white light entered his eyes. It took a while before his eyes could adjust to its surrounding.

"Uh, what-?" he grumbled.
"HARRY!"
"I'm up! I'm up! What's all the fuss ab-..."

Harry suddenly froze.

"Ron?!"

Next: Chapter 1.

A/n: This is my first foray in writing a HP fanfic. I know the high quality of writing this section has but I'm going to try anyway. I hope you guys can forgive me for the many mistakes that I will definitely make. I'm more of a computer gamer after all. I always like Harry-Fleur pairing and was keen to write a story about them for quite a while.

This story, like several H/F stories before it involves time travelling. Although it can be considered as AU, a lot of canon facts will be used. Just so you guys know, there won't be any character bashing and Harry won't be an awesomely powerful wizard like what most stories portrayed him. He will be Just Harry. I never like character bashing anyway and Harry being an ultra powerful wizard, becoming the head of several magical families and ultra rich is never my cup of tea. Sorry, I simply do not like it. It's too unreal.

Anyway, please read and review. I appreciated it. Any feedback would be most welcome.
Chapter 1

This must be some sort of a cruel joke or a horrific nightmare.

Ron, alive. Right in front of him. Younger. And he talks.

Ron was talking to him!

At this point, he wondered if someone would be kind enough to pinch him on the arm. Or better still, hit him with a sledgehammer squarely on the head. Like a fish coming out of the water and tried to breathe air, his mouth opened and closed several times. Nothing came out so far.

It took him several minutes before he could blurt out something and that something was, "But-, but you're dead. You're dead, Ron. I went to your funeral."

And it was Ron's turn to be the fish.

All of a sudden, someone smacked him on the head with something solid. He cried in pain. "Ow!"

His vision blurred and his head ached from that smacking. Rubbing the spot where he got hit, he turned to look at the perpetrator who happened to be sitting next to him. It took him a while before he could see who it was. "Hermione?"

There was a book in her hands and the way she was holding it, she must have been preparing to smack him all over again.

"Stop saying that, Harry!" Hermione shouted at him. "Ron is not dead!"

"But-, but you buried him! I went to his funeral. He was lying right there in the coffin!" blurted Harry. His eyes darted between Hermione and the fish-illized Ron.

And for that remark, he received another smack on the head. "Ow! What's wrong with you?!"

"You're what's wrong with me!" said Hermione. "Stop saying something crazy!"

It took quite a while before Ron finally managed to find his voice. "Harry, the last I check, I'm still alive. I'm not dead, Harry. At least not yet."

Harry's eyes lingered on Hermione as he continuously rubbed the spot where she hit him before. He always knew Hermione was good with books but he never knew it would extend to the books becoming a weapon as well. Hermione's targeting system was really accurate. She hit him exactly at the same spot twice.

But Hermione was right. He must have done something that caused her to act like that. She was even paler than normal, a tell tale sign that something was wrong at least to her eyes.

Well, maybe to his eyes as well. For one, she looked like a teenager. And Ron too looked like teenagers. Harry looked down and saw his hands. One of them was holding a half eaten chocolate frog. And the hands did not look old and crinkly. They looked young.

Harry was confused. At the same time though, he knew that he need to be calm. Another outburst from him and they will have to ship him to St. Mungo's with his skull cracked open.

He took a deep breath. "Sorry." He looked at both his best friends. "I'm sorry."

Hermione who was at that time ready to give him another smack lowered the book she was holding and Ron let out a sigh of relief and leaned against the padded bench. "You scared us, mate," said Ron.

"Look, I'm sorry," said Harry. "I was-." He couldn't continue.

"I was what? Harry, are you alright?" asked Hermione. Unlike before, her voice softened and there were traces of concern in it. "You didn't look too well."

"What happened?" Harry asked.

"Well, you just sort of pass out," said Ron.

"Pass out?"

Ron nodded. "One minute you were talking merrily and eating chocolate frogs and a minute
later you just went limp," said Ron snapping his fingers. "Just like that. I managed to catch you before you fell onto the floor."

So that explained why he was holding a half eaten chocolate frog.

"We thought you were dead, Harry," said Hermione softly. "There had been cases, at least in the muggle world where people dropped dead just like that. A lot of time the reasons were unknown."

"They could be magically killed," stated Ron. "I don't think muggles have the ability to detect magic at work."

"Not always, Ron," said Hermione. "Medical conditions can produce the same effect as well." She then turned towards Harry."You stopped responding, Harry. You even stopped breathing for a nearly a minute. That was the worst moment I ever felt in my whole life."

Harry wentsilent as he continuously dissecting what Hermione and Ron told him. Moments later he spoke, "Well, whatever happened, I'm fine now."

"That will be decided by Professor Dumbledore," said Hermione. "Or at least Madam Pomfrey."

"Prof-" Harry suddenly stopped. He then looked around. Apparently he was so absorb with the conversation that he did not realize where he was at that time. He found that the three of them were in a compartment and the scenery outside the only window available was moving fast. Then it hit him. "We're on a train," he said.

"Well duh," said Ron. "Where else?"

"Where we're going?" asked Harry.

Hermione slowly raised the book she was holding, ready to smack his head.

Harry who noticed what Hermione was doing quickly grabbed the book. "You're not going to hit me once again, Hermione."

"I won't if you stop acting crazy," said Hermione.

Harry shook his head. "Alright fine! Maybe I am a little bit crazy and maybe I'm a little bit 'not okay' but for heaven sake will any of you please answer my question?"

Ron and Hermione glanced at each other. "We're going to Hogwarts, Harry," said Ron. "Blimey, that bloke must have hit you really hard on the head."

"Hermione isn't a bloke."

"He wasn't talking about me," said Hermione. "Do you remember the Quidditch World Cup?"

"Which one?" asked Harry. That was a reasonable question to his perspective. He and Ron went to every World Cup organized after the Second Great War.

"Harry!" exclaimed Hermione. "We've ever gone to only one World Cup event!"

Harry once again shook his head. "Me and Ron had gone to plenty. Now which one is it?"

"You're acting crazy again," said Hermione.

"I'm not."

"Harry," Ron cut in. "We've gone to only one World Cup event. We're still young, Harry. That was our first World Cup. Dad brought us there, remember? Along with Cedric and his father?"

"After the game, there were attacks mounted by the Death Eaters," continued Hermione. "We got separated amidst the chaos. Somebody kicked you in the head and you fainted. Several things happened after that and it ended up with Barty Crouch accusing you for producing the Death Mark."

The first piece of the puzzle began to take it place.

"And yet it wasn't me," said Harry as the memory of his first Quidditch World Cup attendance resurfaced.

"That's right. Well we know who did it, or being falsely accused for doing it," said Hermione with a huff.
Harry remembered it well. Winky. Barty Crouch. Ludo Bagman. Mr. Weasley. They were all there. And as memories of old continued to resurface, Harry finally managed to understand what had happened.

"Harry, you have been acting really strange after you fainted. You really need to see Dumbledore," said Hermione firmly.

Harry silently admit that Hermione was right but somehow, he wasn’t keen on seeing Dumbledore. "No, not Dumbledore."

"Harry, you have to! Or I’m going to make you!"

From that fierce look Hermione gave him, it was clear that Hermione meant business. She won’t let it go, not in the immediate future. Harry sighed. "Alright, fine. But I’m not going to see Dumbledore this early. I’m going to see Pomfrey instead."

"Harry, Dumbledore will know what to do," argued Hermione. "Your mind is in a mess, Harry! You acted strange. You asked strange questions. You-, you were NOT YOU!"

Harry shot Hermione a glance. Did she know, he wondered.

"In what way?" asked Harry.

Hermione shook her head. "I don't know. I don't know how to explain it to you. You're just-, different."

So she didn't know.

At the same time though, Harry knew she was worried sick about him. And he was touched. Hermione, ever since the first time he met her had always taken the role as a big sister to him. And Ron? He was more like best friend/brother/trouble attracting accomplice to him.

Ron who was watching the exchange silently finally gave his own opinion. "She's right. You've been acting strange after you fainted. This isn't normal, Harry."

"How perceptive of him. Maybe that was why he and Hermione ended up getting married."

Harry thought, despite Ron being clueless most of the time. It was time to stop them from getting more worried for him. At least he owe them that much. "Alright. I'll go see someone, but I won't be going to Dumbledore."

"But why not?" asked Hermione.

"I'm just not ready yet," answered Harry. "I need to understand what was going on. I will see him once I'm ready. Just not in an immediate term."

Hermione sighed. "Alright, fine. I'll take you to the hospital wing once we arrived."

"After the welcoming feast, Hermione. Let the bloke eat first," said Ron.

"But-.

"He's right, Hermione," said Harry. "You don't want me to go to bed being hungry, do you?"

Hermione huffed. "Fine!"

She immediately grabbed the book Harry took from her earlier and immediately dived into it. Both Harry and Ron snickered.

The three of them went silent for the rest of the journey with the exception of Hermione who reminded them that they need to change into their school robes just as the dusk sets in.

Throughout the rest of the journey Harry kept on thinking. He finally understood what was happening but he still didn't know how and why it happened. By some freakish circumstances he was thrown back in time from the year 2072 to the year 1994. He was still attending Hogwarts in 1994. It was supposed to be his fourth year of schooling and he was fourteen entering fifteen years old in that year. He was still young.

Something did bug him though. He knew that something big happened within the fourth year of his schooling. He just couldn't put a finger on it. And he bet with all that he had that the same thing will once again happen this time around. If only he could remember what it was. One thing he knew for sure that he won’t like it.

Hermione was right actually. Dumbledore probably have the answer. But, and this is a very big but, he had long suspected that the old headmaster had the ability to read minds. If
Dumbledore indeed have that kind of ability, how will he react to it? What Dumbledore’s action would be if he realized that the young Harry Potter had gone, replaced mentally by a 92 years old man? How could he explain it to him?

Harry decided he doesn't want to know. At least not immediately. But deep inside, something tells him that one way or another, he and Dumbledore will cross path and the headmaster will one day, knows. For now though, keeping that info a secret would be his main priority. At least until he knows what his purpose would be.

The Hogwarts Train chugged slowly as it entered Hogsmeade Station and grind to a halt as it reached the platform. Feet shuffled and soon the corridor outside the trio's compartment was filled with students waiting to exit the train.

The three of them were already in their school uniform. Harry for one felt uncomfortable. It wasn’t because of the uniform. It fit him perfectly and they were brand new. The fact was he felt like a pervert. He may at that time looked like a teenager outwardly but mentally he was a 92 years old man.

A 92 year old man wearing school uniform.

Harry felt liked throwing up.

"You okay, Harry?" asked Ron. "You look like you're about to throw up."

"Does it show?" asked Harry swallowing hard.

"Well yeah," answered Ron. "Your face turned a slight shade of green."

*If only they knew,* Harry thought. He slid the compartments door opened. "Don't worry about it. Come on."

Both Ron and Hermione glanced at each other before they followed Harry out of the compartment.

The rain was heavy just as they got off the train. All around them, students, pushing against each other, were making their way towards the line of carriages that were waiting to take them to the castle. Harry himself was busy looking up and down the platform until all of a sudden a familiar figure caught his eyes. He smiled.

It was Hagrid. Like always, he wasn’t that difficult to be notice, sticking like a sore thumb amidst the sea of much shorter people. Harry misses the gentle half-giant. Hagrid was a good friend and loyal to the end. He passed away 25 years after the war ended. He did got married actually with none other than Olympe Maxime. Madam Maxime eventually succeeded him for another five years. The couple somehow weren’t blessed with children throughout their marriage. They moved to France after they got married and Harry would always make it a point to visit them every time he stayed at his in-laws house. Fleur loved them as well. Like Harry, she too had a close relationship with Madam Maxime.

Harry truly misses Hagrid but at that point, the gamekeeper was busy herding the first years. He decided that he will let Hagrid do his job, knowing that there will be time, in fact lots of time for them to meet.

But just as he made his way to the carriage, someone bumped him hard on the shoulder from behind.

"Watch it Potter!"

It was Draco Malfoy and his male escorts, Crabbe and Goyle. He gave Harry a sneer and a middle finger before he made his way towards the awaiting carriages.

"What an arse," grumbled Ron.

"Leave it, Ron," said Harry, rubbing his shoulder. "He’s not worth it."

"He’s still an arse, Harry. You know he's not going to leave you alone," said Ron.

"Then let's not give him anymore incentive to do more than what he did."

The trio reached one of the still unoccupied carriages. Harry took a glance to the thing that was pulling the carriage as he climbed into the carriage. It was a thestral. He knew that he would be the only who could see it. At this age, both Hermione and Ron had yet seeing death. The pair sat side by side while Harry had the whole bench for himself.

"You changed, Harry," stated Ron just as the carriage began to move.
"Yes Hermione did make it clear on that," said Harry. "What's your point?"

"I would have thought, you know, that you would get a little mad for what Malfoy did back there."

"It was just a shoulder bump, Ron. That's hardly a reason for me to get all work up on that," said Harry.

"I don't get it, Harry. You always rise to the bait thrown out by him."

"And that's all he would be able to do, Ron. Baiting people every now and then," said Harry.

"But-.

But Harry cut him in. "Listen Ron. Draco Malfoy will always be an arse and a coward. We all know that. We all saw what he did. But that's not the reason for us to go down his level. Trust me when I say that someday he's gonna get it. His status as the Malfoy's heir would be the only thing that can save him but only just. You'll see."

Ron leaned back on the bench. "I hope you're right, Harry. Can't wait to see the look on his face when that happen."

Harry smiled. He then turned his gaze to the outside of the carriage watching the night scenery flew past by.

Truth to be told, Harry did not feel angry at all when Malfoy bumped his shoulder and made obscene sign at him. In fact, what he told Ron was half truth. Malfoy did show some form of bravery back in his old timeline. He did save his life once. Harry shuddered to think what will happen if Malfoy decided to expose him to Bellatrix. He was sure that Malfoy did recognize him despite the heroic effort Hermione took to conceal his identity.

Of course both of his friends did not know this. They have yet experienced it in this timeline. How could he tell them about what Malfoy did, let alone telling them that he came from the future? He saw Hermione's reaction to the 'strange behaviour' he exhibited back on the train. It would be better for him to not exaggerate it even further.

The castle came into view as the carriage trundled past the magnificent gate that marked the boundary and the entrance into the school's compound. As before, the view never failed to amaze him. The ancient castle was his home back then after all.

The castle suffered extensive damage after the Battle of Hogwarts concluded. It was rebuilt immediately and while the builders were at it, they decided to include new designs and features as well. Bigger Great Hall, new green houses, larger dormitories were among the new addition. The quidditch field was redesigned as well. Players get bigger locker rooms and hot showers as well.

This one that stood in front of him though, its design remained unmolested.

Harry remained silent as he let the beauty of Hogwarts washed over him. At the same time, he was painfully aware that Hermione's eyes not once wavered from him. It was unusual to see her keeping her voice to herself though. Talk about strange behaviour:

The carriage grinded to a halt right at the bottom of the stone steps that lead into the Entrance Hall. The trio got off and immediately climbed the stone steps, eager to arrive at the cavernous hall and be embrace by its warmth.

Just as they got near to the landing, Harry suddenly stopped. "Wait!"

Both Ron and Hermione shadowed his movement. "What is it, Harry?"

Harry did not answer. Instead he took out his wand immediately fired a curse towards the ceiling. There was a scream and a ghost wearing a bell-covered hat and a bow tie appeared out of thin air. One of his hands was holding several water red and white water balloons and the other fervently rubbing his butt.

"Potty shot me!" the ghost cried. "Nasty smelly Potty!"

"I won't if you stop being naughty, Peeves," said Harry calmly. "All of us had our bath on our way here. We're not in the mood for another one. At least not immediately. Now stand down, Peeves."

But Peeves decided to ignore his warning. He took one of his water balloons and took aim at Harry.

"Fine then," said Harry. He threw several curses at Peeves, each of them hit the exact same
spot as the first one. Peeves cried in pain and immediately disappeared through the adjacent wall, throwing up all of his water balloons in the process. The floor of the Entrance Hall was wet as a result but at least none of the student ended being the victim.

"How did you do that?" asked Ron in awe.

"Do what?"

“That thing you just did!” exclaimed Ron. “I thought ghosts were supposed to be immune to curses. I mean it would just fly right through them, wouldn’t it? You can’t hit a ghost, can you?"

"Well-"

"And when did you learn to use nonverbal spell?" asked Hermione. "We weren't supposed to study that until our sixth year."

Silence fell upon them as Harry suddenly realized that every student within the vicinity had their eyes trained on him. But just as he cranked his brain real hard in trying to come up with a good response, he heard someone calling out his name.

"Mr. Potter!"

Professor McGonagall had just come out of the Great Hall and was heading towards them.

"Potter attacked a Hogwarts ghost, professor!" said Malfoy who was watching the whole event from the sideline. "We all saw it!"

Ron growled at him in which the Malfoy heir completely ignored.

"I am fully aware of what Mr. Potter did, Mr. Malfoy," said McGonagall just as she stop in front of Harry. Turning her attention back towards the boy in front of her, she said, "Five points to Gryffindor, Mr. Potter. Now scoot, all of you. Get yourself into the Great Hall. The sorting ceremony will begin at any moment."

Malfoy looked as if someone had slapped him with a letter saying that he was expelled from Hogwarts and Christmas would be cancelled for the next five years.

All of the students slid and slide across the wet floor as they made their way across the Entrance Hall and through the double door on the right into the Great Hall.

"You haven't told us anything, Harry," whispered Hermione as they took their seat along the Gryffindor table. "How do you all the things you just did?"

"Not now, Hermione," said Harry. "I'll explain it later. I promise."

"Well you better," said Hermione.

Someone took a seat beside Harry. A rounded face boy whom he recognized really well. Someone he held in the highest regards just like his two best friends.

"Hey Harry."

Harry smiled. "Hey Neville. Have a good summer?"

"Well mostly," replied Neville nervously. "You probably don’t know what it feels like living with someone who expects only the best coming out of you. But mostly yeah, I had a good time."

"Someday, your granny will see the real you, Neville. I’m sure of it."

Neville shot Harry a look that says ‘Are you making fun of me?’. "You’re kidding, right? This is the real me, Harry."

Harry nearly gave himself a slap on his forehead. Of course, how can he forget? Back in his old timeline, Neville only showed his potential when he was in fifth year and it didn’t stop since that. But in this timeline, the boy in front of him was still a boy who had zero confidence, prone to nervous wreck and it may be rude to say this, a little bit cowardice.

Harry put a hand on Neville's shoulder. "This is not the real you, Neville. You’re just-, have not found you own true calling. Not yet anyway. But someday you will. Just be patient. Try to find confidence in you, be bold and stand to your ground."
Neville shook his head. "It’s impossible for me to do that, Harry. You know that."

Harry gave him a smile. He pat the boy on the shoulder and said, "For now." If only Neville knew that he bravely faced Voldemort back in his old timeline.

He then turned his gaze towards the teachers table. Albus Dumbledore was sitting there chatting merrily with Professor McGonagall. His eyes continued to travel along the teacher table. Professor Sinistra, Professor Babbling, Professor Burbage, Professor Flitwick, Professor Sprout, Professor Hooch, Professor Vector, Professor Trelawney - they were all there. His eyes finally landed on a man famous for his greasy hair and his ruthlessness. He would have hated Professor Snape back then but this time around, knowing what Snape did, he hardly felt the same way.

Their eyes met. Harry gave Snape a curt nod and turned his attention elsewhere.

He observed that there were two empty chairs along the teachers table. One must have belonged to Hagrid. He must have been still battling the rain in order to get the first years safely to the castle. The other one would belong to the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher. He racked his brain trying to think who will fill the chair in their fourth years. He knew that he already have that information. He just couldn’t get it out. The forced and fully unexpected time travel must have muddled his memory quite a bit. He gave up moments later and decided to wait. One way or another, he will know in the end.

"I heard that you attacked a ghost just now."

That voice took Harry by surprise. It was Nearly Headless Nick who was floating nearby. Harry fully expected the Gryffindor resident ghost would be mad at him. But the look on the ghost's face told him otherwise.

"Well, yes," answered Harry sheepishly. "Sorry about that. Really didn't mean to."

Nick somehow waved him away. "It's about time someone else put that ghost feet on the ground, so to speak. Peeves only respect the headmaster, you know. It's good to know there is someone else he would fear of. By the way, how did you do that? You know spells and curses would fly through a ghost."

Brain tracking resumed and lucky for him, this time a name came out easily. "Professor Lupin. He did something similar once. Remember last year?"

Nick tapped his chin thoughtfully. "Professor Lupin you say? Yes, yes I heard the story of how he jammed Peeves nostril with a wad of gum. But spells and curses are different, Harry."

"Nick's right, Harry," Hermione cuts in. "I have never seen a ghost injured from a spell fire before."

"What about Nick?" asked Ron. "Remember our second year? He got blasted from the basilisk and remained petrified like the rest."

"Yes that!" said Harry with relief. "Thank you, Ron."

"But that's different, Ron!" interjected Hermione. "That was done by a basilisk, not a wizard."

"Well duh. Basilisk is a magical creature. He's-, well-, magical," said Ron.

"The boy's right," said Nick, much to Hermione's chagrin. "If only our dear Harry would tell us what his secret is," he continued while looking intently at Harry.

Harry sighed. They really not going to let this issue go, he thought. "Alright, fine. What if I tell you guys that I'm not from here? What if I tell you that I came from the distant future and in that future I am the best auror ever live - or so they told me, and I was trained to handle both human and magical creatures such as ghost as well?"

Hermione, Ron, Neville and Nick went quiet.

"If you didn't want to answer our questions in an honest and truthful way then just say it," said Hermione moments later. "You don't have to blurt all those crazing things just like what you did on the train."

"But I'm not."

"Save it!" cut in Hermione. "You're going to the hospital wing after the feast AND you're going to see Dumbledore. End of story!"

Harry looked to Ron for help but Ron simply said, "I'm with her, Harry. Sorry."
Great. Just great, Harry thought. Now they would suspect that he was mad. He sighed. But on the bright side though, they stop asking questions. Going to the hospital wing might not yield any results, he believed. Physically he was fine. He just hoped that Hermione won't suggest that he be transferred to the St. Mungo’s psychiatric ward.

A highly excited and breathless voice called from down the table. "Hiya Harry!"

Harry immediately recognized who it was. He smiled to the boy, "Hi Collin."

"Harry! Guess what? Guess what, Harry? My brother’s starting! My brother Dennis!"

"Well, good to know."

"He’s really excited!" said Colin, practically bouncing up and down in his seat. "I just hope he’s in Gryffindor! Keep your fingers crossed, eh, Harry?"

Harry gave the excited young boy a thumb up. His previous self would never approve Collin. He was too eccentric in his own way. Just like Luna. Luna Lovegood.

Harry slowly turned his gaze towards the Ravenclaw and he found her. At this point, Luna had yet become his friends. In the old timeline, they would only meet at the start of his fifth year. Like Luna, Collin managed to change Harry’s perceptions about him.

Collin was a brave young kid. He fought together with the freedom fighters in the Battle of Hogwarts when he wasn’t supposed to. He died in that fight. Even until now, Harry did not know what or who killed him.

Suddenly, his smile faltered. Everything began to fall into place. As he continued to look at Collin, memories of his past life replayed within his mind.

Collin Creevy, George Weasley, Professor Lupin, Tonks, Sirius, Albus Dumbledore, Snape. All of them and many others were among the casualty of war back then. It may not be that different this time around. The only difference would be that he already knew what their fate would be and he will be forced to relive it all over again.

And it will begin with Cedric Diggory.

Harry slowly cupped his face. He did not know how he will go through all of these. He did not how if he would be strong enough to see his friends all around him died. They died for him and in the name of freedom. This time around, they will do so again.

"You okay, Harry?" asked Neville.

Harry hastily rearranged his features. "Yeah. I’m okay, Neville. I’m good." He then immediately turned his gaze to the front of the table.

Hermione was still watching him.

The sorting ceremony went without a hitch and the feast began after that. Luckily Professor Dumbledore was a man of few words. Either that or the headmaster himself was hungry that he could eat a hippogriff. The feast also marked the beginning of Hermione’s crusade in defending elves rights.

It didn’t take long for each of the plates to be wiped off clean. The buzzing chatter within the hall ceased immediately the moment Albus Dumbledore stood.

"So!" said Dumbledore, smiling around at them all. "Now that we are all fed and watered," (“Hmph!” said Hermione) "I must once more ask for your attention, while I give out a few notices.

"Mr. Filch, the caretaker, has asked me to tell you that the list of objects forbidden inside the castle has this year been extended to include Screaming Yo-yos, Fanged Frisbees, and Ever-Bashing Boomerangs. The full list comprises some four hundred and thirty-seven items, I believe, and can be viewed in Mr. Filch’s office, if anybody would like to check it."

"Oh we will. Won’t we, Forge?" said Fred.

"You said it, Gred," said George.

The corners of Dumbledore’s mouth twitched. He continued, “As ever, I would like to remind you all that the forest on the grounds is out-of-bounds to students, as is the village of Hogsmeade to all below third year."

Pause for effect.
"It is also my painful duty to inform you that the Inter-House Quidditch Cup will not take place this year."

There was quite an uproar. Fred, George and all whom he recognized as the member of Gryffindor Quidditch team were mouthing soundlessly at the headmaster. Harry however remained passive.

Ignoring the uproar he just caused, Dumbledore continued, “This is due to an event that will be starting in October, and continuing throughout the school year, taking up much of the teachers’ time and energy - but I am sure you will all enjoy it immensely. I have great pleasure in announcing that this year at Hogwarts -.”

Dumbledore's speech was somehow cut by the sound of the door behind him banged open.

Harry meanwhile slowly took his wand out.

A man stood in the doorway, leaning upon a long staff, shrouded in a black traveling cloak. Every head in the Great Hall swiveled toward the stranger, suddenly brightly illuminated by a fork of lightning that flashed across the ceiling. He lowered his hood, shook out a long mane of grizzled, dark gray hair, then began to walk up toward the teachers' table.

A dull clunk echoed through the Hall on his every other step. He reached the end of the top table, turned right, and limped heavily toward Dumbledore. Another flash of lightning crossed the ceiling. Hermione gasped.

The lightning had thrown the man's face into sharp relief, and it was a face unlike any Harry had ever seen. It looked as though it had been carved out of weathered wood by someone who had only the vaguest idea of what human faces are supposed to look like, and was none too skilled with a chisel. Every inch of skin seemed to be scarred. The mouth looked like a diagonal gash, and a large chunk of the nose was missing. But it was the man's eyes that made him frightening. One of them was small, dark, and beady. The other was large, round as a coin, and a vivid, electric blue. The blue eye was moving ceaselessly, without blinking, and was rolling up, down, and from side to side, quite independently of the normal eye - and then it rolled right over, pointing into the back of the man's head, so that all they could see was whiteness.

The stranger reached Dumbledore. He stretched out a hand that was as badly scarred as his face, and Dumbledore shook it, muttering words Harry couldn't hear. He seemed to be making some inquiry of the stranger, who shook his head unsmilingly and replied in an undertone. Dumbledore nodded and gestured the man to the empty seat on his right-hand side.

The stranger sat down, shook his mane of dark gray hair out of his face, pulled a plate of sausages toward him, raised it to what was left of his nose, and sniffed it. He then took a small knife out of his pocket, speared a sausage on the end of it, and began to eat. His normal eye was fixed upon the sausages, but the blue eye was still darting restlessly around in its socket, taking in the Hall and the students.

Someone grabbed his hand. It was Neville. "Harry, you took out your wand. What's wrong?"

Harry replaced his wand back. "Nothing, Neville." But his eyes were somehow fixated towards the stranger.

"May I introduce our new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher," said Dumbledore brightly into the silence. "Professor Moody."

It was usual for new staff members to be greeted with applause, but none of the staff or students chapped except Dumbledore and Hagrid, who both put their hands together and applauded, but the sound echoed dismally into the silence, and they stopped fairly quickly. Everyone else seemed too transfixed by Moody's bizarre appearance to do more than stare at him.


"Who is he?" asked Hermione.

"You seriously didn't know? Hermione, he's like the best auror ever to live! Half of Azkaban are full because of him," said Ron.

"There are things that I still need to learn, Ron," said Hermione exasperatedly.

"Really? That's a first." That response earned him a smack on the head.

"Ow! Since when you like smacking people right on their heads, Hermione?" asked Ron,
rubbing the top of his head at the same time.

"Since him," replied Hermione while pointing at Harry. "Now shut up! There's more Dumbledore need to say."

"As I was saying," he said, smiling at the sea of students before him, all of whom were still gazing transfixed at Mad-Eye Moody, "we are to have the honor of hosting a very exciting event over the coming months, an event that has not been held for over a century. It is my very great pleasure to inform you that the Triwizard Tournament will be taking place at Hogwarts this year."

"You're JOKING!" said Fred Weasley loudly.

The tension that had filled the Hall ever since Moody's arrival suddenly broke. Nearly everyone laughed, and Dumbledore chuckled appreciatively. "I am not joking, Mr. Weasley," he said, "though now that you mention it, I did hear an excellent one over the summer about a troll, a hag, and a leprechaun who all go into a bar."

Professor McGonagall cleared her throat loudly.

"Er - but maybe this is not the time... no..." said Dumbledore, "where was I? Ah yes, the Triwizard Tournament. . . well, some of you will not know what this tournament involves, so I hope those who do know will forgive me for giving a short explanation, and allow their attention to wander freely. "The Triwizard Tournament was first established some seven hundred years ago as a friendly competition between the three largest European schools of wizardry: Hogwarts, Beauxbatons, and Durmstrang. A champion was selected to represent each school, and the three champions competed in three magical tasks. The schools took it in turns to host the tournament once every five years, and it was generally agreed to be a most excellent way of establishing ties between young witches and wizards of different nationalities - until, that is, the death toll mounted so high that the tournament was discontinued."

"Death toll?" Hermione was looking alarmed. Her anxiety somehow was not shared by the rest of the students who were chatting excitedly to each other.

With the exception of Harry. He no longer hears what Dumbledore said next. His gaze remained transfixed to Mad-Eye Moody.

Or rather as he suspected, Barty Crouch Jr. who impersonated the famous auror.

Harry continued to watch 'Moody' every move, what he ate and what he drank. He also looked for clues on how he talks. Barty Crouch Jr. certainly did his homework really well if he was really impersonating Moody in this timeline.

Except from the way he drank from his own personal flask from time to time, Harry immediately timed it and found that Moody would drink between thirteen to sixteen minutes and would keep on doing that for the rest of the event.

Bingo. He doubted thirst was the result from that repeated action.

Harry's auror instinct threatened to take over. He tried hard to calm it down knowing that any action on his account will resulted on him being expelled for attacking a teacher. Besides, as of now he had no proof. Only knowledge. That would not be enough. For now, all he could do is watch.

Before he knew it, the feast had ended. Before he could do anything though, Hermione grabbed his arm and forced him to follow her. Ron followed as well.

The trio arrived at the hospital wing a couple of minutes later.

"Mr. Potter," greeted Madam Pomfrey just as they entered the ward. "I did not expect you to be here this early but since you never failed to earn the dubious Patient of the Year title every time since you studied here, I'm really not surprised. What's the problem this time?"

Harry turned to Hermione and raised his eye brows. "Hermione?"

"Why do you look at me?" asked Hermione. "You're the one who should tell her."

"Hermione, you're the one who told me to come here. How would I know what to tell her?"

"Tell me what, exactly?" asked Pomfrey. She turned to Hermione. "Miss Granger?"

"Urm, well. Harry's being acting weird," said Hermione. She then proceeded to explain what was happening from the train until the feast.
"I see," said Pomfrey just as Hermione finished her story. "Fainted you say?" she asked while at the same time glanced at Harry.

"Yes, Madam Pomfrey," said Hermione.

Pomfrey took out her wand and waved it all over Harry's body. After a few minutes she said, "Physically you're in good condition." She then put her wand away. "Now about those stories you allegedly made up. Considering all the situations you ended in previously, I could put you under psychiatric evaluation. This is a serious matter, Mr. Potter."

Harry's eyes widened. "No! Wait! You don't really have to do that! Look I'm fine. I just-, you know, wake up on the wrong side of the bed this morning. I just got cranky. Honest." Harry himself couldn't believe how lame his excuse was.

"Are you sure?" asked Pomfrey.

"Yes. Definitely sure."

Madam Pomfrey's eyebrows quirked. "Very well then, Mr. Potter. Since this is one time case, I won't proceed. Make sure that it remains a single occurrence. Am I clear on that?"

Harry nodded fervently. "Perfectly."

"Very well. Off you go. It's already pass curfew. You don't want to get into trouble."

"Hermione, what are you doing?!" scolded Ron as the trio made their way towards their dormitory. "You could get Harry into serious trouble. Psychiatric evaluation?! You want Harry to end up in some... mental hospital?!"

"Look I don't mean it to end that way," defended Hermione. "I'm just worried. I just need to know what's wrong with him."

"You nearly got him canned, Hermione. And that was just Madam Pomfrey. What do you think will happen if Dumbledore knew?"

"Dumbledore will have the answer," stated Hermione. "He'll know what to do."

"I bet he won't have the answer to everything," said Ron. "Stop assuming too much."

"Maybe not but he will definitely try," said Hermione. "You've see how Harry acted today. That's not normal."

"Yes I saw it but it doesn't mean that he should get into more trouble."

"I'm not trying to get him into trouble!"

Both of them continued bickering all the way to the Gryffindor Tower. Harry meanwhile remained silent. Just as they reached the entrance, Harry turned towards the still bickering couple. "That's enough you two!"

Both Ron and Hermione went silent.

Pinching his nose bridge, Harry spoke, "Hermione, I know you're worried about me. I'm truly grateful for that, I really am. But I already had enough trouble for one day. I just want this day to end in peace. I hope that is not too much to ask."

Hermione's shoulder slumped. She looked guilty. "I'm sorry, Harry," she said softly. "I'm worried about you. I just want you to be okay."

Harry smiled. "I understand. I know you mean well. And you too, Ron. I'm glad to have you both as my best friend. Just dial that back a couple of notch will you? That's all I'm asking."

Both Ron and Hermione beamed at him.

"So," said Harry. "Anyone knows what the password into the common room?"

It was Balderdash.

Luckily Hermione listened during the feast. That's how she knew the password. Harry himself isn't looking forward to sleeping on the cold hard floor the first night in Hogwarts. "Good night," she greeted them both before she went to her dormitory.

"Sleep tight, Hermione. We'll see you tomorrow morning," said Harry. Both he and Ron then
climbed up the spiral staircase that leads into their dormitory. Neville and the rest of the gang were already there when they arrived. After exchanging greetings and all, both of them immediately changed into their pajamas and climbed into their bed.

The storm was still raging outside but it was calm and warm within the dormitory.

"I might go in for it, you know," said Ron sleepily through the semi darkness. "If George and Fred found out how to-. you know."

"You mean the tournament?" asked Harry.

"Yeah."

"It may not be as good as it sounds, Ron."

Ron turned towards Harry. "Are you mental? A thousand galleons prize money and eternal glory. Who doesn't want that?"

"That person who doesn't want all of that will be me," said Harry.

"Seriously?"

Harry turned to face Ron. "Yes, Ron. I'm serious. I'm staying away from it. I think you should too. People died in the tournament, mate. I don't care how safe they said it would be this time. I'm not buying it."

Ron said nothing. Instead, he turned to face the ceiling.

Harry sighed. He knew that Ron was refusing to accept his advice. Well, it would be his funeral. Harry tried.

Rolling over on his bed, his mind wandered to all the events that happened on that day. He wondered if the moment he wake up the next day, he'll find that he's back to his 92 year old self, that all of these were just a dream. Really weird dream.

It better be.

But Hermione's smacking him on the head felt hurt. Not once but twice. If this was just a dream, he should not feel anything, should he? Harry shook his head. "This is not a dream. Definitely not," he whispered. "This is as real as it could get. Damn."

Time continued to fly by. The silence of the night was punctuated by thunders from the still raging storm outside and from Ron's legendary snoring.

It had been a quarter past two in the morning and still Harry could not sleep. He simply laid on the bed, staring at the dark ceiling. For the past few hours question upon question kept coming in. Questions that he didn't have the answer to.

This time travelling thing is really weird. Throughout the whole 92 years he had lived, not once he heard any wizard or witch who managed to do it. Hell, he even didn't know if such feat is possible. For all he knows, just like Neil Armstrong who was hailed as the first muggle to set his foot on the moon, he could be the first human, wizard or no, who managed to travel back in time.

Unfortunately, he never intended to go back in time. He even did not know how to do it. One moment he was lying on his bed he shared with Fleur and the next moment he was in a train compartment, with Ron who was supposed to be dead and Hermione….. with him in his 15 year old body! What the fekk?!

Something must have happened. Something that he had no knowledge of in which he himself could not explain. The only explanation he could deduce would be that someone or er-, something send him back through the time. Perhaps for a job or task that he himself need to accomplish. But what?

And why the fourth year?

Harry hated his fourth year in Hogwarts. Too many bad things happened back then. He was forced to compete in a tournament. That announcement of him being the fourth champion created an unstoppable domino effect that worked against him. He sailed through it though. But then Cedric died and Voldemort was reborn.

Harry slowly rose and sat on his bed with his face in his palm.

All of those things will definitely happen all over again this time. He will have to relive it.
There may not be any way for him to change things that had already being predestined. He will have to sail through it once again.

All of a sudden, something ticked. Harry froze. He slowly looked up.

Maybe he can.

Harry got out of his bed walked towards the nearest window. The storm was still raging outside with no sign of receding. From the window he saw the Forbidden Forest and Hagrid’s hut that located right next to it.

Voldemort was out there and Harry knew where he was hiding. At that point, he was still weak. Harry could take him out. Even Wormtail won't stand a chance. Justice shall dawn upon them for the second time.

But it would be easier said than done.

For one, Voldemort still had nearly all of his horcruxs intact. Taking him out won't mean the end of him forever. Voldemort will keep coming back for as long as his horcruxs existed. His horcruxs need to die before him.

A plan began to form in his mind. Harry now knows on what to do. If he plays his card right, everyone he cared about including Sirius Black would be spared.

He went back to his bed. Pulling his blanket to his chest, Harry once again stared at the ceiling.

He can't wait for the month of October to come. The Triwizard Tournament shall mark the beginning of his plan. Barty Crouch Jr. shall be his first casualty.

And he gets to see Fleur Isabelle Delacour once again.

Things will change from that moment on.

As sleep slowly took over him, he saw Fleur in a beautiful silvery white dress smiling serenely at him.

"Good night, love."

To be continued...

A/n: First let's go to the reviews. A couple of you guys brought up the issue of why Harry need to go back to his past when he already had a really good life back then. Well, you guys certainly are right. I agree that there won't be any need for him to do that. However, as teased in the prologue and told within this chapter, going back in time wasn’t his choice. And yes the ‘butterfly effect’ will be one of the main themes within this story. I hope this will raised your interest even further. I want to do this in a different way from what anyone else did. Hopefully you guys will like it.

Anyway I would like to thank all who had taken the trouble in reviewing this story. Thank you also to those who put this story in their favourite and followed list.

I can’t guarantee on how fast I can update this story. Apparently, writing HP stories is far more difficult compare to StarCraft due to its complexities. But nevertheless, I will keep on trying.

So please read and leave a review or two if possible. And once again thank you.
3. Chapter 3

Chapter 2

Flashback...

It had been eight months since the Second Wizarding War ended. Harry was back in Hogwarts to finish his seventh and final year of education. Hogwarts at that time was still under the process of rebuilding but all the basic facilities were already there. Classes and accommodations could still be provided despite the all constructions works going on.

Being the one hailed as the vanquished of the most dangerous dark lord of all time, Harry was offered a position as an auror within the Department of Magical Law Enforcement without the need to go through his final year in Hogwarts and without the need to go through the usual auror training regime. That offer was personally handed over to him by the Minister for Magic himself, Kingsley Shacklebolt who also happened to hold the position as the head of the DMLE as well. Ron, Hermione, Neville and few others who took part as the defender of Hogwarts were offered places as well as a token of appreciation to everything they did for the war effort. Many of them, especially Ron, were excited with the prospect of not having to go through another year of schooling.

Hermione of course managed to change their outlook. She was the first to decline that offer stating that it would better of her and the others to do it in a proper way rather than taking short cuts. Much to Ron's chagrin, Harry agreed with her and decided to follow her footstep and try to finish his seventh and final year in Hogwarts.

Of course that wasn't just the reason. Both James and Lily Potter were among the brightest students in their time and they both were not school dropout. Harry intended to emulate them. That and the fact that that year would be the first time since the moment he came to Hogwarts where he could truly become a student and learn the ways of the magic properly without having to look behind his shoulders all the time.

September the first started without a hitch and it had gone really well so far for the next three months, much to Harry's delight.

Until that fateful morning.

It was a week before the holiday began. Everyone was so excited of going back home for Christmas. Harry himself for the first time ever, was really looking forward to the first Christmas after the death of Voldemort. It would be the first proper Christmas for him. He spent quite a fortune buying presents during the students Hogsmeade outing for all the Weasley's family members including Fleur. Fleur and her husband will spend the first day of Christmas in Burrow before they head to France the day after. Ron was of course extremely excited of what Harry bought him. A specialized broom servicing kit ordered from Quality Quidditch Supplies in Diagon Alley. It was supposed to a secret kept until Christmas morning. Ron found out somehow. Even until now Harry doesn't know how but he made a point that Ron could only have it not before Christmas. Both of them made plans that will include visiting Hermione and several of their friends home. Hermione's parent had return from their exile from Australia. Their memories were still a little bit patchy but at least, they remembered their only daughter. It would take some time for their memories to fully recover though.

Potion was the second subject of that day after Charm. It was still helmed by Professor Horace Slughorn who had given his agreement to continue teaching despite his desire to retire earlier. They were in the midst of receiving the instruction on how to make the Polyjuice Potion, something that Hermione was already good at given that she was smirking all the time within the class, when Headmistress McGonagall came crashing in. She immediately went to Professor Slughorn and began whispering frantically at him.

"What do you think that is?" asked Ron.

"Dunno," replied Harry. "But I think it's definitely something not good."

It wasn't after a few minutes later before McGonagall finally turned to face the class. "Mr. Weasley," she announced. Her eyes laid on Ron. "Pack your bag and please follow me." Then she paused for a few moments. "I think Mr. Potter and Miss Granger should come as well." She then turned to Professor Slughorn. "I apologize for disturbing your class but thank you, Horace."

Slughorn waved off McGonagall apologies. "No-, no-, at all. It was unfortunate but yes I understand. Send my regards and condolence to the family would you?"

"Of course."
The trio's curiosity peaked as they hastily packed their belongings. Swinging their back pack behind their back, they followed her out of the classroom. Ginny was already waiting outside the classroom. Apparently, Professor McGonagall had pulled her out of her class before them.

"What is it, Professor?" asked Harry just as they were out of ear reach of the Potion class.

"What happened?"

"There had been an incident," answered McGonagall simply as she continued to walk quickly towards the headmaster office.

"What incident?" asked Harry again.

But McGonagall did not answer. She sped up, forcing the other four to follow her pace.

Harry then turned to Ginny. "Ginny, what happened?"

"I don't know, Harry," replied Ginny worriedly. "I really don't know. I asked but I was told to wait. Oh Harry, I hope nothing really bad is happening."

Harry took her hand into his. "I'll be here, Ginny. Whatever happened, I will always be here."

Ginny gave him a thin smile. "I know you will. Thank you, Harry," she said as she intertwined her fingers with his.

Hermione meanwhile gave a side glance to Ron. She saw that his face whitened. She knew that Ron somehow managed to deduce that whatever had happened, it would concern his family. The fact that Slughorn asked McGonagall to send his condolences to what could be assume as the Weasley family make matters worse. Hermione reach out and grab hold of his hand, trying as hard as she can to silently assure him that whatever happened, she would be there for him.

They finally reached what would be the entrance to the headmaster's office on the third floor. "Sugar drop," said McGonagall as they reached the gargoyle that guard the entrance to the office. It seemed that McGonagall was paying homage for Dumbledore's affinity to sweets. The gargoyle stepped aside revealing a moving circular stairway. They immediately stepped on the stairway and entered the headmaster's office.

McGonagall turned on her heel facing them the moment they were inside her office. "What I'm about to tell you won't be pleasant. Especially to you," she said as her gaze fell onto the Weasley's siblings. "I know a lot of things happened to your family. Lost of family members and everything- ."

"Professor," cut in Harry. "It would be better if you simply cut to the chase and tell us why we're here. We already have enough anxiety as it is."

McGonagall gave Harry a stern look. Harry though did not back down and calmly looked back at her.

"Very well," she said finally. She then turned back to the Weasleys. "Early this morning there was an incident at the Gringotts. It came under attack. We have yet determined who the assailants were but I can tell you that it was bad. The ministry like always sent their aurors to the scene. A fight ensued. There were deaths on both sides. One of them was your brother, William."

"BILL!"

"NO!"

Ginny sob uncontrollably on Harry's shoulder as the later hug her. Ron meanwhile slumped onto the chair. Hermione sat beside him, hugging him. She too was crying.

"I am sorry," said McGonagall. Sadness plastered on her face. "I know this is hard for all of you given everything that happened a few months back." She then walked towards the fireplace and grabbed a handful of Floo powder from a pot placed next to the fireplace. A greenish flame erupted after she threw the Floo powder into the fireplace. "Hurry now. Your families are now at St. Mungos."

Ginny and Ron sprinted towards the emergency ward the moment they stepped out of St. Mungos public fireplaces. Harry, Hermione and Professor McGonagall followed them from behind. The moment they arrived, Minister Shacklebolt, Arthur, Charlie, Percy and whom Harry recognized as Augusta Longbottom were already waiting.

Both Ron and Ginny immediately hugged their father and were ushered into the ward. Harry meanwhile walked towards Charlie. "What happened?" he asked.
"Gringotts came under attack this morning," replied Charlie.

"Any idea who the perpetrator is?"

Charlie shook his head. "No but based on what I heard, Voldemort splinters group were the prime suspect behind this."

"Voldemort?! Splinters group?!" asked Hermione, perplexed.

"Yeah," said Charlie. "There were several you know. Not just one."

"I thought the moment Voldemort died, the movement died as well," said Hermione.

"Not really," cut in Shacklebolt who somehow overheard their conversation. He went to shook Harry's and Hermione's hand. "Good to see you again, Harry. And also to you Hermione. I trust that both of you is perfectly fine."

"We're indeed fine, Minister," said Hermione. "But what do you mean by 'not really'?"

"The dark lord may have died Hermione, but a lot of his followers still live. Some of them went underground and some tried to revive their dead master legacy. There are many splinters group that are currently under our watch. One of them is called the Wand of Death. We suspect this group was the one that mounted the attack on Gringotts this morning," explained Shacklebolt.


"I don't think robbing the bank would be their motive, Harry," said Shacklebolt. "No. This is something else. And to answer your question, no. Nothing is missing."

"Gringotts is pretty much impenetrable, Harry," stated Hermione.

"Well not really. Remember we did-, Ouch!"

Hermione apparently had kicked Harry on the leg and gave him a stern look. Harry immediately shut his mouth as he realized what he nearly did.

Shacklebolt smiled at the silent exchange he saw coming from Harry and Hermione. He gave out a chuckle and said, "I know what the three of you did back during the war. Word is that the three of you broke into Gringotts and managed to steal something."

Harry and Hermione stiffened at what Shacklebolt just said.

Shacklebolt who seemed to know what they were thinking said, "Don't worry. I'm not going to turn you in though I must emphasize the seriousness of that action. As you both would have see, Gringotts take security matter really seriously. I'm gonna say that you were lucky to be alive. I expect that it won't happen again."

"It won't, Kingsley," said Harry who got accustomed in addressing Shacklebolt by his first name even though the latter had become the minister. "But how did you know?"

"From the Daily Prophets of course. They made quite a fuss about the break in. Now there is no need to make that face," said Kingsley when he saw the change in Harry's expression. "I know how you feel about that daily tabloid. I know you don't trust them. I don't expect you to change your mind given everything they did to you. However, back during the war, that tabloid did become a really useful tool. Believe it or not, many of us fugitives used it to avoid capture."

"Seriously?" asked Harry.

Shacklebolt nodded. "Yes. Seriously. The Daily Prophet was so determined to get in the Ministry good book that in their continuous praise of the ministry, they somehow accidentally printed out thinly veiled Ministry's logistical plans nearly every day. That was how we know all about the death eaters and snatchers movement."

"Well I guess we should give our thanks to whoever wrote those for that," said Harry. "I expected the Gringotts goblin would take action against us by now. So why don't they?"

"What you need to understand is that the goblins have no love for the death eaters. They don't support Voldemort. They were simply forced to be obedient. True, what you did somehow punched their pride but in a way, you did help them," explained Shacklebolt.

Harry went silent for a while. "So how did Bill die?" asked Harry a few moments later.

Shacklebolt's expression fell. He gave out a sigh before answering, "We got a distress call
coming in from Gringotts early this morning at 6.30am. I gather up a bunch of aurors including Bill and his father and we headed straight towards the bank. When we arrive, it was already chaotic. It was not only the bank they attacked you see. Several parts of the Diagon Alley suffered as well. We caught up with them when they were creating mayhem within the bank's lobby. It was a fierce fight, Harry. Many goblins died. We lost several men for the first few minutes. Bill, well Bill was trying to save one of his fellow aurors. One of the Wand of Death gang members got a clear shot on Peter Jameson during the fight. Bill managed to push Jameson out of the line of fire but instead he got the full blown killing curse hit right into his chest. He immediately collapsed. I managed to kill the perpetrator but it was already too late. Bill had already dead."

"So what happened after that?" asked Harry.

"We managed to overwhelm the attackers. They fled. I have sent a bunch of aurors after them. I promise you that it won't be long until we capture them. You'll see," said Shacklebolt. "Justice would still be upheld no matter what."

"I should have accepted the offer you made me back then, Kingsley," said Harry. "I should have become an auror. Then none of this would happen."

Shacklebolt smiled. "Then I should probably tell you that I have decided to take back that offer."

Harry's eyes widened. "What?! Why?!"

Shacklebolt smiled further. "Like what Miss Granger here had said, better to do things in a proper way. I knew you parents really well, Harry. None of them were school dropouts and I don't expect you to become one. Finish up your study and come see me once you graduated. For now, don't worry. I'll manage."

They heard footsteps coming in from the ward and saw Molly Weasley. Both Ron and Ginny were tailing her. Upon seeing Harry, Molly immediately gave him a crushing hug like always. She then released him. "How are you, Harry?"

Harry could see stream of tears flowing down her cheeks. "I'm fine Mrs. Weasley. I'm really sorry for what happened."

Molly gave Harry a soft pat on the cheek. "It already happened, Harry. At least, he died bravely."

Molly then went over to Hermione and gave her the same hug she had given Harry. No words were exchanged at this point though. Both female were simply crying.

Harry then turned to Ron. "Ron?"

"Bill is in there. And George too. He was devastated, Harry. First Fred, and now Bill. I don't think George will be able to recover, Harry. You saw how he totally changed after Fred had gone," said Ron slowly.

Harry pulled Ron into a hug and slowly patted his back. "We're going to help him, Ron. In fact, it is our duty to help him. You're not alone."

Ron simply nodded.

At that point, Harry saw whom he recognized as Monsieur Delacour coming out of the ward. Mr. Delacour went straight to Arthur and they both had a chat.

"Fleur was here too?" asked Harry to Ron as he released him from the hug.

"Yeah."

"How is she?"

"They told me she was unconscious, Harry. They placed her on a bed in a different ward. Her mother stayed with her. I didn't know if her sister was here too enough," said Ron.

"I see."

"They told me she went hysterical the moment she got the news," Ron explained. "And fainted the moment she saw Bill's body."

"The news of a sudden death isn't an easy thing to live with," said Harry.

"Yeah. She really loves Bill, you know."
"Yeah. We all saw that," said Harry. "I want to see him."

Ron obliged. He beckoned Harry to follow him. They both entered the ward. Harry could see emergency healers doing their job left and right. The situation in the ward was a little bit chaotic that day. Harry had no doubt that he knew why.

They reached a door that lead into a small room on the left. They entered and saw a body, already covered with a white blanket laid on a bed. George was sitting next to it with his back facing them.

George looked up at them before turning his gaze back to Bill.

"Hey George," greeted Harry.

But George gave no response.

Harry and Ron exchanged look. Harry then walked closer to the bed and lifted the white blanket that covered Bill's face. His eyes were shut and a thin smile form on his lip. Bill was at peace.

Sadness took over Harry. He wasn't as close to Bill as anyone else from the Weasley's family but still, he felt indebted to him. Bill and Fleur helped him quite a lot during the war even to the point where their life was endangered. They still did it though. After a few moments, Harry carefully covered Bill's face once again with the white blanket and beckoned Ron to follow him out of the ward, leaving George alone in his thought.

Both of them went to look for Fleur. They found her within a ward a few distances away from the emergency section. She was still unconscious. Her mother Appoline Delacour was sitting next to her. Her fingers continued to caress Fleur's silvery long hair. Like Molly, she too was crying.

They both stood in silence.

"You know what, Ron?" said Harry with determination as they walked back to where they met Shacklebolt before. "I'm going to work hard. I'm going to be an auror. And when I do, I'm going to hunt them all down. I'm going to be their living nightmare. I'm going to be Mad-Eye Moody reincarnated, only a hundred times worst."

It was three days after Christmas. Bill was buried two days before at St. Ottery Catchpole cemetery. The celebration that year was really subdued.

Harry had decided to give up his hope of finally having a really good Christmas. He began to think that it was a curse laid upon him by some unknown forces that did not want to see him happy. He was hoping for good and quiet year of studying. He did not get that. He was hoping for a really good Christmas. He did not get that either.

He sat on his bed within Ron's bedroom for a quite a few minutes. All that while, his brain was accessing and analyzing everything that happened these past few days. A lot of things happened to the Weasley family. He would have thought that once Voldemort dead, they would finally be free. No more death and that Fred would be the last victim of the war. But nope. That did not happen.

Harry sighed. He took the old gold watch Molly had given him as his coming of age present and peered at the time. It was already nine in the morning. He then got up and began to get dress. Ron was still fast asleep. Harry contemplated at first on whether or not he should wake his friend up but after a few minutes, he decided to let Ron catch up a few more winks. He then exited the room and made his way downstairs.

"Good morning, Harry," Ginny greeted him. She then leaned forward and gave a peck on his lip. "Do you sleep well?"

"Yeah," replied Harry. "And you?"

"A little bit difficult," answered Ginny. "But I managed to catch a few winks. Why don't you sit at the table. I'll make some breakfast for you."

"Okay. So where are the others?" asked Harry as he made his way towards the dining table.

"Mom and dad went to the ministry this morning," replied Ginny as she began to cook the breakfast. "The Delacour family went there as well. Something about Bill, I think. They'll be back before noon."

Harry nodded and continued his way towards the dining table. But when he arrived, someone was already there.
It was Fleur. "Bonjour, 'Arry," she greeted him.

"Good morning, Fleur," replied Harry, taking his seat in front of her. "How are you?"

"I'm fine," replied Fleur.

"Already have your breakfast?"

Fleur shook her head.

"Well Ginny is making some. You-.."

"She offered me before, 'Arry," Fleur cut him. "I just don't want any."

Harry nodded. "Okay. I understand."

"Understand what?"

"Your situation," replied Harry simply. "I know you mom and dad would have push you to eat something so I'm not going to. I know you won't like me do that."

"So you're a mind reader now?"

Harry chuckled. "No I'm not. I'm bad at Occlumency actually. I simply understand people's feeling."

"I see."

"Listen, Fleur," said Harry. "I've been meaning to talk to you. I'm sorry for what happened. I really am. Bill is a good person. It's unfair that a good person like him being taken away just like that. I remembered what you both did for me, Ron and Hermione back then. I'm not going to forget all of that."

Fleur looked down. "Things that happen had happened, 'Arry. Nothing could stop it."

Harry nodded. "Yeah."

"But I'm proud of him, 'Arry. He died bravely. He's a hero. And nothing could change that," said Fleur.

"Yeah. He's a hero," said Harry.

"Just like you," point out Fleur.

"What? No. I never consider myself a hero, Fleur. I'm not," said Harry.

"But you faced the most dangerous dark lord of all time and you never care whether you'll live or die. That was the bravest thing I saw, 'Arry," mentioned Fleur. "It didn't get any braver than that."

Harry shook his head. "I simply did what I had to do, Fleur. There's more to it than what you saw. I was able to plan it from the beginning. Bill never gets the same chance."

Fleur went silent. "Plan?"

Harry took this chance to continue. "Fleur, sacrificing yourself for others is not as easy as it sound especially when that person concerned was simply a friend. Believe it or not, it was really hard to do. I heard what happened in Gringotts. When Bill pushed that bloke out of harm's way, he never thought of his own safety just as long as his friend is safe. Bill sacrificed himself for a friend. That was a split second decision that he made. That's bravery Fleur, at its purest form. Like I said before, I was able to plan. Bill didn't get that chance. He's braver than I am."

Fleur kept on staring at him. Her brilliant blue eyes continued to pierce that of Harry's. She was about to speak when Ginny came to the table with a huge plate of scrambled eggs and some toasts. She offered some to Fleur. The veela once again declined. Ron and Hermione came down to join them a few minutes later.

It was a silent breakfast. All the time, Fleur simply sat there watching Harry eat. That silence was broken when Ginny speak out, "So Fleur, what is your plan after this?"

Fleur took a while before she answered, "I'm going back to France."

"You're leaving?" asked Hermione, apparently surprised.
Fleur nodded. "Yes, I'm leaving. There's nothing left for me here. Papa and maman also didn't want me to live alone by myself. We will be going back to France this afternoon."

"What about Shell Cottage?" asked Ginny. "You're still going back there from time to time aren't you?"

Fleur shook her head. "No, I won't be going back there. I did a discussion with papa and maman and we had agreed to give that cottage to your family, Ginny."

"But- that cottage is now yours," said Ginny. "Surely you won't want to give it away just like that."

Fleur smiled. "But it was Bill's as well. I want your family to have something to remember him by, Ginny. It won't be fair for me to take everything away."

This time, it was Harry's turn to gape at Fleur. This was indeed something new. This is one side of Fleur that he had never seen before. In fact, he didn't think anyone else saw that as well. Selflessness. Indeed she had grown from being snobbish into someone who showed much care for the others. This new trait of her must have been an extension to that.

Their eyes once again met. Harry smiled and gave her the nod of approval.

Both the Weasleys and the Delacour matriarch returned at noon that day. Gabrielle was with them as well. She gave Harry a fleeting hug the moment she saw him. She now looked exactly like Fleur, only a little bit smaller.

Both families had lunch together and at ten minutes before three, the Delacour family was preparing to depart for France via the floo network. It was a tearful farewell for both Molly and Appoline with Molly insisting that they should remain in contact even though they were now no longer in laws. Monsieur Delacour shook Harry's hand several times, voicing his appreciation to what Harry had done for the wizarding world as a whole.

"'Arry," said Fleur after she finished saying goodbye to the other Weasley family members including Hermione.

Harry extended his hand to Fleur. "Well, I guess this is goodbye," he said.

Fleur took a momentarily at Harry's hand before she pushed it away. She then pulled Harry into a tight hug. "Thank you," she whispered into his ears.

Harry was caught by surprise from Fleur's action. "Anytime, Fleur. Anytime." That was all he could say.

Fleur then released him. "Promise me that you will write to me," she said.

"I will. But before you go," Harry handover to her a present wrapped in a silvery wrapping paper: "Merry Christmas, Fleur."

It was Fleur's turn to be caught in surprise. "Thank you," said Fleur as she took the present. "What is it?"

"You'll know it once you open it," said Harry.

Fleur smiled and gave him a kiss on his cheek. She then stepped into the roaring green flame within the fireplace. The rest of the Delacour family followed her.

Harry simply watched as Fleur and the rest of her family disappeared within the green flame. Sadness filled his heart. Another friend had left him. Just like Fred, Bill, Collin and few others. That will be the last time he saw her.

Little that he realized that four years later, fate will bring him to her once again in a very different circumstance.

**Flashback to be continued...**

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**Present...**

Storm had blown over by the following morning. The sky though was still grey and gloomy with heavy clouds swirling overhead. Harry, Ron and Hermione were at the Great Hall, examining their own timetables. At a few distances away but still at the same table sat George, Fred and Lee Jordan. Harry couldn't hear what they were conversing but he knew it was all about the Triwizard Tournament and how they were going to trick themselves into getting in. Just like before. Harry knew what will become of them, particularly Fred and
George but he decided to keep quiet. It would be better if he did not interfere.

Speaking of the tournament, perhaps it was time for Harry to plan on how not to enter the tournament. Preventing his name from being entered would be one of the major steps in his own grand master plan. And being an auror, he may have some clues on what to do. For now though, that will have to wait for he will need to do a few more initial preparations, particularly the one concerning the horcruxes. Besides, the Goblet of Fire had not being brought out yet. He will have to properly plan for that when the time comes.

"Today’s not bad," said Ron as he made the rundown on his own schedule. "We will be outside all morning for Herbology and Care for Magical Creatures and... oh wait! With Slytherin?! Damn it!"

Harry groaned as he himself run through his timetable. They will have double Divination that afternoon. In the past, Professor Trelawney had made it a hobby in predicting Harry’s death every time she had classes with the Gryffindor. He was sure that it would be the same this time around. He might have known what he was about to face but it was still pretty annoying.

"What is it, Harry?" asked Ron.

"We’ll have Divination this afternoon," replied Harry. "Double period."

"Urgh."

"You should have dropped the subject long ago, both of you. Just like I did," said Hermione as she buttered herself some toast. "Learn something more sensible like the Arithmancy."

There was a sudden rustling of noise coming from above. Harry looked up and saw hundreds of owl flying through the opened windows bringing mails and stuffs. The owls circled the tables looking for the people whom the mails and the packages were addressed to. A large tawny owl soared down to Neville and dropped a parcel into his lap. At the Syltherin's table, an eagle owl dropped Draco Malfoy’s usual supply of sweets and cakes into his receiving hands.

Harry was on the lookout for a snowy white owl. He did not see her. Then he realized that it would be much much later before anything arrived to him. At least that was what happened within the old timeline.

Harry turned back to his breakfast. He hoped that Sirius Black would still remained safe.

The trio arrived at greenhouse three fifteen minutes later for their first subject of the day and today, they will be working with bobotubers. The plants looked hideous, more like thick, black, squirming giant slugs coming out of the soil. This was the second time Harry laid his eyes on it so it wasn’t felt as revolting as before.

"Bobotubers," announced Professor Sprout. "They'll need squeezing. You'll collect the pus."

"The what?" exclaimed Seamus.

"Pus, Mr. Finnigan. The pus," said Professor Sprout. "You'll collect them in these bottles," she pointed to an array of empty bottles placed on a rack beside her desk. "Wear a dragon hide glove when you work. Undiluted pus can do funny and nasty things to your skin if you touch it. However, if properly prepared, it can become an excellent remedy for various skin problems such as acne. Now of you go."

Having done it the first time before, collecting bobotubers pus was a breeze for Harry. It was still satisfying though watching the swelling pop releasing a large amount of gasoline smelled pus. He immediately caught it in a bottle. Looking around, Harry smirked as he watched Ron and Hermione struggling with their own bobotuber plant. By the end of the lesson, Harry alone managed to collect nearly thirty bottles of bobotuber pus. A feat where no other students had achieved. Professor Sprout was really impressed.

"How did you do it?" asked Ron as they headed down towards Hagrid's small cabin for their next lesson. "I only managed to get three."

"And I got only seven," said Hermione. "I watched you, Harry. It looks like you have done it before."

"Well yes," said Harry. He decided to be truthful. "I did that kind of thing before."

"When and where?" asked Hermione.

"I'll tell you but I don't want to risk being hit by a book on the head so why don't we simply let the thing slide shall we?" said Harry.
"You know I’m going to keep asking questions, Harry," said Hermione.

"Yeah I know and I’m going to keep giving the same answer."

The Gryffindor lot had finally arrived at Hagrid’s hut. The gamekeeper aka. Care for Magical Creatures teacher was already waiting for them.

"Hi Hagrid," greeted Harry.

"Hiya, Harry!" Hagrid greeted back. "Say... why didn't you come and meet me on the train platform last night?"

"Well you were busy with the first years and it was raining, remember?"

"Oh yeah I forgot. Those first years were quite a handful this time. Oh well, I bet you gonna love what I’m going to show you today."

The trio looked towards each other. Hagrid’s definition of love certainly did not mean the same from what they understood. Harry knew it well and he knew what Hagrid was about to show them won’t be pleasant.

"Really Hagrid? Well what was it?" asked Hermione.

"See those crates over there?" said Hagrid as he pointed towards several opened crates placed not far from where he stood. Odd rattling noises punctured by several fireworks like explosion came from within the crates. "Blast-Ended Skrewts."

"Blast-Ended what-what?" asked Dean Thomas.


A few of the students took a peek inside the crates.

"Ew!" exclaimed Lavender Brown. "Ew! Ew! Ew! Ew!"

They looked like deformed, shell less lobster those Blast-Ended Skrewts. They were hundreds of them within each crate crawling on top of one another and bumped to the side of the crates. The smelled ungodly as well, like rotten fishes only ten times more worse.

"These are still younglings," announced Hagrid. "Just hatched and we're going to take care of them."

"Why?!"

Apparently the Sytherin had arrived and the speaker was Draco Malfoy.

"I mean what's the point of taking care of them?" he asked again.

Hagrid struggle at first before he finally managed to come up with an answer. "That will be next lesson, Malfoy. For today you’ll-.

"Why not today?" Malfoy cut in. "Why not just tell us what it is for? Or is it because you don’t have a clue on what it good for?"

Hagrid opened his mouth and closed it once again. He was stumped. "Wh-, well..."

Deep inside, Harry was seething. Draco might have save his life back in his old timeline but here, he was still an arrogant kid. It was time to teach the golden boy of Malfoy some manners.

Draco meanwhile was all too happy that he got the chance to undermine Hagrid. "You don’t know do you?" he sneered. "And they made you a teacher? How-.

Suddenly it happened. Draco's eyes widened. His face turned blue. Gurgling noise can be heard loudly coming out of his stomach. It went that way for a few minutes before all of a sudden he went -

FRAPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPP!

He gave out a fart so loud that it threatened to burst open his pant.

All of them including Crabbe and Goyle rolled down in laughter.

Red faced, Draco turned here and there trying in vain to search for the perpetrators. His eyes
suddenly fell on Harry. "YOU!" he shouted.

"What?" replied Harry calmly.

"You're behind this. I know it's you!" accused Draco.

"Your proof?" asked Harry.

"I-, well-, I know it was you! I know it!" shouted Draco.

"Harry didn't do it, Malfoy!" said Hermione. Her eyes were still teary from the laughter. "Did you see his wand?"

Malfoy turned to look at Harry's hand. Indeed they were empty. "Well, he must have learnt on how to cast a spell without using any wand."

"That's bull crap, Malfoy. We're only fourth year student. Wandless spell is a highly advance magic. Not all wizards manage to adapt to it. Even some of the most highly trained wizards still had trouble using it," said Hermione.

"He attacked Peeves!"

"And he still used a wand! In fact, I didn't hear him cast any spell. Did anyone hear him?" asked Hermione.

All the students who stood around Harry shook their heads.

Draco was getting angrier. He once again looked around before his eyes landed on Hagrid.

Hagrid somehow knew Draco was about to accuse him. "I'm not the one who did it Malfoy. I am a teacher and a teacher is prohibited from bullying 'em students. Besides, I don't possess any wand."

Draco stared at Hagrid momentarily before turning around. He was about to leave before Hagrid called him. "Where are you going?"

"I'm leaving."

Hagrid decided to put his foot down. "You're staying or I'm going to give you a month detention. How's that sound to ya?"

Draco's shoulder slumped.

The blast-ended skrewt were disgusting but nothing was sweeter than seeing Draco got schooled by Hagrid. And of course hearing him farted.

Harry smiled. Hermione was right of course. None of the fourth years managed to cast silent, let alone wandless spell. It was highly advanced magic managed only by a few.

If only she knew that Harry could do both. Perfectly.

The news of Draco embarrassing himself travelled so fast throughout the castle that everyone ended up knowing it. He was not seen at the Great Hall during the lunchtime.

"We heard the news!" said George as he and his twin sat with the trio.

"Is it true?" asked Fred.

"Yeah it's true," said Ron. "It was so loud that it nearly burns a hole on his pant."

"Wicked!" the twin exclaimed. "That'll show him!"

"So who did it?" asked Neville.

"Well that's the thing," said Ron. "No one knows."

"Come on, get real," said George. "Someone must have done it."

"If I know, I'll tell you," said Ron. "Just ask everyone else. I bet you'll get the same answer."

"That's curious," said Fred. "I reckon you weren't behind this, Harrikins?"

"Yeah. Besides you attacked Peeves, remember?"
Harry just shrugged. "So how is Peeves?" he asked, trying to divert the topic.

"The last I heard he was still sulking. He would be very afraid of you, Harry. At least for now," said George.

"Good riddance," muttered Ron. "So the Triwizard Tournament. Any luck?" The twin looked at each other. "Well we might found a way. Of sort," said Fred.

"Really? Well what is it?" asked Ron hopefully.

"Nope," said George. "Can't tell you."

"Come on! You can tell me. I'm your brother!" exclaimed Ron.

"Sorry Ronnikins but this is big boys stuff. Let's go Forge," said Fred.

"Right behind you Gred."
The Weasley twin then took leave, leaving Ron grumbling in their wake.

The bell rang. It was time for their next lesson. Divination.

On their way to the north tower where the Divination class was being held, they walked past the entrance into first floor girls' bathroom, well known for being the haunting place of Moaning Myrtle. Harry stopped and gazed into the bathroom.

"What is it, Harry?" asked Ron.

"Urm nothing," replied Harry. "Come on. We're already late."

As they continued their way towards the north tower, Harry's mind went back to the first floor bathroom.

The basilisk carcass was still down there, deep in the Chamber of Secrets.

And he will need it.

To be continued...

A/n: Oh how I wish I could answer all your reviews but I fear that I will giving out spoilers. It would be better to keep my mouth shut.

When I wrote Changing Perceptions, the concept I used was different from what the other authors did. I didn't take the easy way and I put a lot of uncertainties within the story. I can tell you that it was highly unpopular among the readers that I ended up losing quite a few readers. They did return when the story was finished though after they saw the ending.

I will be doing the same for this story. There will be a lot of uncertainties and the result may not be what it seems. I hope you guys could stomach it and will keep on reading until the end. After all, like every other stories, it's the journey that matters. I want you guys to be emotionally invested in the characters as well.

It will be some time before the Beauxbaton and Durmstrang delegates arrive at Hogwarts and the Triwizard Tournament begins so I have decided to do a back story on how Harry and Fleur ended up together in the first place in their old timeline. It will be in the form of flashbacks just like you see in this chapter. I also like to point out that there will be some aspect within those flashbacks that would play some role as the story goes deeper.

Anyway, I would like to thank those who took the trouble in reviewing this story. Also my thank goes to those who put this story in their favourite and followed list. As always, please read and review and I'll see you next chapter.
Chapter 3

Flashback...

Harry, Hermione, Ron and Ginny were ready to go back to Hogwarts two days after Fleur left for France. Headmistress McGonagall gave her permission to have the headmaster fireplace connected to the one at the Burrow. Charlie and George had gone back to their respective home last night after dinner. Percy however headed straight to work that early morning.

They gathered around the fireplace right after breakfast. Like always, Mrs. Weasley would give each and everyone her famous rib crunching hug and like always, she will reminded them to study hard and to stay away from trouble.

"Now all of you be good and please stay out of trouble. The three of you," she pointedly to Harry, Ron and Hermione, "should well remember that this year is the most important. I expect no less than excellence in your NEWTs."

The four of them vehemently promised which once again were rewarded by another bone crushing hug. Harry himself had silently put on the steely determination to not let Molly worried about him anymore. She already had enough on her plate, what more with the death of her sons. She had been good to him. At the very least, he owed her that.

Ron, Ginny and Hermione stepped one by one into the roaring green flame and vanished. Harry was about to do the same when he felt someone was putting their hand on his shoulder.

He looked back and saw it was Mr. Weasley.

"Harry," said Mr. Weasley. "Remember. What we talked about last night."

Flashback to last night...

Dinner that night was a simple affair. Dishes such as roasted chicken mixed with mash potatoes and gravy complemented by steak and kidney pudding graced the dining table. It was still delicious, at least to his taste but though Harry could not help but feel that Mrs. Weasley's cooking had dwindle somehow, both in quality and quantity. He could guess on why it went that way.

Harry stayed behind at the dining table after dinner and helped both Mrs. Weasley and Ginny clean up the table. He was about to bring all the dirty dishes to the kitchen sink when Ginny shooed him away and told him to take a rest. Knowing Ginny, Harry decided to oblige. He made his way towards the living room but before he crossed over the threshold, he looked back and landed his gaze onto Mrs. Weasley. And later to Ginny.

He sighed. Happiness certainly had eroded away from this once jovial family. Back during the happy days, Mrs. Weasley was always the noisiest of the lot. Not a moment when he entered the kitchen when he did not hear her voice fussing over everything. It was a trait that had seemed to pass on to Ginny. Fleur got it too but only the 'fussing over everything' part. She was still basically calm and collected, just like Harry remembered back when she was a still a student. The period after Fred died changed everything. Harry cannot help but feel that this was no longer the family he used to remember and it infected virtually everyone. Bill's death made it even worse. That night, just like the few nights before, was no less different. Both Mrs. Weasley and Ginny were silent as they continued to wash the dishes. No conversation, no nothing.

Harry turned and continued his way towards the living room. Arthur and the rest of the surviving Weasley family members including Hermione were already there, sitting on various chairs and sofas. Harry went to one of the available chairs and sat on it. He looked around. Hermione was sitting right beside Ron on the long sofa. Her fingers intertwined with that of Ron. Percy and Charlie meanwhile sat much nearer to Mr. Weasley on a couple of old couches. The pair was at that time gave rapt attention to what Mr. Weasley was saying. Harry too leaned in to have a listen.

"We got a few leads on the Wand of Death where about," said Mr. Weasley. "Kingsley had been working on it ever since the attack at Gringotts. Unfortunately there isn't much he can do at this moment. The war took its toll on the Ministry. He managed to get the DMLE up and running right after the Battle of Hogwarts but at this point, there isn't that many auror he could use. Yaxley did quite a damage on it. And there's the purging."

"Purging?" asked Harry.

"The Ministry is still chockfull of Voldemort's sympathizer, Harry," explained Percy. "Umbridge for instance became one of the main suspects. You know how popular she was back then,
being the under secretary and eventually the head of Muggle-born Registration Commission. She got lucky though."

"Lucky?!" asked Harry, wide eyed.

Percy nodded. He took a sip from the glass of firewhisky he was holding and continued, "Lucky that she was still alive. She made a lot of enemies back then, Harry. Wizards. Muggle-born. Werewolves, Centaur. Most of them would have no problem seeing her dead."

"She didn't try to wiggle her way out?" asked Hermione who all along was watching the conversation. "You know, just like the last time Voldemort fell the first time fifteen years ago. Lots of people claimed they were imperiused."

"Actually Hermione, this time it happened exactly like fifteen years ago," said Mr. Weasley. "It felt like going back in time. Thicknesse, Yaxley, a whole lot of them. Claiming they were imperiused again and again. Kingsley of course didn't buy any of it."

"Well, that's the key isn't it?" said Charlie. "It's about truth and lies and finding the way to separate it."

"True," agreed Mr. Weasley. "There's no knowing if a person act on his own accord or was under the imperious curse. However we still have records intact and their records were against them. Yaxley was a well known death eater. Pius Thicknesse however was kind of grey area in this case. He never exhibited any act of allegiance with the dark side before. Investigation is still undergoing. Umbridge though is definitely not a death eater but all of her actions proved against her. She was an easy target, that Umbridge. The first ever to be convicted and sent to Azkaban after the war. She was quiet resistive you know. Claiming herself to be of pure blood."

"Of Selwyn?" asked Hermione. The memory of her impersonating Mafalda Hopkirk came back into her mind.

Harry, Ron and Mr. Weasley stared at Hermione. "Well yes. How did you know?" asked Mr. Weasley.

Hermione realizing that she nearly exposed what the three of them did during the war sheepishly answered, "Urm, well. It’s-, it’s a long story. I did a research on her when she was teaching in Hogwarts."

That was a lie and Harry knows it. He however decided to keep quiet.

"Right," said Mr. Weasley finally. "Yes well, her claiming to be of pure blood proved to be useless however. For one, record showed that she was in fact a half blood, descendant of Oxford Umbridge and Ellen Cracknell. Her mother was a muggle so that was a lie. Kingsley used it against her in the Wizengamot, claiming her lies were an act of contempt against the court. Another thing that went against her was that she allies herself with the Selwyn. Selwyn family was well known for their allegiance with the dark lord. She kept kicking her own arse, that woman."

"Not to mention the pure blood everywhere," stated Percy. "Thanks to Voldemort and people like her, pure blood families reputation had gone down in the mud. No one is going to trust or respect a pure blood any more. Lucius Malfoy had all his business contracts cancelled within minutes and that’s not all. There were talks of victims planning to sue him in court for his allegiance with Voldemort and him being a death eater. He would go broke and homeless by the time it's over."

"Well, he reaps what he sows," said Mr. Weasley. He then stretched his leg on the armchair. "It's not over yet I'm afraid. The hunt is still on. The DMLE is still critically understaffed which is why Kingsley had to call in favour from the Order of the Phoenix from time to time. Once the academy is fully established, it could alleviate some of the problem. I hope."

"Academy, Mr. Weasley?" asked Harry.

"You didn't know?" asked Mr. Weasley in return. "Oh right. I forgot. There isn't any formal announcement being made. Not yet anyway. Well, the ministry is planning to establish the Auror Academy. Everything had been laid out. Some of the Hogwarts teacher had given their agreement to become the locum teacher for the academy. Flitwick is one of them. If everything goes within plan, it will start within the second half of this year. The word is the three of you, he pointed to Harry, Hermione and Ron. "already had your name enrolled."

"Enrolled?" exclaimed Hermione. "As in-.

"As in your place in the academy is fully guaranteed," said Percy, smiling.

Hermione looked wildly towards Harry and Ron. "But- But- But they never ask us. They
never ask for our consent. How could they?"

Mr. Weasley leaned forward towards Hermione. "I understand your resentment Hermione, but Kingsley dearly wanted the three of you," he then nudged towards Harry. "and especially Harry here, to be a part of it."

Hermione turned towards Harry. "Harry?"

Harry did not look at Hermione though. His gaze remained fixed at Mr. Weasley. "Mr. Weasley, Fudge and Scrimgeour once asked me to become the poster boy for the ministry. If this is another attempt to- ."

'No! No! No! It's not like that, Harry," said Mr. Weasley. "It's not like that at all, at least based on what Kingsley told me. I did raise this issue with him a few days before the incident at Gringotts. He said he was aware of the previous attempt by Fudge and Scrimgeour to recruit you, to become the mascot for the ministry. He told me that he won't do that. He knows your stance in this matter."

Harry somehow remained unconvinced.

Mr. Weasley sighed. "Harry, you don't have to agree if you don't want to. He's not going to force you. That was the guarantee he gave me. The main reason he wanted to recruit you was because of your past experience with Voldemort. He wanted that and the only way to get it is to have you enrol in the academy. He saw the potential in you, Harry. He was deeply convinced that you'll make an excellent auror. Maybe even better than what Moody had ever been."

"And he asked you to talk with me-, with us about this," stated Harry.

Mr. Weasley once again sighed. He slowly nodded. The feeling of guilt plastered on his face. "Yes. I'm sorry, Harry. I told him that it should be him who should talk with the three of you. He told me it would be better for me to start first since I'm the closest adult to you besides Molly. I told him that I could speak on his behalf but I won't influence your decision. You can say no if you don't want to, Harry."

Harry went silent. It was only after a few minutes later that he spoke, "I'll think about it." He then turned towards the other two. "We'll think about it," he continued.

Mr. Weasley let out a thin smile. He patted Harry on the shoulder and said, "Take all the time you need. You still have a few months of schooling left. Better concentrate on that. You can make your decisions once you graduated."

Harry nodded.

Mr. Weasley turned to look at the clock. "It's already five minutes past ten. You better go to bed now, all of you. You need to go back to Hogwarts tomorrow early in the morning."

"Yeah I need to go back to Romania tonight," said Charlie as he stood up and grabbed his travelling cloak hang nearby. "Mum?"

Harry stood and watched as the two departing Weasleys, George and Charlie, exchanged hugs and goodbyes with the rest of the family. George will be going back to Diagon Alley. Charlie meanwhile will be going to the ministry and from there, he will use the international floo network to go back to Romania. Percy decided to stay for the night and will depart directly to the ministry next morning.

Amidst the scene, he felt someone was staring at him. He turned and realized that it was Ginny. She was standing at the door into the kitchen, looking at him with an unbeknown expression on her face. Somehow she did not join the rest of her family. Their eyes met.

Harry walked up to her. He took one of her hands and asked, "Ginny, you're okay?"

Ginny somehow did not answer. Her brown eyes continued to stare at Harry.

"Ginny?"

Without a word, Ginny slowly took her hand back. She then turned and made her way towards the stairs.

His eyes followed her until she disappeared at the first landing.

After saying good night to both Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, Percy, Harry, Ron and Hermione made their way towards their bedroom. As always, Harry will share with Ron and Hermione with Ginny. Percy meanwhile has a whole bedroom all to himself. Harry tried to take a peek inside
Ginny’s bedroom the moment Hermione opened its door but all he saw was only darkness. Ginny already turned the light off. Feeling disappointed, both he and Ron then continued their way towards Ron’s bedroom after bidding Hermione good night.

“So have you given any thought about it?” asked Ron as he changed into his pajamas.

“About what?”

Ron threw his dirty clothes into the laundry bin near his bed and proceeded to sat on his bed, facing Harry. “You know. The academy. Have you given any thought about it?”

Harry simply shook his head. He put on a white a clean t-shirt coupled with a pair of black short and gathered all of his dirty clothes. He then put them inside a duffle bag and threw it inside his trunk. Mrs. Weasley had of course told him to hand over all of his dirty laundry to her so that she could wash them but Harry decided against it. Given everything that happened, it would better if he did not increase her burden. Besides, he needed to give something for the Hogwarts’ house elves to do and he knew they would be thankful for it.

“No?”

Once again Harry shook his head. “No,” he said. He then lay on his bed and stared at the ceiling, watching shadows moving as the candle flame flickered nearby. He sighed. “It’s still far too early to decide on anything, Ron. We even haven’t got past our NEWTs yet.”

“But I thought you already decided to become an auror,” stated Ron as he began tucking himself into the bed. “You talked about it in our fifth year remember? Also back at the hospital few days ago after we saw Bill?”

Harry rolled on his bed and faced Ron. “Yeah I know I said those things. It’s just, you know, seems like too easy. It’s just too easy, Ron.”

“Actually no. You have a strong resume to back you up Harry. You won the Triwizard Tournament. You killed Voldemort. McGonagall has faith in you. Even that fake Moody guy thought you’ll make a great auror. If those don’t count I don’t know what it is.”

“I’m talking about academic qualification, Ron,” said Harry.

“Academic qualification is just numbers and words on paper, Harry,” said Ron. “It’s not a guarantee that you’ll be good on something.”

“Well don’t let your mum hear that, Ron,” warned Harry.

Ron sniggered. “I won’t. But seriously Harry, what exactly is your problem?”

Harry sighed. “I feel-, I just feel that this is just another attempt to reel me in, making me a poster boy all over again. I really don’t like that.”

“Dad said Kingsley won’t repeat what Fudge and Scrimgeur did.”

“Me and Dumbledore once had faith in Scrimgeur after Fudge got sacked,” said Harry. “Turns out, he tried to do just the same. Not once, but twice.”

“Yeah, I remember his visits here,” agreed Ron.

“Yeah and I showed him what Umbridge did to me,” said Harry as he raised his right hand. The ‘I won’t tell lies’ scar was still clearly evidenced at the back of his hand. “If I want to get myself into the academy, I want to do it properly. That means passing all the subjects required in NEWTs and with flying colours if possible. My parents were the best in their years. I should at least try to emulate them in any way I can.”

“Better late than never eh?”

Harry chuckled. “Yeah. Better late than never. At least, the chances are still there,” said Harry. He then pulled the blanket folded near his feet over him. “So what about you?”

Ron at this point was lying on his back and was staring at the ceiling. “I don’t know,” he replied. “Auror sounds cool but I don’t think that’s the right choice for me. I mean I do-, I can be an auror. But you know, quidditch sounds good too.”

Harry remembered about the Chudley Cannons posters that littered the bedroom’s wall. “Yeah that’ll be a good option. What about Hermione? I don’t think she wants to be an auror.”

Ron shook his head. “No. She definitely doesn’t want to be an auror. That is as far as I could tell. With that brain of hers, I think she’ll probably end up back in Hogwarts.”
Harry smiled. "You mean as Professor Granger?"

Ron sniggered. "Yeah. Professor Granger. She can be Professor McGonagall the Second."

They both laughed.

Harry wiped the tears of laughter from his eyes. "At least it's not Trelawney."

Ron laughed. "Yeah just imagine. She'll freak out if McGonagall told her to teach Divination."

"Yeah that would be awesome," said Harry laughing.

It took awhile before their laughter began to die down. There was a moment of silence before Ron croaked, "Harry?"

"Huh?"

"Do you think Fleur will move on?" asked Ron.

"I don't know," answered Harry truthfully. "She could move on, I think. She's still in her early twenties. She's still young. And she got no children."

"And crazily beautiful," added Ron.

"Yeah, that too. No I don't think she really wants to be alone for the rest of her life," said Harry. "She will want to remarry."

"Wonder who's the lucky bloke who would get her."

"Eh, she probably chooses someone from France. Who knows?" said Harry. "Mr. and Mrs. Delacour would certainly want their daughter to stay closer to them given everything that happened."

"Yeah you probably right," said Ron.

"Better get some shut eye, Ron," said Harry as he waved his wand towards all the candles within the room. Darkness immediately consumed them as the candles flame extinguished. "We need to get back to Hogwarts tomorrow. We need to wake up early."

"Yeah. Good night, Harry."

"Good night, Ron."

But Harry could not sleep.

The tranquillity of the night was punctured from time to time by the ongoing snoring competition between Ron and the ghoul that resided in the Burrows attic. But Harry already got use to it. It was not the reason why for the past one hour he was still wide awake.

No. It was about Ginny and her odd behaviour she shown earlier that night and for the past one hour, Harry was racking his brain out on why that happened. Until now, he hadn't got an answer or a clue.

Ron bringing up the subject of Fleur was what triggered it all and he had kept thinking about it since then. Fleur was indeed extremely beautiful, no question ask. Harry heard that even Billy himself had trouble controlling himself despite him being to an extent, immune to her allure.

But Ginny was a beauty in her own right as well. Her pale skin. The freckles that formed at the bottom of her bright brown eyes. Pink lips and last but not least, her red flaming hair. For him, that hair was the best physical feature she had. He loved her hair. And he loved her.

That was probably why he was also immune to Fleur's allure. His heart was already taken by someone else. But still, Fleur was his friend and forever always will be. Like Hermione, he will always care for her as much as he cared for Ginny.

Harry sat on his bed. He was already tired of tossing and turning on the bed for the past hour, trying without any success in catching some sleep he desperately needed. He looked at Ron. Damn, he felt so jealous at his roommate. Ron never had any problem falling asleep. He could just go on and off, just like that. He was a human equivalent to a light switch.

"I need some fresh air," he muttered after a few minutes of sitting and doing nothing. He got up and put on a pair of pants. He then slowly tip toed his way out of the room.
Harry stopped outside of Ginny’s room just as he reached the third landing. Both her and Hermione must have been fast asleep by now. It was already midnight anyway. Fighting an overwhelming urge to knock on her door, Harry continued his way down and once he reach the ground floor, he immediately made his way to the porch.

The sky was clear that night. Being located far from cities with nearly zero light pollution, the Burrow could afford him the view of the night sky that was littered by stars. Harry could even see a small portion of the Milky Way that stretches from the southwest to the northeast part of the night sky. There was no moon on that night though.

The memory of him and Ginny resurfaced. Every night, whenever he spent his time at the Burrow after the war, he and Ginny would sneak out when the rest of the occupants were fast asleep. They would sit on the small swing at the porch, watching the stars and the moon, talking and cuddled for hours until the rooster crows.

Those memories brought a smile on his lips. However, the smile faltered seconds later. He really missed those moments and silently wished that it would happen again. But the family’s tragedy and the fact that Ginny started acting odd that night put a damper to that. He knew that she should not read too much into it. She had just lost another brother and she was sad. Maybe she simply wanted to be alone for a while. He had no problem giving her that. Once her mind is cleared, maybe things could go back the way it was. Whatever it is, he’ll be ready. His shoulder will always be ready for her.

His gaze fell to the surrounding area near the Burrow. It was pitch black. There was nothing he could see. But still he felt safe. He knew that the security measures around the house had increased tenfold after Bill’s murder. Mr. Weasley had made sure of it.

For the next few minutes, Harry sank into deep thoughts. Until a voice woke him up from his reverie.

"Can’t sleep, Harry?"

Harry startled. He immediately whipped out his wand and pointed it to source of that voice. Within the darkness, he saw a silhouette of a man leaning against a post not far from where he stood.

"Who are you?!" he asked even though he somehow recognized that voice.


"Arth-, lumos!" A small ball of light emerged from the tip of his wand and illuminated the porch. The man was indeed Arthur Weasley. Or someone impersonating him.

Harry’s wand remained where it is. His eye brow furrowed. "Mr. Weasley?"

The so called ‘Mr. Weasley’ walked closer to him. He leaned forward and said, “During our, urm, alone time, I like to call Molly ‘Mollywobbles’."

"Ahh," exclaimed Harry as he brought his wand down. "But how did you know that we-, you-, I mean-.

Mr. Weasley smiled. "Remember the time when each of us had to have our own unique password to gain entry? Molly scolded me once for forcing her to give our own password in front of you lot. So I figure you already know."

Harry scratched his head and chuckled. "Yes, that was quite embarrassing, even for us. Oh, sorry about just now."

But Mr. Weasley waved him off. "That’s alright, Harry. It’s good to see that you remained cautious." He then beckoned Harry to the swing. Harry followed. Mr. Weasley groaned as he sat on the swing. Harry noticed that he was furiously rubbing his knee cap. "You have to forgive an old man. My knees aren’t as strong as they had been."

"That’s okay, sir," said Harry as he sat beside Arthur.

None of them were talking for the first few minutes, settling instead by immersing themselves into the tranquillity of the night. It was Arthur however, who decided to break the silence. "It’s a shame."

Harry looked towards Mr. Weasley. "Sir?"

"This," said Mr. Weasley, throwing his hand out in front of him. "A peaceful night like this. It’s seldom for us to get a decent and beautiful night like what we have now. You know Britain. The beautiful sky. The breeze. It should be cherished and enjoyed when you could stay awake or get a really good night sleep if you can’t."
"Your point, sir?" asked Harry.

Mr. Weasley shook his head. "No. No point at all, Harry. It's just that it's been a long since the last time I enjoyed a night like this. Me and Molly, whenever I'm not working the next day, will sit on this swing and we will spend the night talking, enjoying the night sky. Of course we only did that when you lot were at school. Things began to change when You-Know-Who returned. I still go out to the porch at night. Not to look at the stars, mind you, but to keep watch. It got worse after Bill and Fleur's wedding. We were being watched all the time after you three had gone, doing whatever it was you were doing. For the next few months the nights were misty. You could feel the sense of dread creeping up your bone and into your soul." At this point, Mr. Weasley shuddered. "I could only stay out for a few minutes before I had to run back in."

"Dementors," said Harry.

Mr. Weasley nodded. "That was what I thought as well. They were using the dementors not only as a punishment but as a measure of control as well. Sucking out all the hope and happiness until you lose all the desire to stand up for yourself. I hate to say this but it was quite effective. But now, You-Know-Who had gone. The nights are clear. But I still have trouble enjoying it."

"Some wound take time to heal, sir," said Harry.

"True," agreed Mr. Weasley. "But it's not the wound that's the problem." He then sighed.

"Then what is it?"

"Things had changed a lot after Fred died, Harry," said Mr. Weasley. "Molly. The Burrow. Everyone. It's just not the same anymore. It's like living in a morgue where you could only expect death to come anytime and any day."

The feeling of guilt washed over Harry. He turned away and looked down. "I'm sorry, Mr. Weasley. I never meant anything bad to happen to your family. I never meant anyone to die, not even for me. If only I was fast enough I would-."\n
Mr. Weasley immediately grabbed Harry's shoulder and turned the teenage boy towards him. "Harry! Now you listen to me! Molly and I, we do not blame you for what happened. Not for a moment!"

"But Voldemort wanted me, Mr. Weasley! I was his target and all of you are connected to me. He knows that," stated Harry. "That was his plan all along. To get me and hurt everyone that I loved."

"Harry, You-Know-Who and his death eaters hurt and kill everyone not align with them. More so if they did not like them. Even if you're not friend with Ronald, they would still come for this family," said Mr. Weasley. "The Weasley family had always been known as the 'Blood Traitors', Harry. It comes with some added 'benefit' if you get my drift."

"I just wish I could have done something."

"And you did," assured Mr. Weasley. "You did. You killed him for us, Harry. That is good enough."

"But a lot of people died," said Harry, still feeling dejected.

"People die in war, Harry," said Mr. Weasley. "And a lot more will die if you didn't kill You-Know-Who. You had him cornered at the very last moment and like a snake, You-Know-Who will be at his most dangerous when cornered. Nobody will survive if you hadn't killed him, Harry. Probably not even his death eaters. We owe our lives to you. Remember that."

Harry who was at that time staring at Mr. Weasley once again looked down in utter discomfort. "Nobody owes me anything. I simply did what I had to do," he slowly said.

Mr. Weasley smiled and squeezed Harry's shoulder. "And that make you one of a kind, Harry. Selflessness. God knows that in this crazy world of ours, we need more of that."

Harry did not say anything. He was still musing over what Mr. Weasley said.

Mr. Weasley took the advantage of Harry's silence to continue, "There is a reason on why I told you all of these, Harry. There is also a reason on why I told you about the academy."

Harry immediately looked back at Mr. Weasley. His brow furrowed.

Mr. Weasley simply smiled. "I do this on my own, Harry. Nobody ask me. Kingsley had nothing to do with what I'm about to say and Harry, please bear in mind that it would still be your own choice."
"You want me to join the academy." That was not a question.

"That is basically the idea," said Mr. Weasley. "I personally believe that you could make a lot of differences if you join the academy. Your reputation and your talent will bring a lot of changes. You are also so far one of a very few people whom I know that couldn't be bought. We need that in order to make all the changes, Harry. It's not about being a mascot. It's about finding a way to pave forward."

Silence.

"You don't have to do it if you didn't want to, Harry. There is no pressure," said Mr. Weasley.

Finding the path forward, Harry thought to himself. **Maybe Mr. Weasley is right. It's not about being a mascot or being popular. It's about making changes and by all means the wizarding world do need a lot of changes.** It was something that he and Mr. Weasley, and perhaps Kingsley, could agree on.

After giving it a lot of thought, Harry finally gave his verdict, "Mr. Weasley. I told Ron the other day that I want to become an auror. I'm not planning to back away from that. If it true that Kingsley wanted to make changes, I'm all for it. I will join the academy and I will become an auror. That I can promise. I have one condition though."

"And what it is, Harry?"

"That I'm to be allowed to attend the academy if I score the grades required. My parents were the best of their years. I want to be like them. I want to do it in a proper way. If I don't get the grades required, Kingsley will just have to find someone else," said Harry with renewed determination.

Mr. Weasley patted Harry on his back. "And I believe you will. You're James and Lily's son. Their blood flows in you. We're going to make a difference, Harry. We will."

And the stars continued to shine in the clear night sky.

**Flashback from last night ends**

"I will," he said. He then gave both Mr. and Mrs. Weasley one last hug before stepping into the green flame.

A few seconds later, he stumbled out the headmaster fireplace. Luckily, Ron managed to catch his arm before he got the chance to passionately kiss the floor. "Thanks," he grumbled. He slays a dark lord and yet a mere powder and a fireplace still manage to defeat him.

"Welcome back," said Headmistress McGonagall as she waved her wand and cleaned all the ashes that fell onto the floor. "You three best get going. Your housemate would probably be waiting. The password would be **alpha centorium**."

"Yes, Professor McGonagall," answered the trio in unison.

"Where's Ginny?" asked Harry once they got out of the Headmaster's office.

"She immediately left the moment we arrived," answered Ron.

"Oh," said Harry, clearly crestfallen.

"Call it a girl's intuition but is there something wrong going on between you two?" asked Hermione.

Harry shook his head. "No. There's nothing wrong going on between us. Why do you ask?"

"Well she's different."

"In what way?" asked Harry curiously.

"For one, she didn't talk much this morning and you know how chatty she is. I can't even get a word out of her. Oh, haven't you notice the way she behaved around you during breakfast this morning?" asked Hermione.

As a matter a fact, he did notice. Ginny was acting cold and distant towards him. She did not greet him like she always does. There were no kisses. She even took the trouble by sitting a little bit further away from him at the table and avoided making eye contact with him. It bugged him to no end because until now, he did not know the reason why.

"She just lost two of her brothers within such a short span, Hermione. Maybe she just need a
little bit of space, that's all," said Harry. That was all he could think of actually. He really did not have any other explanation for it.

Hermione however, remained unconvinced. "Well, whatever it is, you got to talk to her Harry. Maybe she need some support. You're the best person to give her that after all."

Harry sighed. "I will. Don't worry Hermione, I will."

They reached the portrait that mark the entrance into Gryffindor common room and for some reason unlike the usual bright colour dresses the Fat Lady used to adorned, she wore an all black dress this time around. She gave Ron the look of utmost sympathy the moment she saw him.

"I'm sorry to hear about William," she said to Ron. "I still remember him, you know. He was a bright student. Charming and very handsome too. Probably the most handsome Head Boy in Hogwarts beside that other boy from Slytherin long before him. If I'm still alive I would have-." At this point, she gave a long sigh.

The three of them felt awkward. "Urm, thank you?" Ron gave this response.

The Fat Lady smiled. "I'm sure that he would forever be in peace. The rest of your friends were already waiting inside. Say the password and I'll let you in."

"Alpha Centorium," said Hermione.

The whole of Gryffindor gathered around them the moment they set foot inside the common room. They offered condolences and hugs to Ron. A few of them even curiously asked on how the tragedy happened. Lucky for them, Ron was generous at that time and spared no detail on what really happened.

Harry, knowing that this was a Weasley moment, pried himself out of the crowd. He wildly searched for Ginny. But much to his disappointment, she was not there.

"She probably had gone up her dormitory, Harry," said Hermione who finally managed to get out of the mob that surrounded Ron. "Do you want me to call her?"

He declined. "It's okay, Hermione. You don't have to. Just let her have some rest. I'll find her later."

Hermione smiled. She squeezed his hand and said, "Okay. I guess I better go. See you later, Harry."

She gazed at Ron momentarily before making her way towards her dormitory.

He saw that his trunk was already placed beside his bed the moment he entered his dormitory. Ron was still downstairs answering questions.

Harry dropped himself onto his bed. He sighed as his mind wandered off towards everything that transpired for the past couple of weeks. Bill's death. His heart to heart conversation with Mr. Weasley. And last but not least, Ginny. All of that pointed to one thing or person. Voldemort.

Harry knew he had killed the dark lord. He died right in front of his eyes. Everyone else who stayed within the Great Hall watching the final fight between him and Voldemort saw he fell. Everyone, even him, thought he died. Well, Voldemort did die but he is not dead yet. The after effect of all of his actions still reverberated until this very day. Bill was one of his post-death casualties. That was what Harry could deduce from his conversation with Mr. Weasley. That was what the Weasley elder wanted to point out. It was not really over.

But Ginny was different. Of course Harry knew that she was sad and hurt from the lost of her family members but nothing could explain the reason why she was suddenly cold and distant towards him. At this point, Harry began to wonder if Ginny was silently blaming him for all the bad things that happened to her family.

"Damn it," he muttered. He really needs to seek the answer from her. He really needs to understand why. Hermione was right. He needed to talk to her.

Harry was awoken from his reverie when all of a sudden Ron barged in.

"I thought I never going to get out of that," complained Ron as he collapsed on his bed. "I think my jaw hurts from all those incessant talking. Ow!"
"Well you do talk quite a lot," mentioned Harry.

"Yeah but not this much. Ow!" said Ron as he continuously rubbing his jaw. "Anyway, what with you and Ginny?"

"Huh. I thought you never pay any attention to me and Ginny," said Harry.

"Oh please. She's my sister. And I'm not that thick. I heard what you and Hermione were talking. Come on, spill it out," nudged Ron.

Harry pushed himself up and sat on his bed. "I don't know. I have no idea what's going on."

"Come off it! You know something was going on," said Ron.

Harry shook his head. "I'm telling the truth, Ron. I really don't know. All of a sudden, your sister was just...puff! Just like that. Cold and distant. She didn't even give me the chance to ask."

Ron nodded. "Just like that, huh? I'm going to ask her myself," said Ron as he stood up and made his way towards the door.

Harry immediately grabbed Ron's arm. "No Ron! Please, just don't. I'll handle this myself, alright? This is a personal matter between the both of us. It would be better if no one else interfere. Not even you."

Ron slowly sat back on his bed. "Okay I won't interfere. I promise. Just try not to make it worse between both of you, okay?"

Harry's lip formed into a thin smile. "I'll try."

Ron gave Harry a pat on his shoulder. "I'm hungry," he said. "You know what that means."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Yeah I know what that means," he said. "Well, lead the way."

Harry glanced at the door that lead into Ginny's dormitory as they walked down the spiral staircase towards the common room.

"You know people were asking me why I didn't look that sad when I lost two of my brothers," said Ron.

"What did you say to them?" asked Harry as they both stepped out of the portrait hole.

'I didn't answer that question," replied Ron. "But I can tell you this. It was Hermione. She's my pillar of strength, Harry."

Harry went silent. Deep down, he wondered if Ginny felt the same.

**Flashback to be continued...**

**Present...**

The familiar sweet perfume for the fire invaded their nostril as they emerged at the top of the step ladder. As always, all the curtains were closed and the circular room was bath in a reddish glow casted by many lamps. The duo walked through the mass of occupied chintz chairs and poufs and sat their usual table.

"Good day," said the misty voice of Professor Trelawney right behind Harry. Unlike before, he was anticipating it. Incidentally he had also anticipated what her action next. But nothing prepared him for this.

Professor Trelawney was indeed peering down at him but her face belied an expression of amusement and curiosity rather than the usual mournful expression she had always shown in the past. "Curious and most intriguing," she softly said. She immediately sat in front of him and stared into his eyes for quite a few minutes. "How?" she asked.

"How what?" asked Harry back.

"You know what I asked," said Trelawney.

At this point, Harry began to have a hunch that Professor Trelawney somehow knew something was different about him. That he was not who everyone think who he was. He dearly wanted to ask what the Divination professor knew but he was also aware that the time was not right to do that. So he decided to lie, "I don't know what you were talking about,
professor."

Professor Trelawney smiled. "Indeed." She then leaned forward to him. "Come here during your free time and we can talk." She then turned around and began her lesson.

Professor Trelawney's lesson that day was indeed different from what Harry remembered. No longer had she made him the focus of her subject. Instead she left him alone throughout the period. It was so refreshing the he found himself hating the professor a little bit less.

Soon the lesson was over. Just as he and Ron made their way to the step ladder, Professor Trelawney called out to him. "Harry Potter. Find a time. We need to talk."

Harry nodded. "Sure thing, Professor." He then followed Ron down the step ladder.

"What was that all about?" asked Ron as they both made their way towards the Great Hall for tea.

Harry shook his head. "No idea."

"Well she certainly acted differently than before. It was odd," mentioned Ron.

"Yeah it was odd," said Harry simply.

"So do you plan on seeing her?"

Harry shrugged. "Don't know. Maybe I will, maybe I won't."

"Oh, okay. Better that you don't. We know who she is, Harry."

But Harry already knew what he was going to do. He will see her and he will find the time for it. And he will press her for answers.

Someone called out to them just as they entered the Great Hall.

"Hey Weasley!"

To be continued...

A/n: Another day another chapter.

I would like to thank you for all the reviews you guys gave. It made my day. And just so you know, since this story will follow quite a little bit of the canon, some of the materials from the book will find its way here. I will of course present it in my own way.

As for the flashbacks, just so you know, I was planning to make it short. However during the writing process, I found that it would be better for me to expand it. More explanation will need to be made on how Harry cross over from Ginny to Fleur. It could run up to several chapters so I hope that you guys could be patient.

Anyway, thanks for the reviews and thank you to those who put this story in their favourite and followed list. Once again, please read and review and I'll see you soon.
5. Chapter 5

Chapter 4

Flashback...

"Didn't you just eat before we went back to Hogwarts, Ron?" asked Harry as they both headed towards the Hogwarts kitchen. It was only 10.30am. Lunch won’t be ready for another two hours. All that will be available within the Great Hall would be empty chairs and tables.

"Yeah I did," replied Ron.

"And you're already hungry? Your mother whipped out quite a hefty breakfast back there you know," said Harry incredulously.

"All those talking and answering questions made me hungry. And I'm still growing up. Andun... I need something to take my mind off Bill and Fred," said Ron. "Lunch won't be for another two hours. I won't be able to walk by then. I am sad and gawing, Harry. You don't want to carry poor old me all the way to the Great Hall, do you?"

"You're exaggerating," said Harry, shaking his head. "Nevermind. I guess I'll just watch you eat. I'm still full I could last until dinner."

"That's crazy talk, Harry," said Ron. "Come on, you and me are going to have a second breakfast. Then we'll have lunch."

"Second breakfast?" exclaimed Harry. "What are you, a hobbit?"

Ron cocked his eye brow. "What's a 'hobbit'?"

"Read the book 'Lord of the Rings' and you'll find out," said Harry. "A wizard named Tolkien I think wrote it."

Ron cringed. "Not a book I'm aware about. And I don't really like books."

Harry sighed. "Yeah I know. Well, high blood pressure and diabetes here we come."

The castle was pretty much silence on Sunday morning. The students had gone back to their common room after breakfast. The walk towards the kitchen was uneventful except at one point where they had to take detours after Harry noticed Mr. Norris, the Hogwarts caretaker feline assistant, was prowling the corridor up ahead. Answering questions and making unscheduled visit to the caretaker office certainly not what Harry and Ron had in mind. Ron immediately grumbled on why Argyus Flitch should not take disciplinary duties since it was never within his job description. Harry meanwhile cursed himself for not bringing along the Marauders Map.

A few detours later – Mr. Norris noise smelling abilities seemed to have improved after the war as both Ron and Harry nearly bumped into her every time they entered a corridor – they finally reached the Entrance Hall. After making sure that no one was following or watching them, they immediately made their way towards a stairway not far from the entrance into the Great Hall. They walked down the stairs and stepped into the kitchen corridor.

Harry and Ron paused as they stood in front of a painting of a bowl of fruit. Ron was about to tickle the pear when Harry suddenly caught his hand.

"Let's not forget to whom we should send our gratitude, Ron."

Ron smiled and nodded. "Like always, Harry. To Fred and George."

Harry smiled and let go of Ron’s hand. Ron proceeded to tickle the pear. It immediately squirmed and let out a small childish laugh before transforming into a green door knob. He then grabbed the knob and pulled the door open.

A swarm of house elves crowded around them the moment they entered the kitchen. They continuously bowed and curtseyed as the pair walked past them. Hogwarts house elves’ respect and admiration for Harry Potter grew tenfold after he defeated Voldemort. And the fact that the story of how Harry treated Dobby at the moment of his death being circulated among the house elves only increases their adoration to him even more.

At that point amongst the crowd, Harry saw someone he recognized. A lone house elf was pushing against the crowd as he made his way towards Harry. Harry could see the fake Slytherin locket, the one he used to win the old house elf loyalty and allegiance, dangling around its neck.

The house elf immediately bowed to Harry the moment he arrive in front of him. "Master Harry Potter, Kreacher is here at your service."

Harry smiled. "How are you doing, Kreacher?"

Kreacher bowed once again. "Kreacher is good, Master Harry. He is fine. But he much rather go back to his mistress's house than staying here. If Master Harry permits him."

Harry knew and understood Kreacher's feeling on having to stay at Hogwarts and not back at Grimmauld Place. He did not intend to keep the house elf at the school actually but circumstances dictated otherwise. Sirius’s old house was no longer a safe haven as it used to be, thanks to Yaxley who managed to follow them there when the trio tried to escape from the Ministry. They ended up in the woods, somewhere near the location where the Quidditch World Cup was held several years before. Ron got splinched and Harry spent a few days afterward worrying about what they need to do next and the fate of Kreacher. When the war is over, Harry asked Kreacher what happened after they gone. The house elf told him that several men came in and ransacked the house as if they were searching for something. The men even took rooms and stayed in the house as if they were waiting for someone. Kreacher managed to hide himself from them and once opportunity came, he immediately made his escape. That was enough of a proof that the location and the entrance into Grimmauld Place information had been compromised and for as long as rogue death eaters were still at large, going back to that place posed dangerous risks.

Harry shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't allow you to go back, Kreacher. At least not yet. It's still not safe for now."

Kreacher bowed for the third time. "Kreacher understands. Kreacher shall wait until the time comes."

"We'll return to Grimmauld Place, Kreacher," Harry assured the house elf. "One day we shall return I promise. But for now we do need something out of you. The other house elves could also help of course," he hastily added when he saw disappointment etched on the face of the rest of the house elves.

The other house elves immediately beamed at him.

Kreacher bowed for the fourth time. "What would it be Master Harry Potter?"

"Well Ronald here," he pointed to Ron beside him. "is kinda hungry."

Kreacher immediately put up his hands. "Say no more, Master Harry. Please follow Kreacher." He then leads the two teenagers to a small table placed not far from where they stood. He then together with a few others immediately set to work and few minutes later, the small table was filled up with assortment of cakes, sandwiches, pastries and a jug of scald pumpkin juice.

Ron immediately began devouring the food in front of him. Harry meanwhile filled up his glass with the pumpkin juice and took little sips from it.

"Master Harry does not eat?" asked Kreacher who was watching him.

"No I’m not hungry. I’ll just wait for the lunch," replied Harry.

"Will there be anything else, Master?"

"No. You can help the others with the lunch. Thank you, Kreacher," said Harry.

Kreacher bowed and took leave.

Harry idly looked around as he continuously took sip from his glass. The smell of the elves cooking filled up the air. It was good. In fact it was really, really good. Only Mrs. Weasley's cooking could top it off. He did not know much about boarding school, given Hogwarts was the only one he went to but from what he heard, food at boarding can be quite a bit letdown. Thankfully, Hogwarts was a case quite opposite. From where he sat, he could see the four long tables were already more than half full with dishes. It won't be long until lunch is ready.

Ron was still eating to his heart's content. Harry decided to grab a pumpkin pastry and took a bite off it.

"You're sure you're not hungry, Harry?" asked Ron. His mouth was still full of food that bits and pieces flew of it while he spoke.

"No and please don't talk while you're eating, Ron," said Harry as he wiped away every bit of food Ron accidentally threw at him from his shirt.

Ron immediately swallowed. "Sorry."

Harry just shook his head and proceeded to finish off that piece of pastry he was holding.

They finally got out of the kitchen at ten minutes past twelve. Just as they reached the Entrance Hall, someone called out to them.

"There you are!" It was Hermione and she was walking fast towards them. "I've been looking all over the place for you!" she said the moment she
arrived in front of them. "Where have you two been, wait! Don't tell me you both sneaked into the kitchen!"

"Well we kind of did go into the kitchen," Ron deciding to be honest said sheepishly.

"Ron wanted to have a second breakfast," added Harry.

Hermione crossed her arms. Her eyes dig into Ron's."Second breakfast? What are you, a hobbit?"

"That's what I asked him," said Harry wide eyed.

"Enough with the hobbit you two," exclaimed Ron looking wildly at both his friends. "Now what is it so important that you're trying to find us, Hermione?"

"I wanted to ask both of you to go lunch with me," said Hermione. "But apparently you two had already eaten so-"

"Ron was the only one who ate, Hermione. I'm just there to accompany him. But he did say he also wanted to have lunch. Isn't that right, Ron?" said Harry, cocking his eyebrows at Ron.

Ron understood the signal and vehemently nodded. "Yeah I did. There's still room within this tummy of mine. Let's go," he said, patting his stomach.

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Come on," she said. She then headed straight into the Great Hall. Harry and Ron looked at each other and immediately followed.

The tables groaned under the weight of many dishes from the excellent house elves cooking. The trio settled themselves down to eat at their usual spot. Harry helped himself to a combination of roast beef, chicken pie, boiled potatoes and Yorkshire pudding.

Meal times at Hogwarts were different after the war. The dishes still retained the excellent quality made famous by the house elves. The three houses, Gryffindor, Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff remained the same. The Slytherin house however was much more subdued. There were no more Malfoy. No more Crabbe and Goyle. No more gloating. No more big talks. It felt strange though. Even after many months of going back to school, Harry still could not get use to it.

Harry knew the fate that befallen Crabbe. He was killed by his own 'bullet' during the war. As for Malfoy and Goyle though, he had no idea. Both of them had fallen into complete obscurity. He could guess the reason why actually. Both were the son of death eaters. Their father's activities during the war were pretty much well known. Unfortunately though, both Draco and Gregory allegiance were made known as well, courtesy of Alptra and Alynus Carrow. He had no love for Goyle. He knew that boy had gone deep into Voldemort's side. He however felt a degree of pity for Draco. The Malfoy's heir had shown a degree of change Harry would have never expected coming out of him. He silently hoped that Draco will be okay wherever he was at that time.

Harry grabbed a goblet and poured the pumpkin juice in it. As he drank it, something or someone caught his eyes. He looked to his left and saw it was Ginny. She was sitting much further down the table together with a few of her friends of the same year. She was smiling and talking amably with the whole lot of them.

Harry continued to stare at her. He was hoping that despite the ordeal she had gone through, her mood would have at least improved and things could go back the way it was. It won't matter how slow it would go. He realized that if would not be easy but as long as thing went into the right direction, it would be good enough for him. From the way it looked, it seemed that he may have gotten his wish.

Ginny was busy chatting with a girl who sat beside her when she noticed that someone was staring at her. She looked up in his direction and their eyes met. Harry gave her a smile. A smile in which Ginny somehow did not reply. Instead she turned back towards her friend and continued chatting while completely ignoring Harry.

Harry's smile fell. He turned to look at his half empty goblet. It seemed clear to him that things were not really patching up between them and the fact that he up until that point had no idea on the changes in Ginny's behaviour compounded the problem even further.

He sighed in frustration. Hermione and Ron were right. He needs to know the reason why. What he needs now is the right time to do it.

A couple of weeks went by and Ginny continued to act cold towards him. Harry tried in every possible way to get her to be alone. All of his efforts were unsuccessful unfortunately and only resulted in the distance between them to grow even larger. Ginny's determination in avoiding him seemed to increase tenfold. Sometime he wondered on how she could avoid him so easily given they were practically in the same house, using the same common room and living in opposite dormitories just a few steps away from one another.

It was Friday 29th, January 1999. Lunch time was basically the same for everyone else except for Harry. It was the day where he determined to end this conundrum he was in once and for all. Harry did not eat much. Once in a while he would glance at Ginny, who had taken to like sitting as far away as possible from him during meal times. It won't matter. He got free times every Friday afternoon. Ginny afternoon class won't start for another two hours.

It was not until thirty minutes later before Ginny and her friends stood up and made their way towards the Great Hall entrance.

Harry stood up as well. "There's something I got to do," he told Hermione and Ron. "I'll see you both at the common room." Both Hermione and Ron knowingly nodded. Hermione turned to look at Ginny's receding back. "Good luck, Harry," said Hermione.

Harry immediately departed and when straight to find Ginny. He knew where she was heading and was able to find her and her friends minutes later, walking up the stair that leads towards the Gryffindor common room.

"Ginny!" he called out to her.

Like before, Ginny ignored him and kept on walking. Harry upon deciding on not letting her go this time around climbed the stairs two steps at a time and came to a stop right in front of her: Ginny frozen by his action. The look of surprise was plastered to her face.

"We need to talk," he said firmly. "I have enough of you continuously avoiding me without giving any reason why.

It took awhile but Ginny finally nodded. She told her friends to go without her. Her friends obliged and took leave. The moment they disappeared at the top landing, she turned and looked at him.

"Reason?" she asked. "There's no reason, Harry."

"Which means that there won't be any point for you to act like this," Harry said. "But you did it anyway. What's wrong?"

"Does something has to go wrong before I decided to do anything, Harry?" asked Ginny crossing her arms. "That's stupid."

"Everything happens for a reason," said Harry. "Including what you did to me."

"Okay. I give you a reason. I just need some time off. I just need some space. Satisfied?" said Ginny hotly.


"Now you're getting angry without any reason," said Ginny.

"All I ever wanted was an explanation. Is that so hard for you to give?" said Harry.

"I already gave you an explanation not more than a minute ago. Have you already forgotten?"

"That wasn't an explanation. That was simply an excuse and a flimsy one at that," said Harry. He then took a deep breath, trying hard to calm himself.

"I'm not looking for a fight. Ginny. After everything that happened, hurting you was the last thing I wanted to do. I asked because I care. You've changed but not for the better. I need to know why."

"Nothing's changed, Harry," said Ginny. "You're just over thinking it."

"Then how do you explain what happened for the past couple of weeks?"

"Nothing needs to be explained. And I'm already late." said Ginny as she tried to walk past Harry.

"Late for what?" asked Harry as he watched Ginny walked up the stair. "For your afternoon class that would not start for another hour?"

But Ginny kept on walking.

"So is this what we both end up in?" he spoke to her loudly. "Lying? Hiding? Ignoring each other? Is this what we have become? What did I do to deserve all of these?"

She suddenly stopped.
"We made a promise, Ginny," he continued. "Both you and I, we made a promise that we will always be true to each other. We both swore that there will be no lies and no hiding between us, that we will always talk things through no matter how difficult it would be. We swore that we will always love each other and none will leave without another. Where has it all gone, Ginny?"

Ginny somehow did not answer.

"All I want is just an explanation. Never knew that this is what I would get instead. But that's okay. You can go, Ginny. I won't bother you anymore." He was about to walk down the stair when Ginny called him back.

"Harry."

Harry stopped and looked back at her. He simply stared at her and said nothing.

"You want to know why?" she asked.

Harry said nothing. He simply waited for Ginny to spell it out.

"I heard what you and dad talked the other night. The night before we came back to Hogwarts," she said. "I didn't really sleep when you walked past my door; I heard footsteps. I know it was you. I hesitated at first but I decided to follow you. I wanted to talk to you. But dad got to you first. I stayed, Harry. I listened to everything. You made a choice, Harry. A choice that I will never be able to accept."

Harry thought back to what he and Mr. Weasley discussed last night. Then it dawned upon him. "Me becoming an auror. Is that what this is all about?" he asked.

Ginny nodded. "Yes."

"Why? Why is that becoming a problem for both of us? For you?" asked Harry.

Ginny looked down. She was on the verge of tears. She said, "I've lost two of my brothers, Harry. That is something that I didn't expect. Even mum still has difficulties in accepting that two of her sons had gone, never to return. With you becoming an auror, there is a chance that I might lose you."

Harry looked away momentarily before his eyes found her once again. "I never wanted anything bad to happen to you and your family. You can trust me on that, Ginny. But things happened. As much as I want to prevent it, people still die in war and I will carry the burden for the rest of my life. Your brothers died as heroes. They died so that others could live free. They died so that others—us, could have a chance. I survived Voldemort, I have always thought that with you by my side, I would survive anything thrown at me. You have always been strong, just like your mother. You always have that in you."

Ginny shook her head. "No, Harry. I am not as strong as you think I am. With you becoming an auror, I know that I will have to face the fact that somehow for the rest of my life I will be wondering for every second and every minute on whether or not you’ll come back alive the moment you walk out that door. I can’t live like that, Harry. I just can’t."

Harry sighed. "Thank you for telling me this but clearly you have forgotten that I’m a human being. My heart is not made out of cold hard steel. My choices and my decisions could still be changed. Things aren’t black and white and what you thought things aren’t what you’re afraid of, then this will be my final decision. Kingsley will have to find someone else. There are still a lot of candidates out there who could fill in the shoes."

Ginny stared at him. There was a look of surprise on her face. "Harry?"

"Harry’s lip curved into a smile. ‘We promised to talk things through. This is one of it. I won’t become an auror if that will make you happy, Ginny. That would be my choice and my decision and I’m doing it just for you. That is how much I love you.’"

He was expecting Ginny to be happy but instead he got the opposite. She looked down and her face fell even further.

"No,” she said.

Harry was dumbfounded. "No? But what do you mean no?"

Ginny shook her head. "No, Harry. You can’t do that. Even for me."

"Of course I can," said Harry."I’m free to make my own choices, Ginny. And I choose you.”

Ginny took a deep breath. She looked deep into Harry’s eyes and said, "All these while, I thought that you will be mine, forever. But what dad said to you that night and Bill’s death had open up my eyes, Harry. People out there still need you. They need you to keep them alive. They need you to keep them safe. You wore their hope and their only chance to make things right. I can’t be selfish and keep you only for me. You never really belong to me, Harry. You belong to them."

Sense of dread filled Harry’s heart. He began to understand what Ginny was trying to imply. ‘You’re breaking up with me?’

It took a while before Ginny finally nodded. "I’m sorry," she said.

Harry shook his head. "Ginny, don’t do this. We could still work things out."

"No, Harry. We can’t,” she said a little bit firmly.

"But why not?" said Harry desperately. "Think about our hopes, Ginny. Think about our dreams. Everything that we have talked about. Our future together. You can’t throw all of it away."

"Those were just hopes and dreams, Harry," said Ginny. "Nothing more. She then turned and made her way upstairs. But just as she reached the top landing, she stopped. She looked back towards him and said, 'Goodbye, Harry. Perhaps someday if fate meant us to be together.’"

Harry could see her cheek glinted with tears. He simply stood and watched her walk away.

"Ginny."

For the whole afternoon he sat on the rocky outcrop that bordered Black Lake, watching the one giant squid that resided within the lake swim lazily by. The weather was cold and windy. Harry found himself to be the only one there. The rest of the school inhabitants preferred to stay inside the castle where it was much warmer.

Harry felt nothing despite the cold and harsh weather. He felt numb for his heart had broken beyond repair and it was all because of a girl with red flaming hair.

He never thought that he and Ginny would end like this. He had always thought that once Voldemort is dead, the path would be made clear for the both of them. He never thought that he would make it out alive given everything that happened back during the war. He survived though and finally given the chance to shape his life the way he wanted to be. He had always envisioned his life around Ginny. That was what he had always talked about with her every time they were together."

But Ginny had decided that she did not want to be a part of his life anymore. She remained fixed to her decision despite the assurance he gave her. He admitted that he was devastated. He had always looking forward to the life after Hogwarts. But now he was not so sure. To be blunt, he now did not have anything to look forward to after all. Personally, he felt a little bit angry with her. He felt that Ginny was acting rather rashly with her decision. He did show her the way out but she refused to take it. But for now though there was nothing he could do. The only thing he could do was to accept her decision and hope that fate will brought them back together once again.

But then, could he still put his trust on a hope? He did that once and look what happened. Maybe he was never meant to be happy. Maybe he was meant to be lonely. Falling in love and to be loved back could be the thing that will continue to elude him for the rest of his life. He sighed. What a bleak outlook he now had in regard of his future life.

The afternoon was getting older and soon the dusk will settle. But Harry still sits there, drown in his own thought. In fact he was so alone in it that he failed to notice that someone was creeping up to him from behind."

"Harry."

He startled. He looked back and saw it was Hermione. She was wearing a wool peacoat and a wool hat. A pink scarf wrapped around her neck. A pair of wool mitten covered her hands.

"What are you doing here?" she asked. "It’s cold out here. You’re going to get sick.'"

Harry stood up. "I was just—thinking."

"There are a lot of warmer places suitable for you to do that,” said Hermione. "Here isn’t one of them. Come one. Let’s get back to the castle. I’m freezing out here."
Harry obliged and they both walked side by side back to the castle.

“I have been searching all over the place for you,” she said. “You promised to meet us back at the common room. We waited but you never came. I saw you sitting here all alone when I was searching for you at the astronomy tower.”

“So only you who was searching for me?” asked Harry. “Where’s Ron?”

Hermione hesitated at first. Then she spoke, “Ron wanted to join me. But that was before he saw Ginny.”

Harry came into an abrupt halt. His eyes widened. “Don’t tell me he—”

Hermione looked apologetically at him. “He figured that things had gone from bad to worse between you two,” she said. “So he confronted her.”

“And you didn’t try to stop him?”

“I’m sorry, Harry,” said Hermione. “I tried but he told me to stay away and to look for you. Harry, wait!”

But Harry had already sprinted up towards the castle. “Come on!” he called out to her.

Both of them dashed right into the common room the moment the Fat Lady granted them entrance. Everyone within the common room fell into silence the moment they saw Harry. Harry looked wildly around and saw Ginny who was sitting on one of the sofas. She was crying. Ron was towering over her. He immediately confronted Harry the moment he saw him. “What happened?” he demanded.

Harry said nothing. Instead he grabbed Ron’s arm and pulled him towards their dormitory.

“Hermione,” he called over to her. “You better take Ginny back to her dormitory. I’m going to have a little word with Ron.”

Hermione obliged.

Harry pushed Ron inside their dormitory the moment they arrived and locked the door behind him. “What the hell do you think you were doing?” he asked sternly.

“You ask me?” said Ron. “I asked you first.”

“You were making a scene, Ron. You’re embarrassing her. And yourself,” stated Harry.

“Harry, she came into common room crying her eyes out. I just can’t ignore that!” replied Ron hotly.

“What did she tell you?” asked Harry.

“She told me nothing,” answered Ron. “Crying was all she did. That’s why I asked you.”

Harry sighed. He was worried that Ginny might give Ron a wrong impression. No, scratch that. Actually she did give him a wrong impression. And now Harry had to answer for it. “Whatever happened between me and Ginny is our own personal matter. You have no right to interfere.”

“In case you have forgotten, she’s my sister. I have every right, Harry!” replied Ron.

“Yes I know she’s your sister and you are responsible to keep her safe. But that doesn’t mean that you can barge in to her personal life just like that. She’s your sister but it doesn’t mean that you can take control to every façade of her life. She got her own life to live, Ron. At least respect her for that,” said Harry.


Harry walked towards his bed and sat on it. He then looked at Ron and asked, “Can you promise me that you’ll stay calm?”

“Why?” asked Ron.

“Just promise it, Ron,” said Harry. “Or I will tell you nothing.”

Ron raised both his hands. “Alright, I promise,” he said. He then sat on his bed opposite of Harry. “So what’s your story?”

Harry took a moment before he said, “Ginny and I, we broke up.”

Ron’s eyebrows creased. “I see,” he said. “So you broke up with her. Why?”

Harry shook his head. “No, Ron. Ginny was the one who broke up with me.” He then proceeded to tell Ron what really happened at the stair leading towards Gryffindor common room. Ron listened to him attentively.

“Okay,” said Ron the moment Harry finished his story telling. “I was not able to tell you the truth that day. I was not present for that. I should have kept up with her better.”

Harry shrugged. “I don’t know, Ron. What I can tell is that she was tearing up before she left. As I said before, I tried to make her change her mind. I tried to make her see reason. She flatly refused. I don’t know what else I could do.”

Ron shook his head. “Still doesn’t make sense. Are you sure that was the reason she breaking up with you? Or is it because of something or someone else?”

“I’m not a cheater, Ron, nor is Ginny! I think I have enough confidence in her to not do that. I’m not going to betray her and your family,” said Harry firmly.

Ron upon sensing Harry’s anger was building up immediately put up his hands. “Okay! Okay! No need to get angry, Harry. I’m just trying to understand the situation. Is there anything I could do? You know mum is going to get upset when she hears about this. She really likes you, you know.”

Harry said nothing at first. He stood up and walked towards the window. Night had already fallen. The cold wind was getting stronger, battering against the window pane. Only the light coming out Hagrid’s but illuminated a small portion of the school compound.

“Your sister did say that perhaps things could change after this. That fate may decide to bring us back together,” he said moments later. “I am afraid of hope. Ron. I’m afraid that it will only hurt me in the end. He then turned towards Ron. “But I’m going to hold to that last sentence she spoke to me. Until fate make its decision. You must not tell this to your mother, Ron. I don’t want her to get hurt. And I don’t want you to approach Ginny in a wrong way. Give her some space. Let her be alone for a few days. Until then, I will wait.”

Ron nodded. “Okay,” he said. “If that what you want. I know you see me as a brother, Harry. You’re not just my friend. I guess I simply want to see it made official.”

Harry tried hard to fight the tears that were building up. He immediately walked towards Ron and hugged him tightly. “Thank you, Ron.”

Ron smiled and patted Harry’s back. “It’s okay. Mate. It’s okay.”
Weeks and months past by. NEWTs final exam loomed in the horizon. For the past months, Harry and his fellow seventh year were getting busier and busier with their schedule. True to its name, NEWTs was indeed nasty. The tension and the pressure were at all times high, giving way to depression that started to kick in. There were many instances where Hermione ended up crying her eyes out when she cracked under the pressure. Several attempted suicide incidence happened as well. One girl from Hufflepuff tried to jump off the Astronomy Tower but instead of coming down crashing, her falling velocity got lower and lower and she ended up landing on the ground not unlike an experienced ballet dancer. Another boy from Ravenclaw tried to jump into the lake, only to be thrown out by the resident squid. Professor Slughorn was forced to reinforce his potion store with extra enchantments after several students tried to break in. Motives varied from attempted self poisoning to attempted potion brewing to make one cleverer.

Harry himself was busy with the preparation. He spent most of his time with his study group which initially consisted of Hermione, Ron and Neville. There were four of them at first but as time goes by, more and more seventh year students joined them. Not only from Gryffindor but also from other houses. Few of the Slytherins joined as well, much to Ron’s chagrin. Harry decided to accept them anyway while at the same time making note to Ron that most Slytherins preferred to leave everyone else alone rather than making trouble. Together, they spent their free time at the Great Hall, the library or the Room of Requirement. The Room of Requirement was a surprise though. It managed to survive the Battle of Hogwarts much to Harry’s surprise. He used it as a ground for them to practice the practical aspect of Defence Against the Dark Arts. The preparation took quite a toll on him. He ended up going to bed later and later every night and woke up earlier and earlier the next morning to do extra revision. He began to form under his eyes due to the lack of sleep and he got a little liss cranky quite a few times due to the lack of rest. Falling asleep at the table had become a norm.

The upside to all of these was that it managed to take off his mind with Ginny. He saw her lesser these days. He did not really mind it anyway since his studies had become his priority.

It was a week before the exam begins. Harry was having breakfast with Hermione and Ron. As usual, the post owls flopped into the Great Hall delivering letters and packages. One particular owl dropped a letter in front of Harry. He took it.

“Another fan letters?” asked Ron as he continuously munched on his toast.

“Yea,” answered Harry. He stared at the cursive handwriting on the envelope. “It's a girl.”

Harry was no stranger to fan letters. After the defeat of Voldemort, he received lots and lots of letters from strangers he did not know. Professor McGonagall who was concerned that some of those letters might contain jinxes and curses had taken the step to screen every letters addressed to Hogwarts. Still despite her effort, some of the letters managed to bypass the screening checkpoint. The letter that currently in his hand was among the ‘lucky’ ones. His deeds during the second wizarding war was so well known that he gained a lot of fans all around the world. Some of his fans had even taken the step to establish a fan club dedicated to him. Dean Thomas was the one who told him about the ‘Harry Potter Pan Club’. And as if that was not enough, his jaw nearly dropped when Dean told him about fans who wrote fanfiction stories about him. “Soon or later someone is going to write a book about you, Harry,” said Dean excitedly to him. “It may not be just one. It could be two, or three or maybe seven books. And I bet they’re going to make movies based on those books. Who knows!” Harry could only face palmed.

“How can I read it?” asked Ron. He had taken the hiddenness in reading all of Harry’s fan letters ever since Harry became so popular. Especially after some really crazy fans sent their underwear to Harry.

“Ron! That’s Harry’s letter! You shouldn’t read it,” apprehended Hermione.

“That’s ok Hermione,” said Harry. “I already gave him permission to read all of the fan letters that I got. He can read this one.” He opened up the envelope and gave its content to Ron.

“And you’re okay with that?” asked Hermione.

“Yes I’m okay with that. The only letters that matter to me would be the one written by my friends and Sirius. I don’t care much about strangers,” said Harry as he took a sip from his goblet.

“Hermione beamed at him. “Thank you, Harry. That is really a nice thing to say.”

“Waah Harry!” exclaimed Ron. He was still reading the letters. “This is not just any strangers.”

“Well, who is it then?” asked Harry.

Ron handed the letter to him. “It’s from Fleur.”

Harry took the letter from Ron and began reading it.

Dear Harry,

I know this letter would come as a surprise. We both never exchange letters before. I hope that you wouldn’t mind. I considered you as one of my best friends Harry, and I really wish to maintain the friendship we had. Besides, you promised that you’ll write to me, remember?

Before you ask, life here in Grenoble is good. It took a while for me to adjust myself back to the life I had before marrying Bill but I’m fine now. I was lucky that I have the support of pops and mamam. And Gabriel of course. My dear sister had always fancied you, don’t you know? She was heartbroken when she found out that you fancy Ginny

I did not do anything for the first few weeks after I went back to France. I was still within the mourning period at that time. Madam Maxime came to visit the Delacour mansion a week after I came back. She offered me a job teaching Charm in Beauxbaton. I told her that I accept her offer but I will only start teaching after the mourning period is over. She agreed. I have been a teacher for the past three months now. Professor Fleur Isabelle Delacour was my first student. I don’t know if I wanted to permanently be a teacher or not. Papa had voice his desire for me to follow his footsteps and work at French Foreign Ministry. As of now, I’m still deciding.

Anyway enough about me. How about you? I trust that you’re busy preparing for the big exam that’s coming your way. I wish you good luck and all the best, Harry.

I think that’s all for now. I’ll be waiting for your reply. Please send my warmest regards to the Weasley family and Hermione. Tell them that I missed them.

Au revoir, Harry

Love,

Fleur Isabelle Delacour.

Harry looked up once he finished reading Fleur’s letter. “She’s a teacher now. At Beauxbaton.”

“That’s not a surprise. She was one of the best students in Beauxbaton. Fleur told me once she was Madam Maxime’s prodigy,” said Hermione.

“So she changed her name back to Delacour,” said Ron. “Do all people do that whenever they get a divorce or their spouse dies?”

“Not all of them, Ron,” said Hermione. “Some women do keep it.”

“Okay,” said Ron as he turned to Harry. “So, do you want to reply that letter or do you want me to do it?”

“Ron!”

“I don’t remember making any promise to write to her,” said Harry.

“You didn’t but she wanted you to,” said Hermione. She was still looking at Ron. “You remember. Before she left.”

“Oh, right.”

“So do you want me to reply that letter for you? I’m ready,” repeated Ron.

“Ron!”

Harry chuckled. He folded the letter and put it in his pocket. “That’s okay. Ron. Fleur’s a friend. I’ll write the reply myself though maybe not today. I’ll write to her once our NEWTs are over.”

“Ask her if she can send you her picture,” put Ron eagerly.

“Ronald Bilious Weasley!”

The NEWTs exam finally came and it will run its course for about two weeks. Unlike the OWLs exams Harry did a few years back then, Theory of Transfiguration got the honour to do the kick off on Monday. It would be followed by Transfiguration practical test in the afternoon of the same day. Defence Against the Dark Arts theory test will be on Tuesday morning followed by practical exam in the afternoon. Theory of Charms will be on the morning on Wednesday. Like the two previous subjects, its practical exam will be done in the afternoon. They had a day off on Thursday. Potions will cap
In the first exam week on Friday, the seventh years did not have much time to rest though no matter how much they wanted it. The following weekend was in fact filled with revising and studying as they prepare themselves for the second week of the exam.

Much to Harry's surprise, basically all of the examiners were the one who also handled their OWLs exam. Professor Griselda Marchbanks and Professor Tofty were among them. Like before, Professor Tofty handled the Defense Against the Dark Arts examination. The moment he saw Harry, he loudly proclaimed, much to Harry's embarrassment, that Harry would not have to do the exam and he will give him full marks, that all his deeds during the Second Great Wars were more than proof enough that he was capable as a full Badge wizard. Luckily Professor McGonagall stepped in and told him to continue with the test and to treat Harry like any other students. Harry did the exam of course but was left with the suspicion that the old professor had already given him full marks in his exam sheet even before he begins the test.

Soon the two exam week was over. Harry managed to sail through it. Personally he felt satisfied. He had a lot of confidence in doing all of the theoretical and the practical tests. There will be some mistakes he made of course but he was confident enough that he will get the grade he desired.

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Saturday came. It was the first time over the seventh years got the chance to relax after a gruelling two weeks exam. Professor McGonagall was kind enough to grant every student the permission to visit Hogsmeade. Both he and Ron woke up early that day. They had promised Hermione that they will go the small wizarding village together right after breakfast and were planning to celebrate the end of the test at the Three Broomsticks with the rest of the Gryffindor seventh years.

The inn was already packed with students when they arrived.

"Harry! Ron! Hermione! Over here!" called out Seamus the moment he saw the trio appeared at the door.

The three of them made their way through the crowd towards the tables which were already occupied by the seventh years and took their seat. Soon the drinks arrived.

"To the end of the test!" said Seamus as he raised his glass. "And to the better future for all of us! And yes not forgetting Harry who had made this all possible!"

"To Harry!" The others raised their glasses and cheered.

They spent the majority of the morning talking, laughing and chatting about their future plans. They even talked about establishing an alumni for all forms Gryffindor. Everyone agreed to it and Seamus became the one entrusted to make it happen.

The trio left the Three Broomstick fifteen minutes after eleven. Hermione and Ron were planning to visit the Honeydukes. Harry, who decided to give the two lovebirds some personal space, decline to follow. He walked alone along the main street of Hogsmeade, watching people coming in and out of various shops and stopped several times for a chat with a few of the fellow students. A lot of people of stopped the shop owners greeted him as well asking him to stop by at their shop and raving on how he stopped the Dark Lord. They even offered him gift and their/merchandise free of charge. Harry had trouble declining those gifts at first so he accepted them all. He was finally forced to say no once his bands were full.

Everything had gone pretty well for him until he reached at the front of Madam Puddifoot's Tea Shop. He remembered that shop really well. His first disastrous date with ChoChang. He smiled at the memory. Of course they both had moved on since then.

Harry took a peek inside through the glass window. That was when he saw her.

Ginny had made her choice.

Flashback to be continued...

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FURTHER MISTAKES AT THE MINISTRY OF MAGIC

It seems as though the Ministry of Magic's troubles are not yet at an end. writes Rita Skeeter, Special Correspondent. Recently under fire for its poor crowd control at the Quidditch World Cup, and still unable to account for the disappearance of one of its witches, the Ministry was plunged into fresh embarrassment yesterday by the antics of Arnold Weasley, of the Miusue of Muggle Artifacts Office.*

Arnold Weasley, who was charged with possession of a flying car two years ago, was yesterday involved in a tussle with several Muggle law-keepers ("police men") over a number of highly aggressive dustbins. Mr. Weasley appears to have rushed to the aid of "Mal-Boy" Moody, the aged ex-Auror who retired from the Ministry when no longer able to tell the difference between a handshake and attempted murder. Unsurprisingly, Mr. Weasley found, upon arrival at Mr. Moody's heavily guarded house, that Mr. Moody had once again raised a false alarm. Mr. Weasley was forced to modify several memories before he could escape from the policemen, but refused to answer Daily Prophet questions about why he had involved the Ministry in such an undignified and potentially embarrassing scene.

Malfoy sniggered the moment he finished reading it. "Can't even get his name right. It's like your dad is basically a complete nonentity. And here's the picture," he said as he flipped the newspaper over. "Good grief, Weasley. You call that a house? More like a pigsty if you ask me. Your mother could do with losing a little bit of weight though, could she?"

Ron was shaking with fury. The rest of the students who stood listening were staring at him.

Meanwhile, Harry was busy looking around. All that happened at that time felt like a déjà vu to him. He knew that this situation had happened before back in his old timeline. The only different was that there was no Hermione with them this time around. But he did find someone else actually. Professor Moody. He was standing behind Malfoy and Harry could see that the old professor was readying his wand. He began to wonder on whether to settle the matter on his own or to let history repeat itself.

After a few moments of deliberation, he decided that he miss seeing Malfoy the Cute White Ferret. Who knows maybe they let Harry pet him this time. Time to make his move.

"Get stuffed, Malfoy!" said Harry as he grabbed Ron's arm. "Come on, Ron."

"Oh yeah, you were staying with them for the summer, weren't you?" sneered Malfoy. "So tell me, is his mother really that porky, or is it just the picture?"

The hate had been laid. Time to make him took it.

"You know your mother, Malfoy?" said Harry as he continuously grabbed the back of Ron's robe to stop him from launching himself at Malfoy. "That expression she's got, like she's got dung under her nose? Has she always look like that or was it just because you wore with her?"

Malfoy's face went slightly pink. "Don't you dare insult my mother, Potter!"

It's getting nearer.

It was Harry's turn to sneer. "Keep your fat mouth shut then, Malfoy. Unless you want it transplanted to your arse," he said as he turned away.

BANG!

Several students screamed but Harry was ready for it. He pushed Run away and immediately ducked. He then heard a second BANG and a roar that echoed throughout the Great Hall.

Right on cue, impostor Moody, he thought.

"OH NO YOU DON'T LADDIE!"

Harry saw Moody came limping at them. His wand was out and it was pointing towards a shivering white ferret.

"Did he get you?" growled Moody at Harry.

"Missed," replied Harry simply.
Good... leave it!

Harry said nothing. He knew to whom Moody was shouting to. Crabbe was trying to pick Malfoy the Cute Little White Ferret up.

Moody limped toward Crabbe, Goyle and the ferret. The ferret gave a loud squeak and immediately took off.

"I don't think so!" roared Moody. Once again he pointed his wand towards the ferret. The ferret flew ten feet high up in the air before it fell with a smack onto the floor. It then bounced off the floor once again and it kept on repeating, going higher and higher with each successive bouncing.


It went that way for a few more minutes until Professor McGonagall came to the rescue. Just like before.

Harry watched the receding back of Professor Moody. At that time, he wanted more than anything to throw a curse at the impostor. But he knew that would be a stupid move. He knew that he had to be patient. There were other things that need to addressed before Barty Crouch Jr. receive his due.

Hermione came to their table fifteen minutes later. She had just finished her Arithmancy class. She placed her bag on the chair and sat in front of them.

"I heard something happened. What do I miss?" she asked.

Harry turned to look towards Ron, who at that time was closing his eyes and looked serene.

He smirked. "A lot."

That night, everyone within his dormitory was fast asleep. Harry was the only one who still wide awake. With all the hangings around his four poster shut, he sat on the bed. In his hand was the Marauder Map. With the help of a small illumination coming out of his wand, he concentrated at one particular dot. Barty Crouch Jr.

Not far from where he sat laid a piece of parchment. It contained a list he scribbled earlier:

HORCRUX

1. Riddle's diary
2. The Ring
3. Slytherin's locket
4. Hufflepuff's Cup
5. Ravenclaw's Diadem
6. The snake
7. ME

To be continued...

A/n: Another day another chapter. Sorry for the late publish. This chapter is particularly difficult to write.

As a general guideline, all the contents within the 'FLASHBACK' part centers on the 'original Harry Potter'. You know, the Harry from the books. All the contents within the 'PRESENT' part meanwhile centers on the 'time travelled Harry Potter'. I have placed a proper border to separate between the two part. Tell me if it works for you. I really wish that I don't have to separate the flashback and the present part into separate chapters. I rather not do that. Also the flashback part won't reach until the end of the story. It will end once it fills its objective. To 'doenerkint', I hope this answers your concerns.

Now on to the reviews:-

the devil reincarnated- Yeap. No bashing. Sorry. You can find those in lots of other HP stories.

Firebluebird2006 - Thanks for the feedback. Just so you know, English isn't my native language and it had been years since the last time I receive formal education. I'm trying hard to improve but for now you'll need to forgive me for any grammar mistakes I made.

Ronin Keshin - Yeah I'm aware of the Occlumency. The answer shall come soon.

Guest - Not sure what you mean by off. Please be more specific. About the Gringotts break in, I was playing with the trio being naive.

MidnightFenrir - That is very kind of you to say that. Yeah I know 'Cadmean Victory'. That story is certainly awesome. You could say it set the benchmark when it comes to Harry/Fleur pairing stories. It would be really amazing if this story reaches that level but I don't really hope for it. Just as long as the audience enjoys what I wrote is good enough. I'll let the readers decide. And of course continue to review this story.

Baby Huey - Isn't a poltergeist a type of ghost?

To neburyem, god of all, ObsessedWith HPFanFic, kkyshkar, champion of the deities and Tersios, thank you for your reviews.

You guys can also PM me if you have something in your mind. Like always, please read and review and I’ll see you in the next chapter.
6. Chapter 6

Chapter 5

Flashback...

The walk back towards the castle did not take as long as the time taken to go to Hogsmeade. He was hardly aware of his surrounding, hardly aware of people greeting him as he marched towards the castle. The dormitory was devoid of his roommates when he arrived. It was not a surprising fact actually. It was not even 1pm yet. All of them would still be enjoying themselves in Hogsmeade and would return much-later in the evening.

Harry landed with a heap on his bed and stared at the ceiling. He let out a sigh. The vision of Ginny sitting close to a boy in the tea shop kept replaying inside his mind. Harry did not know the name of that boy but he knew the boy was in sixth year and came from the house of Ravenclaw. The couple were intimate from the look of it. Several times the boy would hold Ginny's hand and she did not make the effort to pull away. He did not know if they ended up kissing like every other couple within the tea shop. He had seen enough and he did not want to see more of them anymore. He immediately departed for the castle.

All the months spent on hoping and praying that Ginny would change her mind had gone to waste. She did change her mind, but not in the way he would have wanted. All those hints given by her that there might be a chance that they could go back being together were just empty. He wanted to scream. He wanted to lash out his anger and disappointment. He wanted to destroy things and hurt someone.

In retrospect, he should have foreseen it. He should have been prepared for the inevitability. But somehow he remain stubborn and continue to cling to the believe that things would go right in the end.

It doesn't. But he did not scream nor did he lash out on anything and anyone.

Harry knew he was a changed man. He realized it after that little bit of Voldemort soul was removed from him. He was much calmer than before. His entire tendency to lash out and do something destructive whenever he depressed had all gone. But that was not the only factor that he credited his changes to. He remembered the night Sirius died. In his anger he destroyed every Dumbledore's thingamajigs he could reach. Other headmasters would have reprimanded him for his behaviour but Dumbledore remained calm throughout the ordeal. Not only that, he apologized and took Harry personally under his wing so to speak. Harry suspected that some of Dumbledore's virtue rubbed off on him eventually.

It did not change the fact that he had lost Ginny though. And that fact changes everything. Ron had voiced his hope that Harry would make The Burrow his permanent home. He dearly wanted Harry to stay there. Harry of course had no problem with that initially, thinking that it was a wonderful idea. He could stay close to those he considered as his family and he could stay close to Ginny. Now he was not so sure. Going back there, knowing that he and Ginny had broken up would be awkward and painful to boot.

But he really needed a place to stay and for now the only place available to him would be the Grimmauld Place. In all honesty, he was reluctant to go back there knowing that it will bring back all the memories of his dear godfather but for now, he had no choice. He has to stay there at least temporarily until he could found a far more suitable place to call a home.

Making up his mind, Harry stood up and called his house elf. "Kreacher!"

The old house elf appeared with a pop. He bowed to Harry and said, "Master Harry called Kreacher?"

"Indeed yes, Kreacher," said Harry. "It is time."

"Time for what, Master Harry?" asked Kreacher.

"Time for us to go home, Kreacher," said Harry.

Kreacher's bulbous eyes widened with joy. "We-, we're going back home, Master Harry?" he stammered. "We're going back to my mistress house?"

Harry sighed. He had hope that the old house elf would have forgotten that old hag by now. Old habits die hard it seems even for magical creatures. "Yes, Kreacher," said Harry forcing a smile. "We are going back but first I need you to do something for me."


"I need you to go back to Grimmauld Place and do a quick swipe throughout the house. Check
for any jinxes, curses and wards that the Death Eaters might placed inside the house. Remember that this is important. We want to make sure that the house is safe for the both of us. There is no knowing what the Death Eaters might have done. Do you understand?” asked Harry.

The house elf once again bowed. "Kreacher understand."

"Good," said Harry, satisfied. "Now go and be careful. Report back to me tonight. We'll decide what to do from there."

Kreacher bowed for the third time and with a loud pop, he apparated.

Harry lay back on his bed. One of many problems that he faces is now temporarily solved. He will know whether or not it would be a permanent solution tonight. He did not want Kreacher to be in a hurry. It would be better to make sure the house elf does his job right. After all, his and Kreacher's life is at stake here.

Now it was just the matter of telling Ron about the changes in the plan. Truthfully Harry did not know how and when to tell him and how Ron is going to take it especially when all of these stemmed from his sister's action. But one way or another, he will have to tell him. He could only hope that his best friend could handle it well.

It turns out he did not have to wait for long.

It was about 4.30 in the afternoon. Harry was heading toward the Great Hall. Usually he did not care much about the afternoon supper, preferring instead to wait for dinner. But since he did not go for lunch and the only full meal he had for that day was during the breakfast, he could no longer ignore the plight of his own digestive system.

Harry was about to enter the Great Hall when someone called out his name.

"Harry! Harry!"

He turned to look. It was Ron. He was jogging towards Harry. Hermione was following her boyfriend from behind. From the look on her face, this can't be good.

"Harry!"

"What is it, Ron? Wait, did you just run from Hogsmeade back here?" asked Harry. Not an invalid question actually. Ron was sweating profusely as if he had just finish running a thirty miles marathon. He breathlessly stopped right in front of Harry.

"No. We took the carriage back to the castle, Harry," answered Hermione. She looked worryingly at Ron. "Harry. Something-, something happened. I told him not interfere but he-, he wouldn't listen."

Harry's eyes travelled between Ron and Hermione. Suddenly, he was filled with the sense of dread. "What things? Ron?"

Ron looked at Harry with utmost determination. "I did it, Harry. I did it. For you," he muttered.

"Did what?"

"I don't know if you know this but a boy took Ginny out, Harry. Both Hermione and I saw him and Ginny walked together at Hogsmeade. So I went and hit him," replied Ron. "And I warned Ginny not to see that boy again. That nerve of him!"

"What in hell?! Why did you do that?!" asked Harry. "You're going to get into a lot of trouble, you know that!"

"She's my sister, Harry! I can't just let anyone took her out and I can't let her cheat on you!" defended Ron. "None of my family is a cheater."

*Well you have one now,* thought Harry. Lucky for him he did not say it aloud. Things will get extremely dicey if he did. He decided not to give any response to what Ron had just said. Instead he grabbed Ron's arm and pulled the ginger along with him. "You should come too, Hermione," he said. She obliged.

"Where are we going?" asked Ron, clearly perplexed at what Harry was doing. "I thought you're going to the Great Hall."

"I was," replied Harry simply. He was hungry. In fact he was really-really hungry but unfortunately the latest event had somehow blunted his appetite. He continued to walk until
he found an empty classroom. He gestured both Ron and Hermione to enter and close the
door behind him. After placing an Imperturbable Charm on the door, he turned to face them.
"We need to talk, Ron. Have a seat."

Ron took a seat and Harry sat in front of him.

"What is this all about, Harry?" asked Ron. "Why here? Talk about what?"


"Thank you, Hermione," said Harry. He then turned towards Ron. "This is about Ginny and a
couple of other things as well. Look, Ron. I already know she went on a date with someone
else. I saw them probably before you do."

"So what did you do?" asked Ron.

"Nothing. I went back to the castle. That's about it."

"Nothing?!" exclaimed Ron. "You saw her with someone else and you did nothing?! What kind
of a boyfriend are you?"

"Ex-boyfriend," Harry corrected him. "But if you're saying I was a bad boyfriend you're
probably right. There's a reason for that."

"What reason?" asked Ron sternly. "I would have thought that you would fight for her, Harry."

"And I did," said Harry. "Not just for her. For you and everyone else. Before, during and after
the war. What do you think will happen if Voldemort got what he wanted? I fought for the
future of all of us. For those who survived the war."

"Those are different, Harry," interjected Ron. "It's not the same."

"Actually it is," said Harry. "There won't be any future for me and Ginny if Voldemort is still
alive. Well there isn't any future for both us now given what she did but still, the choice is still
there. I'll be lying to you if I said I did not feel anything when I saw her holding hands with
that boy. I feel frustrated. Angry. Disappointed. Bitter. All those months waiting for her to
change her mind had gone to waste."

Ron did not say anything. He simply waited for Harry to continue.

And continue was what Harry did. "But I'm tired of being angry, Ron. I'm tired of
disappointment, frustration and bitterness. I had enough of them to last me three lifetimes.
Surprisingly enough I didn't turn into a psychological mess. I should be thankful for that I
guess. I'm not going to dwell on Ginny any longer. This is why I'm going to respect Ginny's
decision. I'm going to respect her choice, Ron. And I hope you will respect hers as well."

"You really want to do this, Harry?" asked Ron.

"Yes. I've already made up my mind. I won't go back," stated Harry firmly.

Ron sighed. "So I guess there won't be you and Ginny after this huh?" He sounded a little bit
bitter:

Harry shook his head. "No. There won't. I'm sorry, Ron."

"Well. So much for hoping that you'll formally be a part of the family, Harry," said Ron. "But if
that is your choice, I accept it."

"But you are my family," said Harry. "You, your family and you, Hermione. All of you are my
family. I don't really have anyone else. Ginny and me may no longer be an item but she can be
my sister, just like Hermione. I accept that."

Hermione beamed at him. "I had always saw you as a brother, Harry. Always."

"Thank you, Hermione."

"Blimey, Harry," said Ron. "After what she did to you, you still want to be kind to her?"

"You have to remember that just like you and Hermione, she did give unwavering support to
me before and during the war. I'm not going to forget that so easily. People break up all the
time, Ron. I'm not going to make an enemy out of her just because of that. Besides, she did
have a valid reason. She was traumatized. Danger and me will always be a good friend. We
can't be separated. I'm not going to put her in that condition any longer. I'm going to be an
auror, Ron. You know what that means."
"So you have made your decision? To become an auror?" asked Ron.

"Yes, I have. In about a minute ago."

"What the hell?!" exclaimed Ron. "You just make up your mind within just a minute?! Are you crazy?!"

"Sorry. It just came out of my mouth but yeah. I already told you at the hospital that I’m going to be an auror, Ron," said Harry. "This latest event simply solidify my decision."

"Well, good to know that you already know where you'll be heading," said Ron. "We’ll talk about it more when we get to the Burrow. Boy, I can’t wait to get back home the first time without the need to worry about the next year."

And here it comes. The most sensitive issue of them all. Harry was clearly unprepared for that. Never he thought that Ron will be the first to bring up that subject. "Urm about that. Well-.

Ron cocked his eyebrows. "What?"

"Well Ron, let just say that I won’t be going back to the Burrow this time."

"What?! But we already made plans! You aren’t going back to Surrey, are you?" asked Ron. What Harry just said took him by surprise.

"No Ron, I definitely won’t be going back to the Dursleys. I’m going to stay at Grimmauld Place," said Harry.

"Sirius's old house? You’re not going back there, Harry. That place gives me the creeps," said Ron. He shivered as he relived the memories of having to hide and live within the old house once belong to the Black family. "And I don’t care about Kreacher being soft on you. I still won’t trust that brat."

"Ron!" exclaimed Hermione. "That’s an awful thing to say. We know what made him that way. His loyalty has already changed, Ron. He’s maybe a quirk but he has proven himself. At least give him a benefit of doubt."

Ron shook his head. "I really wish you stop with this SPEW nonsense, Hermione. He betrayed Sirius, remember?"

"And he already make it up for it," stated Hermione. "He helped us find Mundungus, he took care of us when we seek refuge and he fought the Death Eaters during the war. And it’s not SPEW!"

Harry who saw the situation between Ron and Hermione was heating up decided to intervene. "Alright! That’s enough you two! I don’t want to see another couple breaking up, especially the two of you!"

Ron and Hermione immediately stopped bickering and stared at Harry.

Harry sighed. He leaned back against the back of his chair and said, "Hermione is right. Kreacher changed and for the better. Yes there are some quirks still left within him but I’m willing to let it slide. He’s an old house elf. It would be hard for him to completely change his habits. And Ron, you did say that you kind of like him in the end. Have you forgotten that?"

"Well yeah, I did say that after he started acting kindly towards us," said Ron sheepishly. "But that doesn’t mean I would trust him."

"And that is good enough for me," said Harry. "Kreacher is my house elf now. Ron. There are rules he will have to follow. There won’t be any way for him to disobey. I will make sure of it. Now back to the topic. Yes, I am going back to Grimmauld Place but it will only be temporary. At least until I find a more suitable place for me to call a home."

"You could skip all of that and just call the Burrow your home," stated Ron. "This is about Ginny, isn’t it?"

"Part of it," said Harry. "The Burrow will always be one of my homes, Ron. But I’m an adult now. I will need a place of my own. You understand."

"One of your homes?"

"The other is Hogwarts," stated Harry. "But of course since I’ll be leaving this place within a few days, I could no longer call it that. But still, it’s the place where I’m happy to be at."

Ron began to understand what Harry was trying to imply. He let out a sigh. "Alright, Harry,"
he said finally. "I understand. Home is a place where you could be happy. Given everything that happened, The Burrow could no longer fill that shoe. I accept your decision but only if you promise to come visit us from time to time."

Harry smiled. He stood and pulled both Ron and Hermione into a tight hug. "That is a solid promise, Ron," he whispered. "That is a solid promise."

It was nearly 6.30pm when the trio got out of the empty classroom. Dinner would not be served for another hour so they decided to head back to their common room. Ron and Hermione wanted to put away all the things they bought at Hogsmeade and to freshen up for dinner.

Ron was called upon by Professor McGonagall that night after dinner and was given a stern warning by the headmistress for the incident that happened between him and Ginny's new boyfriend. McGonagall also threatened to withhold his Hogwarts certificate if he did not straighten out his act and apologize to the Ravenclaw boy for what he did. Gryffindor lost a lot of points that night, enough to nudge it down to second place in the house standing for the first time in six years. Harry and Hermione had to spend nearly all night consoling him.

Kreacher returned to Harry that night and told him that all was clear in regard of the Grimmauld Place, much to Harry's relief. Harry told Kreacher to go back and began the preparation for his arrival within a few days time.

Harry did not see much of Ginny since the incident. They did cross path several times after but no meaningful conversation ever happened. Harry simply gave her a nod and continued to walk.

Friday came. Six days had passed since the incident. Graduation day had finally arrived.

Harry and all of Hogwarts seventh years had spent the last few days with filling out forms and finishing all the documentations necessary before they would be handed with the coveted Hogwarts certificate. The NEWT results came out three days before the graduation day. Harry had received an O for all the subjects he took, much to Hermione's surprise. Kingsley visited him on Wednesday and personally handed him an offer letter for a place within the newly established Auror Academy. Harry told Kingsley that he accepted the offer.

Traditionally, Hogwarts would hold its graduation ceremony within the fourth week into the two months school break but this year, Headmistress McGonagall had decided to hold it before the students go back home. The ministry had given its agreement. Also this time around it won't be held within the esteemed Great Hall. It will instead be held within the sprawling school compound. All of the students were really looking forward to it as this is the first time ever since Hogwarts inception, a graduation ceremony would be witnessed by all of the students from the first until the final year.

Preparations had been made a few days earlier. All the letters of invitation had been sent. A raised platform was erected at the end of the venue couple of days before. Chairs for the attendees were arranged to face the platform. Decorations were brought in as well. It was a big event. In fact it was much too big to be just a graduation ceremony. At least that was what Harry suspected.

And he was right.

Professor McGonagall called for a meeting with all seventh year students two days before the big day. It turns out that Friday won't be just a graduation day but it will also be host to the medal awarding ceremony. It is to commemorate the outcome of the Battle of Hogwarts.

Harry was told that his name was up to receive The Order of Merlin First Class for his deeds during the Second Wizarding War and that he will lead the other recipients during the ceremony. He would be the first wizard to receive that coveted honour in more than a decade and will be the only one still live who will receive it this time. The last recipient was Peter 'Wormtail' Pettigrew. However, that medal was retracted after his true story was revealed. At least that was what McGonagall told him when she met him after the meeting. McGonagall also told him that Remus Lupin will be awarded posthumously for his role during the war, much to Harry's delight and surprise.

Harry and the rest of his dorm mate woke up early that day. After taking the shower, they began to put on their graduation robe, handed to them during the meeting with Professor McGonagall, and made their way to the Great Hall.

Harry saw that all the families of the seventh year students were already gathering inside the Great Hall the moment he arrived. He looked around and saw Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were already sitting at the Gryffindor table, waiting for them. The Grangers sat at the same table as the Weasleys as well. He nudged both Ron and Hermione and nodded pointedly towards their respective family. The three of them then immediately made their way towards the Gryffindor table. Hermione immediately went towards her mom and dad. As for the Weasleys, like
always, Harry would receive a bone crushing hug from the female patriarch of the Weasley. Together all of them sat at the table and began to eat their breakfast.

He was about to take the toast in front of him when he spotted Ginny who was sitting a few distance away from him. Their eyes met. Harry immediately looked away and began to apply liberal doses of butter and jam onto his toast. Deep inside, he hoped that the Weasleys' patriarch would remain ignorant of the status of his relationship with Ginny. Even though it was not his fault, he still certainly did not want to hurt Mrs. Weasley's feeling. From the way it looks, she still had no idea of what was going on between him and her only daughter. While he did feel relieve for the temporary respite, Harry knew that Mrs. Weasley will know sooner or later. When that time comes, his only hope would be that Mrs. Weasley could act more like Ron and would be willing to understand.

His eyes wandered around as he slowly munched on his toast. He saw Neville who was sitting not far from him. Sitting beside Neville was Augusta Longbottom. There were also a few others whom Harry did not recognise but he can safely assume that they are a part of the Longbottom clan. Augusta saw Harry and immediately beamed at him. Harry replied with a smile.

 Everywhere else, everyone was eating and chatting with their families. The atmosphere within the Great Hall was bright, full of happiness and infectious. It would be hard to believe that less than a year ago, a horrible battle that claimed hundreds of lives happened right within the same hall they were in.

Harry turned his gaze towards the teacher's table. Professor McGonagall was sitting at the same spot Dumbledore used to. He saw the interim Minister for Magic, Kingsley Shacklebolt, who sat right beside McGonagall. He saw Percy Weasley as well. There were few others besides the usual roster of Hogwarts staffs and teachers whom he did not recognise.

At 9.30am, all the students, families and teachers made their way towards the venue. The weather on that morning was bright with no sign of impending rain. The sky was painted bright blue with really few clouds floating near the horizon. Given the notorious weather and season the British Isle famously always experienced, that day was truly a gift from heaven.

Hundreds of chairs were arranged in rows with an aisle running down the center of them. All of the chairs were set to face a beautiful floating white platform. A single row of chairs were set on the platform where Harry would guess to whom all those chairs were for. He had never been to the Hogwarts graduation ceremony before but he did witness his old muggle school graduation ceremonies. It seems to him that both were done basically in the same way. Of course the muggle one don't have magically floating platform.

Soon all the seats were quickly filled up. Harry, the Grangers and the Weasleys settled at the second row seats behind the VIPs, Hogwarts teachers and staffs. The headmistress, the Minister for Magic and a group of people Harry could assume were the board of Hogwarts school governors took their seats on the platform. Hagrid and, much to Harry's surprise, Madam Maxime sat a few rows back.

The gleaming white marble of Dumbledore's tomb located not far from the venue caught Harry's eyes. He silently wondered if the old headmaster could observe the ceremony from high up above and see the results of all of his work. He did not count Dumbledore's portrait that was now hanging within the headmaster office. To him, the portrait was nothing than just a memory, a shadow of someone once alive.

He turned his attention back to the platform when Professor McGonagall began her speech.

The event ended with the Order of Merlin award giving ceremony. Harry alone had to go up the platform three times to receive his certificate, his own Order of Merlin First Class award and to accept the award on Remus Lupin behalf. He later presented the award to Tonks's mother, Andromeda, who was present at the ceremony with the young Teddy Lupin.

Harry's heart broke the moment he laid his eyes on Teddy. At such a young age, Teddy lost his parents. He may never know them. While he was sure that Andromeda would have kept quite a lot of Remus and Tonks portraits, they were not the same. Harry realized this when he used the Resurrection Stone before he confronted Voldermort deep inside the Forbidden Forest. The sensation of being able to talk with his parent and not just by looking at their portrait was difficult to describe.

Teddy will never know why his parents died.

It was then an idea flew into Harry's mind. He immediately conjured a small bottle. He then touched his temple with the tip of his wand and began to pull out a silvery white substance. He put the substance into the bottle and corked it. He then gave it to Andromeda. He told her that the bottle contains all the good memories he had with Remus and Tonks and he wanted her to show it to Teddy when he was old enough. Harry told Andromeda to make sure that Teddy knows the sacrifice his parents made for him.
Andromeda immediately hugged him tightly. She cried. It went that way for a while before she finally releases him. Harry looked up to her. He could see that her eyes were drowning in tears.

"Now I know why Nymphadora and Remus choose you, my boy. Now I know."

Those were the last words she said to him before she and Teddy left for Hogsmeade Station.

It was Saturday, the day after the graduation ceremony.

It was time for him to leave the place he once called home forever. Most of the student's parent left the moment the graduation ceremony ended.

Like the previous day, he woke up early. He and the rest of the students had to get to the Hogsmeade Station latest by 11. and his friends spent their last night in Hogwarts chatting and packing up all their belongings. He and the rest of Gryffindor seventh years had also taken the initiative to meet every Hogwarts teachers and staffs, with the exception of Mr. Filch and Madam Pince of course, and expressed their gratitude for what they had done for them. Some of the students also brought small gifts for the teachers and staffs as a token of appreciation.

Harry, Ron, Neville, Dean and Seamus bid their dormitory, the one they inhabited for the last seven years, a final farewell. They walked down the spiral stairs towards the common room. Sadness filled up the air as everyone bid farewell to each other. Hugs and kisses were exchanged along with the promises that friendships, no matter where they are and no matter what they do, shall endure till the end of time.

One final breakfast at the Great Hall and they were now at Hogsmeade Station. The Hogwarts Train was already waiting.

"Well Harry, Ron and Hermione," said Hagrid who escorted them all along from the castle. "I guess this is it."

The trio looked up towards the half-giant. They saw that Hagrid was trying to fight back his tears.

"This won't be the last time you see us, Hagrid," Harry said. "We'll see each other again. We promise."

Hagrid gave out a smile. "I know, Harry. I know. Good luck. Oh, before I forget, I just want to tell ya' lot that Olymp had asked me to come to France with her. We're getting married, ya' know."

Hermione who was also trying to fight back her tears said between hiccup, "Well, that's good news, Hagrid. So you will be resigning from Hogwarts? When, when is the happy day?"

"Yeah looks like it. I can't teach if I were to stay in France, can I?" replied Hagrid. "I'll send ya' invitations. Doncha' worry about it."

"We'll wait."

"Hogwarts is going to lose another good teacher, Hagrid," said Harry. "It's hard to think about that. We've been here for only seven years but you spent nearly all your lives living here. But we understand. Sometime we just got to move on."

Hagrid could only smile.

At that precise moment, the train blew its whistle.

"Well the three of you better get onboard," said Hagrid. "And don't get into more trouble, ya' hear me?"

Harry somehow said nothing. He immediately hugged Hagrid. "Thank you, Hagrid. For everything."

"No - no, Harry. Thank you," said Hagrid, patting Harry's head. He then lifted up the trio's trunks and put it into the train's coach. Turning towards Hermione and Ron, he said, "And I shall be waiting for the invitation from both of you. Hope it won't be too long after mine, eh?"

Hermione let out a mixture of cough and laughter. Ron simply smiled sheepishly. Both Hermione and Ron then hugged Hagrid and together with Harry, they boarded the train.

The trio found an empty compartment and filed inside. Harry immediately took the seat beside the window and gaze outward. From where he was seated, he could see the looming
towers of the castle framed by the surrounding Scottish mountain range.

He was going to leave it for good. The first ever place he called home. Such was the story of his life from being a scrawny kid living inside the cupboard under the stairs into being a wizarding hero famous all over the world. His life's journey was not easy. Anguish, sadness, anger, disappointment and losses coloured it all the way, making him what he was now. A man, who despite the accomplishment he had achieved, remained down to earth.

There was a jolt and the train began to move. Harry continued to watch the castle until it finally disappeared behind the corner.

"Goodbye."

Kreacher greeted him enthusiastically the moment he arrived at the Grimmauld Place. The house elf took Harry's trunk away and began making tea and scones, at Harry's request.

He and the rest of the gang did not speak much during the train journey, preferring instead to remain quiet. Arthur and Molly, together with the Grangers were already waiting for them at the moment they reached King's Cross Station. Molly was surprised when Harry told her that he will instead go to the Grimmauld Place but she told him that she understands. They exchanged hugs and Harry immediately apparated towards Sirius's old house.

Kreacher was busy preparing dinner while Harry sat at the table, attending to the scones and tea Kreacher made earlier. His mind wandered off momentarily until he remembered what he wanted to do earlier. He immediately stands up.

"Kreacher."

The house elf came hurriedly to him. He bowed and asked, "What would the master ask of Kreacher?"

Harry shook his head. "Just continue what you were doing Kreacher. I need to go someplace else. I'll be back tonight."

Kreacher continued to bow. "Of course, Master Harry. And please be careful."

Harry looked fondly at the old house elf. Kreacher really had changed a lot. "I will. I'll see you tonight."

He put on his travelling jacket that was hanging nearby and immediately apparated.

It was 5.30 in the afternoon at Godric's Hollow. Within one of its more secluded alley, a small popping sound was heard. A young man wearing a travelling jacket appeared.

He looked up and down the small alley. Satisfied that there was no one else there but him, he began to walk.

He had been there. Twice. Once when he was still young and his parents were still alive. He went there the second time with Hermione. Like before, the small wizarding village remain beautiful and quaint. It was not snowing like the last time he went there and the sun was still shining brightly. For the first time ever, the beauty of the Godric's Hollow lies before his eyes.

Along the small lane he walked, going past various small cottages and houses. He continued to absorb the surrounding, wondering what it would be like if Voldemort never existed. He would have friends in Godric's Hollow and some of the houses he saw would be theirs. He would have made it a point to visit them whenever he came back on school break. Instead of having to endure the Dursley, his school break would be awesome. But those of course did not happen.

He turned into a corner at the end of the lane and walked into the heart of the small village. A small square appeared in front of him. The memorial was still there and as before, instead of an obelisk covered with the names of fallen soldiers, a statue of three people appeared. Harry knew to whom the statue was for.

But the statue was not the reason why he was there in the first place. At this point, his eyes were fixed towards the small church that lies at the opposite of war cum the Potter memorial. He came to Godric's Hollow to visit his parents.

The cemetery ground was well kept. He still remembers the location of his parent's grave. It did not take him as long as before to find it. The headstone was clean. Someone must have taken a very good care of it. He could see the writing on the headstone very clearly. He knelt.

"Hi mom. Hi dad," he spoke. He did not know if they could hear him but he decided to keep on
talking. "It's me, your son. I just come to tell you that everything had been done. Voldemort is dead. We're now free. Your death has been avenged. I hope that you'll finally be at peace."

The headstone of course did not reply back.

"I wish you were here," he continued. "I miss both of you so much. It was never easy with you not being here. Most of the time I was alone. Luckily I got Ron and Hermione. I wish that you could have met them." He went quiet for a while. A tear began to run down his cheek. "But I also want to thank you for being there for me even if I can't see you. I want to thank you for the life and strength you have given me. You and a few others had helped me to go on and I won't forget that. I'll be looking forward to the time when we will be together once again. For now though, I have to say goodbye. But I promise I will come visiting."

Harry raised his wand and conjured up a wreath of flowers. He laid the wreath on his parents' grave and leaned forward to kiss the headstone. "I will come back."

He then stood up and after taking one last look at the headstone, began to walk away.

He stopped by at Kendra and Ariana Dumbledore's grave. Once again he took out his wand and conjured up two wreaths of flowers in which he laid each of them onto the two graves.

"You have a brave son, Miss Kendra," he whispered. "And you have a really good brother, Ariana. Send my regards to him would you?"

'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'

Those inscriptions on both the Dumbledore's headstones captured his eyes the first time he went there. He did not know the meaning of it back then but now he knew.

Both his and Albus Dumbledore's treasures were there, right within the cemetery ground. And there their heart shall forever will be.

It was a month after he left Hogwarts. Harry had finally begun his auror training. He and Neville were among the first batch of trainees within the newly established Auror Academy, the brainchild of Kingsley Shacklebolt. Kingsley had now become a full fledge Minister for Magic after he won uncontested within an election held a couple of weeks ago.

The two years training was gruelling but Harry took it all in a stride. He knew that it had to be that way given the danger they will face when they go out there. He now knows that being an auror is not just about knowing how to throw spells and curses. Intelligence, espionage and infiltration were also some of the aspects that he needs to learn. At the same time though, he made it a point to visit the Burrow and Godric's Hollow in between trainings. Harry had found out from Ron that Molly had finally knew the situation between him and Ginny but the ginger told him that his mother understood and did not blame Harry at all. Ginny however did get the full wrath of her mother. He and Ginny were now back in speaking term. They addressed each other politely whenever Harry came to visit the Burrow. Harry though had finally managed to get over her. Ginny was now nothing more than a friend and a sister to him, just like Hermione.

Two years flew by and he finally graduated from the academy. His team first mission was to deal with the Wand of Death gang members. They did it brilliantly of course. Under Harry's command, they managed to round up or kill all of the WoDs members within a couple of months. Gregory Goyle was the last gang members to be dealt with. He fought quite hard in the battle but in the end was killed in the hands of Neville. And from then onwards, he and his team continue to excel in every mission given, both in and out of Britain.

Midsummer eve arrived when Harry and his team found themselves holing up within the France presidential palace of Elysee.

The 60th. Anniversary Celebration of the end of World War 2 will be held at the Elysee Palace. All of the dignitaries from nations directly involved in the world's last greatest war will be there and securities will remain a focal point. Harry was appointed to be in charge of the palace's securities and for the last five days before the celebration, Harry and his team had work with aurors all around the world in order to make sure that the palace securities remain as tight as possible. Not only that, he also had to work with muggles security services as well. It appears that the magical people weren't as secretive as some people thought it might be. There were wizards who work within the CIA, British MI-6 and the France DGSI to name a few. Of course the general public never knew that. The President of France met Harry and had voiced his confidence that with Harry in charge, the venue will be safe. But Harry told him that he will not take the matter of security lightly and suggest the president take the same step as him.

The night of the celebration had finally come. Everything was in place.
Harry, who was wearing a tuxedo, stood at the palace balcony as he silently watched various limos and luxury cars waited in line to despatch their contents. From his vantage point, he could see various agents, disguised and undisguised strategically placed within the palace sprawling compound. Agents were placed at various strategic locations within the palace as well. The security comm will be their main mode of communication. However, Harry did have another trick up upon his sleeve. Taking the cue from the Dumbledore's Army, each agent, both wizards and muggles, was given a small gold coin. Pressing the coin will transport every agent within the closest vicinity towards the location of emergency.

His comm suddenly crackled. "Hey Harry! How's the view from down there?"

Harry recognized that voice. It was Mike Alvaro, his American counterpart. "I'm the one who should ask you that, Mikey," he answered. "Given you're high up there on top of the roof and I'm down here watching a lot of cars and a lot of old people."

"Huh. No wonder you sounded cranky. I got a beautiful view of the Eiffel Tower from here," said Mike. "So no beautiful princesses down there then?"

"Nope. None at all. I think they much rather be in a night club than being here."

"Yeah that's a shame. Well, worry no more, my friend," said Mike. "If you haven't seen any beautiful princesses down there so far, you're about to. Get your ass to the balcony at the west wing. A woman, probably in her twenties standing there all alone. She's been there for quite some time. Better go and check her out."

"Can you make it out who is it?" asked Harry as he began to walk towards the west wing.

"Nope. Sorry. She's too far to see from up here," came the reply. "Even with my binoculars I can't see her clearly. Better send some agents to check her out, bro. Nobody is supposed to be alone at a party."

"I'll handle this. Thanks, Mikey," said Harry who began to speed up to the location cited by Mike Alvaro.

"No hay problema, amigo. Just watch your back okay?"

During his stay within the presidential palace, Harry had taken the initiative to memorize every part of the France's president resident. Like Hogwarts, it had become a second nature to him. Couple with his experience of roaming the castle at night undetected, finding his way around the palace was a breeze.

It did not take long for him to reach the balcony.

Indeed, the girl Mike described was still there. Harry could not see her face as she was standing with her back facing him but he could see that she was tall and slender. Waves of silvery blonde hair crowned her head. She was all alone, leaning against the balcony railing and looking at the Eiffel Tower located a few miles from Elysee Palace. The view was indeed beautiful.

"Miss?" he called out to her.

The girl turned her head slightly before returning her gaze back to the Eiffel Tower. She did not answer him.

"Miss?" Harry called again. "You shouldn't be here."

From where he stood, he could see the girl concocted a smile.

"I didn't know that this balcony is a restricted place, monsieur Potter," she finally said. "And it had been awhile since the last time I hear your voice."

Harry took a few steps backward. His eyes widened. He recognized that voice. He recognized the accent that followed it. "Wh-, what?"

The girl turned around to face Harry. Her sparkling blue eyes landed on him. Her pink lips formed an even wider smile.

"Hello, 'Arry. It is so good to see you."

**Flashback to be continued....**
Harry woke up with a jolt.

He was breathing hard and furiously sweating. His hand reached up to his scar. He immediately yelped as his fingers touched it. He felt a burning sensation beneath the lightning shaped scar as if someone had pressed a hot iron plate to his forehead.

He sat up. Within the cover of darkness, he reached over to the bedside table for his glasses. The room immediately came into focus. He was still inside his own dormitory. It was probably three in the morning. Through the window, he could see the moon was shining brightly into the night.

Harry slowly got off his bed and made his way towards the bathroom.

Inside the bathroom, he opened up a tap and began splashing his face with handfuls of cold water that came out of it. He stopped when he felt a little bit refreshed. He then looked up and saw his own image within the bathroom mirror right in front of him. He looked paler than usual. His hand reached up and tucked his bang away from his scar. The scar still hurts. A lot.

He sighed. He then took a small towel hanging nearby and began to wipe his face dry. Once done, he made his way back to his bed.

Ron, Neville, Dean and Seamus were still fast asleep. Harry felt a little bit envy though. There they were, fast asleep like nothing would be going wrong in this world. Meanwhile he, the legendary Harry James 'Fucking' Potter had to save the world all over again. Some life he had.

He shook his head and climbed into his bed. He proceeded to pull the hangings shut around his four poster bed and took out his wand.

"Lumos."

With the help from the illumination generated by his wand, he pulled a bit of parchment from under his pillow and began to read. It was the list of horcruxes he had written earlier. His eyes landed on number seven.

That old caretaker. The old Riddle's mansion. Barty Crouch Junior. Voldemort in his infant stage. Nagini. And the flash of green light. Those were not dreams. Those were visions. He already knew that. But those visions also represented an undeniable proof. Something he suspected all along since he was thrown back in time.

A part of Voldemort lived within him.

Harry put his face into his hands. He knew that he had done it before. He knew how to do it. He knew how it felt. The question was, would he be able to do it again?

Back then, he had a lot motivation in doing it. He really was not looking forward to being alive. He was more than willing to accept his fate knowing that it will give others the chance to survive and to go on. This time around, it was different.

Ron's loud snoring suddenly jolted him. It was at that point he remembered something. Back in his old timeline, at this time around, everybody he knew was still alive. Cedric, Sirius, Dumbledore, Remus, Tonks, George, Collin Creevey and many others were still alive. As he had thought earlier the first night he got back to Hogwarts, if he planned his move right and remain on track, they will continue to be alive.

He lowered his hands and took the parchment. Once again his eyes scanned the list. A solid plan began to form within his mind.

Horcrux number one which is the Riddle's diary had been destroyed so he was down to six. He knew the location of the Gaunt's ring. He will have no problem in getting it. The Slytherin's locket would still be hidden somewhere within the Grimmauld Place. He would not have to wade the cold water to get to the cave under the cliff just to retrieve a fake locket. The Ravenclaws diadem would be hidden somewhere within the Room of Requirement. Finding it would be easy. Taking care of the Hufflepuff cup, Nagini and the portion of Voldemort soul within him will be tricky though. He had a crude idea on how to get to Nagini and how to enable the blood sacrifice that will enable him to destroy the horcrux within him but taking care of the Hufflepuff cup will require him to break into Gringotts and access Bellatrix Lestrange vault. He totally had no idea on how to do it but he was sure that something will come up in the end.

He folded the parchment and put it inside his trunk. He took his wand and murmured 'Nox'. The light at the pointy end of his wand extinguished and once again, he was engulfed in darkness.
Lying on his bed, his mind wandered off towards the plan he concocted earlier. It was then that he realized that he will need allies. But who? His thought went to Ron and Hermione. The two had helped him within his old timeline. He was not sure that they will help him again. Hell, he was not even sure they will believe what he says. He then remembered Sirius. His godfather at this point was still on the run but he knew at some point he will be back, hiding within the caves near Hogsmeade. Perhaps he could pull Sirius into becoming his ally. Convincing him would be difficult though but Harry was sure that when it comes to defeating Voldemort, Sirius won't hesitate. Dumbledore was the last person he thought of. Dumbledore probably won't need much convincing though. The old man was crazy in his own right. The only thing left would be to find out how much the headmaster knew at that point. He knew that Dumbledore never not stop investigating the matters pertaining to Voldemort since the night the dark lord murdered his parents. He was one of the very few people who was convinced that Voldemort will return but from what he could gathered back from his old timeline, the headmaster was only aware of the existent of the horcruxes when Harry was in his fifth year. But he knew that Dumbledore would believe him.

For now though, he had to let the matter laid temporarily to rest. He himself needed some rest. He had classes tomorrow and one of them would be with Snape. Giving the Potion teacher an excuse to put him under detention won't do.

Drowsiness overtook him. Sleep came easily to him this time.

Unlike before, he dreamt of Fleur. They were dancing together in a beautiful meadow. The wind blew her hair softly and she was happy and contented. They continued to dance, their bodies got closer and closer with each step. At one time, Fleur leaned forward to kiss him. But just as her lips were about to touch his...

"Harry! Harry! Wake up! We will be late for classes!"

Damn you Ron!

To be continued....

A/n: Some of you had wanted me to either not write the flashback part or reduce the length of the flashback for various reasons. I apologize. I really can’t do that. I already gone too deep into it and I have to say that I will continue doing the flashback it. It is not just about explanation. It is also designed to lend some credibility and weight to the future events within this story. I want to provide a proper background to each of the event. I could of course make it simple but then it will make this story cheap. However, I would like to iterate that the flashbacks won’t last for the whole story. I think another two or three chapters will do the trick and then it will be the ‘present Harry’ all the way. I hope that until then, you will continue to be patient.

Anyway, thanks for the reviews. I hope you guyz will continue providing feedback for this chapter.
Chapter 7

Chapter 6

Flashback continues...

Elysee Palace, France...

"What iz zhe matter, 'Arry?" the beautiful girl asked as she walked slowly towards him. "Cat caught your tongue?"

It better be because in all honesty, he was truly at lost on what to say to the silvery angel in front of him.

He recognized her. Of course he should. She was once married to the eldest brother of his closest friend. But she was different back then. Of course she has always been beautiful. She was part veela after all. But the woman currently in front of him is in a whole different league altogether.

Her silvery blonde hair was straight and much longer back then, reaching down to her waist. It was shorter now, reaching just below her shoulder and styled in pixie cut and ended in beautiful wavy curls. She had them pulled all over to one shoulder, leaving one of her earrings exposed. Her sky blue lace evening dress matches her eyes and accentuated her curves.

She was elegant. She was stunning. She was gorgeous. She was the testimony of a woman's beauty.

For quite a few moments, he could only gawked helplessly as she draw closer to him. Her perfume invaded his nostril that for a moment he thought he could die, gasping for air.

"'Arry?"

Her voice woke him up from his stupor. He shook his head trying to throw the effect she had on him and looked into her eyes. It was then he realized that she has a pair of really beautiful eyes. It was bright blue and unlike most adults, the sclera of her eyes was clean and white, totally devoid of the reddish veins so prevalent in most adults' eyes.

It took him a while before he could muster a few words. "Fleur? Is this really you?" he asked.

Fleur smiled widely. "Glad zat you remember," she said. "And I'm glad zat you are still immune to my allure."

Harry paused. "Wait, you projected your allure on me?" he asked.

"To the max," she replied simply. "Most men would have reduced into slobbering, incoherent mess just by looking at me. You didn't. Congratulations."

"Hardly. I did fall into a stupor actually," he admitted to her.

"But you climb out of it just as easily," stated Fleur. "If you were like most men, you won't be talking to me. Instead you will be standing zhere looking like a drooling lamp post wearing a suit. Not a pretty sight I assure you. But funny nevertheless."

Harry chuckled. Scratching his head, he said, "Well, maybe it's true. But then you did change. A lot. If it wasn't for your voice I probably won't recognized you."

"And so do you," said Fleur. "You're different from zat scrawny boy I used to remember. Handsome and taller."

It was true. He was indeed becomes taller. Now he was even taller than Fleur whose height had now reached just a little bit above his shoulder. "Thanks to puberty I guess," replied Harry sheepishly.

Fleur let out a small laugh. "I don't zhink puberty had anything to do with it, 'Arry. But it iz good to know that you are well. Can I ask you a question?"

"Sure," said Harry. "Fire away."

"Tell me somezhing, 'Arry. Did Hogwarts change its address? Did my owl lost its way and have it send to the wrong address I wonder?" asked Fleur.

Harry creased his eyebrow. "No. The address remains the same. Like always. Did you sent something to Hogw-, oh wait!" It was at that point he began to remember. "You did send me a letter."
Fleur cocked an eyebrow. "And what happened to it?" she asked.

The sense of dread began to fill him. He knew that Fleur was serious from the look on her face. "I keep it," he said. "Just keep it."

"And you didn't bother to write even a simple reply?" she asked. "Not even a single sentence? A hello?"

Harry sighed. He hated when a conversation suddenly took turn for the worst. He truly did not want it to end badly. But then, part of it was his fault after all. "I was-, too busy. You know with the NEWTs and all. And things happened. I got distracted. I'm sorry."

That was a lame excuse. He knew that but it was all he got. He certainly did not want to lie to her.

Fleur looked hard at him for a few moments. "I see," she finally said. "You got a huge event to be handled, monsieur Potter. I'm sure they need you inside." She then turned around and walked back towards where she stood minutes before.

Her voice was cold. All the warmth that previously reverberated from her all but gone. Harry felt really bad. He knew that the should not treat her like that but in his defences, he had a lot of things happened back then, some of it were bad, that somehow her letter ended up being thrown out of his mind. She of course knew nothing of this which was why he thought he owed her an explanation. The only thing left would be if she would be willing to listen to him and then accept it.

He slowly approached her from behind. She was still facing away from him. "Fleur?" he said.

Silence.

"Look, I'm sorry that I forgot to reply to your letter and you have every right to be angry with me. A lot of things happened back then as I said before and my answer hasn't changed a bit. I know it sounded lame but it is the truth. I don't want to lie to you. I can tell you everything that happened if you're willing to listen."

Fleur remained silent. Her eyes remained fixed on to the glowing lights of the Eiffel Tower.

"Fleur," he said. "It's okay if you don't want to listen but I got a job to do. This balcony isn't a restricted area but still I can't let you stay out here all alone. In the event of a security breach, you'll be the first target. You're the daughter of the French High Commissioner after all. I need to get you inside. Right now."

Still Fleur remained silent.

"Look it was just a letter. I simply forgot to write a reply, that is all. But that doesn't mean that I forgot all about you. You're still my friend, Fleur."

And still Fleur said nothing.

Harry sighed. "Fine," he finally said. "I'll send two female agents to escort you. You can stay out here for as long as you wish but I implore you to heed my advice. It is not safe out here especially for someone like you."

But just as he was about to reach for his comm, Fleur spoke, "A letter may not mean much to you 'Arry, but it means a lot to me." She then turned to face him. "One simple reply iz all it takes for me to know that there iz still someone out there who would still remember me. I have a lot of friends 'Arry, but only a few who treat me for me. I already lost one of them."

Harry could guess to whom she was referring to. Her deceased husband, Bill Weasley.

"And for quite a long time, I thought I've lost you," Fleur continued. Sadness laced her every word.

"I'm sorry," said Harry softly. "I didn't know it means so much to you. I've been a bad friend all these while. You're entitled to hate me, Fleur. I won't defend myself from that. But still, I need to ensure your safety. And it's not because you're the daughter of someone important, but because you're my friend."

Once again he reached out for his comm. But just as he started to speak into it, Fleur's hand shoots out and held his comm down, away from his mouth.

"Don't," she said.

Fleur then took both of Harry's hand and with a sound of a pop, they both disappeared.
Top most platform of the Eiffel Tower, moments later...

Harry gasped for breathe as both he and Fleur appeared with a loud pop. He knew that he and Fleur had just apparated.

Harry looked wildly around. He recognized where they both are. They had just apparated on to Eiffel Tower's top most platform. "You brought me here?" he asked Fleur.

"Yes," replied Fleur simply. "Iz zhere a problem, monsieur Potter?"

"A lot," replied Harry as he continued to look around. His eyes found Elysee Palace, located a few miles away from the famous tower. "We shouldn't be here. We need to go back. Now."

But Fleur held him back. She immediately took his hand and her fingers intertwined with his. "No. We don't need to."

But Harry disagrees with her. "Fleur, I'm on duty and you need to go back to the presidential palace. Let's go."

He was about to take Fleur's hand when once again she held him back. "No 'Arry. We're staying. You are still on duty, I know. Right now, your duty iz to protect me, zhe daughter of one of zhe highest officer within zhe French government. You don't want anything bad happen to me, no?"

Harry shook his head. "Of course I don't want anything bad happen to you. But Fleur, I am supposed to protect you there," he said while at the same time pointing his finger towards the palace. "Not here."

"Here. Zhere. It iz all the same," said Fleur nonchalantly. "Right now, I don't feel like going back. But if you want to leave, fine. Go. Just leave me alone here." She then let go of Harry's hand.

"You know I can't do that," replied Harry. "I won't."

"Then stay," said Fleur. "What are you afraid of? Zhat zhey will know zhat you're not at your post? Like I said, you're still on duty protecting me. But if zhey do know, don't worry. I will make sure zhat zhe least zhey could do iz put you out of your job."

Harry opened and closed his mouth. "The least?" he asked a few moments later. "Is this your idea of a revenge? And it's all because of a letter?"

"Yes," answered Fleur. "You'll be surprised at what I'm capable of doing if zhings are not going my way. You are now at my mercy, 'Arry." She then retook Harry's hand and said, "Now come."

"Remind me not to cross you anytime soon," said Harry as Fleur pulled him through the crowd.

"Of course and you would do well to remember zhat," said Fleur, putting out a smile.

Both Harry and Fleur weaved through the crowd as they made their way towards the edge of the platform. There were really a lot people roaming around the platform that night. In fact, the tower and its surrounding area that night was full of visitors, no doubt the World War II commemoration played some part in it. The heightened security measures seemed had no effect on the visitors count. It was a blessing actually, especially for both Harry and Fleur. Nobody else on the platform was aware that two people just sprang out of thin air right in the middle of them.

Unfortunately, it also had a bad side as well. It took both of them quite a while before they finally found a vacant spot at the edge of the platform.

"So it's true," said Fleur as she leaned forward against the platform's steel railing. "Zhat zhey say you do not like apparition."


Fleur cocked her eyebrows. "So you prefer zhe slowest?" she asked.

"No," replied Harry. "I prefer the most comfortable."

"I see."

Both of them went silent. Each of them drowns in their own thoughts.

The view of Paris in the night time from the top of the Eiffel Tower was simply amazing. From
their vantage point, they could see the famous Champ De Mars, Paris’s well known greenspace laid below them. And surrounds it was the panorama of the city of Paris and its suburb. To their left laid River Seine where multiple boathouses parked along its bank.

After a few minutes standing beside Fleur and soaking up the beautiful view of the Parisian night sky, Harry began to ease up a little. From the chatters he heard from his comm, everything had so far went well at the presidential palace.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" asked Fleur as she reopened their stalled conversation.

Harry nodded in agreement. "Yeah. It is amazing."

"You know, this is the first time I've been here," said Fleur.

Harry stared at Fleur. "Seriously? This is the first time you've been here? I thought, you know, living in France. You could visit this tower like every weekend."

"Not all of us got this privilege, 'Arry," said Fleur. "I had always wanted to visit Eiffel when I was little. Ever since I saw the picture inside a book I wanted to visit. But Papa refused to bring us here no matter how many times I asked him. I know why he did that. He was concerned for our safety. It is understandable of course."

Harry of course understood. Appoline, Fleur and Gabriel were veela. Or at least quarter veela. He was aware of the trouble that could be cause if the three of them went out in public. The only saving grace that he and Fleur both had right now was because everyone else was too busy doing their own things. Like taking pictures, absorbing the view and even, proposing to their love ones in marriage. "So, not even Bill?" he asked.

Fleur's expression fell when she heard that name.

Harry immediately apologized when he saw the change in Fleur's expression.

"That's okay, 'Arry," said Fleur, waving off Harry's apology. "Yes. Even Bill. We didn't even get the chance to go on our honeymoon after our wedding. You know what happened back then. We-, at least I had to go into hiding. Bill fared better because of his blood status. I thought we would finally have the chance to consummate our marriage properly after the war ended. The chance never came. Bill was immediately conscripted into the DMLE." At this point, Fleur let out a long sigh. Harry could see that her eyes were watery. "And then he died."

"I'm sorry, Fleur," said Harry. "For what happened."

Fleur suddenly looked sharply at Harry. "Stop apologizing for something not of your making, 'Arry. Things could have gotten a lot more worst if you didn't kill that bastard. Especially for someone like me. Did you know zhat under this rule, people like me are not considered as human? Zhat we're nothing more than some sort of magical creatures that anyone can own and easily to be disposed of! We-, at least I owe you a lot."

Harry spoke nothing. He simply stared at her.

Fleur looked down and away from Harry. "I'm sorry. It was just something I wanted to get off my chest. It was a rant. But the rant is genuine."

"Then stop apologizing for something not of your making," said Harry, deadpanned.

Fleur looked back at him. Tilting her head a little, she asked, "Are you mocking me, 'Arry?"

"No," answered Harry while giving her a mock innocent look. "I'm trying to make you smile once again. I failed, haven't I?"

Fleur's expression was serious. But then and a few moments later, her pink lips slowly curved into a smile. Turning her gaze away and towards the beautiful panorama in front of her, she said, "Oh you did succeed. But only a little."

Harry chuckled. "That's good enough for me."

"Oh. So the hero of the wizarding world apparently has a very low standard. My oh my what a surprise," said Fleur in a mocking tone.

Harry once again laughed. "Not all of it. But when it comes to girls though, I take what I can get."

"Always the self depreciating boy you are. You never change, 'Arry," stated Fleur. "Ginny is lucky to have you."

Harry's face fell the moment he heard Ginny's name. Fleur apparently was aware of the
gesture. "Somewhat wrong, 'Arry?" she asked.

Harry shook his head. "No, nothing's wrong. So what about you? It's been years since the last time we met. Did you, you know, meet someone else?" he asked in an attempt to change the topic.

It was Fleur's turn to shake her head. "No. I did not meet anyone else."

"Really?" asked Harry. "Don't you, you know, like to fall in love again?"

"It iz not easy for someone like me to fall in love, 'Arry," explained Fleur softly. "No matter how much I want to. Zhere are many suitors but none really qualifies. Zhere iz a certain criteria that has to be met. So far only a few men in my life had it. Papa. Bill." She hesitated for a moment. "You."

Harry was surprised. "M-me?" he stammered.

"Don't get me wrong, 'Arry," said Fleur. "I do love you, but only as a friend."

Harry let out a sigh of relief. "Phew! Thanks for clearing out that one."

Fleur let out a small laugh. "Don't worry, 'Arry. I certainly won't steal someone else property. I'm not a house wrecker. But this does goes to show of how important this friendship with you iz for me. With you not replying my letter, it hurts, 'Arry."

"I'm sorry," said Harry. "I'll make sure it won't happen again."

As before, Fleur waved his apology off. "Enough about me," she said instead. "How about you? When iz the big day? Will I be invited?"

Harry's eyebrows creased. "Big day? What big day?"

"You silly boy," exclaimed Fleur, shaking her head. "Your wedding of course. What else?"

"Oh, that. No there won't be any wedding. At least not with Ginny," said Harry.

Fleur was taken aback. "What do you mean zhere won't be any wedding? You and Ginny was so good together. What happened?"

Harry let out a sigh. Fleur listened intently as he began to regale her with his own love story.

"She iz a fool," said Fleur with a huff as Harry ended his story. "A complete idiot."

Harry though at that point was torn between agreeing and disagreeing with her. "I don't really blame her. She was deeply stressed that time. She lost her family members," he reasoned.

"And I did not?!" exclaimed Fleur. "My husband died. Do I regret zhat he became an auror? I do not! In fact I am proud of him. He iz a brave man. If Ginny break up with you using such petty excuses, zhen she definitely doesn't deserve you!"

"I don't think the excuses were petty, Fleur. It is the matter of life and death. Ginny is right. With me being an auror, I will only hurt her in the end," said Harry. "In fact, I am thankful that she found another man."

Fleur took several deep and long breaths in her effort to calm herself down. "'Arry, look at me. Someday, I will find a man I am going to spend my life with. I am not an auror but zhere iz still zhe chance zhat I will fall thousands of feet from the air and die when I ride a broom. Will my husband hurt? Definitely. Can I do something about it? Maybe yes. Maybe no," she said. She then took Harry's hand into her and continued, "Zhe zhis iz 'Arry, zhere is somezhing in zhis world that would be beyond our measure of control. Bill's death iz neither under his control nor mine."

Harry simply stared at her. "I never knew you feel strongly about this."

Fleur reach up and ran a finger down his cheek, caressing it. "It takes bravery to stand up for someone you love, but it will take another form of bravery to defend those people you don't know. You, like Bill, had done that. Perhaps even more. You are willing to sacrifice for people who would never say thank you for what you did. Zhat iz why she should have never left you in zhe first place."

"I guess I have misjudged you all these time," said Harry as he began to see Fleur in a new light. "You are certainly something else. Bill is lucky."

Fleur put out a sad smile. "I get zhat all the time. 'Arry, I-."
The crackle that came suddenly from Harry's comm cut her off. Harry took it. "Yeah. Harry's here."

"Harry, where are you? The big show is about to start. Kingsley is looking for you. We need you to be on the stage with the rest of the VIPs." It was Neville Longbottom.

"I'll be right there, Neville," spoke Harry into his comm. He then turned towards Fleur, who at that time was looking at his comm with great animosity. "We need to go back."

She forced a smile. "Of course."

And with a sound of a pop, they both disappeared from the platform.

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**Back at balcony of Elysee Palace...**

Harry took several deep breaths the moment he appeared on the balcony. His ears were ringing loudly.

Fleur who managed to reappear with grace was giggling. "We really need to work on your apparition skill, Monsieur Potter."

"Oh, I can apparate just fine, Fleur. I do that a lot," he said as he continued to massage his ears rigorously. "It's just the sensation I'm not accustomed to. And still is."

"Zhen you have no choice but try to accustom to it," stated Fleur. She reached closer to him and began to work on his suit, dusting it off and correcting his bow tie. "You are an auror. Zhere will be times when you need to get to someplace really quick. Apparition iz the only way for you to do zhat."

"Yeah I know. When you're right, you're right. I simply wish there would be some other way," he said as he continued to allow Fleur to work on his suit.

"Of course I am. Zhere you go," she said as she put a finishing touch on his suit. "Now you look much more presentable."

"Thank you, Fleur," said Harry, expressing his gratitude.

"And to you too," said Fleur. "I had a great time tonight, ‘Arry. I hope zhis won't be zhe last."

"Yeah. Me too," said Harry.

"I must go. Papa and mama would probably be waiting for me," said Fleur as she took a glance towards the main hall where the grand event will happen.

"Of course."

Fleur was about to leave when suddenly she stopped. She looked back at him and said, "Well Monsieur Potter, now that you are single, I will be expecting letters from you. No excuses."

"Of course, Fleur. I promise," said Harry.

"You promise?" she asked.

"More like an oath. I'll write to you as soon as I get back to England," said Harry earnestly, putting every ounce of determination into his every word.

But Fleur clearly did not trust him. She tilted her head and cocked an eyebrow. She then leaned closer to him. One of her hands held him by the back of his neck. "Don't make a girl a promise, let alone an oath," she breathily whispered into his ear. "If you know you can't keep it."

Her lips produced a wide smile and after giving him a quick peck on his cheek, she immediately departed towards the palace's main hall.

Harry simply held his breath and watched her hip swaying as she cat walked into the building.

One thing for sure, he will definitely have to make good on what he said the moment he got back home.

**Flashback to be continued...**

XXXXXXXXXXXX
Present...

Early morning at the Great Hall, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry...

Harry was still fuming at Ron for disrupting his dream. Damn it! Fleur was about to kiss him and Ron blew it! Totally blew it!

Of course Ron, who possessed the amount of emotional sensitivity equivalent to a teaspoon, was blissfully unaware of his best friend's silent wrath. Like lunch, dinner and supper, breakfast was his favourite time of the day. He happily gobbled away his breakfast which consisted of sausages, mash potatoes and red beans. As for Hermione, as usual, toast on the right hand and an opened book on the left hand. This time she was reading The Standard Book of Spells instead of the usual Hogwarts, A History book. No doubt in preparation for the Charm class they will be having on the first period. Not far from where the trio sat, George, Fred and Lee Jordan were huddling together: Harry did not know what they were discussing about. It could be about the incoming tournament or about Ludo Bagman who cheated them out of their winnings.

The official launching of the Triwizard Tournament was still weeks away but already the anticipation runs feverishly high. Everywhere, theories emerged as which of Hogwarts seventh years student who will receive the honour of representing Britain's most prestigious magical school within the tournament.

Harry of course did not pay any heed to all of these. At this point, he had a much bigger thing he needed to think of. An issue suddenly arises that was big enough to drive the dream out of his mind. He was sitting, facing the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff table. From where he sat, he saw him. The would-be Hogwarts champion. Cedric Diggory.

Cedric was chatting amicably with his fellow housemates. Little did the eventual school champion realize that if thing goes the way it was, just like Dumbledore in Harry’s fifth year, he would have less than a year to live.

Charm classroom...

Professor Flitwick was jovial as Harry could remember. There he was, in front of the classroom and standing on the teacher’s desk, explaining in detail the fourth year Charm syllabus and what to expect in the upcoming exams.

He remembered the professor fondly. He did not exactly warm up to the miniscule teacher during his time in Hogwarts in his old timeline but all of that changed when he went under training in the Auror Academy. Professor Flitwick was one of the instructors, specially brought onboard by Kingsley. Several Hogwarts teacher was brought in as well. Professor McGonagall and Professor Slughorn were among the few selected. Of course they were brought in as a temporary basis. They still retained their job at Hogwarts.

Flitwick was all 'swish and flick' during his tenure as a Hogwarts teacher. But in the academy, he was a different beast altogether. He really knew his Charm. His response time was ultra-quick and his targeting was ultra precise. He knew the strength and the weaknesses of each spell like the back of his hand. He was better than even Dumbledore though perhaps the former headmaster trumped him in the firepower department. In the Academy, both he, McGonagall and Slughorn had grilled Harry to the max that many times Harry began to wonder if the professors were planning for him to take over their job at Hogwarts once he’s finished. It did bring out some benefit though. It was not for nothing that Harry became renowned as the most dangerous Auror since Moody.

Luckily for him though, there won't be any grilling today. He was not within the Academy. He was at Hogwarts and Flitwick was in his 'swish and flick' demeanour. They will be learning the Summoning Charm and Professor Flitwick was explaining the intricacies of it.

"...will require absolute concentration but most important of all, determination. You have to show that you really want it. Half-hearted act will get the things you want nowhere. As always, you need to say the incantation and do the proper swish and flick. Now I have place a book on this stool right in the middle of the class. The book shall be the subject of our practice. Now recite with me - Accio book."

Every student within the classroom began to recite the incantation.

Harry felt really bored. He already knows the Summoning Spell. He was well verse in it in his fourth years back in his old timeline. But nevertheless, he followed everyone else in reciting the incantation.

"Well done! Well done!" said Professor Flitwick after a few minutes of recital. "Now I want each of you to try summoning this book. Let start with Miss Granger shall we? Remember. Concentration. Determination. Show the book that you really want it."
Hermione cleared her throat. Together with a single flick of her wand, she muttered the incantation, "Accio book!"

Professor Flitwick squealed in delight as the book zoomed from the stool towards Hermione. Unfortunately, she was not prepared to catch it. The book was flying at great speed towards her face. Hermione knew she won't be able to dodge it. All she could do at that time was close her eyes and wait for the book to hit her.

But the book never reached her face. And when she opened her eyes, all she could see was the back of someone’s hand. That hand was holding the book mere inches from her face. Her eyes trailed the hand and saw that it was belong to Harry.

"It’s okay, Hermione," said Harry gently. "I got it. You're safe." He then slowly placed the book on the desk right in front of her.

"Harry," said Hermione with no small amount of relief. "Thank you. That was fast."

"Yeah, mate," said Ron with no small amount of astonishment. He was actually sitting between Harry and Hermione which would mean that Harry would have to reach across him to get to Hermione. "That was really fast. Like lightning fast. How did you do it?"

"Indeed, Mr. Potter," said Professor Flitwick who had now reached the trio's desk. His eyes were observing Harry with great interest. "That was indeed one of the quickest reaction time I have ever seen. Throughout my life I had only known a few who could accomplish such a feat. Have you been practicing?"

_of course I had been practicing. You're the one who trained me_, thought Harry. Lucky for him, those words only emerged inside his head. For more than seventy years in his past life he had been the most feared Auror among the dark wizards. For more than seventy years no dark wizard the magnitude of Voldemort ever emerged. If he ever heard of one, they will be crushed by him before they even get the chance to blossom.

But of course he could tell none of it to the people in front of him. They won’t believe him anyway. "Urm, no professor. I haven’t practice anything. I saw the book. I did what I had to do. It was a lucky shot," lied Harry smoothly.

Professor Flitwick nodded. "Of course, of course. Yes sometimes luck can play it’s part." He took the book and placed it back on the stool. He then turned towards Harry. "Let see if your luck can hold," he said. "As before, Harry. The incantation and swish and flick."

"Yes, professor." Harry readied himself. He raised his wand. "Accio book!"

The book immediately flew towards him and Harry caught it easily.

"Excellent!" cried Professor Flitwick. "Now, Harry. Do it again."

Harry obliged. And once again Harry successfully caught the fast flying book with ease.

"Marvellous! Extraordinary!" exclaimed Professor Flitwick. He was like a toddler that was given a lollipop. "Now again."

In the end, Flitwick made Harry repeat the task for nearly twenty times. And each time the book never failed to fly to him and he never failed to catch it.

"Well done, Harry," said Professor Flitwick. "Well done. Really good catch. And vice like grip too. It is as if your hands know where the book is heading all by itself. Yes, really extraordinary indeed. And very curious I might add. You may sit down now, Harry. And take five points for Gryffindor. And to you to Miss Granger. Ten points for both of you."

Hermione simply beamed at Flitwick.

Harry sat down. Somehow, he was beginning to feel that practicing the Summoning Charm was not the reason why Flitwick put him through the task for nearly twenty times. It was something else. Flitwick was not interested with the Summoning Charm demonstrated by him. He was curiously interested with the way Harry caught the book. His final comment says it all.

The class continues. Flitwick put every student in the class to the task. Unlike him and Hermione, nearly all of them only manage to perform the charm after many tries. Ron alone had to repeat nearly eight times before the book finally flew towards him.

"Excellent!" exclaimed Professor Flitwick. "Well done all of you. We have reach the end of the class unfortunately so as a homework, I want you write the intricacies of the Summoning Charm, its history, its purpose and its do and don’t. You have until next Wednesday to finish it. Now chop! Chop!"
Ron groaned. "First week! First week and we already got homework!" he grumbled.

The trio was walking from the south tower where the Charm classroom was towards the Great Hall for lunch.

"The assignment was actually very easy," stated Hermione. "It's not that difficult. I can finish it within a day."

"Says you," grumbled Ron. "Not all of us have your brain, Hermione. It's going to take at least a week for me to finish it."

Hermione shook her head. "Look at it this way, Ron. We were lucky. All of us managed to perform the Summoning Charm. If just one of us failed, Professor Flitwick will definitely ask us to practice so that he can test us once again during the next class. And that will be on top of the homework he gave us. So don't grumble. Just be thankful."

"Err... thankful?"

"Yes. Thankful," stressed Hermione. "Just remember that we'll have double Potion this afternoon. I bet Snape is going to give us a lot more homework. Remember that just a few months ago, he did not have a good time. He just lost his Order of Merlin Third Class and it had something to do with us. Take it as a perspective."

This time, Ron groaned really loudly.

Harry silently agreed. His mind flashedback towards his third years. Sirius. Wormtail. Lupin. All of it came back to him.

This afternoon is going to be very messy.

To be continued...

A/n: I would like to say thank you for all the reviews. And thank you for the feedback. I of course took consideration on everything you guys wrote. However, there may be limit of what I can do so if there are any issues that I can't resolve, please forgive me.

As always, I hope you guys will enjoy what I wrote in this chapter. And please leave some reviews on your way out. It really means a lot to me. Not forgetting many thanks to those who put this story in their favourite/followed list.

See you in the next instalment.
8. Chapter 8

**"italic" : french**

Only trust and love someone who can see these three things in you:--

-The sorrow behind your smile,
-The love behind your anger,
-The reason behind your silences,

And when she gives you her time, she is giving you a portion of her life in which she will never get it back.

Don't make her regret it.

Flashback continues...

The event that night went well. No untoward incident happened until the event finished at near midnight. As planned, Harry and the rest of the aurors and muggle security personnel on duty stayed on the stage together with the rest of the world leaders until the climax of the event that was the lighting of the fireworks. Harry somehow did not meet Fleur after the event concluded. He presumed that she would have left together with her parents earlier.

But of course, the conclusion of the event did not mean the end for the both of them.

Harry got back to England three days later. Before he went back, he had to attend several security review meetings with various security agencies that oversaw the event in Paris. The next event would be held in Vienna, Austria sometime next year. It was important that any security weaknesses and loopholes found would be dealt with before the next event.

Kreacher greeted him as he arrived at Grimmauld Place and after putting away all of his things inside his bedroom, he went to the kitchen. Kreacher was preparing him the afternoon supper. A stack of letters awaited him on top of the dining table. He sat and began sorting all of the letters sent to him.

One letter somehow stopped him on his track. He recognized the handwriting on the envelope and immediately opened it:-

Dear Harry,

I know you were busy. This is just a reminder.

Love,

Fleur Isabelle Delacour.

Harry smiled and shook his head. The girl really did not trust him at all. He placed Fleur’s letter on the table and went to the library to get new parchments, a new envelope and a quill. Once he returned, he began to write.

Dear Fleur,

I've just got back from France. And no, I did not forget my promise that night. I tried to find you once the event ended but you were nowhere to be seen. I guess you must have gone back by then.

These past three days had been a whirlwind of activities for me. I had to attend non-stop meetings day and night. It was exhausting but then of course, it is my responsibilities. I can’t shirk away from my duties, can I?

I really wished I could have one or two days off. I’m really bushed but these stacks of important looking letters that awaits me means that I definitely need to go back to the office first thing tomorrow morning. Oh well.

I hope to hear from you soon. Give my warmest regards to your family, Madame Maxime and her husband.

Sincerely yours,

Harry James Potter.

After re-reading what he wrote several times, he folded the parchment and inserted it into the
envelope. His newly acquired gray-brown striped barred owl was given the honor to deliver
the letter to Fleur.

Harry returned to his regular schedule for the next three days. Kingsley went to see him on
the second day and voiced his desire to make Harry the person in charge with the DMLE’s
running. For quite a number of years he had been holding double posts, the Minister of Magic
and the Head of the DMLE. It was time to let someone else in charge of Britain's magical
community's security. The Minister and the rest of the ministry higher echelon had agreed
that Harry represented the best choice.

Harry of course hesitated. He voiced his preference of being a field agent before to Kingsley.
Kingsley though reminded him that being the Head of DMLE did not mean that he had to stay
at the office all the time. He would still have to go down the field if situation demands it. After
much persuasion, Harry finally agreed. The job transfer was scheduled to happen within the
next few days. And within all those times, he patiently awaits for Fleur’s reply.

And it came on the fourth day:-

Dear Harry,

I’m fine here in France. Teaching can be quite hectic. Did you know that I only teach female
students now? After a few incidents with the male students and the fact that they all got
glasy eyes whenever I’m in class, Madame Maxime decided to split the Charm class into two,
one for the wizards and one for the witches. The unfortunate teacher to teach the male
wizards is Professor Francois Avellino. Bless him.

I told Gabrielle the other day that I met you at the presidential palace. She showed no interest
at first knowing that you and Ginny was an item. But she immediately lit up when I told her
that you are now single and won’t stop pestering me about you. She also pester me about her
Charm mark and never fails to remind me that she is my younger sister. Lucky for her that she
has the talent in Charm to back her up, just like her older sister. She also told me to invite you
to our house in Grenoble. I told her that I will only invite you when you’re ready.

That is all for now, Harry. I hope everything there goes well for you. Please send my regards
to the Weasley, would you? I miss them.

I shall be waiting for your reply.

Love,

Fleur Isabelle Delacour.

Harry folded the letter carefully. The smell of lavender from that letter lingering in the air. He
leaned against the back of his chair and smiled.

'Things are going well here, Fleur,” he whispered. “Things are indeed going well.”

Over the next few months, both of them continued to correspond with each other. Through
those letters Harry began to learn more about Fleur. He learnt that beneath the unparalleled
grace and beauty, she was just an ordinary girl. She can be haughty at times but Harry
quickly learned that it was just a façade she wore merely as a protection and to sort out all
the weaker ones. Fleur also didn’t trust easily. That was the first lesson he learnt about her. In
fact, many months after Paris, he was still unsure if Fleur would even begin to trust him. But
in truth, even from those letters alone, he could see that she was kind, loving and fiercely
protective of her family. But of course like every other girls that ever lived, she had a few
quirks of her own. And Harry found the quirks whenever she visited Britain.

After the war, magical schools all around the world formed international cooperation, be it in
the form of educations or sports. The Triwizard Tournament that was held a few years back,
while ended up in a disaster, was responsible for spurring the movement. Beauxbatons,
Durmstrang and Hogwart's staffs made a lot of visits to each other's school. Harry
accompanied Fleur in some of the visits to Britain she made whenever he had some time off
from work. It was during her first visit in which he accompanied her that he found her quirks.
The tendency to speak out her mind and her penchant for blunt honesty did somehow put her
in a tight spot quite a few times. Some people might feel embarrassed while watching the
‘train wreck’, but to Harry, she looked so adorable whenever she realized she had accidentally
put her foot in her own mouth.

But it was not always about work though. Whenever both of them had some time off during
her visit, he will bring her along to visit Muggle London. They would visit some of the iconic
places such as the Trafalgar Square and the National Gallery, strolled along Hyde Park or take
a ride on the Eye of London. Fleur never really warmed up to British food, calling them too
oily and too overcooked for her taste so Harry would bring her to dinner at one of the French
restaurants situated along Bermondsey Street before sending her back to her place of stay at
Diagon Alley.
She of course had to cover herself a little bit more during the visits. Muggles men apparently were not immune to veela's allure. Harry did point this out once. Fleur told him that unlike other veelas, she did not have the ability to completely turn off that one ability of hers. She could only reduce it to some extent. Unfortunately even without the allure, her natural beauty still attracted unwanted attentions.

As time went by, their friendship got stronger and they both grew closer than ever. Through the letters they shared their hope and their dream, their secrets and their fear. They both lost someone they love. Something warm eventually grew within Harry. A feeling that had long being dormant but never being forgotten. He remembered the last time he felt this way. It was when the first time he realized he had feeling for Ginny. And now that feeling came back.

Harry had fallen in love with Fleur Delacour.

But he did not know if Fleur possessed the same feeling for him. They were close yes, but it did not mean that the veela also harbored romantic feelings for him. They never talked about anything romantic anyway. At the same time, he was too afraid to ask. Too afraid that the one question will destroy everything good they both had so he ended up keeping his feelings for her to himself, not knowing to where it will lead him.

Harry eventually decided to rest his hope on fate. If they were meant to be together, they will.

**Several months into the year...**

Ron and Hermione decided to hold their wedding later that year together with George who would be marrying Angelina Johnson. They were engaged for the last six months. Both Harry and Fleur were invited. It was decided that the double marriage ceremony will be held at The Burrow while a separate dinner reception for Hermione's relatives will be held at a different venue. Everyone was taken by surprise to see Fleur and Harry appeared together, even Ginny and began to ask a lot of questions. But Harry immediately explained to them that he and Fleur were just friends, that he was simply escorting her to The Burrow.

Little did he realize that Fleur was giving him a sharp look the moment he mentioned it.

The ceremony went smoothly. Both couples exchanged vows and later declared as husband and wife. Harry and Fleur stayed for the rest of the day and into the night, mingling with rest of the attendees and old friends such as Hagrid and his wife Madame Maxime, Dean Thomas, Seamus Finnigan, Katie Bell and many more. Oliver Wood’s appearance was a surprise. He came with his wife and their two daughters.

Somehow for some reason, Fleur never left his side all the time they were there. Harry noticed that Ginny was trying to approach him many times, especially during the after wedding dance but Fleur successfully blocked her every time. She won’t even let Harry dances with other girls. The situation though did not go one way. Fleur herself declined any invitation to dance from other wizards – in which she got a lot - and kept herself only for Harry.

**The house in Godric Hollow...**

It was a few months after the Weasley's wedding. Harry had finally saved enough galleons to buy a house. The location he chose - Godric Hollow, his birthplace. Of course with the large amount of money his parents and Sirius Black left him, he could have bought his own house years ago but Harry decided that he did not want to do that. Instead he set a portion from his monthly salary aside and took only a quarter portions from his inheritance. The total saved was enough to buy him a nice five bedroom house located just outside the town of Godric Hollow.

It was never his intention to buy a house actually. Earlier he expressed his desire to take back his parents’ house to Kingsley. Kingsley's advice somehow changed his mind. The minister told him that despite his right to reclaim his ancestral home, raising a family in a house where murders had occur was not a good idea, especially if the murders were done magically. That house would forever be tainted with dark magic and it would be wise for him to leave the house alone. Harry felt disappointed but at the same time he understood Kingsley's point. He began to search for a different house. He found the one he like eventually of course. He even sent some photos to Fleur. The girl told him that she loved it. She asked him why he did not just magically cleaned his parents' house and move there. He told her that while he was capable of doing that, it would be better to simply leave it as it is since there was no knowing the long term effect from what Voldemort did to the house. Fleur understood and told him that he had made a good decision.

Kreacher expressed his sadness when Harry told him that he will be moving out of Grimmauld Place. Harry made a promise to the old house elf that he won’t abandon him, that he will continue to visit Grimmauld Place whenever he can. He told Kreacher to take good care of the house as the house was the only place where the Black family could still be remembered.
**Five days after Christmas, the same year...**

It had been two days since he arrived at Grenoble, dubbed by many as the Capital of the Alps due to its proximity to the French Alps mountain range.

Fleur invited him for Christmas at Chateau Delacour three weeks before the Yule day but Harry told her that he won't be able to make it. He had to cover for aurors who got the day off. With the exception of few, many aurors were already married and since Harry was still single and did not have a family of his own, he decided to give those who have the chance to celebrate Christmas. He told her he could only make it on the third day. Fleur accepted.

It was one day before the New Years eve. The temperature was falling, signalling the oncoming winter. He, Fleur and Gabrielle were walking along the street of Rue Saint-Sulpice on their way to bottom station of Le Funiculaire de Saint-Hilaire du Toivet, a funicular train known for its steep inclination. Harry stayed in one of the hotel near the funicular railway bottom station and Fleur, who could drive a car, would fetch him from his hotel and brought him on a tour around the city of Grenoble. Gabrielle only joined them on the second day. Fleur had no choice but to bring her sister along. Gabrielle won't stop bugging her day and night. Harry told her that he did not mind Gabrielle tagging along. They spent the whole morning at the village of Saint-Hilaire du Toivet before going down and stopped for lunch at one of the restaurant in the city.

The Delacour family had invited him for dinner that night and Harry knew he had to get prepared so after lunch, he and the Delacour sisters went their separate ways. Harry went back to his hotel and at half past five, he took a taxi towards Chateau Delacour which was located in a village at the outskirt of city. The journey took him about twenty minutes through winding country roads and beautiful villages. It was not long before he could finally see the house where Fleur lives.

The marble white building certainly deserved the word chateau to its name. It was huge, much bigger than an average country house and was certainly much bigger than what the Malfoy had with sprawling, well kept lawn and beautiful garden. The taxi entered the huge archway and travelled through the gravel road that split the front compound in half. It stopped at the marble entrance stair and after paying the driver, he exited the vehicle. Harry took the time to absorb the surrounding. The chateau was indeed surrounded by well kept garden and to his left, he saw a huge car garage. He raised his eyebrows and let out a low whistle when he noticed two Rolls-Royce Phantoms sat within one of the garage spaces and, as far as French patriotism could get, a Citroen C6 in another along with several other sport cars. One of them belongs to Fleur. A helipad located not far from the garage. It was definitely a far cry from the Shell Cottage, the house where Fleur and Bill once resided.

He never expected the Delacour to be this rich. When the first time he saw Mr. and Mrs. Delacour at the Burrow, the way they dressed and the way they behaved were so understated that one would expect that they were simply a really nice French family rather than a crazily rich one. Bill himself never talked much about his in laws anyway and Harry never sought to ask him.

A blast of cold evening air woke him up from his reminiscent. Shaking his head, he proceeded to push the door bell. A house elf dressed in white greeted him.

"Yes?" squeaked the house elf.

"I am Harry Potter. I was invited here by the patriarch of the Delacour," said Harry.

The house elf bowed. "Indeed young sir. Please come in. They is expecting you." The elf then made way for Harry to enter.

"Thank you," said Harry as he stepped over the threshold and into the chateau.

The house elf bowed. He guided Harry to the center of the cavernous lobby and told him to wait while he alerted the Delacour.

Harry stood there alone, marveling at the luxurious decor of the château’s lobby. Various paintings and marble statues lined up the walls. A huge crystal chandelier hang from the ceiling at the center of the lobby, its illumination complemented the light projected by various wall hanging lamps placed strategically around the lobby. Under the chandelier stood a huge Christmas tree. A huge marble staircase laid in front of him that lead to the first floor of the chateau. Two oak doors flanked the sweeping stair and to his right he saw a broom rack mounted against the wall. A black marble fireplace large enough for an average size adult to stand in it was located at the left wall. Harry noticed that the fireplace did not have any firewood in it which would only mean one thing. That fireplace was meant only for floo travel. It was good to know that despite owning several luxurious muggle cars, the family did not abandoned magical transportation.

"You're early."
Harry turned his gaze towards the top of the stairs and saw a girl wearing a shoulder strapless dress made out of silvery satin that went down and fully covered her feet. Her hair was tight in a bun. A silver necklace adorning her neck matched her earrings.

"And you look beautiful. I'm sorry. I hope this would be enough. I've never been to a dinner at a girl's house before," said Harry, referring to the tuxedo he was wearing.

Fleur raised her eyebrows. "What about the Burrow? Not even 'er?"

Harry knew to whom the Delacour heiress was referring to. He shook his head. "Those were never formal. I simply wear whatever I grab first."

Fleur let out a laugh. She then walked down the stairs and upon arriving in front of Harry, held out her right hand to him. Harry took the hand and kissed it.

"This would be enough, Monsieur Potter," she said softly. "I saw the taxi. I know you 'ave arrived."

"Ah. Figures," said Harry. "That's why you're the first to appear. This is a really nice château you got here."

Fleur smiled. "It's just a 'ouse, 'Arry."

"Yeah but still, it's very nice. I didn't know it would be this big. Funny, Bill never told.-."

"I told Bill not to tell anyone," Fleur cut him. From the look of her face, she was serious. "Zhe same zhing I told my former parent in law. People are going to talk, 'Arry. Especially if they know zhat Bill was marrying zhe daughter of an extremely rich man. We both know how zhe Weasley were like. Zhe differences between our families are too large. I don't want people talking bad zhings behind zheir back and also mine."

Harry went silent. He was at lost on what to say for her. A few moments later, he ended up apologizing.

"I'm sorry. I didn't know."

"Zhat's okay. 'Arry. You don't 'ave to apologize," said Fleur. "But I do 'ope zhat you won't spread zhe words over zhere. Zhe Delacours are quite well known in France but not over zhe English Channel. I prefer to keep it zhat way."

"You have my word, Fleur," Harry tried to assure her. "I won't say a word."

"Zhank you, 'Arry."

At that very moment, they heard another voice coming from upstairs. They looked up and saw Gabrielle, followed by a female assistant, trying desperately to adjust the dress she was wearing.

"I know I should not have choose this dress! I am such an idiot !", she grumbled.


Gabrielle looked up. Her eyes widened when she saw her sister and Harry. She immediately ran down the stairs and began to speak in rapid French with Harry the moment she arrived in front of him. Fleur had to calm her sister down. "She was apologizing to you," said Fleur who knew Harry spoke very little French. She then turned towards Gabrielle. "Where are mama and papa?"

Fleur's question was answered when the oak door on the right opened, revealing Mr. and Mrs. Delacour.

"Mister Potter," said Monsieur Delacour as he walked towards the three of them. "I see zhat you 'ave met my daughters."

"Sir," said Harry. He bowed to Monsieur Delacour and shook hands with him. "It is zhat honor to be here."

Monsieur Delacour smiled. He had yet to let go of Harry's hand. "Zhe 'onor belongs to us," he said. He then gestured to the woman who stood beside him. "I'm sure you 'ave met my wife, Appoline."

Appoline Delacour, the mother of Fleur and Gabrielle, was certainly a woman of unparalleled beauty. She was probably not a lot younger than Monsieur Delacour but her appearance did not show that. Anyone who did not know her would probably guesstimate her age to probably
around mid twenties or early thirties.

Appoline stepped forward and held out her hand to him. He took the hand and kissed it. "Mrs. Delacour."

"Charm," replied Appoline. "You certainly look different from the first time I saw you. Time really flies, isn't it, Mister Potter?"

Harry smiled and nodded. "Time indeed flies, Mrs. Delacour. But you still look ageless as you always were."

Appoline raised her silvery eyebrows. "Flatterer. I didn't know you share the same trait as my husband," she said as she glanced at her husband.

Harry turned to look at Monsieur Delacour. "Same trait?"

But the Delacour patriarch just chuckled. Instead of answering Harry's question, he gestured all of them towards the château's dining hall. "Come. Let's not keep our guest waiting," he said.

The château's dining hall was just as, if not more, grand looking as the whole house. Its arched ceiling was high and decorated with Renaissance paintings. Two huge chandeliers hanged high from the beautiful ceiling provided the illumination for hall. At the center of the hall lies a long dining table that could seat in around thirty guests. A bouquet of red roses was placed in the middle of it.

Monsieur Delacour gestured them all to the high back seats. As soon as they sat at the table, dishes upon dishes of sumptuous French cuisines magically appeared on the table.

It did take Harry by surprise. The way the dishes appeared on the table made him wondered if the château's kitchen was under the dining hall, just like the one at Hogwarts.

The dinner with the Delacours was really pleasant. Soon after, all the doubts that surfaced inside him the moment he arrived at the château had all but disappeared. His hosts really know how to make him feel at home. They eat, exchanged conversations and get to know each other. The more Harry learns about the Delacours, the more impressed he got.

The Delacour clan was well known for their association with veelas. Monsieur Delacour certainly was not the only Delacour who married a veela. And unlike its Bulgarian counterpart, French veelas belong to a higher class, more notable and royal bloodline that dated back thousands of years ago. The Delacour bloodline meanwhile was well known for their tact in business and their influences in French's politics for hundreds of years.

Another fact that surprised Harry so much was that Appoline, Fleur and Gabrielle were not half or quarter veelas like every one was led to believe. They were in fact full blooded veela. The vision of them sprouting feathers all over their body and beak growing out of their face invaded his mind momentarily. He immediately shook it off. "Half and quarter veela was just a myth", said Monsieur Delacour. He mentioned that if quarter and half veelas did exist, they would have long become extinct since all veelas were essentially female.

The dinner soon ended. Monsieur Delacour invited Harry for a drink inside his personal library. Appoline and her two daughters meanwhile headed towards the kitchen.

Monsieur Delacour's library was surprisingly much more spartan compared to the rest of the house. There were books of course, lining its every wall. There was a large window and two high back armchair placed facing towards it. Between the chairs was a small coffee table. Monsieur Delacour gestured Harry to one of the chairs. He himself walked towards the wine rack located just beside the window. He took out two empty glasses and poured wine into it. He handed one to Harry. Harry muttered thanks and took a sip.


Harry nodded. He had to agree. He was used to firewhisky and butterbeer, but the drink he was holding was entirely something else. He had never tasted anything quite like it. Given the Delacours' status, Harry suspected the wine would cost an arm and a leg to buy.

They continued to chat. Monsieur Delacour told Harry about his family, about Bill and the aftermath of Bill's death. His son in law's demise apparently had hit the family really hard and from what Harry could surmise, they really loved Bill. The Weasley's eldest son was the first outsider who managed to get over the veela's allure and married one.

"What do you want with my daughter, 'Arry?" Monsieur Delacour suddenly asked Harry.
That question took Harry by surprise. He truly did not know how to respond to it. "I, I don't know what you mean by that, sir," he stammered.

"Oh I'm sure you understand my question, Mister Potter," said Monsieur Delacour. He leaned back against the back of his chair. Not once his bright blue eyes wavered from the young man who sat in front of him. "It iz not zhat difficult to zhink. Not many outsiders aside from our relatives, close friends, business partners and government officials ever set zheir foot in this house. Fleur invited you 'ere. I am sure zhere must be somethzing."

"Sir, Fleur invited me here to celebrate Christmas. I of course could not fulfil it because I have to work so she invited me for dinner after the Yule in which I agreed. I don't have any hidden or ulterior motive towards your daughter. She is my best friend, like Hermione and Ron. I accepted her invitation based solely on that capacity," replied Harry calmly.

"I see," said Monsieur Delacour as he looked at Harry seriously. "So zhere iz no love in zhere somewhere? None at all?"

At this point, Harry dearly wanted to confess his true feelings. But then again, not knowing what Fleur's feeling was for him put a damper to that. Clapping with just a single hand was not what he had in mind. One could use a wall though, if that person did not mind getting hurt. "I do love her, sir," said Harry, causing the Delacour patriarch to cock his eyebrows. "But only as a friend. Nothing more. She is a wonderful girl and certainly deserves someone very special. I don't think that would be me."

"Are you sure?" asked Monsieur Delacour, cocking his eyebrows.

Harry nodded. "Very sure. We do enjoyed each other companies but we never talked anything romantic. I don't want to push it too far either. Besides, she once married to Bill and Bill is my friend as well. I don't want to tarnish his memories." Harry then looked down in discomfort.

Monsieur Delacour said nothing at first. He put his glass on the coffee table and walked towards the window. Harry simply looked on.

Uncomfortable silence grew between them. Monsieur Delacour continued to stare out the window and Harry just sat there, his hands playing with the glass he was holding.

"Peaceful, izn't it?" asked Monsieur Delacour. From where he stood, he could see lights coming in from nearby country homes. "Zhiz exactly zhe reason why I chose zhis place to build a home. Do you trust her, 'Arry?"

"I do," answered Harry. "She had done more than she could during the war, even to the detriment of her own safety. I really can't ask her for more."

"Zhen I zhink it would be comforting for you to know zhat she trusts you as well. Otherwise, you won't be here inside zhis house," said Monsieur Delacour, still looking out the window. "Trust iz very important to a veela due to zheir very nature. A veela's trust iz not easily obtainable but it could be very easily be taken away. Zhat iz one zhing I want you to remember: My daughter gave you a precious gift. I do expect you to take care of it properly."

"Of course, sir. I will," said Harry.

Monsieur Delacour nodded in satisfaction. "Now on to a more pressing matter," he said as he turned to face Harry. "I know it would be 'ighly inappropriate for me to do zhis, but I do 'ope zhat you and Fleur would become more zhan just friends."

Harry was taken aback. "Sir?"

But Monsieur Delacour pretended not to notice Harry's reaction. He continued. "'Arry, for a brief period of time after Bill's death, Fleur was totally devastated. She was completely not 'erself. Both Appoline and I know zhat our daughter 'ad lost it. We tried to bring 'er back. We took 'er to zhe veela's village and asked zhe veela priestesses for 'elp. Zhey did what zhey could and zhanfully it worked. To some extend of course. It was zhen Madame Maxime 'eard of 'er predicament. She really loves Fleur, you know. She offered 'er a place at Beauxbaton, reasoning zhat my daughter may need somethzing to take 'er mind off 'er dead husband. My daughter reluctantly agreed. Much to our relief, 'er conditions improved after she became a teacher at zhe magical school. It was not much but we take whatever it iz we could get. Strangely enough, 'er conditions improve tremendously after zhe World War II celebration in Paris. We did not meet but but Fleur told us she met you there."

Harry nodded. "Yes, I was there. I did meet your daughter."

"I see. And zhat settles it."

Harry's eyebrows creased. "I don't understand."
Monsieur then took a seat in front of Harry. "'Arry, Appoline and I are not getting any younger. Before we go, we need to know that our daughters would be well taken care of. We don't need a rich man. What we need iz a good man whom we could trust, whom our daughter could trust, who could take care of the Delacour heiress az good az we have."

Harry began to understand Monsieur Delacour's point. "Then I am the wrong person you're talking to," he said.

Monsieur Delacour cocked his eyebrows. "And why is that I might ask?"

"Sir, I broke up with a former lover because she could not accept the fact that someday I would become an auror. Bill was her brother and she reasoned that with me becoming an auror, I will inevitably meet the same fate. In a way, she was right. I will only ended up hurting her so I let her go. If what happened to Bill affect Fleur that much, you won't want me to be your son in law," said Harry firmly.

"So I take it that if you did not become an auror, you will live forever?" asked Monsieur Delacour.

Harry was stumped. He did know how to reply at first. "Well I did not mean it that way."

"And you zink zhat I did not zhink matters through?"

Harry shook his head. "No. I definitely do not think it that way."

"Zhere is always zhe risk in everyzhing," said Monsieur Delacour as he took the glass on the table and drank its remaining content. "I zhink you are giving me and my daughter far less credit zhan what we deserve. Fleur won't bring you here if she zought less of you."

"So this is about me marrying Fleur? Is this what the dinner is all about?" asked Harry.

Monsieur Delacour shook his head. "No. She invited you az a friend. You come here az a friend."

"Oh."

"Zhat iz what you said, izn't it?" asked Monsieur Delacour further. "Az a friend. But I'm a man, 'Arry. Just like you. And I can read a man from zhe way he looks at a woman. You, Mister 'Arry Potter, love my daughter romantically. Your feelings for her iz not just between friends. Zhere iz more to it. I can see it in your eyes."

Silence.

Harry looked down. "I'm sorry. It is something beyond my control," he finally admitted.

Monsieur Delacour smiled triumphantly. "Of course. Love iz never somezhing zhat we can control of. But why apologize? To be honest with you, we were lucky."

Harry looked up. "Lucky?"

"Yes. Lucky. Zhat you were zhe one chosen to fall in love with my daughter. I know somezhing happened at zhat celebration but I did not know you're zhe one involved. Zhankfully, it only brought good rather zhan bad," said Monsieur Delacour. "You did not take advantage of my daughter. I thank you for zhat. She was still vulnerable at zhat time."

"She certainly did not look like it," said Harry. "She had always been the Fleur I have always known."

"Trust me 'Arry, she was vulnerable," said Monsieur Delacour. "We searched for her when we realized she had gone. When she came back she told us she was with you. We know she wasn't lying because you came in after her from zhe balcony. So, my question is, what are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know, sir," admitted Harry. "Yes I love her, but I'm not sure if she felt the same way to me. Besides, I'm younger than her. She could simply see me as nothing more than a younger brother. I don't think I would be willing to admit my feelings to her. It could destroy all the good things that we both had. I prefer it to be this way."

Monsieur Delacour looked hard at Harry. Then he said, "Propose to her."

"Proposed?!” exclaimed Harry, wide eyed. "But sir, I'm not sure if your daughter even loves me!"

"You already have zhe ingredient, Mister Potter," said Monsieur Delacour. "Both of you. You have friendship closer zhan I zhink it iz. The strength of trust between you is probably
stronger than you think it is. Believe me, from friendship and trust, love will come. You and Fleur only need to give it a chance. Once it blossom, take good care of it. Both of you will share a bond much stronger than even the toughest steel."

Harry remained quiet as he continued to digest what Monsieur Delacour said.

Monsieur Delacour took the advantage to continue. "None of the women in this house knows what we're talking about," said Monsieur Delacour calmly. "This is just between you and me. Propose to her, 'Arry. Then we shall find out what is coming. But remember, if things do go as planned, do not take her for granted. Remember these words 'Arry, when a woman gives you her time, she is giving you a portion of her life in which she will never get it back. Don't make her regret it."

It took a while, but Harry finally nodded.

**Later that night...**

Monsieur Delacour told Harry to stay for the night. A guest room had been made available for him.

Harry told the Delacour patriarch that he did not bring extra clothing. He then was told that all of his belonging had been brought to the guest room by the house elves. He can returned the hotel keys the next day to the hotel before he returns to England.

Both of them walked pass the entrance to the kitchen on their way to the guest room. Monsieur Delacour gestured Harry to wait. He walked into the kitchen, leaving Harry at the entrance.

Harry simply watched as Monsieur Delacour hugged and kissed his wife. She and her daughters, still in their beautiful dresses, were washing the dishes, much to the house elves' dismay.

It was at this point Harry realized on why Fleur never complaint about having to do all the chores during her time at the Shell Cottage. She was trained to do all those despite her family owned four to five house elves. That was also why she got bored during her time at the Burrow. There was virtually nothing she could do. Mrs Weasley pretty much conquered all the house work.

He continued to watch the family bonding, joking, conversing and teasing each other. He of course understood none of it because they were speaking in rapid French. But still, it was good to know that they were happy.

Fleur noticed Harry was watching them from the kitchen threshold. She gave him a wide smile in which he returned.

Little that she realized the turmoil that was raging deep within him.

**A few months later...**

He took the better part of the first few months to think on whether or not he should proceed. Despite Monsieur Delacour insistence that night, he was still afraid that what he was asked to do would ruin everything.

Meanwhile, the situation between him and Fleur got better even more. They both took the path of the muggles and got each other a smartphone. Sometimes, some of the things the non magical people did were much better than the wizards. No longer they had to wait for each other replies. Sending out messages and receiving them would be instantaneous. Of course the poor thing went haywire the moment Harry brought it into his home. He had to modify and put extra wards into his house so that any muggle instrument could be used. Nowadays, it had become normal to see him and Fleur talked and texted late into the night. But as before, they talked nothing romantic and Harry did not even hint to her that he was going to propose.

**The proposal...**

In early May the same year, Harry once again found himself in Grenoble.

He and Fleur were walking along the jogging path in a park located at the bank of River Isere. The sky was bright and the day was warm. Harry was wearing a grey t-shirt and a worn blue jean. Fleur meanwhile wore a light coloured sleeveless dress with the skirt reaching just below her knees. A cream coloured scarf covered the bottom half of her face. But despite her effort, she still attracted a lot of attention from men within the park. One saving grace was that nobody tried to get near her. The credit of course goes to the man who walked beside her.

As they reached a path that lead to an old bridge that crossed the River Isere, Harry suddenly stopped. There, in front of Fleur, he knelt.
With a ring in his hand, Harry proposed to Fleur Isabelle Delacour.

Fleur simply stood there and did nothing at first. She stared wide eyed at Harry who was kneeling in front of her. Then her surprised face slowly turned into a frown with a hint of anger.

"How could you!" she shouted. Fleur then turned and immediately departed towards her car.

Harry who was feeling so stupid and embarrassed as people all around were watching them tried to catch up with her.

"Fleur wait!" he said. "Look, I'm sorry. I really am. I didn't mean to hurt you or anything. It's just-"

But Fleur ignored him. She continued to walk fast towards her car. She immediately got in the moment she arrived and drove off.

Harry could only watch as Fleur's car disappeared into the traffic. He sighed. He then slowly walked back towards the place where the failed proposal had happened. Taking a seat at one of the vacant benches nearby, he landed his gaze sadly towards Grenoble's skyline.

He had destroyed it. He had destroyed everything that he and Fleur both had. He should have known that Fleur would never accept him. He was just 'that little boy' to her eyes after all. It was foolish of him to think that the most beautiful veela in all of France would loved him back.

Dusk had finally settled in. Harry knew that it was time for him to go back to his hotel. He stood up and took out the ring from his pocket. He gazed at it momentarily before he finally threw the ring into the river.

**August, the same year...**

For the next couple of months he heard nothing from her. Harry tried to call but she would not answer. He texted her many times but none of it were replied until finally he resorted to using the traditional method via the owl.

But still, nothing. Until August came.

It was Friday. On that day, he was supposed to depart for Moscow on an unscheduled mission. But before making his departure, he wrote one last letter to Fleur.

Dear Fleur,

I hope you would read this. I had been trying to reach you through any means necessary. We both know how it went.

I am sorry. I am sorry for what I did. I know it was wrong. I know it was foolish of me to try. I should have known that you would still love Bill, that it would be foolish of me trying to replace him. It was totally uncalled for. Nobody is going to replace him. I know that now.

The truth is Fleur, I had been in love with you for quite some time. But I didn't know if you would reply in kind. I know it now. There won't be any place for me in your heart. I figure that since this will be the last letter I sent you, I might as well tell you the truth.

I will forever cherish what we had before. I will always remember our friendship. I pray and hope that someday and somewhere, you will find the person who will love you as much as you will love him. I promise that I won't stand in the way and I promise that I won't disturb you anymore.

Thank you for everything.

Goodbye,

Harry James Potter.

Harry took one last look at the picture Fleur gave him during his visit to Grenoble before putting it inside the envelope. He was going to return it to Fleur. He won't need it anymore. He knew he had to forget her and moved on. He then grabbed his phone and took out the simcard. He broke the simcard in two and threw away the phone. The phone hit the floor hard and broke into many pieces. Harry ignored it.

After re-reading the letter a few more times, he put it inside the envelope and sealed it. And after handing the letter to his owl, Harry immediately departed to the ministry, and then to Moscow.

**Moscow, Russia...**
The Russian government had asked for Harry's help to hunt a well known dark wizard named Vladimir Alexander Khrushchev, more popular known as The Sickle. It was rumored that he was the direct descendant of the wizard Rasputin. The height of his activities was during the 1980s. The Chernobyl explosion was not due to human error or equipment failure as many were led to believe. It was his handiwork and thanks to him, much of Ukraine and Eastern Europe were contaminated. He went below the radar during the 1990s and resurfaced a few weeks ago. A village near Minsk was obliterated. Hundreds of people died within less than an hour. Official report blamed gas leak but of course the Russian officers knew that it was not the case.

Harry spent the first seven months tracking the elusive wizard. It brought him into the frozen tundra of the Siberia, to the far eastern Russia and into the volcanic land of Kamchatka and once into the ghost town of Pripyat where the ghostly remains of the Chernobyl reactor loomed within the horizon.

It was only on the eighth month that he finally got a strong lead on Khrushchev's whereabouts. He brought along an army of Russian aurors and in the forest bordering Poland, a fierce and violent battle erupted. Five aurors went down in the first few minutes of the fight before Harry realized the aurors would only distracted him rather than help him. To prevent further casualties, he commanded them to stay away from the fight and stand guard while he himself fought Khrushchev.

Khrushchev was powerful, but Harry had more skill. He was faster as well. Couple with his youth, he managed to gain the upper hand in the fight. In the end, Khrushchev's wand flew into his hand and the dark wizard lay dead at Harry's feet.

The Russians, apparently impressed with Harry, offered him a place within the Russian Ministry for Magic with very attractive remuneration package. Harry of course declined the offer and after staying in Moscow for the next few weeks, departed for Britain.

**Godric Hollow...**

A bunch of letters awaited him on the dining table the moment he arrived that afternoon. After putting away his things, he went back to check on them. Much to his surprise, some of them were from Fleur.

He was wondering on whether or not he should open Fleur's letter. But then he remembered his promise to her, that he will never contacted her again. Sighing, he gathered all of Fleur's letter and threw them into the fireplace.

That night, a few of his friends came to visit. Ron came with his wife Hermione and Neville came with his girlfriend Hannah Abbot. Hermione has been pregnant for three months now while Neville was engage to Hannah. They will be holding their wedding in a few months time. Neville also told him that Headmistress McGonagall had offered him a place at Hogwarts.Apparently Professor Sprout was planning to retire and had suggested the headmistress to employ Neville as her successor. He was still thinking about it but hinted to Harry that he might take up the offer. Ron meanwhile told him that he was thinking of joining George in his business.

"I'm still thinking about it," said Ron. "Guess we'll see."

The five of them had a few drinks and chatted before the two couples took leave near midnight.

For two weeks everything went as normal. Being the Head of the DMLE, Harry was kept busy all day long, buried in tonnes of paperwork. It went that way every day.

Until that fateful Friday arrived.

Harry had just got back from lunch with Ron, Neville and Mr. Weasley. Just as he arrived at the DMLE office, Hermione gave him a knowing look and told him that someone was waiting for him inside his office.

Harry nodded and muttered thanks. He opened the door to his office and his jaw dropped.

There, sitting on the guest couch was someone he had not seen or heard of for quite a long time.

Fleur Delacour.

Fleur looked up. The moment she saw him, she immediately rushed towards Harry and gave him a tight hug. Harry replied in kind.

"What are you doing here?" asked Harry after Fleur released him.
"I need to talk to you," answered Fleur. "You-." She suddenly paused. Her eyes travelled up and down him. "You don't have your phone with you."

"No I don't. I threw it away," confessed Harry. "I have no use of it anymore."

"And my letters?"

"I burnt them."

"I see," said Fleur softly. "I heard what happened in Russia. You didn't tell me-."

"What is there to tell, Fleur?" Harry cut in. "You did read my last letter, didn't you? I made a promise, remember? I moved on."

Fleur bit her lips and looked down. A few moments later, she nodded.

Seeing Fleur remained silent, Harry said, "And I'm not someone who would willingly go back on my promise. What is it, Fleur? Why have you come here?"

Fleur sighed. "We need to talk but here may not be the best place."

Harry nodded. "Very well," he said. "But you need to wait. It would be a few more hours before I could get out of here."

Fleur nodded. "I'll wait."

**Along the riverbank of Thames, London...**

Harry finally managed to settle all of the day's work and get out of his office at a quarter before six.

They both walked along the bank of the famous River of Thames, watching boats sailing by. Nobody said anything at first. At a three point junction of the path they were walking, Fleur suddenly stopped. Her eyes were fixed on a boathouse that glides lazily nearby.

"Tell me, 'Arry. Will I regret it?" she asked.

"What? Regret? I'm not sure I understand what you are talking about," said Harry as he looked at her questioningly.

"You know what I am talking about, 'Arry. Just answer the question. Tell me, will I regret it?"

At this point, Harry had a hunch of what Fleur meant about. It was about his proposal many months ago. He then turned his gaze towards the river and said, "I have no control over that."

Fleur cocked her eyebrows.

Without looking at her, he continued, "But I can tell these to any girl I will eventually marry. I will tell them that I can't make any regret that they might have go away. I will tell them that I can't give them back all the time they wasted on me. I will tell them what I can and will do. I can love them. I can care for them. I can defend their honor and uphold their trust to the best of my abilities. And I will not abandon them. And I will always be with them until my dying breath."

Fleur smiled satisfactorily. She then took Harry's hand and leaned forward to give a surprised Harry a light kiss on his lips.

"Very well zhen, Monsieur Potter," she said softly. "If zhat is zhe case, zhen my answer will be yes."

**Flashback epilogue...**

The wedding took place a few months after the event at the bank of River Thames. It took everyone by surprise, especially the Weasleys. But Monsieur Delacour had patiently explained to them the reason. Much to Harry's relieved, they accepted it, though a bit reluctantly. Harry was worried that they will accuse him for tainting Bill's memory but the Weasleys had given their assurance that they will never think of him that way.

Fleur of course had explained to Harry the reason behind her rejection and her silence. Harry accepted it.

All of Harry's friends, with the exception of Ginny, attended his wedding. It was held for the first time ever at Chateau Delacour. Harry held his breath as he watched Fleur, accompanied by her father, walked down the aisle. Gabrielle and a girl Harry assumed would be one of the Delacour's relative followed from behind as bridesmaids.
She was breathtakingly beautiful. Her radiance alone shined on all of invitees. And on the altar, they both exchanged vows and were finally declared as husband and wife.

Fleur moved in to Godric Hollow a few weeks later. Monsieur Delacour was gracious enough to provide a house elf for the newlyweds. Harry had the fireplace within the house specially connected to Beauxbaton so that his wife could continue teaching. Fleur however decided to resign from her post the moment she finds out that she was pregnant with Victoire. She wanted to concentrate on her family, just like her mother did.

For many years, the couple and their children led a good life. They watched their children grow. They accompanied them to King Cross Station when their children were accepted into Hogwarts. They were there when Harry gave Victoire away to her husband. They were there when Dominique and Louise got married. They were there to celebrate the birth of their first grandson.

And during all those times, despite the twist and turns and the ups and downs, the bond between Harry and Fleur grew stronger than ever. And throughout all those times, Harry kept to his words.

Until that fateful day arrived when Death took Fleur away and Harry found himself in a train compartment with Ron and Hermione on their way to Hogwarts.

Flashback ends...

Next and future chapters: Present part all the way!
9. Chapter 9

Chapter 8

The Great Hall, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry...

Ron's bad mood eased up the moment they entered the Hogwarts dining hall. The smell of bacon, steaks, lamb chops, casserole, mash potatoes and various pies and puddings filled up the air. The trio immediately took their usual seats at the Gryffindor table and Ron quickly piled up his plate with everything within his reach and began eating.

Hermione tutted with disgust as she observed Ron's table manners. "Honestly," she said to Ron. "You're already fourteen years old. Grow up!"

"Vut fly yam frowin wup," said Ron. His mouth at that time was full with lamb chop and mash potatoes. "Wat far fiur falkin afoot?"

Bits of food flew out of his mouth as he spoke.

"Speak English, Ron! I couldn't understand a word you say. And stop talking with your mouth full! You're spraying the food all over the table!"

Ron swallowed his food and said, "I said I am growing up. What are you talking about?"

"Your table manners," said Hermione. "You're acting like you haven't taste food for two months straight."

"I had breakfast this morning," pointed out Ron.

"Then act like you had one!" exclaimed Hermione. "Honestly, can't you be like Harry? Look at him. At least he-, wait!" She stared at Harry. "Since when you like apple pie, Harry?"

Harry who took the role as a silent observer stared down at his plate. On it was a half eaten apple pie. He then turned to look at Hermione. "Since forever?"

"No, it's not!" interjected Hermione. "Since our first years I never saw you touch an apple pie before. It will always be something like the kidney and steak pie or treacle tart."

"Well, maybe I have decided to try something new," said Harry. Using a knife, he cut the slice of pie, jabbed the pieces with a fork and put it in his mouth. "Anyway, this is much healthier than the alternative. Important especially for an old guy like me."

Hermione continued to stare at Harry. "Right. An old guy like you," she said sarcastically. "Since when the age of fourteen is considered old? And you never really use a fork and a knife when eating a pie before."

Harry nearly slapped himself in the face. He had forgotten that despite possessing the mentality of a 92 years old man, he was now in a body of a teenager. "It was just an expression, Hermione," he said hastily. "You should be thankful that I don't have dementia."

"You're too young to have dementia, Harry. Oh, well. At least you have proper manners compare to this one who now sits beside me."

Ron took another huge swallow of his food. "Hey!"

No sooner had she stopped talking, the trio heard feet shuffling. Fred, George and Lee Jordan who were sitting a little bit further from them before coasted closer and joined the trio.

"Can't help but hear everything you said, Hermione," said George, grinning.

"But while your criticism towards our dear old brother was spot on," said Fred.

"You might want to consider the sorry state of your empty plate," finished George.

Hermione looked down at her plate and just realized she had spent the last few minutes criticising Ron and interrogating Harry that she totally forgot to have her lunch. Ignoring the snickering made by twin and their close friend, she gingerly doled the beef casserole on her plate and began to eat.

"Attagirl," said Fred. "You know it would be a poor repayment for all the effort the house elves put in preparing these fine dishes if you refuse to eat them."

Hermione nearly sprayed her food the moment she heard what Fred just said. "House elves? What do you mean house elves?"
"You shouldn't have mentioned it, Fred," said Ron, shaking his head. "You really should not have mentioned it."

"Ah, right," said Fred as he watched Hermione with great apprehension. "I forgot."

It was a well known fact on how sensitive the issue of the house elf was to Hermione ever since the tragedy that arose at the Quidditch World Cup. She had never quite forgotten Winky and her master's treatment towards the poor house elf.

Ignoring Ron, she stared, horror-struck, at Fred. "There are house elves here?" she asked. "Here at Hogwarts?"

Fred sighed. "Oh well. Better to tell the truth than keep on lying. Continue Brother George. Let the light of the enlightenment shine on those we deem lesser."

George said, "As thou wish, Brother Fred." He turned to Hermione. "Yes there are house elves in Hogwarts. Lots of them. Nearly a hundred methinks."

"But-, but-, but I never seen one!" said Hermione.

"Well, they hardly left the kitchen by day, do they?" said Fred.

"Absolutely right my dear Fred," said George. "They usually come out at night to do a little bit of cleaning, lighting up the fireplace, do the laundry and so on."

"We thought that being the cleverest of your year, you would have already figured it out," said Lee Jordan.

"No, I haven't," said Hermione, irritated. "How would I know? Filch-.

"What? Do you think Filch did all those?" asked Fred. "Why do you think Dumbledore only employs one caretaker to take care this one big huge castle? No pun intended. Come to think of it though, one could think that Hogwarts is in severe budget cuts that they don't have any money to employ more."

"One caretaker," said George.

"One gamekeeper," pointed out Lee Jordan.

"And one living dead teacher," said Fred, referring to Professor Binns.

"That's enough!" said Hermione. "Now about the house elves. Like I said, I have never seen one. I take it this is one of your jokes or pranks, sort of."

"It's not a joke. We're serious," said Fred.

"No, we're not serious. Serious is out there somewhere," said George deadpanned. "The last I check I'm George, you're Gred and this is Michael Jordan."

Harry felt uneasy when they mentioned Sirius Black even though he knew they were simply joking. He continued to keep quiet while at the same time wondering where his godfather was hiding.

"Shut it you two!" said Hermione.

"Okay! Okay! Sorry," said Fred, raising both his hands in defeat. "Now let's get serious-."

"We can't. We don't know where he is," said George, once again deadpanned.

"Stop driving me crazy!"

"Okay that's enough you two," said Ron to his twin brothers. He took a gulp of pumpkin juice from his goblet and continued. "Yeah, Hogwarts has house elves. At least that's what mom and dad told us. You remember whenever she got loads to do she would always wish that she had a house elf to help her around?" he asked his twin brothers.

The twin nodded fervently.

"And since when you're going to tell me all these?" asked Hermione sternly.

Ron shrugged. "Must have slipped my mind. But then, given the way you react every time the word house elf is mentioned, I'm pretty sure keeping you out of the loop is a better idea."

Hermione huffed indignantly.
"Look Hermione," said Lee Jordan. "The main reason why you never saw they work is because that is the way, you know, they work."

"And being unnoticeable while doing their job is a mark of a good house elf," said George.

"All you will see would be everything had been laid out for you. Your bed, your laundry, those feet warmers you'll find whenever you go to bed every night and the fireplace. Filch definitely don't do those kind of things," stated Fred.

"Yeah. Besides, how would you feel knowing Filch broke into the girls dormitories every night to perform his 'duties'?" said Lee Jordan while at the same time making an air quote around the word duties.

Both the twin and Lee Jordan broke into a long and hard laugh. It took quite a while before their laugh subsided.

"The-," said George as he wiped his eyes from the tears of laughter. "The content of his dresser will be mightily interesting. Something lacy probably. Sorry, Hermione," he hastily apologized the moment he noticed Hermione's face reddened.


"House elves want none of those things," stated Fred flatly.

"That is ridiculous," scoffed Hermione. "Nobody in their right mind would want to do a job without getting paid. Anyway, this school is a government institution. Every employee is protected by law."

Fred shook his head. "You really don't get it, do you?" he said. He took a pudding and began eating it. "House elves don't want any of those things. They really don't. They just like the job. It is in their nature to serve humans like us. They had to have a master. I'm not making up all these facts. You can ask any of the teachers or even a house elf if you happen to see one."

Hermione went silent. She looked down at the half eaten food on her plate. She then put her knife and fork down upon it and pushed the plate away. "Slave labour," she muttered under her breath. "That's what making this lunch. Slave labour." She ended up refused to eat another bite.

The rest of the boys who sat around her glanced at each other and shook their head.

Lee Jordan leaned forward. "What's the thing we want to talk about before we join this table?" he asked.

"Oh yeah! I nearly forgot!" said George. He turned towards Harry and Ron. "We had Defences Against the Dark Art class before lunch."

Ron raised his eyebrows. "Wicked! So you had Moody! How cool is he?"

George let out a low whistle. "Super cool," he said as he gave two thumbs up.

"He's beyond cool," agreed Fred.

"So what was it like?" asked Ron eagerly.

Fred, George and Lee Jordan exchanged meaningful look.

"Never had anything like it," said Fred.

"He knows, man," added Lee Jordan.

"What? He knows what?" asked Ron impatiently.

"Knows what it's like to be out there. Doing it," said George impressively. "Fighting the dark wizards. I mean, he had seen it all, done it all. He was virtually at the front seat all the time, you know."

Lee Jordan nodded. "Yeah. He was amazing. We got Quirrell for a couple of years before you do him in," he said nodding at Harry.

"Quirrel was lame," said Fred. "I could not stand the smell of garlic whenever I'm in his class. Who could have guess he was hiding something."

"Then we got that fake Lockhart," pointed out George. "The girls swooned over him though."
"Lupin was great but even he can't compare with Moody," said Lee Jordan. The twins nodded in agreement.

Ron immediately dived into his bag and retrieved his own timetable. He groaned as he ran through it. "We won't be getting him until Thursday!"

Meanwhile, Harry was listening to the conversation with great disinterest. They did not know Moody like he do. The Moody that they were so impressed with was not the real Moody. He was in fact Barty Crouch Jr. in impersonation via the Polyjuice Potion. The way he kept strictly to his timing whenever he drank from his own flask during the Welcoming Feast was a good enough proof.

But this did bring out the question of what kind of a teacher the original Alastor Moody would be. Would he be as hard charging as the fake Moody? Would he show his class the three Unforgiven Curses? Would he show the same admiration to the dark magic like the fake Moody and Snape? He guessed he will never find that out.

But the original Moody was proven to be just as crazy during his fifth year in the old timeline. Harry remembered the effort the members of the Order of the Phoenix put when they 'kidnapped' him from the Dursleys all too well. He did not like it, but he cannot help but admire the dedication Barty Crouch Jr. put in studying his victim. He managed to copy Alastor Moody right down to the T.

The six of them stayed at the Great Hall for another ten minutes before they departed towards the Gryffindor common room. They will have another hour of rest before the next class begins.

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**Gryffindor common room...**

Harry immediately threw down his schoolbag and sank into his favourite armchair the moment they arrived inside the common room. Ron sat on the opposite armchair while Hermione went straight to her dormitory after telling them that she wanted a little bit of refreshing. The twins and Lee Jordan meanwhile went to sit at the opposite corner of the room, heads together and began to converse in a quiet tone over a piece of parchment produced by George.

Harry already knew why. It had something to do with Ludo Bagman and the deal he made with the twins during the Quidditch World Cup. He decided not to interfere with what they were planning. If anything, his past experiences dictated that the twins won't get a single dime from Ludo no matter how hard they tried.

"I really can't wait for Thursday to arrived," said Ron.

Harry began to play with his own fingers. "And why is that?" he asked, disinterested as before.

"Moody," said Ron. "Don't you remember? We'll have him this Thursday. If what George and Fred said is true, his class would be awesome."

"I'll reserve my judgement until I see it with my own eyes," said Harry, intending to close the conversation about Moody.

"So you don't believe what Fred, George and Lee said about him?"

"Some of the things they said about the DADA teacher are true. I just don't believe the rest," said Harry.

"You said that as if you really knew Moody," stated Ron.

Of course he knew Moody. Both the original and the fake one. But he could not tell it to Ron, could he?

"Not really," Harry lied, feeling a little bit uneasy at the same time. "Intuition. Besides, I prefer Lupin."

"Lupin isn't an auror. Unlike Moody," said Ron.

Anger began to boil inside him. He immediately quelled it down before it went out of control. Ron will be become one of the ornament hanging on the wall if he lost control. Harry took a deep breath and said sternly, "Lupin will be one too if the ministry gave him a chance. His condition was what stopping him from becoming an auror, not to mention all the prejudice everyone had regarding this so called half-human. He will be just as capable as Moody, though
maybe not as crazy. I don't rate a person until I see it with my own eyes, no matter how high people thought of him."

Ron must have realized that Harry was getting angry. He went quiet after that.

The silence was broken s few minutes later upon the arrival of Hermione. She had just returned from her dormitory. She paused the moment she arrived in front of Harry and Ron. She somehow noticed the tension that was brewing between her two best friends.

"What happened to you two?" she asked, raising her brown eyebrows.

Harry shook his head. "Nothing," he said. He then got on his feet and lugged his school bag over his shoulder. "Come on, Ron."

Ron copied him and the trio set off for the dungeon.

The dungeon, a few minutes later...

The rest of the Gryffindor and Slytherin were already waiting for Snape to 'invite' them in when the trio arrived.

As always, Malfoy would never fail to sneer at them whenever the trio entered his line of vision though this time around, that sneer was a little bit subdued. No doubt, Moody's 'teaching' a few days ago had some effect on him. The seniors kept calling him 'Malfoy the white bouncing ferret' whenever they got the chance. Malfoy might be a bully, but he was only brave enough to do that to those in his years and below. And also to the Weasleys whom he loathed so much. He never quite forgave Harry for what he suspected Harry did during their first class with Hagrid. He had no proof of that of course but Harry knew that he would be more than willing to confess if Malfoy ever came up to him, just to show him that he already mastered non verbal and wandless spell casting. A feat the majority of the adult wizards had trouble of doing.

Both Harry and Ron did not talk much. Ron's face was a little bit paler than usual, no doubt from the anticipation of all the worse things that could happen during the Potion class. Harry was much calmer though. As for Hermione, her eyes kept darting between both of them, as if she was expecting Harry and Ron will embroiled in a shouting match anytime soon.

Harry did not look at her though. His eyes remained fixed to the dungeon's door.

Few minutes passed by and all of the sudden the dungeon's door opened with a loud bang. Like an overgrown bat, Snape stood at the threshold. His eyes wandered to every student that stood in front of him until he saw Harry. His glance lingered on him for a few moments.

"Get in!"

Snape left the door and every student followed him into the dungeon. Harry, Ron and Hermione took their usual seats and waited patiently for Snape's further instructions.

After every student was properly seated, Snape began to speak, "Congratulations. All of you manage to come back. I do expect that some of you would choose to drop out of this school," his eyes stopped at Harry. Harry calmly looked back at him. "After everything that had happened. Now!" He slammed his hand onto the board hard. Some of the students startled as a result. "Antidotes. Besides our resident know-it-all Miss Granger, anyone would like to try to give an accurate definition of an antidote? Anyone?"

Snape looked around. None of the students dared to raise their hands. Malfoy smirked a bit when Snape mentioned Hermione's name but even he himself did nothing. Hermione was the only one who was fidgeting on her seat, trying as hard as she could not to raise her hands.

Snape gave out a mixture of mocked and disappointed look. "Pathetic! Useless! Must I feed you with everything you need to know without you taking the effort to do an extra study beforehand of this subject yourself?!" He then walked over to Neville. He took Neville's Advanced Potion Making book and asked, "Mr. Longbottom, tell me what is this?"

Neville's face was completely whitened. It was a well known fact that Neville scared of Snape the most. It looked as though he was in danger of wetting his pant at any moment. "A, a book," stammered Neville. "Sir," he hastily added when Snape cocked his eyebrows.

"And what do you do with a book?!

"Re-, read it."

"And did you read it?!" asked Snape.
"Yes, I, I mean no, sir. No," Neville stammered.

Poor Neville nearly fell of his chair when Snape slammed his book hard on the desk.

Snape ignored Neville's whimpers and immediately closed in on him. He was breathing hard on Neville's face. "Let me make it clear. No more mistakes from you, do you understand? Unless you like being put in detention for the rest of the school year," Snape muttered dangerously under his breath.

"I-, I understand, sir. No-, no more mistakes."

Snape straightened up. "We shall see," he said.

Snape then walked over towards the board and began to write. He turned towards the student after he done writing. "Antidote!" he said. "Is an item that can be used to treat or protect against specific ailments. Most of it are consists of brewed potions however, there are natural antidotes that are readily available. Mr. Potter!"

Harry did not flinch at all. Instead, he looked calmly back at Snape. "Sir?"

"I expect you to remember what I told you before in your first year's class," said Snape.

"I remember, sir. You told me about bezoar," Harry replied.

"And what is a bezoar?"

"A naturally occur remedy. A bezoar is a stone taken from within the stomach of a goat. Useful to treat common poisoning symptoms with the exception of a few. Basilisk's venom is one of the exceptions. The victim must ingest the stone in order for the treatment to work," answered Harry clearly.

"And what are the antidotes for the basilisk's venom?"

"There is only one known effective antidote so far, sir. Phoenix tears," answered Harry.

Snape's eyes travelled between Harry and Hermione. "A sentence by sentence explanation no doubt taken wholly from the book," Snape scoffed. "Apparently, Miss Granger traits had finally rubbed off on you. Let's hope you don't end up wearing dresses by the end of the school year."

Malfoy and the gang sniggered at Snape's comment. Harry on the other hand, remained calm.

Ignoring the Slytherin, Snape then went back to stand beside the chalkboard. "This semester you shall learn everything there is about antidotes. I expect by the end, most of you will gain something out of a knowledge so useful in the magical community. If not, you'll have no one but yourself to blame should anything happen," Snape then glowered at Neville. "Let's hope none of you don't end up being the one with a brick for his brain."

Snape then took out his wand and flicked it. What he wrote on the chalkboard earlier immediately vanished, replaced by step by step instructions written in a clear and concise manner.

"The Chocking Antidote," said Snape. "I don't need to tell you what it's for unless you have no idea what choking means. One teaspoon would be enough to clear a victim's airway. You should get a colourless potion with a little hint of minty smell. You have thirty minutes."

There was a scraping as everyone drew their cauldron towards them and some loud chunks as everyone began to measure the ingredients.

Harry took one glance at the instruction and immediately began to work. Being an auror, learning on how to prepare antidotes on the fly was essential. Every antidotes deemed necessary would be prepared on the eve of a mission but there are a lot of time when he needed to make them himself on the field. Every minute count whenever he went out on a mission. It will determine whether he came back alive or inside a body bag. Chocking Antidote was one of the essentials potion.

The Chocking Antidote itself was really easy to make. He remembered the recipe really well. He immediately fired up his cauldron and began to work. And within five minutes, his potion had already turned a smooth sky blue, an indication that his potion was halfway done.

As always, like a bat, Snape would hover from table to table observing the student progress and making snide remarks whenever he found something unpleasant. Neville as expected, got the worst of it. His potion was in bubbly red. Upon reaching the trio's table, he took a peek first inside Hermione's cauldron. Hermione's potion was progressing as it should be, though perhaps not as fast and as well as Harry's. Snape said nothing. Ron's cauldron was next in line. Snape took a look inside and all he saw was plain water that was boiling in it.
"No progress, Weasley? You got no more than twenty minutes to finish the potion unless you're planning to accompany Longbottom in detention," he said sternly.

Ron whimpered.

Harry was busy slicing his peppermint leaves and roots when Snape finally reached him. He ignored the man and continued to work on his potion.

And for the next twenty minutes Snape stood in front of him, watching him cutting the roots and the leaves, measuring the ingredient and mixing them within the mortar and pouring them into cauldron. Snape continued to watch silently as Harry stir the potion continuously within the cauldron.

Harry took a glance at Snape at one point, fully expecting him to sneer at his effort. But it was not what he found. Instead what he found was an expression of pain and sadness adorned Snape’s face. Harry was indeed curious but decided to say nothing.

Ten minutes before the class ended, Harry's potion turned colourless. A hint of minty smell came out of it.

Using a ladle, Snape scooped out some of the potion from Harry's cauldron and began to examine it. His eyebrows cocked. From the look of his face, Snape was clearly impressed. He then poured the content within the ladle back into the cauldron and said, "Place an example of your potion inside a vial and put it on my desk. You may dismiss, Potter."

Harry did as told. After placing the vial on Snape's table, Harry began clearing up his work table. "I'll see you two back at the common room," he said to Ron and Hermione who were gawking at him once he was done. He then lugged his school bag over his shoulder and set off towards the Gryffindor Tower.

Little he realized that Snape was watching him silently as he went out the door.

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**Gryffindor common room, a few minutes later...**

"Balderdash!"

The huge portrait of the Fat Lady swung opened, revealing the Gryffindor's common room.

Harry climbed inside and through the hole and into the common room. He put down his bag at its usual place and sank his bottom into his favourite armchair. It would be at least another ten minutes or more before Ron and Hermione would return from the dungeon so Harry decided to do the homework Professor Flitwick had given them. He took out some new parchments and the Standard Book of Spells Grade 4 and began writing.

He was about to dip the tip of his quill into the ink for the tenth time when Ron, Hermione and the rest of Gryffindor's fourth year dashed in. He put his quill away and watched as a few of them began to gather around him.

"Being dismissed early from a Potions class because the teacher was impressed with your own work! That is some record!" exclaimed Seamus.

"Yeah!" said Dean Thomas. "Usually it will always the other way around. You know Snape paraded your potion for all of us to see. You should have seen Malfoy's face. He looked like he had ingested a box full of blast-ended skrewts."

"That is-, quite something, Harry," said Hermione she sat beside him. Her brown eyes stared at him. There was no hatred in it, just deep curiosity. "How did you do it?"

Harry could not think of what to say at first. He of course knew the reason why. He was an auror, the best of his time. And as an auror, being well verse in various auror's disciplines was important. Potions brewing were one of it. He already knew how to brew virtually every potion Snape and eventually Slughorn, taught and will teach and he could prepare those potions in much lesser time than the amount the teachers said it would take. He also knew more than that and was capable to create his own potions recipes as well. Back in his old timeline, his potions work was the reason why a lot of the aurors' lives under his command were saved.

But he could not tell that to the three boys and a girl right in front of him, could he?

"All the instructions were clearly written on the chalkboard," he said finally. "I just followed it thoroughly. Maybe I'm just lucky today."

Dean and Seamus shrugged. " Eh, I guess that explains it," Seamus said. "I'll see you guys up in the dormitory. I'm going to dinner early. I'm hungry."
"Yeah, me too," said Dean. "See you guys later."

Both boys put away their school bag and immediately headed towards the twin curved stairways. Ginny who had just come out of her dormitory met them halfway and gave Dean a wide smile in which he returned.

"Are you lot coming for tea?" she asked the trio brightly the moment she arrived at the portrait hole.

"No," said Hermione. "We had just arrived from our class. We'll see you at dinner."

"Okay then," came the simple reply. Ginny then walked into the portrait hole and immediately disappeared to the other side.

Ron put down his school bag and sat at the other side of Harry. "You know mate, you could have shown me the way you did that potion. We both could have left early," he said.

"Ron! Snape was standing right in front of Harry the whole time! How could he help you or even me?!" reprimanded Hermione. "Just be thankful that you did not end up like Neville."

Harry sat up straight when he heard Neville's name. He had just noticed that Neville was indeed not among the group that had just returned from the dungeon. "Don't tell me, Snape slap him with detention?" asked Harry.

Hermione nodded. "He melted his cauldron this time, Harry. I had never seen Snape so furious before. It was scary." She shuddered at the memory.

"Melted his cauldron?!" exclaimed Harry. "But the potion was not supposed to do that even if he got the mixture wrong!"

Hermione raised both her hands. "Don't ask me how it ended that way. He wasn't sitting at the same desk with us, remember? And how did you know that?"

"I don't," said Harry. "But I do know the ingredients won't give out any explosive or pyrotechnic effect even when you handle it wrongly. Poor Neville."

"Yeah, I know," nodded Hermione. "Poor Neville. Always losing his nerve whenever he's in Snape's class. Snape should cut him some slack, you know."

"He's the one who needs to grow a pair," said Ron who had remained silent. "If he keeps on losing his nerve, the bullying won't stop no matter what."

"You should not say that, Ron," said Hermione. "It's harsh for him. Try a little bit of sympathy next time."

Harry leaned back against the back of his chair. He sighed. He knew Neville. Back in his old timeline, he watched Neville transformed from a scaredy boy into a man who dared to confront Voldemort face to face. He even managed to kill Nagini, one of Voldemort's horcruxes. Harry was so proud of him.

But of course in this timeline, Neville had yet found his bravery.

"I think all of us need to give him some slack," Harry said. "Neville is far braver than we knew. He's the descendant of the Longbottom line after all. He had yet found his bravery. He will someday. All that he needs is some encouragement from us, his friends. Anyway, I'm sorry I couldn't help you back in the dungeon, Ron. You know how it went. I promise I will try next time. That is of course if Snape doesn't make 'standing in front of Harry while Harry is working' his new hobby."


Harry began to shuffle all of his parchments on that table and put them aside. He then stood up. "I'm going to the dorm to have a shower and then to dinner. Come on, Ron. We meet you back down here in fifteen minutes, Hermione."

"Thirty," said Hermione who also stood up. "We girls don't take shower like you blokes."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Right. Okay, thirty minutes then."

The trio separated and walked towards their respective dormitory.

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**Later that night at the Gryffindor common room...**

Nothing much happened during dinner except for Malfoy blocking their way into the Great
Hall. He was accusing Harry for doing something to Snape. Much to the trio's relief and surprise, it was Snape who ended up reprimanding Malfoy.

"Never thought I would see that in my whole lifetime," said Ron cheerfully as they walked towards their usual spot.

Back in the common room, the trio took out their parchments and books and began writing Charm's essay. Five minutes into doing their homework, Neville came stumbling in. He fell on his all fours right in front of the portrait hole. Alarmed, the rest of the common room inhabitants rushed towards him. George and Fred were the one who reached him first. The twins pulled Neville up by the arm.

"You're okay, Neville?" asked George.

"You look too pale, mate," said Fred. "What happened?"

Neville could only look down and mumbled incoherently. He was clearly in a state of total nervous wreck.

"He had just come out from Snape's detention," said Hermione. "Let him sit down."

Holding Neville by his arm, the twins carried him over to one of the vacant armchairs and carefully sat him down. Hermione knelt on front of him and began asking questions. Neville did not answer any of it though. He just shook his head towards every question Hermione threw at him.

Harry who stood among the crowd silently muttered some incantations. Its effect was shown immediately. Blood began to pump through Neville's skin and soon, his face had its colours returned. Neville became calmer until he took one long breath and looked up towards Hermione. He then slowly raised his hands towards her.

Hermione gasped loudly. She saw his hands were full of scratch marks. Horned toads innards were still stuck in some part of his fingers and under his nails.

"I was asked to disembowel a barrel full of horned toads," he said slowly. "You know what they're like."

"Horned toads, huh?" said Fred. "That is one nasty animal right there. Remember when we had to do the same thing as Neville here, George?"

George nodded. "The nastiest thing we had done so far."

Hermione took out her wand and pointed it towards Neville's hands. She muttered the Scouring Charm incantation several times until his hands were cleaned.

"There you go, Neville. All clean but you need to go to the hospital wing to care of these scratch marks," she said.

Neville however shook his head. "I just want to go to bed."

"No, you won't!" stated Hermione firmly. "You got to go to the hospital wing, Neville. We don't know what else these injuries could do to you. Besides, I'm sure you haven't had your dinner yet."

Fred gave Hermione a pat on her shoulder. "We'll take care of this," he said. "Come on, Neville."

Both Fred and George heaved Neville by the shoulder and escorted him towards the portrait hole.

The trio returned to their table after Fred, George and Neville disappeared behind the portrait.

"Poor Neville," muttered Hermione while shaking her head at the same time.

"Don't worry, Hermione. Fred and George know how to make him happy again," said Ron.

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Neville returned to the common room an hour later looking happier than before. After giving his thanks to Hermione, he went up to his dormitory. The twins returned half an hour later than Neville. Once again as before, they immediately holed up at the furthest corner of the common room away from where the trio sat.

Time ticked by as the trio continued their work on Flitwick's essay. The night was getting later as the common room's inhabitant began to trickle out until only the trio and the twins were
left. Fifteen minutes before eleven, the twins rolled up their parchment and headed towards their dormitory after saying good night to the trio.

It was ten minutes past eleven when the trio heard soft taps from the window. They turned to look and saw a white snowy owl, illuminated by the moonlight, perched on the windowsill.

Harry's eyes reduced to a slit. He recognized the owl before but from where he could not remember. "Whose owl is that?" he eventually asked.

Hermione and Ron looked at him as if he had grown two heads.

"Harry!" said Hermione. "That is your owl! Hedwig!"

Harry looked blankly at Hermione. "Hedwig?"

His eyebrows creased as he shifted through his memory. Then all of a sudden, it came to him. His owl, Hedwig was still alive within this timeline. "Hedwig!" he cried.

Harry launched himself from his chair and across the common room to pull open the window.

Hedwig flew inside and landed on his arm. She gave him a soft hoot.

"You're alive. You're safe," said Harry with joy. He truly missed the bird, his own true companion during the dark days at the Dursleys. Hedwig was killed during the Order's attempt to rescue him from the Death Eaters during their flight from Surrey. Harry was completely exposed back then. Hedwig took the curse in full blast in her final attempt to protect her master. While he eventually took a replacement, in his heart, nothing would replace the white snowy owl.

He then closed the window and hurriedly walked over towards the table carrying Hedwig with him. He placed her on the table and began caressing her.

Hermione and Ron looked at him with utmost amusement.

"She had only gone for just for a few weeks, Harry," said Hermione, smiling. "You're acting like you had lost her for good."

Harry did not say anything. He simply continued to give his attention towards the owl.

_If only they knew_, he thought.

"Harry," said Ron pointing to one of Hedwig's legs. "She's carrying something."

Indeed, there was a bit of a parchment tied to one of her legs. He hastily untied it and sat down to read:-

_Dear Harry,

I'm flying north immediately. This news of your scar is the latest in a list of strange rumours that have reached me here. If it hurts again, go straight to Dumbledore. They're saying that Dumbledore got Mad-Eye out of retirement, which means that he had read the signs even if no one else has.

I'll be in touch soon. Send my regards to Ron and Hermione. Keep your eyes open, Harry.

Padfoot._

He knew who Padfoot was.

Harry looked up at Ron and Hermione who looked at him back.

"He's flying north?" asked Hermione. "He's coming back?"

"Dumbledore's reading what sign?" asked Ron. "Harry, what's going on here?"

Harry folded the parchment and kept it inside his pocket. "I don't have the answer, Ron. Only Dumbledore knows."

"You're not worried that Sirius would get caught?" asked Hermione. "Everybody is looking for him, you know."

Harry shook his head. "I won't underestimate Sirius's ability, Hermione. He knows what he was doing. As long he stays below radar, he will be fine."

Hedwig suddenly flew onto his knees and hooted softly.
Harry smiled and began caressing her once again. "You're sleeping in my room tonight, Hedwig. There's water and some owl treats I think I still have. You can go to the owlery tomorrow morning."

Hedwig hooted softly back.

Harry then began putting away his things. With Hedwig perched on his arm, he said to his two best friends, "Let's continue tomorrow. We still have time. We got classes to attend to in the morning."

Both Ron and Hermione nodded and began to put away their books and parchments. The boys bid Hermione good night and they headed towards their respective dormitory.

Harry placed Hedwig on top of his bedside table and began scouring his trunk for some leftover owl treats. He found them at the bottom of his trunk and put the treats into a small flat bowl. He then poured some plain drinking water from the available jar into another bowl and gave both the treats and the bowl of water to Hedwig. He sat on his bed and watched Hedwig eat.

"You really missed her," said Ron who had changed into his pajama and sat on his bed. "Don't you?"

Harry looked up to Ron. He smiled and simply nodded.

"Okay," smiled Ron. "Well, good night, Harry. I'll see you tomorrow morning." He then pulled the curtain around his bed shut and went to sleep.

Hedwig finished eating a few minutes later. She was indeed really hungry that she managed to finish all of the treats Harry gave her. After she drank the water, she gave Harry a soft and tired hoot and immediately flew towards the nearest windowsill where she ended up perching. Hedwig immediately put her head under her wings and went to sleep.

"Good to say you again, old friend," he whispered as he continued watching her. "I missed you so much."

He smiled as he lay on his bed. He reread Sirius's letter several times before putting it into his trunk. It was a surreal feeling he was having at that time. Two of the most important people in his life had return. Well, Hedwig was not exactly a person but still, he considered her as one. She was an extremely intelligent owl after all.

He had totally forgotten that he had written to his dear godfather. Of course being thrown back in time caused a lot of confusion in him. The case with Hedwig was one of it. But still, it was good to hear from Padfoot once again. Sirius's letter was a sign. A sign that the time had come for him to start acting on his plan. He would start tomorrow night when everyone had gone to sleep.

Harry's eyelids drooped as sleep began to take over him.

Ron, Hermione, Hedwig, Sirius and many others had returned into his life. Now he was just waiting for the one and he would see her in a few weeks.

The love of his life.

Fleur Isabelle Delacour.

To be continued...

A/n: Made some corrections in this chapter (5/4/2016)

First of all, thanks for the overwhelming responses for the last chapter and also thanks for all the feedbacks. Now to answer some of the concerns put in place by reviewers:-

Grammar

Admittedly, I was horrified when I reread the last chapter. There were indeed too many grammar mistakes that I did. I know it too well that those kind of mistakes can take away the fun in reading. So sorry guys. I had done corrections to the best of my abilities. Hopefully you guys would be satisfied. Actually this is what you get when you tried to cram 9000++ words into a single chapter. Mistakes will happen.

I tried beta before. The arrangement didn't work for the both us unfortunately so I ended up on my own again. But then if I become too dependent to beta readers, I
won't learn, would I? Of course I will appreciate some writing pointers if you're willing to share any.

While doing the correction, I had taken the liberty to add some deleted scenes into the last chapter. You can check them out if you got the time and please tell me what you think.

I had decided that starting this chapter, the word count would be limited to no more than 4000 words. This will enable me to exert proper control on the writing quality while at the same time ensure a proper breakdown of each scene. Hope you guys won't feel it to be a little bit short.

**The 'Proposal' scene**

Yes I have not divulged the reason why Fleur rejected and accepted Harry's proposal. Don't worry. It will be revealed much-much later when the time is right.

**French language**

Some of you offered to help me translate English into French. I thank you for that. Yeah I'll probably take on that offer when the time comes. To French readers, sorry if the translations were horrible.

Alright that is enough for now. You guys should concentrate on the story more than an author's note. The title of this story is "Across the Time", not "Author's note from Izwan" after all.

Anyway, please read and review. Oh, before you ask, Fleur may appear within the next couple of chapters. Hope you guys can be patient.
Chapter 10

Harry's dormitory, 5.30AM the next day...

He woke up with a start.

Harry rubbed his eyes. He blinked a few times. It took a while before his pair of emerald optics managed to adjust to its surrounding. Still feeling a bit groggy, he slowly pushed himself up and sat on his bed. He pushed his bed curtains a little and took a peek. The windows to the dormitory were moistened by the early morning dew formed during the night. It was still dark. From the sound of the snoring, everyone else including Hedwig was still fast asleep. It would be at least another hour before they finally woke up.

That should provide enough time for him to do whatever he planned beforehand.

Harry got off his bed and tip-toed his way to the bathroom. After a few splashes of water onto his face, he returned to his bed and began putting on a pair of clean shirt and a trouser. Once done, he made his way down towards the still vacant common room. Upon arriving at his study table, he took out a new parchment and a quill from his school bag. With the help of the illumination provided by the fireplace, he began to write:-

Dear Padfoot,

It's good to hear from you again. I hope you'll continue to be safe. Just keep your head down and don't try anything risky. It's not worth being thrown back into that hell hole once again.

Don't worry about the scar. It didn't hurt as much as before. Dumbledore would be busy with the preparation for the Triwizard Tournament. You probably know it by now. I prefer not to add the scar to the list of things he needs to worry about but I promise I'll see him once chance comes.

Anyway, I really want to see you. There are things that we need to discuss. As you know, letters won't be safe so I prefer to see you in person. I want to suggest we meet during our Hogsmeade outing slated this November the 21st. but given the tournament would already started at that time, the village will be inundated with a lot of people. I don't think it would be safe for you despite the abilities you possessed. Oh before I forget, I'm in the possession of 'the map'. I think you still remember it. The very same map you, Prong, Moony and Wormtail created and used during your school years. I also know the secret passages. The tournament will start at the beginning of next month. Hope these clues will help you with the planning.

That's all for now. Write to me once you got the chance and please by all mean, stay safe.

Harry

Harry gave the letter he wrote one final reading before he folded it. Remembering that he could get caught strolling the corridor this early morning, he went back to his dormitory and silently retrieved both his Invisibility Cloak and the Marauder Map. In all honesty, he did forget that he owned the two most valuable items in the world. He only remembered it when he wrote Sirius the reply.

After throwing the cloak over his head, he climbed into the portrait hole and out into the corridor beyond.

"Who's that?" the Fat Lady sleepily asked.

Harry ignored her.

A few distances away from the Fat Lady portrait, he took out the map. Under the cover of his cloak, he tapped the map with his wand and pronounced, "I solemnly swear that I am up to no good." An elaborate map of Hogwarts immediately appeared on the once blank piece of parchment. He began to trace the map and once satisfied that the passage to the Owlsery was clear, he tapped the map once again and said, "Mischief manage." After pocketing the map, he set off towards the Owlsery.

It took him only a few minutes to arrive at the top of the castle's West Tower where the Owlsery was located. From one of glassless windows adorning the Owlsery's wall, he could see glimmer of sunlight rising from the horizon. Dawn had arrived. Harry took off his Invisibility Cloak and began to look around. The morning was cold and drafty. Harry shivered and cursed himself for not wearing a sweater.

Harry saw Pigwidgeon, nestling on the top most branch of the Owlsery's perch. He considered using him at first before deciding that it would be too risky. Ron's little owl was too noisy and
hyperactive for his own good. Besides, he had yet asked for Ron’s permission. He knew Ron would not mind but it would be impolite for him not to notify his best friend beforehand.

Few of the school’s owls had already awakened from their slumber. Their big eyes trailed him carefully. He made his decision and approached one of them. The brownish owl, upon sensing an upcoming mission designated for him, straightened up importantly and stuck out one of its leg. Harry tied the letter to its leg and said, “Find him and be careful. Don’t let anyone or anything else sees you.”

The owl gave Harry a reassuring hoot. He stood back and watched as the owl spread out its wing and flew out the window and into the dark, cold and misty morning that lies beyond.

Peeves was only obstacle he met on his way back to the Gryffindor Tower. The residence poltergeist was singing his way merrily into one of the vacant classrooms. The poltergeist didn’t see him though since he was under the Invisibility Cloak at that time so he simply stood there and let the ghost floated pass him before continuing his journey. He could not believe his luck the moment he arrived at the portrait of the Fat Lady. Two Gryffindor prefects were just coming out of the portrait hole. They were just starting on their morning patrol. Of course both of them did not see Harry. He was under his Invisibility Cloak.

Harry took the chance and quietly slipped into the portrait hole just as the portrait began to close. He ran up to his dormitory and was relieved to see that the rest of his dorm mate, and more importantly Hedwig, was still sleeping. The bird would throw quite a fit if she knew what Harry had done.

After storing the map and cloak back into his trunk, Harry took his towel that hanged nearby and stepped into the bathroom. He threw his bird poop smelled clothing into the laundry bin and took his morning shower.

The rest of his dorm mate had awakened when he stepped out of the bathroom.

"Mornin'," said Ron as he yawned widely. He then looked sleepily at Harry. "You’re up early."

"Yeap. Like always. We have Double Transfiguration this morning, Ron. Come on. I want to get to the Great Hall early. I'm hungry," said Harry as he began to don his uniform.

Ron's eyes lighted up the moment he heard the word 'Great Hall'. "Breakfast!"

He immediately took his towel and walked straight into the bathroom.

Harry chuckled and shook his head. Nothing can separate Ron from his food. He realized that fact during their attempt in finding and destroying Voldemort’s horcruxes. The lack of food and various creature comforts had caused Ron to abandon both him and Hermione. Harry was truly disappointed with him at that time. Ron eventually returned to them but whatever trust and respect Harry had for him went up in smoke. It was from that moment on Harry realized that he could not truly rely on the Weasley’s youngest male. Of course he still maintained the friendship he had with Ron. The Weasley clan had done a lot for him. He will never forget their deeds.

Lucky for him that this time around, both Hermione and Ron will no longer be a factor. He already had someone else in mind to join in his mission.

Both him and Ron arrived at the Great Hall fifteen minutes later. It was still early. Aside from a few students, the hall was largely empty. Even the teachers’ table was still vacant. But the sausages, scramble eggs, various jams and butter and toasts had already been served. The two boys wasted no time in finding their usual spot, piling up on everything and began eating.

"Good morning," greeted Hermione when she arrived about ten minutes later. "You both are early today," she said as she sat down and began to apply liberal amount of butter to her toast.

"Well, we both hungry," said Ron as he shoved a spoonful of scramble eggs into his mouth.

She gave him a hard look. "There's no need to show me that, Ron," said Hermione, referring once again to Ron's tableside manners.

Ron just shrugged and continued to devour his food.

They had a silent breakfast that day. The twins arrived ten minutes after Hermione. Soon, the noise within the Great Hall began to build up as everyone, both the students and the teachers arrived for their breakfast.

Harry looked up towards the teacher's table. He saw no Moody there. It had always been like that since the impostor arrived at Hogwarts. 'Moody' never showed up during breakfast. He
figured that having to impersonating someone, both mentally and physically, would take its toll in some way. Barty Crouch Jr. was probably inside his quarters right this very instance in his original form.

Harry’s hand twitched a little when that thought came to him. Oh, how he would love going to the Defense against the Dark Arts classroom and exposed Barty Crouch Jr. once and for all. Oh, how he wished he could see the white eyes of Barty, just like what he saw from every dark wizard who beg for mercy before he killed them.

But he knew he had to be patient and wait. He already knew what Barty was planning. He needed to allow Barty and to some extent, Voldemort, to bask in their illusion of glory for the time being before he gave them a dose of hard reality.

The hard part would be whether he will be able to control himself tomorrow. He hoped that Barty won’t be stupid enough to try to do things that would trigger his auror instinct. One wrong move and Barty will be dead within five minutes into class. He hoped it would not come to that.

At least not yet anyway.

Transfiguration Class...

"Welcome back!" announced Professor McGonagall. Her eyes glinted behind her square spectacles.

Harry observed a cage full of hedgehogs placed on top of her table. He could already guess what they were going to do that day.

"I see that each and every one of you manages to return to Hogwarts. Unfortunately, I cannot display the same enthusiasm I have seeing you here towards your last year’s final results. As you probably not aware, you are now entering one of the most important phases in your magical education. I have no need to remind you that your Ordinary Wizarding Level examinations are drawing closer and-.

"But professor, we will only be having our O.W.L. next year!” said Dean Thomas indignantly.

"I know that, , but believe me, you will need all the practice and study you can get! You only have in about a year to prepare. As to date, only Miss Granger manages to perform all the practical aspects of this class correctly within just a few initial tries,” stated Professor McGonagall, glancing to Hermione proudly.

Hermione, who had turned rather pink tried not to look too pleased with herself.

"And as you all know, the Triwizard Tournament will be held in a few weeks time," continued McGonagall. "Both visiting schools will send their best students to compete-.

"Professor," said Padma Patil, raising her hand. "You mean student?"

"No, Miss Patil. I said students. As Professor Dumbledore specifically explained to you during the Welcoming Feast, an impartial judge will select those worthy enough to compete which would mean that both Durmstrang and Beauxbaton will definitely send more than one candidates," explained McGonagall. "And as such, I am keen to see that none of you would dare to reveal to the delegates anything that would undermine this school’s reputation. I am not looking forward to let them going back to their school telling everyone that Hogwarts students could not perform even a simple Switching Spell."

Professor McGonagall took out her wand and gave it a flick. The once blank chalkboard was immediately filled with writings.

"This semester we shall concentrate on the Switching Spells," she announced as she pointed with her wand towards the chalkboard. "Followed by Cross Species Switching on the next semester. I expect that you will still remember the method and the incantation since you had learnt the spell during your first year. But given it has been awhile since the last time you probably use it, we shall do a little bit of a revision. On my table is a cage full of hedgehogs. You shall attempt to transform your hedgehog into a pincushion and back again, and you will test it with a pin, just like what you did during your first year. You may begin, now!"

Feet shuffling as everyone went to retrieve their hedgehog from the cage and soon after, muttered incantations began to fill up the room.

McGonagall gave her nod of approval to Harry and Hermione who managed to transform their hedgehogs into perfect pincushions and back again within a single try. Ron managed within four tries. Dean Thomas’s pincushion squealed and tried to roll away from him when he approached it with a sharp pin. Seamus’s pincushion oozed a lot of blood and 'died' when he
poked it with a pin.

At the end of the class, only Harry and Hermione managed to pass all the practical aspects of the Switching Spell perfectly. However, due to the class’s overall dismal performance, McGonagall gave them essay homework on Switching Spells, due within a week.

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**Hogwarts library...**

They had a free period before lunch so the trio decided to spend the time at the library. Once they found their usual spot, like always, Hermione would spend the first few minutes finding the book she wanted to read. Unusually though this time around, she brought back Hogwarts, A History.

"Don't you have one of this book back at the dormitory that you read over and over, Hermione?" asked Ron.

"Yes I do. I just remembered something. I need some confirmation," replied Hermione as she began to peruse that book. "Now shut up. I’m trying to concentrate."

Deciding that it would be wise not to bother Hermione with her reading, Ron turned towards Harry. "And since when you become so good in Transfiguration, Harry?"

"Shhh!" Hermione said sharply. "Keep your voice down, Ron. This is the library. I'm not going to have Madam Pince throw us out before I finish."

"Sorry," apologized Ron. "So Harry," he repeated his question in a much lower voice. "How come you became so good in Transfiguration?"

Harry gave Ron a perplexed look. "It’s a first year spell, Ron. We learnt it like three years ago."

"Well yeah, but it still took me four tries before I could nail it perfectly."

"And you did better than most back there," stated Harry. "Remember what happened to Seamus and Dean’s pincushions? You did good. I don’t have any secrets, Ron. You want to know why I suddenly became so good at it? Let just say that when you have to defend your own life twenty four - seven, you tend to excel at something. I conjured a Patronus last year in case you forgotten."

"But it still doesn't explain what happened in Potion," countered Ron.

Harry sighed. He seriously thought that Ron had let that issue go. Apparently, he was mistaken.

"I told you I was lucky. I just followed what Snape wrote on the board. I doubt I could do a repeat of that same feat in the next class. Now could we just drop this subject, Ron?"

Ron went quiet but from the look of his face, Harry could see that Ron was still not satisfied with his reply. But at least he managed to shut down that ginger albeit temporarily. Given the experience he had with the Weasley’s youngest male, that issue will no doubt resurface in due time. Ron and his jealousy problem.

The only way to solve the issue would be to lower his standard to that of a fourth year student. Harry knew it would be impossible for him to do that. He may have the body of a fourteen-year old boy, but his mentality and magic was that of a 92 years old man. His own magic itself had intertwined tightly with him, both physically and mentally, up to the point that he did not really have say the incantation. A mere thought was just enough to get what he wanted. There were also incidents during his time as an auror where his magic acted on its own accord, both defending him and helping him to destroy his enemy. Setting or lowering his own magical standard may not be within his control.

But Ron and Hermione knew nothing about that. They also did not realize that the person who sat with them was not the Harry they have known for three years. He silently wondered for how long he will be able to keep up the charade.

"I can't believe it!"

Hermione's voice woke him from his musing. "What? What is it, Hermione?"

"There's none of it! Not even a reference to them!" she said angrily as she continuously flipped the pages over and over again.

"What?" asked Ron.
"House elves! House elves in Hogwarts! There's nothing about it in here!"

Ron and Harry glanced at each other. They both knew they need to put a stop to it. Hermione would rant about the house elves on and on if left unchecked.

"Urm, can we go to lunch now?" asked Harry who suddenly got an idea.

"Is it time already?" asked Hermione as she checked her watch. "Oh. It is. Oh, well."

Feeling a little bit relieve, Harry helped Hermione put away the book she took and the trio made their way towards the Great Hall.

Potential house elves crisis abated for now.

History of Magic was the only class they had that afternoon and thankfully, it lasted for only an hour. Once again as before and as it had always been for the past three years, they were treated with a flat and boring monologue on the Goblin War, produced by none other than Professor Cuthbert Binn, Hogwarts’ only ghost teacher. It did have an upside though. Not even the one suffering the staunchest insomnia ever will be immune by the soothing lullaby of Professor Binn’s voice. Ron dozed off to the dreamland two minutes into his lecture. It was not for nothing when virtually all students referred Professor Binn’s class as The Class of the Undead.

Strangely enough though, unlike before, Harry managed to keep himself awake throughout that one hour of pure mental agony. He was beginning to wonder if magical history really only centered around goblins. It was the only thing Professor Binn talked about for the last three years and probably way before that. He suddenly had this wild idea of confronting Professor Binn and telling him that he was already dead and it was time for him to move on.

Or perhaps not. Hogwarts may not have the budget to employ a living teacher after all and Professor Binn probably worked for free.

It was not that Harry really cared for magical histories after all. It only introduced more difficulties to him, especially after the war. After Voldemort fell, Harry's name was forever engraved in books, arts and monuments. He became an instant celebrity. A hero. His every action was carefully scrutinized. Fleur did point out to him that fact once. He disregarded it, claiming that he had his own life to live. But of course that did not make his life easy. His marriage to the French beauty drew a lot of flak from British magical community. The Daily Prophet was the most vocal critics of them all. The tabloid vehemently pointed out that Harry should marry a Briton, not an outsider, and that the marriage won’t last. It also accused Fleur for being an opportunist, that she only wanted him for his fame.

He felt sorry for Fleur. This was of course not what he had expected for her to face. Despite the stoic appearance she always wore, he knew that she was hurt deep inside. He voiced his concern to her three weeks after their wedding. She dismissed it. Instead, she walked up to her newly wedded husband and buried him in her warm embrace. To his ear she softly whispered, "I’ve made my choice, ‘Arry. I already know fully well what I’m going to face. I don’t regret it, not once. Do me a favor. Prove them wrong."

And that was what he did. For more than seventy years, he continuously proved them wrong. Their marriage lasted and Fleur remained loyal to him.

The weather that afternoon was clear and bright. The sky was blue with very little hints of clouds. It was not every day one could experience weather this good especially on British Isles.

And beneath the clear blue sky, Harry found himself going down the sloping lawn towards Hagrid’s hut.

It had been awhile since the last time he met the gentle half-giant, both in this timeline and before. He knocked on the door upon arriving. There was no reply. Once again he knocked, this time a little bit louder than before.

His knock was replied with a bark.

Harry turned and saw a familiar looking boarhound running towards him. He smiled.

"Fang."

The huge dog greeted him by placing both his front paws on his shoulder and tried to lick his face.

Harry laughed. He knelt and began to rub behind the dog’s ears. "Okay, that’s enough, Fang."

"Fang."

The huge dog greeted him by placing both his front paws on his shoulder and tried to lick his face.

Harry laughed. He knelt and began to rub behind the dog’s ears. "Okay, that’s enough, Fang."
That's enough. Where's Hagrid?"

Fang simply barked and beckoned Harry to follow him.

Harry obliged and followed the dog. Just around the corner of the hut, he saw Hagrid who was standing near the pumpkin patch. Hagrid saw him.

"Heiya Harry! Always knew it was yeh."

"Hey Hagrid," greeted Harry. "What are you doing?" he asked.

"Just watching these damn skrewts," grumbled Hagrid.

Indeed, in front of Hagrid, several skrewts were crawling round and giving out minor explosions every now and then as they banged at each other. Harry took a few steps back when the smell of rotten fish invaded his nostril.

"So what's the problem?" he asked, scrunching his nose as the awful smell invaded his nostril.

"Huh? No. No problem. Just tryin' ter figure out what these damn thing likes ter eat," said Hagrid, scratching his head.

Harry raised his eyebrows. Just like before, Hagrid never fully figure out any strange animals that he brought to class. He just brought them in. "Didn't you figure that out when you first got the skrewt, Hagrid?"

"Well, I did ask but them men know nothing either. They said the skrewts just grow," explained Hagrid.

"That's weird."

"Yeah, that's weird alright," agreed Hagrid. Suddenly he paused. He had just realized Harry was alone. "Where's Ron and Hermione?" he asked.

"They're at the castle, Hagrid," answered Harry.

"Yeh didn't invite them the come over with yeh? Anythin' wrong going on with yeh three?"

Harry shook his head. "No Hagrid. We're fine. It just that I didn't feel like asking them to come along this time," he explained.

"Oh," said Hagrid. "Well, better ter let them come along next time. They probably worried about yeh. Anyway, since yeh here, a nice cuppa tea won't go wrong, eh?"

Harry smiled.

"No. Nothing would go wrong with a cup of tea."

Except perhaps for Hagrid's rock cakes.

Tea with Hagrid went well. The half-giant regaled to him on what he did during the summer break which basically was not that much.

That was not what Harry wanted to hear actually. The fact was, he missed the gentle half-giant. Hagrid truly cared for him back then. He cried when Dumbledore left him at the Dursley's door step. He volunteered to accompany Harry to Diagon Alley when Harry got his letter. He went all the way, asking all of his parent's friends for any pictures they had that contained James and Lily Potter. Hagrid once again cried when he thought Harry was dead during the Battle of Hogwarts.

Those memories made him realized that Sirius was not the only godfather he had. Hagrid never declared himself as such, but he was as good as one. Those tears, it was not because of he was the Chosen One. But it was because Hagrid truly cared and loved him.

Dusk had settle and Harry found himself walking back towards the castle. But just as he arrived at the Entrance Hall, he saw Hermione. Her hands were placed at her hip in an uncannily Molly Weasley manner.

This can't be good, he thought.

"Where have you been?!" asked Hermione furiously. "We have been looking all over for you!"

"I went to see Hagrid," answered Harry. "Wait! Where's Ron?"
"He went to look for you at the Astronomy Tower. He'll come soon. But Harry, why didn't you tell us that you're planning to visit Hagrid? We could have come with you."

Harry scratched his head. "I just... don't want to disturb you guys."

Hermione nodded. "Hagrid is our friend too, Harry. You should have brought us along to see him."

"Yeah, sorry. Hagrid kinda mentioned that when we were having tea. I'll ask you both to come along the next time. I promised him that."

"Alright. Better wait for Ron. He'll be here anytime soon. Oh, there he comes."

Hermione pointed towards the corridor leading to the Astronomy Tower. They both saw Ron was walking briskly towards them. Harry could see that he was sweating profusely.

"Harry," said Ron, panting. "Where... have... you... been? We... were... looking... all... over... the... place... for you."

Harry smirked. "Found anyone at the Astronomy Tower, Ron?"

Ron gulped a huge amount of air before he replied, "I found the Bloody Baron. Who knows what he was doing up there. Where have you been, mate?"

"He went to see Hagrid," blurted Hermione.

Ron's eyes went wide. "Hagrid?!" he exclaimed. "Why the bloody hell you didn't tell us? That's not cool, Harry. We went all over the castle looking for you."

"Yeah I know, I know," said Harry sheepishly. He certainly felt guilty for making his two best friend worried and ended up launching a search and rescue mission throughout the castle just to find him. "I'm sorry for making both of you worried. I'll make up to you guys, alright?"

"Well you can simply wave off the omnicular you bought me at the World Cup."

"Omnicular?"

Harry cranked his brain hard as he tried to remember the event at the World Cup. Then he remembered that he did bought omniculars both for Hermione and Ron before the tournament began.

Harry chuckled. "Alright, alright. That omnicular is yours, free of charge. But that shall be your Christmas present this year."

"Well that's not fair."

Harry just laughed.

The trio went inside the Great Hall to have their dinner. Strangely enough, this time around Hermione was eating at very high speed. Both Harry and Ron stared at her in surprise.

"Urm Hermione? Are you trying to make yourself sick?" asked Ron.

"No," said Hermione with as much dignity as she could muster with her mouth bulging with sprouts. "I just want to get to the library."

"What?! Library?!" said Ron in disbelief. "At this hour?!"

She just shrugged and continued to shovel down her food as fast as she can. She then leapt to her feet and said, "Well Harry is safe. Got loads to do. See you back at the common room."

Harry and Ron simply watched as she departed from the Great Hall at high speed.

Harry and Ron headed towards their dormitory after dinner. After taking their shower, the two boys went down to the common room, whipped out their books and parchments and began doing their homework. They were halfway done when Hermione walked into the common room.

"Hello," she greeted them. "I'm exhausted," she said as she crashed onto the chair beside Ron.

"What exactly you were doing at the library?" asked Ron.

"Nothing."
"You can't get exhausted by doing nothing," stated Ron.

"Alright, fine. I was just doing a little bit of research, Ron," said Hermione. "It's nothing big."

"About what?"

Hermione shook her head. "Sorry. Can't tell. You'll know soon enough."

"Oh come on, Hermione!"

"No!"

And so the bickering began.

Harry of course knew what Hermione was doing at the library but still, it was amusing to watch them bicker. Ah, the two lovebirds. Little they know that they will someday get married and have a lot of kids. Even now, he could see the romantic and sexual tension that began to develop between them. He wondered what their response will be if he divulged the future. Ron would probably gawk at him with his mouth hanging wide open. Hermione in turn would probably drag him by his hair towards the hospital wing. Nah, it would be better to keep the future away from them and let the time set it course.

He could of course play a little part in it. The Yule Ball, slated this Christmas could present a nice start for a closer relationship between Hermione and Ron.

As for him, he did not know what to do. At least not yet anyway. It will be sometime before he would see Fleur and he had to take into account the huge probability that there may not be any chances for them to be together. Last time, it was circumstances that shaped his and Fleur's destiny. This time around, destiny could have a very different plan for them.

But for now though, he had to put that problem aside. He had a more pressing matter to attend to.

Once everyone else had gone to sleep.

In the dark of the night and under the cover of the Invisibility Cloak, Harry walked along the deserted corridor towards the girl's bathroom on the first floor, home of Moaning Myrtle.

He set out once everyone had fallen asleep and by the means of the Marauder's Map, making sure that Barty was in his quarters. It would be dangerous for him if Barty prowled through the corridor. That eye of his could see through the Invisibility Cloak.

He reached the girl's bathroom entrance few minutes later and upon entering, he saw Myrtle sitting at her usual spot at the end of the toilet row. He took off his Invisibility Cloak and pocketed it.

"Hello Myrtle," greeted Harry.

Myrtle who had sunk deep into her thought looked up and gave a gasp of surprise when she saw Harry.

"Harry," she said. "What are you doing here?" She once again gasped when she noticed Harry was standing close to the sink that marked the entrance to the path into the Chamber of Secrets. "You're not going back there, are you?"

Harry turned to look at the sink. "As a matter a fact, I am going back down there," he said.

"Isn't once should be enough? You already killed the basilisk, remember?"

"I need to extract something from down there," he said, still staring at the sink. Turning to look at Myrtle, he said, "It is important."

"So important that you would be willing to risk your life for it?"

Harry smiled. "There's only one dead snake down there, Myrtle. But yeah. I am willing to risk my life doing what I believed in. Do me a favor will you? Don't tell anyone."

Myrtle crossed her hand to her chest. "I might just tell someone. Anyway, what's in it for me?"

Harry's face turned serious. "I'm going to kill the one who's responsible for your murder, Myrtle. Would that be good enough?"

Myrtle noticed the change in Harry's expression. "You're not bluffing, are you?"
Harry shook his head. "I'm not. There's something I need that's only available from within the chamber. It's a start but it will help to ensure that Voldemort won't return after I kill him. Now, do I have your word?"

Myrtle went silent.

Harry could see that she was thinking hard.

It took a while before Myrtle finally spoke, "I don't have any friends during my time here and it was all because I'm a muggle born. But I do have hope and ambitions. My death took away everything from me and now. She paused for a moment as her eyes wandered around. "I'm confined to this awful place for eternity." She then turned back towards Harry. "Do what you must, Harry. You have my word. I won't tell anyone."

"Thank you, Myrtle," said Harry.

He turned to look towards the sink. He closed his eyes, trying to imagine that a snake was in front of him. Slowly he opened his eyes and said, "Open up."

It had been years since the last time he spoke Parseltongue. He lost that one unique ability when the horcrux inside of him was destroyed. Not that he missed it actually. In fact, he was thankful that the one link between him and Voldemort no longer existed. But now he had return into a body where horcrux still contained inside of it. He knew he had regained that ability.

Instead of words, a hissing sound escaped from his mouth and as expected, the sink began to move. It split itself in the middle and began to move in opposite direction. In its place there was a large hole, big enough for a man to get into.

Myrtle called out to him when he slid one foot into the hole. "Harry?"

"What is it, Myrtle?"

"Be safe."

Harry smiled. "I will."

And with that, Harry slide into the hole and disappeared.

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Once again he felt the sensation of rushing down a huge dark slide that went for miles. Every now and then he could see pipes branching off into all sorts of directions but none of it was as large as the one he was in.

Harry continued to slide down for a few minutes further until he felt that the pipe began to level out. He knew he was reaching at the end of the pipe. He readied himself and immediately leapt out of the pipe and landed cleanly on his feet.

He took his wand and muttered, "Lumos."

With the help from the illumination provided by his wand, Harry began to walk through the dark and forbidding tunnel until he reached towards a section where the tunnel partially caved in. The shedded snake skin was still there. It was where Lockhart tried to erase his and Ron's memories. His spell backfired of course, thanks to Ron's broken wand, but the resulted explosion did considerable damage to the tunnel.

Luckily for him, a part of the section had been cleared allowing him access to the other side of the rubbles. He walked through that part and continued his way until he reached the final bend where the entrance into the Chamber of Secrets was located.

A familiar looking circular door with the carving of the two serpents stood in front of him.

It might be the tricked of the light but Harry could swear that the serpents' eyes were blinking at him. He cleared his throat and muttered, "Open." Once again a faint hissing sound came out of his mouth.

The serpents responded by slithering along the groove that was carved at the edge of the door and into a small hole it slid into. There was a loud groan as the door began to open. A gush of air came out from the other side and from where he stood, he could see the innards of the Chamber of Secrets.

Harry stepped over the threshold.

The chamber looked just the way it was. Towering stone pillars intertwined with more carved serpents rose to support a ceiling lost in the darkness. An eerie greenish glow filled up the
place and a stone pathway split the pool of water right in the middle of the chamber.

And at the end of the path stood a giant face. And right in front of the face lay the remains of the giant basilisk.

Harry walked towards the basilisk's corpse and knelt in front of it. It was surprising to see how fast such a large creature decomposed. Now the only thing that was left was just a skeletal remain. His eyes ran through the skeleton until he saw what he was looking for.

The basilisk's fangs.

He went closer to it. He knew that the fangs were still full of venom. He had to be careful. One scratch on his skin by these fangs would be enough to send him straight to the netherworld. He conjured up a black cloth and laid it onto the floor. Slowly and carefully, he reached out towards one the fangs and began to pull. It took him quite an effort but he did finally managed to break the fang off the skull. He wrapped the fang inside the cloth and immediately departed from the chamber.

Harry faced a dilemma when he arrived at the bottom of the pipe. He totally did not know how to get back up there. He got help once from Fawkes. He doubted he could get the bird to help him this time around. And he could not climb through the pipe either. Its wall was far too slippery to provide any sufficient grip for his hand to hold to.

But he was the head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. It came with a few perks of its own. One of it would be the information about all the wards and protections government buildings had. Hogwarts would be one of them. And he knew how to install and remove all of them.

Harry took out his wand. He closed his eyes and began to scan for all the wards and enchantments Hogwarts had in place.

Back in the old timeline after the war, the ministry saw fit to retrofit the castle with more protection mechanisms than ever before. War had not yet happened within this timeline, but Harry was taken by surprise by the level of security Dumbledore put in place. The amount could rival even the strongest defence fortress.

It had its own weakness though and right now its weakness would be Harry. He did not intend to lift all of them. Just the one.

With his eyes still closed, he slowly waved his wand from left to right and began to mutter several incantations. The air surrounding him shimmered and began to warm up. It went that way until Harry felt the invisible block lifted. The Anti-Apparition ward had been lifted.

Harry pocketed his wand. He then twisted on the spot and immediately vanished without a trace.

"Ooh, so we can apparate within Hogwarts now?" asked Myrtle the moment Harry blinked into existent right within the girl's bathroom.

Harry did not answer. Instead he took out his wand. But this time, he waved it from right to left. Once again with his eyes closed, he muttered several incantations. Myrtle looked stun as the air surrounding her and within the girl's bathroom glowed in a soft light. The glow then slowly dissipated a few moments later. The Anti-Apparition ward had been reinstalled.

Harry opened up his eyes. He turned towards Myrtle and smirked. "No, we can't. I'll see you later, Myrtle."

He threw his Invisibility Cloak over him and immediately headed out towards the corridor, leaving Myrtle gawking behind.

His next destination, The Room of Requirement.

**Room of Requirement, few moments later...**

He still remembered where the room was located. It was on the seventh floor at the castle west wing. To an untrained eye and to those who did not know, the left wall of the corridor was basically featureless.

Harry stopped in the middle of the corridor. He then paced three times in front of the room's entrance and visualized the thing he was seeking and its location. Sure enough, a wooden door began to take form on the once blank wall. He immediately pulled the knob and stepped into the room.
The room looked just like the way he remembered during the Battle of Hogwarts. It was truly cluttered with items the students thrown in throughout the ages.

Harry began to sift through the clutter. He needed to find the cabinet. And sure enough within a few moments later, he found it. And on top of it laid the item he was seeking.

The Ravenclaw's Diadem.

He took out his wand and flicked it. The diadem flew towards him and he caught it expertly. He then turned his gaze back to the cabinet.

He knew what the thing was. It was the Vanishing Cabinet, the very same cabinet Malfoy used to smuggle the Death Eaters during his sixth year and resulted in the death of Albus Dumbledore. He once again raised his wand.

"Bombarda Maxima!"

The curse that hit the cabinet was so powerful that the cabinet exploded violently, sending wooden shrapnel all across the room. He immediately erected an invisible barrier that protected him from those shrapnel.

"Sorry Malfoy," he whispered as the dust settled. "Not this time you don't."

Harry then turned his attention towards the diadem he held within his hands. He can feel it vibrated. Slowly he placed it onto the floor. Kneeling, he then unwrapped the basilisk fang and held it over the diadem.

As if it was sensing that its end was near, the diadem began to chitter violently.

Harry raised the fang high over his head and with all the strength he could muster, he plunged the pointy end of the fang into the diadem. The diadem's jewel cracked and Harry stood back as he watched a thick black smoke oozing out of it, taking the form of Voldemort's face. It let out a loud wail before it perished into non-existent in a huge explosion. Harry immediately anchored his feet to the floor and once again erected a strong barrier to protect himself from the shock of the explosion.

It took sometime before the dust began to settle and when it did settle, Harry saw all the centuries old items were pushed against the wall by the force of the shock wave. The immediate area surrounding the diadem was completely empty. The spot where the diadem once was had blackened.

A few shrapnel of what was left of the diadem littered all over the floor. Harry bent down and took what was left of the diadem and placed the still smoking items into the black cloth along with the basilisk's fang. Feeling satisfied that one mission had been accomplished, he made his way towards the exit. Two horcruxes down. Five more to go.

But just as he entered the corridor, he heard noises. He strained his ears and took a listen. Suddenly he froze.

Those were not noises. They were the voices of the teachers. And they were heading straight towards him.

He suddenly realized that what he did inside the room must be heard throughout the castle. He cursed himself for being so stupid. He should have wait a little longer and find a much safer place away from the castle to dispose the horcrux.

Harry immediately threw his Invisibility Cloak over him and sped towards the Gryffindor Tower. But just around the corner he skidded into a halt. In front of him at the end of the corridor, he saw a group of teachers walking hurriedly his way.

And among them was Barty Crouch Jr.

"Shit!"

To be continued...

A/n: Shout out to Baron for pointing the error in regard of Percy. Corrections had been made. Thanks.
11. Chapter 11

Chapter 10

Harry immediately threw his Invisibility Cloak over him and sped towards the Gryffindor Tower. But just around the corner he skidded into a halt. In front of him at the end of the corridor, he saw a group of teachers walking hurriedly his way.

And among them was Barty Crouch Jr.

"Shit!"

There was not much time. By now, he was sure that the impostor would have spotted him, cloak or no cloak.

I need to get out of here, Harry thought. I need to go back to the common room. Fast.

Harry slowly shifted back around the corner and into the corridor that lead to the Come and Go Room. Once he had steer clear of the group of teachers, he quickened his pace and set off into a different route back to the Gryffindor common room. But much to his dismay, just as he passed halfway through, another group of teachers emerged from the opposite end of the corridor.

A group of teachers came from the front and another one from behind. He was trapped!

He frantically looked around for any sort of cover but apart from the line of armor suits that graced the stone wall, the corridor offered little protection. He could not dive into the Room of Requirement either. There won't be time, plus the teachers would be made aware of the room's existent. While Harry was sure that some of them were aware of the existent of such room, letting them know what had transpired would be highly unwise.

In desperation, he jumped behind one of the suit of armor and stood very still. He held this breathe as the two groups approached his position from either side, praying for miracle to anyone cared enough to listen.

The groups got closer and closer and all those while, Harry kept his attention towards 'Moody', mainly to his revolving eye because that will indicate if he had his cover blown away.

"Albus!" Professor McGonagall called out to the headmaster who had just arrived with the 'Barty's group'. "You heard?"

"Indeed I have," replied Dumbledore grimly. His eyes began to wander his surrounding, going through all the nooks and crannies the wall had to offer. "Strange," he murmured as his finger began to trace the wall where the entrance into the Room of Requirement usually appears.

"What do you mean by strange, Albus?" asked McGonagall. "What have you found?"

Dumbledore did not answer at first. He took his finger off the wall and turned towards McGonagall, who was looking at him expectantly. His expression however was unreadable. "Something that remains elusive. Even for me." Dumbledore then turned away from the deputy headmistress and began to scour the area, searching for clues.

"It may not be that elusive, headmaster," Snape commented. "We have troublemakers among the students and we know who they are. I'm sure we can interrogate a few of them and find the culprit."

"You talk as if you already have one such person in your mind," stated McGonagall.

"Yes," replied Snape curtly. "I have. I caught him last year, wandering around the corridor late at night carrying a piece of parchment. If it wasn't for Lupin I would have-."

"Did you see Potter wandering around the corridor tonight, Severus?!" interrupted McGonagall heatedly. Harry saw her eyes narrowed. He knew McGonagall was angry but nothing would prepare him for what she was about to say next. "Just this morning you mentioned of how the way Potter worked reminded you so much of his mother during your class and now you're accusing him for something that may not be his own doing?"

Harry was stunned. So that explained Snape's peculiar behaviour yesterday.

"There are no connections between the two!" defended Snape. "This is a matter of discipline!"

"Maybe not," said McGonagall. "But until proven otherwise, you have no right to accuse anyone. I would have thought that all these while you would have learnt not to make quick
judgement, especially towards students not from your house and especially to Potter."

"Minerva is right, Severus," said Professor Sprout. "The explosions may be the work of a student but nothing would explain that blood curling scream." She shuddered at the memory. "Do you think someone was injured? Or... killed?" she asked McGonagall.

"They got what they deserved!" interrupted Filch. "Those blasted students! Always making damn trouble not matter-." "That is enough, Argus!" cut McGonagall, glaring at the caretaker. "I won't have you bringing the irrelevancy of your constant, pitiful war against the students into this matter. Like I said, until proven otherwise, it would be best if you keep your mouth shut."

Both Filch and Snape went silent.

"If you professors no longer have anything else to say, it would be best if we all keep quiet," growled 'Moody'. He was at that time observing Dumbledore. "I think the headmaster will appreciate it if we allow him to concentrate."

Dumbledore was indeed in deep concentration. And he stood facing the suit of armor where Harry made refuge.

Harry did not dare to move nor did he dare to breathe. And he felt his mind was being probed. He knew who did the probing and was debating with himself on whether or not he should block Dumbledore's attempt. In the end, he decided to selectively show the headmaster some part of his memories and concealed the rest. Letting Dumbledore knew that he was a time traveller and possessed more abilities than any auror within this timeline won't do. At least not for the moment.

But that was the least of his worries. At that very moment he took a glance at 'Moody' and saw that the impostor was looking directly at him. There was the look of surprise on his face. He had found him!

But strangely enough, instead of letting everyone knows Harry was there, he just kept quiet.

After a few minutes, Dumbledore opened his eyes. He then turned towards the teachers. "I need all head of houses to do a head count check on all students under your care. The rest shall gather at the staff room. Alastor, please stay," he instructed.

'Moody' gave Dumbledore a knowing look and nodded.

Both Dumbledore and 'Moody' stood and watched as the rest of the teachers took leave.

Once all the teachers were out of sight, Dumbledore turned towards 'Moody'. "You saw him?"

'Moody' took a quick glance at Harry and nodded. "Yes. I saw him."

"Then you know what to do," said Dumbledore. "And be quick." Dumbledore then glanced at Harry and spoke, a little bit louder than before, "Tell him that he can see me whenever convenience suits him."

Dumbledore then nodded at 'Moody' and immediately departed towards the staff room.

Now, it was just him and Barty Crouch Jr. aka 'Moody'.

"You can come out now," called out 'Moody'. "There's no point in hiding now that me and Dumbledore already know you're here."

Harry moved from behind the suit of armor and took off his Invisibility Cloak. He then just stood there, eyes unwavering from 'Moody' and patiently waited for whatever action Moody would take next. He knew the impostor won't dare to hurt him. Dumbledore was in full knowledge that he was there and besides, Barty would want to keep him safe until the time comes to deliver him to his master.

'Moody' stared at Harry, or at least his normal eye was staring at him. The magical one continued to spin around, no doubt to check if anyone else was there with them. "I figure that I should ask you on why you ended up here and whether or not you have anything to do with what just happen," growled 'Moody'. "But Dumbledore thought otherwise. I figure that you'll have to explain to him one way or another. Now put on your cloak, Potter. We'll need to catch up with McGonagall."

Harry did as told and began to walk beside 'Moody'. "You're going tell on me to Professor McGonagall?" asked Harry slyly.

'Moody' glanced at Harry as he continued to walk beside him. He then smiled a crooked smile.
"You know it is within my power Potter, but no. Dumbledore spared you so I’m going to do the same. I won't tell. It is far too early to get yourself into trouble. We don't want to give Severus the satisfaction, do we?"

"So this isn't about what Dumbledore told you?"

"Yes and no," said 'Moody'. "Be quick, Potter."

They turned around the last corner and entered the corridor that lead to the entrance into the Gryffindor Tower. Just as luck would have it, Professor McGonagall had just reached the Fat Lady portrait.

"At my signal, Potter," whispered 'Moody'.

Harry nodded.

"Professor McGonagall!" called out 'Moody'.

McGonagall turned to look. "Alastor," she spoke in surprise. "You must have a reason for not being at the staff room."

"I will after I finish scouting the castle. Dumbledore's orders," said 'Moody'. He then gestured at the portrait. "You may want to proceed with the headcount, Minerva."

"That is what I'm about to do, Alastor," said McGonagall, irritably. She turned to face the Fat Lady portrait. "Balderdash!"

The portrait swung open. 'Moody' gave a wink to Harry. Harry nodded and slipped inside the portrait hole just ahead of McGonagall.

Much to his surprise, virtually every inhabitant of the Gryffindor Tower had gathered inside the common room. Ron and Hermione were there as well.

"Ron, where's Harry?" asked Hermione worriedly.

"I don't know," replied Ron. "He wasn't at his bed when I went to wake him up."

Hermione sighed worriedly. "Well he better not get himself into trouble this time. That scream will definitely give me nightmare for days to come."

So they heard, thought Harry. He immediately snaked his way through the crowd towards his dormitory. It was already empty when he reached there. He proceeded to take off his Invisibility Cloak, opened his trunk and deposited both the destroyed horcrux and the basilisk fang into it. After locking the trunk, he immediately made his way down towards the common room. He sneaked up at Ron and tapped his shoulder.

Ron spun around. His eyes widened when he saw Harry. "Harry! Blimey, where have you been?"

"Where have you gone to, Harry?" asked Hermione half whispering. "You're not sneaking out again, are you?"

"I was at the dormitory," lied Harry.

"You're not at your bed, Harry," stated Ron. "I went to wake you up but you weren't there."

"Did you bother to check the bathroom?" asked Harry, raising his eyebrows.

"I... urn... I didn't," admitted Ron, scratching his head. "Sorry."

Harry just shook his head.

"That's alright, Ron."

He then turned towards Hermione and asked, "So why are we all here exactly?"

Hermione raised her brown eyebrows. "Didn't you hear?" she asked.

"I have an upset stomach. I stayed in the bathroom most of the night," he once again lied.

Harry did feel bad about having to lie to his two best friends but that was the only option he had. He had decided to not let the two get involved in his private scheme. Both of them were still too young. Dumbledore's Army had not yet existed during his fourth year anyway.

"Harry, there were two explosions and in the middle of it was a scream," Hermione continued.
"It sounded like the cry of a banshee or—... or something. I don't know how to describe it to you but I can tell you that it was really scary. It jolted us from our bed, Harry. Don't tell me you did not hear anything!"

"I might have heard something but—."

"Shhh!" interrupted Ron. He then pointed to the entrance of the common room. "McGonagall."

McGonagall who had just finished talking to a couple of Gryffindor prefect turned to face the rest of the students in the common room. "I know you have questions," she announced. "But unfortunately the matter is still under investigation so there’s nothing that I can give you at this very precise moment. Now the prefects will do a headcount. If any of your dorm members is missing, please state so."

There was a loud murmur between the students as the prefects began on their task.

McGonagall's eyes meanwhile swiped through between the students until it found Harry. Harry could see the sense of relief washing all over her the moment she saw him standing between Ron and Hermione.

Fifteen minutes later the headcount was done. All Gryffindorians were accounted for.

McGonagall nodded in satisfaction. "Very good," she said. She then turned towards the students. "An announcement shall be made once the teachers got to the bottom of this night event. Now off to bed, all of you. You all got classes tomorrow."

Harry and the rest watched McGonagall leaving through the portrait hole.

"That's it?" asked Seamus incredulously as he continued to stare at McGonagall's receding back. "No answer? No info? No nothing?"

"You heard what McGonagall said," said Hermione. "They'll tell us once they know the truth. I think they are just as clueless as we are. But you can tell that they are worried though. Just look at McGonagall's face. Just think that the Triwizard Tournament has not even started yet."

"Yeah," agreed Ron. "If a whiff of this ever gets out, they might move the venue to another school."

"Let's hope not," said Seamus. "I've been waiting all my life for this to happen. They're not going to back it out on me. No way."

"Hey guys," said Ginny as she approached them. Her face looked whiter and paler than usual. She was clutching the end of the scarf that wrapped around her neck. "Some night, huh?"

"Hey Ginny," greeted Dean who immediately stood beside her the moment she arrived. "You're okay?"

"Hey Dean," replied Ginny. "Yeah, I'm okay."

Harry simply watched the interaction between the two in amusement. *That's a start,* he thought. A perfect set up for Ginny to not continue to fall for him in the long run. She will be much better off with someone else rather than him.

"There will be riots if they decide to organize the tournament somewhere else," said Fred as the Weasley twin joined the group.

"That's true," continued George. "We have sacrificed so much for this to fail."

"Sacrifice?" said Hermione briskly. "What do you mean sacrifice? You both hardly do anything. Anyway, like Ronald said, if a whiff of what happened tonight leaks out, they might consider changing the venue. The incident at the Quidditch World Cup notwithstanding. Everyone is still freaking out."

There was a murmur of agreement amongst them.

Harry could not help but felt guilty. If what Hermione and Ron said indeed come to pass, the blame would be squarely on him. It was true that everyone was still a little bit jittery given what happened at the World Cup. The organizer might suggest that Hogwarts, and to some extent Britain, would no longer be safe.

And the worst thing would be he won't be able to meet Fleur.

"Oi you lot! Get back to your dormitory, all of you. Lights out in two minutes," one of the prefects called out to them.
They hastily obliged.

"Some night huh, Harry?" said Ron as he sank his bottom on his four poster bed.

"Yeah. Some night," replied Harry as he too lay his back on his own bed. "Best go to sleep, Ron. We got Moody tomorrow morning."

"Yeah. Good night, Harry."

"Good night, Ron."

In within five minutes, Ron’s snore reverberated around the dormitory.

Thirty minutes had pass since then and still Harry could not sleep. He just lay there on his bed, staring at the ceiling. The event that night kept on replaying within his mind.

He sighed. He had made a mistake that will cost him everything. If a whiff of what he did got out, his plan would utterly fail. Barty Crouch Jr. will know. Voldemort in turn will know that he was attacking his horcruxes. Voldemort might start making plans to protect his horcruxes better and thus making Harry’s effort in destroying them even harder. As of now, the success of his plan had fully depended in Voldemort’s ignorance of what transpired. Harry knew that he needed to keep Voldemort out of the loop and make sure that he stayed at his current hiding place.

Until Harry finds him.

For now, what he had to do was to make sure that the mistake shall never be repeated again. He needed to watch his own back and make sure that his track disappeared behind him.

At this point, Harry began to wonder if he should bring Dumbledore in. The headmaster was clearly suspecting something. Given what he was planning to do with Sirius, it may be a good idea to reel the Head of the Order of the Phoenix in. A good back up could go a long way.

And then, there was the matter of Barty Crouch Jr. Harry knew that he needed to dispose the impostor one way or another. But given what the impostor did tonight, Harry began to wonder if there was another way to settle the problem. Harry knew that Barty saw him. He had every chance to expose Harry back then but he chose not to do so and that was before Dumbledore ordered him to quietly return Harry to the Gryffindor Tower.

Maybe there was still a chance for Barty to change. Just like Snape.

Drowsiness began to take over him. And before his eyes closed, Harry had decided.

Barty shall be turned against his master.

Or die.

The very next morning...

The event last night became the talk of the school that very morning. Everyone had their own theory and each theory was just as crazy as the next.

Harry sat at his usual spot in the Great Hall and ate his breakfast quietly. Those around him were chatting animatedly about the event last night. From his vantage point, he could see that virtually all the female students look paler than usual. Such was the effect of Voldemort’s mere memory, or soul if you could call it. Male students fared better though he could not help but notice that Malfoy looked a lot whiter than he was. Ron joked that Malfoy might peed in his pant and on his bed last night. Harry just sniggered.

Of course Harry would not know the extent of the effect from destroying the horcrux. The last time it happened was during the battle. Everything was chaotic. The combination of the fang taken by Ron and Hermione from the basilisk’s carcass and the fiendfyre destroyed the diadem but within the chaos of the battle the effect of the horcrux’s destruction was drown.

This time it happened during relative peace. Harry thought the Room of Requirement would absorb some of the after effect. He was mistaken.

Harry glanced at the teacher’s table. He saw Dumbledore and a few others. Teacher’s breakfast attendance that morning was relatively lacking. ‘Moody’, as always, was nowhere to be seen.

His eyes met Dumbledore’s. The headmaster gave him a veiled nod before he went back to his breakfast.
The breakfast time ended fifteen minutes later and much to the students' disappointment, no announcement had been made. Hermione of course, being logical as she had always been, reasoned that the matter was still under investigation. However, from the prefects' mouth, they got to know that a thorough search had been done throughout the castle last night. Nothing was found.

**Defence against the Dark Art classroom...**

"You can put those away," he growled, stomping over to his desk and sat down. "The books. You won’t need them."

Harry felt the sense of déjà vu.

They returned the books to their bags. Ron looked thoroughly excited.

'Moody' took out a register, shook his long mane of grizzled gray hair out of his twisted and scarred face and began to call out names. His eyes though lingered on Harry a bit longer when he declared his attendance.

"Right then," he said, putting away the register after the last person declared themselves present. "All of you must have been reeling from whatever it was happen last night and probably disappointed when no goddamn answer was given during breakfast. Know that the matter is still under investigating and it will be as such until a conclusive answer can be found. Now, take you mind off that and put it to where it belongs which would be in this class."

'Moody' then shuffled through the papers strewn all over his desk and took out a piece of parchment. "I received a letter from Professor Lupin regarding this class," he said, his eyes went through the parchment. "Seems you have a pretty thorough grounding in tackling Dark Creatures. You've covered - let see - boggarts, red caps, hinkypunks, grindylows, kappas and, oh this is ironic, werewolves."

He then put away the parchment and continued, "Unfortunately, this also mean that you're behind – very behind – on dealing with curses. So I'm here to bring you up to scratch on what wizard can do to each other. I've got one year to teach you how to deal with Dark-.

"What? Aren't you staying?" Ron suddenly blurted out.

'Moody's' magical eye spun around to stare at Ron. Ron looked extremely apprehensive. But after a moment, 'Moody' smiled. Ron looked deeply relieved to see that.

"You'll be Arthur Weasley's son, eh?" 'Moody' said. "Your father got me out of a very tight corner a few days ago. Yeah I'm staying for just a year. Only one year as a special favor to Dumbledore and then go back to my quiet retirement."

Harry nearly snorted when he heard that. *Retirement. Yeah right,* he thought. He knew fully well that there was no such thing as retirement package under Voldemort’s employment benefit.

"So! Straight into it!" continued 'Moody'. "Curses. They come in many strengths and forms. Now, according to Ministry of Magic, I am to teach you counters curses and leave it at that. You are not supposed to know what an illegal curse looked like until you reach sixth year. A load of bollocks I would say. Luckily, Dumbledore seems to think that you got the nerves and that you can cope. I agree with him. I say, the sooner you know what you’re up against with the better. A wizard who’s about to put an illegal curse on you won't tell what he is about to do. He's not going to be nice and polite to you. You need to be prepared. You need to be alert and watchful. And the most important thing will be CONSTANT VIGILANCES!"

Everyone in the class except Harry jumped at that.

"Now, do any of you know which curses are the most heavily punished by the wizarding law?" asked 'Moody'.

Several hands rose tentatively into the air, including Ron's and Hermione's. 'Moody' pointed at Ron.

"My dad told me one," said Ron. "It is called the Imperius Curse, or-, or something."

"Yes, yes, your father would have known that. Gave the Ministry quite a bit of trouble years ago. Perhaps you should see why."

'Moody' took a glass jar from his desk drawer. In it were three huge spiders. Harry could feel Ron squirming beside him. He knew Ron hated spiders.

'Moody' reached into the jar and took out one of the spiders and held it in the palm of his
hand so that all of them could see it. He then pointed his wand towards the spider and muttered, "Imperio!"

The spider immediately leapt out of 'Moody's' hand and began to do all sorts of tricks. 'Moody' commanded it to do. At one point, the whole class, again with the exception of Harry, and this time 'Moody', laughed watching the spider rose to its hind feet and did a tap dance.

"Think it's funny, do you?" 'Moody' growled. "Would you like it if I did it to you?"

The laughter subsided almost instantly.

"Total and absolute obedience," said 'Moody' as he returned the spider back into the glass jar. "And the scariest part is, you won't even know that it happened to you. Years back, at the end of the last Wizarding war; many witches and wizards claimed to be under control by the Dark Lord. Some job for the Ministry trying to sort between the truth and the lies. Now! Another illegal curse. Anyone?"

Hermione's hand flew into the air again, and so did Neville.

"You son," said 'Moody', pointing towards Neville. "Another curse. What is it?"

"There's one. The-, the Cruciatus Curse," said Neville in a small and distant voice.

"Your name's Longbottom?" asked Moody, reaching for the register and began checking on it.

Neville nervously nodded.

'Moody' made no further inquiries. He put away the register and took out a second spider from the jar. He pointed his wand towards the spider and muttered, "Engorgio!"

The spider swell, reaching the size larger than a tarantula. Ron instinctively pushed his chair backward and as far away as possible from 'Moody's' desk.

'Moody' raised his wand again, pointed it towards the spider and muttered, "Crucio!"

At once, the spider's legs bent in upon its body. It rolled over and began to twitch horribly, rocking from side to side. No sound came from it but if the spider had voices, its scream would be much scarier than what the students heard last night.

"Please! Stop it!" said Hermione shrilly. "Can't you what it's doing to him. Please stop!"

'Moody' immediately pointed his wand away from the spider. The spider went calm although it still twitched from time to time. "Pain," said 'Moody'. "You won't need a screw driver or a knife if you know how to perform the curse. Do it long enough and the damage to the victim will be permanent." He once again raised his wand and muttered, "Reducio!" The spider returned to its original size and was put back into the jar.

Harry glanced at Neville. The boy's knuckles were white as he clenched the desk in front of him. His eyes were wide and horrified. He was the main reason on why Hermione pleaded 'Moody' to stop.

'One final curse," said Moody as he looked at each and every student. "Anyone?"

No one raised their hand this time. Except for Hermione.

"Yes?" said 'Moody', looking at her.

"Avada Kedavra," Hermione whispered.

"Ah yes," said 'Moody', another smiled twisting his already lopsided mouth. "The last and the worst." He proceeded to pull out the third spider from the jar. The spider, as if sensing what 'Moody' was about to do, immediately leapt off his hand and ran scampering across the desk. 'Moody' immediately pointed his wand towards the spider and shouted "Avada Kedavra!"

There was a flash of blinding green light and a rushing sound, as though a vast and invisible thing rose and flew through the air. The unfortunate spider rolled over and moved no more.

There were muted cries and Ron threw himself backward and nearly fell off his chair as he frantically tried to get away from the doomed spider.

'Moody' swept the spider off the desk and onto the floor. "Not nice. Unpleasant and there are no countercurse. Not even a way to block 'em," said 'Moody' calmly. "There's only one known person who survives it and he is in this room, sitting in front of me."

Harry met 'Moody's' gaze calmly.
Yes. He did survive it. Not once but twice. And he lived to tell the tale.

'Moody' gave them homework at the end of the lesson, due Thursday next week. He also indicated that he might test them later on the Imperius Curse, to see what it felt like and how they can cope with it and he may teach them on how to throw it off.

"Come on! Hurry up!" said Hermione tensely as the trio made their way towards the Great Hall.

"To where?" asked Ron. "If you're going to the bloody library again then count me out."

"Not the library," said Hermione irritably, pointing towards the side of the corridor. "Neville."

And indeed there was Neville, standing alone and staring at the wall with same horrified eyes he wore when 'Moody' demonstrated the Cruciatius Curse.

"Neville?" Hermione said gently.

Neville spun around. "Oh hello." His voice was higher than usual. "Interesting lesson wasn't it? I wonder what's for lunch. I'm-, I'm starving. Aren't you?"

"Neville, are you alright?" asked Hermione.

"Oh yeah. Yeah, I'm fine," said Neville with the same high voice. "Very interesting lesson, I-, I mean lesson. So what's for breakfast?"

Ron raised his eyebrows. "Neville? What-?"

An odd clunking noise sounded behind them. They turned around, only to see 'Moody' came limping at them. The four of them watched silently as 'Moody' approached for Neville.

"It's alright, sonny," said 'Moody' in a much gentler voice, his hand on the boy's shoulder. "Why don't you come up to my office? We'll have a cup of tea, you and me."

Neville looked even more frightened to the prospect of tea with 'Moody'. He neither moved nor spoke. 'Moody's' magical eye turned upon Harry. "You alright, Potter?" he asked.

"I'm fine, sir," said Harry.

'Moody' nodded. "It is harsh, I know. But you got to know. There won't be any point in pretending. Well, come on laddy. I have some books you may find interesting."

Neville looked pleadingly at the trio as 'Moody' steered him away. The trio said nothing so Neville had no choice but to let 'Moody' took him away.

"What was that about?" asked Ron as the trio continued their way towards lunch.

"I don't know," said Hermione, looking pensive.

"Probably something to do with his parents," Harry suddenly blurted out.

"What?" said Hermione in surprised. "Why? What's wrong with his parents, Harry?"

"All I know is that he stayed with his grandma," said Ron.

Harry just shrugged. "Just a wild guess of mine. Don't worry about it you two."

Hermione was about to interrogate Harry when all of a sudden she found herself distracted. Harry looked ahead and saw what caused it.

They had just arrived at the Entrance Hall and up ahead, a large group of students congregated. A large sign apparently had been erected at the foot of the marble staircase. The trio could not get near so Ron, being the 'giraffe' of the three, read the sign for them:

**TRIWIZARD TOURNAMENT ANNOUNCEMENT**

**THE DELEGATION FROM BEAUXBATONS AND DURMSTRANG WILL BE ARRIVING AT 6 O'CLOCK ON FRIDAY THE 30TH. OF OCTOBER 1994. ALL LESSONS SHALL END HALF AN HOUR EARLY.**

**STUDENTS ARE TO RETURN THEIR BOOKS AND BAGS TO THEIR DORMITORIES AND ASSEMBLE IN FRONT OF THE CASTLE TO GREET OUR GUEST BEFORE THE WELCOMING FEAST.**
"Excellent!" exclaimed Ron. "We have Potions on Friday afternoon. We can get out early."

Ernie Macmillan came up to them, emerging from the crowd. His eyes were gleaming. "This is cool. I wonder if Cedric already knows this. Think I'll go and tell him." He then sped off towards Hufflepuff Basement.

"Cedric?" asked Ron blankly at Harry.

"Of Diggory," said Harry. "Remember the bloke that went to the World Cup with us? He's already seventh year. He probably would put up his name for the tournament."

"That idiot becoming a Hogwarts champion?" said Ron incredulously as they push their way towards the Great Hall.

"He's not an idiot, Ron," reprimanded Hermione. "You just didn't like him because he beat Gryffindor once at Quidditch. I heard he's a really good student and a prefect too." She spoke as if this settled the matter.

"You only like him because he is handsome," said Ron scathingly.

Hermione turned to face Ron, her hands on her hips in an uncanny resemblance of Molly Weasley. "Excuse me! I don't like people just because they're handsome!"

Ron gave out a false cough which oddly sounded like "Lockhart!"

The lunch was a usual affair, if you did not count the Triwizard Tournament into the equation. Everyone was really excited. The event last night was promptly forgotten. Now everyone was talking about the tournament.

As before, Hermione ate at high speed.

"To the library again, Hermione?" asked Ron who was watching her.

"Can't help it. Got loads to do," said Hermione as she finished off her own meal. "See you boys at the common room. " She then heaved her school bag around her shoulder and sped off towards the library.

Ron shook his head. To Harry he said, "Last year it was the time turner, and now this. What, is she trying to achieve 200% mark on all subjects?"

Harry said nothing. He though, was sure that whatever Hermione was working on, it won't be good to the both of them.

The rest of the week went as normal. Friday came. Snape had indeed made 'watching Harry while Harry is working' his new hobby, much to Malfoy's chagrin. Luckily though, he did not bring out the issue of the event that happened the last two nights.

From what Harry could gather, the teachers were nowhere close in deciphering the event that happened on Thursday night. Filch prowled the seventh floor more often nowadays but Harry did not think that he found the Come and Go Room. At least not yet. For now though, he needed to stay away from that floor until things cooled down.

Sunday came. Harry woke up early that morning. Everyone else was still sleeping.

He once again had the vision of Voldemort. It interrupted his sleep. But at least he knew that the Dark Lord was still hiding at Little Hangleton.

Harry got up from his bed and began to dress. He decided to have an early breakfast.

There weren't that many people within the Great Hall on early Sunday morning. Gryffindor's table, with the exception of him, remain empty. The breakfast had already been served though. He proceeded to sit at his usual spot and began to ply his plate with one of everything and began to eat.

Five minutes into eating he heard a whooshing sound. He looked up and saw a brown tawny owl flew towards him. It landed in front of him and extended it foot towards him. Tied to that foot was a letter.
"Sirius."

He immediately detached the letter from the owl's leg and began to read:

Dear Harry,

You're saying you got the Marauder's Map? That is bloody awesome! Yeah, I remember all the things James, Remus and I did with the help of the map. Of course we got caught in the end and Filch confiscated it. We were not as good as Voldemort apparently. Legend says he was never got caught for his mischief during his school years. And now it has pass down to you, the worthy heir of our treasure.

21st November sounds great. I'll meet you during your Hogsmeade visit. Just bring in some food if you can. I had enough of eating those 'Wormtails'. You probably realized why I did not include his name up above. You know why.

Don't worry about me, pup. I know what I'm doing. The last thing they'll suspect would be an escaped convict visiting the most heavily guarded town during an international tournament.

Looking forward to see you then.

Padfoot.

P/s: Look for a black dog at the western outskirt of the village, at the fork right before the path that leads to the mountains.

Harry folded the letter and kept it inside his pocket. He smiled. For the first time ever, aside from Fleur, he had something solid to look forward to. Still, he can't help but felt worried. Worried that things might go wrong.

Be it as it may, he would still meet him. And he will meet his godfather alone without Ron and Hermione.

The appearance of the sign in the Entrance Hall brought marked effect to the inhabitants of the castle. Throughout the following week, only the topic of the Triwizard Tournament was talked about in the school. Rumour has it that virtually all seventh year students will put up their name. There were favorites of course. Angelina Johnson became Gryffindor's firm favourite. The Hufflepuff seemed to vouch for Cedric. Cassius Warrington from Slytherin was said to be interested in becoming the Hogwarts champion. Nominees from Ravenclaw were still a mystery though.

Up until this time, nobody with the exception Harry knew how the candidates shall be selected and plenty rumours about it abound as well. It was amusing for Harry to hear those crazy theories. If only they knew who the 'impartial judge' really was. As for the twins and few other nearly seventeen years old students, hoodwinking the judge became the main favorite topic of discussion.

The inhabitants were not the only one affected by the upcoming event. The castle itself underwent thorough cleaning. Portraits were scrubbed, much to their subject displeasure, and all the suits of armor underwent thorough cleaning and polishing. Filch himself had taken extra precaution by punishing anyone who did not wipe their shoes whilst walking along the corridors. New banners were hung within the Great Hall along with several other decorations. The tables were polish such that one could practically use it as a mirror. Hogwarts had certainly gone all out in readying itself for the event.

Sometime during the week, both Ron and Harry became the unwitting members of a new organization established by Hermione, the Society for Promotion of Elfsh Welfare aka. S.P.E.W. True, each of them paid two sickles for an S.P.E.W. badge, but they did it just to keep her mouth shut. That did not work out however. If anything, it only made Hermione more vociferous. Poor Neville became her third victim. She kept badgering the three to wear the badge and to persuade others to join in her crusade. "You do realize that your sheets are changed, your fires lit, your classroom cleaned and your food cooked by a group of magical creatures who are unpaid and enslaved?" she said fiercely to whomever willing to lend their ears.

The twins tried to reason with her. Hermione however, refused to listen.

Friday the thirtieth finally came. All the students went to breakfast in excitement. The twins revealed to Harry during breakfast that they had been pestering McGonagall for the info on how the champions would be selected. McGonagall however did not budge.

Classes ran as usual that day but none of the students were really paying any attention. Flitwick gave up and just let the student do whatever they want when he saw that no one were giving any attention to what he said in his class. Virtually all the professors experienced
the same thing with the exception of Snape who did not give a crap on anything. Luckily for Harry's class, Potions that afternoon ended up early.

When the bell rang, Harry, Ron and Hermione hurried up to the Gryffindor Tower, deposited their books and bags, pulled up their cloaks and rushed down towards the Entrance Hall. When they arrived, all the Head of Houses were busy shepherding their students.

"Mr. Weasley, straighten your hair," McGonagall snapped at Ron. "And Miss Patil, take that ridiculous thing out of your hair."

Parvati scowled and removed a large ornamental butterfly from the end of her plait.

"Now, follow me," said Professor McGonagall. "First year at the front... and no pushing!"

They filed down the steps and lined up in front of the castle. It was a cold and clear evening, dusk was falling, and the pale and transparent moon hung over the horizon, shining over the Forbidden Forest.

Harry stood between Ron and Hermione. His eyes continued to scan the sky for something he had always been anticipating.

'Nearly six," said Ron, checking his watch and then staring down the drive that led to the front gate. "How do you reckon they're coming? Train?"

"I doubt it," said Hermione.

"How, then? Broomsticks?" asked Ron.

Harry meanwhile was still scanning the sky. His heart beat increased with each second.

"I don't think so. Not from that far away," said Hermione.

"What about Portkey? Apparition?"

"You can't apparate inside the castle ground, Ron. How many times do I have to tell you?" said Hermione impatiently.

"So Portkey it is," said Ron confidently.

Harry sniggered. An image of students gathering around an old mangy boot appeared inside his mind. What would Ron think if Viktor Krum arrived at Hogwarts holding an old and smelly shoe or an old tin can in his hands. Of course they will have better objects made into Portkeys if it comes to that.

Hermione meanwhile just shook her head and refused to say another word.

They continued to stand at the darkening ground, waiting for the arrival of their guest. Harry was starting to get cold. He silently wished that they would hurry up. Still his eyes kept watching the sky.

Minutes passed by and all of a sudden, he saw it.

"Aha! Unless I am very much mistaken, the delegate from Beauxbatons approaches!" announced Dumbledore who was standing at the back along with all the teachers.

"Where?" said many students eagerly as they looked at all sort of directions.

"There!" yelled a sixth year student, pointing over the Forbidden Forest.

Sure enough, something large, much bigger than hundreds of broomsticks hurled across the deep blue sky towards the castle, growing larger all the time.

"Is that a dragon?" asked a first year who apparently seemed to nearly lost her mind.

"Don't be stupid! It's a flying house, sort of," said Dennis Creevey.

The thing certainly looked like a flying house, except that it was not. As it brushed the tree tops that lined the edge of the Forbidden Forest, the students could see a gigantic powderblue, horse-drawn carriage the size of a house soaring towards them. A dozen palomino horses, each the size on an elephant, pulled the carriage.

The students stepped back as the carriage got nearer, coming in to land at speed. With an almighty crash, the horses' hooves hit the ground, followed by the carriage seconds later. It landed cleanly and stopped right at entry of the pathway that split the group of Hogwarts students into two.
Dumbledore and the rest of the teachers walked along the pathway towards the carriage in preparation to greet the just arriving guest.

A boy in pale blue robes jumped from the front of the carriage. He fumbled with something under the carriage floor and unfolded a set of golden steps. He then sprang back respectfully.

The door of the carriage opened. Harry saw a shining, high heeled black shoe emerging from the inside of the carriage. This was then followed by a woman whom he recognized very well. Olympia Maxime, also known as Madame Maxime, headmistress of the Beauxbaton Academy of Magic.

"Blimey," muttered Seamus, eyes widened as he took in the sheer size of Madame Maxime. "That is one bloody huge woman."

Madame Maxime indeed was dressed for the occasion. She wore a pair of black satin dress, covering her from the neck to toe. Her jet black hair was pulled back into a bun. Magnificent jewellery adorned her neck and her fingers.

Dumbledore started clapping and soon the rest began to follow.

Madame Maxime's face relaxed into a smile. She walked down the golden steps and towards Dumbledore, extending a glittering hand. Dumbledore, though tall himself, barely needed to bend to kiss it.

"My dear Madame Maxime," he said. "I bid you welcome to Hogwarts."

"Dumbly-dort," said Madame Maxime in a deep voice. "I 'ope I find you well?"

"In excellent form, I thank you," said Dumbledore.

"My pupils," said Madame Maxime as she waved her dinner plate sized hand carelessly behind her.

A group of students, all in their late teens, filed down the steps and onto the castle ground. They stood behind Madame Maxime. All of them were shivering, which was unsurprising given their uniforms were basically made out of silk. All of them wore cloaks and scarves. It was something that Harry took notice.

Harry's heart fell. There was a lump in his throat. He had been observing each of the students. None of them was the girl he was looking for.

At this point, Harry was beginning to have a second thought about this whole time traveling thingy. He began to question on whether or not he did gone back in time. Fleur was not there. She was supposed to be there but he did not see her. Harry was beginning to suspect that he was in fact, did not travel back in time as he had thought. This timeline he was currently in could be some sort of an alternate universe he did not realized before. A universe where Fleur never exist.

He continued to drown within his own thought when Hermione suddenly blurted out, "Oh, I thought they are all accounted for."

Harry looked up. Sure enough, another female student emerged from within the carriage. Unlike the other Beauxbaton students who were gathering around their headmistress, her face was half hidden by the scarf she wore. A shawl covered her head. She stood at the carriage door. From there, her eyes wandered around until it met Harry's.

Harry's heart did a back flip. He could not see her face but he recognized those beautiful bright blue eyes. He knew to whom it belongs to.

The girl who until now held his heart within her hands.

Fleur Isabelle Delacour.

To be continued...

A/n: There you go. Another chapter for your enjoyment.

I don't want to write really long author's note. I don't want it to distract from the enjoyment of reading and I certainly don't want to be accused of trying to rake up the word count. Even without the author's note, this chapter's word count had easily passed 7000 words.

Unfortunately, there are some questions that need answering and given that some of you had decided not to log in when reviewing this story, I am forced to answer it
within this chapter:-

1. Guest(reviewed 20th May) - If you read further you'll know the flashback ended at some point. But thanks for liking the story. I hope you could go up until the latest chapter.

2. PaC :-

Owl - There was never a proper explanation on how the mail owl worked but they do tend to be able to find the recipients wherever they are. This was shown in a scene within GoF where Harry first wrote to Sirius Black. I mean he did not know where Sirius was hiding and yet Hedwig managed to find him. The only explanation : Magic.

Chamber of Secrets - The pipe is for the basilisk. Not Salazar. I'm sure a wizard as great as him would have a more dignified way to go in and out of the Chamber. But alas, once again, no proper explanation had been given. Sure I could use the 'stair idea' like every other author but disabling Hogwarts ward and apparating out of the Chamber sounds way cooler.

Vanishing cabinet – Harry destroyed the cabinet because it was there, right in front of him. He was simply destroying what eventually would become Hogwarts security loophole. If you remembered HBP, you know that the main plan was to bring Death Eaters into Hogwarts. That was what Malfoy tried to do from the start. The tiara and the poisoned mead were just alternative attempts to kill Dumbledore.

Basilisk - Nobody knows how fast a dead basilisk decompose. Sure common assumption dictated that it will take years for the carcass to be completely stripped off the flesh. However, we need to consider that this is a magical creature we're talking about. It decomposing rate may not follow science.

I'm not sure what you were complaining about in the last paragraph in your review but I take it that it was about me making Harry look weak. FYI, Harry in this story is not weak. He of course does not have godlike power, hundreds of women at his disposal and lump of gold the size of the sun within his Gringotts vault. Harry in this story is much more humanlike. He is powerful but he also can make mistakes, accidentally or not. I like it better that way to be honest. Of course he will learn from his mistakes. We all humans do.

But anyway, thanks for the feedback. I appreciated it.

3. Phazer12 - Thanks for feedback. Good to know that you like this story.

Now that's over with, shout out to Dault3883 Barron Backslash for pointing out the huge mistake regarding Percy. Correction had been made.

Also, I had made the correction to ‘the letter to Sirius’ part in the last chapter. I wrote 21st October when it should be 21st November.

That's all for now. So please enjoy the story and tell me what you think. I'll see you in the next chapter, tentatively by the end of this month.
Chapter 12

Harry looked up. Sure enough, another female student emerged from within the carriage. Unlike the other Beauxbaton students who were gathering around their headmistress, her face was half hidden by the scarf she wore. A shawl covered her head. She stood at the carriage door. From there, her eyes wandered around until it met Harry's.

Harry's heart did a back flip. He could not see her face but he recognized those beautiful bright blue eyes. He knew to whom it belongs to.

The girl who until now held his heart within her hands.

Fleur Isabelle Delacour.

It happened in an instant but it was enough for Harry to know that she was the girl he was waiting for.

The girl tore her eyes away from him and slowly walked down the steps towards the group of Beauxbaton students who were now converging around their headmistress. One of the girls saw her and immediately grabbed her hand and pulled her to join them.

"Scotland isn't that cold," said Hermione who was at that point eyeing Fleur with a slight distaste. "And yet she's acting like we're snowed six feet under."

Harry glanced at her. He of course could not blame her one bit for what she had just said. Hermione in this timeline had yet to know Fleur that well. She will eventually. In a way, Hermione was right. The days were getting colder but it was not enough to cause them to cover up from head to toe. Not yet anyway.

There was actually far more valid reason for Fleur to cover herself. This was one fact that Harry was well aware of.

Her beauty.

Fleur once told him that she became aware of that one 'advantage' she had after she reached puberty. Her social life took a deep plunge after that. Jealousy. One by one her friends deserted her until at one point she was in danger of becoming an introvert. Every night she would cry herself to sleep, wishing that things would go the other way around. She began to sow distrust of the humans and wizards alike for their failure to understand the real nature of her ownself.

Luckily, her mother came to the rescue. Appoline explained and taught her daughter everything there was about being a veela. She told her that was something every veela would have to go through in various period of their life. Their beauty can be a curse or a blessing depending on the situation and in Fleur's cases, the problem was a lot more pronounced given that even among the veelas, her beauty stood above the rest. Her mother told her to continue to keep her head held high no matter what. That somehow only provided little relief for Fleur. While she began to understand on why her friends reacted to her that way, it still hurts her to no end.

It was not until her third year at Beauxbaton that things started to change. It began with a boy, a sixth year student to be exact and supposedly the most popular guy in the French magical school. He tried to get fresh with Fleur on that fateful day. She retaliated and in the end, the boy suffered near fourth degree burn and was force to stay at Hotel-Dieu de Paris, an old hospital in Paris which also happened to provide treatments and special wards for France magical community, for the rest of the school year.

Fleur was nearly expel from Beauxbaton due to that incident and would have been if she could not proved the boy's wrong doing. However, on the brighter side, it did open the eyes of the rest of the female students of Beauxbaton. They finally realized that she was not what they thought she would be and rallied behind her; Cassandra Osman was the first to offer Fleur an apology post incident and soon, the rest of the girls in her year followed suit. Cassandra eventually became Fleur's closest friend and confidant. Cassandra, who was older than Fleur by a few months, became over protective of Fleur. Together with a few other girls, they formed what would then known as the Fleur's Squad.

Harry remembered vividly the time when he had to go through their interrogation after his marriage proposal was accepted. It was something Bill had to go through as well, Fleur told him. The difference was that he got the worst part compared to Bill. Harry might be 'The Dude Who Lived', or after the defeated of Voldemort as 'The Chosen Dude', the squad still
treated him like any other guy who tried to get close to the veela. He survived them though.

Ron's stomach growl woke him up from his stupor. The gingerhead was grumbling at the same time. He clearly had become impatient and probably wished that all of them could retreat back into the warmth of the castle right that instance.

Harry turned his attention back to the Beauxbaton delegates. At this time, Dumbledore was instructing Professor McGonagall to escort their French guests to the waiting lobby near the Entrance Hall. McGonagall obliged.

Harry's eyes followed Fleur's receding back as she followed her friends and her headmistress into the castle. He was hoping that she would give him a glance or two before she disappeared inside the castle.

He did not get what he wished for, much to his disappointment. But perhaps he should have expected that. Earlier when their eyes met, Harry saw no recognition in her eyes. This could only mean one thing:-

The Fleur who had just arrived at Hogwarts was not the same Fleur who spent seventy years of her life with him.

Well, he wouldn't expect that anyway. His Fleur died as he recalled.

Harry once again fell into deep thoughts as the new conclusion that he made began to haunt his mind.

"Oh come on!" grumbled Ron. "How much longer do we have to wait? I'm cold and starving."

"Be patient," said Hermione who had turned her attention from the Beauxbaton lot to the sky. "They'll come soon."

"I know they'll be coming but when?"

"How would I know?! Just be quiet, Ron!"

"How do you reckon they'll be coming?" asked Seamus, leaning around Lavender and Parvati to address the trio. He had been watching the Abraxan winged horses that pulled the Beauxbaton carriage. "You think their horses will be much bigger than the Beauxbaton?"

"Well if they're much bigger than this lot, Hagrid won't be to handle them. That's for sure," said Hermione.

The sun had sunk beneath the horizon, leaving only a mixture of yellow, pink and greyish aura in its wake. They continued to stand in silence, slightly shivering now, and waited for the arrival of the second delegates.

"Can you hear something?" someone suddenly blurted out.

Indeed, in that very instance, a loud and oddly eerie noise came drifting towards them. Harry turned his gaze towards the lake. Just as he had expected, the once calmed surface of the water was disturbed. Huge bubbles formed on the surface of the lake, wave crashing the lake's muddy shores and from the middle of the lake, a huge whirlpool took form.

A long black pole rose from the centre of the whirlpool.

"It's a mast!" exclaimed Dean Thomas.

Slowly and magnificently, a ship rose from the depth of the lake. Looking more like a pirate ship from the 15th century, the ship came out completely out of the water and glided smoothly across the turbulence surface of the lake towards what Harry recognized as the makeshift harbour. The ship threw down its anchor once it parked. A plank, wide enough for two medium size people to walk side by side on it, extended towards the harbour. The ship's side hatch opened and people began to disembark.

Harry recognized that ship. The Durmstrang had arrived.


Dumbledore stepped forward and went to greet the man who was leading the Durmstrang delegates.

Harry of course recognized that man. Igor Karkaroff. The headmaster of Durmstrang Institute.

"Albus Dumbledore!" Karkaroff called heartily as both men shook hands. "How are you, my
friend? How are you?"

"Blooming," replied Dumbledore as they both continued to shake hands. "Thank you, Professor Karkaroff."

Karkaroff let go of Dumbledore's hand and looked up as he admired the castle that was towering high above them. "Ah, Hogwarts," he drooled. "How good it is to be here. How good." He then pulled one of his students towards him and said, "Come here, Viktor. Let's get you into the warmth. You won't mind, Albus? Viktor has a slight head cold."

"Of course not. Please, come."

Ron suddenly shook Harry's arm. "Harry! It's Krum! It's Viktor Krum!"

"I don't believe it!" Ron said in a stunned voice. "Viktor Krum! Here! In Hogwarts!"

Ron certainly was not the only one who was excited by the appearance of a Quidditch star at Hogwarts. As they filed back into the castle behind the Durmstrang, Harry saw many Hogwarts students, both male and female, jumping up and down and craned their neck as far as it could go, as they tried to catch a glimpse of the famous Quidditch player.

"For heaven sake Ron, he's just a Quidditch player," said Hermione sternly.

"Only a Quidditch player?!!" said Ron, looking at her as if he could not believe what Hermione just said. "Hermione, he's one of the best Seekers in the world. No idea he was still in school! I'm getting his autograph. Do you have your quill with you?"

"No, I haven't. It's upstairs in my backpack," said Hermione.

She tutted impatiently as she watched several girls squabbling over a lipstick. "Do you think he will sign my hat with a lipstick?" one of the girls asked.

"Honestly," Hermione said loftily as they walked pass the girls.

Just as they entered the Entrance Hall, Dumbledore led the Durmstrang delegates to the waiting lobby on the right. The rest of the Hogwarts student proceeded into the Great Hall.

The trio headed towards the Gryffindor table, only this time, Harry chose to sit facing the Ravenclaw table. Ron sat beside him and Hermione sat opposite of Ron.

"There are still four house tables within the hall," said Ron as he looked around. "I reckoned they will have to share table with any of the houses. Move over, Hermione. Make some space."

"For what?!" asked Hermione sharply.

"For the Durmstrang! They're going to sit here at our table!"

Hermione gave Ron the look that said that she will not hesitated to hit him on the head with one of the golden plates if he muttered another word.

Harry who had his eyes fixed at the door just shook his head. Be prepare to be disappointed, Ron. You're in for a surprise when you see which table the Durmstrang choose, he thought.

Sure enough, both delegates lead by their respective headmaster, Professor Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall entered the Hall moments later. Professor Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall escorted Professor Karkaroff and Madame Maxime towards the teachers table. The Beauxbaton students lingered at the threshold for a moment before deciding to join the Ravenclaw table. Only the Durmstrang remained indecisive.

"Over here! Come and sit over here!" Ron hissed, trying as hard as he could to get the Durmstrang lot's attention.

Poor Ron. He just gawked in disappointment when he saw Krum and his fellow students made their way towards the Slytherin table, just as Harry predicted. Adding insult to the injury, Krum chose to seat beside Malfoy, much to the Malfoy's heir delight.

"Yeah, that's right. Smarm up to him as much as you can, Malfoy," said Ron scathingly as he watched Malfoy leaned in to speak to Krum. "I bet Krum could see right through him. He gets people fawning over him all the time. Where do you think they will sleep, Harry? We could offer them our dormitories. Krum can sleep on my bed. I won't mind kipping on a camp bed."

Hermione snorted.

"They probably sleep in their boat, Ron," said Harry who had his eyes trained on Fleur all the
time Ron was talking. She at that time was talking to a fellow student who sat next to her.

"Well that can't be right," said Ron. "I'm sure it won't be as comfortable as our dormitory, Harry."

"I thought so too the first time I saw that tent your dad pitched at the World Cup," said Harry. "Imagine my surprise when I take a look inside. Anyway, you didn't see them bringing in their luggage, did you?"

"We didn't bring in our luggage too, Harry. The house elves did that for us."

"I don't think Hogwarts house elves have the jurisdiction to enter the boat and the carriage, Ron," said Harry patiently. "There is a reason why Durmstrang and Beauxbaton kept their school's location a secret."

"Shush," interrupted Hermione. She then nodded towards the teachers table.

Everyone, both humans and ghosts, had settled down. The staffs entered, filling up the teachers table and taking their seats. Madame Maxime took seat at Dumbledore's left hand side and Karkaroff at his right. Dumbledore then stood up and silence fell over the Great Hall.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, ghosts and particularly our honoured guest," said Dumbledore, beaming around at the foreign students. "I have great pleasure in welcoming all of you to Hogwarts. I hope and trust that your stay here will be both comfortable and enjoyable."

Not all of the foreign students shared Dumbledore's enthusiasm. While the Durmstrang lot had comfortably made themselves at home, most of the Beauxbaton students looked at their surrounding with gloom expression.

"They aren't looking too happy, are they?" said Hermione as she continued to observe the Beauxbaton students.

"The tournament will officially be opened at the end of the feast," continued Dumbledore. "I now invite you all to eat and drink and make yourself at home."

Dumbledore then sat down.

As always, the plates in front of them filled up with food. Only this time, there was more variety for them to choose from. The Hogwarts elves clearly had pull out all the stops in preparing the dishes that not only catered for the British taste, but also to the French and the Bulgarian as well.

"What's that?" asked Ron, pointing at a large dish of stewed shellfish that stood beside a plate of large steak-and-kidney pudding.

"Bouillabaisse," answered Hermione as she piled her plate with some of the bouillabaisse.

"Geisundheit," said Ron.

"It's French," explained Hermione. "I had it the last time me and my family went to France. It's very nice."

"I'll take your word for it," said Ron, helping himself to a black pudding.

Harry watched with bated breath as Fleur began to undo her shawl. Long and gleaming silvery white hair fell over her shoulder. She then slowly took off her scarf.

And the Great Hall became strangely airless.

There, sitting at the Ravenclaw table was a woman with such breathtaking beauty anyone had ever seen. She seemed to emit a faint silvery glow herself. Her skin was perfect, soft, pale and looked creamy. Her eyes were sparkling bright blue and her naturally pink lips looked inviting. Virtually all of the Ravenclaw bloke stopped eating, mouth wide opened as they looked at her with astonishment. The Beauxbaton male students weren't spared either though they did have more self control. They simply shook their head and continued eating.

Harry might have lived with her for the last seventy years, but even he silently admitted that he could never get used to her beauty.

Fleur slowly reached up and began to tie her hair into a pony tail, leaving a few strands fencing her face. Ignoring all the attention she received from the males around her, she began to eat.

Hagrid sidled into the Great Hall via a door behind the teachers table twenty minutes after
the start of the feast. He slid into his seat at the end of the table and waved at Harry, Ron and Hermione. The trio noticed one of his hands was heavily bandaged.

"I guess Hagrid has finally found out what the skrewts like to eat," said Ron. "His own fingers."

At this point Harry noticed that Fleur was looking around and as fate would have it, their eyes met for the second time that day.

She then slowly stood up and began to walk, circumnavigating the side of the Ravenclaw table nearest to teachers table, and headed towards the Gryffindor table. This time around, not only the Ravenclaw’s students took notice. Virtually all of the Great Hall’s inhabitants, including the teachers, ghosts and the staffs, watched her as she stopped at where Harry was sitting.

"Excuse me," said Fleur to Harry. "Are you still wanting zhe bouillabaisse?"

Harry was about to reply when he heard loud gurgling noise coming from beside him. He turned and saw Ron, who turned a brilliant shade of purple, staring at her. Little bit of drool came out of his wide opened mouth.

Harry nearly face palmed. *Urghh... people gurgle after they brush their teeth, Ron. Not when they see girls*, he thought irritably.

It was not just Ron. The rest of the Gryffindorian stopped to stare at the angelically beautiful French girl.

"Well?" asked Fleur who apparently was still waiting for Harry's reply.

"Oh, I’m sorry. Here, you can have it," said Harry. He carefully lifted the plate of bouillabaisse and handed it over to Fleur who gracefully accepted it. Electrical surge coursed throughout his body as her silky smooth hands brushed against his fingers.

"You 'ave finish with it?" asked Fleur. Her bright blue eyes continued to drill into Harry's.

Harry was about to speak when Ron suddenly chimed in, "Yeah. The boula-boui-boui-boo-what-base. They were excellent."

For the second time, Harry nearly face palmed.

The Delacour heiress glanced momentarily at Ron before returning to Harry. "Thank you," she said to him.

Fleur then carefully carried the dish towards the Ravenclaw table.

Ron was still ogling at the girl like he had never seen one before. Harry nudged him. That did help bring Ron back to his senses.

"Harry," he croaked. "That's a veela. She's a veela."

"Of course she isn't!" said Hermione. "I don't see anyone else gaping at her like an idiot!"

That of course, was not true. It did take quite a while after Fleur resumed her seat for normalcy to return to the Great Hall. Of course, the hot topic right that instance will be all about Fleur. Even from Harry's seat, he could see Malfoy, much to his displeasure, giving Fleur that hungry look.

Ignoring Hermione, Ron leaned sideways to get a better look at Fleur. "I'm telling you, that's not a normal girl!" he said to Harry. "They don't make them like that at Hogwarts!"

Hermione tutted impatiently.

Harry did not offer a reply. Ron was right. Fleur was indeed a veela. A full blooded veela. Not half or quarter veela like everyone was led to believe.

He saw Cho Chang who sat not far from Fleur and began to make the comparison.

Nope. They definitely did not make them like that at Hogwarts.

"When you both got your eyes back into their sockets, you might want to check who had just arrived," said Hermione briskly. She was pointing up towards the teachers table.

All thought of Fleur flew out of Harry's mind when he saw who had just gate crashed into the party. Ludo Bagman, Barty Crouch and of course, Percy Weasley. The three went on to shake hands with everyone at the teachers table before they took seat.
Harry’s attention went towards one particular person who was sitting at the teachers table. ‘Mad-Eye Moody’.

He could see the deep hatred ‘Moody’ harboured towards his father when they both shook hands and every now and then, after Mr. Crouch took seat, ‘Moody’ will glanced at his father.

“What are they doing here?” asked Ron.

“They organized the Triwizard Tournament, remember?” said Hermione. “Apparently they’re here to observe the kick off.”

“Oh.”

The dinner second course came. Ron was busy examining an odd sort of blancmange closely. He then pushed the dish a little to the right, hoping that Fleur would see it and once again come to get it. However, Fleur seemed to have eaten enough. She was now chatting with - Harry’s heart skipped a beat - Cassandra Osman who sat beside her.

It was at that point Harry realized that Fleur was surrounded by her squad. From his vantage point, he could see Cassandra Adeline Osman, Marianne Belle Dionne who sat on Fleur’s right hand side, Adrienne Aime Petit, Camille Louise Moresu and Daphne Annabella Lavinge. The last three sat on the opposite of Fleur. There were actually more of them but Harry could not remember their names. All of them were beauties in their own right. Of course Fleur outshone them all via a large degree.

Once the golden plates were wiped clean, Dumbledore stood once again. A pleasant sort of tension filled the air. Every pair of eyes within the hall turned towards the headmaster as they eagerly wait for the announcement.

"The moment has come," said Dumbledore, smiling around the sea of upturned faces. "The Triwizard Tournament is about to begin. However, I would like to lay down the procedure that we will be following for this tournament before we unveil the casket."

"The what?" asked Ron. Harry just shrugged.

"But first, let me introduce, for those who may not know, Mr. Bartemius Crouch, Head of the Department of International Magical Cooperation and Mr. Ludo Bagman, Head of the Department of Magical Games and Sports."

There was a round of applause for both Mr. Crouch and Mr. Bagman. Unlike Crouch, Bagman jovially waved back to the students when his name was announced.

"She must be too proud to clap her hands,” commented Hermione.

"Who?" asked Ron.

"The girl who took the plate of bouillabaisse earlier from this table."

Harry who was a little bit preoccupied with the happenings at the teachers table turned to look at Fleur. Indeed, unlike her schoolmates, she did not clap at all. Her expression though was unreadable as she continued to gaze towards the teachers table.

"Mr. Bagman and Mr. Crouch had worked tirelessly over the last few months on the arrangement for the Triwizard Tournament" Dumbledore continued. "And they will be joining myself, Madame Maxime and Professor Karkaroff on the panel that will judge the competitors' effort."

Another round of applause.

"Now, Mr Filch. The casket if you please."

Filch, who had been lurking unnoticed in a far corner of the hall, approached Dumbledore carrying a large wooden casket encrusted with jewels. He gingerly placed the casket on a small table Dumbledore just conjured and stood back.

There was a murmur of excitement erupted between the students as they continued to observe the casket.

"The tasks for the eventual champions had been scrutinized carefully by the panel set up by Mr. Crouch and Mr. Bagman," announced Dumbledore. "As per agreement, there will be three tasks, spaced throughout the school year, that the champions will be expected to face. The tasks had been designed to test the champions magical prowess, bravery, deduction ability and of course, the ability to cope with danger."
The murmurs died as the students' concentration towards Dumbledore's speech heightened.

"One champion will be selected from each participating school," Dumbledore went on. "They will be marked on how well they do within each task and the champion with the highest score wins the Triwizard Cup."

Dumbledore extended his hand and touch the edge of casket. The casket magically melt away, revealing an old and large wooden cup. As if on cue, blue and white flames immediately erupted from within the cup.

"Anyone who wishes to submit themselves as champion must write their name and school clearly on a piece of parchment and drop it into the goblet. You will have twenty four hours in which to put your name forward. Tomorrow night on Halloween, the goblet will return the names of the three it judged most worthy to represent their schools. The goblet shall be placed within the Great Hall tonight where it will be freely accessible for anyone who wished to compete."

Silence.

"However," continued Dumbledore. "To ensure that no underage students yield to temptations, an age line will be drawn around the Goblet of Fire. Nobody under the age of seventeen will be permitted to cross the line and submit their name. I would like to impress upon any of you who wishes to compete that this tournament must not be taken lightly. Once selected, a champion is obliged to see the tournament through the end. There must not be any change of heart for a binding magical contract will be enforced the moment your name is selected. Use the twenty four hours wisely. Now it is time for bed. Good night to all of you."

Dumbledore then sat down and began to have serious discussion with the rest of the committee members at the teachers table.

"An age line?!" said Fred, observing the teachers table. "There won't be any problem, wouldn't it? All we need would be a little bit of aging potion to trick it. Once our name inside the goblet they won't be able to do anything, right?"

"I don't think anyone below seventeen should enter," said Hermione. "We haven't learnt enough."

"Speak for yourself," said George. "You'll try and get in, won't you Harry?"

Harry just shook his head.

"Ok then. The lesser they are the bigger our chances would be. Come on you two," said George to Fred and Lee Jordan. "We got plans to make."

"What about Ludo?" asked Lee Jordan as he stood and began to follow the twins out of the Great Hall. "He's already here, you know."

"We'll deal with him later," said Fred. "Right now we have a much bigger fish to catch."

"Come on, Harry," said Hermione. "Let's go back to our dormitories. Ron?"

But Harry held her back. He pointed towards the Great Hall entrance which was now jam packed with students trying to get out. "Let's wait until it cleared a bit."

"Oh, okay." She then sat back down.

"I wonder where he will be sleeping tonight?" asked Ron as he tried to look through the crowd for Viktor Krum.

"Who?" asked Hermione.

"Krum."

"Urghh!"

But his query was immediately answered when Karkaroff began to herd the Durmstrang students. "Well, back to the ship, then," he was heard of saying. "Come, Viktor."

Madame Maxime also began to hustle her students. Harry just watched Fleur, who now had her shawl and scarf back on, and her friends lined up and began to make their way towards the exit.

Harry turned his attention towards the teachers table after Fleur disappeared from his view. He saw Dumbledore briefing the staffs under his care. One thing was missing though.
Or rather someone.

'Moody'.

Harry subconsciously gripped his wand. Whatever reasons 'Moody' had for leaving early, it won't be good.

1.30am later that night...

Hidden under his Invisibility Cloak, he set out alone towards the Great Hall. He found the door into Great Hall remained open when he arrived, supposedly to give students a full 24 hours access to the Goblet of Fire. It was ironic to be honest given the fact that students were not allowed to be in any of the corridors past curfew. He was pretty sure that even the Durmstrang and the Beauxbaton students were not allowed to be outside during curfew. It was this kind of hastily made decision of not using any extra precaution that led him becoming the unwitting champion during the last Triwizard Tournament.

Harry stood at the entrance into the Great Hall. He looked around. No one else was there except him.

Satisfied that he was the only one there, he walked towards the Goblet of Fire and stopped just outside the golden line that was drawn in perfect circle around the goblet. Blue and white flames danced merrily along the brim of the cup giving the hall an eerie glow that was reflected off the stone walls.

He took off his cloak and knelt. The golden circle glowed brightly when he muttered a few incantations and waved his hand over it.

"None below seventeen," he whispered as he continued to read the golden circle’s properties. His eyebrows creased. "Anti aging potion. That’s it? Only the aging potion? Damn it Dumbledore!"

Harry retracted his hand. The glow immediately dimmed. He stood up and gazed at the goblet. He would have thought that given what had happened nights before, the headmaster would have put up extra precautions starting the beginning of the tournament.

Clearly, he was wrong. Harry shook his head. It seemed to him that it was now up to him to set things right and not the way it had previously been. Extra ward will need to be set up around the goblet.

He took out his wand and began to wave it around the goblet. The tip of his wand glowed when he muttered the required incantation. A thin blue circle followed by a slightly larger green one formed outside the original golden circle. Harry then began to program the line to do what he wished. The blue circle will act as a deterrent to any attempt in putting his name into the goblet. The green one will shot spell that will revealed the one that tried to sabotage him. Once that done, Harry waved his wand the final time to lock and conceal both circles from eyesight.

Satisfied that everything was now in place, Harry pulled the Invisibility Cloak over him and retreat to the furthest corner of the Great Hall. And with his wand at ready, he waited.

It did not take long before he sensed someone was coming. He gripped his wand tightly.

A tall, dark person appeared at the doorway. He stood there for a moment, looking around. Harry eyebrows creased. He could not see the man clearly within the cover of darkness but he could make the outline of that person. Much to his surprise, that man was not ‘Moody’.

The man, upon seeing that he was the only one there, entered the Great Hall. After closing the door behind him, he marched up towards the Goblet of Fire.

Harry gasped when the light from the goblet's flame shone upon the man's face. Professor Karkaroff?

Karkaroff stopped just outside the golden circle. He fished a small paper out of his pocket and with bated breath, Harry watched him stepped over the line.

Then it happened.

There was a loud bang, and Karkaroff was unceremoniously thrown out of golden circle and landed with a mighty crash just near the entrance into the Great Hall. A spurt of green light then shoots out from the goblet and hit Karkaroff directly on his chest.
Karkaroff began to groan in pain. He cupped his face as it slowly melted away, revealing the true person beneath it.

Barty Crouch Jr.

Barty touched his face. His eyes widened in horror the moment he realized that his face had returned to its original form. Still covering his face, he immediately got onto his feet and fled the scene.

Harry was breathing hard. He stayed put at that corner of the hall as his mind was busy processing everything that he had just saw.

It took awhile before he finally moved away from that location and towards the goblet. He stopped. His eyes darted between the goblet and the now slightly opened Great Hall's door.

His ward. It worked perfectly just as he expected.

"Your move now, Tom," he whispered. "Or better still, just stay where you are."

The next morning...

It was Saturday.

His eyes fluttered open. He looked to his left and right. Everyone else was still fast asleep. He closed his eyes, only to have it opened once more seconds later.

He groaned. What he would not give to have an extra few hours of sleep.

He was still very tired. All he wanted that morning was to have a proper sleep and to be able to wake up late. Unfortunately, his eyes betrayed him. They refused to grant him anymore sleep. The feeling of exhaustion did bother him actually. He knew that it had something to do with what he did last night but still it did not make sense. All he did was set up extra wards around the goblet and that was about it.

"Maybe I just didn't get enough sleep," he muttered.

Sighing, he got off his bed and made his way towards the bathroom. After a few splashes of water onto his face, he walked back towards his bed and put on his glasses. He then turned his gaze towards the window.

It was a cloudy morning. Grey clouds hung over the horizon and covered the whole of the Scottish skies. Right from his vantage point he saw the Beauxbaton carriage and the Durmstrang ship. There were lights coming out of the windows. It seemed that even during the weekend, both the Beauxbaton and the Durmstrang students tend to wake up early. Nearby at a makeshift horse stable, Hagrid was busy attending the Beauxbaton horses. Quidditch pitch loomed a little bit farther away.

Quidditch!

It had been long since the last time he played Quidditch - work, family and Voldemort notwithstanding. He then remembered by this time, he just got the new Firebolt racing broom from his godfather. What better way to re-brush his Quidditch skill than to ride on it.

Harry immediately changed out of his pajama and into a pair of shirt and trouser and headed towards Gryffindor broom locker downstairs. He opened the locker and there it was, the Firebolt. He took it off its stand and ran his fingers along the polished surface. He smiled. It was still new.

He got out of the Gryffindor Tower, heading towards the Entrance Hall. But halfway there, he stopped. All of a sudden, a crazy idea came into his head.

Harry smirked. "Well, why not?" he muttered. He turned back and set out on different route, this time towards the Astronomy Tower.

He walked over to the edge of the tallest tower's balcony once he arrived and looked down. Everything looked so small from that height. And without further ado, he threw the Firebolt over the edge.

And then he jumped.

Harry closed his eyes. Morning air rushed pass by as he continued his fast descent towards the ground. Huge dose of adrenaline rushed through his veins and for the first time ever since his return, Harry felt so alive.
His eyes snapped open just before he reached a few feet above the ground. He immediately snatched the broom in front of him, mounted it and blasted his way to the sky.

He did not get far when he heard cries from below. He looked down and discovered that Madame Maxime and the rest of her students including Fleur, probably on their way to breakfast, were watching him. Their faces registered shock and awe.

Harry just shrugged. It was far too late for him to stop now. He leaned forward on his broom and sped off into the distance.

Higher and higher he climbed until finally like a bullet shot from a cannon, he punched through the early morning cloud and into the warmth of the morning sun. He hovered above the cloud for a moment, soaking in every warmth the ray of sunshine provided.

It was surreal. It was beautiful. It was like heaven on earth. And his mind travelled back along the road of the past towards the memory when he carried Fleur for the first time on his Firebolt, just the both of them, high up into the sky to admire the rise of the morning sun. Fleur, who was sitting in front, leaned against him.

The memory went away as fast as it came.

He tilted the broom downward and the Firebolt began to dive. Faster and faster he fell. Once again the morning air rushed pass by.

Harry was blinded and deaf to everything around him.

Below him was the Quidditch pitch. It get nearer and nearer by every second and just as he reached close to the ground, Harry suddenly pulled up. His feet graced the ground and with the speed of the bullet he flew around the pitch, winding his way around various pillars that supported the spectators stands, whizzing his way in and out of the pitch with unparalleled agility and doing every acrobatic styles he was capable of.

Throughout all that, he smiled. This was it. This was what he was. This was where he belongs. High up in the air with no one else around. He was in his element. He was the strongest. He was immortal.

Harry spent nearly half an hour at the pitch before he finally sped away towards the lake. He went down low. His feet brushed slightly with the surface of the lake. He leaned forward and with a loud boom, the Firebolt blasted through the air towards the castle. The surface of the lake rocked as huge waves followed in his wake.

He whizzed around the castle towers, going around, up and down and finally made a clean land back at the Astronomy Tower.

He was sweating and breathing hard and yet he had never felt so alert and energetic. Gone has the exhaustion and the tiredness he felt before.

Harry smiled.

Yup. He still had it.

Harry returned to the Gryffindor Tower minutes later. He went to his dormitory after storing his broom. It was empty. Ron and the rest of his dorm mate must have been gone to breakfast.

Harry did not mind at all. He had fun. He took his towel hung nearby and proceeded to the bathroom to take his morning shower.

He arrived at the Great Hall fifteen minutes later, expecting both Ron and Hermione to be at their usual spot. They were of course but unfortunately, what he did not expect were the looks he received from every one that currently resided within the hall.

There were whispers and from where he stood he could see that everyone was looking at him. Even from the Beauxbaton and the Durmstrang delegates and the teachers as well.

"Okay. What did I do this time?" he muttered.

From the Gryffindor table, he could see Seamus slowly stood up, followed by George, Fred, Lee and Ron. The five of them then began to clap.

The rest of the Gryffindor, upon seeing this immediately followed suit. There was also a deafening roar of whoops and whistles.

Harry was indeed taken aback.
One of the Gryffindor seventh year students pulled his hand towards them and along the way to his seat, he received pats on his back, congratulatory handshakes, hugs and everything.

"That was wicked, Harry!"

"The best flying I had ever seen!"

"You showed Krum how it is done!"

"The best seeker of the century!"

"Oliver would be so proud!"

"You show them, Harry!"

Harry finally reached his seat. Seamus and Ron both were grinning madly at him.

"We didn't see it," said Ron, as Harry sat down. "But everyone who saw you told us you were fantastic."

"Umm... What?"

"Harry," leaned Seamus towards him. "Is it true what they say about you jumping off the Astronomy Tower and only mounted your broom just before you hit the ground?"

Harry was about to answer when George interrupted. "It is true. We saw it all. It wasn't just us, you know. The Durmstrang and the Beauxbaton saw it all too. At least that's what we heard. You were damn fast, Harry. And the way you maneuver your way around the Quidditch pitch... Never saw anything like it and we are teammates!"

"Don't forget when he shot down from the sky and only pulled up just before he hit the pitch ground," said Fred.

"And the lake," added Lee impressively. "Any faster and you'll sink the Durmstrang ship."

"Yeah, it made me wish there would be Quidditch this year. With that kind of performance you put out, we will sure to blast every other team wide open," said George.

Everyone within the vicinity nodded in agreement.

Only Hermione did not share their enthusiasm. She simply looked at Harry with deep concern. "That is quite irresponsible of you, Harry," she said softly. "You could get hurt."

Ron who sat beside her rolled his eyes. "Come on, Hermione. Lighten up. Harry's fine. Look, no scratches."

"He will be if he's not careful!"

But Ron just waved it off. "Stop worrying, Hermione. Look, he's fine. He faced worse things than these before. He'll be okay."

Hermione did not say another word.

Harry looked over her shoulder towards the Ravenclaw table. He saw Fleur and the rest of her school mate were whispering among each other and watching him. It was the same thing with the Durmstrang. Viktor Krum himself was staring at him with great interest.

The situation at the teachers table was not that different either. McGonagall shook her head at him though. Both the headmaster and the headmistress from Durmstrang and Beauxbaton were watching him with great interest. Dumbledore, his eyes twinkling, raised his glass to him when their eyes met. 'Moody'? As usual, he did not appear at breakfast. Harry did not worry about him though. He had gone too deep, that Barty Crouch Jr. He could no longer back away.

Harry sighed. This was certainly what he did not expect, the kind of attention he was receiving at that point. Remembering that he had yet taken his breakfast, he decided to push the matter temporarily aside and took a toast and began to munch on it.

He was halfway through his toast when he noticed that the hall suddenly turned quiet. He looked up and saw Viktor Krum, standing right in front of him.

"Harry Potter," greeted Krum. He extended his hand towards him.

Harry immediately put down his toast and reach out to shake hand with Krum. He noticed that the Bulgarian seeker had a really firm handshake. "Nice to meet you," he said.
Krum smiled and nodded. "It was a very good flying you did back there," he said. "I watch it all. I take it that you play Quidditch?"

Harry nodded. "Yes. Yes I am. These are my teammates, Fred and George Weasley. They're both beaters," he said, pointing towards the twins.

Krum nodded at the twins before he turned his attention back at Harry. "And you are a seeker, yes?"

"Yes. How do you know?"

Krum smiled widely. "Only a seeker can fly that good. Do you hav any plan thees afternoon, Harry Potter?"

"Urm, so far no."

Krum’s smile widened. "Meet me at the Quidditch pitch thees afternoon at 4.00pm. Bring along your broom."

Harry turned to look at the twins. Both George and Fred said nothing. They simply nodded fervently.

"Yeah, sure," Harry gave his answer. "I'll see you there."


Once again Harry turned to look at the twins. George and Fred turned wide eyed and nodded even more fervently that their heads were in danger of falling off their neck.

"Yeah, that will be great. You brought your team along?"

"Yes," Krum nodded. He pointed towards the rest of the Durmstrang students who were sitting at the Slytherin table. Some of the Durmstrang boys waved at Harry. "Ve vere among the hopefuls. It vould be great if ve could occupy ourselves vith something else other than the tournament."

"Well, in that case, you got a deal, Krum," said Harry, extending his hand.

Krum shook his hand. "Call me Viktor. I vill see you thees afternoon, Harry."

"Of course, Viktor."

Krum then took leave and walked back to the Slytherin Table.

Harry sat back down. The rest of the Gryffindor stared in disbelief at him.

"Holy shit," said George.

"Holy crap," added Fred.

"Holy errr... dung," finished Lee Jordan.

"That was unbelievable, Harry," said Ron. "A one on one with Krum and a friendly match between Gryffindor and Durmstrang? That's mighty wicked, Harry!"

"Yeah I know," said Harry.

"We have a problem though. Oliver Wood just left. He graduated, remember? We don't have a keeper," said Fred.

"And also a captain," pointed out Lee Jordan.

"That's easy to settle," said George. "We can select one of us to become the captain. But what we desperately need is a good keeper. Remember that we're not playing against a house team. We're going to play against the Durmstrang and Viktor Krum happens to be in that team."

Everyone within the vicinity nodded in agreement.

"How about you guys call back Oliver," suggested Seamus. "He certainly won't pass the chance to play against Krum, would he? Come on! We need to make this match happen. This is our only chance."

"Yeah I think we could. I'll ask Angelina," said Fred. "In the meantime, we need Harry to discuss with Krum on when the match will be held. We may need some time before we can
sort everything out."

Harry nodded. "Yeah, sure. No problem. I’ll talk to him this afternoon. I’m sure he’ll understand."

"Alright, cool," said Fred. "I’ll get Angelina." He, together with George and Lee Jordan, immediately took off.

Harry sat back and began to ponder what just happened.

His eyes traveled towards the Ravenclaw table. He saw Madame Maxime came towards her students and began herding them towards the Goblet of Fire.

Fleur stood. She gave Harry a quick meaningful glance before she joined the rest of her school mate.

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That afternoon, near 4.00pm...

The news of the 1-on-1 between Harry and Viktor Krum and the impending friendly match between Gryffindor and Durmstrang traveled like wild fire. It got everyone super excited. Harry did not believe it at first but both Professor Karkaroff and Professor Dumbledore had given their permission for the match to happen at a date that will be determined later on.

Angelina Johnson, Alicia Spinnet and Katie Bell came racing towards him when they heard the news after breakfast. They threw him a bone crushing hug, telling him that this was something they would never expected to happen. Angelina then immediately went towards her dormitory after informing him that she will write to Oliver that very instance.

Ravenclaw keeper Grant Page and Herbert Fleet from Hufflepuff, knowing that the Gryffindor team did not have a keeper of their own, offered them their service. Harry’s teammate, intending to keep the players only among the Gryffindorians, of course did not give any reply at the beginning. Harry however did urge them to consider their offer given that the Gryffindor team would practically representing Hogwarts in the match and there won’t be any guarantee that they could get Oliver.

It was ten minutes before 4.00pm. Harry, clutching his Firebolt and escorted by all the Gryffindorians, walked down the castle ground towards the pitch. He saw that the pitch stands were full to the brim. Virtually everyone had gone down to watch him and Krum slugged it all out.

Harry and his teammate entered their locker room.

"Well, good luck, Harry," said both Fred and George, shaking his hand.

"We’ll be rooting for you, Harry," said Angelina Johnson as she gave him a tight hug.

"Show him, Harry," said Katie Bell, also hugging him.

"You can do it, Harry," said Alicia Spinnet. She then planted a kiss on Harry’s cheek.

Harry watched his teammate exited the locker room with amusement. To be honest, he did not even know if there will be any slugging. Krum did not even tell him why he wanted to meet him at the Quidditch pitch. He could simply just want to talk.

He turned, took a deep breath and stepped out into the pitch.

He was greeted by a deafening roar of applause. Harry looked up and saw Viktor Krum, hovering alone high above the pitch on his own Firebolt, waiting for him.

"Okay," he muttered. "Let get this show started."

He then mounted his broom and sped off towards Krum.

To be continued...

A/n: As promised, another chapter had been delivered. I would like to thank you for all the feedbacks given. As for the grammatical error, it had been dealt with in the best way that I can.

Shout out to thebookworm1998 for pointing out the time skip issue within the past chapter. Corrections shall be made.

I hope you guys enjoyed reading this chapter. Please leave feedback on your way out. I really appreciate it.
Harry watched his teammate exited the locker room with amusement. To be honest, he did not even know if there will be any slugging. Viktor did not even tell him why he wanted to meet him at the Quidditch pitch. He could simply just want to talk.

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"Okay," he muttered. "Let get this show started."

He then mounted his broom and sped off towards Viktor.

From afar, Harry could see Viktor was watching him. The Durmstrang/Bulgarian seeker cocked his eyebrows when Harry arrived in front of him.

"You called all of them here?" Viktor asked.

"No, definitely not. Did you?"

"I expect only both of us and a few of my friends to be here," Viktor said, looking around and shaking his head. "This is too many."

Harry too looked around. "Well, news travels fast, Viktor. Some of us may have over exaggerated it. I can see that all of Durmstrang delegates turn up as well. You sure you said just a few?"

"The rest of them only come when they saw that everyone else came," explained Viktor. "I told them I just want to talk to you. They were just curious about the crowd I think."

Harry immediately saw the issue. The very problem he foresaw back at the Gryffindor locker room. Not only the news about his meeting with Viktor had been spread wildly, it had also blown out of proportion.

"Just talk?" asked Harry incredulously. "Then why you ask me to bring along my broom?"

"It was just an excuse I gave them," Viktor hastily explained. "I was hoping that you could show me some of your moves. I prefer to do that when not many people are around."

Harry began to understand. But still, the issue of too many spectators need to be address with. "Well Viktor, they come expecting us to do something. We need to give them something before we do anything else."

Viktor nodded in agreement. "Yes, you are right. Vait, let me think."

Harry found that he did not have to wait for long. Viktor gestured him to wait and set off towards the stand where the Durmstrang delegates sat. He saw Viktor was talking to one of the boys. The boy nodded and together with another boy, immediately departed from the stand.

"And now ve vait," said Viktor the moment he returned.

"So what is it exactly you're planning to do?" asked Harry curiously.

"Ve are going to train. And maybe a little bit of competition while ve're at it," said Viktor. "Seeker versus seeker."

"I see," nodded Harry. "Competition huh? I take it that it will involve a snitch?"


Harry stared at Viktor, wide eyed. "There's more than one?"

Viktor simply smiled and nodded. "Just vait. You will see it once my friend arrive."

And they both wait.

The crowd was getting noisier and one point, they began to chant both Viktor and Harry's name.
"They're getting impatient, Viktor," pointed out Harry.

"Yes I know," said Viktor. "They will just have to wait. There won't be anything we could do until my friends arrive."

After a few more minutes of waiting, a duo of Durmstrang boys flew towards them. Harry noticed that the two of them were carrying a small brownish chest. The two boys passed the chest to Viktor the moment they arrived.

"What's in it?" asked Harry curiously.

"Something I use to train as a seeker," answered Viktor. He passed the chest back and asked the two of his friends to hold the chest for him. His friends obliged. He then took out a small brass key from his pocket, slotted it into the keyhole and opened the chest.

Harry's eyes widened when he saw the content of the chest. There were snitches, and a whole lot of them. And they were in various shade of gold. He also noticed a few that were black in colour. "Snitches!"

"One hundred and one to be exact. These are what I use to train myself as a seeker. Notice the colour, Harry?"

"Yes I notice that," confirmed Harry. "I guess the differences are more than just appearance, am I right?"

Viktor nodded. "Indeed you are. The lighter ones are the normal snitches, you know the ones we would use in trainings and tournaments. The darker ones differed in term of speed. They are much faster and harder to catch. The black ones are not only the fastest but also the sneakiest as well. They tend to hide and will come and go in a blink of an eye. They also like to change direction abruptly. They will try hard to make you crash. There were seekers who ended up permanently disable or lost their life while training using the black snitch. It is quite dangerous."

"And you're still using it," stated Harry. He could not believe that Viktor would dare to risk his life for it. "Why?"

"How else do you think I could become the best seeker in the world?"

"Right."

"The black ones help me to concentrate and be always on alert. You never know when they will change direction. All you will know is that the in next second, your body and the wall in front of you become one."

At this point, Harry was beginning to feel uncomfortable. He looked at the black snitches with a slight distaste in his mouth.

"Enough explanation," said Viktor in a more businesslike tone. "What we are going to do is simple. We are going to have a small competition. The one who catches the most snitches wins. Are you up for it?"

Harry thought for a while. "I don't know, Viktor," he responded moments later. "Those black snitches, they won't be easy to catch, would they? Unlike you, I don't have the experience in dealing with it."

"Ah, but you do have the skills," said Viktor. "I saw you thees morning, Harry Potter. Right now, what I vant is for you to put those skills to the test. Vill you do it?"

It took a while, but Harry did finally agree.

"Good," said Viktor in satisfaction. "My friend here," he pointed to the one with darker skin. He had thick eyebrows, much like Viktor though his height seemed to be a little bit shorter. "Vill track the count for us. Harry, meet Alexander Stukov. He plays keeper in our school team."

Alexander extended his hand towards Harry. "Hello. It iz nice to finally meet you, Harry Potter." Harry noticed Stukov had a much thicker Bulgarian accent than Viktor.

"Nice to meet you too, Stukov," said Harry, shaking hands with him.

"Call me Alexander."

Harry just smiled and nodded. "Call me Harry."

Stukov then handover the chest to a taller, skinnier boy beside him. He then flew towards the
stand where Lee Jordan and Professor McGonagall always seated when they were running commentaries for the Quidditch matches. Once he was safely landed on the stand, he took out his wand and pointed it to the sky. Yellow flashes came out of it and began to form a floating scoreboard, much like the one in the Quidditch World Cup albeit a bit smaller in size. Harry’s and Viktor Krum’s name appeared on top of the scoreboard, now registered as 0 - 0.

"Ready, Harry?" asked Viktor.

Harry took a deep breath. He nodded. "Ready."

Viktor nodded. He turned towards the boy. They spoke in Bulgarian.

Harry understood their conversation without the two knowing. Viktor was telling the boy to handover pouches, each to Harry and Viktor, and to be ready to let the snitches go. And Harry got to know the boy’s name. Olaf Antonov.

Back in the old timeline, being fluent in many languages was essential for an auror like him, especially when it comes to fishing out information. The first language he learnt was French, courtesy of his wife of course. Fleur religiously taught him her native language up to the point where he managed to completely lose his English accent whenever he spoke French and was able to differentiate French local dialects very effectively. It was then he moved on to other Northern and Southern European languages such as Swedish, Hungarian, Spanish, Italian, Norwegian, Bulgarian and a lot more including some of Asian languages. He of course was not fluent in all of them but his level of command was good enough to see him through in every mission he embarked.

Nobody within this timeline knew this little ability of him though. And he planned to keep it that way.

Olaf gave two pouches to Viktor, who in turn gave one of them to Harry. "Use these to store all the snitches you capture. You can tie it to your waist. That would be much easier and won’t impede your movement."

Using the small strings that extended from the opening of the pouch, Harry tied the pouch to his waist. Viktor mirrored him.

"Ready?"

Harry nodded.

Viktor gave Olaf a nod.

Olaf hit the side of the chest really hard. And like a swarm of locust, the snitches woke up and flew out of the chest in all directions.

Harry’s eyes darted here and there as he tried to keep track with the snitches movement. True to what Viktor had said, the black ones were the sneakiest and the fastest. Harry saw them for like a second before all the black snitches jetted away out of sight with amazing speed. At this point, he began to wonder if the Firebolt really can outrun them.

Harry turned towards Viktor.

The Bulgarian seeker was staring hard into Harry’s eyes. "Ready?" he once again asked.

Harry gripped his broom tightly and nodded.

"GO!" Viktor suddenly shouted and immediately took a steep dive.

The spectators roared once they realized what the two seekers were intending to do. Here and there, Harry’s and Viktor’s name can be heard chanted loudly by them.

In a burst of speed, Harry zoomed forward and caught three snitches in one swoop. He immediately put the snitches caught into his pouch. A loud gong was heard. The scoreboard showed his tally. He felt a bit proud, until he saw Viktors’s tally. The Bulgarian seeker led him by four snitches.

"Drat!" he cursed.

He leaned forward and sped off. He caught another two snitches on the way before he noticed a stray snitch floated unnoticed near to Draco Malfoy's left ear. He gave his broom a kick and Firebolt launched in a great burst of speed. The Slytherins screamed as they saw Harry coming barrelling towards them. Malfoy himself fell off his seat as Harry zoomed in, missing him by a mere inch, and caught the snitch.

Harry did a sharp turn and braked in front of Malfoy. He smirked. Showing the snitch he
caught in Malfoy's face, he said, "This baby has been floating near you for like decades and you didn't even notice. You might want to consider applying for a different position in Slytherin's Quidditch team, Malfoy. Or better still, resign."

"Shove off, Potter!" Malfoy who was still on the floor, hotly replied.

"Don't like that piece of advice?" said Harry. "Then I'll give you another one. Train harder."

Harry did not wait for Malfoy's retort. He zoomed away from there and caught another snitch in the process.

It was already five minutes into the game. The scoreboard registered 17-12 with Viktor still on the lead. Harry zigzagged through the course, nudging his broom to go as fast as it can as he tried to intercept as many snitches as he can. At one point, a black snitch appeared in front of him. He had caught a lot of normal snitches and several darker ones but he had yet added the black snitches to his collection. He leaned forward, once again nudging it to fly even faster. The black snitch zoomed ahead, darted left and right and remained just outside his outstretched arm reached. Harry inwardly cursed with frustration. He refused to give up tough and began putting all of his effort into catching the snitch. His broom gave another burst of acceleration. But just as he nearly had it within his grasp, the black snitch suddenly shot up and disappeared out of sight.

And Harry found himself travelling at a very high speed straight towards a pillar in front of him.

He gripped his broom with both hands and did a barrel roll to the left and managed to miss the pillar at the very last second. But it was not the end of it. He found himself facing another pillar and once again did a barrel roll, this time to his right. Apparently in his overzealous effort to capture the black snitch, he had accidentally entered underneath one of the towering stands and was forced to dodge every pillars and wooden beams that make up the frame of the spectators stand. It was not easy. The spaces between the pillars and the beams were narrow, just enough to fit someone his size with mere inches to spare. But he made it out unscathed, much to the spectators' surprise. There was a boom of applause and a roar of cheers as he emerged on the other side of the tower.

"You okay, Harry?" called out Viktor as he flew to Harry's side.

"Yeah, I'm fine. I'm okay." The truth was, his heart was beating at probably a thousand times per minute.

Viktor nodded. "That was a really close call, Harry. I told you the black snitch is really nasty."

"Yeah. I kinda saw that."

"Concentrate on the easier one first," said Viktor. "And keep track of the scoreboard!"

With that, Viktor shoot upward, leaving Harry in his wake.

Harry glanced at the scoreboard and saw that Viktor had extended his lead by ten points. The tally was now 61 snitches remain uncaught. He did a quick calculation and found that as long as Viktor's score remained below 51, he would still have the chance to win. Without wasting any more time, he urged his broom forward, flattened his body to it and with his eyes tracking all the snitches continuously, resumed his effort to catch the snitches. He lunged upwards, he dove and did sharp and wild maneuvers as he tried to increase his score. Several times he saw black snitches right in his sight and tried to catch them. He failed.

Minutes passed by. Harry managed to reduce Viktor's lead by two points. The tally was now 39-37. He was flying fast and high above the pitch when he once again saw a black snitch hovering nearby. With a burst of speed, he went after it. But the snitch once again outmaneuvered him.

Harry groaned in frustration. He began to suspect that he may need a different tactic in order to catch them. He decided to stop pursuing the black snitches and followed Viktor's advise by concentrating on the easier one. He did that and the result was quite encouraging. At one point, there was a loud roar coming in from the audience as Harry managed to match Viktor's score 41 - 41.

As Harry flew by the Ravenclaw stand, he noticed a black snitch hovering alone on top of the stand. He was about to leave it alone when all of a sudden, an idea flew into his head. Without thinking further, he immediately made a detour but this time, instead of going straight for the snitch, he went underneath it.

There were screams. The snitch once again tried to escape. But this time, it did not make it. The black snitches may have outstripped the Firebolt when it comes to speed, it did not have a chance against Harry's agility. Harry outstretched hand managed to grasp it finally.
Harry was elated. That was his first black snitch ever.

His delight did not last long however. He immediately noticed disturbances coming in from just below. He looked down and saw several Ravenclaw and Beauxbaton students had fallen off their seats. Fleur was one of them.

He threw the caught snitch into his pouch and flew closer to the stands. Without thinking, he extended his hand towards Fleur.

Fleur's eyes darted between his face and his offered hand. She did not take it. Harry could see that there was a hint of annoyance in her eyes.

But Fleur cocked her eyebrows the moment she heard what Harry said next.

"I'm sorry, Princess," said Harry softly. "It was my fault. Let me help. You don't want to continue sitting on the floor, do you?"

Harry's words seemed to have a profound effect on her. Her expression immediately softened and as a result, she slowly reached up for his hand and Harry gently pulled her up.

"You okay?" asked Harry.

Fleur nodded.

And for the next few moments, they both lost into each other eyes. Green into blue. Blue into green.

A loud gong startled them. Harry turned to look at the scoreboard. Viktor's tally had now reached 45 versus 42 from him.

"Aw damn!" cursed Harry. He then turned to Fleur. "Listen, I'm sorry for what happened. I'll make it up to you I promise, but now I need to go." He then looked down. "I may need my hand back, Princess."

Fleur mirrored him and saw that she was still holding on to his hand.

"Oh. I'm sorry," she said as she let go of his hand. Harry noticed that for some reason, she seemed a bit reluctant to release him.

"You have a firm grip," Harry smiled kindly at then gave Fleur and the rest of the Beauxbaton and Ravenclaw student a nod and took a steep dive over the edge of the stand, catching another snitch as he made his way to the bottom.

The competition between him and Viktor intensified. They both flew so fast that from the audience point of view, they were nothing but a blur, whizzing round the Quidditch pitch at great speed. At one point, they gasped loudly as both Harry and Viktor nearly collided head on when they tried to catch the same snitch that hovered just a few feet above the ground. The two seekers managed to perform a perfect barrel roll to the opposite direction at the very last moment, missing each other by mere centimetres that their knees nearly grazed into each other. Viktor got that snitch though. Harry, who finally had a grasp on how to deal with the black snitches, turned his effort on capturing them as many as he can. He no longer cared if he lose. To him, capturing the black snitches gave him more satisfaction and was much more fun.

There was a really loud cheer when the game concluded. Indeed as expected, Viktor won. He scored 52 versus Harry's 49.

Harry, Viktor, Alexander and Olaf flew down onto the ground.

Harry handed over his snitch filled pouch to Viktor once they landed. "Congratulations, Viktor," he said. "You really deserve it."

But Viktor shook his head. "No, Harry Potter. The actual vinner would be you if you did not let yourself get distracted," he said. "You know why?"

Harry shook his head.

Viktor then poured both his and Harry's pouch back into the chest. From it, he took out one of the black snitches and showed it in front of Harry. "You managed to capture nine of these. I only manage to capture two. And you are the only one so far who managed get his score that close to mine."

"It was just luck I guess."
Viktor once again shook his head. "Luck had nothing to do with it, I assure you. It was your skills. It seems that I have found my sparring partner."

"Your what?" asked Harry, dumbfounded.

"My sparring partner," repeated Viktor. "It has been a while since the last time I train with someone possessing serious skills. I hope you won't mind, Harry. I hope that we could do theses more often, at least until I return to Bulgaria."

Harry saw there was nothing wrong with it. Maybe it would be a right choice. He could in turn learn from Viktor. "Yeah, sure. I won't mind. I mean why not? I had fun doing this."

Viktor smiled and nodded in satisfaction. "Then I would say thank you. I think that is all for today. We can set the date for the next meeting later. I have to go back and prepare for tonight."

Harry suddenly remembered that there would be the Triwizard Champion selection ceremony after the Halloween Dinner that evening. "Oh yeah, right. I guess you should prepare early."

Viktor once again smiled. He then tossed the black snitch he was holding to Harry. Harry caught it. "Take it. That will be a souvenir from me to you. Use it well, Harry. It will help you to train before our friendly match. By the way, have you and your team decide on a date?"

Harry was honestly nearly forgotten about that. "Oh yeah, about that, well-, my team, well-, we do have a slight problem."

"And what problem is that?" asked Viktor.

"We don't have enough players, you see. Our keeper graduated last year and since the inter house Quidditch tournament had been cancelled this year to make way for the Triwizard Tournament, we didn't seek a replacement. And since the keeper was also our captain, we don't have that too. We'll need some time," explained Harry.

Viktor nodded in understanding. "Very well. In that case, take as much time you need. Find a good keeper and a good captain and train hard. I want you and your team to be in your top form when we meet in this pitch. I would still expect the match to happen."

"Thank you, Viktor," said Harry, feeling a bit relief. "I'll try not to disappoint you and your team."

"I don't think there would be any disappointment given your performance today, Harry. I would expect your team mate to be as good as you," replied Viktor. "As a matter of fact, I am looking forward to our match more than ever."

"Don't worry, Viktor. It will. You're not the only one who expecting it."

Viktor nodded and they both shook hands. "I'll see you later, Harry."

"Yeah, you too," said Harry. He then proceeded to shake hands with Olaf and Alexander.

Viktor and his friends then took leave but before they got too far, Harry called out to them, "Hey Viktor!"

Viktor turned to look. His thick eyebrows cocked.

"Good luck! For tonight! Hope you'll get nominated!"

Viktor smiled and gave Harry a thumb up.

The rest of his team mate met him back in the locker room. They all tried their best to console him for his lost. But Harry told them that it was okay.

"Seriously guys, I'm okay. As a matter a fact, I had fun," he said exasperatedly. "What do you expect? I'm playing against a World Cup player. It's like a primary school student playing soccer against Wayne Rooney."

His entire team mate looked at him in puzzlement.

"Who's Wayne Rooney?" asked Fred.

"And what the hell is a soccer?" asked George in turn.

Harry raised his eyebrows. "You seriously don't know Wayne-, owh never mind. Let's get back to the common room. I smelled filthy. Anyway, looked at what Viktor gave me." He showed the
black snitch to them.

"Viktor Krum gave that to you?" asked Angelina Johnson in amazement. "I mean he really, really gave that to you?"

"Yup," said Harry simply. "I think he too tried to console me. I told him I'm fine. He said it was a souvenir from him to me."

His teammates stared at the snitch with utmost reverence. It did remind Harry when Ron and Hermione first laid their eyes on the Elder Wand after Voldemort was killed. He found that he still did not like it.

"Can I hold it, Harry?" asked George.

Harry gave the snitch to George.

"Oh wow," said George. "Can't believe that was Viktor's. I could finally touch it. I mean, I am touching it. Blimey."

Harry just rolled his eyes.

"But why it's in black?" asked Katie who like everyone else, could not tore her eyes away from it. "The gold colour is already hard enough to be notice, wouldn't it?"

"That's a training snitch. Viktor had snitches in various shade of gold inside that chest of his. The darker the shades are, the harder it is for a seeker to catch it. And it's not just about being able to see it," explained Harry. He then took the snitch back from George. "The black snitches are supposed to be the hardest to be capture. They're not only much harder to be noticed, they're also much faster and are able to trick a seeker. A black snitch was responsible for my near miss earlier in the game."

"You mean when you accidentally plough into the stand?" asked Angeline. "You really gave us quite a scare, Harry."

"Well yeah, sorry about that," said Harry as he lugged the Firebolt over his shoulder. "Anyway, I already told Viktor about our dilemma. He understands. He told me that we can take all the time we need to find a new keeper and a captain and train hard. He wants us to be in a really top shape before the match happens."

"That's good to hear, Harry," said George. "That will allow us to prepare."

"But he would only be in Hogwarts for a year," said Alicia who had remained silence before. "I don't really think we have all that time."

"That's true," agreed Fred. "Depends on whether we could get Oliver, I think the best time to hold the match would be during the second term. It will give us time to prepare."

"I agree," said Harry. "Let's agree on it."

"Okay. Second term it is then," said Katie. "Let's hope we could get good news from Oliver. Come on you guys. It's getting late and Harry's probably tired."

"Katie's right," said Fred who noticed Harry looked a little bit worn out. "Come on, Harry. Let's get you back to your dorm."

With that, the whole team made their way out of the locker room.

The rest of the students were filing up back towards the castle. Harry found Hermione, Ron, Seamus and Dean was waiting for him just outside the locker room. He noticed that there were fingernails marks on Hermione's face where she had been clutching it in fear.

"Oh my God, are you okay, Harry?" squeaked Hermione.

"Yeah, you really gave us quite a fright back there, mate," said Ron. His face was as white as ashes. "Blimey, we thought you're a goner."

Both Seamus and Dean nodded in agreement.

Harry knew they were referring to the stand incident. "I'm fine. I'm okay. Look, no scratches."

"You may not be as lucky the next time, Harry," said Hermione. "You really need to be careful."

"I promise," said Harry, trying to appease Hermione. "Come on. Let's head back to the common room."
Together with the rest of his team mate, they joined the crowd as they made their way back to the castle. Both Seamus and Dean told him that they were analyzing both him and Viktor tactics during the competition.

"There's not much different between you and him," said Dean. "It's like watching two Viktor Krum's or two Harry Potters slugging it out against each other."

"You could have beaten him, Harry. You got distracted by that girl from Beauxbaton it seems. I know she's pretty. She's the hottest girl in Hogwart at this point but you need to keep yourself focus," pointed out Seamus. "Remember that, Harry. Don't get distracted. Focus!"

"Yeah I'll remember that," said Harry, feeling a little bit annoyed at Seamus's attempt to channel Oliver Wood. "You're not the first to give me the rundown, Seamus."

They continued their way towards the castle. Along the way, even though he was defeated, a lot of students still congratulated Harry for his performances in the competition and echoing the same sentiment as Seamus and Dean.

Suddenly-...

"Nice flying, Potter."

Harry looked around and saw a girl, together with her friends, walked past the Gryffindor as she also made her way back to the castle. She gave Harry a glance before she continued her way up. Harry noticed that she was quite pretty. No. As a matter a fact, she was really a beauty. A brunette, she wore her hair in ponytail with a few strands left to frame her face, just like Fleur: The difference was that Fleur's hair reached to her waist. The girl's hair only reached just below her shoulder line. And like Fleur, she had a fair, creamy smooth skin. Her eyes though were bright green in colour: A little bit shorter than Fleur, her body was just as curvaceous as the French veela.

Harry then noticed the robe she wore and the emblem printed on it.

She was a Slytherin.

There was something in the way she looked at him, though. Unlike the look the other Slytherins never failed to give him, there was no hatred in it.

"Who's that?" asked Harry to Hermione.

Hermione, who also noticed the girl, said, "You seriously didn't know? She's in our year, Harry."

"I don't give much damn about the Slytherin in case you forget, Hermione."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "As if I could. Well, if you must know, her name is Daphne Greengrass," said Hermione.

"Daphne Greengrass?"

"Yup. Daphne Greengrass," confirmed Hermione. "Like I said, she's in our year. It wasn’t a surprise that not many really knew her or aware she existed. She keeps mostly to herself that Greengrass girl. Most of her housemate called her The Ice Queen of Slytherin."

"The Ice Cream of Slytherin?" said Ron as he continuously rubbing his ears. It had been ringing extensively due to the excessive noise generated during the competition between Harry and Viktor, rendering him temporarily half deaf. "That’s an odd title to be given to a girl, don’t you think?"

"I said Ice Queen, Ron! Ice Queen! Not ice cream!"

"Oh, sorry."

"Nevermind," Hermione waved Ron off. "If you're wondering Harry, on why she got that title, it was because of the way she treated any boy trying to approach her. She did not take them kindly. Quite a few boys ended up in the hospital wing just because of her. Anyway, the girls in my dormitory, you know. They talk. It was said that Malfoy had been chasing Greengrass for years. They said he fancies her."

"Hang on! I thought Malfoy dates Parkinson," said Harry who was taken by surprise by that little info. "She was just like Crabbe and Goyle, always following him around whenever she got the chances."

"I know, right?" said Hermione. "But unless my dorm mates were bluffing, I think that's true. Malfoy does fancy Greengrass. She never gives him the chance though. He got Parkinson
"Figures," said Harry. "I mean, that Greengrass girl certainly is a looker. A lot of boys would want to be with her."

"A lot indeed," agreed Hermione. "Considering that she belongs to an aristocratic family which means that she's really rich. Plus there were rumours that there was a veela lineage buried deep somewhere within her family tree."

Harry's eyebrow cocked. At this point, he began to see the similarities between Daphne and Fleur. Both came from aristocratic families. Both were called the Ice Queen of their respective school. And if what Hermione said was true, both had veela lineage in their blood though unlike Fleur, Daphne did not seem to possess the veela's allure. Both were really pretty. "So, she's a veela?" he asked.

He doubted it though.

"Of course, not!" said Hermione irritably. "Do you see any boys drooling whenever they look at her? Though I won't bet on that boy who is walking right beside you. He'll drool on anything."

Harry knew that she was referring to Ron. Thankfully, it seemed that Ron was still half deaf that he could not hear properly to whatever conversation Harry and Hermione had.

"Eh?" asked Ron.

Ignoring Ron, Harry turned back towards Hermione. "I thought you're not interested with this kind of stuff. You never failed to surprise me, Hermione."

"I still am not interested in that kind of stuff," said Hermione. "Why do you think I stick to the common room most of the time? I only use the dormitory to change and to sleep. You can't help but hear this kind of things you know. We're not like boys."

"Yeah. You're right."

"Indeed I am."

---

**Back at the dormitory, a few minutes later...**

His Firebolt had been safely stored inside the broom cabinet. Harry was now lying comfortably on his bed. It won't be for another couple of hours before the Halloween Feast and the Champion Selection begins. He got a lot of time to rest.

He was half listening to the blow by blow analysis on the competition given by Neville, Seamus, Ron, Dean and the twins. Earlier when they arrived, he showed his dorm mates the snitch Viktor gave to him. And like before, they looked at it with utmost reverence and took turn to hold it. Seamus reminded him to have Viktor put his signature on the snitch, reasoning that the snitch might worth something someday. Harry said he will make a note on that.

Right now though, all he could think of was Fleur. Mainly the way she looked at him back at the stand.

She was beautiful in her teenage years and she was even more beautiful in her adult years. Just like Appoline, her beauty did not diminished as time marched on. Even in her 90s, she got no wrinkles whatsoever. Harry readily admitted that it was her eyes that he liked most. He was drowning within it back at the Quidditch pitch.

He noticed the changes within her when he called her 'princess'. When they were married, he loved to call her that from time to time and she in turn loved it as well. It seemed that Fleur within this timeline also liked it. That was a good sign, at least to him though to be honest, he was clueless on what to do next. He could not tell her that he was a time traveler, could he? He would be labelled as a lunatic.

Still, he had nearly a year to see if he would have the chance for the second time.

Hours had passed. The sun hung lower over the western horizon. Ron gave him a pat in the shoulder, waking him up from his musing. "Come on, mate. Best get ready. We need to get down to the Great Hall, remember?"

"Right."

---

**Great Hall, that night...**

Harry and his friends arrived at the Great Hall at five minutes before eight. They found that
Harry just scratched this head. "Yeah well. I'm just... nothing," he sheepishly you and you have earned my respect.

seems that I was wrong. You are really down to earth and you got really serious skills. I like you and you have earned my respect."

Harry just scratched his head. "Yeah well. I'm just... nothing," he sheepishly said.
Viktor just smiled and gave Harry a pat on his back.

"So you learn a lot of dark magic," asked Hermione this time to Viktor. "How was it?"

Viktor stared at Hermione for a few moments. "And you might be?" asked Viktor finally.

"Oh, sorry. My name is Hermione. Hermione Granger," replied Hermione.

"Her...mi...mio... ney...niy...?"

"It's Hermione," she repeated. "Nevermind. I know my name can be a bit mouthful. So how was it?"

"It's like learning every other subject," said Viktor airily. He once again took a sip out of his goblet. "But I can tell you, the more you learn them, the more appalling and horrible it gets."

"So why bother learning them at all?"

"Professor Karkaroff," said Viktor. "He told us that it is essential for us to know. We are required not only to learn on how to perform them but to learn the counter measure as well. He said only evil people will want to have anything to do with them but we the students have to know for our protection. He said evil will return soon."

Harry's and Hermione's eyes met. Harry imperceptibly shook his head, warning her not to press the matter further.

Hermione grudgingly obliged. Harry could tell that she was worried though.

Harry's mind lingered momentarily to what Viktor just said. So apparently, there were reasons on why Karkaroff established the Durmstrang Institute but it was not what people seemed to think. He was in fact building some kind of deterrent. He was getting ready for the return of Voldemort.

Harry suddenly felt a pressure at the back of his eyes. He looked around and found, there at the Slytherin's table, Daphne Greengrass was staring at him. Once again, like before, there was neither hatred nor anger in her eyes. There was... something else. His eyes lingered on her for a moment before he looked away towards the staff table.

'Moody' was there though Harry could not help but notice that he was not his usual self. If anything, he looked a bit jittery. It was as if he was forced to be in the Great Hall and much rather being somewhere else.

Soon the last of the golden plates had been wiped clean. The noise within the hall immediately died down as Professor Dumbledore took to the stage. On the either side of his side, Professor Karkaroff and Madame Maxime looked as tense and expectant as anyone else. Ludo Bagman was his usual self and so did Mr. Crouch.

"Well, the goblet is almost ready to make its decision," he said. "I estimate that it will require another minute or so. Now, when the champion's names are called, I would ask them to present themselves in front and go into the next chamber." He then indicated the door behind the staff table. "In there, they shall wait for further instruction."

Dumbledore took out his wand – Harry gave out a gasp as he recognized that wand – and gave a long sweep with it. All the candles except those inside the floating pumpkins were extinguished. In the state of semi darkness, the Goblet of Fire shone more brightly than ever. Everyone patiently waited. Few of them can be seen checking their watches every now and then.

Harry suddenly remembered something. "Oi! Did you put your name in the goblet?" he asked the twins.

Both of them shook their heads.

"We planned to," said George. "Already got it all figured out. But we got distracted. No thanks to you and Viktor."

"Anyone else from Gryffindor you know putting their name in?"

"Angelina submitted her name this morning," said Fred. "There are a few others I think."

"Oh, okay."

All of a sudden, the sparkling bright and bluish flames of the goblet turned red. Sparks flew out of it. Next moment, a tongue of flame shot into the air along with a charred piece of parchment. Dumbledore caught it and held the parchment at arm's length. By this time, the
goblet’s flame had return to its original state.

"The champion for Durmstrang," Dumbledore read in a loud and clear voice." "Will be Mr. Viktor Krum!"

Viktor rose to a storm of applause and cheers. Everyone around him, both from Gryffindor and Durmstrang patted his back and shook his hand. Even Ron who earlier did an unmistakable impression of a clam through the course of the dinner.

"Knew it will be you," said Harry as he shook Viktor’s hand.

Viktor smiled widely. He then went up to Dumbledore, shook the headmaster's hand and disappeared behind the door to the next chamber.

The clapping and cheering died down. Once again everyone's focus turned towards the goblet. The flame turned red and out came from it another parchment.

"The champion for Beauxbaton," announced Dumbledore. "is Miss Fleur Delacour!"

This time, the applause given out was much louder than before, especially from the male students who finally got to know the name of the extremely beautiful girl.

Fleur stood gracefully. She gave Harry a glance before echoing Viktor and disappeared behind the same door.

Silence once again engulfed the hall. This time though, it was so stiff that one could almost taste it. There was no doubt why. The Hogwarts champion will be chosen next.

Minutes passed by. Here and there, murmurs can be heard throughout the hall. Everyone was puzzled. The Goblet of Fire this time had taken far longer than before in deciding who the next champion will be.

Harry himself felt nervous. This did not feel right.

Questions began to bombard his head. Had everything went wrong? Would he still be one of the champion this time around?

To be continued...

A/n: First of all, I would like to thank you for all the wonderful reviews. There were criticism as well, but I don't mind. It means that you guys are invested in this story. It warms my heart. Though I have to say, I really wish that some of you would at least provide me with a way to get back to you on any of your concern. While I once used author notes to answer reviews before, after reading other stories where the author did the same, I found that it was distracting and at some level, quite annoying. So I have decided to do away with it and would only answer through PMs and such. There are things that I could take and there are things that I can’t so please don’t be mad at me if I did not take your suggestion and advices. Unless of course you provide me with a way to explain. Anyway, answering reviews through author notes is like writing snail mail. You would only get your answer 2-3 weeks after that.

So anyway, hope you'll enjoy this chapter and don't forget to tell me what you think on your way out. Thanks.
Chapter 14

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"Why does it take so long?"

"You think there's a problem with it? I mean it does look kind of old."

"Maybe there are too many Hogwarts students who put their name in it. The Goblet may not have enough time."

Murmurs within the Great Hall were getting louder and louder. Everyone was getting impatient.

Including him. His eyes remain fixed at the Goblet of Fire, waiting for the inevitable.

Dumbledore was still looking at the Goblet, patiently waiting for the Goblet to pull out the name of the final champion. At some point, Mr. Crouch and Ludo Bagman followed by the two competing school's headmasters, joined him. They talked. Dumbledore can be seeing nodding at certain point raised by Professor Karkaroff.

Harry put his face into his palm. He truly did not like this at all. He truly did not want to be one of the champions. Once was enough. It was not about facing the eventual ridicules. He knew he was mature enough to be able to easily dismiss all of that. He was not worry about Ron either. He perfectly knew the inside out of his best friend. It was the fact that being pulled into the tournament would derail his plan and everything then will become just a carbon copy of the old timeline. A lot of people would die.

Someone touched his shoulder. He looked up and saw it was Ron.

"You're okay, Harry?" asked Ron, concerned.

Harry nodded and looked away from the gingerhead. "Yeah, I'm fine, Ron," he said. He then took a deep breath. "I'm just... feeling a bit tired. That's all."

Ron nodded. "It won't be long, mate. Once this is over you could go back to the dormitory and have a really good rest."
Harry put up a faint smile. *That will depend on the Goblet of Fire,* he thought.

"Oh look!" Someone pointed out.

Harry turned to look and saw the Goblet's flame turned red.

As before, a partially burnt piece of parchment shoots out of the tongue of the flame. Dumbledore immediately caught it. He held the parchment at arm's length and read, "The Hogwarts champion will be," - he took a pause - "Mr. Cedric Diggory!"

There was a huge celebration as virtually all of Hogwarts students rose from their seats and gave Cedric standing applause. Cedric's friends grabbed the seventh year Hufflepuff and carried him over their shoulders towards Dumbledore. They let him down once they reached the headmaster. Cedric, smiling widely, shook hands with Dumbledore and walked towards the door behind the staff's table.

Harry's heart was beating fast. He held his breath and....

'Puff'!

The Goblet of Fire's flame extinguished.

There was another round of applause.

And Harry let out a sigh of relief. He did not become one of the champions. He wiped his face and was surprised that he was in fact sweating profusely. He once again turned his gaze towards the staff's table and saw 'Moody' was looking at the Goblet dejectedly.

*Not this time you don't,* he thought satisfactorily.

"Excellent!" Dumbledore called happily as the last of the applause died down. "Well we now have our three champions. I am sure I can count on all of you, including the remaining students from Beauxbaton and Durmstrang, to give your champions every ounce of support you can muster. But now it's getting late. All of you will have classes tomorrow. Chop! Chop! Off to bed. All of you! To the Beauxbaton and Durmstrang students, please wait at the Entrance Hall. A teacher shall be assigned to escort you back to your place of accommodation."

Dumbledore then turned towards the staffs and the visitors and gestured them towards the side chamber. 'Moody', being forced to follow, gave Harry one last look before he tailed Dumbledore into the chamber.

Feet shuffling and the students began making their way towards the exit. The Durmstrang students after bidding the Gryffindorians good night, made a beeline towards the Great Hall entrance.

"We'll see you tomorrow, Harry Potter," said Alexander.

A visibly relief looking Harry smiled and nodded. "Yeah sure. See you guys tomorrow."

The trio remained at their seats, waiting for the traffic of students to subside before they made their way back to the Gryffindor Tower.

"Wonder what happen in there," said Ron who was eyeing the entrance into the chamber with curiosity. "Do you have any idea, Harry?"

"The champions will be receiving instructions for the tournament," said Harry, remembering his own experience as the fourth champion back in the distant past. "That's what happens in that chamber."

"How did you know?" asked Ron, raising his eyebrows.

"Well, what else would it be?" said Harry nonchalantly. "In a tournament like this there will be rules and regulations. Those aren't important to us but they are important to the competitors. The champions have to know that. And remember that the first task had yet been set. All the briefings, it'll happen in there. Mr. Crouch and Ludo Bagman is probably laying it all to them right now."

"Blimey."

"You surprised me, Harry," said Hermione who was listening silently to the exchange. "You seem to know a lot about the tournament."

"Not really," denied Harry. "I was just being logical."
Of course that was not the truth. He knew a lot more than the whole school combined together.

Hermione raised her brown eyebrows. "So you were just guessing," she stated. "Well at least they're logical."

Harry just shrugged.

"I wonder what it is like to be in there," said Ron who had turn to look at the chamber's entrance. "It must be exciting, you know, to become a champion. I bet they can't wait to know what the first task will be."

Harry scoffed. "Hardly."

Ron turned to look at Harry. "Hardly? What do you mean by that?"

"Ron, this is an international competition. It won't be like what we had back in the second year. Remember the duelling class?"

"The one organized by that fake Lockhart," said Ron. "Yeah, I remember."

"That class was nothing compare to what the champion will face, I can assure you that. Why do you think they make up a certain set of rules for entry? No students below seventeen years old? An impartial, non-living judge who will decide which one of us is worthy? And what about the prize? A thousand galleons is a lot of money and fame for the lifetime? That should be enough of an indication. If you ask me, the champions should be scared for what's coming for them."

Ron was about to reply when Hermione suddenly interrupted, "The traffic nearly cleared. We should go now."

The three of them got on their feet and made their way towards the Great Hall entrance. There were still a lot of students snaking their way out but it was not as many as before though. They joined the crowd and slowly crept their way into the Entrance Hall.

Harry was walking behind both Hermione and Ron when all of a sudden he felt someone bumped him from behind. Strangely enough, the bump that person gave was unusually warm and soft. He looked back and saw it was Daphne. He looked down and suddenly realized that it was her chest that touched his back earlier.

"Any slower then you'll be walking backward, Potter," said Daphne, unconcerned that her 'asset' had touched a Gryffindor boy.

This was the first time ever he got into a really close proximity with a Slytherin girl, let alone Daphne. It did render him a chance to analyze her carefully. She had a fair complexion. Her skin looked soft and free from any imperfection and blemishes. And her eyes, those green orbs, were really pretty. She was a really beautiful girl.

However, Harry cannot help but notice there was something else behind all those beauty. Something familiar. Something he too felt whenever he laid his eyes on Fleur.

"Well?" Her soft voice woke him up from his musing. "Aren't you going to say anything?"

Harry however said nothing. He somehow did not feel like starting any confrontation with the Slytherin girl, especially not when the girl herself did not start any. He moved aside, intending to give Daphne a clear path out of the Great Hall.

But Daphne did not move. She just continued standing there, looking at Harry.

"After you," said Harry to her. "You should go on, Daphne. Your friends would probably be waiting for you."

He honestly did not know why he used her first name.

Daphne raised her eyebrows. She was about to speak when suddenly she realized that Hermione and Ron was staring at her. Hermione was impassive but there was the look of deep dislike in Ron's face. She looked at them momentarily before turning her gaze back to Harry.

"I'll see you in class, Harry."

Harry just watched her walk away. He did not fail to notice that Daphne too had begun to use his first name.

"What was that all about?" asked Ron.
Harry just shook his head. "I have no idea. Come on. Let's go back to the common room."

He gave the entrance to the chamber one last look before he followed his two best friends out of the Great Hall.

The trio did not get far when all of a sudden...

"POTTER!"

The trio turned around and saw Malfy marching towards them.

"What did you do to that girl!" shouted Malfy the moment he arrived in front of Harry. Both Crabbe and Goyle were shadowing him. "What did you do to her?!"

"Shove off, Malfy!" said Ron.

Malfy pointed his finger towards Ron. "Stay out of this, Weasel!" He then turned back to Harry. "Speak! What did you do to her?!!"

Harry signalled Ron to calm down. He crossed his arms and looked at Malfy calmly. "What girl?"

"The girl! Greengrass!"

"Oh, that girl," said Harry, still calm. "I just cleared a path for her to get out of the hall. Is there anything wrong with that?"

"Don't lie!" spat Malfy. "I know there's more to it! You did something to the Durmstrang! You did something to her as well!"

"Ah, I see," said Harry. He still remained unnervingly calm. "So there's actually more to it. So can you tell me, what do you think I did to them? Any guess?"

"You tell me!"

"I already told you."

"I-," Malfy was suddenly at loss of words on what to say. Harry unusual calmness had somehow affected him. It took him awhile before he found them again. "I know you did something!"

"And yet you neither have any proof nor could you guess the nature of the so-called crime that I purportedly committed," said Harry. "Listen Malfy, why don't you just ask Daphne Greengrass and the Durmstrang. I'm sure they could give you the answer you seek. Mind you, it won't be pretty. Anyway, it's getting late. You should get back to the dungeon."

"You're not the boss of me."

"Of course I'm not but someone else is," said Harry. "Heed my advice if you do not want to get into any more trouble."

"You won't be such a bighead if Moody wasn't around, Potter," said Malfy scathingly. "He would be in Hogwarts for only a year if you have forgotten that. Who then will you hide behind? Dumbledore? McGonagall?"

Harry smiled. "And this comes from a boy who's content in hiding behind Snape's arse all these years. I assure you that I don't need them to protect me and no, I haven't forgotten about Moody staying for only a year. It's you who need to watch your back, Malfy. For as long as he's here, you could always be turned back into a ferret."

Malfy gritted his teeth. He knew he had lost the fight.

Harry took the advantage of Malfy's silence. He closed in on him and with his face just inches away from that of Malfy's, he spoke in a much dangerous tone, "You know how much Moody hated the Malfy family. He knew all about your death eaters dad Malfy and so do I. A word of advice, tell your dad that he should stay at home and unheeded his master's call if he values his freedom. Now get out of my sight or I will make sure the 'Malfy the White Bouncing Ferret' title sticks with you until you die!"

Malfy's mouth opened and closed several times but no word came out. He made a heel turn and left with Crabbe and Goyle tailing him.

Harry turned to look at both Hermione and Ron. They were staring at him impressively.
Dormitory, a few minutes later...

Ron wasted no time in regaling to his other dorm mates what happened between Harry and Malfoy. They looked back at Harry, who had change into his pajamas and was now lying on his bed, impressively.

"It's about time someone showed him!" said Seamus. "I'm getting sick of him strutting around in his stupid face! Good for you, Harry."

"Don't you, you know, concern that he-, he might try to get back at you?" asked Neville timidly.

Harry did not answer at first. Instead, he just stared at Neville.

Admittedly, it was odd to see Neville this way. Hopelessness engulfed the boy, wrapping him in an existence far cry from what Harry used to see. The Neville he left behind was different. The Neville he left behind was brave. The Neville he left behind was his right hand man, always eager and always ready to perform any duty given.

"Harry?"

Harry just smiled. "I have no doubt that he will, Neville. And when he does, I'll be ready for him."

Neville sighed. He looked down. "I wish I could be as brave and confident as you, Harry."

Harry immediately got up and sat on his bed the moment he heard what Neville had said. He reached out and put his hands on Neville's shoulders. "And you will be," he said. "I have no doubt about that. All you need is time and patience. You're just... a late bloomer after all. Someday, you will become more than what you are right now. And remember that you're the son for Frank and Alice Longbottom, the two bravest aurors ever to exist. Some of their traits will rub off on you eventually. It's just have yet to come out. You'll just have to wait. What most important is, don't lose hope."

Neville just stared at Harry.

Harry just smiled and nodded. He knew what Neville was thinking. "Yeah. I know what happened to your parents. I know where they are. There's nothing to be ashamed of, Neville. Your parents saved countless lives. Learn to be proud of them."

It took awhile but Neville finally nodded.

"Why?" asked Seamus. "What happened to his parents?"

Harry and Neville glanced at each other.

"I can't say, Seamus," said Harry. Without looking away from Neville he continued, "It's up to Neville if he want to tell or not. Whatever his decision will be, we as his friends should respect it. Anyway, you'll be needing a new wand, Neville. The one you're now using clearly does not fit you."

Neville took out his wand and began examining it. "Why? What's wrong with it?"

"You probably never heard of the phrase 'the wand chooses the wizard', Neville. You're now using your parents' wand, I believe. It chose them but it didn't choose you. That's why you're having trouble with it. Remember, Ron?"

Ron nodded. "Yeah I remember. There are mark differences between the hand me down wand I got in the first year and the new one I got last year."

Neville sighed. "I don't know if my granny would buy me a new one, Harry. She said the one I have now is good enough."

"No it's not," said Harry firmly. "There'll be a lot more wand work the further our studies are. You will need the one that listen to you. Tell your granny to buy you a new one if she wants to see you get through."

"I'll try."

Harry gave Neville a pat on his shoulder and leaned back against one of his bed's poster. He looked around and saw the rest of his dorm mates were staring at him. Ron in particular was looking at him proudly. "Well done, mate," he said. "Well done."

"Blimey," said Seamus. "Are you sure you're fourteen years old, Harry?"

"Yeah," agreed Dean. "I mean the way you act, it's different. You changed. Something
happened to you during the summer, Harry?"

"Well, I'm still Harry Potter if that what you were asking," said Harry. Deciding that the time is ripe to steer the conversation away from him, he continued, "So, Cedric Diggory huh?"

Seamus took a pillow and hugged it. "I'll be honest with you I am deeply surprised that he got selected. I mean Viktor Krum is natural. That girl, what's her name again? Fleur Delacour, right? She probably has something in her as well. But Cedric? I don't know."

"She's mighty pretty," said Neville. "I like her."

There was a murmur of agreement.

Harry shot Neville a glance. He was surprised that Neville could come up with something like that.

"Yeah she is," said Dean. "Do you think she's still single?"

"Keep on dreaming, Dean!" exclaimed Seamus to his closest mate. "She's out of your league, man! She's pretty and a Triwizard champion at the same time. And from the look of it, she probably come from a very well to do family. She's rich. A girl such as her definitely won't look at guys like us. Besides, she's already seventeen years old. We're just... a bunch of fourteen years old blokes who never even had a girlfriend." He then sighed and shook his head. "I hate my life."

"That certainly doesn't stop a lot of guys from trying to get to her," said Neville.

Harry's eyebrows cocked. "Know anyone, Neville?"

"I know one," said Seamus. "You know Roger Davies? That bloke from Ravenclaw who also happens to be their Quidditch captain as well? He ordered a bouquet of red roses this morning and had it send to the Beauxbaton carriage in the afternoon. At least that's what I heard."

"Wow. Seriously?" asked Ron. "But doesn't mean that he was sending it to her, does it?"

Seamus just shrugged. "Probably. I mean that won't be that too far off, would it? Nobody in Hogwarts had ever seen a girl as beautiful as her. Nobody in their right mind would ignore her whenever she's around. Blokes will definitely try to get her attention in any way they can. You'll see. This is just the beginning. We're definitely going to see a lot of Hogwarts couples breaking up after this."

What Seamus said gave Harry a pause. On the contrary, there were definitely a lot of beautiful girls in Hogwarts. Cho Chang was one of them. The Patil sisters, Susan Bones, Angelina Johnson, Katie Bell, and Alicia Spinner to name a few. And there was Hermione. Granted that she looked kind of messy most of the time, her appearance at the Yule Ball back in his past changed his view on her. Hermione was a pretty girl. And not to mention Daphne Greengrass though there was something about the Slytherin girl that he had yet put his finger on.

Of course all of them pale into comparison whenever Fleur, who's beauty stood way above the rest even among the veelas, was included into the equation.

He would not worry about Roger Davies though. That boy hardly managed to control himself in front of Fleur in the past. He would be just the same this time around.

"Back to the Triwizard Tournament. Harry, you said something about the champions should be scared of what's coming for them. What do you mean by that?" asked Ron.

"I was talking about the tasks actually."

"Yeah?" said Seamus. "What do you think the tasks would be? Any guess?"

"Hmmmm.... Dragons?"

All of his dorm mates stared at him wide eyed.

"You certainly didn't mince your words, Harry," said Dean.

"Dragons? Don't you think that's a little bit too much, Harry?" said Ron. "I mean even Charlie had a hard time dealing with them and he learnt all that is to know about dragons! I don't think the champions could survive that."

"It would be cool if we get to see them fighting dragons though," said Seamus thoughtfully. "I mean, I would love to see a real life dragon here at Hogwarts. But yeah I agree with Ron. The champions will be dead if they were really made to face them."
Harry just shook his head and let out a chuckle. If only they knew what really will happen within the tournament. Harry silently admitted he was a little bit over exaggerating when he said about the champions should be feeling scared when in truth he was simply talking about his experiences in the past.

For the next couple of hours, they continued to chat about the tournament. Harry's dorm mates were highly sceptical about Cedric Diggory's chances of winning tournament, stating that the Hufflepuff had nothing but a pretty face. Harry though countered by reminding them that the Goblet chose Cedric for a reason, that they need to wait until the first task to see what Cedric was capable of.

At some point, Neville yawned widely. Harry turned to look at his bedside clock and realized that it was already an hour past midnight. He told them that it was time for them to turn in. They will have Herbology early tomorrow.

"Damn! The weekend did move really fast, didn't it?" said Seamus as he beat his pillow, trying desperately to make it softer. "Just for the record you guys, I hate Mondays."

The rest of them chuckled.

"Don't we all, Seamus," said Harry. "Well, good night."

"Good night," the rest of his dorm mate echoed him.

In the darkness, Harry lay on his bed and stared at the ceiling. That weekend had certainly become a whirlwind of activities for him and it culminated into the Champion Selection where he thankfully was not chosen to be one.

That was strike one for Barty.

But Harry knew that he must not be complacent. He knew that the death eater was fully aware that his master did not take failure kindly. Returning to Voldemort empty handed would usually means death. Barty would definitely try again.

And like always, he will be ready for him.

Drowsiness took over him. His eye lids began to close and before long, the image of a room within the old Tom Riddle's house, Peter Pettigrew and the badly decomposed and half mangled body of the poor old housekeeper came into view.

**The next morning...**

They had Herbology with the Hufflepuff as their first subject of the day. And as expected, the Hufflepuff was elated that one of them was selected to be the champion for Hogwarts. Even Professor Sprout was in a celebratory mood that morning. She ended up giving them really easy assignment. All they had to do was to water the plants.

"So, did you guys celebrate last night?" asked Harry to Ernie Mcmillan, a Hufflepuff who eventually became his good friend after the second year. They both were busy watering some of the brightly coloured flower plants within the Floral Faction of the Greenhouse Three.

"Yeah, we sure did," said Ernie, smiling. "We only slept at three in the morning."

"Woah! Really?"

"Yeah," Ernie chuckled. "There were a lot of foods and stuffs." He then leaned towards Harry and whispered, "We nick them all from the kitchen. Sadly we didn't have any butterbeer though."

Of course butterbeers were Fred and George specialty. Only the twin knew how to smuggle those into the school.

"So you guys know how to get into the kitchen?" Harry whispered back.

"Of course we know," said Ernie. "The kitchen's door is not far from the entrance into our common room, Harry. All Hufflepuffs know how to get into the kitchen. Even the first year."

"Oh, right."

"I could teach you how to get into the kitchen Harry, but not now. Maybe sometime later when the coast is clear," whispered Ernie.

"Thanks," said Harry, who decided that it would be wise to not divulge to Ernie that he already knew how to get into the kitchen. "So Professor Sprout, she didn't bust on you guys
for partying too hard?"

Ernie once again chuckled. "Yeah she did. But that just it. She came in, shook her head at us and left."

"Really?"

"Yeah," confirmed Ernie. "I mean, she understands. We Hufflepuff... we don't really have a lot of things to celebrate, Harry. With Cedric being chosen as the champion, it's awesome. Unbelievable but awesome. It's a testament, Harry. That we can do just as well as everyone else did."

Harry of course understood the sentiment. And Ernie of course was right. "I understand, Ernie."

Ernie nodded. "You know, I was hoping that the rest of the school would give Cedric the full support he needs, Harry. I mean, it doesn't matter that he's from Hufflepuff."

Harry smiled and patted Ernie at the back. "Don't worry, Ernie. Cedric doesn't merely represent Hufflepuff. He represents the whole school as well. He'll have our full support. Don't you worry about it."

Ernie smiled satisfactorily. "Thanks Harry. You're the best. Anyway, good job on that Malfoy bloke. It's about time someone stood up to him."

"You knew?"

"Knew?" exclaimed Ernie. "I saw the whole damn thing! A whole lot of people saw it too, Harry. The look on Malfoy's face was priceless and you didn't even raise your voice the whole time! If you ask me, that was one fine damn performance you gave back then. You really have gained a lot of people's respect, Harry. And not to mention a lot of girls' attention."

"Err..."

Ernie gestured towards a group of female students that gathered not far from where they both stood. Several faces he knew were in it. Harry saw that they were whispering and smiling at him.

"Few of the Hufflepuff girls asked me about you. They knew that we're close," stated Ernie. "Can't say that I didn't feel a little bit jealous though," he said, smirking.

"You know I'm not that type, Ernie," said Harry sternly. "I don't collect women."

"Don't worry, Harry. I know. Oh, before I forget, can you get me an autograph from Krum?"

Harry could only roll his eyes.

The Gryffindor had Care of Magical Creatures next. Harry and the rest walked down the sloping lawn towards Hagrid's hut. They walked past the Beauxbaton carriage along the way. Harry took a glance at it. No one else was outside of it. They were probably having class inside the carriage. They probably had their breakfast there as well given that Harry did not see them at the Great Hall that morning.

Hagrid was busy tending the Blast-Ended Skrewt when they arrived. The skrewts were growing at remarkable pace despite the fact their favourite food had yet to be found.

"Mornin'!" he said when he saw them.

"Good morning," said Hermione. "So, have you found out what the skrewts like to eat, Hagrid?"

"No," Hagrid answered. "Haven't found one yet though they do seem ter like my fingers." He proceeded to show Hermione his bandaged fingers.

"That looks bad, Hagrid."

"Nah, this is nothing. I'll be fine."

The Slytherins arrived minutes later. Malfoy saw Harry and immediately looked away. He ended up strutting away from Harry as far as he could with both his henchmen following him. Daphne though gave a different reaction from Malfoy. She gave him a faint smile and ended up standing not far from him. Harry had no doubt that she will try to get closer if it was not for Ron and Hermione.
The lesson then began. That day, instead trying to figure out what the skrewts like to eat, Hagrid tasked them to do observation on the skrewts behaviour and such and make notes out of it.

Harry immediately gets on to work. With a piece of parchment in one hand and a quill in another, he began to jot down every details and observation about the Blast-Ended Skrewts he could find.

Minutes passed by. Crouching, Harry was busy monitoring one of the smaller skrewts when all of a sudden he felt someone stood close to him. He looked up and saw it was Daphne.

"Interesting creatures, doesn't it?" she said.

Harry looked back at the baby skrewt he monitored earlier. "Yeah."

She knelt beside him. Her leg nearly touched him. Her perfume began to dominate his sense of smell. "I didn't know you're really into this kind of thing."

"I don't," said Harry. "I just like to give it all in everything that I did."

"I see," said Daphne. "And it wasn't because of your fondness for him?" She gestured towards Hagrid who at that time was busy reeling some of the wilder skrewts.

"Part of it," said Harry as he continued to write down his latest observation on the skrewts. "He's like a surrogated parent to me. Of course a Slytherin may not understand that. All they care about is being prejudice."

Daphne's face fell. "Not all of us were like that, Harry."

"Yeah? Did any of you tried to prove to anyone else that a Slytherin could be different, that they're not some pure blood purist bigot who were more contend in only taking care of him or herself? See that boy?" He gestured towards Malfoy. Malfoy stood not far away from them. His teeth gritted and his grey eyes darted between Harry and Daphne. "He tried to bring down someone who never had any intention to do him any harm and it was all because of he didn't like him."

"The hippogriff-"

"The hippogriff hurt him because he was being stupid, Daphne. It wasn't Hagrid's fault. Look at me. I rode the hippogriff. Did you see any scratches on me?"

Daphne shook her head.

"See what I mean? You didn't even try." He then stood up. "I'm sorry. You seem like a good person, Daphne. But I can't trust you. At least not yet."

He was about to walk away when Daphne called back to him. "Harry?"

Harry stood and turned to look at her.

Daphne stood and walked towards him. "I saw what you did with the French champion yesterday at the pitch. You were unaffected by her."

Harry looked at her questionably.

"I know who she is," continued Daphne softly. "She's a veela and a full blooded at that. There's a lot of things you don't know about me, Harry. There's a lot of things that I keep for myself. I was hoping that I could find someone who would understand and yesterday, I found him. I'm sorry for what I said. If trust really is important to you, I will try to gain it. I just hope that you won't shut me out."

She leaned forward but before anything else happened, she suddenly stopped. She gave him a sad smile, squeezed his hand and left.

The class ended half an hour later. Hagrid was thoroughly delighted with their progress and suggested that the students to come down every alternate evenings to observe the skrewts.

"I will not!" said Malfoy flatly. "I had enough seeing these foul things during classes."

Hagrid's smile faded from his face.

"Yeh'll do as told what yer told, Malfoy," growled Hagrid. "or I'll be takin' a leaf outta Professor Moody's book. He won't be the only one who would be more than happy ter turn yeh into a ferret. And I'll be stayin' here for more than a year."
There was a roar of laughter coming in from the Gryffindor. Few of the Slytherins chuckled as well. Apparently, it seemed that the news of Harry's confrontation with Malfoy last night blew around. Now everybody knew what happened.

Malfoy's face was flushed with anger. However, the pain of the humiliation from Moody's punishment was still fresh and that alone was enough to prevent him from retorting. He simply grabbed his school bag and left without another word.

The trio stayed behind to have a chat with Hagrid after the class ended. Hermione and Ron interrogated Harry about Daphne. He told them that she just wanted to talk.

"You shouldn't trust them, Harry," claimed Ron. "None of them can be trusted."

"I'll make a note of that, Ron."

It was nearly lunch when they began their journey back to the castle. Hagrid joined them as well.

"I'll come with yeh," said Hagrid. "Just let me put on sumthin'," He then disappeared into his hut and came out a few minutes. A truly horrible smell reached the trio's nose the moment Hagrid arrived right in front of them.

"Hagrid," said Hermione, coughing. "Are you wearing an after shave?"

"Well yeah," said Hagrid. "I just want ter smell nice, don't I? Now come on. We'll stop by at the carriage first."

"The carriage?"

But Hagrid had already walked ahead.

The trio immediately set off towards him.

The carriage door opened just as they arrived. Madame Maxime smiled widely just as she saw Hagrid.

"Monsieur Hagrid," she greeted Hagrid and extended her hand towards him.

"Olym," said Hagrid as he bowed to kiss her hand. "Shall we?"

"My pupil must come with us," she said.

"Of course."

One by one the Beauxbaton students filed out. Fleur was one of them. She gave out a look of surprise when she saw Harry was there.

"Come," said Madame Maxime, waving her enormous hand.

Both Hagrid and Madame Maxime began to walk towards the castle with the rest of her students following them. The trio made up the rear.

For some reason Fleur slowed her pace until at one point she ended up walking just in front of him. Harry decided that this will be the perfect time to have a few chat with her before they reach the castle. He immediately went beside her.

"Hi," he greeted her.

"'Ello 'Arry Potter," she greeted him back.

"Listen, I didn't get to congratulate you for becoming one of the champion," said Harry.

"It iz okay," said Fleur. "You don't 'ave to."

"So how do you feel?" he asked.

Fleur turned to look at him. She saw the deep concern he had within his eyes. "I will be fine. I promise."

Harry nodded. "I know you will be. And I'm sorry for what happened back at the Quidditch field."

Fleur smiled. "Your apology 'as been accepted, Monsieur Potter. I know you mean well."
"Well, yes. So I better go now. Have a great lunch."

He was about to fall back when someone else held him back. It was Cassandra Osman. "Wait! You could withstand her? 'Ow?"

Harry turned to look at Fleur and back to Cassandra. He smiled. "I honestly don't know. Perhaps it wasn't her beauty that I saw. Maybe it was something else."

"Such as what?"

Harry just shrugged. "I'm just a fourteen years old boy, Cassandra. I don't think I'm really qualified to talk things such as these."

Cassandra looked at him, wide eyed. "'Ow did you know my name? I never told you them!"

Fleur looked sharply at him. Her eyebrows creased. And so did the rest of the Beauxbaton females.

Harry just realized that he had made a blunder.

Without him knowing, a pair of emerald eyes was watching him intently from high above. She stood there for the next few minutes before retreating back into the castle.

To be continued...

A/n: Another chapter delivered. I would like this opportunity to thank you guys for all the wonderful reviews. Rest assure that some of your concern will be addressed and I hope that the answers that I gave in PM would be enough to satiate your curiosity.

A little bit about Daphne Greengrass:-

I became interested with this character after I read about her in fanfics way back before I started writing this story. I confessed that I was intrigued and curious as well. I did some research and found not much about Daphne so I was curious on why the character got so much attention in fanfics. Can anybody tell me? Some of the authors did quite a really good job in bringing what can be called a blank slate character to life and I heartily congratulate them.

Last but not least, congratulations to all of you who managed to survive chapter 1-8. You guys have a heart of steel and the determination of early American pioneers who first set their foot on the Oregon Trail.

Anyway, please leave a feedback on your way out. I really appreciate it.
15. Chapter 15

Chapter 14

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"'Elo 'Arry Potter," she greeted him back.

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Legend:-

"normal" – normal conversation

Italic – thought

"bold italic" – French

All of them stopped dead on their track. All of the Beauxbaton females were gathering around Fleur and Harry. Meanwhile the males, Hermione and Ron just watched from afar.

"We never met you before, 'Arry Potter," said one of the girls whom Harry recognized as Camille. Spotting red hair and brown eyes, he remembered that of all the girls within Fleur's squad, she was the most soft spoken one. "'Ow did you know 'er name?"

"Is it that strange that I know her name?" Harry asked back, racking his brain at the same time to try to come up with a much better excuses.

"Yes it iz," said Camille. "You called 'er by 'er first name. Strangers don't usually do zhat. And zhe way you speak to 'er, it waz az if you 'ad already known 'er for long."

Fortunately, he found one excuse. "I heard you girls talking. It was from there," - he pointed towards Cassandra - "that I got her name. On why I used her first name? It was because I don't know her family name, or her middle name if she has any. I don't how else I'm going to call her."

From the girls' responses, he could tell that his excuse, while difficult to be accepted, made
sense to them.

"So you understood French," Cassandra surmised. "You know we only talk between ourselves in that language. But it still doesn't answer on 'ow you could withstand 'er," she continued. "We want to know why, 'Arry Potter."

Harry was about to reply when...

"What iz this all about?!"

It was Madame Maxime. She came marching towards them after finding out that her students did not followed her for the last few minutes. Hagrid trailed her from behind. She gave a look of surprise when she saw Harry standing there among the students. Fleur stood beside him. "'Arry Potter; if this iz one of your attempt to sabotage the Beauxbaton champion, I shall 'ave you reported to your 'eadmaster for –"

"No-, no it wasn't like that, Madame Maxime," Harry quickly interrupted her. "I was just congratulating Fleur on her being the champion for her school. And I also wanted to apologize to her for what happened yesterday at the Quidditch pitch."

"I could 'ardly believe zhat. You're too close with zhe Durmstrang champion and zhe rest of 'iz friends," said Madame Maxime sternly. "Zhere maybe risk."

"Madame Maxime, the reason I am close to Viktor Krum is because we both share the same passion that is Quidditch and the main reason why his friends moved to Gryffindor table is because they could not stand the Slytherin," explained Harry. "You can ask any of them yourself if you want to."

Madame Maxime crossed her arm to her chest. "It still doesn't give you zhe right to get close to our champion, 'Arry Potter;" she said sternly. "I want you to stay away from 'er az far az possible."

"'Olymp," said Hagrid. "I'm sure Harry doesn't mean ter do anythin' ter yer students. They're with me. I'm just escorting them back ter the castle."

But Madame Maxime ignored him.

Harry stared at her in disbelief. "You have no problem with your students sitting and mingling with the Ravenclaw when you know they will vouch for Cedric Diggory anyway. Why the double standard, Madame? Do you think we the Gryffindor would rally behind the Durmstrang just because they sat at our table and Viktor being my friend? Why do you and your students even come here if this is the way all of you are going to act?"

Madame Maxime's eyes narrowed when she heard what he just said. "Zhat iz rude of you to say zhat. I won't have it!"

"Madame, please," Fleur suddenly cut in before Harry could retorted. "Harry Potter was telling the truth. He was just congratulating me and apologizing for what he did yesterday. I don't think he mean any harm."

"He still should not get that close to you, my dear," replied Madame Maxime. Her voice softened. "You know as well as I do what happened every time boys and men tried to approach you. Bad things happened. You are our champion. You don't want to divert your focus away from the tournament and losing it."

They both were speaking in French but Harry could understand every details of their conversation. He just kept quiet for the moment.

"I assure you Madame, my focus would still remain on the tournament and I am fully capable of taking care of myself. I do want to win," said Fleur. "As you can see, Harry Potter manages to remain as himself even as I stand here right beside him. Nothing bad happened. I can vouch for him. Completely."

"You just met him, Fleur. How can you trust him that easily?"

For some reason, Harry noticed that Fleur hesitated a little before she answered, "Something tells me... that I should trust him."

Madame Maxime went forward and put her massive hands on Fleur's shoulder. "I made a promise to your parents that I will take good care of you and your sister when she attends Beauxbaton. It is an oath that I do not take lightly."

"I am aware of that, Madame. All I ask is for you to give him a chance. If he isn't the person whom I think he is, he will have me to deal with. The consequences can be,"
she turned to look at Harry. "- severe."

Harry cocked his eyebrows at Fleur's warning.

It took a while before Madame Maxime finally nodded. "Very well." She then turned towards Harry. "Fleur vouched for you, 'Arry Potter. She trusts you and therefore so shall I. I will accept everything that she said but you would do well to remember on not being rude to a teacher."

Harry dearly wanted to retort. As in the past, he quickly got tired of people accusing him of something was not his doing. Things like that only made him angry. But doing that right now would only undo what Fleur did for him. He could not let that happen, not when the chance for him to get closer to her surfaced.

Offering an apology seemed to be the best course of action.

"I'm sorry," he finally said. "I apologize for being rude, Madame. I'm sorry if I had hurt your feeling and I apologize for disturbing your champion. It was never my intention to do her any harm. I bid her good luck in the competition and I hope that the odd will be in her favour. It won't be for nothing that the Goblet of Fire chose her as the champion. I'm sure she will do great."

Madame Maxime stared at him for the moment. She finally gave him a nod and left for the castle.

Hagrid gave him a nod of approval and a wink before he followed Madame Maxime.

Harry let out a low whistle. One potential crisis had been averted.

"You're not out of the woods yet, 'Arry Potter," reminded Cassandra. She crossed her arms to her chest. "You still 'ave us to contend with."

He just rolled his eyes. "Like I didn't know that."

"Excusez-moi?!"

"Err nothing," he quickly replied. "All of you should go and take your lunch while there's still time. I'm sorry for holding you girls up." He was about to rejoin Ron and Hermione when Cassandra called him back.

"Where are you going?"

Harry turned back. "Back to the castle. With them."

He pointed to both Hermione and Ron who were standing awkwardly nearby. Ron was petrified, no doubt due to the after effect of having Fleur standing just a few feet away from him.

Cassandra cocked an eyebrow. "I told you that you still 'ave us to contend with."

"So?"

"You are going to walk with us. Your friends can join us," said Cassandra. "Come."

"Do I have a choice?"

"No!"

Harry nearly jumped backward when all of Fleur's squad members answered him in unison. He looked at Fleur. She gave him an imperceptible nod and a look that said 'Just do whatever it is they say and get it over with.'

He raised both of his hand as a sign of defeat and said, "Alright." He then gestured to his two best friends to join the Beauxbaton group.

Together with the Beauxbaton male students, they began to walk towards the castle. Few of the males looked at him and nodded. He replied in kind.

"You 'aven't answered our question, 'Arry Potter," said Camille.

"And that question is important because-?"

"The reason iz not important, 'Arry Potter," said Camille.

"Fine," said Harry. "I think I know the reason why but I'm not going to state the obvious. You want to know the answer I'll give you one. Then answer is... I don't know."
Camille cocked an eyebrow. "You seriously don’t know?"

Harry glanced at Fleur who looked back at him calmly. "Yeah," he nodded. "I truly don’t know. I know men will melt or go crazy whenever she is around. I truly don’t know why I did not end that way. I wish I know why."

"Self control?" wondered Camille. "Or maybe perhaps you’re into men?"

"Woah! Self control? Maybe. Into men? Definitely not." Then something clicked within him. "Am I correct to suggest that there are not many men you found that did not succumb to her so far?"

"Az a matter a fact, you are zhe first," Marianne who was walking on the opposite of Fleur jumped into the conversation. She had dark wavy hair and a pair of brown eyes. She had a pale skin. In term of height, she reached no higher than Fleur’s - who happened to share the exact same height with Cassandra within the group - shoulder. And like everyone else within the group, she had a beautiful curvy body. “With zhe exception of Monsieur Delacour. By zhe way, remember Pierre, Fleur?”

Fleur snorted in disgust. "I really wish that you would stop bring him up, Mary. You know as well as I do he’s very disgusting."

"I know. Luckily he’s now no longer in Beauxbaton."

Harry went silent. This was not the first time they interrogated him. They did the same back in the past. The only difference was that the questions and the answers were different. Back then, they had already met Bill Weasley and from what Fleur told him, they really liked Bill. Compared to Bill, his interrogation went a bit harsher. They did have some problem in accepting him as Fleur’s mate. They considered him as too young for her, more suited as a younger brother rather than as a husband. They in fact already had Bill’s replacement - a French man and reputedly even better looking than Bill - at that time and were going to introduce the man to Fleur. Lucky for him that Fleur decided not to change her mind and continue to choose him.

His thought did bring out one huge problem that he previously failed to foresee however: Bill Weasley at this time was still alive. Deep down, he began to wonder what will happen if the two met. What will become of him? Where he will end up in?

"Harry?"

He immediately woke up from his thought. It was Marianne.

"Hmm?"

"Are you alright?" she asked.

Fleur was also looking at him with concern. Apparently they noticed the sudden changes in his demeanour.

"Yeah. Yeah I’m fine," he hastily answered.

"Somezhing bothered you?"

Harry shook his head. "No. I’m fine. I’m good."

Marianne nodded. "Can I ask you a question?"

Harry just shrugged.

"What iz it zhat you want from Fleur?" she asked.

Ah. Exactly the same question they ask back in the past.

Harry glanced at Fleur. He wondered if he should tell the truth of what he truly wanted. After a few moments of deliberation, he finally came with an answer. "Nothing."

"Nozhing? Are you sure?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah. There’s nothing I want from her. But maybe a friendship? That is if she is gracious enough."

He gave Fleur a faint smile before he looked away.

Behind him, Fleur and her friends were whispering to each other. He heard them. He chose not to care.
And for the rest of the journey, they walked in silence.

**Great Hall, few minutes later...**

They had arrived at the castle but before they entered the Great Hall, Cassandra held him back. "We will see you again, yes?"

"Yeah. If you want to," said Harry. "I'm stuck in this castle for at least a year. There's nowhere else I can go."

Cassandra nodded satisfactorily. "Good. We're still not finish. We'll see you later. Come Fleur."

His eyes and Fleur's met. She gave him a reassuring smile before she turned to follow her friends.

He failed to reply to that smile.

They went their separate ways as they entered the Great Hall. He, Ron and Hermione followed from behind.

Viktor waved at him as soon as he saw Harry.

"You're really late," he asked just as Harry arrived and sat in front of him. "Lunch will be over soon. What kept you?"

"We were held up," said Harry as he began to pile his plate with mash potatoes, steaks and sausages and began to eat. "Nothing to worry about, Viktor."

"Good to hear that. Listen, do you have any plans this afternoon?"

"Well," he said as he began cutting his steak and put it into his mouth. "We'll be having a double period after lunch but nothing after that. Why?"

Viktor nodded. "Five pm. Quidditch pitch. What do you say?"

"Broom?"

"Yes."

"Yeah sure," Harry gave his agreement. Flying on his broom would take his mind off the event that happened minutes before. "I'll see you there."

They continued to eat and chat. Ron fared better this time around. He had finally gathered enough bravery to strike up a meaningful conversation with Viktor and much to Harry's surprise, it went really well.

Hermione took the advantage to speak to Harry. "The Beauxbaton champion is looking at you, Harry."

"Yeah?" said Harry, feeling strangely disinterested. This time around, he was sitting with his back facing the Ravenclaw's table. A choice he made at the very last minute before he sat at the table.

"Harry, what's wrong?" asked Hermione.

"There's nothing wrong, Hermione," said Harry flatly. Using a fork, he jabbed the sausage on his plate with a force stronger than usual and began eating it.

"We've been friends for more than three years, Harry. Any changes - anything at all - coming from you or Ron, I can see it," said Hermione. "Even the slightest. Something is bothering you isn't it?"

"I honestly don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, I think you do," said Hermione. "You changed immediately after that Marianne girl mentioned someone named Pierre. You know him?"

Harry just shook his head.

In truth, he did know who Pierre was. Fleur told Harry all about him when they were married. A Beauxbaton student, three years her senior, that changed everything for her. His full name was Pierre Andre Fontaine. He was the boy who had been stalking Fleur right from the moment the first time she set her foot in Beauxbaton. He was so obsessed with her that he followed her everywhere. He would try to coax her whenever he got the chance. She never
entertained him of course. She never reported the boy's behaviour to her parents. She dearly wanted to prove to them that she was not weak. It continuously happened until that day when she was in her third year that the boy finally succumbed to his lust and tried to breach Fleur's modesty. She retaliated. It ended badly for Pierre. He ended up hospitalized for nearly a year. Fleur was nearly expelled. Luckily for her, proofs were on her side. She managed to prove her innocence. Monsieur Delacour threatened criminal action against Pierre when he was still hospitalized but after lengthy discussions, Pierre's parent agreed to take him out of Beauxbaton and enrolled him somewhere else.

Hermione's voice jolted him back to the present. "If not him, then what?"

Harry sighed. He honestly did not know how tell her. How can he tell Hermione something that had yet to happen?

After some deliberation, he decided on an answer. "Yes. There is something that bothers me but I really don't want to talk about it at this time. Maybe someday. Raincheck?"

Hermione nodded. "Okay, Harry. I understand. But I will hold you to it."

Harry chuckled. "Of course."

"Can I ask you another question?"

"Bring it on."

"Why they were so interested in knowing why you could withstand Fleur Delacour?" asked Hermione.

Harry glanced at Hermione. "You seriously don't know?"

"Would I ask if I knew?"

"When it comes to you, nobody knows," said Harry, smiling. "It's easy. She's a veela."

"I doubt that."

"There are signs if you care to look, Hermione. Just look at Ron's behaviour whenever she's around," said Harry.

"Ron will drool at anything."

"It's not just him. Why do you think Fleur's friends asked that question if she is just an ordinary girl?" said Harry. "Daphne Greengrass too recognized Fleur as a veela. She mentioned it during Hagrid's class."

"She did?!

Harry nodded. "Yeah, she did. Like I said, all the signs are there if you care to look. Fleur's friends were curious on why I wasn't affected by Fleur's allure. I wish I know the answer."

Hermione went quiet for a while. "You haven't told us on why Daphne suddenly approached you."

"I don't have any answer to that either, Hermione," said Harry. "All that she told me was that she became interested in me after she saw what I did with Fleur yesterday at the Quidditch pitch. I think she wants to befriend me."

"So you accept?"

Harry shook his head. "Not yet. I told her that she needs to earn my trust before anything else. It won't be easy I can tell you that, considering that she was part of Parkinson's gang. And you know how hostile that group can be with me."

"That is a smart move, Harry."

"Not sure about me being smart but thanks anyway."

Suddenly they heard feet shuffling. They both looked around and saw the rest of Gryffindor fourth year were lugging their school bags over their shoulders.

"It's Divination time you two," said Ron. "Let's go."

"Well, see you both at the common room," said Hermione as she too lugged her bag over her shoulder. She then took off towards Arithmancy class.
"Alright. See you this afternoon, Viktor."

Viktor just nodded. "Don't forget, Harry."

Harry heaved his bag over his shoulder. He then took a quick look at the Ravenclaw's table. He saw that Fleur was playing with her food, pushing it around on her plate with a fork listlessly. For some reason, she looked a little bit downcast. It seemed to him that she did not eat her lunch at all. All her friends around her tried to console her. She just shook her head at them.

He did not know why she acted that way but for now, he decided to leave it as it is. There was nothing he could do anyway.

He tore his eyes away from her and walked out of the Great Hall. Little did he realize that as he made his exit, many pairs of eyes were looking at him.

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**Divination classroom, North Tower, a few minutes later...**

Compared to last year, Divination classes nowadays were much more bearable. Professor Trelawney no longer made predicting his fate her hobby. However, she did keep on reminding him to come and see her whenever he got the chance every time the class ended. Harry had not forgotten her reminders actually. It was just that he never got around doing it. These days, he was much rather spend his time doing other things and be at other places rather than the North Tower.

They were still studying on the astronomical aspect of the Divination and as always, Harry's mind would drift to other places, no doubt an after effect from the burning incense and Professor Trelawney incessant lecture about the movement of celestial bodies and its effect on humans. Her lectures ended with her giving each of them a task where they need to study the movement of the solar system outer bodies on that month by using a complex circular chart she handed to them a few classes ago.

And as always, he and Ron would use their most effective method whenever the Divination teacher gave them works. They both would just make up everything and see what happens.

Professor Trelawney told them to stop twenty minutes before the class ended. She asked if any of them had finished. As expected, no one managed to complete the task in time. She seemed to not mind about it. She told them that the task shall be their homework and she expected them to hand it over during the next class.

"You can go now," she said.

Surprised that they were let out early, the students began to gather their things and made their way out of the classroom.

Harry was about to do the same when Professor Trelawney called out to him. "Harry, please stay."

Ron and Harry looked at each other. "You go on. I'll see you back at the common room," said Harry.

Ron nodded. "Yeah, okay. Can I come with you later to the Quidditch pitch?"

"Yeah, sure. Just don't blurt out the news to many people. I have a feeling that Krum may not like it."

"Sure thing, Harry. See ya."

Ron then took leave. Now it was just Harry and Professor Trelawney.

The Divination teacher motioned Harry to sit. He obliged and took a seat at the opposite side of her desk.

"Tea?" she offered.

Harry shook his head. "No thank you, professor. I had my lunch."

Professor Trelawney just smiled. "Fate told me that you will want to have a cup of tea," she said. Without further ado, she got up off her seat walked towards a nearby small kitchen set up within the classroom and began making tea.

Harry just rolled his eyes behind her.

Moments later, she came back with two steaming cup of tea. She gave one to Harry.
Harry took it and muttered thanks. He took a sip and was pleasantly surprised. That cup of tea was really good. It was totally different compared to the tasteless ones he had the displeasure of drinking when they studied tea leaves. It was even better than what Fleur used to concoct for him. But of course the girl liked coffee more than tea.

Professor Trelawney noticed the impression printed on Harry's face. "I can see that you like the tea."

"This-, this is really good," admitted Harry as he took further sips.

"Even better than what the Beauxbaton champion used to make?"

Harry immediately froze. He looked up at her, wide eyed.

Professor Trelawney looked calmly back at him. "You are not from here, Harry Potter," she said in a much firmer tone. Gone had her usual airy-fairy self. "Not in a sense of distances or places, but in the sense of time and dimension. You came from the future and your return shall have far reaching consequences."

To be continued...

A/n: First of all, I would like to thank you for all the reviews and feedbacks. Rest assure that most of the issues that you guys raised in the last chapter had been dealt with. At the same time, I took the liberty of adding a few snippets within the last chapter. It wasn't much actually and it won't have any detrimental effect on the plot. I just want to make things looked nicer. The changes can be found within the 'dormitory' scene and the 'Herbology' scene. You guys can check it out if you have the time. Unfortunately, I have yet do changes on chapter 13 because I need to be careful with some of the problems you guys highlighted. It will be done eventually. I will put an alert once done.

This chapter admittedly is short, only half of what I usually write and more like a filler. The reason is that I'm going to be a bit busy this week. Trying to write the other half would mean that this chapter would only come out probably near the end of this month. But of course you guys won't mind waiting, amirite? I will start writing the next chapter (the other half) sometime next week so you guys could expect it to come out by the end of the month, latest by early September.

Anyway here it is. I hope you guys would enjoy reading it as much I enjoyed writing it and as always, please leave a feedback or two on your way out. Thanks.
Chapter 16

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Legend:

"normal" – normal conversation

Italic – thought

"bold italic" – French

Harry immediately erected a strong mental barrier.

Professor Trelawney just watched him in amusement. She placed her cup on the table and lean against her high back chair. Tapping her finger on the armrest, she spoke, "This isn’t the first time you met someone such as me in your past life, is it? If it is, I should probably tell you that Occlumency doesn’t work on Seers."

It was true that he met really few Seers in his past life. Given his past experiences with Trelawney, he hardly had any incentive to seek them out. He preferred not to know what his future holds for him and instead was more contend in traversing the time one second at a time. Besides, true Seers were really rare and those who claimed to be one were mostly fraud. However, Professor Trelawney’s claim that Occlumency do not work on Seers raised his curiosity. As an auror, he was fully trained in both Occlumency and Legilimency art. It wasn’t easy - his past experience with Snape is a proof of statement - but he managed to ace both in the end.

He placed his cup of tea on the table. "You’re a Legiliment?" asked Harry. His mental barrier was still strongly erected. "You can read minds?"

Trelawney gave out a soft laugh. She shook her head. "No, Harry. Legilimency isn’t one of my specialties. I cannot know what you are thinking at this precise moment nor will I know what your plan is. Unless of course if you choose to tell me."

Harry however remained unconvinced. "If you’re not a Legiliment, how can you make that assumption?"

"Because what ever happened to you had everything to do with time, Harry," replied Trelawney. "The signatures, it’s all over you. I can see them just like every other Seers can. You’ll be a fascinating subject for us to study. Trust me when I say that this doesn’t happen very often."

"Often? You mean that this had happened before and I’m not the only one?" asked Harry in surprise.

"As far as I know, you’re not the only one and you’re certainly not the first," confirmed Trelawney. "But of course crossing path with a time traveler presents one very rare opportunity due to the fact that no one will want to admit openly that he or she is a time traveler. The consequences can be unfavorable." She then paused. "I am surprise that you didn’t try to deny it."

"Would it matter?"
"If you put honesty above all else," said Trelawney. "But of course you could deduce it to the fact that nobody is going to believe you anyway. You will think that there won't be any reason to be bothered with it. I take it that no one else knows?"

Harry just shook his head.

Trelawney nodded satisfactorily. "Perhaps it would be better to keep it that way, my dear," she said softly.

Trelawney got on her feet and walked towards one of the book cabinets that lined up the wall closest to her desk. Her long thin finger slid along the spines of the many books arranged neatly within the cabinet. After a couple of minutes, she finally settled on a large black leather bound book. She pulled it from its shelf and brought it back towards the desk. She then placed the book on the desk.

Harry could clearly see the gold writing on the cover of the book. It was in Ancient Latin. Luckily for him, he learnt Latin in his auror training. It said 'Through the Ages by Adeodatus Abatantuono.'

"Through the Ages?" said Harry.

Trelawney eyebrows cocked. "You could read Ancient Latin? That is impressive, Harry. Not many young people give any thought about learning additional languages, let alone ancient ones. For them English would be enough for everything."

Harry at this point decided that he had enough pretending. He had decided that he could trust Professor Trelawney despite her quirks. "I'm already 92 years old, Professor."

"Of course you are," said Trelawney without looking at him. She opened the book and ran her finger along the content pages. "You came from the future, Harry. I don't expect you to still be a fourteen years old boy despite you looking like one. "She once again paused and looked up at him. "Tell me Harry, He-who-must-not-be-named, did he die?"

Harry nodded. "Yes. I killed him."

Trelawney nodded. "And I take it that a lot of people died in the process?"

Harry looked down in grievance. He slowly nodded. "Yes. Unfortunately."

"And in your long years you keep thinking about them," stated Trelawney. "You're regretting their death and you wished that things could be different. You wished that you could do something about it."

Harry slowly nodded.

Trelawney stared at him momentarily before she continued, "Of course you wish for that. You aren't the one who would shirk away from his duties. This will make you case more straightforward it seems. Do you know anything about Adeodatus Abatantuono, Harry?"

Harry shook his head. "I have no idea who he is but I figure that you're going to tell me. You won't take that book out of its resting place without any good reason."

"Clever."

"And that book contains ways to time travel, I presume?"

"I read this book from end to end, Harry," said Trelawney as she continuously flipped the pages. "I wish you were right about that. Being able to truly see through time would be a holy grail for us who study the art. Unfortunately, this book contains none of it. It does however, contains accounts of those alleged to be time travelers."

"Accounts?" said Harry. "Adeodatus. He wasn't a time traveler?"

"He was reputedly to be one. Nearly lost his life when he confessed. This book was written sometime between 967-1005AD. You learnt what it's like living within those periods. You could lose your head just by being different. Adeodatus made it his life obsessions by hunting down every alleged time traveler and asked them for their stories. That was before he finally realized that the majority of them were fraud who were only interested in the gold and the silver he offered them for their confessions. By chances, he learnt about some ancient scrolls that were supposedly hidden within the caverns that lie at the edge of the Dead Sea. He traveled there and was not disappointed. He found the scrolls. Unfortunately for him, the scrolls were written in Ancient Hebrew," explained Trelawney.

"So he had to find someone who could read it," said Harry. "But how did he know that those scrolls really contain what he seeks?"
"He didn't," said Trelawney. "Luck played a lot of part in his quest. He went to Old Jerusalem where he found someone who could read the language. It was by the help of the local translator that he knew he found what he was looking for. He went on to stay in the ancient city for the next several years, mingling with the Arabs and the Jews, hiding from the incoming onslaught of the Byzantine Empire as he continued to finish his work. The result is what you see here." Trelawney gestured towards the book now laid open in front of her.

"What happened to him?" asked Harry.

"No one knows," replied Trelawney. "Once finish, he kept this book hidden within a vault inside the house where he lived in Jerusalem. Then one day, he went out for a walk. He never returns. Everyone who knows him went out to search for him. They never found him. It was rumoured that before he went missing, Adeodatus revealed to his assistant the method on how to access his vault. He told his assistant that the contents of the vault must be kept safe for it is too precious. His assistant obliged and the book was kept within the assistant's family for generations until by some mysterious means it ended up in a second-hand books shop in Diagon Alley."

"Wait! Are you saying that this book had never been reprinted, that this book is the same exact book that he wrote?!"

"Adeodatus wrote on pieces of parchments actually. Books were practically unheard of back then, Harry. All they had were scrolls. It was sometime later that all of it were compiled and turned into a book," said Trelawney. "But yes. What you see here is his own writing."

"And you bought it."

Trelawney nodded. "My grandmother and I were close. She was already a Seer. I wanted to be just like her. I was eleven and on my way to Hogwarts for the first time. My parents, as you could have guessed, were tight on money. They bought me everything second-handed. I'm not complaining, Harry. In fact, I am thankful that they were willing to sacrifice what little money they had just so that I could have better education and later on, better life. The book as you could tell by now wasn't part of Hogwarts syllabus. I have to beg them to buy it for me. They did cave in eventually. It was my first ever birthday present."

Harry said nothing. His mind drifted towards the Weasleys who happened to be under the same predicament as the young Professor Trelawney. The Weasleys too were impoverished despite them being a pure-blood magical family.

"Now," said Professor Trelawney. "Enough of history lessons. Let's get down to why you're here. As I said to you before, I had gone through this book end to end. Many times in fact and what I found is a pattern. A clear distinctive pattern."

"Pattern?"

"Pattern," confirmed Trelawney. "Each of the time traveling account documented within this book points to one fact; the time traveler had experienced horrifying and sometimes, cataclysmic event, in his or her past life and was somehow sent back through time within a period of time after the said event."

"Did they know the reason why they were sent back? Who sent them?"

"No," said Trelawney. "They know neither the reason nor the one responsible for what befell upon them. They can't even control the nature of the time travel itself; on when it happened and to what period they were returning to. Of course most of them were intelligent enough to deduce the reason why, that they were sent back in time so that they can change the future and saw that as a chance. There were also however, those who failed to see the chance bestowed upon them and simply let the history repeat itself."

Harry went into deep thought. Moments later he spoke, "How does he-, I mean we know that those accounts were legit, that it wasn't just some cooked up fantasy just to amuse those gullible enough to believe any of it?"

"Luckily, Adeodatus thought of that," said Trelawney. "The accounts matched his own experiences. You see Harry, Adeodatus was a citizen of Rome. He lived within the era where the Roman Empire had already crumbled. It was really bad, Harry. Famine, diseases, everything bad happened all at once. No one was safe. He was once a victim in his past life. Adeodatus admitted that his curiosity took over him the moment he found out he had travel into the past. While he knew that he could do something about his future, he decided to let history repeat itself and instead devoted this second chance he received into studying the nature of the time travel itself, hoping that someday, someone else may benefit from it."

"I hardly could believe that, Professor," said Harry. "That reason wasn't strong enough. He could have done something."
"Yes he could," agreed Trelawney. "And maybe perhaps he should but consider this, Harry. What if he did change his future, and that future caused a time ripple that reverberate through more than a thousand years, changing everything within it path? What if Adeodatus action causes you to be born not as a savior you are supposed to be? What if instead you become the very nature of evil itself? Have you given any thought on that?"

Harry went silent.

Trelawney took the advantage to continue, "And they say that Divination is such a lowly subject not worthy of any attention. Yes, I know what everyone spoke behind me, Harry." Trelawney said when she noticed Harry's expression of embarrassment. "Adeodatus realized the consequences of every action. Every single one of it will determine the course of the future. One may never see the changes that lie beyond the choices they made, Harry. I can only predict what will happen based on your current choices and it will remain correct for as long as you do not make a new one. Once a new choice had been made, a new path shall open up, leading one into different events and different destinations. Such was the difficulties of Divination."

"Is this why you prefer to play around with objects such as the moon and the planets in your teaching?"

Trelawney smiled. "Those objects do help and through various means influences us though perhaps not in the way you thought it would be," she said. "But yes I do prefer to play around them. It's far easier to teach the student by using them. Easier to make them understand. Not everyone is blessed with the Inner Eye. It's a rare privilege."

Harry stared at her in disbelieve. Poor Parvati Patil and Lavender Brown.

Trelawney continued to smile. "You probably thought of me for being some kind of fraud. I don't blame you Harry. I already know the risk when I took the job but I needed the money. I was homeless when the first time I met Dumbledore. I told the headmaster that not everyone can be taught. He told me that in order for Divination to stay as one of the subject taught in Hogwarts, I must teach every student that chose the subject as an elective. I had no choice but to accept. He was right anyway. None of the students in my long years of teaching possessed the Inner Eye. If I was being selective, I won't have any students to be taught and I'll probably be out of the job before long."

Harry slowly nodded. "I understand, professor. For the record, I didn't see you as a fraud. You did make predictions that caused the fall of Voldemort in the past. It helped me quite a lot back then and I'm sure that this time once again, it will help me. You have my thanks for that."

Professor Trelawney smiled widely. A tear ran down her cheek. She gently wiped it off with the back of her hand. "Thank you, Harry. That is the nicest thing anyone ever said to me for a long time."

Harry smiled kindly and nodded. "I'm the one who should give thanks." He suddenly remembered that he had a 'date' with Viktor. "Will there be anything else, Professor? With your permission I would like to leave. I have an appointment later this afternoon."

"Wait!" Professor Trelawney immediately grabbed his hand just as he was about to leave. "There's more."

Her face suddenly was filled with worry.

Harry's eyebrows creased when he noticed the sudden changes in Trelawney's expression. "What is it, professor?"

"First, tell me how did you return from the future?"

He became puzzled. But nevertheless, he spoke, "It happened a few days after the funeral of my wife. It was night time. I was falling asleep in my bedroom. The next thing I know is that I woke up in a train compartment next to Hermione and Ronald Weasley on the way to Hogwarts. Why?"

Trelawney took a deep breath. She was still holding onto him. "Harry, all those time travellers, they made their journey through the time on their deathbed."

Harry cocked his eyebrows. "I know what you mean," he said. "How can I be here, sitting next you when I'm supposed to be dead?"

But Professor Trelawney shook her head. "Harry, listen to me. Right from the first day I saw something significantly different about you. Your aura. They're different from that of the living. That is why I've asked you to see me. That is what I'm trying to tell you."

"Aura? Professor, I admit being thrown back in time shook me quite a bit but me being dead?"
Trelawney once again shook her head. She tightened her grip on Harry’s hand and spoke, "You’re not dead. For now. Harry, Adeodatus wrote in his book is that all the time travelers lived on borrowed time."

"Borrowed time?"

Trelawney nodded gravely. "Yes, Harry. Borrowed time, which means that they shall continue to be alive until the purpose for their return had been fulfilled. Those who decided not to fulfill their purpose died much sooner."

"But professor, Adeodatus didn’t fulfill his purpose. You said it yourself he chose not to change his future and yet he lived a long life!" interjected Harry.

"Changing the future may not be his purpose, Harry. Remember what I said, it is up to the traveler to find the true meaning of their return. He was gone after the book is complete, Harry. Remember he vanished without a trace," said Trelawney.

"But he could be anywhere! He probably left Jerusalem and gone back to Rome! His friends, they probably didn’t search for him far and wide! The world back then was vast, professor!"

"Yes the world was vast back then. It was also unforgiveable," said Trelawney. "He left his home bringing only the clothes on his body. He was nowhere in Jerusalem, Harry. Out in the harsh wilderness, he would only have a few days to survive. He would still die."

Harry just stared at Professor Trelawney. He clearly was not expecting it. He was torn on whether or not he should believe her.

Trelawney immediately stood up and went to kneel in front of Harry. She took both of his hand into hers and said, "I know it’s hard to believe but my dear boy, you must know. You must be prepared. I don’t want you to be caught off guard when the inevitable happen. I’m so sorry, Harry."

Harry bit his lip. He then slowly nodded. "It’s okay, professor. You don’t have to apologize. Whatever is going to happen to me isn’t of your making," he said slowly. His voice trembled. "Maybe it won’t happen at all. I will be fine. Don’t worry about me."

Professor Trelawney nodded. "There’s one more thing you need to know. Your magical core. You need to be careful with them."

"And why is that?"

"Your magical core is too well developed, Harry. I can see it and I have no doubt that the headmaster may notice it as well. While it will give you the advantage in doing magic, your fourteen year old body might not be able to take it. Your old body may be strong enough to contain it but your current body might not," explained Trelawney. "It might kill you."

"How do you know all these?" asked Harry, confused. That can’t be right, he thought. Trelawney was just a Divination teacher.

Trelawney seemed to know what he was thinking. "I’m an old woman, Harry," she said. "Like you, I have seen things. I’m not as close minded as everyone like to think."

"Right," said Harry. "Will there be anything else, Professor?"

Trelawney who saw that Harry still have difficulties in believing her asked, "You performed magic since the beginning of the school year. How do you feel after doing it?"

Harry began to scour his memory. He found one really significant memory. The memory of when he destroyed the Ravenclaw’s Diadem. "I felt exhausted. I felt weak," he said.

"And I figure the magic you performed shouldn’t drain you that much, should it?" she stated. "It probably wasn’t your magic that made you feel that way."

"You mean my body?"

"Probably. I fear that it’s a prelude to something much worse," she said. "But who am I to tell you all these things, Harry. I’m not trained to analyze matters such as these. But I do have life experiences. I am not forcing you to believe me. I just hope that it won’t be too late."

Harry nodded. "Thank you professor, for telling me."

He let go of Trelawney’s hand. He then stood up, lugged his school bag over his shoulder and walked towards the exit. But just as he reached the trap door, he suddenly stopped and turned around to face Trelawney who was still kneeling at the exact spot where he once sat. A fierce determination can be seen on his face.
"Maybe it won't matter whether I believe you or not. Maybe it won't matter whether or not I'll live to see it but I do know one thing. The purpose of why I'm here. I nearly lost everything back from where I came from," he said fiercely. "A lot of people died. My parents, Cedric Diggory, Sirius Black, Albus Dumbledore, Fred Weasley, Bill Weasley, Professor Burbage, Professor Lupin, Nymphadora Tonks, Alastor Moody, Professor Snape and many more including a lot of students you now seeing prancing around the castle every day; all of them died so that the rest of us who survives could have a better future, away from tyranny and away from war. I had a good life, professor. For seventy years I led a wonderful life, a life that had been denied from those who were killed during the war. It's time for me to pay my dues. It's their turn now to have what I had. If I die doing this, it will all be worth it. I won't regret it, professor. My parents are already waiting for me. It's time for me to return to them."

Trelawney slowly stood up. "What about your wife? Don't you want to get back to her?"

Harry smiled. "Even if I do come out alive, there may not be any chances for me and her to be together, professor. It's a long story but suffice to say, I'm not her first choice. But it's okay. I just want her to be happy even if her happiness in the end doesn't lie with me."

"Don't you love her? Won't you fight for her?"

Harry looked down. Sadness plastered on his face. "With all my heart I do love her. I care too much for her. And it won't change, not a bit which is why I'm doing this despite whatever it is you said earlier. I won't mind dying if it means that she would be safe. This is why I fight."

"Maybe you should tell her how you feel. At least let her know."

But Harry shook his head. "To what end? If she does ends up falling in love with me, it will only hurt her in the end. Anyway, Fleur Delacour at this time only knows me as a fourteen years old boy. She doesn't remember me like I remember her. It's better this way, professor. It would be better if she doesn't know."

"That is a noble thing to do, Harry."

Harry looked up to her. There was the look of strong determination on his face. With a much firmer voice he spoke, "I'm just a man doing what really matters. Things had already begun and I will finish what I've started. I promise you, Voldemort will die by my hands one way or another. I have only one request; please don't tell anyone else what we've talked about."

Professor Trelawney nodded. "You have my word, Harry."

Harry gave a her nod and through the trap door, he made his exit.

The memory of the conversation between him and Trelawney kept on replaying as he walked towards the Gryffindor Tower.

In all honesty, deep inside he would like to maintain his original view on Trelawney, that she was nothing but a fraud. But the way she spoke to him, the urgency in her tone of voice somehow made he thought otherwise. What if what she said was true? What if Adeodatus assumption do come to fruit? Did he was supposed to die in his sleep that night? Did he really live on borrowed time right now? So many questions. The answers were there. The only problem was that would he be able to accept it.

So deep he was in his thought that he nearly bumped into someone.

"Hey!"

He immediately applied the brake and looked up. "Cho?"

Yeap. Standing right in front of him was the beautiful Ravenclaw seeker, ChoChang.

Cho just shook her head and smiled. "You really need to watch where you're going, Harry."

Harry just scratched his head. "Yeah, sorry about that. Just... have a lot of things going on inside my mind right now. That's why I didn't see you."

Cho nodded. "Yes I noticed that. So where're you going?"

"Back to the common room."

"Oh. Okay."

And there was the awkward silence. Harry remembered it all too well during his previous fourth year. At that time, he had a huge crush on the Ravenclaw's fifth year. Now, not so much.
"So... I think I better get going," he said.

There was a look of surprise on her face. "Oh, okay. So I guess I'll see you later, Harry."

Harry just smiled and nodded. He took off but just after a few steps of walking, Cho called him back.

"Harry?"

He stopped and turned to look at her quizzically.

"You were awesome yesterday, Harry." she said.

He smiled. "I lost, Cho. Remember?" he said.

"Yes I remember but you're still awesome."

Harry just shrugged. "Well, if you say so."

Cho walked closer to him. "I was wondering if I could train with you? If you don't mind."

Harry stared at her. He noticed that her cheek went red. "Training? With me? But we're competitors, Cho."

"Yes I know that. I'm not expecting you to teach me everything, Harry. Please?"

Harry sighed. He knew he will have a hard time to say no especially when a girl begged him. But still, he was late for his appointment with Viktor and he needed to get Cho off his back at least for the moment. "Okay. No problem. We'll discuss it later. But I have to go now, Cho."

Cho smiled widely. "Thank you, Harry. I'll see you later. Bye." She immediately squeezed his hand and left.

Harry just shook his head and continued his way to the Gryffindor Tower.

First came Fleur. Then came Daphne and now ChoChang.

"What have I got myself into?" he muttered.

**To be continued...**

_A/n: Before you guys criticized my decision on using Trelawney, please consider that this is fanfiction. And since Divination dealt with time, future whatever, I think it's appropriate to have her play some role in this story._

Anyway as promise so here it is, the second part of the previous chapter. I would like to thank you for all the reviews. As before, being anonymous will bring you nothing so if you have something to complain or issues that you think I should address, please use an account. As I told one of you, I'm not the type who would report a user just because of the things he or she said. Using an account will allow me to answer your concern. That is the main point here.

**This chapter is not be a happy chapter though. So yeah.**
Chapter 17

Did you ever fall for someone you know you shouldn't? Try hard to fight your feelings but you just couldn't?

You fall deeper with each passing day, but try to hide it in every possible way; she's only a friend and nothing else.

Those are the lies you keep telling yourself, but deep inside you're falling in love.

You get so giddy when you meet her eyes, but keep reminding yourself that it isn't right,

A simple glance turns into a stare, but you pretend that you don't care.

It's not right for you two to be, is that why you hide it so that no one can see?

But how long will you pretend? Keep lying that she's just a friend?

Perhaps your feelings you can never show, perhaps it's wrong for her to know,

Your friendship can't be risked over this,

So being her man is an impossible wish....

Legend:-

"normal" – normal conversation

Italic – thought

"bold italic" – French

"Trelawney really held you back didn't she?" said Ron the moment Harry stepped into the common room. "Come on mate, we're nearly late. Krum will be waiting for us."

Harry put down his school bag at the usual place and glanced at the clock. They still have five minutes left. "We still got time," he said. "Wait here. I'll go up and change."

Without waiting for Ron's response, he dashed towards the dormitory and returned two minutes later wearing a gray t-shirt and a loose pant. He immediately grabbed his Firebolt from the broom cabinet and gestured Ron to follow.

"Come on."

They dashed out of the common room towards the Entrance Hall. Once arrived, he mounted the broom. With Ron riding shotgun, they sped towards the Quidditch pitch.

They thought they were already late. Apparently they were not. Viktor was nowhere to be seen.

Harry directed the Firebolt towards one of the stands and made a landing. They dismounted the broom and took seats as they wait for Viktor's arrival. Ron took a seat. Harry did not copy him. Instead, he remained standing, leaning against the guard rail facing Ron.

"So what are you planning to do with him today?" asked Ron. His eyes kept on darting between Harry and the Durmstrang ship that harboured not far from the pitch.

Harry shook his head. "No idea," he said. "Viktor was the one who asked for the meeting. I don't know what he has in mind. Guess we'll find out when he arrives."

"Oh, okay," said Ron. "So, Trelawney. What does she wants with you?" he asked.

"She just wants to chat, that's all."

"Really?" Ron cocked an eyebrow. "I always figure she has a thing or two about you. Remember last year? Every damn class she never failed trying to make prediction about you."

Harry smiled. "Yeah, I remember. It was always about my eventual 'death'," said Harry, rolling his eyes and making an air quote.
"Yeah. And it got to the point where it became very annoying, even for me. Sometimes I wonder if she was unhappy that you somehow manage to attend all her classes. I think she would definitely hold a party if you really kick the bucket."

"Yeah, I know," said Harry. "Well she would no longer be disappointed. This time around, her wish would come true."

"What did you say, Harry?"

Harry turned to look to Ron. The ginger head was staring at him, his eyebrows creased.

"Er... nothing," he hastily said.

Ron continued to stare at him for a few moments. "Right. I figure it was nothing."

Harry knew that Ron was still suspicious. He needed a diversion. "Er... so Viktor. How was he during the lunch? I saw you had quite a conversation with him."

Ron's face immediately lighted up the moment he heard the question. He then began to regale the conversation he had earlier during the lunch with Viktor.

Harry felt relief. He was so absorbed by the conversation he had earlier with Trelawney that he forgot to watch his mouth. Lucky for him, Ron could easily be distracted. He did not want to think the consequences if the person in front of him was Hermione. The girl will dig deep down and search far and wide until she got a satisfactory answer, especially when it comes to him. He would not put anything past Hermione.

Ron kept on talking but Harry wasn't really listening. His mind drifted on and off towards the conversation he had earlier with Professor Trelawney.

He did not want to believe her. That was all to it. A goofy teacher teaching a subject that was practically useless, that was all she would ever be. That was all she ever amounted for.

But fifteen minutes ago she was not the goofy teacher who taught a practically useless subject. Fifteen minutes ago, she was something else. That should lend some weight to her credential, should it?

"Did you know that he is the only child in his family? Must be pretty lonely back there. Er, Harry?"

Harry felt someone nudged him. He turned and saw that Ron was looking at him.

"Do you listen to what I was saying, Harry?"

Harry stared at him momentarily. "Er... no."

Ron just shook his head. "So it seems that I was talking to myself the whole time."

"Sorry," said Harry sheepishly. "There are a lot of things going on inside my mind right now."

"No doubt about that," said Ron. "Really Harry, what was going on-" Ron suddenly paused. He then pointed towards the Durmstrang ship. "Here he comes."

Once again Harry was grateful for the distraction. He looked to the same direction Ron was pointing and saw Viktor on his broom, flying towards them.

Viktor landed with a heap the moment he arrived. "I am sorry," he hastily said as he put down his broom. He then took a seat beside Ron. "I had a meeting with Professor Karkaroff."

"That's okay, Viktor," said Harry. "We were a little bit late ourselves as well. So the meeting had something to do with the tournament I suppose."

Viktor nodded. "Professor Karkaroff really want to win this tournament. He told me everything there is to know about it."

"So did he tell you what the first task will be?" asked Ron this time. "When will it begin?"

Viktor shook his head. "The first task will be on 24th November. That is all I know. He told me that I will know what I will face in due time. He will make sure that I will have enough time to prepare. I hope he is right. As much as I am happy being selected, I know the challenges won't be easy. Ah, but he did told me that there will be vand weighing ceremony, due tomorrow."

Harry just remained silent. He already knew about the ceremony and when it will be held. Right during Potions class in the morning tomorrow.
"Wand weighing ceremony?" said Ron. "What's that? Is it where they put your wand on a weighing scale and tell you your wand is obese or something?"

Harry hastily turned his snort into a clearly fake cough. Damn you Ron, he thought. You really 'know' how to choose your word.

Viktor stared at Ron, as if the ginger had grown two heads right that instance. "No," he said. He then proceeded to explain, "Vand weighing ceremony is where a vand expert come to look at your vand. He vill check the vand to make sure that it perform up to the standard. You von't vant to be stuck within a situation where your vand suddenly gives up on you."

Ron nodded in understanding.

"He's right, Ron," said Harry. "It's not about how big or small or how long the wand is. It's all about performance."

Damn. He could probably be talking about someone's dick right now. Lucky for him, the other two were oblivious to the nuance.

"Wand expert?" said Ron. "I wonder who that be."

Harry of course knew who. But he kept silent.

"Someone by the name of Ollivander, I think. Only a vand maker could weigh a vand," said Viktor.

"Ah, Garrick Ollivander. A wand maker he is. The majority of the British wizards got their wand from him. There were several smaller wand maker shops but they're not as popular. You got your wand from-," said Harry.

"Gregorovitch," said Viktor. He took out his wand and showed it to them. "I am one of the last who managed to procure a vand from him. He was really good."

"Yeah he was really good," agreed Harry. "But most of his wands were designed to channel more power than emphasizing subtlety, I think. Ollivander mostly designed his wand based on a wizard or witch's inner strength and abilities. He is the opposite of Gregorovitch."

Viktor seemed to be impressed. "You really know your vand, Harry. But yes, you are right. Gregorovitch made powerful wands."

Of course I knew about wands, thought Harry. I'm an auror. And I know your wand maker's secret.

"So I take it that Gregorovitch already retired. Who took over the business from him?" asked Harry.

"No one," said Viktor as he stowed his wand back into its sleeve. "The rest of us vill have to get our vand from several smaller manufacturers. Mind you, they are not as good as Gregorovitch."

"Yeah I guess so," said Harry. "So what are we going to do today?"

Viktor's eyebrows creased momentarily. He then shook his head. "Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Vell I do plan to do something but now I don't have any mood for it. The meeting with Karkaroff wore me off. Let's talk and maybe have a few drinks."

"We don't have any drink with us," Harry pointed out.

"Don't worry, I brought some," said Viktor. He began to rummage his pant's pocket and took out a small leather pouch. He reached into the pouch and pulled out three bottles of drink. He passed the bottles to each of them. "I saw you come here with your friend," he said to Harry. "So I brought three."

Harry took the bottle and muttered thanks. His eyebrows cocked when he saw the label.

"Bulgarian firewhisky."

"Yes, Bulgarian firewhisky," said Viktor proudly. He uncorked his bottle and took a sip. "The best in the world. It is quite strong. If you never drink it, you should." His eyes widened when he saw Harry uncorked his bottle and downed half of the content of the bottle in one go.

"You're not an amateur in drinking, aren't you Harry Potter? You never failed to surprise me."

Harry smacked his lips. "This is good stuff," he said.
"Wow!"

Both Harry and Viktor turned towards Ron. The boy's eyes darted between Harry and Viktor. In his hand was a half empty bottle of Bulgarian firewhisky.

"This is good shit," croaked Ron. And without any further ado, he toppled over, lying on the seats, his mouth hanged wide open and began to snore loudly. The content of the bottle he was holding spilled all over the floor.

Both Harry and Viktor snickered.

"Yes that could happen," said Viktor as he continued to laugh.

Harry chuckled. It did bring back the memory of when he was on an assignment in Bulgaria. The deed had been done. He and his Bulgarian counterpart entered a bar in the small town of Plovdiv. They were celebrating. His Bulgarian partners insisted that he tries the Bulgarian Firewhisky. He declined at first, stating that his wife didn't like him being drunk. They kept on insisting until finally he obliged. He told them that he will take only a sip. Harry did not really know what happened after that. All he knew was that he ended up consuming four bottles in succession and ended up collapsing on the stool he was sitting on. Luckily for him, he was in good company who helped bring him back to his hotel room and for him, only needed to go back to the United Kingdom the next day. Unluckily for him though, Fleur found out about it. She was furious. She forced him to sleep on the couch for the whole week and she only allowed him to kiss her a month after that.

The laughter finally died down and for the next few minutes, both of them did not say anything.

Harry stared at the firewhisky bottle he was currently holding. "They say that a man drinks to drown his sorrow," he said slowly. "Have you ever heard of that?"

Viktor nodded. "Yes, I heard it. Are you in sorrow, Harry?"

"Sometimes."

"You miss your parents." That was not a question.

Harry nodded. "Not just them."

"They are in a good place now, Harry. They are probably watching you right this instance. They did not forget you."

Harry smiled. He looked up to the sky. It was a bright afternoon. The sky was blue with hints of clouds here and there. He continued to stare at it, as if trying to see a glimpse of his parents somewhere up there. Fleur, his Fleur would probably be up there too.

After a few moments he turned back to Viktor. "I take it that your parents are still alive? Ron told me that you're the only child in your family."

Viktor nodded. "Yes they are and yes I am the only child. Your friend did ask me if I feel lonely whenever I got back home."

Harry chuckled. "Yeah he would ask that. He has a big family, you know. He has six siblings. It's a riot every time all of them got together. It must be nice back where you came from."

Viktor's face immediately lighted up. "Yes it is. I came from Nesebar. It's a small enclave located right out into the Black Sea. It is very nice there. I love it. It is one of a few places where muggles and vizzards could mingle together. My father operates a small grocery shop and my mother is a housewife. I have a lot of neighbourhood friends and every summer, ve vill go to the beach for a swim."

"So how do you get to Durmstrang?"

"Ve have various means of transportation to go to Durmstrang," said Viktor. "I usually use the Floo network. I understand that Hogwarts students come here only by train."

"Yes. The Hogwarts Train."

"Vhy only the train? Vhy not allow the students to use other type of transportations at the same time?" asked Viktor.

Harry just shrugged. "I have no idea. It was like that since... forever. Come to think of it, I don't think anyone ever question why. I do like the train though. It's warm and comfy and we got food sold within the dining carriage. There's also a lady pushing a trolley filled up with candies that we can buy if we don't feel like walking to the dining carriage. It's really nice."
Viktor nodded. "Vell, Hogwards certainly is much nicer than Durmstrang. The food is also better than what ve had back at the institute. I think that vill be what ve vill miss most after the tournament is done."

"Don't you have anyone to cook for you on the ship?" asked Harry.

Viktor shook his head. "Ve have a place to eat but no one to cook. That iz why ve only eat at your dining hall."

"I see," said Harry. "So the ship, how was it?"

Viktor turned to look at the ship and back to Harry. "It is simple," he said. "But it is varm and what you say? Comfy."

"How long did it take to get here from Bulgaria?"

"A day I think."

"A day?!"

Viktor nodded. "Yes. A day. Ve departed from Durmstrang in the evening, the day before we arrived here. For the whole one day ve stayed under water."

"Wow."

"It would be a bad news if you are claustrophobic. One of us did go crazy within an hour into the journey. Our headmaster had to put a spell on him and make him sleep for the whole journey. I could take you on a tour of our boat if you like."

Harry's eyebrows rose. "I could? Your headmaster won't mind?"

"I don't think he would mind. Of course it probably be just you. In fact he did encourage me to become friend with you. I have no problem with that of course. So how about it? This weekend if you are interested."

For the first time in a few days, he had something to look forward to. "Yeah, sure. That would be awesome."

Viktor smiled. "You could of course bring your friend here as well but no more than him."

"I understand. Yeah I think he would like that. Thanks, Viktor."

They continued to talk until the sun finally touched the western horizon. Harry conjured a rope and with Viktor's help, tied Ron to his back while he mounted his broom.

"Thanks, Viktor," said Harry after Ron was finally secured. "I'll ask our head of house if she would allow you to visit our tower. You and the rest of your friends."

Viktor nodded. "Yes that would be most welcome. I see you later at dinner, Harry."

And with that, they went their separate ways.

He arrived at the Entrance Hall a minute later. Students were streaming into the Great Hall for dinner. Some of them stared wordlessly as Harry landed right in middle of the Entrance Hall carrying Ron at his back.

"Harry!"

He looked up and saw Ernie McMillan came running towards him.

"What happened?" asked Ernie the moment he arrived in front of Harry.

"He fainted," said Harry as he untied Ron from him. He then grabbed Ron's underarm and swing it over his neck as he tried to keep him upright. Ron's head lolled to the side. He was still unconscious.

Ernie immediately went to Ron's other side and grabbed Ron's underarm and copied Harry. "Come on, Harry. Let's take him to the hospital wing."

Harry paused for a moment. "Alright. Thanks, Ernie."

"No problem, mate," said Ernie.

Both of them began to carry Ron towards the hospital wing. They met quite a few
Gryffindorians along the way asking questions about Ron but they did not stop to answer. A few minutes later, they finally arrived at the entrance into the hospital wing. They entered and immediately put Ron into one of the vacant beds that lined up the ward.

“What happened?!”

Harry and Ernie turned around and saw Madam Pomfrey came marching towards them. She grinded into a halt the moment she arrived. Her eyebrows creased the moment she saw Ron.

“What happened to him? Mr. Potter? Do you care to explain?”

“It’s a long story,” said Harry. “Suffice to say he drank something. He then collapsed.”

“Drank something you say?”

Harry nodded.

Pomfrey began to inspect Ron. She checked his pulse and touched various parts of his body. It was when she was touching Ron’s face that she suddenly paused. She then turned towards Harry.

“Something as in firewhisky, Mr. Potter?”

“Erm, probably?”

Pomfrey just shook her head. “I can smell it. Who gave him the drink?”

“Er, that’s classified. But he’s a friend of us.”

Pomfrey once again shook her head. “You’re lucky that he passed out due to drunkenness. If he suffers more than that I will have to haul you and your friend to the headmaster. Well, there’s nothing I could do for now other than to let him sleep. He will wake up tomorrow with a hell of a hangover, I promise you that. Lucky for him I have the antidote. How much did he have for drink?”

“Just half a bottle,” said Harry.

Pomfrey nodded. “Well that explains it. Your friend here has a really low tolerance on alcohol. Now out you go, both of you. Go and take your dinner. You can come and visit your friend tomorrow. Now go!”

“So you both drank firewhisky?” said Ernie as they made their way towards the Great Hall.

“Yeap.”

“No, shit. Who gave you the drink?”

“Can you keep a secret?”

“Well yeah.”

“Viktor Krum.”

“Holy Merlin,” said Ernie. “He must have given you the Bulgarian firewhisky. That’s potent I can tell you that. But how come you’re not drunk?”

“Dunno,” said Harry. “Have you ever tried it?”

“Yeah,” said Ernie. “It was embarrassing. I only took five sips. I ended up running around my house clad only in my underwear.”

“Woah!”

They finally arrived at the Great Hall a few minutes later and parted ways. Harry headed straight towards the Gryffindor’s table. From afar, he could see Viktor Krum and Hermione was having a chat.

Viktor wave at him the moment he saw him coming.

“How’s your friend?” asked Viktor as Harry took the seat in front of him.

“He will be fine. He’ll just need to have a good rest, that’s all,” said Harry. “He’s now in hospital wing.”

“I guess I owe him an apology,” said Viktor.
"I don't think he will be mad at you, Viktor. Don't worry about it. But of course you can visit him tomorrow."

Viktor Krum just nodded.

"Ron is in hospital wing?" said Hermione, cupping her mouth. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I just got here," said Harry as he began piling food onto his plate. "I just met you."

"What happened to him?"

Harry gave a meaningful look at Viktor. "He will be fine, Hermione. He just need some rest. I tell you everything later, I promise."

Hermione went quiet. She did not touch her food after that. She was clearly worried.

The dinner that night went well. Harry, this time sitting facing the Ravenclaws table, stole a few glances towards Fleur. She ignored him at first, refusing to meet his eyes. But near the end of the dinner she finally relented. Their eyes met for the first time that night. And she looked deeply into him.

As he and Hermione headed out of the Great Hall towards the Gryffindor Tower, a girl whom Harry recognized as a third year Ravenclaw gave him a note. He muttered thanks and put it into his pocket.

"Harry, you haven't answered my question," said Hermione as they walked past a stream of Hufflepuff students heading down to their common room.

"I'm about to," said Harry. He then leaned towards her. "Can you keep a secret?" whispered Harry into her ear. "Quite a few people will get into trouble if this leaks out."

"Well yes. Of course I can," Hermione whispered back.

Along the way, he told Hermione about the meeting with Viktor and about the Durmstrang champion handed each of them Bulgarian booze to drink.

"Harry, we're underage!" said Hermione. "We weren't supposed to drink alcohol. How can he give you that?"

"We drank butterbeer," stated Harry.

"Butterbeer isn't as strong as a firewhisky, Harry. You shouldn't have let him drink it. You shouldn't drink it!"

"In my defence I didn't see him drink it. All I know is that the bottle was already half empty before he collapsed. Look Hermione, Ron probably has lower tolerance when it comes to alcoholic drinks. He will be fine. Even Madam Pomfrey said he will be okay," said Harry.

"What if he didn't?"

"Then I will hold responsible for what happened to him," said Harry. "Krum did not mean him any harm, Hermione. He just wanted to share something, that's all. He was planning to visit Ron to apologize to him tomorrow. I think we should go too."

"Okay. We'll visit him after Potions," decided Hermione.

Harry agreed.

**Dormitory, a few minutes later...**

Once arrived Harry took the towel hanged nearby and proceeded towards the bathroom. He felt filthy after a long and sweaty afternoon so he took a hot shower. His dorm mates were just arriving when he emerged from the bathroom.

They clamoured around him, demanding him to tell them about Ron. He obliged but only after he was fully clad in his pajamas.

"Blimey," said Seamus. "Bulgarian firewhiskey. It is supposed to be one of the most potent drinks in the world, second only to the Russian firevodhka. And he drank half of it in one go?"

"Looks like it," said Harry, sitting on his bed. "I didn't see him drinking it. All that we saw was that the bottle he was holding was already half empty."

'Firewhiskey would burn down your throat if you're not careful," said Dean. "Are you sure he..."
didn't feel any of it?"

"Well, I have to ask him that when I see him tomorrow," said Harry.

"I wish I could have a go at it," said Seamus wistfully. "I heard some great things about it."

"Ernie McMillan told me he drank it once," said Harry. "He took just five sips. He ended up running around his house wearing only his underwear."

There was an explosion of laughter. Seamus himself rolled around his bed as he continued to laugh. It only died down a few minutes later.

"Seriously?" said Seamus, wiping his tears.

Harry chuckled. "I don't know if he was lying but I don't think he will make fun out of his own embarrassment."

"Now that made me want to try it even more," said Seamus. "Hey, Harry. You think you could ask Krum if he could spare a bottle for me?"

"Are you serious?"

Seamus nodded fervently.

"I don't think that's a good idea, Seamus. I already had a hard time explaining to Madam Pomfrey regarding Ron. She threatened to bring me and Krum to Dumbledore, you know."

"I won't tell anyone. I promise."

"I don't know..."

"Oh come on, Harry. Just a bottle."

Harry looked at Seamus exasperatedly. He then sighed. "I'll see what I can do. No guarantee though."

"Awesome! Don't worry. I'll keep your secret, Harry."

Harry just shook his head.

They continued to chat for the next hour. His dorm mates asked him the update about the eventual friendly between Durmstrang and Gryffindor and whether he got any response from Oliver. Harry said there was no response yet but he told them that he would expect Oliver to give his answer anytime that week. If Oliver could not make it, they probably have to start auditioning a new keeper.

The light went out exactly at 11.30pm.

In the darkness, Harry lied on his bed, staring at the darkened ceiling. There was no snoring that night. That night, the snoring would only happen within the hospital wing. Poor Madam Pomfrey.


Fleur.

He suddenly remembered the note the Ravenclaw girl gave to him. He kept the note inside the drawer of his bedside table. He reached out to the drawer and fished the note out.

"Lumos."

With help of the illumination provided by his wand, he began unfolding the note. It was short, neatly written in French. It came from the Beauxbaton. The writing however, was not Fleur's.

He began to read:-

Dear Harry,

We would like to invite you for a coffee this weekend Saturday at around 4.00pm at our carriage. We hope you will accept it. Please send your reply as soon as possible.

Cassandra.

P/s: You can send your reply using owls.
Harry smiled and shook his head. Looks like he would have a very busy weekend after all. He would accept their invitation. He wanted to apologize to Fleur anyway and the invitation can serve its purpose for that. He carefully folded the note and returned it into the drawer. He would write to them tomorrow.

He decided that he wanted to have a really good sleep that night. No dreams. No nightmares whatsoever. And the only way to do that was to block Voldemort out of his mind. But before that, he took a dip into the Dark Lord’s mind. He saw that he was still there, sitting on the same armchair facing the same fireplace. Satisfied, Harry pulled out of Voldemort’s mind and immediately applied Occlumency.

He slept soundly that night. There was no dream of Voldemort. Instead, he dreamt of someone else:-

**The dream…**

He was standing in a small grassy field overlooking a green valley nestled between the low, grain-covered mountains. The sun hung low in the sky; casting streamers of pink and orange along the horizon.

And then he saw her.

Fleur.

She wasn’t wearing her Beauxbaton uniform. In fact, she wasn’t even the seventeen years old girl he now sees every day. Her face, her body, her hair; it all looked the same as the Fleur he met that night at Elysee Palace. She wore a laced sky blue evening dress that as before, matched her eyes. But this time around, the dress had a low cut around her neck, revealing tantalizing hints of her cleavage. As before, she had hair worked free. The soft wind blew her hair around. Her hands were long and slender, strong and artistic. Her nails were painted a faint shade of blue that complement but could never compete with the bright blue of her eyes.

This was an adult Fleur and she was lovely. She was the Fleur of his wildest dream.

And she was smiling at him. It was an unfeigned smile of genuine pleasure, causing crinkles around her eyes and faint dimples on her cheeks.

She was happy.

Now he saw himself in the dream, a him to match her. Harry Potter as he might have been in happier times. His hair was longer and was just as messy as it had always been. It was short enough to keep out of his eyes but long enough in the back to touch the collar of his shirt. Beard stubbles adorned his face. He was wearing a white, long-sleeves buttoned shirt and a long light brown pleated pants. He found that he did not wear any glasses.

But he did not care.

Approaching Fleur, he held out one hand, palm up. She smiled and blushed a little bit, and placed her hand atop his. He then led her a few steps away and she turned to face him. He bowed and she curtsied and they both came together. With their hands clasped and extended to the side and their other hands wrapped around each other’s waist, they began to dance.

They danced, they twirled and they dipped to the music that suddenly came out of nowhere. He did not recognize the music but strangely enough, it brought in happy memories. Memories of when they both were properly together. And dancing to it with Fleur only added to them, leaving him warm and content.

The music then shifted, slowing. Fleur stepped in close, her arms rising to wrap loosely around his neck. His own hands shifted to settle around her waist, clasped at the small of her back. They were doing a little more than swaying to the rhythm, occasionally shuffling a step forward or back, right or left. Their eyes were locked together and hers were twinkle with happiness, arousal and… something else.

Mischief.

Her hips brushed against him as they took a step. Her chest rubbed against his as he stepped forward and she did not bother to step back as quickly. Somehow, it was as if she was longing for their bodies to connect repeatedly, though always in innocent and seemingly accidental ways. And all the time her face bore the look of calm enjoyment. Her eyes though, told a completely different story.

She was toying with him.

He could not stand it any longer. He tightened his arms around her, preventing her from moving away and leaned in close. Her eyes widened slightly but he knew she was not
surprised at all. Her lips parted and her chin tilted slightly so that her mouth met his. Their lips brushed, gently at first, then pressed together more firmly as they both gave in to the passion they felt. It was gentle and it was sweet and it was demanding; leaving a powerful hint of what might follow. And for a second after they pulled apart, Harry could not think, could not blink and he could barely breathe for wanting her.

Fleur suddenly pulled back and broke free of his arms. She was smirking and with a quick, sly look, she took off running, forcing him to go after her. He did so happily, laughing at the sheer joy of it all. The feel of wind through his hair and the sight of her before him, her silvery blonde hair streaming about her; he loved it all.

She was quick but he was taller. His longer strides ate up the distance, closing the gap until finally he reached close enough to catch her wrist. The sudden shift in her balance caused her to stumble. He bumped into her, sending them both toppling to the ground together. They landed on soft grass, amused and unhurt. Fleur struggled to free herself, twisting her hand this way and that but to no avail. She was laughing the whole time, and so was he.

At last she finally gave up trying to escape. She changed her tack suddenly and shouldered him aside causing him to topple onto his back. Then she rolled over onto him, forcing air out of his lung. While he lay there trying to catch his breath, Fleur managed to pull her wrist loose and broke free.

"Hah!" she shouted triumphantly, raising her hands away from him, keeping them from his grasp.

She sat on top of him with her crotch positioned oh so near to his most sensitive point. She then gently pushed him back against the ground. With both of her hands still on his chest, she lowered her lips to his.

Harry woke up that morning. The taste of her kiss lingered on his lips.

To be continued...

A/n: I already know the last chapter can be quite controversial even before I wrote it. I decided to go with it anyway.

Now a little titbit about Trelawney. Yeah I know she was practically useless in the books. Don't tell me that I did not know about that. The decision stemmed from one scene within the GoF book. If you guys remembered the scene where Ron mentioned the word Uranus, Trelawney immediately snapped and turned into something not unlike McGonagall. Clearly Ron had touched someone’s nerve. And why would she be too sensitive about that? I mean she had always been painfully oblivious to anything, right? I'll let you guys figure it out.

Anyway, so here it is. Enjoy.
18. Chapter 18

Chapter 17

His bedside clock showed 5.30am.

The rest of his dorm mates were still sleeping. There was no loud snoring however. At first he thought that Ron had woke up much earlier than him before he remembered that the ginger was still stuck at the hospital wing.

It was still dark. It took a little bit of time before his eyes could adjust itself to the surrounding and for the next few minutes, he just laid there in the warm comfort of his bed, gazing the ceiling of his four posters bed.

His mind raced towards the dream he had earlier.

He could still feel her touches on various part of his body. His hand reached up towards his lips. The taste of her kiss was still there. He even could almost smell the sweet scent of her fragrance. It felt so vivid. It felt so real that he began to wonder if it was just a dream after all. In his long years of living, not once he ever experienced something such as that before.

One thing that he could agree upon though, whether it was a dream or not, it did made him feel happy. So happy that it felt like the weight of the whole world lifted off his shoulder.

He rose and sat on his bed. He could sleep no more. He felt like he wanted to look forward for something that day. The only thing was, he did not know what.

Deciding that it would be pointless to continue lying on the bed, he got off and took his towel and walked towards the bathroom. He came out after performing the usual morning ritual, get dressed in his school uniform and headed down towards the common room.

Crookshanks was the only other occupant within the common room. The squashed-face ginger cat was curling right in front of the fireplace. His head shot up when he heard footsteps. He went back to his original routine when he saw who was coming.

Harry went towards his usual desk. He remembered that there was a letter that needed to be replied. He took out a piece of parchment and a quill from his bag and placed them on the desk right in front of him. He then sat. Dabbing the tip of the quill into a bottle of ink, he began to write:-

Dear Cassandra,

I thank you for the invitation.

He suddenly remembered that he also had a promise with Viktor on the very same day. Of course Viktor had yet to confirm whether or not it’s a go. The Bulgarian Seeker however was adamant that he will get the permission so the only question would be the time of the invitation. He wondered what he would do if both Cassandra and Viktor’s invitation clashed. He could not found the solution after a few minutes of thinking so he decided to put his dilemma into writing, hoping the Cassandra will understand. Viktor will of course be informed when he met him at breakfast. He resumed his writing:-

I would like to state that Viktor Krum had also invited me for a tour of the Durmstrang ship on the very same day and his invitation came earlier than yours. He had yet told me the time but I had already promised him that I will accept. If it happens and his schedule clashes with yours, I would have no choice but to say no to your invitation. I’m sorry but promise is a promise. However, I will speak to him on this matter. If his schedule doesn't clash, I will of course accept your invitation.

I hope that this new piece of information won’t change anything. I promise you that I’m not a spy. I certainly won’t do anything that will undermine either the Beauxbaton or the Durmstrang. I hope that you and Madame Maxime will understand. I will come as a friend and I will leave as a friend.

I will confirm my answer as fast as I can and once again, thank you for the invitation. Sincerely yours,

Harry James Potter.

P/s: Send my regards to Fleur. Tell her that I apologize for my behaviour earlier.

He reread the letter several times until he satisfied. He then folded the letter and put it into his pocket. He planned to stop by at the Owelry on the way to breakfast.
He went to sit at his favourite armchair right next to the fireplace. Crookshanks joined him a few minutes later. The cat jumped into his lap and curled comfortably on it. He purred out a storm as Harry began scratching the back of his ears.

"You like that, huh?" said Harry, smiling.

The ginger cat just continued to purr.

The common room began to fill up as the sun rises. At fifteen minutes after seven, Hermione came down from her dormitory. She gave a look of surprise when she saw Harry was already there.

"Good morning, Harry," she greeted him. "You're up early." She then noticed her cat, curling comfortably on Harry's lap. "Hi, Crookshanks."

The cat meowed back at her.

"Mornin', Mione," Harry greeted her back. He took Crookshanks off his lap and placed the cat on the floor. "Ready for breakfast?"

"Yeah," said Hermione as she lugged her bag over her shoulder. "Where's Ron—oh I forgot. He's at the hospital wing." She immediately corrected herself when she noticed the odd look Harry gave her.

Harry just shook his head. He copied Hermione and the two of them left the common room right after that.

"So I was thinking that maybe we could do a quick visit to Ron after History of Magic and—"

She suddenly realised that Harry was steering her through a different route than usual.

"Where are we going?"

"I need to make a stop," said Harry to Hermione. "I have a letter need to be sent."

"To Sirius?"

"No," said Harry. "To the Beauxbaton."

"Beauxbaton?"

"More specifically, to one of their champion's friends. I got an invitation from them. They invited me to their carriage this Saturday," explained Harry.

"Seriously? And Madame Maxime allows this?" said Hermione perplexed, her eyebrows cocked.

Harry shrugged. "I think so. Why else would they do that? They even set the time. The only thing left now would be my answer."

"Hmm, I thought they would prefer to be more secretive. Beauxbaton, like Durmstrang, is well known to be highly competitive, you know. I don't think they want anyone else to know their secrets," said Hermione thoughtfully. "So are you saying yes to the invitation?"

"I haven't decided on that."

"Haven't?"

Harry nodded. "Well, here's the thing. Viktor had also invited me for a tour on his ship on the very same day as the Beauxbaton's invitation. He had yet to set the time but I'm confident enough that it will happen. His invitation came earlier, you know." Harry took out the folded letter from his pocket and showed it to a thunderstruck Hermione. "This is just a letter of explanation just in case I have to reject the Beauxbaton's invitation."

"You got invitation from Viktor too?"

"Yeah," nodded Harry. "He invited me yesterday. He said that Ron could come too."

"Hmm, I always wondered what's the inside of their ship looks like," said Hermione. "You're lucky Harry. Not only that you could observe the Durmstrang, you could also see the inside of the Beauxbaton's carriage too. I don't think any other outsiders would get that chance."

"Viktor told me that it's like a submarine. Very simple," said Harry. "I could ask Viktor if you could come too if you want."

Hermione however shook her head. "That's okay, Harry. You don't have to."
"I already told him that I’ll invite him and his friends into the Gryffindor Tower so I don’t think adding just another visitor to their ship would pose any problem to them. I have yet asked McGonagall though."

"I don’t think McGonagall will agree, Harry," stated Hermione. "You know the rules. Even members from other houses are not allowed to enter our tower."

"Yes I know the rules," said Harry. "but if the Beauxbaton and the Durmstrang are willing to bend their rules in order to let me into their sanctuary, why won’t she? The carriage and the ship are just an extension of their school, right? Don’t worry, Hermione. I’ll talk to her. I’ll make her see reasons. And I’m sure Dumbledore won’t mind as well."

Hermione said no more.

They finally reached the Owelry. Hedwig immediately flew to him and perched on his arm the moment she saw her.

"Hey girl," greeted Harry as he continuously stroked her. "Are you sure you want this job? The recipient is just down there, you know. It’s not that far."

Hedwig gave out an indignant hoot but nevertheless, she held out her feet.

Harry recognized that hoot. "Sorry Hedwig," said Harry as he tied the letter onto her feet. "I really don’t have any letter need sending that far. I know you've been hankering to stretch out your wings but for now this will do."

He then carried the snowy owl towards one of the windows. "Go, girl."

And Hedwig took off, stretching her wings and glided effortlessly through the cold morning air towards the Beauxbaton carriage down below.

"You know you could just pass the letter by hand to them," stated Hermione, amused as they continued their journey towards the Great Hall.

"Yeah, I know," said Harry. "But they told me that I could use an owl and honestly, I don’t really want to create a scene. You know how much the Beauxbaton, especially the girls, attracted attention. Anyway, Hedwig does need the exercise."

"That’s what you get for being pretty, I guess. A whole lot of them are," said Hermione.

"You’re pretty too, Hermione."

"No, I’m not!"

"Yes, you are."

"If this is just your feeble attempt in jacking me up Mr. Harry James Potter, it doesn’t work! You still need to do your own homework!"

"I’m just being honest. You just don’t know that yet," said Harry. He wondered if he should tell her about the upcoming Yule Ball. After careful consideration, he decided that it would best for the girl to know about it on her own.

The pair arrived at the Great Hall a few minutes later. It was already packed with students. The whole lot of them were still groggy. As always, they both went to sit at their usual place. Viktor Krum and the rest of the Durmstrang students were already there.

"Good morning, Harry," greeted Viktor.


"You look happy," said Viktor. "Anything I should know of?"

Harry just smiled. His mind wandered off momentarily towards the dream he had that night. "I’m just feeling great today, Viktor."

Viktor smiled and nodded. "Vell, good for you. Listen, I have yet asked Professor Karkaroff about this Saturday. I will ask him later."

"That’s okay, Viktor. No need to rush," said Harry as he liberally plied his toast with butter and took a bite off it. "It's Tuesday. It's still early. Anyway, just so you know, I also got invitation from the Beauxbaton to visit their carriage, also this Saturday. I hope that it won't clash with yours."

Viktor gave out a look of surprise. "They invited you too?"
Harry nodded. "Yeah. I haven't made my decision though. I already told them about it so I guess we'll just have to wait and see. But don't worry. If the invitations clashed, I'll put yours on top of the list. You're the first to invite me after all."

Viktor nodded.

"Hermione," said Ginny who was at that point was sitting next to Dean. "You're blushing ever since you got here. Is something wrong?"

Hermione looked up towards Ginny. She was indeed blushing furiously ever since Harry said she was pretty. Somehow what Harry said about her stuck in her head especially given the way he was saying it. "Erm... nothing, Ginny."

"You're really okay, Hermione?" asked Harry this time. "Never seen you're blushing like that before."

"Yes, Harry. I'm fine," said Hermione exasperatedly. "Please, just don't worry about it."

Harry decided not to press further. He knew Hermione won't like it. He turned towards Viktor once again. "Anyway, we're visiting Viktor after second period right before lunch. Wanna come?"

Viktor however shook his head. "No, I can't. I have schedules of my own at lunch but I vill visit him after breakfast. I'm planning to give him this potion. It vill help him with the hangover."

Viktor took out a small vial containing greenish clear liquid and showed it to Harry.

"Will it work?" asked Harry curiously.

"It wark for us," said Viktor, pocketing the vial. "It vill work on him."

Harry nodded. He made a mental note of asking Viktor the recipe for that potion. He might have quite a hand in Potion, as he found out during his auror training, it will bring him no harm in learning more.

"Well in that case, send Ron our regard, Viktor. Tell him that we'll visit him after our second period," he said.

"Vill do," assured Viktor.

Harry loved and hated History of Magic. He loved the soothing lullaby of Professor Binn's voice that never failed to transport him to the dream's nirvana. On the other hand, listening to Professor Binn talking about the Goblin War over and over again made him wanted to slit his own throat. He was pretty sure there was a lot more to Wizarding history than just goblins. The only person who appeared to be immune to all that was Hermione.

"Do we have time-," said Hermione after they exited Professor Binn's class.

"No," Harry immediately cut her off. He knew what she was going to ask. "The hospital wing is on the other side of the castle. We won't make it back to the dungeon in time. I'm not really interested in making Snape angry this early morning. We'll visit Ron after Snape's class ended."

Hermione went quiet.

The Slytherins were already waiting for Professor Snape when Harry and the Gryffindorians arrived. Malfoy as always sneered at him whenever Harry appeared within his view. As always, Harry just kept cool and ignored him. Daphne was there as well though Harry could not help but notice that she somehow was trying to distance herself from the Parkinson Gang.

The door into the dungeon flew open. As always like an overgrown bat, Snape stood there staring menacingly towards them.

"Get in."

They were going to make the Deflating Draught that day. As usual, Snape would do a little bit of explanation on the potion they were going to make, pointed out to where the ingredients were stored and told them to get to work.

And as before, Professor Snape could not find any fault on the way Harry worked and the eventual result that came from it. By the end of the class, Harry managed to produce a clear gray liquid, a signature of a perfectly brewed Deflating Draught potion. The only other person who managed quite the same result was Hermione. She did though finished a bit later than him.

"Potter." Snape called out to him at the end of his class. "See me before you go."
Harry told Hermione to wait for him outside the class. Hermione nodded and made her way out of the dungeon.

Harry approached Snape's table. "Professor?"

Snape said nothing at first. Instead, he took out a vial of clear liquid and handed it over to Harry. Harry took it. "What's this?" he asked.

"A cure for hangover," said Snape. "Give it to your friend when you visit him."

Harry just stared at Snape in a complete disbelieve. Snape trying to help Ron?

"Sir?"

"I heard what happened to Weasley. You know the rules, Potter. Both you and Weasley are liable for detention but I'm going to let it slip this time. Don't do it again," said Snape sternly.

Question upon question came into his mind. Snape's action was certainly not what he would have expected given the attitude the Potion master had always shown towards both of them before. At the same though, something told him that it would be best for him to also let it slip, at least for now. There will be time for questions and answers later on.

"Of course, professor," said Harry, pocketing the vial.

Snape looked deep into his eyes. "You're going to be late for your lunch. You're dismissed," he finally said. Snape then rose from his chair and walked to the nearest potions cabinet.

Without further ado, Harry turned around and exited the dungeon.

"So what does he want?" asked Hermione.

The pair was now on their way to the hospital wing.

"He gave me this," said Harry. He fished the vial Snape gave him out of his pocket and showed it to Hermione. "It's for Ron."

Hermione took it and began examining the clear liquid. "What's this for?"

"Cure for hangover," answered Harry. "Or so he said. He told me to give it to Ron."

Hermione cocked an eyebrow. "He knew?"

Harry nodded. "Apparently yes. And if he knew, everyone else must have known it as well. He even knew that I'm involved in it and told me that I and Ron are liable for detention."

"Detention?!" frowned Hermione. "Owh Harry, I knew this will come to bite you in the end. You know you haven't got any detention last year. I thought you're keen to keep the record for this year. Oh well. At least Ron won't be alone this time."

Harry just smirked and shook his head.

"What?" asked Hermione.

"Relax Hermione. Snape didn't put us in detention."

"But you said!"

"I said me and Ron are liable for detention. I didn't say that we both got detention. Snape just gave us verbal warning this time. Come to think of it, that's a first," said Harry thoughtfully.

"Be it as it may, you both still need to be careful," said Hermione sternly. "Snape might really give you detention the very next time."

Harry just shrugged.

Hospital wing, a few minutes later...

Ron beamed at them the moment he saw them entered the ward.

"I thought you both would visit me sooner," he said, grinning widely.

"Oh Ron, we really want to but we can't. You know how packed our schedule this morning," said Hermione as she put her down her bag and sat on one of the available chair. "How are you feeling?"
"I feel great actually," said Ron happily. "Never been better. Hey Harry!"

Well he is unusually happy, thought Harry. He wondered if Viktor's remedy had anything to do with it. "Hey Ron. So did Viktor visit you this morning?"

"Yeah!" he suddenly scrunched his face. "I think so. I can't remember. I think I was still sleeping, I don't know. I do remember someone came in. A lot of people came in actually. Maybe I was still groggy at that time. Yeah I had a splitting headache, I think. I thought I see someone, really tall, really manly, and he tried to talk to me. I can't remember what he said but I think he apologized to me. Yeah he apologized to me but I can't remember. Then I drank something. I can't remember what I drank but it was something greenish but I forgot about it but then I went to sleep and then I woke up and feeling great and you both came in and I greet you Hermione and after that I greeted you Harry and you asked me how I feel and I said I'm feeling great and you asked about Viktor and I told you I forgot everything and..."

And Ron kept talking and talking. And he did not stop at all.

Both Harry and Hermione looked at each other. Harry had a hunch of what really had happened. It was the side effect of Viktor's potion. It did cure Ron's hangover. However at the same time, it introduced something else in return.

Hermione was still clasping the vial Harry gave her. "Should we give it to him?" she asked.

Harry stared at Ron, who at that time was still talking, non-stop.

"Best we don't," he said to Hermione. "This is probably Viktor's antidote side effect. We don't know what will happen if Snape's and Viktor's potion clash. Better to wait until the side effect wear off. By the way, I didn't see... oh, here she comes."

Harry was about to search for Madam Pomfrey when the venerable Hogwarts' nurse suddenly emerged from her office. She came marching towards them, carrying a tray of potions.

"How is he?" Madam Pomfrey asked just as she arrived. She did not really need an answer though.

"Hi Madam Pomfrey! A wonderful day today is! And I'm already glad it's Sunday!" greeted Ron.

Both Harry and Hermione cringed in embarrassment at that.

Madam Pomfrey cocked her eyebrow and shook her head. "It's Tuesday, Mr. Weasley," she said.

"Really?! I thought it's Friday! How delightful!"

Madam Pomfrey once again shook her head. She sighed. "I knew I shouldn't have let that boy administered that antidote of his," she muttered as she placed the tray she was carrying on the bedside table. "I told him not to but he was persistent. Told me that it will clear out the hangover in a jiffy. Well it did. Mr. Weasley was all moaning and groaning the moment he woke up this morning. I had to put an ice pack on top of his head to reduce the headache. He vomited thrice within the space of five minutes. Then that Durmstrang champion and his friends came to visit. He administered that potion and Mr. Weasley immediately went back to sleep after that. Never knew he would wake up to this."

"Will he be alright?" asked Hermione.

"He will be alright, don't you worry about it," said Madam Pomfrey impatiently. "But he will have to stay here until the side effect wear off. Too much happiness can be dangerous."

Hermione nodded. She suddenly remembered something. "Professor Snape gave Harry this." She showed the vial of clear liquid to Madam Pomfrey. "He told him to give it to Ronald. He said it will help with the hangover."

Madam Pomfrey cocked her eyebrows. "Did he now? Well it's too late for that. His hangover had been cured. Now it's something else. You can keep the vial, Miss Granger. Who knows you might need it during your next Hogsmeade visit."

Both Hermione and Harry stayed for the next fifteen minutes before their stomach reminded them of its needs.

"SEND MY LOVE TO DRACO MALFOY! TELL HIM I MISSED HIM SO MUCH!" called out Ron just as they exited the hospital wing.

"Did he really say that?" asked Hermione as they walked towards the Great Hall for lunch.
"Yes he did."

Viktor was nowhere around during the lunch, just as Harry expected. The rest of the Durmstrang were at the Great Hall though. He was still curious though.

"Where's Viktor?" he asked Alexander Stukov.

"He's with our headmaster," said Alex. "They are having a meeting, I think."

Harry nodded. "I see."

Harry looked over towards the Ravenclaw table. Apart from a few Beauxbaton male students, Fleur and the rest of the females were not there.

Harry and the rest of year four Gryffindor did not have any classes after lunch. Hermione beckoned Harry to join her at the library. Thinking that he did not really have anything else to do that afternoon, he obliged. Besides, they could make a stop at the hospital wing on their way back to the Gryffindor Tower.

There were not many students with the exceptions of a few seventh years' students doing their studies within the library. It was still considered early semester for the rest. Hermione and Harry found the most secluded corner of the library, put down their bags, took out their quills, ink and parchments and began to do their homework.

One and a half hours went past when, much to Harry’s surprise, Hermione closed her books, packed her quills and her inks and put them in her bag.

"You're done?" asked Harry.

"Nope. I have other things to do."

Without offering further explanations, she took out her knitting set and began to knit what unmistakably seen as a pair of socks. Harry already knew what the pair of socks was for.

"You made them for the house elves." That was not a question.

Hermione paused and stared at Harry. A few moments later she resumed her knitting.

"Yes."

"How many have you done?"

"Including this?" she gestured at the one she was making. "Four pairs."

"And how many have you distributed to the house elves?" asked Harry.

Hermione paused the second time. The way she looked at Harry it was as if he had grown four heads.

"I'm not going to distribute the socks, Harry," she said, "The house elves, they won't take it. I'm going to hide them at places where I know they will accidentally find them."

Ah, typical Hermione, he thought. Just like the old Hermione he left behind.

"And how many have you put in place?"

"Zero," came the short answer. "I'm going to wait until I have ten pair of these."

Harry nodded.

Yes. Hermione was absolutely right. The house elves would not take them. Heck, they would not even take the socks that were lying around once they knew what the socks were for. However, someone probably will take them eventually.

Dobby.

Dobby!

Harry suddenly remembered. Dobby was here at Hogwarts and he was still alive. He immediately made a mental note to visit the house elf at the kitchen when he got the chance.

The pair left the library at exactly 5.00pm. During their time at the library, Hermione managed to finish knitting two pairs of socks. Now she needed another five pairs to go before
the second phase of her plan could be put into action. They made a stop at the hospital wing. Ron was sleeping at that time. Madam Pomfrey told them that Ron can be discharge by tonight or latest by early tomorrow morning if his prognosis was favorable. They stayed for the next fifteen minutes before they headed back to the Tower.

The Entrance Hall would mostly be deserted at this time. Everyone would already be at their house room or dormitory, relaxing, showering and getting ready for dinner that night. However, just as the pair approached the hall this time around, they heard a commotion.

The pair watched Daphne as she marched towards the stairs that lead to the school ground. Draco Malfoy was tailing her. Crabbe and Goyle meanwhile followed him from behind.

"Why Potter?! Why not me?!" shouted Malfoy to her.

"I don't know what you were talking about, Draco!" said Daphne dismissively as she continued to walk. Not once she looked back at the boy who was following her.

"Oh I think you do!" said Malfoy. "I saw you, Daphne. I saw you hold his hand in class. What? Are you attracted to him? What did Potter have that I don't? I'm far richer than him. I'm pure blooded. I came from a noble stock! You're better off with me than with him."

"Perhaps that is why I didn't like you!"

"Bollocks!" said Malfoy heatedly. "I don't believe you!"

He grabbed Daphne's arm, intending for her to face him. That was a bad move. Daphne yanked her arm out of his grasp, took out her wand and pointed it to between Malfoy's eyes.


Malfoy however was unmoved. He just laughed derisively. "What are you going to do? Throw a curse at me? Go ahead and see where it leads you. You know Professor Snape is going to know about this. Pansy too will know. No one is going to be your friend, Daphne. Unless of course if you're willing to do what I say. What do you have to lose?"

Daphne slowly lowered her wand.

Malfoy smirked. He slowly approached her, intending to grab her arm or whatever it was her body part he fancied.

But just as he thought that the girl was willing to give it all up and deliver herself to him, Daphne suddenly raised back her wand. A white bluish flare erupted from the opposite end of her wand and hit Malfoy squarely in the face.

Malfoy went down, crumpled on the floor and went unconscious.

Daphne looked momentarily at the unconscious figure that was now lying on the floor in front of her with extreme disgust. "My dignity. My sense of self respect. Those are the things that I will lose if I ended up with you," she muttered.

Without another word, she made a heel turn and continued her way towards the Entrance Hall's exit.

Little did she realise that two wands were now trained at her back.

"OH NO YOU DON'T!"

She turned around, only to see two wands flew high up in the air and landed on the hand of one very angry Harry Potter.

"Cowards!" growled Harry. He had his own wand pointed towards Crabbe and Goyle who were now wandless and cowering with fear. "Like Moody, one thing that I hate is when one attack when the others had their back turned against them."

He gestured them towards the unconscious Malfoy. "Grab him. Take him to the hospital wing. Now!"

Goyle, trying to recover any slice of bravery he had left, sneered at Harry. "Why should we listen to you?!

"Because I have these." Harry gestured towards the pair of wands he was holding. "I'm more than willing to break them in half right in front of you," he said with no small amount of satisfaction upon seeing the horror now plastered on both Crabbe and Goyle's faces. "Moody turned your boss into a ferret. I'm going to turn you both into a pair of skunk if you refused to do what I said."
Both Crabbe and Goyle immediately grabbed Malfoy's arms and put them around their neck. And as they made their way towards the hospital wing, Harry called them back. "Hey! You forgot these!" He threw the wands right back at them. It landed right at their feet. "You're not going to tell Madam Pomfrey what had happened. You're going to make up stories and those should not involve her," he said, pointing towards Daphne who was watching the scene unfold a few feet away from him. "You hear me?"

Both boys nodded fervently.

"Now go! And don't look back!"

Crabbed crouched and took the wands. He gave Harry one fearful look and immediately left with Goyle and the unconscious Malfoy.

Daphne simply stared at Harry. Her expression softened as their eyes met. She was about to walk up to him when she saw Hermione standing nearby, watching her.

Harry gave Daphne a nod. He then gestured Hermione to follow him. The pair continued their journey towards the Gryffindor Tower, leaving Daphne behind, watching them.

"You know Crabbe and Goyle definitely won't do what you said," said Hermione.

Harry just smiled. "Of course I know. Let us see if Malfoy would be willing to admit to the whole school that he was beaten by a girl the second time."

Hermione, upon remembering the smack she gave Malfoy during their third year, smirked.

Daphne will lose some of her friends. That would be certain. But something tells him that she would not be alone.

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**Two days later...**

Ron was discharged before lunch on Wednesday after Madam Pomfrey satisfied that he no longer displayed any unusual behaviour resulting from the side effect of Viktor's antidote. He did complaint incessantly about having Malfoy as his ward mate though. Madam Pomfrey had set Malfoy's bed next to him.

"You know to whose face I woke up to this morning?! Malfoy!" he grumbled.

Harry did not see much of Viktor and Fleur for the next couple of days at the Great Hall. And strangely enough, Daphne as well. He did see her during the classes though. This time around, she had taken to throw him a smile or two whenever he appeared within her vicinity.

As expected, rumour flew of Daphne's being expelled from Parkinson's gang. She seemed to be unfazed about it. And as Harry expected, she did however retained some of the friendships she had with other Slytherins. Apparently not all Slytherins were like minded. It was something Harry was well aware of. A blonde haired girl still follows her around like always. He came to know that the girl's name was Tracy Davis, also a fourth year student.

As for Malfoy, no story of him being beaten by Daphne ever came out.

Thursday came. Angelina came to Harry during breakfast. She was carrying a letter.

"It's from Oliver," she said as she passed the letter to him. "It came last night."

Harry took it. He had yet read the letter but he knew from her crestfallen expression, the news won't be good.

"I figure that we could not get him?" he said as he began to unfold the letter.

Angelina just shook her head. "Read that, Harry. Tonight we're going to have a meeting. Common room right after dinner."

Harry nodded. He then began to read:-

**Dear Angelina,**

**Seriously?! A match between Gryffindor and Durmstrang and Viktor Krum will be playing as well?! It looks like I have taken the wrong year to graduate.**

Thank you for telling me this. You know I really want to play. I really do but at the moment, I can't. As you know I'm playing for Puddlemere United. The league is coming so the coach can't spare any of us. I tried to reason with him. I told him that
Viktor Krum will be playing as well. You know what he told me?

"Viktor Krum is just a Quidditch player who got lucky during the World Cup!"

I did a little bit of digging and got to know that he lost thousands of galleons within the World Cup betting and he blamed the Bulgarian team for it.

It looks like that you have to get a new keeper soon and that keeper has to be really good. The Durmstrang Quidditch team is not to be trifled with. They could beat quite a few national teams with ease. Train hard and try to come up with good strategies. I will try to dig out as much as I can about the Durmstrang team and the way they play. I'll get back to you later on that.

Anyway, good luck. If Puddlemere's match doesn't clash, I will be there to watch you guys play against the Durmstrang. And last but not least send my regards to everyone within our team.

Yours,

Oliver Wood.

"So, he said no?" asked Ron who was watching the exchange between him and Angelina.

Harry shook his head. "Yeah. Unfortunately." He then passed the letter to Ron.

Seamus who was reading the letter over Ron's shoulder asked, "So, what now?"

"Don't know," said Harry. "We're going to hold a meeting later tonight. We'll see what our options are."

Seamus just nodded.

Transfiguration that morning ran without a hitch, at least for him and Hermione. They were learning on how to transfigure a Guinea Fowl into a Guinea Pig. That would be the last topic they will learn before the holidays. They will start on cross species transfiguration during the next semester.

And as before, Professor McGonagall was pleased with Harry and Hermione, especially with Harry who managed to transfigure his Guinea Fowl perfectly in one try.

The Gryffindorians had a free period after that. Harry and the rest decided to spend that time holding up inside their common room. He and Ron watched Hermione knitting socks with amusement. Harry had of course told Ron about her scheme. Ron just shook his head. He had given up arguing with Hermione, something in which Harry indicated as a first.

Lunch time came and went. They were now heading towards the Defense against the Dark Art class. Something took the Gryffindorians by surprise the moment they walked into the classroom.

The Beauxbaton students were already there.

To be continued...

A/n: The term 'Gryffindorians' was something I coined myself. Of course it won't be found within the books and movies. As for the suggestion to visit Perdue Online Writing Lab, I will look into it. Thanks for the suggestion.

Hmm... there's nothing much I can say this time around so as always, hope you guys will enjoy this chapter and please leave a review or two on your way out.
They paused at the entrance into the classroom. The presence of the Beauxbaton's students within Moody's classroom was something they did not expect. There were whispers circulating among themselves, all of it pertaining to the question of why the foreign students were there in the first place.

"What are they doing here?" whispered Dean to Harry.

"Dunno," replied Harry. He too wondered on what a bunch of seventh year foreign students were doing inside that classroom.

The Beauxbaton themselves looked back at the now stunned Gryffindorians. Fleur was amongst them. Her eyes found Harry and she nodded at him. He nodded back at her and suddenly realized that she at that time was sitting at his regular seat.

"They took our seats, Harry," whispered Ron as he tried very hard to tear his eyes away from Fleur. Apparently, Fleur’s mere presences still affected him so much. "Well, most of our seats anyway."

"Yeah I kinda saw that," said Harry.

Ron was right. The foreign students did take the majority of the seats regularly occupied by the Gryffindorians. Strangely enough, they did not take any of the seats usually occupied by the Slytherins.

"Well we can't take the ones the Slytherins always use, can we?" said Seamus, as he looked around. Several Gryffindorians whose seats had yet being taken had already claimed theirs, leaving a good few including Harry seatless.

Harry was about to reply to him when the entrance to the classroom burst open. The Slytherins had arrived.

Malfoy eyed the Gryffindorians who had yet taken their seats. His eyes were reduced to a slit. "What are you all?" His question was left hanging when he saw the Beauxbaton's student. He immediately froze when he saw Fleur. His mouth hanged opened and he started to drool. Luckily enough that did not happened for long. Parkinson who stood beside him immediately pulled him away and slapped him. Malfoy immediately woke up from his stupor and stared at Parkinson. His face reddened when he realized what she did and was about scold her when Parkinson spoke coldly, “You looked like a complete idiot, Draco! You were staring at her! And you drooled!"

"I didn't!" replied Malfoy hotly.

"Oh yeah?!” Using her handkerchief, Parkinson wiped some of the saliva from Malfoy's shirt and showed it to him. "Unless someone else was drooling on you, Draco. Today you're going to sit with me. No arguments!"

The rest of the class watched the drama unveiled silently.

Parkinson pulled him towards the rearmost desk and forced Malfoy to sit beside her. "Find your own seat you worthless trolls!" she said towards Crabbe and Goyle. The two stared at her momentarily before they obliged.

From where he stood, Harry could see that moments ago, like Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle were also drooling. And so did the other male Slytherins. All of them seemed to have awoken from their stupor however. Harry could deduce the reason why. Fleur had turned her attention back towards the front of the class.

Still, the problem with the class seating remains. The Slytherins had taken their seats and given the unexpected change in the seating arrangement and for some reasons, Daphne ended up taking the seat closest to Fleur. Most of the Gryffindorians on the other hand were still standing.

Harry signalled his friends to take whatever seats that was still available while he attempted to find out what was really going on. He walked up towards Fleur. Cassandra was seating beside her, like always.

"Hi," he greeted Fleur.

Fleur looked up to him. "'Ello 'Arry Potter."
"So, are you staying or are you leaving?" he asked.

Fleur tilted her head a little and looked at him with amusement. "We 'ave just got 'ere, 'Arry. Why?"

Harry stared at her. "Really? You sure you got to the right classroom, Fleur?"

Fleur was about to answer when all of a sudden-

"Yes they came to the right place, Potter!"

Harry turned to look and saw Moody who was standing on the small balcony in front of the class, looking at him.

"Professor Mcgonagall sent them here," growled Moody as he began to traverse down the small spiral staircase. Once he reached at the bottom of the stair, he walked straight towards where Harry was standing. Harry could see his magical eye spinning relentlessly in its socket from that distance. "It came as a special request from Madame Maxime herself," continued Moody. "Do you have any problem with that, Potter?"

Harry shook his head. "No, sir."

"Then take your seat, son," said Moody as he made a heel turn and made his way towards the blackboard. "Class is about to start."

"There aren't enough seats, sir," said Harry.

Moody turned to look at him. But instead of replying to Harry, he took out his wand and flicked it. Several chairs appeared out of thin air. "There's your seat," said Moody as he stowed his wand back. "Four persons will share one long table each. This classroom isn't big enough for me to add more. Now be quick! I don't have all day!"

There were shuffling noises as the students rearranged their seating all by themselves. Harry took a chair and made his way towards the second last table from the rear where Ron, Hermione and Neville were waiting for him. He sat beside Ron. Hermione meanwhile sat between Ron and Neville. The seat arrangement was a little bit further back than what Harry would have like but at that moment, he really did not have any other choices.

Facing towards the front of the class, his view was dominated by the silky bluish colour of the Beauxbaton's uniform. He saw that several students were still busy rearranging their own seats. Then he saw Fleur, who was sitting two rows away from him at the front, glancing at him. His table was still occupied only by her and Cassandra.

There was something contained within the look she gave him though. He knew that look. He saw that before.

Fleur slowly turned her gaze towards Cassandra, who also at that time was staring at him. They both looked at each other momentarily before Fleur turned her attention to somewhere else.

More specifically to someone else. To Daphne, who was sitting at the table beside hers.

She gestured Daphne to join her. The Greengrass heir smiled and obliged. Daphne nudged Tracy and they both, each carrying their own chair, ended up sitting at the same table as Fleur and Cassandra.

Harry, dumbfounded, watched the whole thing unfolding. He saw Daphne talking to Fleur and from the way they both interacted; it was as if Daphne and Fleur had known each other for a long time. There was no indication, if any, that the conversation was between two people who had just met. And both girls were speaking in French too.

Harry however could not make any heads or tails on what they were speaking though despite his fluency in the language. The class was still a bit noisy.

He however could not dwell on that matter for long. As the noise finally died, Moody began his class.

"Alright!" he barked. "Be quiet now! Some of you might ask on why our guests ended up joining the rest of you within this class. Now I'm about to tell you. It seems that the Beauxbaton Academy lack one thing within their standard curriculum - the study of Dark Magic or more correctly, as your headmistress had mentioned, the defence against it. Am I right?"

All of the Beauxbaton students nodded.
At this point, Harry felt odd. He knew that Beauxbaton Academy did in fact teach its students defensive magic and they were pretty good at it. Back in the past, he witnessed their training and came away impressed despite the fact that the school did not delve much into the study of the Dark Arts. France had basically the lowest count of Dark Wizards in all of Europe. He was pretty sure that the current Beauxbaton Academy would still be the same as the one he left behind so what Madame Maxime said to Moody did not make any senses. He however remained quiet. He knew that he needed to know more.

"Well of course I am," continued Moody. "Among the three most prestigious schools in Europe, the Beauxbaton fared the worst when it come to defensive magic. I told your headmistress that all of you should be joining Hogwarts seventh year class but she insisted that you would be better off joining this class instead. She did not state the reason why, however. This is probably the oddest and craziest request anyone made out of me. It doesn't make sense at all."

Harry silently disagreed with Moody's notion that the French's magical institute was really bad at defensive magic. He however agreed with Moody's assessment that Fleur and her friends would be better off joining Hogwarts seventh year classes instead. After all, they were already seniors. That was indeed an unusual request given out by Madame Maxime.

But then the man, now standing in front of the classroom, was a Death Eater in disguise. He pretty sure that the real Moody would not think the same.

"Right. The fourth year had gone a bit farther in this class," said Moody, still addressing the Beauxbaton students. "At least in regard of the syllabus outlined specially for the fourth year. But all of you are seventh year students. I shall expect you to know more than your friends here. The Goblet of Fire won't pick someone who is wimpy." At this point, both his eyes fell on Fleur. He paused at her momentarily before continuing. "Be it as it may, Madame Maxime had ask me to put you into the fourth year class. If this class gets too boring for you just because you already know what I'm about to teach, don't blame me. Bring the matter up to your headmistress. I won't entertain any complaints. Now!"

Moody made a heel turn and walked towards the blackboard. "The fourth years had been given a little bit of an introduction on the Unforgivable Curse," he said as he began writing on the blackboard. After he finished writing, he threw the chalk onto the desk and took out the student's register and began to scan it. "Rafael Mercier!"

A blonde boy, sat right in front of Fleur slowly raised his hand. "Sir."

Moody nodded at him. "The Unforgivable Curse. How many are there and give me one."

"Zhere are three, sir," answered Mercier. "One of zhem iz zhe Imperius Curse."

"Good." Moody scanned the register the second time. "Camille. Camille Louise Moreau."

Camille who sat at the table adjoining Fleur spoke, "Zhe Cruciatuse Curse."

Moody nodded. "Correct."

But just as he went back to the register-

"Zhe Killing Curse!"

It came from Fleur Delacour. Unexpectedly.

Moody's eyes shot up. He stared at Fleur. Fleur looked back at him calmly.

"I didn't ask for you, Miss Delacour," said Moody. "But nevertheless, that is correct. You might want to put a little bit of restrain in your in-class-behaviour the next time however or I will be forced to report you to your headmistress. And there is no need to shout. I'm not deaf."

"My apology, sir," said Fleur.

From where he sat, Harry could see both Daphne and Cassandra putting their hands on Fleur's arms, as if they were trying to calm her down. He wondered on why they needed to do that.

Moody did not respond to Fleur's apology. He simply closed the register book and placed it back on the teacher's desk. He once again addressed the Beauxbaton lot. "Before you came to this school, I did a practical demonstration using each of Unforgivable Curse to the fourth years."

There were gasps coming in from the Beauxbaton students.

"Don't worry! Nobody's dead. At least not yet." At this point, Moody's magical eye glanced
momentarily at Harry before it swivelled to the other part of the class. “The fourth years already saw it all except you lot. I’m not going to redo the demonstration. As what the fourth years had shown me, some of you may not be able to take it too well and I’m not going to answer to Madame Maxime on what happened to her students. You will have to ask your friends what it feels like. I do hope that none of you will have to experience it however. CONSTANT VIGILANCE!” – nearly everyone jumped – “Those two words will be the key to your survival.”

Moody pointed towards the blackboard. “See what I wrote on the board? The Imperius Curse. Despite it being one of the Unforgivable Curse, unlike the other two, this is the only one that did not leave a long lasting effect on its victim. Unlike the Cruciatius that leaves it victims mentally scarred and the Killing Curse that leaves its victims dead, the victims of the Imperious Curse will usually return back to normal once the curse is lifted. Of course if it’s not done properly, it could mess with the victim’s mind.”

No shit, thought Harry. His memory flew back towards Mr. Crouch whom in his old timeline responded poorly to a badly executed Imperius Curse.

“So this is what we are going to do today,” continued Moody. “I am going to put each and every one of you in turn under the curse. Let see if any of you could resist it. Now stand up! All of you and gather at the back of the classroom.”

This announcement took everyone by surprise.

Except Harry. He simply stood up and walked towards the back of the classroom. The rest followed.

“But, but you said it is illegal,” said Hermione uncertainly. She stood up like everyone else. However unlike Harry and the rest, she remained at her seat. “You said to use it on other human was.”

“Dumbledore wants you taught what it feels like,” said Moody, his magical swivelled and fixed on her with an eerie, unblinking stare. "Now, if you rather learn it the hard way, fine by me. You’re dismissed. Off you go."

He pointed one gnarly finger to the door.

Hermione went very pink and muttered something about not meaning that she wanted to leave.

“No?” said Moody. "Then get your arse to the back of the class like everyone else. Quickly now! I don’t have all day!"

Still red faced, Hermione moved to the back of the class and stood beside Ron. The ginger head gave her a sympathetic look and squeezed her hand. Hermione looked up to him, saw he gave her a thin smile in which she replied.

With a swipe of the wand, Moody moved the tables and the chairs a bit further to the back, creating just enough empty space at the front of the class. He then beckoned each student to come forward and began putting them under the Imperius Curse.

Harry watched as one by one, his classmates did all sort of unusual things they definitely would not do or unable to do in their normal state. Dean hopped three times across the room and sang the national anthem. Lavender Brown imitated a squirrel. Neville performed a series of gymnastic moves he definitely would not be able to perform in his normal state. Malfoy, well Moody made him impersonated a ferret. Moody also selected a few of the Beauxbaton students to be his guinea pig. Camille ballet danced across the room. Daphne – not Daphne Greengrass but Daphne Lavinge – imitated a crow.

Harry silently wondered what will happen if Moody selected Fleur. How well she will respond to the Imperius Curse? He slowly tucked his hand into his pocket and began fingering his wand. He felt his wand warming up and began to vibrate a little as surges of magical energy began to flow from his hand and into his wand.

"Potter!” called out Moody. "Front and center!"

Harry took his hand out of his pocket and walked to the front of the class. He did not see it, but he felt nearly every pair of eyes within classroom descended upon him. He stopped and faced Moody once he reached the front of the class.

Moody slowly raised his wand, pointed it at Harry and muttered, “Imperio!”

The familiar, wonderful feeling and floating sensation washed over him that very instance. Every thought, worries and concerns were all fell away, leaving him in deep contentment and untraceable happiness. Harry knew those sensations and feelings all too well. That was what
one will get when one was being put under the Imperius Curse. He experienced that before and was able to shake it off just as quick as before. The curse fell away and he was himself once again.

But all of a sudden something else happened. Harry's mind inevitably connected to Moody's mind. He saw his plans. He saw what he did during the night after the Beauxbaton and the Durmstrang arrived. He saw him run away from the Great Hall that night. He saw his anguish and his fear after realizing that his initial plan had fail. He saw him making up another plan, more precisely back up plans on luring Harry into his trap. He saw him watching Ron and Hermione. He saw him watching Harry walking together with Fleur and the rest of her friends. He sensed his sinister motives involving them should his current plan fail.

Moody's current plan was to continuously induce him in the Imperius Curse and to let him stay back after the class ended. Moody was planning to hand him over to Voldemort that very day.

Harry's mind racing, thinking of what he should. He could of course force Moody into a duel right there and then. However, words will leak out. Fine if he could defeat the impostor, but the news would travel all over Britain. Voldemort would catch the wisp of it and the Dark Lord would disappear once again. If that happened, it would throw a huge spanner into Harry's own plan. He could not let that happen.

"Jump on to the desk!"

Harry's mind immediately brought back to reality. He stared at Moody.

"Jump on to the desk!"

Still, Harry stared at him.

"Jump on to the desk! NOW!"

Slowly but surely, he began to bent his knees in absolute obedience and without further ado, he jumped, making a smooth clean landing on top of the desk in front of him. And once on top, he straightened up and once again gave Moody that blank stare.

Moody's crooked lips formed a smile. A triumphant smile. He turned towards the rest of the audience. "You see that?! That is what happened if you were being put under the curse. The perpetrator could force you to do all sort of things you would never do normally. And that includes killing." He then turned back to Harry who was still standing on top of the desk. "You can come down now, son. And take your seat."

Harry obliged. He jumped down and stood beside the desk. Moody took out his wand and began rearranging the tables back to its original locations. "Sit down!" he barked once he was done.

"You're okay, Harry?" asked Ron worriedly as they both took seat. "You looked unwell."

Harry turned to look at Ron with that same blank look he gave Moody. "I am fine, Ronald." He then slowly turned his attention back to the front.

Moody was smirking at him.

The class continued after everyone took seat. At the end of the class, Moody gave them homework on the subject of the Unforgiveable Curse, due next Thursday.

Soon the bell rang. Everyone began to put away their books and belonging into their bags.

"Potter!" barked Moody. "Stay behind. There's something we need to talk about. Everyone else, dismiss. Now!"

Harry stayed put on his chair. Fleur and the rest of her squad including Daphne Greengrass walked past him, each of them looked at him with unreadable expression and each of them squeezed his hand in turn. Hermione and Ron were the last to exit the room.

"We'll see you back at the common room, Harry," said Hermione.

Harry failed to give her any acknowledgement. He continuously stared blankly ahead.

She and Ron looked at each other. They both looked really worried. Suddenly Hermione turned to Moody and asked, "Sir, can we stay?"

Moody who was standing not far from there gave her a stern look. "No. You and Mr. Ronald Weasley are dismissed."
Hermione was hesitant but Ron had already pulled her arm to follow him. "Come on, Hermione. Harry will be fine. I'm sure he will. He's with a teacher."

Hermione looked at Ron. After a few moments, she finally nodded. They both lugged their bags over their shoulder. Ron gave Harry a pat on his shoulder before he and Hermione made their way towards the exit.

The entrance door closed with one final click. Moody moved towards Harry and stood in front of him. He took out his wand and pointed it to the door. "Collorpotus!" There was another click, signalling that the door had been locked. He kept on pointing his wand to it and muttered another incantation, "Signaculum limine!"

The door glowed bluish momentarily.

Moody slowly lowered his wand. "The door had been sealed," he said. "Nothing will get in or out." He then lowered his eyes to Harry.

"Nobody is going to save you now, Potter. Not when you're still under my control. Today shall be the day of your reckoning."

To be continued...

A/n: Horrible? Not so sure about that. I've read worse.

When it comes to writing, there are four simple rules that I usually apply:-

Proper use of punctuation, questions, quotation marks and such.

No spelling errors.

No wall of text.

No run on sentences.

It is also the same rule I used whenever I read other people's work. For me, if a work complies with the four rules I outlined, it is good enough for me. I won't worry much about tenses and such.

Why I tell you guys these? It is because I would never be a professional writer. As much as I really want to present you guys a story with perfect grammar, I really can't. English isn't my first language and it's been years since I left school. And I'm just a regular dude who loves his job, love movies, music, travelling, playing video games. And I don't read much book. I tend to be picky on what I picked up. I'm here just to share something with those who care to appreciate, that is all. So I hope that you guys can keep it low on the grammar issue.

So that's it. Till the next chapter. Oh one more thing. I'm planning to write a one chapter story on StarCraft in commemoration of the one year release of The Legacy of the Void expansion pack. It will feature another favourite pairing of mine - Jim Raynor and Sarah Kerrigan - so there may or may not be a HP update next month depending on the time permitted.
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"Nobody is going to save you now, Potter. Not when you're still under my control. Today shall be the day of your reckoning."

He held out his hand. "Your wand, Potter."

Harry looked up at him.

"Your wand," repeated Moody impatiently. "Give me your wand."

Obediently, Harry tucked his hand inside his pocket and pulled out his wand. He then held it out to Moody.

Moody took it. He ran his fingers along the length of the wand, examining it carefully and admiring the wand's every detail. "This is a very good wand," he commented. "Impressive." He then turned towards Harry. A triumphant smirk formed on his lips. "Too bad that you'll no longer be able to use it. This shall be the greatest present my master will receive. Well, beside you that is."

Moody then bundled Harry's wand together with his and placed them inside his robe. He then gestured Harry to follow him. "Come."

Harry stood and followed Moody towards the front of the class and they both climbed the spiral stairway that lead to the entrance into Moody's office cum quarters.

"Get in," commanded Moody as he opened the door into his office.

Harry obeyed and found himself inside a room full of exceptionally odd objects. He knew and recognized each and every one of them of course. Back in his old timeline, Moody's paraphernalia became one of the exhibits at the Wizarding Museum in Diagon Alley. There were proposals from various parties that the equipments be used by the Department of Magical Law Enforcement but Kingsley shot them down. He wanted all the fallen wizards that fought in the Second Wizarding war to be remembered and Alastor Moody, given that his body was never been found, no pictures and no relatives, had only his equipment left with no one to inherit it. Harry had wholeheartedly agreed with Kingsley.

The arrangement of the furniture and the odd objects within the room was oddly familiar. It was basically the same arrangement he saw back then, back in his old timeline. A large sneakscope stood on Moody's desk. At the farthest corner on a small table, stood an object that looked like an extra squiggly, golden television aerial. He knew what it was. It was a Secrecy Sensor, used to detect lies and magical concealments. Hung on the wall to Harry's left was a mirror, more aptly known as the Foe Glass. Built into the wall on his right was a fireplace. A large trunk with seven keyholes was placed directly under the window. His eyes fell on it for quite some time.

Moody, satisfied that there was no one else inside the classroom down below, entered. He closed the door and locked it. He turned towards Harry and noticed that the boy was staring at the large trunk. He limped towards it.

"You want to know what's inside this trunk, eh boy?" he said. "I'll tell you. It's Alastor Moody! The real Alastor Moody! The greatest auror of all time! And the one responsible for my imprisonment. Beside Karkaroff that is."

Harry did not give any responses. He simply stared blankly at Moody.

"What? No response? No look of surprises? Awe?" asked Moody, mocking a disappointed look. "You're not surprised or feeling impressed that I finally defeated the greatest auror of them all?! Bah! You're under my control. Of course you're incapable of any of that."

Moody closed in on him. He bent forward until his scarred face just inches away from Harry's.
"You want to know who I am, boy? You want to know my name? My real name? I'll tell you. It's Barty. Barty Crouch Jr. Surprised? Don't be. I might have share the same name as my putrid father, but we're not related. Not anymore especially after he abetted with that low life form named Alastor Moody and that old hag Dumbledore and threw me into the Azkaban. Me, his own son! But today, there'll be payback. Today, he'll get what's coming for him, for what he did to me. It's a pity that you won't remember anything I told you but no matter."

He then straightened up. Both of his eyes, the magical and the non-magical one, fixated on him. "I will be more than happy to kill you Potter, just like what I will do to every Death Eaters who choose to betray my master. It'll save the trouble of smuggling you out of here. But unfortunately, my master needs you. I am to bring you in, alive and unharmed."

He then turned around and walked towards the trunk. "But before that, there shall not be any witnesses," he whispered.

Barty took a set of keys from one of the pockets of his robe. He carefully selected one of the keys and pushed it into one of the keyholes. There was a click when he turned the key. Using both of his hands, he opened the trunk. He then took out his wand and pointed it into the depth of the trunk.

"You have done a great service to me, Alastor," said Barty. "But it's time for you to retire for good. It'll be a quick and painless retirement, I can assure you that."

Barty slowly raised his wand. "Avada-"

*BANG!*

Something hit him from behind before he could complete the Killing Curse. It was so powerful that he ended up tumbling forward a few feet away from the trunk, hit the wall hard in front of him and ended up sprawling on the floor. He groaned in pain and felt something warm trickled down his forehead. He went to touch it and found that it was blood. His own blood. He immediately turned to look. His eyes immediately widened.

"You!"

Standing not far from him was Harry Potter. His hand held out towards Barty. Faint traces of white smoke came out from every finger of the outreached hand.

There was a reason one why he was called the most feared auror of his time. There was a reason on why during his reign, no dark wizards uprising ever happened. If there was one, he would be there to crush them into tiny little pieces. The look upon Harry's face as he stared down at the sprawling Barty was more terrible than anyone could imagine. There was no benign smile, only cold and calculated fury within every line of his face. There was a sense of power that radiated from deep within him. It felt as if he was giving off intense heat that threatened to burn down everything within his vicinity.

Barty felt that power. Fear began to grip him tightly.

"No one controls me," Harry said. Anger and hatred lined his every word. "No one. Not even you."

"What?! How?!!" Barty stammered.

"That's the thing about the Imperius Curse, Barty," said Harry. His hand still trained on Barty. His eyes never left him. "You can never really tell if it works on your victim or not unless you know what to look out for. I threw off the curse just as fast as you placing them on me. Given that all those long years your father did that to you, I am surprise that you failed to see that I was simply faking it."

Barty slowly stood up. He pointed his crooked finger at Harry. "How do you know that?! THAT’S IMPOSSIBLE!"

Harry smirked. "It doesn't matter. And nothing is impossible. Your history, how your impersonate Alastor Moody and your motive in planting yourself as a spy in Hogwarts. It's all inside my head. I know you have been planning all along to put my name in the Goblet of Fire. You want me to be the fourth champion and you're planning to help me survives all the tasks laid out in front of me. And when comes the third task, you're going to turn the Triwizard Cup into a portkey that will send me straight to Voldemort. I know why he needed me, Barty. He needed my blood so that he can be resurrected. He thought my blood will make him stronger. He see me as a key to invincibility. Well the jokes are on him."

Barty just stood frozen as Harry laid his plan bare. He began to sweat profusely. His hands clasped and unclasped. His eyes kept glancing towards the fireplace.

"But your plan failed, didn't it Barty?" continued Harry. "I was there that night in the Great Hall. I saw you came in, impersonating as Igor Karkaroff. You wanted to blackmail him, didn't
you? And it's because he exposed you back then during the hearing. He wasn't blackmailing you, Barty. He was simply telling the truth. For your information, I am the one who placed the extra wards around the goblet. I don't have to explain what those wards are for. You're already experienced them firsthand."

Barty's jaw tightened. His hands continuously clasped and unclasped. His eyes kept on darting towards the fireplace. Deep within his heart, he began to realize that the boy in front of him was not to be trifled with. Even without his wand, he could still feel strong aura radiating from the fourteen years old boy. If he was really a fourteen years old boy that is. Barty knew he needed a way to escape. Fast. That fireplace would be his only hope.

But first, he needed to distract Harry.

Barty's lip formed a smile. "So you knew everything, eh? Congratulations, Potter," he said. "Yes, it was my bad. But tell me Potter; did you anticipated this?!"

Without warning, Barty took out his wand and threw a curse at Harry.

Harry, who had readied himself, conjured up an invisible shield. Barty's curse hit it with a loud bang. Amid the chaos, he saw Barty making the run towards the fireplace. Harry who already knew that the fireplace will be Barty's only mean of escape waved his hand and threw a powerful spell at the fireplace. The spell hit the fireplace before Barty could reach it. It exploded and shattered into many pieces.

Barty skidded into a halt and could only watch helplessly as the fireplace was reduced into rubbles. He turned towards Harry. His eyes, there were fear in it.

"Sorry about that," said Harry casually. He waved his hand once again, sending various furniture and instruments within the room towards every available windows and doors, jamming them in the process. "You can't apparate out of Hogwarts, Barty. There won't be any escape for you. Not this time. This time, you're going to reap what you sowed."

Barty slowly raised his hand. With one finger pointed towards Harry, he asked, "Who are you?! You're not Harry Potter!"

"As a matter of fact, I am Harry Potter," said Harry calmly.

"No you're not! You're-… you're an impostor!" shouted Barty. "Show yourself! Show who you truly are!"

"An impostor you say? Like you?" Harry snapped his finger. A small flask flew out of one of Barty's robe pocket towards Harry. It stopped and floated just inches away from Harry's face. "I have no need for a Polyjuice Potion, Barty."

Harry waved his hand over the floating flask. A small glowing sphere began to envelop it. Once the sphere was fully formed, he sent it away. "Don't want to get my finger prints all over it. That will be the proof they'll need to send you back to Azkaban. Now." He turned his gaze back to Barty. "What do we need to do with you?"

Barty sneered. "Your arrogance blinded you, Potter. You forgot that I still have your wand!" He then reached into his pocket, took out the holly wand and held it high.

Harry just smiled mockingly at him. "I took away your flask from you. Why do you think I won't be able to do the same with my wand?"

Barty paused at this.

"That's right, Barty," continued Harry. "I attacked you. I've also destroyed your only means of escape. All without using a wand. I want to thank you for keeping it safe for me. In which case." He waved his hand. His wand escaped Barty's grip and flew towards him and with the unerring skill of a Seeker, he caught it easily and pointed it towards Barty. "I have endured the Cruciatius curse before. I have even survived the Killing Curse. The Imperius Curse is nothing to me. The unforgiven had been forgiven and as you will learn, there's nothing in this world that is impossible."

Barty seemed to have enough. He immediately attacked Harry, throwing spells upon spells at him.

Harry stood to his ground. His wand slashed and twisted, deflecting every spells and curses thrown at him and attacking Barty in return. Jets of light flew from each wand as they both fought to kill.

Barty moved left and right, trying in vain to avoid every spells Harry threw at him. He was getting tired. His energy was completely drained out of him. His targeting had become more erratic than ever. And he was getting frustrated as none of his spell hit the boy in front of him.
Harry would simply deflect his spells or conjured up a strong invisible shield in which none of his spells were able to penetrate.

Harry on the other hand remained energetic. His rate of attack increased ferociously with no sign of slowing down or even stopping. At one point, three of Harry's curses seared Barty's right arm and his left thigh. He screamed in pain and fell backward onto the floor. He took the advantage by targeting Barty's wand-holding hand. He shot a spell. It hit the back of Barty's hand squarely. Barty screamed in pain and accidentally let go of his wand. Harry flicked his own wand and Barty's wand flew towards him. He caught the wand and immediately broke it into two. He then threw the broken wand away.

Barty just watched his broken wand landed a few feet away from him. That was it. He had become powerless. His fate was now in Harry's hand. He slowly held up his hand in defeat. "Stop. Please stop," he begged. "That is enough."

"You should have died, Barty," said Harry, his wand trained on the fallen Death Eater. "You should have died for your crimes. For what you did to the Longbottom. And for your mother."

"Don't you dare speak of my mother, Potter!"

"Your mother died for you, Barty," said Harry, ignoring Barty's warning. "She sacrificed her life for you and you repay her love and kindness with this!"

"She is weak!"

"She is strong!" interjected Harry. "Strong enough to face her own mortality so that you, her only son, could live! And you repay her by becoming something she despised. She had done nothing wrong to you and yet you insulted her! You've insulted her memories. You're not a human. You're nothing more than a monster."

What Harry said seemed to touch Barty's nerve. He slowly got off the floor and without warning, lunged towards Harry.

Harry easily sidestepped him. He twisted on the spot and landed a kick on Barty's back, sending the Death Eater headlong into a desk in front of him. He hit his head on the desk real hard and went unconscious.

Harry stared at the unconscious Barty for a while. "You're a really good impersonator. You had everyone fooled. But as good as you are in impersonating Moody, there's one thing that you could never copy. His fighting skills. To be honest, I'm truly disappointed. You didn't even put out a real fight."

He then flicked his wand. A wooden chair from other part of the room flew towards him. He caught the chair and placed it in front of him. Using his wand, he raised the unconscious Death Eater from the floor and carefully placed him on the chair. He then conjured up a steel chain and had the chain wrapped tightly around Barty's unconscious figure.

But before he could do anything else, all of a sudden, Harry felt painful surge all over his body. He trundled towards a chair and sat down. He drew his breath, long and deep, trying with all his might to reduce the effect of the surge. And without warning, he coughed. Violently. He felt something warm trickling out of his mouth. He went to wipe it and saw blood on his hand. His own blood.

"Yes, Harry. Borrowed time, which means that they shall continue to be alive until the purpose for their return had been fulfilled. Those who decided not to fulfil their purpose died much sooner."

"Your magical core is too well developed, Harry. I can see it and I have no doubt that the headmaster may notice it as well. While it will give you the advantage in doing magic, your fourteen year old body might not be able to take it. Your old body may be strong enough to contain it but your current body might not. It might kill you. I fear that it's a prelude to something much worse."

Harry's heart raced. That part of the conversation between him and Professor Trelawney began to replay within his mind. *So that's it, he thought. That is what she meant. He was not drained of his magic. In fact, his magic was strong as ever, perhaps even more. But his body. It could not take it. Even at that point, he was beginning to feel that his body was beginning to break down. He silently wondered if there was a way to control his magic. Perhaps there could be a way to tone his magic down.*

But then, he had intended to fight and kill Voldemort. He will need all the magical power he had in order to do that. And he must not die before his mission fulfilled.

It took a while, but the painful surge finally subsided. He wiped his mouth and cleaned out his hand from his blood. He slowly stood and walked towards Barty. The Death Eater had yet to
turn back into his original form. It won't be long now.

Satisfied that Barty was still unconscious, he made his way towards the opened trunk and peered into it. Inside the trunk within an underground room, the real Alastor Moody lied unconscious. Harry climbed into the trunk and lowered himself into it. He fell lightly on the floor beside the sleeping Moody. He bent over him and began to check for his pulse. The retired auror was still alive but Harry knew the old man needed help. He took out his wand and magic-ed Moody out of the trunk. He then carefully laid Moody onto the floor, not far from where Barty was.

His own problem will be dealt with later on. Now, he had a Death Eater need taken care of and a teacher that needed help. But he knew that all of that must be done covertly without raising any attention.

And there was one man he knew who could help him.

He raised his wand. "Expecto Patronum!"

A whiff of silvery smoke shot out of his wand. It immediately formed into a stag. The silvery stag hopped around the room until it stopped in front of Harry.

Harry smiled. "Hello, Prongs," he greeted the patronus.

The stag bowed to him. Prongs certainly had changed overtime. He was now much bigger and muscular than before and his antlers had certainly looked more majestic than ever.


Prongs once again bowed. He kicked off the floor with his strong hind leg and disappeared through the ceiling.

It did not take long before the door into Moody's office burst opened. Dumbledore barged in with his wand outstretched. He immediately skidded into a halt upon seeing the state of the room. There was a look of surprise on his face.

Broken furniture and instruments littered the whole room. Each window was completely blocked and to make matters worse, there were two Moodys, one lying on the floor and another tightly bound on a chair within the same room.

"What?"
"My apologies, Professor."

Dumbledore turned around towards the source.

From the farthest corner of the room and out of the shadows, Harry emerged. He looked calmly at Dumbledore.

"Harry, what happened?" asked Dumbledore as he lowered his wand. "What is the meaning of this? Who did this?"

Harry said nothing. He walked towards Dumbledore and the moment he arrived in front of the headmaster, he produced Barty's flask and gave it to Dumbledore.

Dumbledore took it. He unscrewed the flask and took a sniff. His face cringed. He turned towards Harry. "Polyjuice Potions?"

Harry nodded.

Dumbledore put down the flask and walked towards the two unconscious Moodys. He began to examine them. He noticed that the one that lied on the floor had his wooden leg missing and one of his eye sockets was empty. "This is the real Alastor," he said as he knelt beside real Moody. "The one on the chair is the impostor."

Dumbledore stood up. "Know who he is, Harry?" he asked as he trained his wand towards Barty's chest.

Harry walked up and stood beside him. He gently grabbed Dumbledore's wand wielding hand and lowered it. "It won't be long, Professor. I know how Polyjuice Potions work. You know me. Give it another minute or two."

Dumbledore nodded.
It certainly did not take long. Right before their very eyes, Barty began to change. The scars disappeared and the skin smoothened. The mangled nose became whole and started to shrink. The long mane of grizzled gray hair withdrew into the scalp and turned black. With a loud clunk, the wooden leg fell away and in its place, a normal leg grew. Another loud pop was heard. The magical eye was ejected from its socket and in its place, a normal eye grew. The magical eye started to roll away on the floor. Harry bended over and caught it. Within his palm, the eye continued to swivel in every direction.

"Barty Crouch Jr. Merlin's beard," muttered Dumbledore the moment the transformation was finished. He turned to Harry. "How long have you known this?"

"Way back before he tried to put my name in the Goblet of Fire," answered Harry.

Dumbledore was taken aback by his answer. "Harry, there is no possibility that the Goblet will allow you to enter the tournament. Why would he want to do that?"

Harry nearly chastised Dumbledore for his answer but he managed to hold back. He took a deep breath and pushed his anger down. "Do we really know that, Professor? Barty certainly won't take those actions if he knew that it won't work. Voldemort doesn't take failures kindly. But you know what? Let's hear it from him. You know very well on how to do that."

Dumbledore went silent. From the look of it, Harry knew that the headmaster somehow agreed with him.

"You're right, Harry," said Dumbledore. "We, or at least I, wouldn't know about it. Forgive me. But I need you tell me everything."

"And I will," said Harry. "But we have a Death Eater and a teacher need taken care of."

"Yes I agree," said Dumbledore. "I'll have Alastor sent to the hospital wing. As for Barty, I think we may need to keep him here for a while for interrogation. Then we'll turn him over to the DMLE."

"You can't do that," said Harry. "You can't turn him over to the DMLE."

Dumbledore was taken aback. "And why is that? Harry, he is an escaped prisoner of the Azkaban. We have to return him to them."

"I know that, headmaster," said Harry. "But we can't. Not yet. We must keep him here. For now."

Dumbledore closed in on him. He put his hands onto Harry's shoulder and asked, softly, "Tell me. Please."

Harry stared into the blue eyes. He took a deep breath and said, "If you turn Barty over to the DMLE, Britain's magical community will know about it. Everything that transpired here must not be made known to the public. It has to be kept in secret or everything will fail."

"You're saying that you already had a plan?"

Harry nodded. "Yes. And there's more. The switch between the real and the impostor Moody must also be done covertly. No one must know about it."

Dumbledore nodded. "Very well, Harry. If that is your request, I shall oblige. But first, let us get Alastor to safety."

Dumbledore conjured a stretcher and magicked Moody onto it. He then paused. "You're not allowed to apparate within the castle," he said to Harry.

Harry just stared at Dumbledore. "Well, obviously."

Dumbledore let out a small chuckle. He pointed his wand towards Harry.

Harry felt warm. His body glowed yellowish momentarily.

"There," said Dumbledore once the glow completely faded. "I give you permission to apparate anywhere within the castle but just for twenty four hours. Now come. Let's go to the hospital wing. It seems to me that you also need a little bit of checking up as well."

"I'm fine, Professor."

"No. You look pale and that is not good," said Dumbledore firmly. "Now come."

And with a loud pop, the three of them disappeared from the room.
Hospital wing, moments later...

"Albus! Never thought you would come for a vis."

Madam Pomfrey suddenly paused. She saw Moody, lying on floating stretcher with Dumbledore and Harry stood beside it. She raced towards him and began to check on him. She then turned towards Dumbledore. "Good heavens! What happened to him, Albus?"

Dumbledore did not answer at first. He took out his wand and waved it towards the door. The door immediately closed. A click sound indicated that it had been locked from the inside. He then replaced his wand back into his robe and turned towards Madam Pomfrey. "Something that we did not expected, Poppy. I need you to treat him. And place him inside a private ward. I don't want anyone else, especially the visitors, see him."

Madame Pomfrey nodded. She took over the floating stretcher and pushed it towards the private ward located at the end of the hospital wing.

Dumbledore turned towards Harry. "Come, Harry. Let's go to my office."

Harry was about to speak when all of a sudden, he coughed violently. It was a bloodied cough, just like before. However this time around, he felt his head spinning as well. He swayed. His hands flayed around as he tried to grab anything that could be use as a support.

Dumbledore raced to his side and grabbed under his arm in an attempt to support him. "Harry! What happened? Did any of Barty's curses hit you?"

Harry just shook his head. He continued to cough.

"Poppy!" called out Dumbledore.

Madame Pomfrey came hurriedly from the private ward. "What is it, Albus?" Then she saw Harry. "Potter!"

She ran towards him.

By this time around, blood had completely drenched the front of Harry's shirt.

"My goodness," cried Madame Pomfrey. "Help me, Albus!"

With Dumbledore holding Harry on the other side, the two of them brought Harry towards the emergency ward. They laid Harry onto the bed and Madame Pomfrey immediately set to work.

Dumbledore stood beside Harry. He ran his fingers through Harry's hair.

"Everything will be fine, my boy. Just hold on."

To be continued...

A/n: Another day another chapter. The last chapter was just half of what I had planned. I didn't mean to give you guys a cliff hanger. It's just feel right to end it that way.

To Jiggly Joe, I wanna say thank you. Despite the criticism, you still held hope for this story and I thank you for that. Yes you're not the only one who suggested that to me. Unfortunately, I have my own reason on not using a beta reader. You see it's all about the updating speed. In this case, I had no choice but to compromise. I hope you will understand. I however, will except any pointers and will appreciate if any of you could point out any error within the chapter.

Harem? Multi-pairing? Eh, probably not so don't worry about it.

To The Radiant Yapper, can you explain a little bit more about your suggestion? Thanks.

So that's it. And yes I'm still holding on to my plan I mentioned earlier. I can't guarantee if there'll be any update for this story for the month of November but I will try to push out a chapter if I can. Usual update will recommence on December.

And just for your information, I'm planning for this story to end at no more than 40 chapters, spanning over three years. However, given my history and the fact that my last completed multi chaptered story Changing Perceptions ended up at 49 when I planned it to end at chapter 35, there's a good chance that this story will overshoot my target. Greatly.

Anyway, I see you then. And have a good day.
Chapter 21

Dumbledore turned towards Harry. "Come, Harry. Let's go to my office."

Harry was about to speak when all of a sudden, he coughed violently. It was a bloodied cough, just like before. However this time around, he felt his head spinning as well. He swayed. His hands flayed around as he tried to grab anything that could be used as a support.

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"Everything will be fine, my boy. Just hold on."

Bottles and beakers clang as Madam Pomfrey hastily and desperately prepare a potion that could help to stop what appeared to be a massive hemorrhage Harry currently suffered.

In the mean time, Harry continued to cough out blood. Lots of blood. His shirt and part of the bed he was lying on was completely drenched in it. His chest heaved heavily as he gasped for air. The blood had appeared to disrupt his air passage, he was choking on it.

Dumbledore stayed beside him all the time. He held Harry's hand tightly as he continued to whisper words of encouragement into Harry's ears.

"Harry, please hold on. Madam Pomfrey is doing everything she can."

But even the best word of encouragement anyone can come up with could not help Harry at that time. The headmaster knew he needed more.

"Poppy."

"It's not easy to conjure up the potion that can stop massive hemorrhage, Albus!" said Madam Pomfrey as she cuts, measure and weighed various ingredients before mixing it all within a glass beaker at high speed. "One tiny mistake and he could bleed to dry within seconds! Nothing could stop it if that happens! Blast! I knew I should have prepared every potion in advance before anyone really needs it!"

"In which case, you're doing a fine job, Poppy," said Dumbledore upon realizing the gravity of the situation. He turned to look at Harry. "We can wait a little bit longer."

It was a lie. He knew that Harry did not have much time. The boy was getting extremely pale as his blood continued to drain out of him. His breathing while still labored, began to weaken. Dumbledore knew he had no choice but to make sure Madam Pomfrey remained calm as she prepared the potion. All he could do now was pray.

Madam Pomfrey poured the smoking content of the beaker into a steel goblet. She grabbed a small bottle of Blood Replenishing Potion from a nearby cabinet and together with the smoking goblet, rushed towards Harry's bed. She handed the small bottle to Dumbledore. Stepping over to Harry's side, she pinched Harry's nose and immediately began pouring the content of the goblet slowly and carefully into his mouth, making sure that the boy swallowed every single drop of the potion. It was not easy. Harry's incessant coughing means that some of the potion, mixed with his own blood, spilled out and his nearly blocked airway means that
it was difficult for him to swallow anything, let alone the potion.

"Potter, please! You have to swallow the potion! Please try!" said Madam Pomfrey.

He tried. Slowly and painfully at first. He held his breath momentarily and took small gulps, one at a time until the potion finally successfully administered.

The effect was immediate. Harry's bloodied cough immediately ceased. His breathing while still heavy, began to stabilize. He was still extremely pale however, no doubt the result of his massive blood lost. His eyes were closed as his body began to relax.

Madam Pomfrey breathed the sigh of relief and so did Dumbledore. The venerable headmaster knew that Harry survived.

"Didn't realize I am sweating this much. In all these long years I've been here I never had this kind of emergency before," said Madam Pomfrey as she wiped her sweaty forehead with her apron. She then took out her wand and began to wave it up and down Harry's body. "Nearly all of his major blood vessels were ruptured. His main organs are still intact though. Lucky for him that the blood vessels within his brain were spared. He could have suffered a major stroke if the rupture pattern follows through to his head. We were lucky, Albus."

"Lucky isn't the word I would use to describe it, Poppy," said Dumbledore. "I credit it all to you."

Madam Pomfrey did not answer. Instead, she continued to wave her wand up and down Harry's body. She suddenly paused moments later. "Wait! I'll be damned!" she said in astonishment. She stared at Harry in disbelieve.

"You saw it, didn't you?" asked Dumbledore.

Once again, Madam Pomfrey failed to answer. She held out her hand to Dumbledore. "Albus, the bottle if you will."

Dumbledore handed over the Blood Replenishing Potion to Madam Pomfrey.

Madam Pomfrey patted Harry's shoulder gently. "Potter?"

Harry opened his eyes. There were senses of fatigue in it. He looked directly at Madam Pomfrey.

"There's another potion that I need you to take," she showed the bottle to Harry. "Then I'll let you rest."

Harry, knowing what the potion is for, nodded weakly.

This time unlike before, the potion was successfully administered without any difficulties. Color immediately returned to Harry's face as soon as the potion set to work.

Madam Pomfrey cocked her eyebrows. "That was fast," she muttered. "Rest, Potter. I'll give you something to help you sleep later."

Except that he did not.

His eyes might be closed but his sensitivity to his surrounding heightened with each second passing by. From where he laid, he could sense where Madam Pomfrey and Dumbledore were standing within the hospital wing, just outside the emergency ward.

"Normally a wizard's or a witch's magical core grows in tandem with his or her physical growth. This is to ensure that the physical body could safely contain the power and that one's magic won't end up killing its own master. While there were few examples where a wizard had his magical core outran him, they usually don't survive for long. Potter's magical core Albus, is not normal for a fourteen year old," said Madam Pomfrey. "It's too powerful, too advance and too well developed. He must have been utilizing it to the fullest when he fought the impostor. It put quite a massive strain to his physical body. That's why he bled. It nearly killed him. It's a miracle that he survived."

Even from where he laid and with his eyes closed, he could sense that Dumbledore was busy scrutinizing him from the entrance into the emergency ward. So Dumbledore told Madam Pomfrey the incident within the Defense of the Dark Arts class.

Dumbledore sighed, "I know of one whom his magical core outgrows him. He survived but not without... undesirable circumstances. Yes, I was made aware of his – changes - even before the Welcoming Feast but I was too busy with the preparation for the Triwizard Tournament. The incident within Moody's living quarters will speed up things apparently."
"Yes. You should explain to him how important it is for him to be careful with his own magic. I could arrange for some tests with my colleagues at St. Mungo's, see if there is a way to tone down his magical core a bit," said Madam Pomfrey. "Prevent it from hurting him again. Maybe find the reason behind his changes."

Dumbledore however shook his head. "I wish it would be that simple, Poppy. You and I, we both know that it's virtually impossible to tone down one's magical power. It will either stay in the same state or grows. The only way to ensure that Harry won't overuse his magic is to deprive him from his wand. I don't want to do that in all honesty. As for the reason, I think we could simply ask him."

"If it helps him to survive, I see why not," argued Madam Pomfrey. "At least until we can determine a way to put it under control."

"My dear Poppy, I fear that by simply depriving Harry from his wand won't change a thing. It is possible that he may not need it," stated Dumbledore. "Until the matter had been thoroughly investigated, everything will chug along as usual. I am sure that Mr. Potter will know his limit the next time he tries to do magic. I have a hunch that Harry was merely scratching the surface when he fought Barty. He may have yet tapped fully into, I dare say, his talent."

Madam Pomfrey stared at Dumbledore, wide eyed. "You can't be serious, Albus."

"I'm afraid I am, Poppy. His latent power could prove to be his own undoing if he's not careful," said Dumbledore. "Harry and I will have a long talk tonight. Now if you will excuse me, there's a Death Eater needs taken care of. I will come back to check on Harry later."

Dumbledore then turned and left for the hospital wing's entrance.

He took a peek through his half opened eyelids.

Dumbledore had gone. He must be on his way to Moody's living quarters. He was not sure on how Dumbledore will handle the Death Eater. Earlier on, he had made a request to Dumbledore to not to handover Barty to the Ministry. He was pretty sure the headmaster will keep to his promise. Guess he will have to wait until tonight to know what Dumbledore will do.

He closed his eyes when he saw Madam Pomfrey approached him.

The resident nurse began to check on him, placing his hand on his forehead and inspecting the various part of his body, most likely to see if he suffered wounds elsewhere. Once she satisfied that there was no wound, she took out her wand and began to siphon Harry's blood that wetted his shirt and the bed. She then went away and returned with a jug of pumpkin juice and a goblet. She put them on the bedside table together with a small bottle of Dreamless Sleep potion. She then once again exited the room. This time, she did not return.

Harry opened his eyes. He knew that Madam Pomfrey had gone back to her office.

As he lay on the bed, that day's event and the conversation between Dumbledore and Madam Pomfrey flew through his mind. Lucky enough for him, everything that happened managed to be contained just in time. He was not sure for how long but still, he knew that he needed to keep it that way for as long as possible. Beside a chosen few, no one else must know what transpired.

And that, in his mind, could cause some problems.

His friends especially Hermione will definitely become curious and throw difficult questions at him if they failed to see him at dinner. They were already a little bit jittery back at the DADA class. And he also needed to attend the Quidditch meeting after that. He knew that he needed to make his appearance on both occasions.

If only Madam Pomfrey would be lenient enough to grant him temporary leave.

That would be just his wishful thinking. The resident nurse will definitely won't allow him to leave the hospital wing. His only option is to sneak out unnoticed, straightened out his affair and return that night to the hospital wing. He had a hunch that the meeting with Dumbledore will happen there anyway instead of the headmaster's own office.

He glanced at the emergency ward's clock. It was already 5.30pm. It will be another hour before dinnertime.

Madam Pomfrey came to check on him at five minutes after six. She asked him a few questions. He answered truthfully. Once she satisfied that all was well, she took leave but not
before reminding Harry to take the potion before he sleeps. She also told him that he will have his dinner within the ward and it shall be sent to him in half an hour.

Harry slowly got off his bed. His legs felt wobbly, a sure sign that his full strength had yet to return. He tip-toed towards the emergency wards entrance and took a peek into the hall of the hospital wing. No one was there. Madam Pomfrey must have been inside her office.

Thinking fast, he took out his wand and conjured up a piece of parchment and a quill and began to write:-

Dear Madam Pomfrey,

I must apologize for my absence. I need to take a temporary leave from the ward. I will be having my dinner at the Great Hall and I will return to the ward later I promise. Please tell Professor Dumbledore that I will be meeting him here tonight at 11.00pm.

I'm sorry I can't explain to you right now. Please don't worry about me. I will be fine.

Yours sincerely,

Harry James Potter.

After re-reading the letter a couple of times, he folded it and placed it on top of his bed. He then made his way towards the entrance into the hospital wing.

The Great Hall, a few minutes later...

He arrived early despite the fact that he was not able to walk as fast as he would have like. He suspected that he might over estimated his current strength. He was in fact feeling more tired than usual. He knew why. While the Blood Replenishing Potion did a fine job in replenishing his blood, the amount that was lost was a lot. Harry could still feel the potion still doing its job at that time.

Besides him, only a few Slytherin boys occupied the Great Hall. The long tables were still devoid of food. Dinner won't begin for another ten minutes. Ignoring the Slytherins, he walked towards the Gryffindor table and sat down at his usual spot.

Minutes pass by. Students began to trickle into the Great Hall and at exactly 6.30pm, the night dinner magically appeared on the tables. Harry helped himself to treacle tart as he watched students pouring into the hall, he waited for his friends.

He saw the Gryffindor, the Hufflepuff, the Ravenclaw, the Slytherin, few of the Durmstrang and Beauxbaton coming in. He saw Daphne, who strangely enough bore a surprise look on her face when she saw him. But no Ron and Hermione.

Questions began to creep up into his mind. They were not usually this late. He knew Ron well enough to know that the gingerhead would not miss food for the whole world. He had a mind to search for them right after dinner but given his condition at that time, that may not be a smart move. He did not want to give any excuse for Madam Pomfrey to be mad at him further should anything happened to him. With that in mind, he decided to wait.

He found out that he did not need to wait long.

He saw Ron, Hermione and the rest of his dorm mate entering the hall. They saw him. He was about to wave to them when he saw Viktor, who pointed at him just as he arrived at the entrance. Then he saw Fleur and the rest of her squad. They were gesturing towards him. Then he saw Madame Maxime and Professor Karkaroff. Both of them were staring at him.

The whole group then began to march towards him.

"Aw hell! What did I do this time?"

To be continued..

A/n: I'm back!

Sorry for the late update. While I indeed became too busy with StarCraft last month, I blame it on me binge watching Elementary for causing me to delay updating the fic this month. And before you guys ask, this chapter is less than half of what it supposed to be. I decided to post early just to indicate that this fic is not dead. Next chapter will come within this month I can assure you that and it will be longer.

Anyway, enjoy.
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"Aw hell! What did I do this time?"

Hermione was the first to arrive.

"Harry! Are you alright?" she asked.

"You okay, mate?" asked Ron. He arrived just after Hermione and was seemingly a little out of breath, just like Hermione. "What happened?"

Harry thought that this was a little bit odd. Both Hermione and Ron looked like they had just come in from a run. "I'm fine. You both look sweaty," he pointed out. "What? You both finally find out that jogging is good for you?"

By this time, Viktor Krum, Fleur and the rest of their friends arrived and congregated around him. Viktor sat beside him, facing him and spoke, "Harry, this is not a joke. Your friends here are clearly worried."

"Worried? Why?" asked Harry, perplexed.

Hermione proceeded to sit at the other side of him. "We look for you everywhere, Harry," she said. "You didn't show up at all this whole afternoon. What happened? What Professor Moody wants with you?"

"Nothing," he said. "Nothing happened."

Hermione's eyebrows creased. "Are you sure?" she asked. "Tell us the truth, Harry."

Harry began to feel that Hermione was suspecting that something went amiss. He never suspected that she would be this intuitive. But then Hermione would always be intuitive when it comes to him, just not at this level. He looked around and saw everyone; Fleur, Viktor and whole lot of their friends were watching him intently. "If I'm not okay I won't be here, am I?" he said. "Look, what's really going on, Hermione? Why are they here?" He pointed towards the rest of the group.

Hermione proceeded to tell the tale, "We were waiting for you outside the class right after Professor Moody dismissed us. Well not just me and Ron but the Beauxbaton as well. Minutes went by and still you haven't come out. It was when one of us tried to open the door and found that it was locked that we began to panic. We tried everything - spells, manually prying open the door - all of them didn't work. We called out for you but you didn't hear us. Dumbledore arrived just as we decided to alert other teachers. He asked us why we were there. We told him everything."

Harry stiffened when he heard this. "Everything?" he croaked. "You both knew?"

It can't be. How come they knew?

"Of course we knew, mate," said Ron this time. He was sampling one of the treacle tarts at the same time. "We were there, don't you remember? We told Dumbledore what happened within the class. Come to think of it, I can't really remember what really happened though."

"That's because you were drooling. Honestly Ron!" said Hermione hotly.
Harry sighed with relief. His fear was unfounded. Still, that did not mean that he was out of the wood. At least not yet.

"So, what happened then?" he asked.

"Dumbledore took a look at the door," continued Hermione. "It was as if he was trying to take a peek into something. It went like that for a while until he told us to go back to the common room. He told us that you're going to be fine. We refused but he insisted. We had no choice. We don't know what happen next. Harry, what happened in there? Tell us!"

"Moody gave me quite a tongue lashing," said Harry, trying to look casual. In truth, he really felt bad about it. He did not like to tell lies but in this case, he had no other choices. "For my inability to throw away the curse."

"But Harry, nobody would be able to throw away the Imperious Curse!" exclaimed Ron. "Nobody! And we're still young. We're just fourteen... fifteen years old at most! How can he expects you to do that?!"

Harry tried really hard not to roll his eyes. "Yeah, I know that, Ron. He told me I'm a special case, that I really need to posses that skill."

"So what happened then?" asked Viktor, intrigued. "Did he teach you how to throw away the curse?"

"As a matter a fact he did," replied Harry. "I ace it but not without difficulties."

Viktor smiled. He was genuinely impressed. He gave Harry a pat in his back and said, "Congratulations! You know, ve at Durmstrang, ve learnt how to defend ourselves from dark curses. Trying to overcome the effect of the Imperius Curse is one of them. Not many manage to do it. All the students in my year failed to do it."

Harry cocked his eyebrows. "Including you?"

"I barely pass actually," said Viktor. "But Professor Karkaroff said it was not enough. He told me I passed because the curse thrown at me was not strong enough. He told me that in real life, they will take over my mind very easily so he gives me a fail. He told me to continue practicing."

"I see."

"That would be enough."

Harry looked up and saw Madame Maxime. She had just arrived together with Professor Karkaroff.

"Go to your table," she addressed her students in French. "Take your dinner. You all have additional classes tonight, remember? I won't tolerate any more lateness from any of you, do you understand?"

"Oui, Madame," answered Fleur and her friends in unison. They immediately left for the Ravenclaw table. After they left, Madame Maxime turned towards Harry. "You look a bit pale, dear boy," she said. "You will want to 'ave someone check on you. I suggest that you go to the 'ospital wing after you take your dinner. I shall 'ave a word with your headmaster about what you 'ave been through today. Ah! Zhere 'e iz."

Harry turned to look at the staff table and indeed there he was. Albus Dumbledore had just entered the Great Hall through the door usually reserved for Hogwarts' staffs. The headmaster paused as soon as he noticed Madame Maxime and Professor Karkaroff were standing close to Harry.

Madame Maxime turned briefly towards Harry. "Remember what I said, Monsieur Potter," she reminded him. Without waiting for a reply, she then set off towards the staff table. Professor Karkaroff stared at the receding back of Madame Maxime with unmasked amusement. "It seems to me that she did not like that you had been taught by Mad-Eye," he said. He then turned to Harry. "I don't like that man but I agree that it is essential for you to learn that skill. It will help you someday. You have become close to Viktor. Maybe Viktor could learn a thing or two from you. Viktor told me that he invited you to our ship. I give you my permission to come at anytime you wish."

"Thank you." That was all Harry could say.

Professor Karkaroff nodded and left for the staff table.
There was a momentary silence at the Gryffindor table.

Viktor was the first to break the silence. "Sunday," he announced. "Morning at ten after breakfast. Do you think you could come?"

"Yeah, sure thing Viktor."

Viktor nodded satisfactorily. "You can invite a few of your friends, Harry. I figure that since the Beauxbaton invited you on Saturday, it will be a good idea for you to come to the ship on Sunday. You will have school works too, no? I don’t want to stretch you thin."

"That’s mighty thoughtful of you, Viktor. Thanks."

For some reason, he was expecting that both tour to happen on the very same day on Saturday but the new arrangement was much-much better.

Viktor nodded. He proceeded to pile food into his plate and began to eat.

"I suspect there are a few more details purposely left out of what was going on with you two today," Harry addressed Hermione and Ron. "Might as well spill it out. Why are they here?"

Hermione looked uncomfortable. She exchanged looks with Ron who in the end looked pointedly away from her.

"Like I said you didn't reappear for the whole afternoon, Harry," said Hermione as she glared daggers at Ron. "We went back to the DADA class. We tried to get in but the door is still locked. We didn't know what to do. It was then we thought-"

"She thought that you were hanging out with Viktor," interrupted Ron.

"No, I did not!" contested Hermione.

"Well you were the one who suggest that we knock on the Durmstrang's door," stated Ron. He then turned to Harry. "I told her to wait and if you're still went missing, we go straight to Dumbledore but she wouldn’t listen. For some reason, she was convinced that you’re with Viktor Krum."

Harry turned towards Viktor. His eyebrows raised.

The Durmstrang's Seeker just shrugged. He attacked a chicken nugget with his fork and put it into his mouth. "It is true. Her-my-knee vas a little bit hysterical if I use the term correctly when I saw them. She banged on our door, demanding that ve let her in. She wanted to barge into our ship looking for you. Your friend here however managed to restrain her."

Hermione's face reddened at this. "Well I- I..." she stuttered.

"Hermione, I only got permission from Professor Karkaroff like five minutes ago," Harry said seriously. "I definitely, positively did not hang out with Viktor in his ship this afternoon."

"Well I- I... well where were you then?!"

"I already told you," said Harry calmly. He then leaned forward towards Hermione. "Look at me, Hermione," he instructed her.

The girl did as told.

Harry looked deeply into her eyes. It was then he saw her pupils shifting abnormally. Her eyes were also seemed to go out of focus from time to time. He then understood. Hermione was suffering from the after effect of the Imperius Curse which rendered her temporary unable to think straight. As an auror, he recognized the symptom. He saw it many times before during his days as an auror and Hermione definitely was not the only one suffering from it. The Imperious Curse it seemed not only put one under control of the other, but also addle the brain, causing delusions, distress, hallucinations and in some extreme cases could change the victim's personality as well as causing various cognitive disorders such as dementia and amnesia early at young age.

Well, they didn't teach you that in school, he thought savagely. His anger rose upon remembering what Barty did. He'll pay for what he did. But for now...

Harry grabbed a nearby goblet and poured pumpkin juice in it. He then pushed the goblet into Hermione's hand. "Drink it," he told her. "Eat, Hermione. Once the dinner is over, I want you turn in early tonight. Me and Ron will escort you to the hospital wing tomorrow morning."

But Hermione shook her head. "I can't. I got homework to do and pages to read."
"You'll do no such thing," said Harry firmly. "Our homework needs only to be sent the very next week. I think you could afford to relax one night."

"But."

"No but! You'll do as I say. I'm not taking excuses, Hermione."

Hermione sighed. She looked down at her goblet. "This is a payback for blowing things out of proportion, isn't it?" she muttered. "I'm sorry."

But Harry waved her apology off. "There's no need for an apology, Hermione. You were just worried about me, that's all. Anyway, tomorrow is Friday. You can use the weekend to do whatever it is you want to do, just not this night. Now drink the pumpkin juice and eat something before you go to bed. We'll see Madam Pomfrey early tomorrow before breakfast. Maybe she could give you something to calm your nerve a little bit."

Hermione had no choice but to oblige.

The rest of the dinner time that night went without a hitch. Ron gave him a rundown about the incident at the Hogwarts harbor where the Durmstrang ship made port. He told him that the Beauxbaton only joined them when they were on their way back to the castle. Apparently, they saw the commotion but did not make any move to investigate.

"They were surprised when they found out what really happened, the whole lot of them. Madame Maxime looked livid after she learnt what really happened. She was scary, mate. I never saw that level of anger from anyone before," said Ron. "Not even Snape. It's because of you, isn't it?"

But Harry disagreed. "She probably was angry because her students were in the class as well. Remember that he did test the Imperious Curse on a few of them. I don't think it's about me, Ron," said Harry.

Ron gave out a thoughtful look. "Yeah, you're probably right. I saw her speak to her students but I can't understand a word she said. She spoke in French you see but I think it's safe to say that she probably asked them what Moody did in the class. Boy, poor old Moody is going to get his arse whipped I can tell you that. You should have seen her face. She was very angry."

"Yeah," agreed Harry, thinking about the poor innocent, real Alastor Moody. He had a hunch that Dumbledore will urge the retired auror to take over from Barty in teaching the DADA. There would be lesser problems if Moody agrees. However, given what happened, he silently hoped that Dumbledore will be able to protect the old ex-auror from Madame Maxime. Dumbledore owed Moody that.

Speaking of which...

He turned to look towards the staff table and saw Professor Dumbledore, Madame Maxime and Professor Karkaroff in serious discussion. He was indeed curious on the kind of explanation Dumbledore would give to the other headmasters. And he was curious to know if Dumbledore really gave Barty the permission to teach the three Unforgiven Curses to the students. Knowing Dumbledore, he probably did.

Harry continued to observe the headmasters' conversation for the next few minutes. It seemed to him that Dumbledore managed to put things under control given the way Madame Maxime responded to him. Harry would not worry about Karkaroff. The Durmstrang's headmaster already made it clear that he had no problem with what the impostor taught. Chances were he would back Dumbledore up. Still, it would be interesting to know what they were talking about. He made a mental note to ask Dumbledore when they meet later tonight.

He tore his eyes away from the headmasters and inevitably, it landed on Fleur. Their eyes met momentarily before the Delacour heiress returned to her food. He could see that she and the rest of the Beauxbaton students were having their dinner in a hurry. They probably did not want to be late for their night classes, he mused. But just as he about to return to his own dinner, he noticed Cho Chang. The Ravenclaw's Seeker was glancing every now and then towards him and Fleur. There was something in the way she looked at him and Fleur. More like curiosity... and maybe a little bit of jealousy.

Harry decided that he did not want to know so he returned to his dinner and ignored everything.

Katie Bell, Alicia Spinnet, Angelina Johnson, the Weasley twins congregated around him near the end of the dinner. They were concerned about him given the rumors that flew around that
day. The Beauxbaton already left the Great Hall more than fifteen minutes before.

“You sure you’re alright?” asked Angelina gently. “We could postpone the meeting, Harry.”

“Yeah I think that would a good idea,” supported Fred. “Let Harry have some rest tonight.”

“Agree,” nodded George. “You look a little bit peaky by the way, mate. We’ll get you something once we’re back in the tower.”

Knowing the twins, Harry suspected that that ‘something’ would be butterbeer or firewhisky. As much as he loved both drink, he decided to have none that night. “That’s okay, George. I’m fine,” he declined. “I think we should continue on with the meeting tonight. We need a consensus on how to go forward now that Oliver won’t be able to join our rank. The sooner we decide the better.”

“Are you sure, Harry?” asked Angelina.

Harry nodded. “More than sure.” He looked around his teammates. “Let’s get to it.”

“Alright.”

Dinner time was finally over. Professor Dumbledore ushered all the remaining students out of the Great Hall. Harry joined the rest of the Gryffindorians on their way back to the Tower.

“You should go back to your dormitory, Hermione” said Harry the moment they arrived at the common room. “Take some rest tonight.”

“Can I just-”

“No, you can’t!” said Harry firmly. “Go to your dorm Hermione, and stay there. If you try to sneak out, I’ll find out. Goodnight.”

Looking dejected, Hermione turned and left for her dormitory.

“You’re a little bit harsh on her, Harry,” commented Ron as he and Harry watched Hermione walking up the steps towards her dorm. “You know you could give her a little bit of slack.”

Harry sighed. “I know, Ron” he said. “If you must know, Hermione is suffering from the side effect of an overpowered Imperious Curse. I just found that out during dinner tonight. I’m doing this for her safety. God knows what she’ll do if nobody watches her.”

Ron cocked his eyebrows. “How do you know this?”

“Well I could explain to you technically but there are simpler ways. Both you and her went to the Durmstrang ship because she thought that I would be there, hanging out with Viktor. A normal Hermione definitely won’t make such baseless assumption,” said Harry flatly. “Plus there are other symptoms that we could look out for. It’s better this way, Ron. We’ll take her to see Madam Pomfrey tomorrow.”

“Why do I have the feeling that you knew more than you’re willing to admit? Anyway, if her condition is really that bad perhaps we should bring her to the hospital wing tonight,” suggested Ron. “Madame Maxime already told you to go to the hospital wing to have you check. We could bring her along.”

Harry gritted his teeth. He knew Ron was right but given what he intended to do that night, bringing Hermione along would put a damper on everything. But at the same time, he could not bring himself to say no especially when it come to Hermione and Ron.

Harry sighed. “Alright, fine. I’ll take her to see Madam Pomfrey later after the meeting’s finished.”

Ron nodded satisfactorily. “Alright then. I’ll tag along. I’ll help.”

But Harry declined, much to Ron’s disappointment. “I can handle her myself, Ron. Besides, we have classes tomorrow. I’m not sure what time I’ll be back.”

“You sure?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah pretty much. It’s best that you get an early shut eye tonight. Get some rest. You had a hectic day today.”

Ron was about to retort when George called out to Harry.

“Hey Harry! Come on. Meeting is about to begin.”
The rest of the team had already gathered at the farthest corner of the common room. 
Seamus, Lee Jordan, Dean and a few others joined in as well.

"Coming," replied Harry. He then gestured Ron to follow him.

"So we already know that we lack a keeper for our upcoming match against the Durmstrang," said Angelina. "And our situation doesn't get any better with the arrival of Oliver's letter. We need to discuss our next options and hopefully we could come up with some sort of agreement before we turn in tonight."

"You're forgetting that we also in a dire need for a captain," reminded Fred.

"Choosing a captain is easy," Katie pointed out. "You acted as Oliver's deputy when he was still in Hogwarts. It's natural isn't it? That you should be the one to replace him."

"I can't. I don't even have the badge. Besides, house captain selection is solely the head of the house's prerogative and Professor McGonagall hasn't said anything yet about Oliver's replacement," said Angelina. "I prefer to let her choose. Like always."

"Well, we still need a captain," pointed out Alicia. "And as of now, you're the best candidate we have. You worked with Oliver before. Some of his skills rubbed off on you, plus we need someone who knows strategies."

"Guys, please."

"I agree," said George, ignoring Angelina's plea. He stood and looked around at his teammates. "Angelina as our new captain. Let's agree on it."

Fred's hand shot up before Angelina could say anything. "Agree!"

"Fred!"

"We already made up our mind, Angelina. You're now our new captain," said Katie smirking.

"There is no way you're getting out of this one."

Angelina pouted her lips. "Actually I can. Professor McGonagall still has a say on this, remember?"

"She will agree once she hears what we have to say, Angelina," said Katie, still smirking.

"Anyway why won't you want it? You already done half the job of what Oliver did. You're talented as his assistant and you know how he works. Plus you'll get to enjoy all the privileges those prefects get."

Angelina was about to retort when Harry who initially contend to simply observe the proceeding interrupted.

"Katie and Alicia is right, Angelina," he said. "You're the best candidate for the job. We need someone who is as effective as Oliver and you being his prodigy mean that you're the most suitable among us to take over from him. You're driven, you're energetic and you have the same determination as he is, maybe even more. We won the Quidditch Cup last year under his leadership. I'm confident that we can repeat the feat this year under your leadership. Just agree to it. We won't have anyone else to lead us but you."

"But Harry, we're going to face the Durmstrang and Viktor Krum," stated Angelina. "They got a World Cup player amongst them."

Harry stood up. Looking around at his teammates, he spoke, firmly. "I am the one who will face Viktor Krum. Remember that the rest of their team is just students like the rest of us. They can be beaten. We have the best package in years. We got the best Chasers." He gestured towards Angelina, Katie and Alicia. "And we have the best Beaters," he continued, gesturing towards Fred and George.

"And don't forget that we have the best Seeker who never fail to catch a snitch," pointed out Fred.

"And he nearly beat Krum," added Lee Jordan.

Harry tilted his head. "Yeah, that too," he said, smirking. "So all we need now is a good keeper and a brilliant strategy. The Durmstrang will have weaknesses and we are going to exploit it to the fullest. They're not going to lie around doing nothing until the day of the match. They will train and we will observe and we will use what we learn against them."
"I don't think they will allow us to watch them training, Harry," said Seamus who until just now simply watched the proceeding. "They will want to keep it a secret."

"Ah but you forget that we already have talented secret breakers among us," said Harry. He then pointed towards Fred and George. "I'm sure they will do well."

Fred and George, upon realizing what Harry was insinuating, smiled widely.

"Just leave it to us, Harry," said George.

"We'll break into their secrets in no time," added Fred.

"But Harry, you know that they also going to spy on the Gryffindor," said Dean. "They're going to know our secret as well."

Harry paused, but moments later, he grinned widely. "Don't worry. I know a place where we can practice without anyone else watching."

They gawked at him.

"Really? Well where is it?" asked Seamus.

"You'll see. So here is what we're going to do. Once we're done with the captain and keeper problem, we're going to set the date of the match with the Durmstrang. I prefer it to happen after the winter break. I know they didn't do anything yet but once they know when the match will happen, they will start training. The pitch probably will be out of bound every time they train. Fred and George will spy on them. We saw how Viktor played in the World Cup but we know nothing about their team mates. That's where you two come in. This is important. Our strategy then will heavily based on what you feed us," said Harry. "Just remember. They're all students like us. Viktor might have the upper hand but the rest of his team may not. I have a feeling that their pooled talents maybe lop sided with it leaning heavily towards Viktor, just like the Bulgarian team. If what I suspected is true, we're going to have quite an advantage over them in the match."

"What about their brooms?" asked Ron. "We're going to be severely outmatched if all of them use Firebolt."

Harry gestured towards the Weasley twin. "That will be their job to find out. Remember that two years ago, the Slytherin team used Nimbus 2001 and yet we were the one who won the game. We even outpace them during the match. We can do it."

Everyone there murmured in agreement.

"I think we have found our new captain," Angelina who was watching Harry keenly suddenly spoke. For some reason she was grinning madly.

"Of course we have," said Harry. "It's you. We already agree to it."

But Angelina shook her head. "Actually it's not going to be me. It's going to be you, Harry."

"What?!"

"Haven't you realized Harry, that you're already doing the captain's job for the past five minutes?" she asked. "And you were brilliant at it."

"Yeah," agreed George. "Come to think of it. You did act like a captain. You spoke like a captain."

"Come on guys! We already agree that Angelina is the new captain, not me," said Harry irritably.

"You set up the match. You came up with a brilliant plan. You told us and guide us on what to do. You motivated us when we were unsure of ourselves. You're just like Oliver," stated Angelina. "Those are a captain's job, Harry. You did it really well."

"But I know nothing about game strategies, Angelina," groaned Harry.

"I can help you with that," said Angelina. "Look Harry. I'm going to leave Hogwarts in less than a couple of years. Oliver held his spot for more than three years. You already know that he became captain in his fourth year. Now, you will be able to do the same. For once, it would be good to see another potentially brilliant captain holding his reign for a long time. It will do a lot of good for the team."

Silence.
"You know, I miss Oliver," Katie spoke softly. "I miss him being the captain. But Angelina is right. You got potential, Harry. You have the same mindset as Oliver. He never knows when to quit. It looks to me that you also have it. I know you're going to be a brilliant captain just like him. I vote for you." She then looked around towards her teammates. "We all vote for you."

"Agree!" announced Fred and George in unison. "From this moment on, Harry's the new captain of our Quidditch Team! Hurrah!"

And the rest of the Harry's teammate and those around them including other Gryffindorians within the common room began to clap, cheering and celebrating the unexpected inauguration of the new Gryffindor Quidditch Team captain.

"Our dorm mate is the captain of the Quidditch team!" Seamus and Dean declared loudly. "Our dorm mate is the captain of the Quidditch team! How cool is that?!"

Ron and Neville meanwhile were grinning madly at Harry.

Harry meanwhile could only stand and watched as the event unfolded in front of him. That night really did not go the way the was expecting it to be.

"Well this is unprecedented. So what now, captain?" asked Alicia, smirking at Harry.

Harry did not answer. Instead, he shook his head and sighed. He pinched his nose bridge and said, "Alright fine. I'll do it."

There was another thunderous applause and cheering.

Harry held up his hand. The noise immediately died down and everyone looked at him with utmost respect.

"There's one last issue we need to solve," he announced. "We need a keeper and a really good one. Given the amount of time we have until the day of the match, there is a possibility that we won't be able to train a new one. We need someone who's already well trained. From there, all we need is to do is sort out the coordination between us and make sure that the new keeper will be able to work seamlessly with us."

"You're talking about accepting the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff's offer," stated Angelina matter factly.

Harry nodded. "Yes. But we're not going to accept the offer just like that. We're going to have tryouts. We will grill them and we will grill the candidates hard. From there we'll choose. The one who loses, we'll put him as a reserve. Both Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw will want their people to be part of the team to fight the Durmstrang. This way, we will be able to avoid disappointment and those tryouts will further legitimize our decision. They won't be able to complaint."

Fred and George stared at Harry impressively.

"Brilliant plan, Harry," said George.

"We know we did the right thing by putting you in the captain's chair," said Fred.

Harry could only roll his eyes.

The time was 10.30pm. The meeting was finally adjourned.

Angelina told him that she will forward his name to Professor McGonagall early the next morning.

"I'm pretty sure Professor McGonagall will agree. It was a unanimous decision after all. You'll receive the captain's badge tomorrow, Harry," she said to him before she left for her dormitory.

Harry simply nodded.

"So Harry, what now?" asked Ron who was standing beside him. "Hey, since you're now the captain, do you think I could have a chance? You know I always play the keeper whenever we practice at the Burrow."

"Yeah sure," said Harry. "There will be tryouts for a permanent keeper. I'll keep you posted. Just remember to practice hard, Ron."

"Sweet," said Ron delightedly. "So you're going to the hospital wing?"
"Yeah," said Harry. "Wait, hold on. Parvati?"

Parvati was on her way to back to her dormitory which she shared with Hermione. "Yes, what is it, captain?" she said, emphasizing on the word 'captain'.

"I really wish you stop doing that," said Harry with no small amount of annoyance. "Can you get Hermione for me? Please?"

Parvati just smirked and gave him a captain salute. "Of course. Whatever you say, captain."

She then set off towards her dormitory.

Harry just shook his head. "Damn this people," he muttered.

"Are you sure you don't want me to come, Harry?" asked Ron as they both waited for Hermione at the bottom of the spiral stairs.

"Yes I'm sure," confirmed Harry. "Like I told you, I don't know what time I'll be back."

"It'll be that long? Are you saying that you're really sick, Harry?" asked Ron, worriedly.

"No Ron, I'm fine," said Harry. "Look, I have an appointment with Dumbledore later tonight. He wanted to see me."

Ron cocked his eyebrows. "Dumbledore? For what?"

"Dunno," replied Harry simply. "I'll know when I meet him."

Ron nodded understandably.

"Harry!"

They both looked up, expecting to see Hermione. Instead, they saw Parvati.

"She's already asleep," she said. "Do you want me to wake her up?"

"No. That's okay," said Harry with no small amount of relief. "Let her sleep. Thank you, Parvati."

"You're welcome."

"Well, I guess I better get going," he said to Ron. But all of a sudden, he remembered something. "I need to get something first."

Together, he and Ron headed towards their dormitory.

Claps and cheers greeted them as they entered their dormitory. Fred, George and Lee Jordan were there too. Fred who was sitting on Neville's bed walked up to him and pushed a dusty bottle into his hand.

"As promise. Drink up, Harry," he said.

Harry stared at the dusty bottle. "Firewhisky?"

"Straight from Hogsheads. That's our last bottle," said Lee Jordan proudly. "But we figure that your need is more important than us."

"So for the good of mankind, we sacrificed," said George with mock patriotism.

"Hear! Hear!" said Fred.

Harry stared at them. He already knew how the twin managed to smuggle all the drinks and the sweets into the castle. He though silently wondered if they knew that Professor Dumbledore's brother was the one who ran the out-of-the-way pub, the Hogshead.

"Guys, I'm not going to see Madam Pomfrey while being drunk," he said.

There was a momentary pause.

"You're going to see Madam Pomfrey? asked Dean.

"Are you alright, Harry?" asked Neville.

"I'm fine, Neville. I'm just going to have a check up, that's all. I can't drink this." He held up
the firewhisky bottle.

"Well in that case," said George. He got up and grabbed the firewhisky bottle from Harry and handed him another bottle. "Butterbeer."

Harry looked at the bottle. It was indeed butterbeer. He smiled. "That's more like it," he said. He popped the cork open and drank it all up in one go while at the same time enjoying the warm sensation as the liquid flowed down his throat.

Another clapping and another cheering.

Seamus, who was eyeing the firewhisky held by George, looked at him impressively. "Woah! You're quite a drinker, Harry."

"Yeah," he said, handing over the now empty bottle back to George. "Thanks. I got to go."

He opened up his trunk and took out the horcrux list and the folded black cloth containing the Ravenclaw's Diadem and the basilisk fang and placed the item inside his jacket. He had been keeping it locked inside his trunk since the early next morning after the event within the Room of Requirement.

"What are those?" asked Dean, curiously.

"Nothing," said Harry dismissively. "I'll see you guys later."

With that, he made the exit from his dormitory.

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**Hogwarts hospital wing, moments later...**

He popped into existence just outside the entrance into the hospital wing. He looked around and saw that he was alone.

He made a mental note to thank Dumbledore for allowing him to apparate within the castle even if it just for a day. To be honest, he was not looking forward to walk all the way from the Gryffindor Tower towards the hospital wing and having to circumnavigate Filch, Mrs. Norris and Snape who would no doubt be prowling the castle corridor this time of night looking for rule breakers.

He paused for a moment and tried his best to feel if there were any unintended side effects from him performing magic. Satisfied that nothing unexpected happened, he was about to push the door open when suddenly he remembered something. He took out the list and read through it. After deliberating for a few moments, he took out his wand and erased the item pertaining Nagini and him. He then put the list back into his jacket, pushed the door open and entered the hospital wing.

"MR. POTTER!"

Harry froze in his place. He saw Madam Pomfrey came marching towards him. She stopped exactly in front of him and glared at him.

"Sorry." That was all he could think of.

"You nearly gave me a heart attack this afternoon, Mr. Potter. I appreciate it if you did not do it again. If it was me, I'll chain you to the hospital bed myself. You're lucky that the headmaster back you up. Come! He's waiting."

He followed Madam Pomfrey into the emergency ward where Moody was kept. Once inside, he saw Professor Dumbledore was already there. He was holding a silver goblet in his hand and perched on his left shoulder was Fawkes.

"Professor?"

Professor Dumbledore gestured Harry to come closer to him. Once he arrived in front of him, the headmaster handed him the goblet. "Here, Harry. Drink this," said Dumbledore gently.

Harry took the goblet and drank it whole. Immediately just as the clear liquid touched his throat, warmth flowed all over his body. All the pain disappeared. He felt all the organs within his body revitalized. He felt energized and his mind got sharper and clearer than before.

"What's in it, professor?" he asked curiously.

"Pure crystallized mountain water mixed with a few drop of phoenix tears," answered Dumbledore, gesturing towards Fawkes who crooned softly on his shoulder. "You probably realize by now that a phoenix tear has excellent medicinal properties. It can cure everything."
Harry's eyebrows cocked. "Yes I realized that. Fawkes saved my life from the basilisk venom. Everything, sir?"

Dumbledore nodded. "Yes. Everything except death."

This was quite a revelation to him. He totally had forgotten about it. He forgot about phoenix tears being able to cure all diseases. Fleur died of cancer. If only he remembered back then. He immediately made a mental note to ask Dumbledore if he could give him a few drops of Fawkes tears. For future sake.

"So that explains it," he said.

Dumbledore just smiled. "I take it that you already know why you're here and why I gave you the drink."

Harry nodded. "Something to do with my magical core, I believe. Can it do something about it?"

Dumbledore sighed. "Despite whatever I said previously, I'm afraid the reprieve would be just temporary. You are cured but only for now. Caution is still advisable. I take it that you're ready to tell me everything."

"Yes," answered Harry. "There are questions I need to ask as well."

Dumbledore nodded satisfactorily. "Very well. We shall go to my office, Harry."

But at that point, Harry's eye landed on the still unconscious Alastair Moody, lying on the bed not far from where he and Dumbledore stood. "How's Professor Moody, sir?"

Professor Dumbledore turned to look at Moody. "He will survive. Barty kept him under his control, making him weak so that he can harvest his head to make the Polyjuice Potion."

From where he stood, Harry could see various parts of Moody's hair being cut erratically. "I admired Barty's dedication."

"Yes he managed to fool everyone," agreed Dumbledore. "Including me."

Harry stared at Dumbledore. "You mean to tell me that you didn't see it coming?"

Dumbledore smiled. "It's just one of my weaknesses, Harry. Of course what happened today will change a lot of things."

Harry nodded. He turned back to gaze at Moody. "Do you think he will agree?"

"Agree to what, Harry?"

"Continue teaching? Taking the mantle over from Barty? After everything that happened to him?"

Dumbledore paused for a moment.

"We shall see," he spoke. "But I would have hoped he will agree."

Despite the fact that both of them were able to apparate anywhere within the castle, Dumbledore decided to walk to his office. Harry had no problem with that. Along the way, they talked. Harry asked him about Barty. Dumbledore told him Barty was now hidden, safely within the trunk that once was Moody's prison.

"That trunk shall be his temporary home until we could find a more viable solution. He will of course return to Azkaban where he will serve the remainder of his time there. That unfortunately will be the least of his problem however," said Dumbledore. "But you already know that, don't you?"

Of course Harry knew. As an auror, he knew what will become of Barty. There would be another trial pertaining to him breaking out of Azkaban, kidnapping Alastair Moody, drugging the ex-auror and unauthorized use of substances which was the Polyjuice Potion. And if convicted, they will perform the Dementor Kiss on him before throwing him back into his cell. He would face the worst fate ever to be bestowed to a human being. But he knew that he wouldn't care for what would happen to the escaped convicted. Barty was a Death Eater and to become a Death Eater, taking someone's life was one of the preconditions. That alone was more than enough for Barty to receive whatever it was coming for him. Mr. Crouch won't be spared either. The Ministry will find out what he did. He too will face judgment for hiding a convicted felon, unauthorized use of substance and the usage of the Unforgiven Curse. He foresaw that the Crouch Family scandal will be the biggest that will hit Magical Britain in
months to come. The Ministry would have quite a field day once the public get a whiff of it. Rita Skeeter would be the happiest. She would write and write until her Quick-Quote quill begged for its life. The House of Crouch's name would forever be tainted.

Harry was pulled out of his stupor when Dumbledore announced that they had arrived at the entrance into his office. He looked up and saw the familiar looking gargoyle blocking the way towards a slowly ascending circular staircase.

"Sherbet Lemon."

Harry raised his eyebrows at this. He remembered the password. He first heard of it during his second year. It was after the school found out what happened to Justin Finch-Fletchley. Harry was at that time unwittingly became the main suspect. Talk about being at the wrong place at the wrong time.

The stone gargoyle leapt aside and both Harry and Dumbledore step onto the staircase.

"You're still using the password from two years ago," Harry reminded Dumbledore as the circular staircase slowly brought them both to the true entrance into the headmaster office. "I thought you would have it changed by now for security sake."

Dumbledore just chuckled. "The password isn't the only protection the headmaster office has, Harry."

No doubt, Harry thought. He remembered back during his fifth year at Hogwarts. Dolores Umbridge finally managed to usurp Dumbledore as the new headmaster. The headmaster office however refused to let her in despite her knowing the password. He was not sure if it was Dumbledore's making or not but he had a hunch that the office would only recognized a legitimate headmaster and the legitimate headmaster at that time was still Albus Dumbledore. It was basically part of the castle own magic he assumed. He was pretty sure that there would be more security measures implanted that would protect the office from unauthorized trespassing.

Dumbledore pushed open the oaken door the moment they reached upstairs. "In you go, Harry."

Harry entered and Dumbledore closed the door behind him.

He took a moment to soak in the surrounding. The headmaster office was just like what he used to remember. Vast number of portraits of past headmasters, all of them evidently sleeping, hanging on the wall. There were many spindly tables with intricate silvery instruments on top of them. Far at the corner of the office he saw the stone Pensieve, resting on top of an old wooden table. The Sorting Hat could be found resting high on top of a shelf. Fawkes had comfortably perched at his own perch. The bird continued to observe Harry with utmost curiosity.

Dumbledore walked around the headmaster desk and sat on his chair. He gestured Harry to sit down.

"Take a seat, Harry."

Harry sat on one of the guest chair facing Dumbledore.

There was a moment of silence. Dumbledore leaned against the back of his chair. His eyes were closed and he was massaging his temple. It appeared that he was plunging into a deep thought. That act however did not last long. The headmaster opened up his eyes and put down his hand. He began to address Harry.

"We both had questions," he said to Harry. "But I feel it would be prudent to let you start first."

Harry nodded. "Headmaster, when was the first time you realized that Tom Riddle isn't dead?"

"Right after he killed your parents," answered Dumbledore. "But it wasn't a realization. More like a suspicion. I don't have any proof that Tom survived at that time but I was sure that given his ambition, he will find a way to extend his life span. The residual magic left behind after your parents were murdered seemed to support my case."

"Residual?"

Dumbledore nodded. "Yes. Residual. And there were a lot of it, hanging within the room you slept in like a thick fog. A wizard's magic dies with him, Harry. Tom's magic however lived on. And curiously enough, so did your mother's magic."

Harry was taken aback. "You mean to say that she was still alive?"
But Dumbledore shook his head. "Your mother's dead, Harry. Just as your father. But her magic lived on. In you. I recognized it the moment I look at you which is why I decided to place you under the care of your relatives. And for that, I am truly sorry."

But Harry waved Dumbledore's apology off. "That's okay, professor. I know exactly why you left me there and I'm not really complaining. Sure the living condition isn't great but I survived because of it. What happened after you left me at the Dursley's doorstep?"

Harry noticed the embarrassment that crept into Dumbledore's expression but he did not care about that. All he needed now is answers.

"I went back to your parents' house in Godric Hollow. The Ministry personnel were already there. They could not sense it but I know that Tom's magic is still present and I suspected that it will linger in that house for years to come. So I advised Minister Millicent Bagnold to make your parents' house out of bound to anyone based on the reason that dark magic had been performed in there. He agreed immediately. He did ask where you were kept. I told him that you are safe but I refused to disclose to him on your whereabouts, much to his displeasure I admit. As you would have known, many things happened after that. The cleansing. The purge. Sirius Black went to prison for something he did not committed. I spent the next eleven years tracking Tom or whatever left of him. I got nothing but the suspicion remained and it grew stronger as time passes by. It was only during your first year at Hogwarts that my suspicion turned into realization," explained Dumbledore.

"The event with the Mirror of Erised," stated Harry. 'And Professor Quirrell.'

Dumbledore nodded. "Exactly."

"How long have you been suspecting Professor Quirrell?"

"I didn't at the beginning," said Dumbledore. "You do remember vault no. 713, the vault in which the Sorcerer's Stone was initially kept?" he asked to which Harry nodded. "It was only after my contact in Gringotts described the perpetrator who tried to break into the vault and steal the stone that I began to suspect him. I put Professor Snape to the task and ordered him to spy on Professor Quirrell. Thanks to you, my suspicion was proven right. It was after that event that my search began in earnest. I know something is tying him to this world and that something prevents him from crossing over to the afterlife. I began to trace Tom's footsteps after he left Hogwarts. His diary inevitably becomes the first clue."

"Do you still keep it?" asked Harry.

"Yes."

Dumbledore pulled open one of his desk drawer and took the diary out. He placed it in front of Harry who eyed it with no small amount of distaste.

"I'm suspecting that the diary isn't the only clue," stated Dumbledore. "And it's not just a mere memory of Tom Riddle that once resided in it."

"You're right. It's not," said Harry.

Dumbledore's eyebrows raised. "There are more that you could tell me."

"Indeed, sir."

Harry took the folded black cloth from his jacket and placed it on top the desk beside the diary. He carefully unfolded it and laid the content bare for Dumbledore to see.

It definitely took Dumbledore by surprise. The old headmaster stood and leaned forward towards the Ravenclaw Diadem. He carefully took it and began examining it. He immediately noticed that the bright blue jewel embedded within the circlet was damaged. There was a hole that burrowed right through it.

Dumbledore looked up towards Harry. "Harry?"

Harry looked back at Dumbledore calmly. "That's right, Professor. The thing you have in your hand is the Ravenclaw Diadem. The diadem and the diary both shared the same thing." He then leaned forwards towards Dumbledore.

"How much do you know about Horcrux?"

To be continued...

A/n: Another day another chapter. And thanks for all the input guys.

So that's it. Nothing much to say here. Hope you guys enjoy this chapter.
Until next time.
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"How much do you know about Horcrux?"

Of course Dumbledore knew about horcrux. How could he did not? As a matter a fact, every Hogwarts teacher would know about it. Horace Slughorn was a solid proof despite him being only a Potion Master. Horcrux making did not have anything to do with magical chemistry after all.

What Harry really wanted to know was the progress of Dumbledore's investigation pertaining Voldemort's survival. How much Dumbledore currently knew? He had a hunch however, that the headmaster at this point might not know much. Back in his old timeline, it appeared that Dumbledore's progress only accelerated after several events that happened at the end of his fourth year and beyond. Cedric's death. Voldemort's rebirth. Harry's purported connection with the Dark Lord. The Battle at the Ministry for Magic. Those events seemed to provide Dumbledore with something that aided his progress in unveiling Voldemort's secret to immortality. It culminated in Harry's sixth year when Dumbledore tasked him to obtain a secret Professor Slughorn kept for a really long time. That, as Harry would learn later on, was the final clue Dumbledore required in order to ensure that Voldemort could be fell permanently.

Horcrux.

Harry dearly wanted to know in what way those events helped Dumbledore in his quest. Sure those events would make Dumbledore realized the dire situation the world was in, making him speed up everything. But what important was what Dumbledore learnt from the events and all his travels. Dumbledore never really told him except those related to his past. Unfortunately though, he knew that it would be impossible for him to obtain those information. In this timeline, Dumbledore had yet to experience those events and given what he planned to do, the headmaster may never will.

Dumbledore put down the diadem and straightened up. He stared at Harry with darkened expression. His blue eyes lost their twinkle.

"Horcrux, Harry?"

Harry calmly nodded. "I know all about horcrux sir, and I know you know about it too. But what I need to know is what you had learnt all these past years from the moment my parents were murdered until today. I know you didn't just sitting around, twiddling your thumb, waiting for things to happen. So can you tell me anything at all?"
Dumbledore sat back down. "Like I told you before, not much," said Dumbledore. "But the diary did give me an idea on what and where to look."

"You already suspecting he was using horcrux but somehow you're not sure," stated Harry.

Dumbledore nodded. "Precisely. One cannot make an assumption based just on one, single information. I know I needed more. I need to know that the horcrux isn't just the only way for one to tie his soul to this world. And if he did, would that be only one?"

Harry's eyebrows cocked at this. "There are other ways?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "No. As far as anyone knows. Or at least, as far as the book could tell me."

Dumbledore then got up and walked towards a small stairs that lead to what Harry assumed to be his quarters and shelves of books. He climbed the stairs and headed towards one of the bookshelves. His thin fingers ran through the back of the many books until it stopped at one particular black leather bound book. He pulled the book out and returned to his desk. He carefully placed the dusty old book on his desk. The book's title, written in white silver, was plain for Harry to see.

"Secrets of the Darkest Art," said Dumbledore. "The foulest, most wretched book I had the displeasure in reading in my entire life. It was once kept in the Restriction Section of the library. I came to know about it in the early months of my appointment here as the Transfiguration Professor. I tried to have the book initially thrown out but with no success. I even tried reasoning with Headmaster Brutus Scrimgeur; Phineas Black and later on, Armando Dippet, but none of them listened. They said that as an educational institution, knowledge should be made available to everyone who wants to seek it and as a teacher, I should not interfere with it. It was only after my appointment as the principal of Hogwarts that I managed to take the book out of the library permanently. But then it was already too late."

"Tom Riddle got a hold of it," stated Harry. "And he managed to learn as much as he could from it."

Dumbledore nodded grimly. "The fear that he would have learned everything from the book for whatever devious purposes he had in his mind hangs over my head for many, many years. It's not always being the case, Harry. I usually do not fear those who want to seek knowledge. What I truly fear is what they are going to do with it."

Harry nodded in understanding. He also like Dumbledore, was aware of the danger that book posed. Back in the old timeline after the war, he had forgotten all about it until one day, he found the book resting in one of the bookshelves that lined up the walls of Hermione's office while visiting her. He took the book out and against Hermione's protest, destroyed it in front of her:-

"That book was the main reason why my parents and people we know died! It was that book that gave me this scar! What do you think will happen if it falls into the wrong hands once again? Are you sure you ready to face another Voldemort?! We may not be so lucky the second time, Hermione! Some knowledge should have just died, never to be learnt again. I thought after everything that happened, you would have wised up by now."

He left her office immediately after that, leaving Hermione alone in her office. He decided not press charges on Hermione for keeping what could be considered a high risk object. The book had been destroyed anyway. Still, it was beyond believe that she dared to keep the book inside her office.

Harry pushed the memory away.

"I'm surprise that you decide to keep it," he said to Dumbledore. "I would have thought that you already have it destroyed given the risk it posed."

"I would," said Dumbledore. "But something tells me that further down the road, I might need it. So I keep it and hid it from plain sight until such time when its service is no longer be required. It shall be destroyed by then. That is my promise. Given what you showed me, I think I'm proven right."

Harry nodded. "I think it's safe to say that the horcrux was the only way he chose to become immortal, professor."

"I hope so."
"So the diary gave you the idea to track Tom Riddle’s journey after he left Hogwarts," said Harry after a few moments of silence. "You believe that the diary wasn’t the last of it."

Dumbledore nodded. "Indeed. The incident within the Chamber of Secrets seemed to reinforce that belief. You see, the diary projected an image of him when he was still a student. The Tom Riddle that you saw when you confronted Professor Quirell was the older version of him. I became aware of that at the time while the two are not the same, they are completely related to one another. I played around with the idea that he did make a horcrux but unfortunately I cannot be sure because I have no proof. There are ways for one to store his or her own memory and that memory can sometime act like a horcrux."

"Except that a mere memory won’t be able to take over a person’s mind. A mere memory cannot think for itself," said Harry. "That diary did."

"Yes it did. And that Harry, was when I made the first mistake," said Dumbledore apologetically. "For my failure to see the obvious and for reluctant to admit that he had gone too far."

Harry nodded in understanding. "We all make mistakes, professor. For as long as we live, we will continue making it. But enough of your stories. Now it’s time for you to listen to mine."


"I know you have an acute sense of observation and you probably know by now that I know all of his stories, professor," began Harry. "I know he likes to collect trinkets, old and powerful magical objects to be precise, and I know what he was doing with those that he collected. He was turning them all into horcruxes and later hid them in various locations inaccessible to anyone else but him. The only exception was the diary. The diary was the first horcrux he made after committing his first murder. Myrtle Warren, we mostly know her as Moaning Myrtle, was his first victim. He gave the diary to Lucius Malfoy for safekeeping. I’m not sure why he would be so trusty of the Malfoys but we all know what happen next. I however, don’t have any knowledge of when he turned the Ravenclaw Diadem into a horcrux but given the location where I found it, it is possible that he created it when he was still a student. That means another murder committed while he was still here."

"The Ravenclaw Diadem had been sought by many for hundreds of years. Do you know how he found it?" asked Dumbledore.

Harry nodded. "He befriended the Grey Lady, Lady Helena Ravenclaw, while he was a student here and tricked her into revealing the location of the diadem which in this case, was hidden somewhere within the forest of Albania. Tom traveled there, retrieved the diadem and turned it into a horcrux. He later hid it within the Room of Requirement."

"In which you later found and destroyed it," added Dumbledore.

"Yes," said Harry. "Tom was probably banking on the fact that not many students knew the existence of the Come and Go Room. And as I observed that night, it seemed that many teachers are not aware of the room as well, making the room a perfect place to hide things. The scream you and everyone else heard that night came from part of his soul that was hidden within the jewel of the diadem."

"And the explosions?"

"One of it came from a vanishing cabinet," answered Harry. "One apparently exists within the Come and Go Room. I destroyed it. Just in case."

"I assume that its pair exists somewhere outside the castle," said Dumbledore impressively. "You destroyed it to close a potential loophole pertaining to the school’s security."

"That is correct, professor. Its pair can be found at Borgin and Burkes so you understand why I did that. Anyway, going back to the horcrux matters…"

Harry took out the list he kept inside his jacket and handed it over to Dumbledore. "Here is the list of known horcruxes he made."

Dumbledore unfolded the list and began reading it. He later looked up and said, "Five?"

Harry hesitated momentarily before he answered, "As of now."

Dumbledore stared at Harry for a few moments before he went back to the list. "Two had been taken care of," he muttered. "Three horcruxes left that needs to be destroyed. Are you certain that this is an exhaustive list?"

"We’ll work with whatever it is we got at the moment, sir," Harry instead replied. "At least it is better than nothing."
Dumbledore nodded. "Very well." Returning to the list, he continued, "The Hufflepuff Cup, Slytherin's Locket and The Ring. So he did go for the best but the Ring? Care to enlighten me the nature of this particular horcrux, Harry?"

"Of course, sir," said Harry. "It is a ring once owned by a man named Marvolo Gaunt."

"Gaunt?" wondered Dumbledore aloud. "Why is that name sound familiar?"

"You should be familiar with it, sir. The House of Gaunt was a direct descendant of the House of Slytherin and Peverell. The Gaunt's male lineage however, ended with the death of Marvolo's son, Morfin Gaunt who until his eventual demise, never got married. Morfin though had a sister named Merope. Merope against the wish of her father, eloped with the son of wealthy muggles, Thomas and Mary Riddle."

"And she gave birth to Voldemort," finished Dumbledore.

"Indeed, sir. A lot of things happened after that. His mother died and Tom ended in a derelict orphanage where you found him," said Harry. "The ring passed out of all knowledge after Marvolo died but the truth is, it was passed on to Morphin. Years later, Tom relief it off him. Morphin died in Azkaban for a crime he never committed. Voldemort framed him for the murder of Tom Riddle Sr."

Dumbledore nodded. "Thank you for telling me this, Harry. So now it's just the case of finding the horcruxes and destroy it. I see that you already have the tool effective enough to get the job done." He gestured towards the basilisk fang.

"Indeed, sir," said Harry. "And I already know the suspected location of each horcrux. The Slytherin Locket can be found at Grimmauld Place. The Ring is located at Gaunt's cottage, that is if no one else found it already. I doubt it as Tom will definitely put extra protection around it. The Hufflepuff Cup though can be a little bit tricky though."

Dumbledore's eyebrows cocked. "Tricky? In what way?"

"Well, Tom gave the cup to Bellatrix Lestrange for safekeeping. The cup would then be move to her vault in Gringotts. The problem is at this point and due to the fact that she's currently in Azkaban, we don't know if the cup had indeed already being moved to Gringotts. If we're lucky, it could still be found at her mansion. If not, we just have to devise a way to break into the wizard bank. We can't just ask Bellatrix or even the Gringotts to open up the Lestrange vault, can we?"

Dumbledore paused for a moment. "You're speaking about the future, Harry. You are saying that Bellatrix will soon be released from Azkaban?"

"A lot more will happen, professor," said Harry. "We have to act without hesitation or else everything will fall."

Dumbledore nodded. "So what Professor Trelawney said about you is true."

This certainly took Harry by surprise. "Professor Trelawney talked to you about me?" he asked.

Dumbledore leaned back against the back of his chair. "She told me everything. I understand that you had a talk with her a few days ago. I have to admit that I had a mind to kick her out of my office the moment she speaks. I'm glad that I did not. How many died, Harry?"


He was aware that he did not mention Cedric Diggory but something told him not to.

Dumbledore nodded. "Then we shall act decisively. I am correct to assume that you already have a plan?"

"Yes. I'm going to meet Sirius during the upcoming Hogsmeade visit. I'm planning to bring foods and some stuff, just to make his living condition at his hiding place a little bit more comfortable. At the same time, I'm going to try to strike a deal with him. I have a feeling that he will be reluctant to go back to London, especially back to his old home. I don't want to force him but unfortunately, his involvement in this matter is crucial. It cannot be done without him."

"Indeed. There will be protections put in place to prevent unauthorized entry into Grimmauld Place. Only he will be able to undo it," agreed Dumbledore. "Perhaps we could put someone on a lookout. Just to make sure that it would be safe for him to return. Given his status, his home will be heavily watched by the Ministry."
"I thought something like that. May I suggest Remus?"

"Yes, I think we could use Remus," said Dumbledore. "We could have several people from the Order as well to be on the lookout. Perhaps we could have him meet both you and Sirius during the Hogsmeade visit. In the mean time, I will try to attend to the other two horcruxes. Do you know the location of the Gaunt’s cottage?"

Harry paused at this question. He remembered what happened to the headmaster the last time he found the Ring. "I don’t think it’s a good idea for you to go alone, professor. It did not end well the last time for you. I shall attend to the horcruxes personally."

"That is very noble of you Harry, but this burden should not be yours alone to bear. You have friends and allies. A little help could go a long way after all."

Harry could sense the headmaster’s eagerness to join him in his hunt for horcruxes. He wondered if there was a way to convey to the headmaster that he merely needed him as a backup, not as the so called partner in crime.

In the end however, he could not find one. He sighed. "Very well, professor. We’ll do it together. That is my condition. I will meet Sirius and we’ll devise a plan. If everything is set, we’ll gather at Grimmauld Place preferably right after the First Task. We shall decide on where to go from there."

Dumbledore agreed.

They continued to talk. Harry asked about Madame Maxime. Dumbledore told him that the Beauxbaton headmistress was livid when she heard what Barty did in his class. He also mentioned about Madame Maxime being unusually concerned about Harry. Professor Karkaroff unsurprisingly was far more forgiving. Both him and Dumbledore managed to talk her out of her plan to file a complaint to the Ministry. Dumbledore however mentioned to him that Barty never made a request to teach the Unforgiven Curses to the students, leading Harry to think of what will happen to him if he did not manage to throw the Imperius Curse off back in the past.

"Did she know?" asked Harry. "About Barty?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "No, she did not nor did Professor Karkaroff. Both of them are still under the impression that they were dealing with the real Alastor Moody."

Harry nodded. "Then I can’t stress enough the importance of keeping them that way. I hope you will be able to persuade him to take over from Barty. I know he will be traumatized but we really can’t afford to lose him."

"Don’t worry about him, Harry. Just leave the matter to me. I’m pretty sure I can persuade him to stay, at least until the Triwizard Tournament ended."

"What about Barty?"

"As I said before, he will be temporarily kept within the same trunk he used to imprison Alastor. He will be moved to a much secure location soon."

"Does anyone else know about this?"

"No."

Harry once again nodded. "If I can make a suggestion, you might want to relax a little bit around Professor Snape."

That did take the headmaster by surprise. "Professor Snape, Harry? And may I enquire as to why?"

Harry smiled. "He’s a member of the Order too, isn’t he? You trust him, professor. Therefore I will trust him. Bring him in. I have a feeling that in time, we’re going to need his help."

Dumbledore upon hearing what Harry said smile widely. "Thank you for having such confidence in him, Harry. I have to admit it’s hard to convince other members of the Order to trust him. They only accepted him because I told them so. It will mean a lot to him."

Harry just continued to smile. "I don’t know if this will change the dynamic between me and him," he said. "It probably won’t but there’s one thing I do know. He will never betray my mother."

Dumbledore continued to smile. His eyes glinted of happiness. And sadness. Both emotions seemed to mix within him, the turmoil that he saw within the old man almost make Harry swear that Dumbledore was on the verge crying.
The conversation continued until the clock suddenly chimed. Dumbledore looked up. "It's already two hours past midnight. It's best that you go back to your dormitory."

"Yes, professor."

They both stood up. Harry was about to leave when Dumbledore called to him. "Harry?"

He turned to look.

From one of his desk's drawers, Dumbledore took out a small beaded bag, not unlike the one Hermione used to carry around when she, Harry and Ron were hunting for horcruxes. He then took out his wand – Harry's heart flipped when he saw the wand – and conjured two sleeping bags. He put both sleeping bags into the beaded bag and handed over the bag to Harry. Harry took it.

"Those sleeping bags are for Sirius and for Remus too if he decides to stay. You can get as much food as you can carry from the kitchen. You have my permission. And Harry." This time, Dumbledore's eye began to twinkle like they always were. "I forgot to reapply the no-apparating restriction to you."

"Oh, of course, sir."

Harry immediately stood ready, waiting for Dumbledore to reapply the restriction.

But Dumbledore did nothing. The old man just continued to smile. "Good night, Harry."

"But sir, the restriction!"

"Yes, I told you that I forgot," said Dumbledore. "And for as long as you're a student of this school, I shall keep on forgetting."

Harry upon realizing what Dumbledore had meant just stood there in surprise. "Sir?"

"This shall be our little secret, Harry. Good night."

"Good night. And thank you, professor."

Feeling elated, he opened the door but before he walked out, he remembered something. He immediately stopped and turned back. "That wand you're using," he said. "It's Elder Wand, isn't it?"

Once again, Harry took Dumbledore by surprise. "How did you know?" he asked.

"It doesn't matter," said Harry, calmly. "I know it's one of the Deathly Hallows. Keep it secret. Keep it safe. Voldemort might want it if he knows about it. That is my advice."

With that, he closed the door and headed towards the moving staircase, now revolving downwards. Along the way, he thought about the conversation he had with Dumbledore. As for the horcruxes, he knew that he had not told the headmaster the full story. He did not tell him about the remaining two. Instead he kept the two just for himself for he had other plan for it. A plan that no one else will know about it but him.

He stepped into the Gargoyle Corridor the moment he reached the bottom of the moving staircase. He looked around and after making sure no one else was there to watch, he spun on the spot and vanished into thin air.

The very next morning...

His bedside alarm clock went off.

A hand shot out from behind the bed curtain and tapped the clock silence.

His eyes fluttered opened. He groggily woke up and slowly sat on his bed. He was still undeniably, extremely sleepy. What he would give for another hour or two of shuteye. Unfortunately for him, he got classes that morning. The upside? Thank Goodness It's Friday.

He pulled open his bedside curtain and got off his bed. The rest of his dorm mate were still sleeping it seemed. Through the misty window, soft morning sunshine peered over the horizon, basking him in its warm soft glow. For the first time that week, no cloud can be seen in the sky. The weather that day was promising. He grabbed his towel and headed towards the bathroom for his morning ritual.

He got out of the shower fifteen minutes later, properly freshened. By that time, the rest of his dorm mate had already woken up.
"Mornin', Harry," greeted Ron as he stretched on his own bed and yawned. "Sleep well?"

"Like a baby," replied Harry as he began donning his uniform after he finished drying off. "Hurry up, Ron. Breakfast and the joy of having to go through two hours of History of Magic await us."

Ron's face immediately lighted up. "Excellent! Food and another two hours of extra sleep! Don't go without me, Harry!"

Harry just shook his head and chuckled as he watched Ron grabbing his own towel and sprinted towards the bathroom.

Fifteen minutes later and properly dressed, Harry and the rest of his dorm mate walked down the stairs towards the common room. Hermione was already waiting for them.

"Good morning, Hermione," greeted Harry as he arrived in front of her.

"Morning," she gave Harry a simple reply. She did not even look at him. Apparently she was still unhappy with the way Harry treated her yesterday.

Ron mouthed 'You asked for it' to Harry and nodded towards Hermione who continuously looked sullen.

Harry just rolled his eyes. He turned towards Hermione and said, "You can be mad at me for as much as you want but know that I'm doing this for your own good. Now let's get some breakfast. We'll visit the hospital wing right after that."

Without another word, both Ron and Hermione followed Harry out of the common room and towards the Great Hall.

**Great Hall, few minutes later...**

Breakfast that morning was the usual affair. The group arrived quite early that morning.

Ron piled everything within his arm reaches into his plate and began eating. Hermione quietly ate her toast. Seamus ended up sleeping and Dean meanwhile was chatting animatedly with Ginny. The twins together with Lee Jordan once again huddled together at the far end of the table. Harry, while munching on the sausages, looked over towards to the staff table. Once again there was no 'Moody'. And for some reason Professor Snape and Professor Dumbledore were absence too.

The rest of the students continued to arrive. The Durmstrang students arrived five minutes after them and after a few morning greetings with the Gryffindorians, began eating. The Beauxbaton students together with their headmistress entered the Great Hall after Durmstrang. Fleur and the rest of her friends as usual made their way towards the Ravenclaw table. Madame Maxime however, instead of making her way towards the staff table, headed towards the Gryffindor table and stopped right in front of Harry.

"'Ow are you zhis morning, Monsieur Potter?" she asked.

"I'm fine, Madame Maxime. Thank you for asking," replied Harry.

"Did you do what I told you last night?"

"Yes, madam."

"Good. Because I don't want to 'ave to bring zhis matter to your 'eadmaster once again. What Professor Moody did to you was uncalled for," said Madame Maxime.

"I thank you for your concern madam, but I assure you that no damage had been done," said Harry politely.

Madame Maxime nodded. She then reached into the pocket of her fur coat and handed Harry a note. "From my students. I believe zhat iz zhe reminder about tomorrow."

Harry took the note. "Thank you."

"Good day to you, Monsieur Potter."

But before she left, Professor McGonagall arrived just in time. She apparently was carrying something in her hand. She greeted Madame Maxime. The later replied.

"I was just talking to Mr. 'Arry Potter 'ere," said Madame Maxime to Professor McGonagall. "I am glad zhat 'e iz well."
"And I thank you for your concern on the welfare of my students," said Professor McGonagall, smiling. "It is very much appreciated."

Madame Maxime smiled and nodded. She gave Harry one last glance before she made her way towards the staff table.

Professor McGonagall turned towards Harry. She looked at him proudly and smiled widely. "Miss Johnson told me this morning," she said. "I heartily approve. Congratulations, Mr. Potter. You are now the new captain of the Gryffindor Quidditch team."

She then, in front of all Gryffindorians and Durmstrang, presented the captain's badge she was holding to Harry.

There were loud cheers and whooping and the rest of the Gryffindorians, together with the Durmstrang students stood and gave Harry a standing ovation as they celebrated the formal inauguration of the new Gryffindor Quidditch captain. Viktor himself gave Harry a pat on his back and congratulated him on his new appointment. Hermione who seemed to have forgotten that she was sulking with Harry beamed at him. "Harry! You didn't tell me!"

When the noise finally died down, Professor McGonagall spoke, "Oliver Wood became the captain when he was in fourth year. He was a really good captain. I am sure that you will do just as well as him, if not better. Congratulations once again. Miss Johnson will fill you up later in regards of the captain's duty."

She then shook hands with Harry and later left for the staff table.

Cedric Diggory, Roger Davies and a few of Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws came to the Gryffindor table to congratulate him.

"Captain huh? Just like Oliver," beamed Cedric.

"Do you know that he was the youngest in his batch to become the captain? During his reign, Gryffindor only lost to Slytherin. The rest of us never had the chance," said Roger.

The three of them talked for the next few minutes. Cedric asked him whether or not the Gryffindor team found Oliver's replacement. Harry told them that no replacement had been found yet but he was heavily considering in accepting the offer from Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff keeper.

"Tell your keeper that there'll be tryouts," he said to both Cedric and Roger. "I'll keep you posted on when will it happen."

Both captains nodded and expressed their hope that their keeper will be the one chosen to join the Gryffindor team.

Harry sat back down after they left, holding the gleaming captain's badge in his hand. He passed it over to Seamus who wanted to have a look at it. He then looked up towards the Ravenclaw, wondering what Fleur's reaction would be. But instead he saw Roger, this time taking a seat beside Fleur. The Ravenclaw Quidditch captain was trying to strike a conversation with the veela. Jealousy crept into his heart as he watched the two began to chat. His heart told him that he should beat Roger to a pulp. But his brain told him there wasn't any good reason for him to do that and he needed to reign in his jealousy, and he also need to remember that Fleur at this point did not belong to him. Both side of him continued to battle against each other but in the end, the brain prevailed. Harry took a deep breath and began to calm down. It won't do to have blind jealousy. It will only push her away from him. He had nearly a year to do something about it. Maybe something good would come in the end.

Then again, given what happened within these couple of days, he had a feeling that his relationship with Fleur is no longer his main priority.

He suddenly remembered the note Madame Maxime gave to him. He immediately unfolded the note and began to read:-

Dear Harry Potter,

This is just a reminder of our invitation to you.

Fleur Delacour.

He completely recognized the beautiful cursive writing. It indeed belongs to Fleur. He silently wondered if he should just go along with it or make some excuses and tell her that he could not make it.

Someone suddenly tapped his shoulder. Harry tore his eyes away from the note and saw that it was Ron.
"We need to bring Hermione to the hospital wing, Harry," reminded Ron.

"Oh yeah, I forgot," said Harry, pocketing the note. "Come on, Hermione."

The three of them rose from their seat.

"Harry!" Ginny suddenly called out to him. She held out his badge to him. "Congratulations, Harry," she said, smiling widely at him. "I know you'll do great. I'll be cheering for you."

Harry returned the smile. He accepted the badge from her, and did not fail to notice that Ginny somehow deliberately brushed her fingers against his. "Thank you, Ginny."

"Where are you three going?" asked Dean. "Class won't be starting for another half an hour."

"We're going to the hospital wing. Hermione's not feeling well lately," explained Harry. "See you guys in class."

"Owh, okay. See you."

Without looking back, Harry walked out of the Great Hall and towards the hospital wing.

"You know my sister is having a crush on you," said Ron as they walked towards the hospital wing. "I'm worried for her. She's too young."

"Yes I am aware of that, Ron," said Harry. "And I agree with you. She's still young. You should advice her. Tell her to wait until she's older. Maybe by then she'll find a truly perfect gentleman for her. Crushes seldom ended up with each other, you know. It will only hurt her in the end."

"Yeah, I guess you're right. I'll tell her."

"You have a crush with ChoChang," stated Hermione flatly.

"Yes you're right, Hermione. But it will be just that. A crush. Nothing more."

"You mean to say that you're not planning to pursue a more serious relationship with her?" asked Hermione, her eyebrows rose.

"I don't plan to pursue romantic relationship with anyone, Hermione," said Harry. "Maybe after Hogwarts I don't know but definitely not now. I don't feel like it. Maybe by then, I'll found that someone. Who knows?"

Hermione did not say another word after that.

They arrived at the hospital wing a few minutes later.

"You're early," said Madam Pomfrey, who was doing her usual morning round within the ward. "Alright, what is it this time, Mr. Potter?"

"Hermione," said Harry. "I think she's suffering from the side effect of the Imperius Curse. You know the story."

"Really? Well she's not the only one," said Madam Pomfrey. She walked over towards Hermione and by using a small flashlight, she peered into her eyes.

"There's more students affected by it?" asked Harry, perplexed.

"Yes. Luckily I already have the antidote prepared for such occasion. And you're right. She indeed suffers from the side effect of an overzealously thrown Imperius Curse. Very well then. Have a seat, Miss Granger. I'll go get the antidote."

Hermione did as instructed.

Madam Pomfrey returned from wing's pharmacy carrying a vial of purplish liquid. She then began administering the antidote.

And all the while the nurse was doing her job, Harry looked around. He saw the door into the emergency was shut close. A sign saying 'No Entry' was placed right in front of it.

"There you go," Madam Pomfrey said suddenly.

Harry tore his eyes away from the emergency ward.

"It will take quite a while before the antidote began to work," continued Madam Pomfrey. "But
I think you're well enough to attend your classes. Well, off you go."

"Thank you, Madam Pomfrey," said Hermione. She appeared relief, knowing that she won't be missing any class that day.

The trio then made their exit and headed towards the History of Magic classroom.

As always, Ron will pile his book high and used it as a pillow every time the History of Magic lesson began. And he was not the only one to do that. Harry and Hermione were the only one so far who managed to go through the two hours of agony without a single nod.

Charm class also was the same. As before, Harry managed to accomplish every spell the teacher taught that day, much to Professor Flitwick's delight.

Lunch once again the usual affair but Harry sat with his back facing the Ravenclaw Table this time. He deliberately did that as he cannot bear to watch Roger trying to hit on Fleur, especially when he could not do anything about it. He once again left the Great Hall after lunch without single glance given towards the Ravenclaw table.

But everything went the usual way that afternoon. As always, they would wait, together with the Slytherin outside the classroom, for Professor Snape to let them in. The door opened two minutes before the class officially started. Professor Snape stood at the threshold.

"Get inside, all of you," he drawled. "Except you, Potter."

The rest of the students went in. Hermione and Ron however stayed. Their eyes darted between Snape and Harry.

"What did I just tell you?" said Professor Snape sternly to the two. "Get inside or there'll be a month worth of detention waiting for you."

"You guys go on," said Harry to his best friends. "I'll be fine."

Both Hermione and Ron nodded to Harry and immediately, they went inside the class.

Professor Snape then closed the door behind them. After placing the Silencing Charm onto the door, he turned towards Harry. "You'll be glad to know that the impostor had been moved to a much safer location," he said.

"Owh. Well, where is he now?"

"The castle dungeon."

"The castle dungeon?" exclaimed Harry. "Like the Slytherin common room?"

"I assure you that there is more than one dungeon inside this castle, Potter. The one we put him in is located deeper within the castle."

"And no one else knows about this?"

"No one," answered Snape. "Except the obvious."

"Will you show me where it's located?"

"Perhaps."

Harry nodded. "Thank you, professor. So can I go in now?"

"Not today."

Harry stared at Professor Snape in puzzlement.

Professor Snape pulled out a vial of clear liquid of his cloak and held it out to Harry. "Take this and keep it with you at all time. The liquid in that vial can temporarily halt injuries both inside and outside. It shall give you some time until you manage to secure help. I have also prepared a cauldron full of that potion just in case you need to replenish it. You can come at anytime. You don't have to attend my class for today. You are to go back to your dormitory and take some rest."

"But I will miss the lesson," protested Harry. Not that he really needed it.

"We will simply revising previous lessons for today so you won't be missing anything. Now go."
It seemed that he had no choice but to turn around. "Alright, professor."

He walked a few steps away when Snape called back to him. "Potter!"

Harry turned round to face him. "Sir?"

"Professor Dumbledore gives you his permission to call in his phoenix whenever needs arises. And if you want to see where Barty is being kept, come see me tomorrow."

Well that was unexpected.

Harry nodded. "Thank you, sir." He then turned around and left for the Gryffindor common room.

He was in the midst of doing his homework when his classmates returned. All of them gathered around him when they saw him.

"What happened, Harry?"

"Why Snape won’t let you in?"

"What does that jerk wants with you?"

Questions kept coming in that Harry, feeling that he needed to put a stop to that raised his hand. The others immediately went silent.

"Nothing happened," he told them. "You guys remember what happened to me yesterday. Snape gave me time off and told me to get some rest. That’s all."

That took them by surprise.

"Seriously, Harry?" asked Seamus. "Snape really did that?"

"Yes, Seamus. He did that."

Hermione took a seat beside him. "That’s unusual for him to do that, Harry. But why?"

"No idea," said Harry. "Maybe you should ask him."

"I’m not going to ask him."

"Just let it go, Hermione," interjected Ron. "Harry's in one piece. Snape didn't give him detention and he's not in trouble. That is good enough for us."

Hermione went quiet but Harry knew that she was simply set the matter aside temporarily. She would bring it back whenever she saw fit.

Harry turned to Ron. "So how's Potion?"

Ron put his bag onto the floor and took the seat beside Hermione. He let out a long sigh before he spoke, "Stressful as usual."

"New topic? Old topic?"

"Nah. We're just doing revisions. We didn't even have to prepare a potion. Snape threw us questions and he expected us to correctly answer all of them. You know how it feels like. For the whole two goddamn hours! The only person who enjoys that kind of thing is Hermione."

He then glared at Hermione as if the girl did something very offensive to him.

Harry could picture it. So Snape was telling the truth.

They continued to chat for the rest of the afternoon.

Dinnertime finally came. After shower and changed of clothes, the trio headed towards the Great Hall.

Someone called out to him just as they reached the entrance into the Great Hall.

"'Arry!"

To be continued...

A/n: So here it is. Another chapter for you guys.
As always, thank you for all the inputs and as before there’s nothing I can say really except that I hope you guys will enjoy this chapter.

Till next time.

P/s: To those who had just read this chapter and those who do repeat reading, I took the liberty to do corrections, add and subtract few stuffs.
Chapter 24

Chapter 23

The trio stopped dead on their track.

Harry turned to look and saw a girl, standing near the staircase that leads down to the Entrance Hall below.

It was Daphne. Not Daphne Greengrass but Daphne Lavinge. One of Fleur's best friends. She never really talked to him before even in the old timeline, preferring instead to stay away from him whenever Fleur and her gang got together so it was surprising to see her standing there, calling out to him. She was wearing a light blue coat that covered the Beauxbaton uniform underneath.

"Do you 'ave a moment?"

Harry gave a nod. He turned towards Ron and Hermione and said, "You two go on. I'll catch up with you later."

"Okay."

The two went into the Great Hall.

Harry walked towards Daphne. "So what is it?" he asked the moment he arrived in front of her.

"You are coming tomorrow, yes?" asked Daphne.

Harry remembered that he had yet given them his answer. Up until that point, he was internally debating on whether or not he should go. Given his current concern, he was not sure if spending the afternoon at the Beauxbaton carriage would be productive. Besides, Fleur's extremely positive reaction to Roger Davies's attempted flirtation both at breakfast and lunch angered him a little bit. He was pretty sure that there will be another attempt at dinner. Given Roger's relentless pursuit, he was pretty sure that sooner or later, the two would go out on a date.

"Well?" asked Daphne when she saw that Harry failed to come up with any response.

Her voice though did wake him up from this musing. He knew that he had to make decision that instant.

And he decided that he did not want to go.

"I'm sorry. I can't."

There was a look of surprise on her face. "Why?" she asked.

"I got other plans."

"What plans?"

"Err... something else came up. I won't be able to make it. Sorry."

Daphne looked a little bit unhappy. "Zhis plan of yours, it will take the whole day tomorrow?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah. Most likely."

"Can you tell me what it iz?"

"Sorry. I can't."

"Why not? Are you going to do somezhing dangerous?" Daphne's eyebrows furrowed.

"No! No! Definitely nothing like that!"

"Zhen zhere won't be any problem, no?" insisted Daphne. "So what iz it?"

"Err..."

"We won't tell anyone," said Daphne in an apparent attempt to convince him.

Harry scratched his head and looked at Daphne in exasperation. He suddenly realized that she stood really close to him. From his standpoint, he could see the seventeen year old facial
She probably applied lip gloss earlier. She had a fair skin. Little bit of freckles lined her cheeks just below her eyes. Under the hat, she had brownish hair tied up in a bun with few of the strands framing her face. Of course being a seventeen year old, she was taller than him. They all are, Fleur and her friends. But then, being malnourished for the most of his life did quite a dent on his own height.

"I'm... meeting someone."

She looked surprise. "I see. Who iz it?"

"I don't see why I should tell you that," responded Harry, now feeling slightly irritated. And hungry. He may not be as gluttony as Ron, but the wonderful smell from within the Great Hall continued to invade his nostril. Hunger can do bad things to one's mood.

"Iz it a girl?"

Harry, keened on getting the matter over with, plus he already in quite a bad mood when it comes to Fleur, answered, "Yes."

Daphne's expression darkened. Now she looked even unhappier. "Which girl? Zhe one who always follows you around with zhe red 'aired boy or zhe red 'aired girl you spoke with earlier at breakfast?"

This took Harry by surprise. They were indeed watching him. But to what end he did not know. Still, he really needed to get the girl in front of him off his back. Given his history, he truly did not appreciate being watched all the time.

"Err... the red haired girl. I'm very close to her. She's special. We have plans tomorrow. For the whole day. Sorry I can't tell you more. It's personal," said Harry.

"I see." Now she really looked unhappy.

"I'm sorry," said Harry. "I already told Cassandra in the letter that I won't be able to accept the invitation if-"

"If our invitation clashes with zhe Durmstrang," Daphne cut him off. "Which in zhis case, it iz not."

So they knew that Viktor invited him to the ship on Sunday.

"Look, I'm sorry I couldn't make it. Plan's changed. You don't have to be so serious about it. Plus I don't even know why you girls so wanted to invite me in the first place. I tell you what, why don't you invite Roger Davies? You know, the Ravenclaws Quidditch captain? You girls could hang out with him instead."

Daphne was taken aback. "Why 'im?"

"Why not? He's seventeen year old. He's tall. He and Fleur were flirting with each other. I saw them. Maybe they really like one another, I don't know. It's him Cassandra should have invited, not me. I'm just boy. I don't want to stand between them, alright?" explained Harry. "I respect Roger. I have nothing against him. We both love Quidditch. He may not like it if he knew that I was invited instead of him. I don't want to be anyone's enemies. That's all."

Daphne's eyes reduced to a slit."Iz zhis what it's all about?" she asked.

"Yes and no."

She stared at him and said nothing. Moments of silence went past between them before she began walking past him and headed towards the entrance into the Great Hall. But just before she crossed over the threshold, she suddenly stopped. She looked over her shoulder towards him and asked, in French, "That snowy white owl. What is her name?"

Harry who understood French replied, "Hedwig. Why?"

She did not answer. "Hedwig. That is an unusual name," she softly said. "You do know that she is still with us, yes?"

"No, I don't. So she hasn't gone back to the owlery?" asked Harry, surprised.

Once again Daphne failed to answer. Instead she said, "If you want her back, accept our invitation. We won't release her back to you until you do. Good night, Harry Potter."

With that, she continued her way and disappeared into the Great Hall, leaving Harry dumbfounded.
"Oh boy."

He sat at the table facing Ron and Viktor with his back once again facing the Ravenclaw table.

"So what does she wants?" asked Hermione who was sitting beside him. She was having chicken and vegetable salad for dinner that night.

Harry did not answer at first. He reached out for the plate of steak and kidney pie and took out a slice. "She was asking about tomorrow," he replied as he took a bite out of his slice.

"You mean the invitation," said Hermione as she put a forkful of salad into her mouth. "So, what did you say?"

"I told her I couldn't make it," said Harry. "I told her I had plans."

Hermione's eyebrows cocked. "Really? That was unexpected. So, how did she take it?"

"Unexpectedly, not well."

Hermione stared at Harry in amusement. "Unexpectedly? Harry, they probably plan this for quite some time. How do you think they will take it if you cancelled on them at the very last minute? And what's this plan of yours that made you changed your mind?"

"There isn't any plan actually."

"Owh. So you simply don't want to go?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Reasons."

"And what reasons is that?"

"Just forget it, Hermione."

"So you just simply lie to them."

Hermione sighed. She put down her fork and turned to face Harry. "Look, I really think you should go. Whatever issues you had, put it aside and for once try to entertain their request. Please? It's not often they come here, Harry. What will they say if they saw you accept Krum's invitation and decline theirs? Madame Maxime was expecting you to come too, you know."

This time, it was Harry's turn to sigh. "One good thing that comes out of this conversation we are having is knowing that you're cured. Unfortunately, the cure brought back your rational and logical side as well. Anyway, since when you start liking them?"

"I never hated them if that what you're saying," said Hermione as she grabbed her fork and jabbed it into the salad. "I'm just... questioning them. I'm just being sensible."

"Ah. The sensible Hermione. Well, you'll be glad to know that I am going," he said as he finished off his slice of pie.

"You said you wouldn't."

"I really don't have any other choice," he said, taking a sip of pumpkin juice from his goblet. "I got to rescue Hedwig."

"Hedwig?" exclaimed Hermione. "Why? What happened to her?"

"Hedwig didn't return to the owlery. She has been staying with the Beauxbaton. They were holding her hostage. She said that they won't release her to me unless I accept the invitation," explained Harry. "So, I'm going."

"Hostage is such a strong word, Harry."

"Yeah well, remind me why girls can be so crazy."

Hermione just shook her head. She turned to gaze at the Ravenclaw table. "I have a feeling that they won't let you get away that easily. You better prepare a good excuse when you go over there tomorrow."

"And why is that?" asked Harry.
"See for yourself."

He turned to look over his shoulder and saw Fleur and Daphne Lavinge were whispering with each other. Fleur frowned with every word Daphne spoke to her. At one point, she flicked into his direction. Their eyes met but not for long as Harry immediately looked to the front. He did not dare to look back towards her after that.

That look Fleur gave him. He recognized that look. It was the look she always gave him whenever he mentioned about men flirting with her back in the old timeline. Fleur hated it whenever he brought it up. It was a matter a fact, a never ending issue that plagued their marriage. Of course both of them were mature enough not let it overtook their marriage and Harry himself understood the risk of marrying a veela. Fleur was extremely loyal to him, he knew that. But of course, jealousy reared its ugly head once in a while especially when other men tried to get fresh with his wife. He did mention about his jealousy problem once to Fleur when they were cuddling inside their bedroom. Fleur said she did not worried. In fact she was flattered, knowing that the feeling of jealousy meant that he really loved her.

That very same issue did have an upside though. It brought him closer to his father in law and Gabrielle's husband. The three of them faced the exact same problem - men trying to flirt with their wives all the time. Every Christmas and in every family gathering, the three will choose a night and hold up in a bar in Grenoble, drinking and exchanging stories about how other men flirted with Appoline, Fleur and Gabrielle and how their wives handled those flirters.

"Like I said, prepare a good excuse when you come visiting them," said Hermione, pulling him back from his reminiscent. She too had turn back to look to the front.

"You look like you have seen a ghost, Harry," commented Viktor casually.

The rest of the dinner went with lesser drama for Harry. Putting the Beauxbaton matter aside, he and Viktor ended up in deep discussion regarding the eventual friendly match. Viktor pointed out to him that he wished they could set the date of the match by next week so that he could begin preparing his team. After some haggling courtesy of Harry, both party finally agreed that a decision on the date of the match to be reach by the end of the next weekend. Harry felt relief. This will give him the time to organize keeper tryout early next week and immediately began training. Also, in a way it will prevent Durmstrang from training earlier than Gryffindor. It might not mean much but it would be a start.

Fifteen minutes before the dinnertime ended, Professor Dumbledore walked up to him.

"Finish your dinner, Harry?" asked Dumbledore.

Harry who was already full, replied, "Yes, sir."

"Good. Will you please follow me?"

"Of course, sir."

He turned to Ron and Hermione and said, "I'll see you guys back at the common room."

The two nodded.

Harry got off the bench. He took that chance to glance at the Ravenclaw table. Fleur and the rest of her squad were staring at him. He looked away and followed Dumbledore out of the Great Hall.

"Where are we going, sir?" he asked once they both out of ear reach from the Great Hall.

"To the hospital wing," answered Dumbledore. "Professor Moody has requested you."

"So he agrees?" asked Harry who did not miss the title Dumbledore bestowed upon Moody.

"Yes, Harry. He agrees."

The emergency ward, hospital wing...

"Just the one I wanted to see," growled Moody the moment he and Dumbledore entered the emergency ward. Harry noticed that Professor Snape was there as well, standing a little bit further than the bed Moody lay on. Moody's wooden leg leaned untouched against the wall. His magical eye swirled within a glass of water on top of the bedside table.

Madam Pomfrey had just finished checking Moody. She readjusted Moody's bed, making sure it was comfortable for the ex-auror. Once that done, she gathered all her things on a tray and let herself out of the emergency ward. Dumbledore then closed the door behind her and put a
Silencing Spell on it.

"I want to thank you laddie, for what you did," said Moody, extending his hand to him. "You saved my life."

Harry took it and they shook hands.

"I just did what I had to do, professor," said Harry as he let go of Moody's hand. "Barty exposed himself. I can't let it go just like that."

"And much to the detriment of your own safety," pointed out Moody. "You stepped in just as he was about to kill me. There is nothing more dangerous than a Death Eater in the midst of taking other people's life."

"You saw it?" asked Harry in surprise.

"Saw it all. Heard it all," said Moody. He rose to sit on his bed. "The only thing I was unable to do is move. Totally paralyzed." He then paused. He stared at Harry. There was something in the way he looked at him that made Harry a little bit uncomfortable. "Told Dumbledore everything I heard."

Harry froze at this. He glanced at Dumbledore, and later on to Snape. The former gave a subtle nod at him and the latter simply looked at him impassively.

"How did you know everything about his plan?" asked Moody.

Harry hesitated for a moment. "It was... complicated," he answered.

"Huh. Your headmaster said exactly the same thing," said Moody, gesturing towards Dumbledore who remained silent. "Who's your source?" he asked once again.

"To be honest with you, no one."

"No one?!" exclaimed Moody. "Is this some kind of joke, Potter?"

"Like I said," responded Harry, a little bit firmly. "It is complicated."

Luckily enough for Harry, Dumbledore decided to cut in at that point. "Alastor, I can vouch for Harry. I believe whatever that had been said between him and Barty are the truth. And indeed on how he came to know all of that are complicated."

"I know it's the truth," responded Moody incredulously. "Death Eaters don't play around, Albus. What I want to know if Potter here had been in contact with any other Death Eaters prior to this."

"I'm sure that Mr. Potter here wouldn't want to have anything to do with any of the Death Eaters nor any Death Eaters would want to divulge anything to the detriment of their master," said Dumbledore.

"I'm just trying to come up with a conclusion, Albus."

"And not all conclusions are logical, Alastor. Surely you realized that by now," replied Dumbledore firmly. He gave a glance at Harry and continued, "Harry Potter will reveal everything once he is ready but for now that is not the pressing issue. We have a security breach. A Death Eater made it inside the castle posing as you. You know that I called you back not only to teach, but to also act as the head of security for the Triwizard Tournament. A Death Eater becoming the head of the security Alastor, and the reason he was here has everything to do with the Dark Lord. That's what worries me. After the fiasco at the Quidditch World Cup, all eyes will be looking towards Hogwarts. A missing student, a dead teacher and the second rising of Voldemort is not what I have in mind."

Moody sighed. He gazed at Harry and said, "Do you have any information on where You-Know-Who is currently hiding?"

Harry just shook his head. "No."

Moody nodded. "My apologies, Potter. I hope you don't take this personally. I appreciate what you did."

"None taken, sir."

Moody then turned towards Dumbledore. "So we were lucky. Thanks to Potter here. What now?"

"Measures are being taken at this moment," said Dumbledore. "Severus had taken the step to
reevaluate the castle and its ground security. I would expect you to work with him once you are able to."

"I can start by tonight," said Moody. "Your nurse did a great job. And Barty?"

"Severus will show you where he's being kept," said Dumbledore. "It is important that this matter must be kept in absolute secrecy. And if you do visit him, try to control your anger. Azkaban is where he will be kept permanently once this is all over."

"No problem," said Moody casually. "Anything else?"

"My contacts at the Department of International Magical Cooperation are moving the Triwizard Cup to a much safer location as we speak. It will be tested for any attempt to turn it into a Portkey. In the mean time, all the members of the Order had been put on high alert. I took the liberty to pull out some of them for a special task," explained Dumbledore.

"What task?" asked Moody curiously.

Dumbledore glanced at Harry. The expression on his face, it was like he was asking Harry for his permission.

Harry gave a subtle nod.

"Harry is in search for something that will ensure that Voldemort will never return," said Dumbledore. "Their task is to ensure that he will have a clear path to it. Details are sketchy at the present."

Moody looked at Harry. "Like a weapon?"

"I'll know when I see it, sir;" answered Harry. "If you must know, it's located somewhere in London."

"London?"

"Yes, sir."

Harry wanted to tell Moody about Sirius but at this point, he was not sure about Snape. After everything that happened in his third year, there were huge chances that Snape will still hold huge grudge against Sirius and won't hesitate to turn him in if he found out about him. He trusted Snape but in all his long years of living, he knew that anger can change a person.

Moody nodded. He slowly pushed himself off the bed. With one hand held onto the headboard and another grabbing his wooden leg, he spoke, "Well, I guess I better get started. Looks like you had been pulled deep into this kind of thing, laddie. I'm surprise Dumbledore had yet make you a member of the Order."

Harry and Dumbledore looked at each other. The old headmaster smiled at him.

"As a matter a fact, starting from now, he is."

It did not take long for Moody to prepare and soon, the four of them walked out of the hospital wing. Moody excused himself, stating that he wanted to begin patrolling the castle and its ground. He gestured Snape to follow him. Moody wanted to visit Barty earlier, but Snape told him that the visit can wait. He told him that the visit can be done in the following morning. Plus he told Moody that Harry wanted to go and see Barty as well. Moody did not argue. Snape told Harry to meet him right after breakfast. Harry agreed.

Both Harry and Dumbledore watched the receding back of Snape and Moody. Once they disappeared behind the corner of the corridor, Dumbledore turned to him.

"It is good that you didn't mention anything about Sirius to Moody," he stated.

"I would," said Harry. "But Snape was there. I trust the person, just not his anger."

Dumbledore nodded. "It is a wise decision, Harry. But I think it's getting late. You should go back to your dormitory."

"Of course, sir."

Harry spun on the spot and disappeared into thin air.

To be continued...

A/n: Next chapter - The visit to the Beauxbaton carriage. Will it be good? Will it be
bad? Guess our hero will find out.

Next chapter will happen sometime in February. Not sure early, mid or at the end. I have no update schedule. I only do quick update when I got lots of spare time and lesser distractions.

Anyway, as always thanks for the input. See ya next time.
He felt he had barely lain down to sleep when he was being shaken awake by Ron.

"Wake up, Harry," said Ron, yawning and grabbing his towel as he made his way towards the bathroom.

Harry grudgingly sat up, one hand reaching out for his glasses which were on the bedside table. He put them on and the dormitory immediately came into focus. Soft, warm light of the morning sun filtered through the misted window. Everywhere within the dorm, with the exception of Seamus and Dean, everyone else had rouse from sleep. The two were still fast asleep. Thick blanket covered them from head to toe. That was pretty much the tradition every time comes weekend. The two best friends would only make their presences known during lunch time.

Harry looked over towards his alarm clock. It showed thirty minutes past eight.

His younger self would cherish the chance of being able to lie in during the weekend. In the past, he would be just like Seamus and Dean, snuggling in his bed all morning, ignoring breakfast and would only appeared during lunch time. His older self though thought otherwise. Waking up at 5.30am was the norm. 8.30am would be considered really, really late. Besides, he had things to do that morning.

Deciding that he could no longer fall asleep, he pushed himself off the bed and walked towards the bathroom.

The Great Hall that morning was largely sparse by the time he and Ron arrived. There were a lot of vacant seats at all tables. Both of them looked towards the Gryffindor table. Apart from Hermione, only a few first and second year Gryffindorians were having their breakfast. The food though was plentiful, as always. If just that there weren't many people who would be eating them.

The two boys made their way towards their usual spot, joining Hermione who was eating her cereal alone at that time. An unopened book lay beside her cereal bowl.

"Morning, Hermione," greeted Harry.

"Morning," Hermione greeted back. "Never thought I would see you both up this early on a Saturday."

"Yeah, well. We're just hungry," replied Ron as he began piling food onto his plate.

The trio had a silent breakfast, preferring to concentrate on the food than talking. Hermione was the first one to finish and while waiting for the other two, she opened the book she brought along and began reading.

Ron was heavily committed to his food, unlike Harry who had his eyes wandering around the Great Hall. He glanced at the staff table. For the first time ever, besides the Welcoming Feast, Moody was present at the Great Hall. He did not carry the flask with him though which was a sure sign that this Moody was the real Moody. He still checked on his food though, examining, sniffing and looking for any sign of poison that he thought might be embedded within the food he was about to consume. Snape was there too, seating a few chairs away from Moody. And there was Professor McGonagall, Professor Flitwick, Professor Trelawney and Professor Vector. The three headmasters were absent though.

And so did the foreign students.

Viktor and his friends were absent just like their headmaster. And it wasn't just the Durmstrang. Harry looked over his shoulder towards the Ravenclaw table and saw no Beauxbaton students there. He saw Cho Chang though, eating breakfast and chatting with her friends. His eyes lingered on her for a few moments before he turned to face the front.

Hermione was still little bit preoccupied with her book. Ron was still with his food. And he was beginning to get a little bored.

He decided to break the silence.
“There aren’t many people at breakfast today,” he started.

Hermione looked up from her book. “Obviously,” she said before returning to her book.

“Can’t you just lay your hands off your book for like a second, Hermione?” said Ron, now munching on a chicken sausage. “It’s Saturday.”

Hermione once again looked up and gave Ron a very nasty look. “Can’t you just lay your hands off your food for like a second, Ron?” she asked sardonically. “It’s Saturday.”

Ron looked down at his still unfinished sausage. “I’m eating this.”

“And so am I,” huffed Hermione before she returned to her book.

Ron just shrugged and continued eating.

Harry just shook his head at the antics of them both. Hermione apparently was in a bad mood that morning. Luckily, she wasn’t his girlfriend. If she was, he would be sitting there, cracking his brain and trying to figure out what he did wrong. Just like what every boyfriend would do whenever their significant other got mad at them.

Minutes went by. Harry, now fully fed, sat there in full contentment. He glanced at the staff table every now and then, watching and waiting patiently for Snape and Moody to take their leave. That would be the signal for him to excuse himself from Ron and Hermione. In the meantime, he had taken to watch Hermione reading her book. Looking at Hermione, there was something soothing about her whenever she was in deep concentration. Her calm expression could be the reason for that, he proposed.

Apparently, Hermione seemed to realize that someone was watching her. She looked up and saw Harry was staring at her.

“What is it, Harry?” she asked softly.

Harry upon realizing that he was caught shook his head. “Err... nothing. Just thinking.”

Hermione raised her eyebrows. “Thinking about what?”

“Nothing. Just forget it, Hermione,” said Harry.

Hermione stared at him for a few moments. She then closed her book and leaned slightly towards him. “Last night, what Dumbledore wants with you?” she asked.

“Yeah mate,” said Ron, who had now finished eating and was taking a gulp of fresh orange juice from his goblet. “Everybody was talking about it.”

“It’s not always the headmaster would come down to fetch a student, Harry,” said Hermione upon seeing Harry’s expression. “Especially in front of everyone else. Rumors are spreading.”

“Rumors?”

Both Hermione and Ron nodded.

“About what happened in the DADA class,” said Hermione. She then shook her head. “You won’t believe half of the stories they invented.”

“You should hear what Malfoy spoke about you,” added Ron. “The things he said, makes you want to punch his face and throw all three Unforgivable Curses at him, all at once, over and over again. Clearly he had gained a new level of vindictiveness against you. Wonder why?”

Harry did not answer. He of course, knew the reason why.

“You honestly didn’t know?” Hermione asked. Her eyebrows raised.

“What?” asked Ron in confusion. “What I didn’t know?”

“It’s about a girl, Ron.”

“What girl?”

“Daphne Greengrass,” said Hermione impatiently. “The Slytherin girl. Remember what we saw at the Entrance Hall many days ago?”

“Entrance Hall?” wondered Ron. Now he was even more confused. “No, I don’t remember any of it. What happened?”
Hermione stared at Ron in disbelief. She was about to retort when Harry suddenly cut her off. "He wasn't with us at that time, Hermione. We came back from the library after visiting him at the hospital wing when the incident happened, remember?"

Hermione's eyes darted between Harry and Ron. Moments later she put her face into her hands and groaned rather loudly.

Harry just chuckled. He reached out to her and squeezed her shoulder. "That's okay, Hermione. Mistakes happen. You're just confused."

Hermione took her face out of her hands and looked embarrassingly at Ron and Harry. "I'm sorry," she said in a small voice.

Ron just sniggered. "Maybe we should take you back to see Madam Pomfrey, Hermione. Just in case," he teased.

Hermione immediately put down her hands. "I'm fine, Ron!" she said sternly.

Harry just shook his head. "Yeah, she's fine, Ron. There's no need to for her to see Poppy."

"Still," said Ron. "You haven't told me what really happened at the Entrance Hall. So, what happened?"

Harry and Hermione both exchanged glances.

"Maybe you should take this one," suggested Harry to her.

"Are you sure?" asked Hermione.

Harry nodded. "Yeah, I'm sure. Don't worry. I'll fill up anything you miss," he assured her.

Hermione began to regale the tale and Ron listened to her with deep concentration. It turned out that Harry didn't have to do anything at all. She laid it all out correctly and in full details.

"...that's when we found out that Malfoy had a huge crush on her but unfortunately for him, she already had her eyes set firmly on someone else," finished Hermione. At the same time, she nodded pointedly at Harry.

Ron stared at Harry. "On him?" he asked incredulously. "But she's a Slytherin!"

Hermione just rolled her eyes. "This isn't about the houses, Ron! This is about a boy and a girl!" said Hermione impatiently.

"She's a Slytherin," repeated Ron.

"So what? People from different houses getting together aren't abnormal, you know." "I know it isn't abnormal, Hermione," said Ron. "But we're talking about a girl from Slytherin who took an interest towards a boy from Gryffindor. And this boy happens to be Harry. Doesn't that make you suspicious?"

Hermione just sighed. "I can't believe I would be saying this but no. I don't feel suspicious at all. Greengrass hated Malfoy. That's one thing."

"But she might be pretending," argued Ron. "You know how it is with the Slytherin. And why do you side with them? It's not like they had done anything good to you?"

"I'm not siding with them," replied Hermione hotly. "I know a lot of them are jerks but maybe some of them are good. We don't know that, Ron. Anyway, she knocked Malfoy out cold. The enemy of my enemy is my friend. And for that, I'm willing to give her a chance."

"I still don't trust her," said Ron stubbornly.

"Fine. I really wish you could at least pretend to see the other side of them but whatever," said Hermione briskly, waving her hand in a mock defeat. She then turned to Harry who had decided to not embroil himself into their little debate earlier. "You haven't answered my question," she pointed out.

"I'm about to," said Harry. He gestured both of them to scoot closer to him. "Dumbledore brought me to see Moody. Moody apologized for what happened earlier in the DADA class," he said, half whispering.

"That's it?" asked Hermione. "Just that?"

"There's more. Madame Maxime threatened to bring this matter to the Ministry. Dumbledore,
with the help from Professor Karkaroff somehow managed to talk her out of it."

"Blimey," said Ron. "Moody will be in a heap of trouble if the Ministry finds out about this."

"I know, right?" said Harry. "Madame Maxime was enraged because Moody performed the Imperius Curse on some of her students. If this leaks out, the Ministry will be the least of his problem. He will have the French government to contend with as well. Performing the curse is one thing. Doing it to someone else is another. I feel sorry for him though."

Harry was genuine about that. Moody was taking the hit for someone else shenanigans. He hoped that the ex-auror managed to walk through it unscathed.

"The French will have his head for this if they knew," said Hermione, worriedly. She covertly glanced at the staff table before continuing, "He should have been more careful. Beauxbaton is an elite magical school. Powerful families, both in political and business alike all over the world, send their children there. Moody could have started a war."

"So you mean to say that Beauxbaton is better than Hogwarts?" asked Ron, his eyebrows raised.

"No, I'm simply saying that they're an elite school. Their accommodations, facilities and campuses - all of that are lot better than what we have. Just look at their uniforms. Hogwarts has an edge in term of education though. And the collective magic that resides within the castle is a lot stronger than any magical dwelling known to mankind," explained Hermione.

Hermione of course was right about Beauxbaton. It was indeed an elite magical school. Harry visited the school several times back in the old timeline when Fleur was still a teacher. The design of the main building and buildings surrounding it within the campus were a mixture of French Renaissance and modern art. The lobby alone left Harry speechless. High painted ceiling, huge decorative stairways that led to the first floor behind the receptionist table, beautiful paintings and marble statues lined up each walls. Huge, dancing water fountain can be found in front of the entrance into the lobby. A well kept multi acres wide lawn with perfectly aligned trees, benches, a small lake, picnic area, jogging tracks criss-crossing the lawn and beautifully arranged flower bushes completed the whole package. There was also a huge garage where the institute's buses and various vehicles were kept and they also have a sport center where the students and staffs can play various indoor and outdoor sports such as tennis, squash and soccer. Strangely enough, there was no Quidditch pitch. A heated indoor swimming pool was also available for the students and staffs. A computer lab would be added a couple of years later after the war ended. Beauxbaton seemed to pride itself in mixing various aspects of magic and non-magic in its daily operations, unlike Hogwarts which dispensed anything that had to do with muggles completely. Like the other two magical schools however, it was still unplottable.

Harry also had the opportunity to have a look at Fleur's former dormitory in one of his visits. It had a good view of the Eiffel Tower and it was bigger, more spacious than the room he shared with the boys and far more luxurious with its own modern central heating and air conditioning system. The occupants had their own desks, bookshelves and wardrobes. The one similarity Beauxbaton's dormitory shared with Hogwarts was the usage of poster beds. Fleur only had to share the dormitory with one roommate throughout her education years which in this case was Cassandra. All Beauxbaton students received the same perk, as Harry would later found out. Gabrielle eventually took over the dormitory from her elder sister and she would live in it until her seventh year.

The fees were of course quite expensive. Luckily for French natives and to those who eligible, generous scholarships were provided by the French government to students who managed to claim a spot in the school. Term and conditions of course applied here.

Back to Moody matters, of course what Harry told them was basically incomplete. He purposely left out the part about Barty. Moody did apologize but it was for something else.

The trio continued to chat. Harry informed them that Dumbledore called in Moody not just to induct the former auror as a teacher, but also to be the head of security for the Triwizard Tournament event.

At one point, they heard loud clangs. They turned and saw Moody, limping heavily towards them.

"You alright, Potter?" asked Moody the moment he reached them.

"Yes, sir," replied Harry.

Moody was about to continue speaking when he realized that Hermione and Ron was staring suspiciously at him. He paused for a moment before giving them both a nod. He then turned back to Harry. "Come, laddie," he said. "I want to show you something."
"Of course, sir," Harry said as he got off the bench. "I'll see you guys back at the common room," he said to Ron and Hermione. After seeing the look on the faces, he hastily added. "I'll be fine. Don't worry about me."

"Alright, Harry," said the other two simultaneously. From their expression however, it was clear that they remained unconvinced.

"Your friends are suspicious of me," stated Moody as they both walked out of the Great Hall.

'I'm sorry, professor," said Harry apologetically. "Rumors are spreading about what happened in the DADA class. I know it wasn't your doing but aside from Professor Dumbledore, Professor Snape and Madam Pomfrey, the rest of the school thought it was you. Barty had clearly spoiled your reputation, sir."

But Moody waved off Harry's apology. "That's okay, son. I don't really give an arse about my reputation. What matters most is getting the job done. In my line of work, if you give a damn about your reputation, you won't be able to do anything."

Harry just nodded. How true that was, he thought.

They both continued to walk. It was then that Harry realized they were heading towards the Potion classroom. He pointed it out to Moody.

"Yes, I know," said Moody. "We are to meet Severus. Only he and Dumbledore knew where Barty is being kept. Besides, we need to bring along something and he has it."

Harry went silent.

They both arrived at the Potion classroom a few minutes later. Professor Snape was already waiting for them.

"Severus," said Moody. "Do you have it?"

Snape said nothing. He fished out a small bottle of clear liquid out of his cloak's pocket and showed it to Moody.

Harry gave a loud gasp.

The two teachers stared at him.

"You do know what this is, Potter," said Moody, pointing towards the vial Snape was holding.

Harry nodded. "Veritaserum. Might I ask why?"

"So you know your potion. Good," said Moody. He proceeded to explain. "If the conversation you had with Barty is true, he will know the location of where You-know-who is hiding along with his accomplice. That is what we're going to find out."

"And then what?" asked Harry. The feeling of dread crept into his mind.

"We're going to nip his comeback in the bud," supplied Moody. "Now let's not waste any more time. After you, Severus."

Snape and Harry exchanged glances before the Potion master began walking down the corridor that lead away from the Potion classroom towards, if Harry was not mistaken, the entrance into Slytherin's common room. Moody followed him with Harry making up the rear.

No! No! No! This should not happen! This should not happen! thought Harry worriedly. Voldemort must not be found before everything else had been done!

But there was nothing he could do at that moment. All he could hope was that by some miracles, Moody did not get what he seeks.

The three of them walked down several stairs and into a cold, marginally lit corridor. Something green was glowing up ahead. As they got nearer, they saw a glowing painting of an arch on the right side of the wall corridor. Harry knew what that was. It was the entrance into the Slytherin's common room. One need to speak the correct password before the arch melted away, revealing a passage that lead into the common room.

They silently walked past the arch. They turned left into another corridor and continued their way until they reach the end where they meet a brick wall. Snape took out his wand and began to tap the brick wall at several places. Then, in the same fashion as the brick wall that separated the Diagon Alley and the Leaky Cauldron opened up, the bricks rearranged themselves, revealing a passage. Moody and Harry followed Snape through the passage until
they arrived into a large, dimly lit room with a curved ceiling. Nothing else was there except for an old looking elevator box, not unlike the ones Harry saw at the Ministry for Magic, located right at the center of the room.

The three of them entered the box. Just as Snape closed the door, the elevator box immediately sank into the floor.

Total darkness enveloped them. Harry could not see anything but by the creaking sound the elevator made, he knew that they were still on their way down. He strained his ears, trying to hear any other noises. Nothing came with the exception of the creaking sound and the sound of their breathing.

Minutes went past when Harry suddenly saw faint light from down below. It got brighter and brighter until, after several blinking of the eye to get it to adjust with the sudden brightness, Harry saw that they had entered a huge underground chamber from above. His jaw dropped. He had never seen anything like that before in all of his years of living. The chamber was huge. The distance from wall to wall would probably go up to several kilometers at its widest. Giant stalactites littered the ceiling of the cavern and between the stalactites, hundreds of giant crystals embedded within the cave's ceiling. The bluish illumination within the cave seemed to come from those crystals. He saw several huge passages that he suspected would lead to more chambers, just like the one they were currently in.

"This chamber," Snape spoke for the first time. "is far deeper than the Chamber of Secrets."

"No kidding," said Harry, still at awe. "How deep does this thing go?"

"Probably until the planet's core if we didn't stop the elevator," said Snape casually. "See that?" He pointed towards a speck that was getting larger and larger by the minutes. "That will be our destination."

"Do you know who built this chamber?"

"No one knows," answered Snape. "Most likely it's just a natural formation until the four founders found it and retool it to fit whatever purpose they had in mind."

"It's full of magic," stated Harry, looking around. "I can feel it."

"Indeed it is," agreed Snape. "Which is the reason why the castle was built on top of it."

Harry silently wondered if Tom Riddle, given his penchant for scouring the castle for anything useful to his ambition, knew about this place when he was still a student.

The elevator box finally made land on top of a platform. The three of them got out. Harry walked towards the end of the platform and took a peek over the edge. He saw only darkness down below with no bottom in sight. He looked up and saw gushes of water coming out of a huge hole embedded within the nameless cave wall in front of him. The water, most likely came from the Black Lake high above fell into the darkness. Then it struck him. They were not in a cave. They were in a hole. A really huge, bottomless hole. The platform itself was built on top of a huge floating rock. Nothing physical could be seen holding the rock in place. He could only surmise that magic was what holding the rock in place. He could also feel streams of cool air coming in from the giant passages that dotted the hole's wall.

"Potter!" called out Moody. "Careful, son. We don't want to risk you falling over the edge. Dumbledore will have my head if anything bad happens to you."

Harry obliged. He retreated from the edge of the platform and made his way back towards Moody and Snape. The two teachers were standing in front of a stone chair. And sitting rigidly on the chair was a man. Barty Crouch Jr.

Barty seemed to be unconscious. His head lolled down. Both his hands laid on the arm rest. It was then Harry saw the problem. Nothing bound Barty to the chair. He immediately took out his wand.

Snape however, saw the gesture. He put his hand on Harry's wand wielding hand and gently pushed it down. "He is well secured, Potter."

Harry once again obliged. He put his wand back into his pocket and waited.

"Time to wake him up," said Moody. He took out his wand and pointed at Barty.

"Ennervate!"

A bluish blob of light shot out of his wand and hit Barty right in the chest.

The death eater began to stir. He groaned several times, looked up and blinked his eyes. His
face concocted rage when he saw who were standing in front of him. His eyes travelled from Harry to Moody until it finally settled on Snape. He tried to lunge at Snape but found that he could not. He was tightly bound to the chair.

Harry, Snape and Moody watched silently as Barty thrashed around on the chair, trying with all his might to break free. But alas, all his efforts were in vain. He could not break free, not even an inch. He finally stopped a few minutes later, panting and out of breath. His eyes laid firmly on Snape.

"Traitor!" he said with undisguised hatred. "I knew I should have just killed you back then when I found out that you love that whore!"

Harry glanced at Snape. The Potion master simply looked at Barty impassively. Harry knew that Barty was speaking about his mother.

"That's enough!" said Moody sternly. He then took a deep breath and began to calm down. He took a few steps closer to Barty and bent down towards him. His crooked face was just inches away from Barty's. "I don't usually do this. I fight. I catch. Or I kill if it comes to that. I don't do interrogations. I prefer to have it the easiest way if I can so help me make it easy. Where is your master, Barty? Where is he hiding?"

Barty turned to look at Moody. His face turned into a sneer. "You can dig as much as you want Alastor, but you won't be getting anything from me. Do you think that I will give him up that easily? I much rather die than betray my master! Unlike Severus here!"

"Knew you would say that," said Moody. He straightened up and extended his hand towards Snape and said, "Severus, the potion if you will."

Snape walked up to him and handed the potion over to Moody. He then walked back and stood beside Harry.

Barty saw the vial and laughed maniacally. "A veritaserum?! My dear Alastor, you need to do better than that! If only you knew what it really does."

Moody pulled out the vial's stopper. "Oh, I know perfectly what it does," he said. With one hand, he clutched Barty's hair and pulled it to the back, forcing the death eater's mouth to open. He then poured three drops of the clear liquid down Barty's throat while making sure that the death eater swallowed every drop of the veritaserum. Once done, he let go of Barty's hair and took a few steps back.

Barty's earlier chaotic breathing began to ease. His eyes focused and unfocused several times. Once again, he sat rigidly on the stone chair.

"Can you hear me?" asked Moody.

"Yes," answered Barty, truthfully.

"What Potter said when he fought you, are those true?"

"Yes. All of it."

"You are planning to have him entered the tournament and have it delivered to your master. Is that true?" asked Moody.

"It wasn't my plan," answered Barty. "It was my master's. I am to take Alastor Moody's place as a teacher. Potter is to be entered into the tournament as one of the champions. My task is to guide him covertly through the tournament and make sure that he will be the one to reach the Triwizard Cup in the final task. The Cup shall act as a Portkey, which would take him straight to my master."

"What did your master want with Potter?" asked Moody.

"He said he wanted his blood. He said that Potter's blood is vital for his resurrection," said Barty.

"His resurrection?" asked Moody in surprise. "You mean that he had yet resurrected? How did you communicated with him?"

"Eye to eye. My master is weak. He had yet reached his full potential. He will soon once he got Potter's blood. He will then be invincible. He shall be the most powerful wizard ever to live."

Moody glanced at both Harry and Snape. He then turned back towards Barty. "Where is your master? Where is he hiding?"
Barty looked up towards Moody.

Harry held his breath, waiting for the inevitable.

"I don't know."

That answer took everyone by surprise.

"What do you mean you don't know?" asked Moody lividly.

"I do not know," repeated Barty. "My master met me at my house, where I was kept hidden. He was carried by one of his servant, Wormtail. He knew of my release from Azkaban. He subdue my father and put him under the Imperius Curse. It was there, based from the information given by a woman named Bertha Jorkins, that the plan was hatch. My master made my house as a temporary refuge. When he leaves and to where he will go I do not know. He said that I will know. Soon."

"To turn an object into a Portkey, you have to know to where it will travel to," growled Moody. "I doubt it that you do not know."

"My master thought of everything. He knew that in an unlikely case should I get captured; my captors will force me to divulge his location. He retains that information from me, until he sees fit to divulge it. It would only be then, that I will be able to turn the Cup into a Portkey."

Moody sighed in frustration. He turned to Snape. "Severus?"

"He spoke the truth," said Snape. "The truth serum is designed to prevent lies. It cannot create something out of nothing. If Barty said he does not know, then he does not know. It won't be easy to trick the dark lord either. He does not trust easily."

At this point, Barty's face developed an insane smile. He looked to Moody and said with a glee, "I told you, Alastor. If only you knew what it does."

Moody said nothing. Instead, he raised his fist and punched Barty's face.

Blood dripping from Barty's lip. The death eater however showed no pain. He just laughed.

"Hitting me won't change a thing, Alastor. You will never get him. Never!"

Moody bent down until his face was just a few inches away from Barty's. "I know where you live," he half whispered. "And there is a good chance that your master is still hiding there. We will find him. And when we do, it will be the end of him."

Barty's face immediately turned into uncontrollable rage. "You will never find him! He will kill you all!"

Moody just smirked. "We'll see, Barty. We'll see." He straightened up and walked towards Harry and Moody. "Our work here is done. Come."

"TRAITOR!"

The three of them stopped on their tracks and turned to look at Barty.

Barty's eyes were fixated on Snape. "COWARD!" he yelled. "YOU SOLD OUR MASTER! AND IT ALL BECAUSE OF YOUR LOVE FOR THAT WHORE OF A WOMAN WHO GAVE BIRTH TO THE BASTARD THAT STOOD BESIDE YOU! YOU GONNA PAY FOR WHAT YOU DID, SNAPE! YOU GONNA PAY! AND YOU WILL DIE JUST LIKE THATWHORE DID! YOU HEAR ME?! YOU WILL DIE!"

The three simply watched as Barty continued to rant. And rant. And rant.

"Let us leave him," said Moody calmly. He then turned around and walked towards the elevator box.

Harry stared at Barty with extreme disgust. His younger self would have thrown a curse or two at Barty. His older self however would remain calm. And that was what he was going to do. Remain calm.

He felt someone touching his shoulder. He looked back and saw it was Snape. Snape gestured him towards the elevator box.

Harry gave Barty one last look before he turned around and followed Snape towards the elevator box.
Nobody said anything on their journey back. Harry glanced at Snape. The Potion master looked calm but his clenched fist showed that he was struggling to control the anger that was raging inside of him.

They finally reached the Potion classroom. Without a word, Snape entered the classroom and closed the door behind him.

Harry and Moody stood outside the classroom, staring at the door.

"Love changes people. Love can also make people do things they had never done before," said Moody.

Harry looked up towards Moody and saw that the ex-auror was smiling at him.

"Severus loved your mother, Potter. In fact, he loved her so much that he was willing to forsake everything, even his life, just to see her safe. She was his world," said Moody softly.

"Her death destroyed him."

"You knew?"

Moody solemnly nodded. "Yes. It took me some convincing but in the end, I know Dumbledore was right. I am among the very few whom he told about Severus."

"Have you ever fallen in love, sir?" asked Harry.

"I had," said Moody. "Once. She was a wonderful woman. But I did nothing. I let her go and kept that feeling with me knowing that the life I chose will only hurt her in the end. Aurors blood runs deep within my family, Potter. Such was the sacrifice that some of us had to make."

Both of them then stood in silent for the next few moments. Each drowned within their own thoughts.

Moody finally put his hand on Harry's shoulder and gestured him to follow. "Come," he said.

They began to walk.

"So what now?" asked Harry.

"Well," said Moody. "We know now where You-know-who could be hiding. We also know that Crouch was embroiled in a certain scheme that led to his son being able to escape the Azkaban Prison. We also know that he was now under the Imperius Curse. We're going to ambush his house. Tonight."

Harry knew that their search would be fruitless. From the dreams he had, it was clear that Voldemort at this point had left the Crouch Mansion. But Mr. Crouch would still live there. One out of two won't be so bad anyway.

"Can I come along?" asked Harry.

Moody stopped dead on his track. He turned to face Harry. "No, you can't. I can't let you do that," he said, firmly.

"Why not?"

"First of all, you're too valuable. Both to us and to him. Second, while Barty did mention about him being weak, I won't underestimate him. Despite his conditions, he could still come up with a brilliant plan and subdued Crouch. Crouch himself is no slouch when it comes to wand art. You-know-who is still lethal. It's best that you stay here," explained Moody. He was about to continue to walk when Harry called out to him.

"Sir, I fought Barty and saved your life."

Moody stopped. He turned back to look at Harry. "I can't say that I'm not impressed," he said. "But you're probably just lucky."

"As an auror, you know that luck had nothing to do with it."

Moody saw the fierce determination in Harry's eyes. "I fought Barty once. Took a while before I could bring him down. He was quite a fighter, just like his father. Very well," he said. "I'll ask Dumbledore. I won't like this but I have a feeling that he will agree. Come along, Potter."

Harry obliged. He caught up to him and they both continued to walk.

"How did you guess that he is still dangerous?" asked Harry, jogging along beside Moody.
"You-know-who has been well known to keep his minion under complete control," said Moody, now taking longer strides as if he was in a hurry. "I may be out of work but I am still not out of touch. I heard things, Potter. France had been reinforcing their borders and buffing up their security for many months now and so did the rest of continental Europe. Reports are coming in from all over the globe. Former death eaters are getting jittery. There had been reports of unusual movement of those we suspect still loyal to You-Know-Who. It would be just a matter of time before they show their true colors. The incident at the Quidditch World Cup was a solid proof."

"What about Britain?"

"Britain, like its minister, is sitting on its bum, twiddling its thumb and keeps repeating to itself that everything is peachy. We keep on living in the past when the future is already knocking on our door."

"Did Dumbledore know that you're planning to interrogate Barty?" asked Harry.

Moody gave Harry a smile. "Yes. And this time, I'm telling the truth."

They reached the corridor that lead to the Great Hall. Up ahead, they heard noises and saw students streaming into the Great Hall.

"Go on, laddie," said Moody. "It's nearly lunch time. I need to see Dumbledore. I'll keep you posted. And as always, stay vigilance."

"Thank you, professor."

Harry watched Moody's retreating back as the ex-auror made his way towards the headmaster office.

He nearly walked the same path as Moody. He silently wondered if this time, he will truly traverse it.

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The Great Hall...

"Harry!"

He just entered the Great Hall when he heard his name being called. He saw a small congregation at the spot where he usually sits. Ernie Macmillan was there, together with several fourth year Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws. And much to his surprise, Cassandra too. Viktor Krum was waving at him. All of them stopped talking and simply watched as he walked towards them.

"Mind to tell me what this is all about?" he asked the moment he reached them.

"Moody," said Ernie. "We heard what happened. What does he want?"

"Yeah, Harry. Tell us," asked one fourth year Ravenclaw whom Harry could not remember what her name was.

Cassandra meanwhile just stayed silent and stared at him.

Harry sighed. He pinched his nose bridge and said, "Nothing happened. He invited me to his office, showed me his thingamajigs and told me stories about his adventures. That's all."

There was a pause.

"So that's it?" asked Alexander Stukov, one of the boys who brought the wooden chest full of snitches during the little competition he had with Viktor before.

"Yes," said Harry dryly. "Oh wait, there's more. He apologized for what he did to me. As a matter a fact, he wanted to apologize to everyone. He admitted he was a little bit overzealous. He was just being a little bit enthusiastic. He felt horrible for what happened."

"Oh," said George. For some reason, he sounded a little bit disappointed. "We thought it would be something... you know."

"Something what?"

"Something important," said Fred.

George and Lee Jordan nodded fervently.

Harry just stared at the twins and their friend with deep amusement.
There were murmurs and the little crowd began to dissipate. Cassandra glanced at him knowingly before she left for the Ravenclaw table.

Harry took his seat. He stared at Ron and Hermione. “Alright, you two. Spill it out. What just happened back there?” he asked sternly.

Ron immediately raised both of his hand. "We didn't tell anyone anything," he said.

"It's true, Harry," said Hermione. "We didn't tell anyone."

"Then how do you explain that?"

"Harry, we're not the only one who saw you being picked up by Professor Moody," explained Hermione. "We really don't know what happened. The rumors just spread like wild fire. The next thing we know is that people keep coming to us asking questions about you."

"Yeah, mate," said Ron. "The story of how Moody put the Imperius Curse on everyone isn't exactly dead you know. Anyway, you did tell us that you're finally managed to throw that curse off. I guess that got everyone excited. A student who managed to throw off one of the Unforgivable Curse isn't exactly small news you know. Daily Prophet will have it printed on the front page if they got any sniff of it."

Harry let out a long sigh. "Great. Just great. Like I really need any more attention," he grumbled.

Hermione reached out for his hand and touched it. "I'm sorry, Harry. I know you didn't like it but you know what, in some way, they all look up to you hence the attention. I'm afraid there's nothing you can do about it."

Harry looked around and saw everyone within his vicinity looked and smiled at him. Fred gave him a pat on his back. "Yeah, Harry," he said, smirking. "After everything you did this year you think we're just going to let you go? No way."

"Definitely and absolutely no way," said Lee Jordan.

"Our spotlight shall shine onto you, my good man," said George. "Twenty four hours a day and seven days a week."

"There'll be posters. Lots and lots of posters."

"And framed pictures of you."

"And toilet papers with your face on it."

"So that we all can-"

"Okay guys, that's enough," Harry quickly cut them off. "Thank you."

The three laughed.

Harry shook his head. He did smiled at the three's antics however. They had always been funny. Remembering that he had yet taken his lunch, he doled the beef casserole into his plate and began to eat.

He just hoped that the twins weren't serious about the toilet papers. Malfoy would be the first person to buy it, he suspected.

Nothing much happened for the rest of the lunch. They just chat and ate. Viktor and his friends however had to excuse themselves early, saying that they had extra class that afternoon. Fred asked him if he had reached the decision on when he wanted to hold the keeper's tryout. Harry pondered for a moment. He told Fred that it was his intention to hold the tryout sometime early next week.

"But then I realized we will all be tired from attending the classes so... How about tomorrow afternoon? Think the rest of the team can make it? I'll need all your help in this," said Harry.

"Yeah I think we can do it," said George. "Wait here. I'll go and ask the girls."

George got off the bench and walked towards the other end of the Gryffindor table where Angelina, Katie and Alicia were sitting.

"Why not today, Harry?" asked Seamus. "The weather is good. It'll be a good time to do the tryout."

Harry looked up towards the enchanted ceiling. The weather was indeed lovely that day.
There were no clouds in sight. It was perfect.

Damn.

"I can't," said Harry, dejectedly. "I have some... prearranged meetings need attending this afternoon."

"Oh, okay," said Seamus.

George came back. "Alright. The girls agree," said George as he sat on the bench. "What time?"

Harry paused for a moment. He would be fulfilling Viktor's invitation in the morning so afternoon seemed to be good. "How about four pm? Two to three hours of tryout should be enough."

"Yeah that'll be good," agreed Fred. "We can go directly to dinner after that."

"Alright then. I better inform both Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw. They might want to get their keepers ready," said Harry, feeling relieve that a concensus had been achieved pertaining the keeper's tryout.

He got off the bench and walked towards the Ravenclaw table. From afar, he could see Roger Davies, once again seating beside Fleur. They both were chatting though Harry could clearly see that Roger was fighting hard to control himself. That boy was losing the fight however. His eyes glazed even more as seconds went by. As for Fleur; she still entertained Roger. The difference was that she seemed to be lot less enthusiastic towards him than before.

His inner monster rose. Harry immediately quashed it just as fast as it came. It won't do for him to entertain his own jealousy. He may be trapped in a fourteen years old body, but his mind was a lot more mature. Harry decided that he did not want to care. Fleur can befriend whomever she wanted. It was not his place to decide that for her.

He approached them. Cassandra saw him first. She nudged Fleur on her rib and nodded at him. There was a surprise look on Fleur's face when she saw him. Her sparkling blue eyes followed him as he made his approach.

The group immediately went silent as Harry stopped right in front of Roger.

"Roger?"

"Yeah?" Roger was still staring at Fleur.

"Can I speak to you for a moment?"

"Yeah, sure. Whatever. Put it somewhere. I'll have a look at it later," mumbled Roger, still staring at Fleur. It seemed that he had totally lost it.

Harry tilted his head. He then reached out and snapped his finger loudly in front of Roger's face.

The Ravenclaw's Quidditch captain jumped a little. He shook his head and looked around. His eyes widened when he saw Harry standing in front of him.

"Harry?"

"Glad to see you back, Roger," said Harry, ignoring Fleur and her friends who were staring at him. "Relay this message to Grant. There'll be keeper's tryout tomorrow at four pm. Don't be late."

"Quidditch pitch?" asked Roger.

"Where else?" said Harry. "Can you do it?"

Roger nodded fervently. "Yeah. Sure thing, Harry. I'll tell him."

"Good," said Harry. He gave Fleur a glance. She was still staring at him. "And Roger," he continued. "Please wash your face. You don't want to embarrass yourself in front of our guest."

Without waiting for Roger's response, he immediately departed after that. He saw Cho Chang, seating not far from Fleur and her friends.

"Hey Cho," he greeted her.
Cho Chang immediately brightened up and smiled widely at him. "Hey, Harry."

"How's weekend?" asked Harry.

"Weekends okay," answered Cho. "You?"

"Same. You'll be watching the tryout tomorrow?"

"It's tomorrow?" said Cho in surprise. "Yeah sure thing, Harry."

"Alright. I'll see you there. Have a good weekend, Cho."

"You too, Harry," said Cho cheerfully.

He then approached Cedric. Much to his luck, Herbet Fleet was sitting beside the Hufflepuff captain. He informed them both about the tryout. Cedric and Herbet agreed with the schedule and promised Harry that they will be there.

Feeling satisfied that everything had gone according to plan, Harry made his way back to the Gryffindor table. But halfway there, he suddenly stopped. He turned to look at the Slytherin table. He saw Miles Bletchley, keeper for the Slytherin Quidditch team seating beside Marcus Flint, his captain. An idea suddenly flew into his head. He turned back and walked towards Slytherin table.

Malfoy saw him approaching. "What are you doing here, Potter! This table –"

"SHUT UP, MALFOY!"

Malfoy immediately quiet down when Harry yelled at him. There was a look of surprise on his face. The whole of Slytherin went silent, watching Harry’s every move.

Harry could feel every eye within the Great Hall, including those at the staff table, were watching him. Ignoring them, he turned to Bletchley.

"Miles Bletchley," he said with a firm voice. "As a representative of Hogwarts, I would like to invite you to the keeper's tryout tomorrow at the Quidditch Pitch. Be there at four pm sharp."

"Why would I want to be there?" Bletchley sneered. "I don't remember offering myself as a keeper for the Gryffindor team."

"You don't," said Harry calmly. "And it's not Gryffindor's team. It's Hogwarts. But I still want you to be there."

"Are you really this desperate, Potter? If you do this just to embarrass me, you can forget it. I'm not going!"

"Nobody is going to embarrass anyone, Bletchley. You either make it into the team or you do not. If you think you have what it takes, if you think that you can contribute to something and if you feel like you want to be part of something big, this is your chance."

Bletchley shook his head. "You aren't going to win, Potter. You know that, right?"

"Then make yourself present at the Quidditch Pitch tomorrow. Try your best to win a place within the team and help us beat Durmstrang. You have until tomorrow to decide. That would be all."

Harry then turned and left, leaving Bletchley dumbfounded. He walked past Daphne Greengrass, who was seating nearby and staring at him impressively.

"What are you doing, Harry?!" said Ron.

The Gryffindorians apparently were shock by what Harry did.

Harry look over his shoulder towards the Slytherin table. Bletchley was in a serious discussion with the rest of his friends. The rest of the Slytherins, including Malfoy himself were looking at him in confusion.

"I'm offering the Slytherin's keeper a chance at the tryout," said Harry casually.

"We know that. We heard what you said to Bletchley but why?" said Seamus.

"It seems fair, doesn't it?" said Harry. "Nobody got left behind and everyone will have the chance to contribute to the cause."
"But we already have Herbert and Grant," said Lee Jordan. "It's just the matter of deciding which one of them is the best. There's no way we're going to work with the Slytherin, Harry. You know that."

There were murmurs of agreement all around Harry.

"I hate to disagree with you, Harry," said Fred. "But I'm with Lee. What you just did, it won't work."

Harry leaned forward, closer to them. "Look guys, this isn't the Interhouse Quidditch Match we're talking about. This is Britain versus Bulgaria and it so happens that we got the honor to represent Britain in the upcoming friendly. We still want to win, right? Even though it's just a friendly match. Sure we got Herbert and Grant and they both want to be a part of the team but what I really want is a keeper who wants to win, not a keeper who simply want to brag to everyone that he once part of a team who fought Viktor Krum and his team even though his own team loses. One thing that I learnt about the Slytherin is that they hated being part of a losing team. Remember, we beat them at the Quidditch for the past three years and we won the Cup last year. We are the winning team. They will want to join us and they will want a piece of that glory. They know that they have a lot to gain by siding with us."

His friends however remained unconvinced.

"I don't know, Harry," said George. "Look, I was just extending an invitation, alright? I just don't want them to feel that they're being left out. Sure they're not in the best term with us and everyone else but they're still a part of this school. I don't want our guests to see us fractured just because we can't get over our differences," said Harry. "Anyway, there's no guarantee that Bletchley will come. But if he does and if you guys really don't want him to be part of the team, you guys know what to do. But if he does manage to win a place in our team, I would expect our team to be able to cooperate with him."

"He won't, Harry. I can promise you that," said Fred.

Harry just shrugged.

The news travelled fast and it immediately became the hot topic of the day. Everywhere, everyone was discussing about it. Some even place bets on who will grab that elusive place and whether or not Bletchley will make an appearance. Everyone was excited to watch the tryout the next day. Even Slytherin House who, as Harry would learn later, had planned to boycott the tryout earlier, only to cancel it after knowing that there were possibilities that one of their own would present at the tryout and may have the chance to claim the place.

Nobody, not one expected that a Gryffindor would extend a hand to the Slytherins. That had never happened before. Harry had everyone awed by him.

Harry however, had to endure questioning from the rest of his fellow house mates. Angelina, Alicia and Katie in particular were livid and began questioning his action. Harry answered all of their questions calmly but firmly made it clear that he won't back away from his decision. Professor McGonagall however was proud of him and praised him for his sense of sportsmanship and fair play. She went further by telling the rest of his fellow Gryffindor that what Harry did was the right thing and they should fully supported him for that.

The invitation...

It was fifteen minutes before four pm. Harry was walking down the castle's lawn towards the Beauxbaton's carriage.

He went to the owlery first to check on whether or not Daphne Lavinge was telling the truth. Unfortunately for him, she was.

From afar, he could see a few of the Beauxbaton students, all male, were loitering around outside the carriage, throwing Frisbees, reading a book, playing one to one soccer... just about any stuff one would do outside in a bright afternoon. A couple of them can be also seen sitting at the bank of the lake, fishing.

All of them immediately stopped what they were doing when they saw him approaching. The one who was holding the Frisbees walked up to him and extended his hand. He was taller than him, had dark hair and pale skin. His facial features though did remind Harry of young Tom Riddle.

"'Arry Potter," he said, his eyes did the typical flicking upwards and rested on his partly covered scar.
“Hello,” said Harry as they both shook hands. “You might be?”

“Raphael Bertrand. At your service,” said the other as they let go their hands. “You can call me Raphael. Or Raph if you like. So what are you doing ‘ere, ‘Arry?”

Harry hesitated for a moment. “Urm well, this is quite embarrassing actually.”

Raphael eyebrows raised. “Okay, here’s the thing, Raph or Raphael. I was invited to your carriage a few days ago. Unfortunately, things happened after that so I’m not really sure if the invitation still holds. So if it still holds, I’m here to fulfill it. If not, I’m here to get my bird back,” explained Harry.

“I see. Your bird? It iz ‘ere inside the carriage?” asked Raphael curiously.

“An owl actually. Yes, that was basically what I was told.”

“It so ‘appen zhat I am aware of zhe invitation,” he said. “But I’ve never seen any owl except zhe ones we already own. Are you sure, ‘Arry?”

“Yes, I am sure. I check the castle’s owlery before coming here. If she's back she would be there,” said Harry.


Harry followed Raphael towards the carriage's door. Along the way, he shook hands with some of the boys and got to know their names as well. Raphael climbed the golden steps and opened the door. He then gestured Harry to come inside.

Harry followed him inside.

Harry had visited the institute several times back in the old timeline but this was the first time he ever been into the carriage. A familiar sighting greeted him the moment he stepped inside the carriage. He was now inside a miniaturized version of the institute's lobby. The differences were that the walls, while still adorned with paintings and several marble statues lined along side of it, were painted light blue instead of pearlescent white, basically the same color as the carriage’s exterior. There was still a wide stairway behind a small reception desk but it now led to the first floor verandahs that lined the left and right wall. Harry could see many white doors that lined up the first floor which he assumed were living quarters of students, teachers and staffs. A marble fireplace can be found built into the right wall. It did not have fire woods in it so Harry assume that the fireplace was use as a mean to access the Floo network for travelling.

“Impressive, isn’t it?” said Raphael. “You won’t know zhat it would be zhis huge from zhe outside. Az a matter a fact, zhis iz zhe first time I travel inside zhe carriage. We usually uses zhe institute buses and airplanes to travel anywhere within France. We never really use magical transportation unless zhe place we want to get to ‘ave it. Zhose white doors are where we sleep. Girls on zhe right side and boys on zhe left side. Would you like a tour?”

Harry was more concern about Hedwig and dearly wanted to get his owl back. He didn't feel like staying inside the carriage for long but he didn’t want to be impolite either. Raphael though seemed eager to be a really good host. But then, Harry wasn’t sure if Raphael was allowed to do that.

“Are you allowed to do that?” asked Harry out of concern. “I’m pretty sure there are some parts of this carriage that I’m not allowed to visit.”

Raphael shrugged. “Well no outsiders are allowed inside zhe carriage actually but you were invited. I’m pretty sure zhe girl won’t dare to do zhat if Madame Maxime doesn’t agree. Come to zink of it, zhis iz zhe first time she did zhat. She usually would disapprove any request for visitation unless it iz very important. I think she trusted you so I see no problem. Come.”

Harry followed Raphael, somewhat reluctantly. As they climbed the stairway, he asked, “Why would Madame Maxime trusts me?”

Raphael glanced sideways at him. “Maybe because you're ‘Arry Potter,” he answered.

Harry just rolled his eyes. “You seem to not mind that the girls invited me here,” he stated. “Most boys would be jealous.”

Raphael chuckled. “You mean Fleur? If you must know, she iz my cousin on my mother’s side. Her father iz my mother’s brother. It took quite a long time for me to get use to ‘er. You can’t help but become a zombie and drool every time she appears. Zhat waz very embarrassing but you will get use to it. I am impress zhat you manage to control yourself in front of ‘er.”
Harry was puzzled by this. "Hmm, Fleur never told me about-"

Harry immediately caught himself. He nearly spilled out the fact that he was a time traveler who was once married to Fleur. He racked his brain, trying to remember his conversations with Fleur pertaining to her relatives back in the old timeline. It was then he remembered about Fleur mentioning that quite a few of her relatives were murdered by death eaters. Fleur never mentioned about Raphael but he had a hunch that Raphael could be one of them.

Raphael looked curiously at him. "She never told you what, 'Arry?" he asked.

Harry shook his head. "Err... nothing. Nevermind about that. So you're a Delacour too?"

Raphael stared at him. There was something in his eyes that Harry could not interpret. "Yes. Basically," he said moments later.

"So shall we continue with the tour?" Harry quickly suggested in an effort to cover the awkwardness.

"Yes. Of course."

Raphael brought him to see the kitchen which was quite large but looked barely used given how clean and polished all the cookware were. Well, the Beauxbaton had most of their meals at the Great Hall anyway. But Raphael did tell him that Madame Maxime was planning to ask Dumbledore if the Hogwarts house elves could send food to the carriage instead so that they don't have to brave the cold morning and harsh weather every time they wanted to eat. Next was the dining room which was big enough to accommodate all the occupants of the carriage. There was also a modestly sized library, a study area and a recreational room complete with sofas where they could lounge around, watching television and playing board game such as chess and backgammon. Harry also got to know where Madame Maxime living quarters is. Of course he wasn't allowed inside.

Raphael's living quarters was the last location he visited before they both decided to return to the lobby. He was sharing it with another boy. His roommate though wasn't in the room at that time.

"'e loves fishing," said Raphael as they exit his room. "'e immediately brightened up zhe moment 'e saw zhe lake outside zhe castle. Zhe bad news iz as you can see, my room now smells like a fish compartment. Come. Let's get you back to zhe lobby. Zhey probably waiting."

It turned out that they did not really have to go back to the lobby. Just as they came out of Raphael's room, they saw Marianne. She was walking up the stairs from the lobby.

Raphael put two of his fingers into his mouth and blew a loud whistle.

Marianne turned to look at him. Her eyes widened when she saw Harry, who was standing beside Raphael. She immediately marched towards them.

"Zhere you are!" she said to Harry the moment she arrived in front of them. She then turned to face Raphael, hands on her hip and spoke, "Raphael! What did you do to him?!

"Calm down, Mary. I didn't do anything. I was just taking our guest here on a tour of our carriage," explained Raphael, rolling his eyes. "You shouldn't be here, you know. You're on the male side of the verandah. Yours on the other side. Now scoot. Oh before that, can Harry have his owl back?"

Marianne turned to look at Harry. Her eyebrows raised. "You come 'ere just for zhe owl?" she asked.

"Err..."

"He told me something happened so he did not know if the invitation still holds when he comes here. If not, he just wants his owl back. Come on, Mary. Be a nice girl and give the bird back to him," urged Raphael.

Marianne however ignored Raphael. "Of course zhe invitation still 'olds, 'Arry. We were waiting for you. We zhought you won't come," she said to Harry. She then grabbed Harry's hand but before pulling him along, she spoke to Raphael, "You have a lot to answer to Fleur, Raphael!"

Raphael once again rolled his eyes. "Please, what do you think my cousin will do, drool me to death? I've seen a lot of veelas to last me a lifetime."

"Well considering that you drooled every time you see a veela especially Fleur, she just might do that to you. Or she could burn you to crisp. You know she isn't the only veela on board this carriage?" said Marianne hotly.
"You mean Daphne and her sister? Bring it on!" challenged Raphael. At the same time, he winked at Harry.

"Urggh!"

Marianne who wasn’t keen to entertain Raphael's antic any further immediately pulled Harry away from Raphael.

"See you later, 'Arry!" waved Raphael as he watched their retreating backs. "If anything ‘appen, just conjure a fire ‘ydrant and ‘ose down everyone and everything! Zhe boys will zhank you for it!"

"Shut up, Raphael!" shouted Marianne back.

Raphael just laughed.

Harry had a feeling that Raphael was a funny guy, just like Lee Jordan and the twins. They would build up a great rapport if they meet. But still, three veelas on the carriage? He remembered about his meeting with Lavinge the night before. She was a pretty girl but she hadn't showed any sign of her being a veela. And who was the other one?

"Urggh. That Raphael really gets on my nerve. Every. Single. Time," grumbled Marianne as they walked past the verandah and into a well lit corridor.

Harry who noticed the romantic tension evidenced between the two blurted, "Maybe he likes you. Maybe he just wants your attention."

Marianne looked sideways at him. "If ’e really likes me, ’e uses zhe wrong way to win my affection. ’E won’t claim my attention if ’e continues to act zhat way."

Evidently, you haven't meet Ron and Hermione, Harry thought.

Still, he hadn’t the slightest idea to where they were going so he asked, "Where are we heading to?"

"To Fleur's bedroom," said Marianne. "Zhey all are waiting for you zhere."

Hearing this, Harry immediately skidded to a halt. Marianne who was holding his hand was also pulled back along with him. She looked at him questionably.

"What iz it, 'Arry?" she asked.

"Hold on! Fleur's bedroom? Are you crazy?" said Harry in shock. "I’m pretty sure no boys are allowed on the female side of the carriage, let alone their bedroom."

"Hmm, zhey said zhat you are noble," said Marianne thoughtfully. "Zhey said zhat zhis will ‘appen."

"Who?" asked Harry.

"It iz not important," said Marianne dismissively. "Come."

She pulled Harry's hand but he wouldn't budge.

"Can't we just do this at your recreational room or something?" said Harry. "This is not right."

"Relax, 'Arry. If anything 'appen, we will bear responsibilities. You should be proud. You shall be zhe very first male to enter a Beauxbaton female bedroom in one 'undred years."

Marianne once again pulled Harry's hand. Harry hesitantly followed.

"That is definitely not something to be proud of, you know," said Harry. "Anyway, who's the other two?"

"Two what?" asked Marianne.

"Veelas."

"Ave you forgotten what Raphael said? Daphne and 'er sister. You'll meet zhem."

They had reached the end of the corridor. To the right there was an oak door. Marianne turned the knob and pushed the door open. She gestured Harry to come in.

But Harry just stood there causing Marianne to reach out and pulled him in.
He found himself in a medium sized bedroom. Of course it was much larger than the room occupied by Raphael. A large double bed can be found sitting closely to the right wall. To the left wall there was a door leading to what he presumed a personal bathroom. There was a small dining table able to sit six person, a three person couch and several bean bag chairs, all occupied by none other than Fleur's friends and the rest of Beauxbaton female students who were part of the delegates. On top of the dining tables were plates of cakes, pies and drinks. On top of a window side table there was a micro system churning out Confide in Me, a song sung by Kylie Minogue.

"I Harry!"

"Ello Harry!"

"Zthought you wouldn't come!"

Fleur's friends greeted him.

Harry's face reddened when he saw what they were wearing. With the exception of Marianne, all of them wore girl shorts that showed off their shapely legs and tight shirts that accentuated their curves. The low neck t-shirts showed hint of cleavages of their quite considerable bosom. Marianne didn't wear shorts however. She wore long white pants matched with a white short sleeveless shirt that showed her stomach and cleavage. All of them didn't wear their hair in buns and ponytails this time. Instead they let it fall freely over their shoulder. And all of them smelled really good.

Marianne invited Harry to sit on one of the vacant chairs. He hesitated at first but eventually obliged nevertheless.

"Raphael got to him first before I did," said Marianne as she walked towards the bed and sat cross legged on it. "He took him on a tour around the carriage. They were just coming out of his room when I found them. Harry thought we cancelled the invitation, Cassy."

Cassandra upon hearing what Marianne told her got off her bean bag chair and walked towards Harry. She folded her hands across her chest and spoke, "Now why would we do zhat?"

Harry tried hard not to look at Cassandra's pumped up chest. He was about to reply when Daphne Lavinge cut him off. She was sitting a bit further away on the couch. There was a book in her hand. He noticed that she was wearing a pair of thin rimmed glasses when last night she wasn't. He silently admitted she looked rather cute that way.

"It was last night, Cassy," she said. "Remember what I told you and the girls about the other guy?"

"You mean Roger Davies?" asked Cassandra.

"Yes. The one and only," came the reply.

Cassandra turned back to Harry and burst out laughing. It took her awhile before her laughter subsided.

"Are you jealous, Monsieur Potter?" asked Cassandra, wiping away the tears from her eyes. The other girls were smirking at him.

"No."

"Well maybe you should," said Cassandra, smirking. "Roger iz really into Fleur. 'E can't stop flirting with 'er. And Fleur receives 'im well. Zhey both really well match with each ozher considering zhat 'e was only one year younger zhan 'er."

"And good looking too," added Adrienne, who was sitting at table. She was eating a piece of cupcake at that point.

Harry's hand twitched a little. His anger rose. He knew that Fleur's friends can be quite a bully. He remembered having to go through their interrogations back in the old timeline. He knew that they were just being protective of Fleur and wanted to ensure that he was really right for Fleur, considering what she had gone through post Bill's death. He didn't mind it back then. He really loved her and was willing to do anything for her and Fleur herself was ready to be with him. But this time it was different. He still loved her to death in this timeline but this was a different Fleur. The younger Fleur had yet gone through all the pain and suffering that eventually turned her into a strong, independent and wonderful woman he married for more than seventy years. This Fleur had yet fallen in love with anyone. This Fleur also can be quite snobbish as far as he remembered. Given how easily she was in falling in love with Bill, there was no doubt in Harry's mind that she could fell for Roger if the later managed to control himself in front of her. He knew he should probably fight for her affection
but given what happened, he silently wondered if it will all be worth it.

Maybe he should just conjure a fire hydrant and hosed down everyone and everything within the room. Just like what Raphael suggested him to do.

Feeling that there won't be any point for him to stay for much longer, he said, "Which is why Roger should be the one you invited, not me. I told this to Daphne last night. Either she didn't hear me or she suffered from short term memory lost."

Daphne Lavinge immediately put down her book and stared at Harry.

But Harry ignored her. He continued with a much firmer voice, "I'm not here to fulfill the invitation. I'm here for Hedwig. Where is she?"

"Hoot."

He turned to look and saw Hedwig perched comfortably on top of a silver perch placed on top of a table located at the far end of the room. Bowl of food and water were placed below the perch. Apparently the Beauxbaton students treated her well.

But Harry did not care. He simply wanted to get out of there as fast as possible. "Hedwig!" he called out to her.

Hedwig stretched her wings, flew to him and landed on his outstretched hand. He was about to grab the door knob when Cassandra called back to him.

"But Fleur hasn't come back yet! You should at least meet 'er first!" She went to grab his arm.

Harry in anticipation of her action immediately moved his arm away before she could grab it. "Why would I want to meet her?" he asked sternly.

The room immediately went silent. Cassandra herself froze when she heard what Harry said.

Without waiting for her responses, he turned the knob and opened the door.

And he found himself face to face with Fleur.

From the position of her hands, Harry could see that she was about to open the door. And behind her was Madame Maxime.

"'Arry?" said Fleur, her eyebrows furrowed. "Where are you going?"

"Back to the castle," replied Harry simply.

There was a look of surprise on her face but Harry ignored it. He looked past her towards Madame Maxime.

"Madame Maxime," he greeted the Beauxbaton headmistress and politely bowed to her. "I apologize. I know I shouldn't be here but your students made me. I promise to you that it won't happen again."

"You don't 'ave to apologize, Monsieur Potter," said Madame Maxime. "I gave zhem zhe permission to invite you 'ere."

Harry nodded. "And I thank you for that. But if you'll excuse me, I have to go."

He was about to walk past Madame Maxime and Fleur when the later grabbed his arm.

"'Arry, please," said Fleur. "Stay."

"I'm sorry but I have to go."

He was about to again, walk away from there when Madame Maxime spoke, "My students worked 'ard to organize zhis little get togezhier party. Zhe least you could do iz stay, even just for a short while."

Harry sighed. It took a while but he did finally nod.

Fleur who was still holding his arm smiled satisfactorily. "Thank you, Madame," said Fleur to Madame Maxime.

Madame Maxime nodded. She then took leave, leaving Harry and Fleur alone in the corridor.

Fleur turned to Harry. "'Arry? Come inside," she spoke softly. She then gently pulled his arm
and Harry inadvertently followed her inside. After closing the door behind her, she walked up towards the table and pulled a chair out. She then gestured Harry to sit.

Harry hesitated at first before he finally obliged. But Cassandra immediately stopped him before he could do anything. He looked at her questionably before he realized what she intended to do.

Cassandra reached out to Hedwig who was perching comfortably on his shoulder. She took the owl off his shoulder and brought Hedwig back to the silver perch.

"'Arry?" Fleur called once again to him.

Harry walked up to her and sat on the offered seat. Fleur then placed a clean plate in front of him and poured him the drink. She then took the seat beside him.

"Pies, 'Arry?" she offered.

"Yes, please."

Fleur took a knife and carefully cut one of the pies - she chose the blueberry pie - and put the slice into Harry's plate. She then handed him a pair of silver fork and knife.

"Thank you," said Harry, still staring at her.

It was at this point that he realized how extraordinarily beautiful she was. Unlike the others, she wore her hair in a braid which fell over her left shoulder. Together with the thin make up she wore, she looked just like Queen Elsa from the movie Frozen. He remembered how much their daughter Victoire loved that movie. She was ten years old and she would always ask her mother to wear her hair in the same style as Elsa. Fleur of course obliged. And Victoire would always wear her hair in the same way as Princess Anna every time she cosplayed with her mother.

Fleur's clothing was more modest than the rest of the females within the room. It still showed some of her curves though.

Cassandra returned from putting Hedwig back on the silver perch and sat in the only vacant chair in front of Harry.

"Zhey were just teasing you, 'Arry," said Fleur, taking a bite out of a slice of chocolate cake. It seemed that she had guessed what really happened in the room prior to her arrival. "I zhink you know zhat, don't you?"

"Well, it didn't seem like it," Harry retorted. He had yet touched his pie.

Fleur frowned at him. "Roger and I are just friends. I waz just being polite to 'im. I'm not ready for new relationship at zhis point, I still 'ave one year left of my education. I want to concentrate on zhat first," explained Fleur, glancing at him.

Yeah right. You haven't met Bill yet, thought Harry.

"Harry, iz zhere somezhing wrong?" asked Fleur upon noticing the look on Harry's face.

"No. Nothing's wrong."

Fleur gazed at him for awhile. "I would like to apologize for my friends' behavior earlier," she said moments later. "Zhey mean well, 'Arry."

"'Arry, I am sorry," said Cassandra, who until that time was contend in watching the interaction between the two. "I zhought you were just like any ozher men who just want to take advantage of Fleur. Clearly I was wrong. You are different."

Fleur smiled when she heard that. "I told you he is different, Cassy. You didn't believe me."

Cassandra just shrugged. "Well, we still have to test him, don't we? When it comes to men, I will only believe it when I saw it with my own eyes. Luckily your man here passed the test."

Fleur playfully hit Cassandra's arm. The later just laugh.

Harry just shook his head at the antics between the two. His mood brightened up a bit. "That's okay, Cassandra," he said. "Apology accepted. I should have guessed that you mean well. As a matter a fact, I am glad that you and the rest have been a very good friend to Fleur. She couldn't ask for much better friends than all of you."

Fleur and the rest of the girls smiled widely upon hearing what Harry just said.
"Can I kiss you?" Cassandra suddenly blurted out to Harry.

*Smack*

Fleur once again hit Cassandra on her shoulder. This time a little bit harder than previously.

"I was just kidding, Fleur!" said Cassandra, rubbing her shoulder and laughing.

"You haven't apologize to me, Harry," said Daphne Lavinge. "You called me forgetful."

Harry turned to look at her. "I apologize," said Harry. "I guess I should have not said that."

Daphne Lavinge stern look turned into a smile. "Apology accepted," she said before returning to her book.

The mood within the small party lifted up considerably after that. They ate and they chat.

Fleur told him that they baked all the pies and cakes themselves.

"We don't 'ave the ingredients unfortunately," said Marriane, standing beside Fleur and eating a slice of strawberry and vanilla cake. "Luckily zhe 'Ogwarts 'ouse elves were kind enough to give us some. We don't really like zhe food zhey cook, zhey are too greasy for our taste, but zhe ingredients are very good and really fresh."

"So which one of this you made, Fleur?"

"Zhe blueberry pie."

"It is very delicious, Fleur."

"Zhank you."

"Did you ever, you know, invite the boys into your party?" asked Harry curiously. He was now eating another slice of the blueberry pie after finishing the first one. The pie was indeed delicious. Baking was one of old Fleur's fortes.

Cassandra shook her head. "Only once. Zhey were nozing but nuisance. All zhey wanted to do is snuggle with us and do romantic stuff. It gets even worse when Fleur got thrown into zhe mix. You are zhe first boy who manage to act around us with much decency. We may invite you to our next party."

No kidding. Fleur's beauty stood way above the rest, but her friends were pretty in their own right. And with the kind of clothing they currently wore, it was enough to shut down a man's brain and turned him into a monkey on heat.

"'Ave you met my cousins, 'Arry?" asked Fleur at one point.

"You mean Raphael? Yes. He's funny. I like him."

Fleur chuckled. "Not Raphael. Daphne. And 'er sister."

"I met her last night."

Fleur smiled and shook her head. "Not zhat Daphne," she said. "Zhat Daphne." She pointed towards the far corner of the room.

Harry suddenly realized there were two more people sitting there.

The girl suddenly rose from her chair and walked towards the table.

Harry's eyes widened when he saw who she was.

"Daphne Greengrass?!" he croaked.

"Hello, Harry," greeted Daphne Greengrass, smiling.

Harry turned to Fleur. "She's your cousin?" he asked in shock.

Fleur nodded. "Yes, she iz my cousin on my mother's side. 'Er mother iz my mother's younger sister."

Then it dawned upon him and Harry began to understand what Raphael and Marianne was talking about. He turned to Daphne Greengrass and asked, "You're a veela too?"

Daphne Greengrass didn't reply.
All of a sudden, Harry felt wave upon wave of veela allure washed over him. He was dazed for a moment before he effectively threw the allure off him. He somehow knew from where it came from.

Daphne Greengrass looked impressed. “This isn't the first time I did that to you. So what they say about you is true.”

“This wasn't the first... but I felt nothing before.”

“I didn't turn up my allure in full, Harry,” said Daphne Greengrass. “If I did, all the boys within the Great Hall will go crazy. You should have seen what Fleur is capable of through. She is much stronger than I am.”

“But why no one knows about this?” asked Harry. “How come no one in Hogwarts knows that you're a veela?”

“I have the ability turn my allure all the way down, Harry. This is why no one noticed. My sister,” she pointed towards another girl who looked like her albeit younger. “Also capable to turn her allure off. Have you met her?”

Harry looked over towards the girl Daphne Greengrass mentioned. The girl waved at Harry. “Hi Harry! I'm Astoria.” she greeted him. Beside her was another girl with blonde hair.

“Who's that?” asked Harry, pointing towards the blonde girl.

“Tracy Davis. My friend in Slytherin. Astoria is in Ravenclaw. She's in the same year as that Weasley girl.”

“I see.” Harry then turned to Fleur. “Can you do the same as them?” he asked her.

Fleur however shook her head. “I wish I could,” she said.

“Fleur won't be able to do what me and my sister could do, Harry,” said Daphne Greengrass. “She's too powerful even among our kind. She could tune down her powers but it will only go as low as half of what I can do. But still, as you have seen, even with my allure fully turned off, men still acting stupid whenever I'm around them. Malfoy is a good example. And for that, I am grateful for what you did for me the other day. Thank you, Harry.”

“Which is why we 'old zhis little party, 'Arry,” said Cassandra. “Zhis iz our way to say zkank you for protecting one of our sisters. Zhere are ozher reasons of course. You don't need to know what zhey are for now.”

Harry just rolled his eyes.

“I just did what I could, Daphne,” he said, ignoring what Cassandra just said.

Fleur just smiled. “Always zhe modest man you are, 'Arry.”

“One thing that I didn't get though,” he said to Fleur. “Why didn't you tell me this when we were still-”

Harry immediately clammed up. He realized he nearly spilled out what he should not say to her. For all he knew, she and the rest of her friends would simply label him as that crazy boy if he didn't manage to stop in time.

“When we were still what, 'Arry?” asked Fleur curiously.

“Err... nothing. Just forget about what I said, Fleur.”

Fleur and the rest of the girls exchanged glances. She then nodded. “Alright 'Arry. If zhat iz what you asked.”

Luckily for him, Fleur and her friends decided to let the matter go. The party then continues.

It was then Harry found out that Daphne Greengrass had been sleeping inside Fleur's bedroom for many days now. Her sister and Tracy joined her occasionally. They asked him about Cho Chang and Ginny. He said that they both were just friends.

He noticed that he was now surrounded by three veelas and a group of lovely young women inside a spacious bedroom. It was a wonder that he didn’t turn into a monkey on heat.

The clock showed thirty minutes past six when Harry excused himself.

“Don't you want your owl back, 'Arry?” asked Adrienne.
Harry paused for a moment. He stared at Hedwig. He saw how comfortable she was living in the carriage. She had a clean perch, a clean bowl of water and clean food. And Fleur and her friends were fawning over her. He saw that during his time there. Her living condition was vastly superior compared to that cold and dirty owelry Hogwarts had. It was a miracle that none of the owls that lived within the owelry fell sick from the harsh living conditions they were subjected to.

And all of a sudden it dawned upon him. He may not survive for long given what he was planning to do. Hedwig needed someone to take care of her and someone to love her. She truly deserved it. And he already found someone who will.

"No," he slowly shook his head. "She looks happy here. She can stay here if you girls don't mind."

"Of course we won't mind," said Camille. "We like 'er. But what if you want to send letters?"

"The school owls will do," replied Harry. "It's not like I would be sending out letters every day."

He let out a small chuckle. And the chuckle went away as fast as it came.

"Will you love her? Will you take good care of her?" he asked them, trying as hard as he can to feign his sadness.

Fleur and her friends looked at him in puzzlement. "Of course, 'Arry," said Fleur.

"Thank you."

Harry stared at Hedwig. He took her in for as much as he can for that might be the last time he would see her.

"Goodbye, Hedwig."

He then turned around and walked out the door.

His heart shattered into many pieces. And he was the only who heard it.

Fleur and her friends, now dressed modestly, escorted him back to the carriage's entrance. Fleur herself was wearing a shawl on top of her head. This was to prevent the boys from losing their mind every time they saw her. The Beauxbaton boys did have some measure of controls over themselves but that usually didn't last long, Fleur told him. They packed him some of the pies and cakes for him to bring back.

"So 'ow's zhe party, 'Arry?" said Raphael. He was seating on bench outside the carriage with a couple of his friends. "How come you never invite us to your party, Cassy?"

"Behave yourself and maybe we will!" she replied.

"Owh shucks," said Raphael. "Did you conjure zhe fire 'ydrant like I told you to, 'Arry?"

"No," came the reply.

"Owh shucks."

Harry just shook his head. George, Fred and Lee Jordan will really like Raphael if they meet him. "Thank you," he said to the girls. "I had a great time."

"You're welcome, 'Arry."

Harry nodded. Suddenly, an idea flew into his head. "I would like to invite all of you, and yes including the boys to the Gryffindor Tower. I will tell you the time and date later. Will you accept it?"

This took the Beauxbaton students by surprise. "You can do zhat?" asked Raphael.

"Why not?" said Harry. "After all, you did allow me into your sanctuary. It's your turn now to see where I live."

"Zhat would be great, 'Arry," said Fleur. "We're looking forward to it. Zthank you."

He nodded. He then turned around and began walking towards the castle. But before he could go any further, he heard a melodious singing coming in from the sky. He stopped and looked up.
"Look!" One the Beauxbaton boys pointed towards the sky.

Indeed, up in the sky, they saw a beautiful bird with beautiful long tails circling the sky. It circled lower and lower until Harry could see what it was.

It was a phoenix and it belongs to Dumbledore.

Fawkes landed gently on Harry's shoulder. Everyone else was staring at the phoenix in awe.

"Iz-...iz zhat a phoenix?" asked Marianne.

"Yes it is," replied Harry.

"I 'ave never seen a phoenix in all my life. But I zhought 'Edwig waz your only familiar?" she said.

"Oh, he wasn't mine," said Harry as he stroked Fawkes's head. "He belongs to the headmaster. His name is Fawkes."

"Owh."

Fawkes extended his leg.

Harry saw a note attached to it. He untied the note from Fawkes's leg, unfolded it and began to read:--

**Hold on tight, Harry.**

Harry's brows furrowed. "Hold on-... Wait what?!"

But before he could do anything, Fawkes suddenly burst into flame along with him.

"'Arry!"

But Harry and Fawkes disappeared without a trace once the flame extinguished.

To be continued...

_A/n: Phew! Finally. This chapter is the longest chapter I have ever written since I first became active writing fanfics. It's 14.7k words long if you must know. My laptop's keyboard is screaming for its life right now._

_As always, thanks for all the input. Kindly read my profile if you want to know a little bit more about this story._

So that's it. Till next time. Owh, update won't happen until March.

**Update:** Some corrections had been done.
Chapter 26

Chapter 25

He wanted to scream.

He was expecting that the flame would burn him alive. But that did not happen. He was okay. He did not get burn. He felt no pain. The package he was carrying was intact. And he found himself no longer at Hogwarts.

The flame went away as fast as it came. Gone has Fleur and her friends and the Beauxbaton carriage. Instead he found himself standing at the foot of a hill overlooking a sprawling green valley. The sun was hanging low in the western sky and far into the horizon he saw lights coming in from what could be a huge city. Night was creeping in. The first evening star had come out.

He became aware of where he was. He was now somewhere within West Yorkshire County. Those lights he saw, they came from City of Leeds, one of five metropolitan enclaves existed within the said county.

Dumbledore's familiar was transporting him there. That was the first time in all his long years he travelled via a phoenix. He of course knew that Fawkes was able to do that. He witnessed it back in the old timeline when Dumbledore made his escape.

Fawkes crooned softly into his ear.

Harry took out his wand. "Why are we here, Fawkes?" he asked, looking around.

Fawkes again crooned softly and turned its head towards the top of the hill. Harry copied the phoenix and saw a man with recognizable long white beard and wearing a pair of half moon spectacles walking down the hill towards him. He immediately recognized who that person is.

"Professor Dumbledore!"

"Harry!" greeted Dumbledore. "I'm glad you come. And good to see that you are on alert," he said when he saw Harry was holding his wand in readiness. He then turned towards Fawkes. "Thank you, Fawkes. You may go back to the castle. Severus, Rubeus and Argus will need you there."

Fawkes let out a soft cry and immediately took off.

Both Harry and Dumbledore watched the phoenix turned into a brilliant ball of flames midair and zoomed out of sight under the dark northern sky, leaving a streak of white light behind it.

Harry stowed his wand. He then turned towards the headmaster. "Explanation, professor?" he said.

"I believe Professor Moody already told you what we intend to do," said Dumbledore. "You want to tag along so here you are." He gestured Harry to follow him. "Come, Harry. Everyone is waiting."

"Waiting?" said Harry as he began walking up the hill alongside Dumbledore. "For what?"

"For the right time to act," said Dumbledore simply.

"You know you could at least give me a warning or something," said Harry as they both walked past trees and stepped over a few broken branches lying on the ground. "You snatched me right in front of the Beauxbaton students. I'm not really complaining but they will ask questions."

"Did they know to whom the phoenix belongs to?" asked Dumbledore.

"I told them Fawkes belongs to you," replied Harry. "Why?"

"Then there won't be anything to be concern about," said Dumbledore. "Madame Maxime I believe, will take care of the matter for us. There wasn't much time, Harry. Fawkes was already waiting for you for quite a few hours. He would have brought you here much sooner if it wasn't for your meeting with the French champion." Dumbledore cocked his eyebrows and smiled widely.

"It wasn't just between me and her, sir," said Harry sheepishly.

"Oh I won't mind if it happened just between you and Miss Delacour," teased Dumbledore. His eyes twinkled behind the half moon glasses. "I mean if she does make you happy."
"It's nothing like that, sir," Harry immediately cut Dumbledore off. "We're just friends."

Dumbledore chuckled. "If you say so, Harry. I'll take your word for it."

Harry had a feeling that Dumbledore somehow did not believe him but he decided to let the matter slide for the moment. "So, Professor Snape isn't here?"

"Yes," replied Dumbledore. He stopped to lift a low hanging branch that stood in their way. He let Harry walk past him first before continuing. "He and Mr. Filch had been assigned to guard the castle tonight. Hagrid with Fawkes's help will be in charge of the castle's ground and our guest's security."

"You believe that something will happen tonight?"

"I don't," replied Dumbledore. "But it won't hurt to be prepared. As I already told you earlier, even for someone who is blessed with a mind so brilliant, mistakes could still happen."

The path began to level and soon, they entered a small clearing that was surrounded by trees on top of the hill. Harry could see several people were already there. A couple of them were looking out towards the other side of the hill.

"Harry," said Dumbledore. He suddenly paused for a moment. "I believe a second introduction would be more appropriate. These people are, as you would already aware, the members of the Order of the Phoenix."

"Harry Potter."

One of the wizards that was on the lookout walked up to him. He held out his hand and shook Harry's. "Harry Potter," he spoke in deep gravelly voice. He was black and bald. An earring was attached to one of his ears. "Kingsley. Kingsley Shacklebolt. At your service. Remus spoke a lot about you."

Harry of course knew Kingsley. He looked a lot younger than what he remembers. The auror would eventually become the future Minister for Magic though he was not sure that would still hold given the enormous changes he planned to do in this timeline.

"Remus?" said Harry as he let go of Kingsley's hand. "Is he here too?"

Kingsley nodded. "He lives around here. He's the one who provides the logistic information of this village."

It was at that point that Harry realized they were now in Ilkley, one of Britain's wizard villages. Of course. Both Remus and Mr. Crouch lived here. He nearly forgot about that. "So where is he?"

"Investigating," said Kingsley. "He'll be back. And Harry, meet Elphias Doge."

Elphias, also a tall black wizard who previously was on the lookout together with Kingsley bowed.

"And here is-"

"WOTCHER HARRY!"

Harry did not realize that there was a witch amongst them. Apparently she was standing a little bit further away from them in the darkness which was why he did not see her in the first place. The witch approached them until Harry could finally see the recognizable pearl heart shaped face, the dark twinkling eyes and the violet colored hair.

She beamed at him.

Harry silently admitted that she looked rather cute.

"They didn't let me put on one, single light. And I hate dark," she complained to him. "These guys, they're bullying me."

"Tonks?!" Harry blurted out.

The cute witch froze, staring at Harry wide eyed. "Wait! How did you know my name?" she asked.

Oh shit.

"Err..." He suddenly remembered that Tonks was Moody's prodigy. "Professor Moody told me?"
"Huh!" said Tonks. She crossed her hand to her chest. "You know this is the first time you saw this face, right? How do you know it was me he talked about?"

"He showed me your picture?" said Harry in his effort to wiggle his way out this one.

"I don't remember giving him any pictures of mine," said Tonks, her hands now positioned at her hip. "But I do like to take a lot of pictures by the way. Come on! Spill it out, Harry!"

"Okay, that's enough, Nymphadora," said Kingsley, shaking his head and amused by what he saw. "I'm sorry, Harry. This is Nymphadora Tonks. Our youngest member. She can be a little bit too high spirited at times and quite a handful to handle. I honestly don't know how Alastor was able to keep up with her."

"How many times do I have to tell you not to call me Nymphadora!" scolded Tonks as she aimed a kick at Kingsley's leg. "It's Tonks. Tonks! Tonks! Tonks!"

Kingsley managed to move his leg out of the way just in time. "As many times as needed for me to remind you to keep your voice down," he said. "We're on a mission here."

Tonks just rolled her eyes.

Harry glanced at Dumbledore. The headmaster had move away from them and was now standing at the edge of the clearing, staring down toward the village of Ilkley.

Harry excused himself and joined Dumbledore. Down below, he saw various cottages and mansions littered throughout the village. He saw a mansion which was a little bit bigger than the rest, situated a little bit farther from the hill. All the lights within the mansion were turned which was odd given that there would be only one inhabitant within the mansion most of the time.

He knew about the village of Ilkley. He visited the village several times before during his tenure as an auror. He also knew that both Remus Lupin and Mr. Crouch lived there. Remus, given his conditions, was forced to live inside a derelict house somewhere within the village and was forced to take odd, low paying jobs well below his own qualifications and abilities ever since he graduated from Hogwarts. The pay was enough for him to get simple meals but not much else. He kept on changing jobs however, staying only until before anyone else found out his secrets. He left Ilkley when Dumbledore offered him a job at Hogwarts. There were preconditions of course, all of which Dumbledore easily met. He returned a year later.

Unfortunately for him, given that his secrets had been revealed by none other than Snape, he got turned down every time he applied for work. He ended up having to beg for a living since then. Lucky for him, Dumbledore came to his rescue every now and then. Sirius himself when he was still alive offered Remus sanctuary at Grimmauld Place. Remus however turned Sirius's offer down. But despite all those hardships, he remained true to himself and did not hesitate to raise his wand for the Order whenever called upon. His marriage with Tonks somehow changed his fortune. For the first time ever since he left Hogwarts, he gained a proper home and a proper family to return to. Remus ended up helping Ted Tonks run his business when his father in laws took him under his wings. His good luck was short live however. Second Wizarding War happened shortly after that and everything else became history.

That was the story told by Andromeda every time he and Fleur visited his godson, Teddy Lupin.

As for Mr. Crouch, that mansion of his fell into disrepair after his death. With no one to inherit the house, Barty Jr. died in Azkaban a few years after the event of the Triwizard Tournament, the house remained vacant until another wizarding family purchased it fifteen years after the second war ended. They rebuilt it and had been living in it since then.

And Harry and Dumbledore were looking right at it.

"You do know which house we're looking at, Harry?" asked Dumbledore.

Harry nodded. "Yes. Remus went down to the house to investigate?"

"Remus and Professor Moody, yes," said Dumbledore. His eyes were still staring at the mansion. "But only from the outside. From Barty's information, Voldemort made Crouch Mansion as his safe house albeit only temporary. I don't think he is planning to stay for long. Crouch is one of Ministry's employees who is well known to be anti dark wizards. Voldemort knew it won't be safe for him to stay there. We have yet ascertained whether or not he had left but I have a hunch that we may not find him here tonight. It is however, not an excuse for us to be complacent. For all we know, he could still spring a few surprises for us. That would be what Remus and Professor Moody needs to find out."

"We're not here to catch Voldemort," guessed Harry. "Are we?"
"Catch him?" asked Dumbledore. He looked sideway towards Harry, his eyebrows cocked. "Would you show compassion to someone who is already responsible for the death thousands of innocent people, muggles and wizards alike, and who planned to add more into his collection?"

"You would kill him," stated Harry. "If you can."

Dumbledore turned back to look at the mansion. He nodded. "Yes. But I have a feeling that it won't be by my hand that Voldemort meet his end. And to answer to your question, yes. Tonight is not about catching Voldemort. We have a high ranking Ministry's employee in need of a rescue. He will have to answer some questions however. Assisting a prison breakout and hiding a prisoner would entitle him heavy punishments. The Ministry won't take lightly on this, especially when two prison breakouts happened right under their nose. There was quite an uproar when Sirius Black escaped Azkaban. Who knows what will happen if the public find out that there is in fact another prison breakout, this time assisted by a Ministry employee himself. The implication I think will be quite severe."

"What will happen to Mr. Crouch once he's rescued?" asked Harry.

"That my boy, will depend on the kind of answers he gives us," replied Dumbledore. "I take it that you would want this to be kept under wrap."

Harry nodded. "As tight as possible," he said.

"Very well. We shall do what we can."

The rest of the Order joined them as they waited for Remus and Moody to return.

"What's in that?" asked Tonks to Harry. She had been eyeing the package Harry carried with him since the first time she greeted him.

Harry looked down towards the white carton box he was holding. "This? Oh, I just came back from a tea party when Professor Dumbledore fetched me. It's just some pies and cakes."

"Pies and cakes you say?" beamed Tonks. She immediately moved closer to Harry. "Can I have a look?" she asked.

"Tonks!" warned Kingsley. "Those are for Harry."

"No that's okay, Kingsley," said Harry as he handed the box over to Tonks who gratefully received it. "She can have some of it. I don't think I can finish it all by myself."

"Hear that, Kingsley?" said Tonks. "Now stop being too uptight. We already have one Moody. We don't need another one." She proceeded to open the box and took a peek inside. "Oh my God, Harry!" she moaned. "These smell so good. Are you sure you won't mind?"

Harry just chuckled. "No, I won't mind. Just have some, Tonks."

"Thanks!"

Kingsley just shook his head watching the young auror's antics.

They continued to wait.

Minutes went by when all of a sudden they heard two loud cracks. Right in the middle of the clearing, both Moody and Remus popped into existence.

Remus saw Harry first.

"Harry!"

"Remus!"

Harry went to hug Remus, a gesture that took Remus totally by surprise. He just smiled as he returned the hug. "It's good to see you too, Harry," he said, patting Harry's back.

Harry let go of Remus a few moments later. He looked up towards his former teacher and his parent's best friend. His heart sank when he saw Remus's condition. Remus was shabbier than ever, even more so than he used to remember, looked ill and tired. And he looked a little bit hungry as well.

He wanted to say 'How are you?' Somehow, what came out of his mouth was, "Are you okay, Remus?"

Remus, who understood that look Harry gave him, replied, "Never better, Harry. Dumbledore
told me everything. To be honest with you, I can't be more proud than ever after hearing what you did."

"I just did what I had to, Remus," said Harry.

"Always the altruistic and self-deprecating person you are. Just like James," said Remus, still smiling. "Saving two innocent lives within the space of just a few months isn't something to be sniffed at, Harry. Sirius and Moody owe you their lives."

"Well I-

But Harry could not finish what he was about to say. Dumbledore, after speaking to Moody, walked up to them.

"I'm sorry to interrupt this little reunion," said Dumbledore. "But it's time."

"Of course," said Remus. He then turned to Harry. "We'll talk later, Harry."

Harry just nodded and followed everyone as they gathered around Dumbledore and Moody.

"There are several layers of protective wards set up around Crouch's mansion," began Moody. "Two of these would alert whomever inside the mansion of intruders. At least one will alert the inhabitants of any attempt to dismantle the wards."

"How strong are those protective wards?" asked Kingsley.

"Very," answered Moody. "It's like Crouch was setting up a fortress around his home to protect something so valuable. It's very unlikely he set up all those wards alone."


"Most likely," said Dumbledore. "We don't know if he's still here but I'm going to assume the worst. Like what we've discussed before, if it is proven that Voldemort is here, we will call in the DMLE. If not, we're going to keep the fight just between us and Crouch. We're still going to have quite a fight in our hands. Crouch's fighting skill alone is quite formidable."

The rest of them nodded in agreement.

Harry was not worried. He knew that Voldemort had long left Crouch Mansion. He could guess how Dumbledore and the rest of them were going to enter the house and subdued Crouch. Still, he spotted one flaw in the plan.

"You said whoever in the house would be alerted to any attempt of intrusion," said Harry to Dumbledore. "What if instead of fighting us, they choose to flee?"

"I already thought of that, Harry," said Dumbledore. He then turned to the rest of the Orders. "Wands out. We're going on foot this time."

Harry mirrored the rest.

Dumbledore saw Harry's gesture. "You have to stay here, Harry."

Harry was taken aback. "But Professor, I can fight. I want to fight."

"I know you can," said Dumbledore. "It is not your skills that I'm worried about. Nymphadora?"

Tonks who had finished eating a slice of blueberry pie glared at Dumbledore. She too like everyone else had her wand ready. "It's Tonks!"

But Dumbledore acted like he did not hear her. "Stay with Harry."

Tonks looked back and forth between Harry and Dumbledore. "What?! So I'm a baby sitter now?"

"You're babysitting for a cause," said Dumbledore. "Wait here both of you. I shall give you a signal once it is safe to come down."

With that, Dumbledore turned around and together with Moody, Kingsley, Remus and Elphias, they walked down the hill towards Crouch Mansion.

"Can you believe that?" grumbled Tonks a she stowed back her wand. "What he think we both still are, little kids? Well, you're a kid. I'm all grown up. I should be down there joining them."

But Harry had stopped listening to her. His eyes were trained on the five dark figures now
walking quickly along the sparsely lit narrow path towards Crouch Mansion. They began to spread out when they reached the courtyard with each covering strategic location that can be used as exit points for the inhabitant to escape. He saw Dumbledore raised his wand. A shimmering dome began to envelop the mansion and the area surrounding it. At this point, Harry understood what Dumbledore was doing. He was erecting an anti apparition ward over Crouch Mansion.

The five of them raised their wands. The air around the mansion shimmered continuously as they attempted to dismantle every protective ward surrounding the mansion. At one point, a loud wail was heard. The alarm had been triggered. Harry saw the top of the anti apparition ward's dome glowed white several times, a sure sign of attempts by someone to apparate out of the place but fail. The five members of the Order of the Phoenix ran into the house after the last shimmering subsided with Dumbledore leading them. He saw flashes of light coming out through the windows of the mansion.

The duel had begun.

Harry watched the situation closely. His hand was inside his pocket, twitching his wand, eager to join in the fight. But Dumbledore did not allow him to do so. He had to wait and only observe.

Until he saw a green light flashed through the windows.

Horror dawned upon him. He immediately took out his wand. "Come on Tonks! We're going in there!"

"But Harry, we're supposed to stay here!"

"Not anymore!"

Harry grabbed Tonks's wrist and spun. They both apparated just outside the mansion.

"You can apparate?!" asked Tonks, wide eyed.

But Harry did not listen to her. He immediately ran into the house, expecting the worst.

To be continued...

A/n: That's it for now. Just a short chapter this time. The next will come out before the end of this month.
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He skidded into a halt and nearly toppled over a rocking hair when a green blob of light brushed against his left cheek. Harry felt burn at the place where the blob of light rubbed against his skin. The Avada Kedavra spell hit the wall behind him with such force that it immediately crumbled.

"Harry!" cried Dumbledore. The headmaster, like every other members of the Order, was busy fighting. He tried to position himself in front of Harry, trying to protect him, but the incessant attack directed towards him prevented him from leaving his spot. "Get out of here, Harry!" commanded Dumbledore as he ducked another killing curse directed towards him. "Get away!"

But Harry remained rooted to his spot. He refused to obey. From where he stood he could see how lopsided the battle was. The five of them had only one opponent.

Bartemius Crouch Sr.

Harry heard about Bartemius's legendary fighting skills before. It was not for nothing that he once was the head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. He was known to be ruthless, cunning and was said to possess the same amount of brutality any Death Eaters would be proud of. All of that combined with his wand weaving skills created a potent mixture in which he finally had the privilege to witness that night.

Bartemius stood at the center, surrounded by five opponents. None of their spells could touch him. His wand danced around as he deflected incoming curses and attacking his opponent in return. He snarled as his opponents weaved and ducked around him. From time to time, he would throw a Killing Curse at his opponents. Clearly, Bartemius was fighting to kill.

If anyone could gain the upper hand in the fight, it will be Albus Dumbledore. But Harry could see that the headmaster was exercising utmost restraint. From the way Dumbledore weaved his wand, he could see that the headmaster was simply trying to disable Bartemius.

Harry could see that it won't do anyone any good. Bartemius wanted to kill. In his crazed state of mind, Harry suspected that he was under the Voldemort's influences, there was nothing he could lose. If the battle dragged on any longer, any one of them could be dead.

And he could not let it happen.

Harry continued to watch the duel intently. He weaved his wand from time to time, deflecting any runaway curse headed his way. Fortunately for him, Bartemius was busy trying fighting the other members of the Order that Harry continuously fell out of his radar.

Until chance came.

Bartemius's back suddenly opened up and he became completely distracted when Elphias's curses came his way in rapid succession. Harry took this chance and apparated right behind Bartemius.
"Harry!" yelled Remus in horror as he watched one of his curses intended for Bartemius, flew directly towards Harry.

Harry waved his wand and deflected that curse.

Bartemius was about to turn to face him when Harry pivoted in the air and landed a kick on his back with full force. Bartemius fell forward, sprawling on the floor. But he was not done yet. He rolled onto his back and immediately pointed his wand towards Harry. But Harry was already on top of him. He kicked Bartemius's wand away towards Dumbledore. But before he could do anything else, Bartemius grabbed and pulled his shirt towards him. Harry fell on top of Bartemius. The old man took this chance and grabbed Harry's neck with both hands in retaliation and tried to strangle him.

Harry gasped for air. He tried to pry Bartemius's hand off his neck but the old man's grip was too strong. He felt something cracked right beneath his skull. Both of their eyes met and Harry saw insanity within Bartemius's reddened eyes. Finding himself running out of other options, he quickly pointed his wand towards Bartemius' face and shot a spell. Bartemius cried in pain in response and immediately let go of Harry's neck. But before the could do anything further, Remus arrived that very instance. He quickly pulled Harry off Bartemius and the other members of the Order dashed towards the fallen head of DIMC and immediately subdued him.

"Are you alright?" asked Remus as he held Harry's shoulder. "Breath, Harry!"

Harry's leg somehow buckled and he fell, crumpling onto the floor. He took a deep breath several times. His head felt spinning due to the lack of oxygen into his brain seconds ago and his vision went in and out of focus. Remus knelt beside him and began massaging his back.

It took a while for him to respond. "I'm fine, Remus," he said once he found his voice. "I'm okay."

He coughed several times. It took a while for the spinning sensation to go away and for the room to come back into focus.

Remus gently grabbed Harry's underarm and pulled him up. He guided Harry towards one of the available chair. "Let me check," he said after Harry sat down. He began to touch Harry's neck, pressing his fingers here and there. "There're finger marks but I see no permanent damage so far. I think Barty is trying to break your neck, Harry. He wasn't just going to choke you. It's going to take several days before those marks to disappear though. Does it still hurt?"

Harry coughed. "Yes."

Remus sighed. "Someone needs to check on that. What were you thinking, Harry? You could get yourself killed! Don't you understand? You're too important!" he scolded Harry.

Harry knew what Remus meant by that. Massaging his neck, he said a little bit sternly, "The fact is I don't. I'm still alive, Remus. Anyway, there goes to show that there is more than one way to defeat your opponent."

Remus frowned. "Indeed," he said. "But next time please for heaven sake try not to choose the one that could end with your neck broken into two."

Harry just rolled his eyes. "I ended the stalemate, Remus. That would count for something at least. Stop complaining."

Remus just shook his head. He placed both hands on Harry's shoulder and said, "Indeed you have but that doesn't mean that I would stop worrying about you. Sirius is going to have my head if anything happens to you. My life is at stake here."

That statement did put a smile on Harry's lip.

At that point, Dumbledore hurried up to them.

"How is he?" asked Dumbledore to Remus.

"He'll live, Albus," said Remus. "But his neck... someone needs to take a look at it."

Hearing this, Dumbledore immediately knelt in front of Harry. He reached out and began to feel various part of Harry's neck. "His cervical vertebrae, it cracked a little bit. A few more seconds and Barty would have it broken apart and you my dear boy, would be dead. Thank you, Remus," he said moments later, his hand still pressing the back side of Harry's neck.

Remus just nodded.
Dumbledore let go of Harry’s neck and stood up. Looking directly towards the middle of the living room, he let out a slow, musical whistle.

A bright flame appeared in the middle of the living room. Fawkes emerged from it. He flew to Dumbledore and perched on his out stretched arm.

"I apologize for having to pull you away from your duty, Fawkes. There is something we need to do," said Dumbledore.

Fawkes crooned softly in respond.

"Wait here," Dumbledore said to Harry. He and Fawkes then made their way towards the kitchen.

Harry watched silently as the headmaster and his familiar disappeared behind the kitchen door. Suddenly, he felt someone closing in on him. He looked to his left and saw Tonks. Her face and her hair whitened like ashes.

She looked terrified.

All of them gathered within the mansion’s dining room, sitting at a long and ornate dinner table. At the head of the table was Bartemius. He was tight onto a chair with his head lolled to side. He was still unconscious.

Earlier, Dumbledore handed Harry a silver goblet, filled to the brim with a milky white potion. He told Harry to drink it all up. The boy obliged. The unnamed potion had a slightly bitter taste in it. It took a while for him to finish it all up but the difference it made was quite remarkable. The pain he felt within the back of his neck immediately dissipated. Phoenix tears, as Harry was told, was part of the ingredient make up of the potion. The reddened finger mark on his neck remained though, unfortunately. From the reflection he saw from one of the mirrors hanging within the dining room, it was quite prominent. Dumbledore told him that the potion only fixed the crack at his vertebrae. As for the finger marks, he suggested that Madam Pomfrey will be able to fix that. Harry however was reluctant to entertain the idea of having to see the school nurse once again. But then again, meeting Poppy posed a better option than having to endure questioning from the rest of his friends.

The Order immediately began restoring all the damage parts of the mansion to its original conditions right after Bartemius had been contained. And while Crouch Mansion was located a little bit further away from other houses, the sound of the fight did raise curiosity among the residents of the normally quiet village. They came out into the street, talking, watching and pointing towards the mansion. They did not dare to come closer though, preferring instead to stay quite a distance away from the mansion. It did not stop the muggle policemen however. Two police cars arrived right in front of the mansion's gate. Kingsley however, having innate knowledge in dealing with the muggles, was ready to receive them. He met up with them at the gate. He talked to them a bit and without warning, immediately obliviated them. He then proceeded to plant false memories into them. The policemen ended up dispersing the crowd on the behalf of the Order. There were complaints of course, coming in from the crowd. They insisted that they did hear something. The crowd did oblige in the end especially after the policemen threatened to have a few of them arrested for gathering without permission. Kingsley later admitted that it did not go as well as he would have like but obviating hundreds of people at one time was not an option. If only they had Swooping Evil’s venom and a Thunderbird at their disposal.

They continued to sit there at the table, waiting for Bartemius to come around. Tonks came in from the kitchen carrying a pot of piping hot tea. With a flick of her wand, scores of cups and saucers flew from a nearby cupboard onto the table. She poured the tea in to the cups and distributed it to everyone. Harry meanwhile took out all the cakes and pies Fleur and her friends gave him from the box and put them into a large plate. He then offered the cakes and pies to everyone. He was pretty sure Fleur and her friends would not mind. They supplied him quite a lot. There was no way he could finish them all before it goes bad and he certainly did not want to survive solely on them alone. He did that before at the Dursleys. He certainly did not want to repeat that again.

Dumbledore, Remus, Kingsley and Elphias were huddling together and under deep discussion. Harry did not pay much attention to them. He knew he could ask Dumbledore later. What caught his eyes however was the dynamic between Remus and Nymphadora.

Remus and Tonks were sitting opposite of him, side by side. The way she talked, the way she moved and the way she looked at Remus, it was clear to Harry that she was already smitten by the werewolf. Remus though, looked a little bit reserved. Harry had a feeling that Remus somehow saw through Tonks. He knew that she liked him. It just that his ‘little furry problem’ had been getting in the way. It was the same thing back then in the old timeline. Remus continuously ignored Tonks’ feeling for him. Only after Bill Weasley suffered an attack from Fenrir Greyback and after witnessing Fleur’s declaration of her love for Bill and her refusal to
abandon her fiancée, that he was finally convinced. He married Tonks eventually and from that marriage, out came Teddy.

Memories of Teddy flooded his mind. Throughout Teddy's life, he only knew Harry as his surrogated father and Andromeda as his surrogated mother. Remus and Nymphadora died when he was very little so he knew very little of his parents. Harry fared better in this respect though. He did not remembered much the life he had when James and Lily were still alive but he knew, both through the pictures and the letters, that he had a good life before Voldemort took it all away.

But Teddy, he did not have any of that. All he had were pictures of his parents. Nothing more. No memories, no love. Harry of course loved Teddy unconditionally. He saw Teddy as his own son despite him having already two of his own. He would always make sure that Teddy spent part of his school break at Godric Hollow. Over the years, Teddy and his family grew closer. He was happy when he got to know that Teddy and his daughter Victoire formed a relationship. That relationship however did not last long, much to Harry's disappointment.

Harry silently wondered what it would be like if Teddy's parents continued to be alive. They will of course be the one taking care of him. They will love him and protect him. Teddy might get his own little brothers and sisters. Hell, he might want to be a werewolf himself, thinking that it would be cool. Remus would have a hard time convincing young Teddy otherwise.

Teddy won't need Harry anymore. Remus and Nymphadora will be there for him. Always.

"Harry?"

Harry was awakened from his stupor by Tonks. Both she and Remus noticed that Harry was giving an odd look at them.

"Are you alright?" asked Tonks, concerned.

Harry hastily rearranged his posture. He noticed that Tonks’ hand was resting on top of Remus' arm. "Yeah, I'm fine. I was just thinking." He then gave the couple a smile.

Tonks returned the smile. She then turned her attention back to Remus.

Nearly an hour went by.

Silence engulfed the group for many minutes now. Everyone had already run out of things to say. Dumbledore, Kingsley and Elphias sat with their hands placed on the table. From time to time, their eyes would flick over to Bartemius who was still unconscious. Remus leaned against the back of his chair; his eyes were trained towards the ceiling. As for Tonks, she already dozed off, her head resting on the table.

As for Harry, he was simply staring out into nothingness, recounting the events that occur that very day. His thought went to Fleur, wondering what she was doing at that exact moment. He hoped that she and her friends won’t get too freaked out and started asking questions. He also began to regret his action earlier when he came to their carriage. He silently admitted that it was really immature of him to act like that. Luckily for him, Fleur and her friends were very patience with him. He silently swore that he will make it up to them whenever chances come.

For now though, that matter will have to be set aside.

Earlier on, Dumbledore discussed with him on the way forward regarding Bartemius. Harry told him that it would take a while before Bartemius could return to normality and stressed that the event that night must be kept secret.

"If Mr. Crouch could return to his desk and act normally, that would be great," he said. "Of course this will depend on what we can dig out of him tonight and whether or not he could truly be free from Voldemort's influence. You might want to get another judge to replace him for the Triwizard Tournament. He will be one of the judges, am I right?"

Dumbledore nodded. "Yes, he is. I think whether or not he would continue being the judge is a mute point. He's already compromised. He's not fit to be one. It would be best if he stay away from the tournament."

"I agree. So now is the matter of finding someone who could replace him," said Kingsley. "But who?"

"How about Percy?" suggested Harry. "Percy Weasley."

Kingsley cocked his eyebrows. "You mean that new assistant of his? Arthur's son?"
"Yes. I believe he will do well. From what I saw during my time at the Burrow, Percy loves his job. He's anything but loyal to Mr. Crouch. This will present an opportunity for us to make sure that everything goes as smooth and as normal as possible. Nobody will be asking on why Percy replaces his boss. They knew he's Mr. Crouch personal assistant and that the act of temporary relieving him off his duty is a normal thing to do. They will think that Mr. Crouch is too busy or something. They will ask questions if we choose someone else," explained Harry. "If Mr. Crouch is able to return to normalcy, we must confine him mostly to the Ministry building and his home. Someone also needs to watch over him, see that he does not relapse. He could of course visit Hogwarts from time to time given his position at the Ministry but it can only be done with someone from the Order escorting him.

Elphias who had kept silent gave his opinion, "I am not sure if Barty would be willing to comply. We know how he is."

"He have to," said Harry, firmly. "Or we'll force him to. We'll threaten him with all the evidences we have about his dealing that lead to the unexpected release of his son. Pride is the only thing he got left. It was smeared before. He won't want it to happen ever again. He won't want to spend the rest of his life in Azkaban either. He'll see our point of view, I am sure of it. And if he betrays us, I'll personally hunt him down. He won't be safe anywhere in this world."

Everyone within the room just stared at Harry. And he knew why. He had just shown them that he also can be ruthless, just like Bartemius. And they seemed to be worried about that.

"I'm sure there won't be any need for you to do that, Harry," said Dumbledore moments later.

Harry leaned against the back of his chair. He looked hard at Dumbledore. "I hope so, Professor," he said. Calmness returned into his voice. "For when it comes to innocent people's lives, I don't play games."

The silence continued.

Tonks suddenly nudged Remus. She pointed her finger at Bartemius. "Look! He's waking up."

Indeed, Bartemius began to stir. He groaned and blinked his eyes several times. He tried to move but found that he could not.

"Why?" he asked in confusion and looked down. His eyes widened once he realized his predicament. He was bound tightly to a chair via a thick rope with his hand behind his back.

"No!"

The rest of the Order just watched as Bartemius thrashed around, tried as he might to escape the bind. It went that way for a few minutes until he ended up exhausted and finally gave up. But then, he remembered something.

"My wand! Where is my wand?" he said as he frantically looked around. It was at that moment when he realized that he was not alone. He came into a pause, looked up and saw Dumbledore standing tall near him, looking at him.

And the headmaster was not smiling.

"Albus?" said Bartemius. "Is it really you?"

"It is I, Barty," answered Dumbledore calmly. "Your wand is safe with us."

"Us?"

Bartemius looked down in confusion. Then suddenly, he gasped loudly.

"ALBUS!" he cried. "YOU-KNOW-WHO! HE'S HERE! ALASTOR! HARRY POTTER! HOGWARTS! THEY ALL ARE IN DANGER! PLEASE ALBUS, YOU HAVE TO WARN THEM!"

Dumbledore gently placed his hand onto Bartemius's shoulder and spoke, "Calm down, Barty. We already know. Alastor is safe. It's all thanks to Harry."

"He's... safe?" Bartemius stammered. He turned to look down the table and saw the rest of the members of the Order. He saw Harry among them. He stared at the boy for a few moments before turning back to Dumbledore.

"My son?" he asked.

Dumbledore sighed. "He's now under our custody. He's alive and well. The Ministry has yet to know about this."
Bartemius's lips began to tremble. Tears ran down his cheeks. He turned to look at Harry and said, "Forgive me. I never meant to do it. I denounced my son the moment I realized what he did. My wife. She couldn't accept it. She begged me. I refused. She did not eat. She did not sleep. She just cried. But still I refused. She missed him so much that her health began to fail. I tried to treat her. I wanted to save her. But she did not want me to. She said that the only thing that could save her is her son. I could no longer ignore her pleas so I agreed. I did it because I loved her."

Bartemius looked down. His tears continued to fall. His body began to shake as he cried. "I rescued him," he said between sobs. "But I lost my wife. He took my wife. He took my son. He took my love. He took everything away from me. I'm sorry, Harry. I'm so sorry."

At this point, Bartemius could no longer speak. His body continued to shake as he wept. Dumbledore stood behind him, his hands continued to massage Bartemius's shoulders, his face showed grievance.

Each and everyone within the dining room were lost for words.

Harry just stared at Bartemius, the man who had lost everything he held dear. He felt a stab of sympathy for the man. Bartemius had to choose between two hell and it all because of Tom Riddles.

He heard sniffs and saw it was Tonks. Tears were falling down her cheek.

It was thirty minutes after eleven.

Bartemius's weeping had subsided. Dumbledore still had him in bind though. He refused to release him until he was sure that Bartemius was no longer in danger of relapse. Bartemius did not argue. As a matter a fact, he was horrified when he learnt that he tried to use the Killing Curse on his own colleagues and friends. Remus and Kingsley will stay at the mansion for the rest of the night. Dumbledore had given them the task to watch over Bartemius and to ensure that the mansion was fully secure.

Harry was getting ready to go back to Hogwarts. He asked earlier if he could stay there with Remus and Kingsley but Dumbledore refused. The headmaster however did promise that he will update Harry on Bartemius's matter.

"You'll need some rest tonight. If my mind did not fail me, you have the keeper tryout to attend to tomorrow. I wish you good luck, Harry," said Dumbledore.

Harry went to the living room. Tonks was already there, waiting for him.

"Ready, Harry?" asked Tonks. Her eyes were still red and puffy from the crying she did earlier.

Harry just nodded.

"Hold on, Harry," said Tonks as she grabbed Harry's arm. Together they spun on the spot and vanished out of sight.

To be continued...

A/n: Couldn't think of a word to say. Enjoy?
Chapter 27

The pair popped into existence just outside the wrought iron gate that marked the boundary between Hogwarts compound and the Scottish Highland forest.

It was a dark and cloudy night. There was no moon, not even a star that could be seen. Soft, cold breeze blew in from the west flank of the Scottish mountain range. And beyond the mountain range lies the great North Sea where the breeze originated.

Harry shivered in the dark, cold night. He did not bring with him warm clothing. It was to be expected of course. Everything that happened after the little get together party at the Beauxbaton carriage was not planned. He never had the chance to prepare. Tonks fared better in this respect. She always brought along her travelling cloak wherever she went.

He brought out his wand and spoke, "Lumos!"

Tonks imitated him.

Harry looked up and with the help of the illuminated tip of his wand, saw the two pillars made out of stones flanking the gate. Worn out sculptures of winged boars topped the columns. Hogwarts coat of arm can be seen stamped in the middle of the old iron gate. And in the distance, the many turrets and towers of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry loomed in the darkness.

The gate and its columns were completely destroyed during the Battle of Hogwarts and for the next few years after the war, Hogwarts had to make do without its famous gate. The gate was rebuilt later with a few changes made into its original design. The wing boar sculptures were replaced with stone gargoyles for some reasons. The new pillars were also taller than before and made out of black marbles. The iron gate design remained unchanged though.

Harry remembered the first time he saw the gate. He could not appreciate it at that moment as he was still recovering from the dementor attack he was subjected to a few hours prior. That and the fact that a couple of dementors were stationed right by the column meant that the cold sickness that plagued him earlier returned. He did not fainted the second time however. That fact did not give him even the slightest comfort unfortunately.

"Well, we’re here,” said Tonks, also staring at the gate. "Let me open this gate-, damn! It’s locked!” she said in frustration. She tried to push the gate open the second time but still the gate won't budge. "And we can't apparate into the castle either.”

Harry was not worried though. He knew that he could just apparated into the castle with ease. Unfortunately, he could not show that one privilege he got from Dumbledore in front of anyone including Tonks.

"It’s nearly midnight, Tonks,” said Harry. "The gate will only be opened in the morning.”

"Maybe we could spend the night at Hogsmeade,” said Tonks, looking towards the direction of the small magical village. "I can send you back to the castle the very next morning.”

"Spend the night? With you?”

"Yes. We could rent a room at the Three Broomstick. It'll be cozy.”

"A room? Cozy?”

Harry just stared at Tonks.

Spending the night with a young attractive woman was not what he had in mind, unless of course if that woman was Fleur Delacour. He could imagine the awkwardness that may resulted from such act if the room sharing with Tonks happened. And he would feel that he was cheating on Fleur even if nothing really happened. Furthermore, he really needed to get back to the Gryffindor Tower that night. He did not want his friends to find that his bed remained vacant the very next morning. He was already absence during dinner. Both Ron and Hermione knew that he had gone to meet the Beauxbaton that afternoon. They will asked Fleur and her friends on where he had gone to.

"There won't be any need for that, Tonks,” said Harry. "You can leave me here. I'll be fine.”

"Don't be silly, Harry," said Tonks as she grabbed his hand. "I'm not leaving you out here all alone in the dark. Come on.”

But just she was about to apparate together with Harry, a creaking sound was heard.
They turned around and saw the gate began to open.

"Oh, the gate's opening," muttered Tonks.

"Yes it is," said Harry, visibly relief. "I'll take it from here. It's already late. You should go back."

But Tonks declined. "No can do, Harry," she said. "I promised Dumbledore that I'll bring you back safely and safely is where I would leave you. Come on." She pulled his hand and began to walk towards the castle.

Harry had no choice but to follow.

They walked up along the gravel lane that snaked towards the huge castle. The gate closed by itself the moment they got past it. Luckily the lane was dry enough for them to walk on. And as they made their way to the castle, they chatted.

Tonks told Harry that she was quite a troublemaker when she was still a student at Hogwarts, up to the point that people, even Professor Sprout was at lost on what to do with her. She did point out that most of it happened by accident though.

"I think it had gotten so bad that even my closest friends think that the Sorting Hat sorted me wrong," she said, laughing. "Even I thought that as well. I mean, just look at all the mess I got into. Did I tell you that I'm also prone to accidents? There was this one time, in the Potion Class we were making the Sleakeazy's Hair Potion you see. Maria Brown was sitting next to me, she was very pretty. Boys like her a lot. She didn't like me though, probably because I keep on overaking her in every subject since our first years. We never sat together in classes you know but for some reason we were forced to share table that day. So we were making this potion, nothing happened at the beginning. I was nearing completion when all of a sudden Maria started making quite a fuss. At one point during her tantrum, she nearly knocked off some ingredients into my cauldron. Luckily I managed to swipe it off before it gets in. Unfortunately, I probably was a little bit overzealous at that time that my swiping caused the ingredient to bounce back and ended up inside her cauldron instead. There was a loud bubbling and then there was an explosion. I managed to take cover just in time. When I got up, Maria was already covered in this yucky, thick, greenish liquid. Then all of a sudden thick hair sprouted all over her body including her face. You know what she looked like? Imagine a skirt wearing ape who had just came out of a long swim in a pool of extra strong hair tonic. She was fluffy!

"My goodness," said Harry, astounded. "I think my brain just bled. So what happened then?"

"Well, Hufflepuff lost quite a few points that day due to my negligence," she said, rolling her eyes and making an air quote. "Professor Sprout was so furious with me. Never saw her that angry. Maria had to stay in the hospital wing for a week. I heard that Poppy had to shave her every day until the effect wear off to prevent her from suffocating. You know what's funny? I found out later that she intentionally threw those ingredients into my cauldron. She wanted to sabotage me. Karma's a bitch, huh?"

"Indeed it is," agreed Harry, laughing. "She got what she deserved."

That did remind him of Hermione during their second years. She also had to stay in the hospital wing for a week, coughing out hairballs and everything. That did raise the question on why Hermione could not differentiate between a human hair and a fur of a cat.

"Yeah she got what she deserved," said Tonks, raising her hand and gave Harry a high five. "You know, I never feel at home in Hufflepuff. I never showed any qualities Helga Hufflepuff admires. McGonagall just put that hat on me and it shouted Hufflepuff almost immediately. A lot of times I think the Sorting Hat made the wrong decision in putting me into that house. I never understand why it did that. That thing is very old anyway. It probably has dementia or something. I always thought Gryffindor or even Ravenclaw suit me better. To be honest, I'm probably the laziest Hufflepuff in a century," she pondered.

"You did get good marks in all of your exams, didn't you?" said Harry.

"I'm one of the best," said Tonks proudly. "But so what? A lot of students from other houses got good marks in their exams too. Why should I be any different? Intelligent doesn't pool within one house only, Harry."

Harry nodded at this. "Yeah, you're right. Hermione is one such example. She's the best in our year and she isn't a Ravenclaw."

"Her-my-he-who?"

"Hermione," Harry corrected her. "Sorry, I forgot you haven't met her. But yeah, she's a Gryffindor. Nobody surpassed her so far." He then paused for a thought. "Except me. But even
then it was only one subject."

"Really?" said Tonks, her eyebrows raised.

Harry nodded. "She lost to me at Defense against the Dark Arts."

"Huh! Impressive. Have you given any thought of becoming an auror, Harry?"

Harry paused at this. In the past, the word 'yes' will automatically came out of his mouth whenever someone asked him that. This time though, he was not so sure.

"I don't know," he gave his answer. "I haven't thought about it yet."

"Well, you do have the talent," stated Tonks. "That whole kicking thing you did back then, that was impressive. I think Moody and Kingsley were impressed too. You should really consider it."

Harry just smiled. "I'll consider it."

Tonks returned the smile. "Do you know that Barty was in Ravenclaw?"

Harry did not answer. He just glanced sideway at Tonks. Of course he knew which house Bartemius was sorted into. He went through Bartemius's file when he became the head of DMLE. He decided not to answer Tonks's question.

"Yeah, he was," continued Tonks. "Who would have guessed that he tried to murder some of us, his friends, tonight. And those things he did back then. Given his reputation, you would never guess that he would be willing to... I don't know. This is just too much for me to take."

"He lost nearly everything, Tonks," said Harry softly. "His only son. His reputation. His ambition. His wife was the only thing he got left and he was trying as hard as he could to hold on to her. But still, he lost her in the end. Love, the sweetness and the beauty of it, can force us to do things we never thought of doing because we're afraid that we might lose it. Mr. Crouch won't be the only one."

Tonks remained silent as she continuously digested what Harry just said.

"Did you know that the Sorting Hat considered putting me in Slytherin?" asked Harry.

"Seriously?!" asked Tonks in surprised. "But-, but you're in Gryffindor!"

"I would if I didn't say no," said Harry as a matter a factly. "But it goes to show that there are things that we did not know we had in ourselves the whole time. There are reasons on why it wanted to put me in Slytherin in the first place and it all because of the things I previously didn't know I have. It's the same as you. You may not know it but there are reasons on why the hat put you there and it's because of the things you didn't know you possessed. Maybe you haven't found it yet but trust me, it's there. You'll see it someday."

Tonks just stared at Harry. "Are you sure you're only fourteen years old boy? Because you didn't act like a fourteen years old boy." 

"I am fourteen years old," said Harry.

"Huh? You know, I'll date you if you're not shorter than me," she said, deadpanned.

Tonks indeed was taller than him. She was almost as tall as Fleur.

"Yeah, lucky for that," said Harry, sarcastically.

Lucky for him, she missed the sarcasm.

And as they walked, they continued to talk. Tonks told him about how she got inducted into the DMLE and how Alastor Moody found her. She told him that he had become her mentor ever since, even after the old auror resigned from his duty.

"He's nuts, I can tell you that," said Tonks as they approached the marble stairs that led into the Entrance Hall. "But he's a kind person. You'll never know that just by looking at his appearance. I know he looked ghastly and all that but... oh!"

She was looking up the stairs.

"What?" asked Harry. He imitated her and saw what it was.

Severus Snape, his hands behind his back, was standing at the top of the stairs, looking at
them.

Both Harry and Tonks went silent.

Snape slowly made his descent and stopped right in front of them.

Harry glanced sideways at Tonks. He could see the pure loathing she wore on her face as she continued to stare at Snape.

Snape however remained impassive.

Harry suddenly had a déjà vu. This happened nearly the same way as before, when he was in sixth year. The differences were that Snape fetched him at the gate and Tonks was emotionally messy.

"I'll take it from here, Nymphadora," said Snape to Tonks. "Dumbledore wants you to return to the place where you came from. He has a task for you. I suggest that you leave immediately. Hogwarts does not allow unannounced visitors, especially at this time of night."

Harry knew that was not true. Snape was there for a reason and it was because Dumbledore told him about their arrival. He probably was the one who opened the gate. They certainly did not arrive unannounced. Snape was just being Snape.

Tonks gritted her teeth. She looked angry but still, she did not say anything.

Harry was aware of this. He gently placed a hand on her arm and said, "It's okay, Tonks. You should go. Best not to keep Dumbledore waiting."

Tonks turned to Harry. Her expression immediately softened. "Yeah, you're right," she said. She then pulled him into a tight hug. "I'll see you again, Harry."

"Sure thing, Tonks. Promise me that you'll be careful," said Harry as he hugged her back.

"I promise."

She then let go of him. Without sparing a glance at Snape, she turned around and walked away.

Harry stared at her receding back until she disappeared into the darkness of the night. He then turned back to Snape, wondering what the Potion Master had in mind for him.

Snape just stared at him. Both of them just stood there, looking towards each other.

Suddenly Snape reached out and touched Harry's neck.

Harry let him.

His fingers began to press at various parts of his neck. It went that way for a few minutes until Snape drew back his hand. His eyebrows creased.

"Follow me, Potter," said Snape. He then turned around and made his way up the stairs.

Harry obliged and followed him.

They both walked, going in and out of Hogwarts corridors.

Harry somehow knew to where they were going.

The hospital wing.

Snape pushed the door open once they arrived at the entrance into the wing. He entered and Harry followed him. Once they were inside, they found that Madam Pomfrey was waiting for them.

She was in her night gown. "What is it this time?" she grumbled as she marched towards Harry. "It's already past midnight you know."

"His neck, Poppy," said Snape. "You might want to take a look at it."

Madam Pomfrey did as told. She nearly leapt back the moment she laid her eyes on Harry's neck. "Goodness gracious! Who did this to you?!

Harry wondered if he should answer that question. Thankfully, Snape came to his rescue.
"You should ask Dumbledore about it," suggested Snape. "Potter is not in a liberty to divulge anything at this moment."

"I did when he contacted me," said Madam Pomfrey as she began checking Harry's neck. "He told me about Potter's injury but that's about it. I didn't realize it would be this bad. Fine. Whatever. This isn't the first time patients refuse to inform me the cause of their injuries for whatever reasons. Usually I would deny them treatment if they do that. You can't treat a patient if you don't know the cause of the ailment in the first place. It will make it even more dangerous. But you know, this is Dumbledore. It looks like someone is trying to break your neck, Potter. Come."

Madam Pomfrey took Harry's hand and guided him into the treatment ward. Snape followed from behind. Once inside, she ordered Harry to sit on the examination chair. Harry obliged.

"So, Dumbledore already fixed the crack at your cervical vertebrae. That's decent of him to do that," she said, waving her wand. Harry just watched as various bottles of ingredients from several cabinets flew towards a small table nearby. "So now it's just the matter of making those finger marks on your neck disappear," she continued. She then once again waved her wand and began mixing those ingredients inside a beaker.

Snape just stood nearby, watching the proceeding.

Fifteen minutes went by.

Madam Pomfrey returned with a beaker full of thick, white, creamy liquid.

"Hold still, Potter," she said as she dunked her fingers into the lotion mixture. She then began applying the lotion to the whole of Harry's neck. "The marks will be gone by morning. Just don't touch your neck at this time," she continued as she applied even more lotion to his neck.

Two minutes later, she was done.

"There," said Madam Pomfrey as she put way the beaker containing the lotion. She then took a couple of pills from a container and gave it to Harry together with a goblet of water. "Take this. It will help you sleep. I would detain you in this ward for tonight but Dumbledore told me not to. You can go back to your dormitory, Potter. I'll keep the lotion just in case you need it. With the coming Triwizard Tournament and everything that happened, you'll never know."

Harry muttered thanks. He popped the pills into his mouth and drank the water.

"You may go now," said Madam Pomfrey, taking the goblet out Harry's hand and placed it on top of the small table. "See me the first thing tomorrow morning, Potter. That would be all."

"Thank you, madam," said Harry.

"You're welcome."

Harry then rose from his chair and together with Snape, made his way out the hospital wing.

It was a long and silent walk on their way to the Gryffindor Tower. Snape was escorting him back. Both of them did not speak to one another, each was drowning deep in their own thought. They were about to turn right into another corridor when, out of nowhere, Filch the caretaker pounced at them.

"Ahah! A student out of bed!" Filch shouted triumphantly. "I'll take him off your hands, professor. I'll give him punishments and he will never forget for a long time! Come on now you!"

Filch was about to grab Harry's arm when Snape spoke sternly, "Hold your hand, Argus. You will do no such thing tonight."

Filch was taken aback by Snape's response. "But, but... professor! He's breaking the rules. He needs to be punished!"

"Not tonight he does not," said Snape. "He is with me and I'm escorting him back to his dormitory. I suggest that you continue with the patrol. Make yourself presence at the Entrance Hall in twenty minutes. We are going to meet Hagrid."

Filch's eyes darted between Snape and Harry. His excitement deflated. Knowing that he had no other choices, he took his leave. They could hear him grumbling as he made his way down the corridor.

Both of them started walking until they finally reached the Fat Lady portrait.

Harry turned to Snape. "Thank you, professor," he said.
Snape just nodded. “Stay inside your dormitory, Potter. I don’t want to see you wandering the corridors this time of night. Do you understand?”

“I understand, professor.”

Snape then took his leave.

Harry continued to watch Snape’s receding back until he disappeared around the corner at the end of the corridor. He then turned towards the Fat Lady portrait.

“In trouble again, aren’t we?” asked the Fat Lady.

Harry just smirked. “Not tonight. Balderdash!”

The portrait promptly swung forward, revealing a passageway behind it. Harry entered the passageway and walked into the common room on the other side.

The common room was vacant, much to his relief. He immediately made his way up towards his dormitory. Once arrived, he slowly opened the door and took a peek inside.

His dormitory was dark. He heard loud snoring. Everyone was fast asleep.

He tiptoed his way in and closed the door behind him. He then changed into his pajama and immediately climbed into his bed. Having pulled the curtain around him, he laid down. The event that day went through his head. It was not that long though. Drowsiness eventually took over him and immediately, he fell asleep.

To be continued...

A/n: Another chapter coming. Thanks for all the reviews, guys. Hope you’re happy with this one.
Harry felt as though he had just fallen asleep for five minutes when someone shook him awake.

"Harry! Harry! Wake up!"

He groaned and slowly rolled onto his back. His eyes fluttered open. He was forced to close them when the ray of morning sunlight poked hard into his eyes.

"Harry!"

His eyes opened up once again and in the blurriness, he saw a tall silhouette of a red haired boy, looking at him.

"Ron?" he blurted out. "Morning already? What time is it?"

"It's nearly eight. Come on. Hermione is waiting. We're going to be late for breakfast," said Ron in earnest.

Harry sighed. He honestly did not feel like going to breakfast that morning. He was still sleepy and felt a little bit lazy that morning. He had a hunch that whatever he felt that time was due to the pills Madam Pomfrey gave him last night. They did help him sleep indeed.

"Harry? Come on?" urged Ron. He shook Harry's arm upon seeing Harry did not make any effort to get out of his bed.

Harry closed his eyes. "You go ahead, Ron. I'm just going to have a lie in. I'll see you at lunch. Say hi to Hermione for me, would you?"

"You sure?"

"Yeah, I'm sure," said Harry as he pulled his blanket closer to him and rolled to his side with his back facing Ron. "Later, Ron."

Ron nodded. "Okay. If you say so, Harry. Oh, before I forget, you have an appointment with Krum this morning. He invited you to his ship, remember?"

Harry's eyes shot wide open upon hearing this and he immediately sat bolt upright, taking Ron by surprise. And this time, he groaned really loudly.

"Damn it! I totally forgot about that!"

He reached out towards his bedside table, grabbed his glasses and shoved them on.

"Damn it! Damn it! Damn it! Is it too late for me to cancel the appointment, Ron?" he asked.

Ron just raised his shoulders. "I don't know, Harry. It's all up to you. Are you alright?"

Harry did not answer. He immediately climbed out of his bed and took a little bit of time to do some stretching. "Wait for me, will you?" he asked once he was done.

"Take your time, Harry," said Ron.

Harry grabbed his towel and made his way towards the bathroom. After his morning routine completed and a quick shower, he came out and began dressing.

And all that while, Ron, sitting on his own bed, watched him intently.

Harry, noticing that Ron was scrutinizing him, asked, "Something wrong, Ron?"

Ron hastily rearranged his features in an unconvincing smile and said, "No. Nothing's wrong, Harry."

Harry stared at his best friend for a few moments before he continued putting on his shirt and pants. He knew Ron was lying to him. He could sense it. The boy had something bottling inside of him and he had been trying very hard to suppress it. He then sat on his bed and took a pair of socks out of his bedside table's drawer and began putting them on. "Me and you, we're both best friends, Ron," said Harry, this time putting on his shoes. "If you have something to say, just say it."

He then stood up and stared at Ron.
Ron looked a little bit uncertain.

"Well?" asked Harry. His eyebrows cocked.

Ron sighed. He slowly stood up and said, "Alright. Rumors are spreading, Harry. They told us that Dumbledore snatched you away using his phoenix and then-, and then you were absence for the whole night. What’s going on, Harry?"

"Who told you these?"

"The Beauxbaton students," answered Ron truthfully. "They came to us after dinner, asking about you. We told them that we haven't seen you since the late afternoon. That's when they told us."

"I see."

"We waited for you at the common room but you never came. Hermione wanted to wait for you the whole night but we were forced to vacate the common room near midnight by the prefects. Me and the rest of our dorm mate waited further inside our dormitory but in the end, you know, we became too tired."

"The Beauxbaton, how do they take it?" asked Harry.

"Well, they were really calm and relax," said Ron thoughtfully. "Hermione was the one who was freaking out. You should have seen her face. She wanted to see McGonagall right away. They had to calm her down. You know what's amazing? That French champion, Fleur Delacour, she went up to Hermione and placed three of her fingers on Hermione's cheek. I don't know how to describe it but Hermione immediately-, I mean she went totally deflated right after that."

Harry of course knew what it was. It was the Veela Calming Effect and Fleur had used it on Hermione in order to calm her down. Veelas seldom used this one ability of theirs. During their long marriage, Harry had seen Fleur used that ability only thrice and she did it only to him.

"What about you?" asked Harry. "You're not freaking out at that time?"

"Oh, I'm fine," said Ron, waving his hand. "I'm totally cool. I just relaxed."

Yeah right. You probably was too busy drooling from here all the way to China, thought Harry. He knew Ron well enough to know that Ron and staying cool are two opposite things, especially in the presence of Fleur:

"I admit I'm curious to where you had gone to last night, Harry," said Ron when he saw Harry said nothing. "But I figure, you know, you'll tell me when the time is right. It's Hermione you need to watch out for. She's determined to get it out off you no matter what. She's been suspicious of you since we arrived at Hogwarts."

Harry was taken aback by this. "Since when you're going to tell me this?" he asked incredulously.

"She just told me last night, Harry," said Ron, raising both of his hands. "I swear I didn't know about it before."

Harry pondered for a moment. He wondered if he should continue leaving Ron and Hermione out of the loop. He had sworn that both of them would not be involved in what he was planning to do. They were still young after all. At fourteen years of age, they had zero experience in wand dueling. They could not even apparated. It would be too dangerous for them. He could not deprive the Weasleys and the Grangers of their son and daughter.

He already had a backup plan in the event of his failure. He had plans for Dumbledore and the Order of the Phoenix to take over the mantle should he fell before he could finish what he started.

But should he reel Ron and Hermione in?

The pair had proven their worth in the past and Harry had trusted them. Of course there were few ups and downs but the fact remains. They had gone to hell with him and they were the best allies he ever had.

With these in mind, Harry finally made his decision.

"Do you want to know where I went to last night?" he asked Ron.

Ron nodded fervently.
"I wasn't at Hogwarts last night. I was with Dumbledore. He took me away via his phoenix just after I exited the Beauxbaton carriage," he said calmly.

"So it's true. But to where? And what you and him were doing last night?"

"It would be quite a story, Ron," he said, putting one hand on Ron's shoulder. "I'll tell you and Hermione all about it later, perhaps tonight. Now come on. Hermione's probably waiting for us long enough down at the common room. Let's not deprive her of the chance to shout whatever it is she had in her mind right to my face."

"I hope you're just being sarcastic, Harry," said Ron, shaking his head.

Harry just sniggered.

And with that, they exited the dormitory.

Harry will tell them all. But like what he told Dumbledore, he won't tell them everything.

Hermione was sitting at her usual spot with a book in her hands when she spotted the two boys headed down towards the common room. She immediately put down the book and marched straight up towards Harry.

"Morning, Hermione," greeted Harry the moment he and Ron reached the bottom of the spiral staircase.

She did not greet back. Instead, she stopped within a couple of feet away from him. Her eyes looked up and down at him.

Harry silently wondered if the finger marks on his neck really had disappeared. Ron did not mention anything about it back at the dormitory. But then again, a woman's eyes were not the same as men.

"Where were you last night?" she asked, her hands crossed to her chest. "People have been wondering, Harry."

The common room was not exactly empty at that time. While most of the students were in the Great Hall, there were few students who remained inside the common room. And they were all giving their utmost attention towards the trio. Hermione had lost her trademarked subtlety and Harry did not like it.

"Sleep well, Hermione?" Harry instead asked.

Hermione tilted her head. "Don't change the subject, Harry. Just answer the question," she demanded.

That's it, thought Harry. He walked up to her and grabbed her arm. He then pulled Hermione alongside him towards the portrait hole. "Come on, Ron!"

"Harry, let go of me!"

"Shut up!"

Curious eyes followed them as they climbed through the hole and out into the corridor beyond. It was only then Harry let go off Hermione's arm.

"What are you doing, Harry?!" asked Hermione the moment he let go off her.

Harry did not answer at first. He looked up and down the corridor, making sure that there was no one else but them. Once he satisfied that no one else was in the vicinity, he turned to Hermione.

"Quirell would have gotten the Sorcerer Stone for Voldemort and Sirius would have been carted off to Azkaban that night and they would have performed the Dementor Kiss on him had you been freaking out like this!" said Harry sternly.

"Harry, I was just asking you."

"Which would be better if you did it without attracting anyone else attention!" Harry cut her off.

Hermione went silent at this.

Harry sighed. He took a deep breath before continuing, "You have always been subtle. It's disconcerting to see you like this." He then glanced sideways towards Ron before turning
back to her. "Ron told me a little bit of what happened last night. This is not you, Hermione."

"I'm sorry. I was worried," said Hermione, looking down at her feet. She was unable to meet Harry's eyes after realizing what she nearly did. "I feel that you have been keeping something away from us. What is it that you didn't want to tell us? Don't you trust us anymore?"

Harry shook his head. "I trust both of you and I always will," said Harry, looking at both Hermione and Ron. "We have been through so much together. I don't forget. Walk with me."

The trio began to walk towards the Great Hall.

"Last night I was with Dumbledore. I'm pretty sure that you already know that his phoenix fetched me yesterday afternoon," explained Harry.

"That's what the Beauxbaton told us, yes," said Hermione. "But to where, Harry?"

"Somewhere outside of Hogwarts," replied Harry simply. "I only returned sometime past midnight last night. All of you were already asleep. There's no reason for you to worry, Hermione. I was with the headmaster the whole time."

"Just that? You still haven't told us what you and Dumbledore did last night."

"I plan to," said Harry. "Just not now. Tonight will be a good time. I'm going to be very busy until late afternoon today."

Hermione who seemed to think that baiting Harry's anger was not such a good idea said, "Alright, Harry. I'll wait. Just don't forget."

"I won't. But I would like to stress the importance of keeping this to only between us."

"We understand, Harry," answered Hermione and Ron in unison.

They arrived at the Great Hall a couple of minutes later and immediately headed towards their usual spot.

Viktor Krum and his friends were already there. He immediately waved at Harry the moment he saw him.

"Harry!"

"Morning Viktor!" greeted Harry as he took the seat in front of Viktor.

Viktor cocked an eyebrow. "You know you made quite some news last night, Harry," he said. "Everyone was so worried about you, especially your Beauxbaton friends."

That gave Harry a pause. He turned to look towards the Ravenclaw table.

He saw Fleur was playing with her food. It seemed to him that she did not eat. From her face, he knew that she was worried. He saw Cassandra nudged Fleur and looked pointedly at him. Fleur looked up and immediately their eyes met. He saw the look of relief on her face.

Harry raised his hand and pointed a finger to his chest. He then gave Fleur a thumb up and mouthed 'I'm fine' to her.

She immediately smiled and gave Harry a nod. It was only then she began to eat.

Knowing that he managed to free Fleur from being worried and that he managed to rescue her from dying of starvation, he began to pile his plate with bacon, scrambled eggs and sausages and began to eat.

"So where did you go last night?" asked Viktor. He was munching on a buttered toast.

Harry saw the rest of the Gryffindorians seating nearby leaned in to listen to what he had to say.

"Yeah, Harry," said Seamus. "They said a phoenix fetched you yesterday. Is it true?"

Harry nodded. "Yes it's true," said Harry as he jabbed the bacon with his fork and put it into his mouth. "That phoenix belongs to Dumbledore. I was with him last night."

"Phoenix travelled by fire, right?" said Seamus to which Harry nodded. "So how does it feel?"

"I felt nothing," said Harry, this time jabbing the sausages. "But I can tell it was really fast. Faster than apparition I say. One moment you're at one place and the next moment you're
somewhere else."

"Cool!" said Seamus in awe.

"But how can you assume that?" asked Hermione who was eating a bowl of cereal. "We have yet to learn how to apparate, Harry."

"Just my guess," said Harry. He did not want them to know that he could apparate. But what he said was true. Travelling via phoenix was much faster than apparition and much more comfortable too. There was not any of those being squeezed through a small tube sensation. "I still prefer brooms though," he continued.

"So what you and Professor Dumbledore was doing last night?" asked Viktor.

"Just helping him with some errand, Viktor," said Harry. "Nothing important."

"I see," said Viktor. "Your headmaster really know how to show off. Professor Karkaroff, if he wanted help, he will simply come to us and asked. Of course he doesn't own a phoenix. Seeking a student's help by sending a phoenix, seem a bit too much don't you think?"

Harry noticed that both Hermione and Ron were shooting glances at each other. He silently admitted that he was getting a little bit uncomfortable.

"Now about our invitation," said Viktor, suddenly changing the topic. "If you have nothing to do after this, ve could go to the ship right away. I have decided to also invite the Gryffindor Quidditch team to come along. I already asked them and they have agreed." He paused. "Your two friends here also can come," he said, pointing to Ron and Hermione.

This took Harry by surprise. He looked towards Fred, George, Katie, Angelina and Alicia.

All of them were beaming at him.

"Well, that's very kind of you, Viktor. Thank you. But are you sure your headmaster is okay with this?"

"He already agrees," said Viktor. "But I can't invite more and there are certain places in the ship that is out of bound. I hope you'll understand."

"I understand, Viktor. We are going to respect that. Thank you."

They continued to eat and chat. At one point, Harry took a glance at the staff table. Dumbledore, Snape and Moody were absence but Madame Maxime, Professor Karkaroff and a few Hogwarts teachers were there.

At five minutes past nine, Madame Maxime, together with Hagrid, swooped down from the staff table and began shooing her students back to their carriage. Hagrid saw the trio and began waving at them as he made his exit. Madame Maxime, together with the rest of her students glanced at him before they disappeared from view.

"How about ve go now?" suggest Viktor after seeing that everyone had finish eating.

"Yeah sure," said Harry.

He, Hermione, Ron, the rest of Gryffindor Quidditch team members and the Durmstrang students got off their seats. Seamus who was visibly disappointed that he was not chosen however mouthed 'don't forget' to Harry.

Harry knew what he meant by that. "Can't promise but I'll try," he said to Seamus. "See you back at the Tower."

He and the rest followed Viktor and his friends out of the Great Hall. But just as they reached the Entrance Hall, Harry suddenly remembered something.

"Oh shoot!" he exclaimed.

"What? Harry what is it?" asked Hermione.

The rest of the group stopped on their tracks and stared curiously at Harry.

"Err... why don't you guys go ahead? I'll meet up with you guys later at the ship. I won't be long."

"Harry what is it?" Hermione repeated her question.

"There's something I need to do, Hermione. I won't be long. I'll join you guys later," said
Harry.

"Doing what?" asked Hermione.

Harry saw that Hermione was looking sternly at him. He knew that there was no way for him to get out of this one. Hermione won’t let him. He already had difficulties with her earlier. He was not keen to face that again.

"I need to go to the hospital wing," he explained. "I need to see Madam Pomfrey."

"What for?"

"Just for some follow-up procedure. Nothing fancy."

"I'll go with you," said Hermione. "Then once that done, we can go to the Durmstrang ship together."

Harry could only look exasperatedly at Hermione.

"Why don't we all go together?" Viktor suddenly suggested. "The only part of the castle we had seen so far is the Great Hall. We really like to have a look around if it's okay with you. It is still early anyway."

All of the Durmstrang students beamed at him.

"Well?" asked Hermione, cocking her eyebrows.

Harry sighed. "Yeah I guess it won't hurt to bring you guys for a little bit of a tour. Let's go."

So instead of walking down the stairs towards the Entrance Hall below, they headed left and entered the corridor that led to the hospital wing.

Along the way, Viktor and his friends soaked up everything that they saw. They looked at the painting, the decorations, wall hanging, portraits, suits of armor and such. Harry stayed silent all the way. Hermione unwittingly became the tour guide and was the one who did all the explanations and storytelling. Well, she did memorize the Hogwarts, A History book from end to end. Who else would be more suitable? From the looks of it, she seemed to enjoy the attention the Durmstrang lot gave her in regard of her knowledge on the castle.

Several turns and after getting stuck at the Grand Staircase – the Durmstrang lot were having a lot of fun there with the moving staircase and the trick staircase, thanks to the Weasley twins who suggested that they followed a different route this time – they finally arrived at the entrance into the hospital wing.

Harry pushed open the huge door and beckoned them in. They began filing in into the ward and once everyone was in there, Harry closed the door behind them.

Viktor looked around impressively.

"This is much better than what we have back at Durmstrang," he noted.

" Seriously?" asked Harry when he returned to them.

Viktor nodded. "Yes. Bulgarian weather is much nicer than Britain but our institute is located somewhere within the highlands near Romania. I cannot tell you where the precise location is – it's a secret – but I can tell you that the weather inland is much colder than the coast. Our institute buildings have less windows and it is less airy than Hogwarts. It is a bit, what the English says, claustrophobic."

"I see."

"We also don’t have a lot of paintings and sculptures lining the walls," continued Viktor. "And our food is not as good. That is why we are impressed."

"Do you have house elves at Durmstrang?" asked George. He at the same time gave a side glance at Hermione.

Hermione in return gave him a furious look.

"Yes we do," replied Viktor. He was of course oblivious to Hermione's away from school activities. "We have a lot of them. They do everything from cleaning to cooking. Of course their cooking is not as good as Hogwarts. I take it that house elves do the cooking for this school?"

"Yes they do," said Fred. "They do everything, just like yours. Honestly, we don't know what we'll do without them. We really don't want them to go, you know."
Both Fred and George seemed to enjoy watching Hermione’s face reddened.
The young brunette however said nothing.
The noise from the group seemed to alert the resident nurse. Madam Pomfrey stuck her head out of her office and was surprise to see a large group of people gathering inside her ward.

“What is the meaning of this?” she asked, walking up to them.

“Madam Pomfrey,” said Harry. “It’s me. You wanted to see me this morning. The rest of them, they were just sightseeing.”

Madam Pomfrey looked at each and every students of Durmstrang. “Well, welcome. I’m pretty sure you know what a hospital is no matter where you came from so there’s no need for me to explain it to you. There’s not much to look at anyway. Come, Potter,” said Madam Pomfrey, gesturing Harry to take a seat on a nearby chair.

Harry did as told.

Madam Pomfrey began to check his neck.

“What’s wrong with your neck, Harry?” asked Hermione curiously.

Harry did not answer.

“Nothing wrong, my dear girl,” Madam Pomfrey instead answered for him, “Just doing some routine checking, that is all. I don’t understand why Dumbledore wants to keep a heroic act a secret.”

“Heroic act? Harry?”

Madam Pomfrey finished her checking. “Your neck seems fine, boy. Good to see it already mended perfectly. You may go. Just be careful next time.”

Harry muttered thanks and stood up.

Hermione immediately round up to him. “Harry? Tell me!”

“I am fine, Hermione,” said Harry. “Look at me. I’m fine.”

Madam Pomfrey’s eyes travelled between the two students in front of her. She shook her head and said, “He is indeed fine, Miss Granger. But if you must know, last night he saved five fully grown men from certain death at nearly the cost of his own.”

Hermione and the rest of the girls present there cupped their mouth. Ron, Viktor and the rest of the boys stared at Harry in utter disbelief.

Harry closed his eyes and sighed. He was beginning to regret his decision in allowing them to tag along with him. But the milk had been spilled. All that was left was containment.

“It did not happen that way, Madam Pomfrey,” he said. “It was nothing. They weren’t really in any real danger.”

“That’s not what the headmaster told me when I confronted him last night after you left, Mr. Potter,” said Madam Pomfrey. She then put her hand on Harry’s shoulder and continued, “Why keep a good deed a secret? You friends,” she gestured towards the rest of the group congregating around him within the ward. “Deserves to know what you did. Albus and Alastor may not be with us today if it wasn’t for you.”

She then let go of Harry’s shoulder and continued, “You may go now, Mr. Potter. And please bring along your friends with you. Only the sick stays here.”

Madam Pomfrey then made her way towards her own office.

Hermione lowered her hands. “You nearly died?” she half whispered.

“Blimey, Harry,” said Ron. “Is this what you’re planning to tell us?”

“More or less,” said Harry. “Madam Pomfrey was exaggerating. It was nothing, really.”

“Harry, it’s not easy to impress Madam Pomfrey,” stated Hermione. “And she seldom exaggerates. The fact is, she was impressed back there. She doesn’t do that on constant basis.”
"No, Hermione. The fact is everything here had been blown out of proportion," countered Harry, irritably.

"Oh yes! And that includes the fact that you could have been laid on one of these beds lifeless! Is that what you're trying to say?" replied Hermione heatedly.

"Erhm... excuse me?"

"What?!"

Viktor held up his hands. Apparently he saw things were heating up between Harry and Hermione had decided to interrupt.

Hermione glared at him.

"It is getting late," he said. "Why don't we all go to our ship now? We had promised to bring all of you for a tour and I'm sure that Harry would want to go back in time to be ready for this afternoon."

"Yeah, you're right," said Harry, making his way to the door. "Come on."

Nobody spoke a word along the way. What happened back at the hospital wing had unfortunately casted a rather gloomy tone for their whole journey to the Durmstrang ship. They went through a different route this time which was proven to be a lot shorter than before.

They arrived at the ship dock ten minutes later.

Viktor waved his hand from left to right. A plank magically extended from the galleon's top deck to the dock.

"Please," he said, motioning Harry and his friends to get onto the ship.

Harry walked on the plank first, followed by Ron. Hermione hesitated at first. She looked at the seemingly unstable plank with great trepidation.

"It may not look like it but it is safe," Viktor assured her.

When Hermione still hesitated, he extended his hand towards her. "Come with me."

Hermione stared at his hand for a few moments but then slowly but surely, she grabbed it.

Viktor then immediately guided her up the plank.

Hermione was surprised that the plank was indeed stable and safe, just like what Viktor had said. It did not bend down under their weight, it did not wobble and her feet felt securely planted on it. They both reached the ship's top deck in no time at all.

Harry and Ron at that time were busy looking around.

From the onset, the top deck of the galleon looked no different compared to what the muggles used to sail the oceans back in 16th to 18th century. It had three masts – square rigs adorned each of the mast – and directly behind and below the rearmost mast was the quarter gallery. Multiple old world sailing tools such as ropes and ladders could be found scattered all over the deck. Old bronze cannons lined up both side of the ship. Two wooden stairs led towards the top of the quarter gallery where a ship wheel can be found. And in between the stairs there was an oak door.

Harry seriously doubt all those ropes, ladders and cannons were useful given the way the ship travelled.

Harry and Ron then noticed that both Hermione and Viktor standing not far from them. They both raised their eyebrows when they saw her fingers intertwined with Viktor's.

Hermione was puzzled by the odd look the two boys gave her when she realized that she was still holding hands with Viktor. She immediately let go of his hand. Her face reddened a little in embarrassment.

By now, everyone was already on board the ship.

Viktor cleared his throat in an attempt to cover the awkwardness. "So now everyone is here. Follow me."

Viktor led them towards the oak door. He opened the door and motioned them to enter.
Harry and the rest crossed over the threshold and found themselves inside some sort of living room. Wooden chairs with cushion were neatly arranged around a small coffee table. There were also several wooden armchairs placed at several locations within the room. A bookshelf lined one wall and on the opposite wall, the Durmstrang coat of arm can be found hanging there. Three huge portraits can be found hanging below the coat of arm. One of them belonged to Professor Karkaroff, located at the rightmost side. Harry could only assume that those portraits were the portraits of Durmstrang headmasters, both past and presents. Durmstrang apparently followed a different tradition compared to Hogwarts when it comes to their headmasters portraits. The only shared trait was that the person inside those portraits could move. Professor Karkaroff's portrait can be seen scowling at them. Unlike the Beauxbaton's carriage, the room was sparsely decorated. Those portraits and the coat of arms were the only decoration that could be found.

"These are the pictures of the Durmstrang Institute headmasters, Harry," said Viktor. They both were standing side by side, looking at the portraits.

"Apparently so," said Harry. "So Karkaroff already had his portrait hanging on the walls of Durmstrang while he is still in service?"

"Yes," said Viktor. "Don't your headmasters have their pictures taken and hanged on the wall, Harry?"

"We do," said Harry. "But only after they kicked the bucket."

Viktor stared at Harry in confusion. "Kicked the bucket?"

"I mean after they died. Only then their portrait be taken and hanged onto the wall," explained Harry.

"I see."

Hermione walked up to them and stood beside Viktor.

"Harfang Munter. Boris Teodora. Igor Karkaroff," muttered Hermione. "So Durmstrang only had three headmasters so far?"

"Actually more than that," said Viktor. "There isn't any space left for us to put all of our headmaster's portrait here. Ve can only put up the most recent ones with the exception of this one." He pointed towards a portrait of a woman. "Her name vas Nerida Vulchanova. She is the founder of Durmstrang. Of course our institute is not as old as Hogvarts. It is quite recent so there isn't much histories that ve could share."

Hermione nodded. "Word is your school doesn't accept muggleborns."

"Your point?" asked Viktor.

"I am a muggleborn," pointed out Hermione. "And I'm on your ship."

Harry glanced sideways at both of them.

Viktor paused for a moment. He then smiled and said, "But you are also my guest. Don't worry. Ve are not as rigid as you think we are."

"Good to know that."

"Now come," said Viktor. "I vant to show you somewhere else."

They followed Viktor towards a narrow staircase located not far from the portraits that led to a deck down below. They carefully filed down the stairs and onto the lower deck. They met Professor Karkaroff who was going up.

Karkaroff eyes travelled to each of the Hogwarts students until it rest on Harry. And as always, like everyone else that met Harry for the first time, his eyes would flick upwards towards his scar.

"Welcome," he said in thick Bulgarian accent. "I didn't know that it would be this many but nevertheless, you are still welcome on board."

"Thank you, professor," said the Hogwarts students in unison.

Karkaroff then turned towards Viktor. "Remember, Viktor," he said.

Viktor just nodded.
Karkaroff then excused himself. He walked past Harry and began to climb up the stairs.

"What was that about?" asked Harry once Professor Karkaroff disappeared from view.

"Nothing. It just a reminder that certain area within this ship is out of bound to outside people."

Harry nodded.

"Come," said Viktor.

From then on, Viktor brought the Hogwarts students to see their dining room, library, study area, recreational lounge and their kitchen, all of them located at different levels. Viktor told him that the ship had six levels, each catered for different functions. The first level they descent to from the top deck contained sleeping quarters for all the students. Fred asked Viktor where Professor Karkaroff slept. Viktor however refused to tell. He only indicated that their headmaster's living quarters was in lower level. Harry was surprised to find that they had a pool table aside from several chess tables inside their recreational lounge and was itching to try his hands on it. It was odd given that the Durmstrang Institutes was known to be muggle unfriendly.

The galleon interior was certainly a far cry from the Beauxbaton's carriage. If the carriage interior looked like a five star hotel, the Durmstrang ship could be likened to The Leaky Cauldron. Everything that was being put there within the galleon was for functionality rather than aesthetic. There wasn't any portrait to speak of, beside the headmaster's portraits of course. There was no sculptures, no statues, no decorations, no nothing. The walls were mostly blank, devoid from anything decorative. While the Beauxbaton carriage's interior was bright and airy, the galleon was gloomy with minimal lighting.

Near the end of the tour, Viktor invited them to his living quarters. But since female students were not allowed into male living quarters and vice-versa, Hermione, Alicia, Katie and Angelina were whisked away by female Durmstrang students. They were going to visit the female living quarters instead.

"Your friend's mood seems to improve, I think," said Viktor once the female group was out of earshot. "What is her name again?"

"Hermione," said Harry.

"I see," said Viktor; his eyes were staring the receding back of Hermione.

Harry could see that Viktor had become very interested with Hermione. He glanced at Ron and saw the ginger head was busy conversing with Vladimir and was oblivious to what he and Viktor talked about just now.

Harry knew that Viktor liked Hermione in the old timeline. He even danced with her during the Yule Ball. The only reason on why their relationship never really took off was communication. Viktor seemed to be very bad at it.

Things could be different this time around, Harry suspected. He honestly did not know how he would feel about that and how Ron would take if Hermione really ended up with Viktor. Only time will tell, he guessed.

Every male living quarters within the ship was just the same, Harry observed. Each room was spartanly equipped with two bunk beds, two small desks and two wardrobes. They even had to share the bathrooms and toilets. Only Professor Karkaroff got his own bathroom, Harry was told. What took Harry by surprise was that despite Viktor being crowned as the Durmstrang champion, unlike Fleur, he still had to share a room with another student. In this case, his roommate was Alexander, the Durmstrang Quidditch team keeper.

Harry pointed this fact to Viktor. All those who gathered inside his room raised their eyebrows.

"So she was given her own room?" asked Olaf. He was impressed.

"Yes."

"How big was it?"

Harry looked around the room. He was sitting on Viktor's bed at that time. "Probably two to three times bigger than this room I suppose? Maybe more. You can't really see it from the outside, you know. But once you're inside, it's a different matter altogether."

Viktor raised one hand. "Vait! Are you saying that you were inside her room yesterday?" he asked.
Harry wondered if he should tell them. But then, they already knew he visited the Beauxbaton carriage the day before so there wasn't any point to deny it.

"Yes. But I wasn't alone with her. All of her friends were there too," explained Harry.

"Thought so," said Viktor. "You do know she is a veela, yes?" he asked.

"Yeah, I do have that part figured out. So you know she's a veela?" asked Harry.

"Me and my friends, we met veelas back in Bulgaria so we know what to look for," said Viktor. "There were veela communities scattered in several regions back in my countries but they are especially prevalent in Eastern Europe. Some of us 'survive' the encounter," he made an air quote. "Some of us don't. That is why I am surprise that you managed to come out unscathed."

Harry silently wondered what they will say if they knew he was in fact in the same room with three veelas and a group of hot French witches.

"I know what you mean. I think her friends did help calm me down a little bit," said Harry.

"So what's her room look like?" asked Ron. "Tell us."

Harry did not like the question Ron just asked. To him, whatever was inside Fleur's room is a matter of privacy and he truly did want to share it with anyone, especially without the owner's consent.

"It was nice," said Harry simply.

"Yeah we know it was nice, but what? What did you see?" urged Ron.

"I can't tell you more than that, Ron," said Harry. "Sorry."

"Why not? Come on, Harry. No one else will know about it! I'm sure everyone here would like to know."

"I can't tell either you or anyone else because I did not get the permission from the owner herself which in this case is Fleur," said Harry firmly. "How would you feel if the whole world knows what Ginny's bedroom looks like?"

Ron went silent at this.

"Harry is right," said Viktor. "He did not get the permission so none of us should ask this of him ever again. We must respect his decision and Miss Delacour's right for her privacy."

Viktor then gave a nod to Harry.

"Ignore our brother, Harry," said George, glaring at Ron with embarrassment and slight distaste. "But answer me this though. Did they really allow you in their female dormitory?"

"No, I haven't been into their dormitory, George. Just Fleur Delacour's room. Even then I wasn't alone with her. But a student named Raphael did invite me to his dormitory before that. You should meet him."

"So what were you doing inside her room?"

"We had some tea. Cakes. Pies," said Harry. "It was just a little get together party, that's all. Fleur and her friends organized it. They must have been doing that kind of thing a lot back at their academy."

"You must have done something to get that kind of invitation," pointed out Fred.

Everyone there nodded their heads.

Harry just shrugged. "It was nothing," he said.

Of course that wasn't the truth.

Fleur's friends told him that the party was organized as an appreciation for what he did for Daphne Greengrass. He somehow wasn't inclined to tell them about that. He somehow suspected that keeping Daphne's secret was the right move especially when he too had some questions about her. Like how did she get into Slytherin and how the Sorting Hat could not guess who she truly was. And what about her sister, Astoria? And why Madame Maxime made a 180-degrees turn all of a sudden when it comes to him?

"So what their carriage was like, Harry?" asked Viktor's roommate.
Harry did not like to make comparison between the two schools’ accommodation to be honest, given the stark contrast between the galleon and the carriage. But they already knew he was there so it was normal for them to be curious. He figured it would do the Beauxbaton no harm if he gave out a general view.

"Very nice," said Harry. "Beautiful. Really comfortable. They even have a lobby. It’s like a moving five star hotel."

"What’s a hotel?" asked Fred.

"Urm, remember Leaky Cauldron, Fred? We stayed there last year. Now imagine the Leaky Cauldron that is a hundred times more luxurious."

That was some truth in that statement. Like Fleur, all of her friends both males and females came from affluent and important families. That explained the expensive designer clothes they wore during the party. But children of rich families were not the only one who studied there.

"Yeah but they do offer scholarship and financial assistance for less fortunate students who’s qualified," said Harry. "So it wasn’t just rich children who go there."

"Just like Hogwarts," said Fred.

"Yeah. Just like Hogwarts. Though unlike the Beauxbaton, rich kids in Hogwarts tend to be twats," said Harry, referring to Malfoy.

The twins sniggered.

They continued to chat. Harry got to know every Durmstrang male student name in the process. Viktor did ask him on what really happened the night before and whose life did he save. Harry told him that he wasn’t ready to divulge everything but he promised that he will tell Viktor when a suitable time comes. Viktor agreed to wait but at the same time he told Harry that he expected him to hold on to his words.

Hermione, Alicia, Katie and Angelina returned near lunch time. Together with the Durmstrang students, they walked back to the castle for lunch.

They went their separate ways after lunch with Harry and his friends going back to the Gryffindor Tower. Viktor told him that he will attend the keeper tryout that afternoon before he left.

4.00pm that afternoon...

Harry and his teammate had a quick meeting after lunch, discussing final details on how the tryout was going to be. Harry stressed to them about the two important criteria they will be looking for when selecting the best candidates for the post. One would be how well the candidates protect their hoops. Second would be how well the candidates could read opposing players movement. George and Fred were given the job to continuously trick the keeper. Angelina, Alicia and Katie were given the job to score goals as many times as possible. Lee Jordan will be the one responsible for keeping the score.

"The bludger," said Harry to Fred and George. "Use it on them."

"But Harry, we’re not allow to hit the bludgers at the keeper," pointed out Alicia. "You know the rules."

"It’s not a match, Alicia," said Harry. "I’m allowing our beaters to do that. They both could also score goals whenever possible. Hear that Fred? George?"

"Sweet," said both Fred and George, grinning madly.

That afternoon, Harry, clad in Gryffindor’s Quidditch uniform and carrying the Firebolt on his shoulder, went down the Quidditch pitch together with the rest of the members of his house. Along the way, he saw long lines of students heading towards the pitch as well. Virtually everyone wanted to see the tryout it seemed.

Harry and the rest of his teammate entered their locker room once they arrived at the Quidditch pitch. From outside, they could hear loud noises coming in front the stands.
"If I hadn't known better we could be in an actual Quidditch match," said Alicia as she took a peek through the curtain.

"Ready, everyone?" Harry asked as his teammate gathered around him.

All of them nodded.

"Good. Do the best you can. Remember what we had planned. Don't make their lives easy. If you think you could send them to the hospital wing, do it!" he said.

Both Fred and George grinned at this.

"We want the best and we need the best," continued Harry. "There's no substitute for that. Now get out there and show them what we wanted and what we truly are!"

His teammate then threw their fist into the air and shouted "GO! GO! GRYFFINDOR!"

They then walked out of the locker room and into the pitch. Roar and cheers greeted them. It was like an actual Quidditch tournament except there was no tournament. The raw energy generated by the crowd was intoxicating, to say the least.

Harry looked up and saw the three candidates were already waiting high up in the air.

He turned to Fred and George who was carrying the wooden trunk containing the bludgers, snitch and quaffle. "Let go of the bludgers," he instructed them.

The twin did as told. The bludgers immediately shot into the air the moment the twin released them from their traps.

"Mount your brooms!" said Harry.

They clambered onto their brooms and moments later, six brooms rose up high into the air.

The rest of his teammates flew around the pitch as they did their warm up. Fred and George were playing with the bludgers, hitting the uncontrollable balls towards each other.

Harry stopped mid air. He looked around, taking in the surrounding. The stands were full to the brim. The Durmstrang and the Beauxbaton were there as well. But the students weren't the only one attending the tryout. The teachers were there as well, including both the foreign school headmasters. Lee Jordan, like before, had taken his position at the score board. And as always, Professor McGonagall sat beside him. Hagrid sat among the Gryffindorians.

Harry noticed Fleur, sitting amongst her friends on the Ravenclaw stands.

Fleur and her friends noticed that he was looking in their direction. They gave him a small wave. Harry replied with a small wave of his own.

Viktor Krum and his friends were also there as promised. They were sitting among the Gryffindorians. He gave Harry a thumb up in which Harry replied.

But the most surprising attendee was a huge shaggy black dog, sitting alone at the topmost of one of the stands.

"Padfoot!"

He smiled and gave the black dog a small salute. He saw the dog wagged its tail.

But all of a sudden he remembered something. He immediately looked towards the Slytherin's stand and felt a huge wave of relief washed over him when he saw Professor Snape was not there. He was pretty sure by now the Potion Master would recognized Sirius's animagus form.

Given the incident was still fresh, Harry suspected that Snape would not hesitate to contact the Ministry if he saw Sirius. At this point, whether Snape was willing to forego his long years of animosity was unknown.

He did see Daphne Greengrass though, sitting beside Tracy Davis a few seats away from Pansy Parkinson and her gang. Her lips carved a smile when she noticed Harry was looking in her direction.

Feeling that there won't be any need to waste any further time, Harry flew towards the three candidates.

"Welcome," he greeted them the moment he arrived in front of them. "I'll be brief. You have fifteen minutes to protect those goal hoops. Your performances will be measured from how much my friends could score within those fifteen minutes and how many of the throw that you can save. The quaffle won't be the only thing you need to watch for though," he said, pointing
towards the bludgers.

The three keepers noticed the bludgers. There was a look of surprise on their face once they realized what he meant.

"You're mad!" said Grant Page incredulously.

"You know it's illegal to hit the keeper with a bludger, Harry," stated Herbert Fleet.

Miles Bletchley who hovered a little bit farther away from everyone else however said nothing.

"In a match, yes," said Harry. "But not in a tryout. See there?"

He pointed towards the Durmstrang students.

"Those are our opponents," he continued. "This is not the Interhouse Quidditch match we're talking about. This is United Kingdom versus Bulgaria. The stake is high. Mark my word, Viktor Krum will want to win after the blunder at the World Cup. You need to be able to predict your opponents and be on a complete lookout for anything unpredictable. That's where the bludgers come in. If you can read your opponents, you can protect your hoop better."

"We already know that," said Page. "We have no problem doing it."

"Of course you knew," said Harry casually. "And that you have no problem in doing your job. I just want to see it how you would fare against this one. Let's put this skill of yours to the test, shall we?"

The three keepers said nothing.

After a few moments of deliberation, Harry decided that the Ravenclaw keeper should start first.

"Grant! Take your position. The rest of you, return to your respective house's stand. And be ready," instructed Harry.

Grant did as told. He flew towards the hoop post indicated by Harry and hovered there.

Harry gave the signal to Lee Jordan and his team to get ready. The five Gryffindor Quidditch players immediately congregated in front of the hoop post. Lee gave a thumb up at Harry, indicating that he was ready.

Harry then nudged his broom to rise higher. Once he reached the intended altitude, he took out his wand, pointed it upwards and began erecting a ward that would null any possible spell the opposing houses might use in order to get their keeper into the team. Of course this was a lesson learnt back in the past, thanks to Hermione. He wanted no one else to help the keeper. They had to do it on their own.

Once the ward fully covered the pitch, Harry stowed his wand and took out a whistle he brought with him.

He blew it and the tryout began.

Fred immediately hit the bludger as hard as he can towards Grant.

Grant managed to dodge it just in time. Suddenly a gong was heard. A quaffle hit by Alicia managed to get past him and flew into one of the hoops. The scoreboards showed:-

**Gryffindor -1  Grant Page - 0**

There was a loud groaned coming in from the Ravenclaw stand. And Grant himself was fuming after realizing that he had been tricked.

High up in the air, Harry watched the proceeding below him. A smile formed on his lips.

In a match, the beaters will always protect the keeper from those pesky bludgers. But not this time. This time around, those candidates will have to face the bludger’s famous unpredictability themselves. If they could survive the bludger while at the same time protecting their hoops, they will survive Durmstrang. Harry of course never saw the Durmstrang played, but he had a hunch that based on what he remembered during the World Cup, they took no prisoners. And Viktor will dearly want to win especially after the mistake he did during the World Cup.

Fred, George, Angelina, Katie and Alicia criss-crossed in front of Page at high speed in their
effort to confuse Page as much as possible. It worked really well. Page had not managed to save every quaffle hit by the Gryffindor players. He kept on making mistakes after mistakes. He veered to the left when in fact the quaffle was on the right. Once he made a mistake by dodging the quaffle instead of catching it. And at one point he tried to catch the bludger instead of the quaffle. The bludger hit his chest at full force, sending him tumbling backward for quite a few feet and rendering him unable to breathe for a few minutes. Lucky for him though, he still managed to hold on to his broom.

The crowd cheered and roared watching the Gryffindor in action. There were loud ohhs when Page took full hit from the bludger. From his vantage point, Harry took a glance at Viktor. He and his teammate were observing his players carefully and they were whispering to each other. No doubt they were studying the Gryffindor team, looking for its strength and weaknesses.

And at the end of the fifteen minutes, the result spoke for itself:-

**Gryffindor - 47 Grant Page - 0**

Grant Page left the hoop, shoulder slumped and feeling dejected. There were no cheers coming in from the Ravenclaw stand. Everyone there was looking disappointed, including the Beauxbaton.

Harry was not surprised by this. The Beauxbaton had chosen to ally with the Ravenclaw so of course they would vouch for that house. But he was glad that Page did not make it at the same time. He knew he was just being petty, but this he considered a payback for Roger Davies for flirting with Fleur.

Herbert Fleet was up next. He took the position in front of the hoops.

And the whistle was then blown.

Once again the Gryffindor players used the same maneuver as before. Fleet however fared better. No doubt he had watched the proceeding before him and readied himself. There were a few times when a bludger tried to throw him off his broom but overall, he did well. And after the fifteen minutes time was up, the score was:-

**Gryffindor - 45 Herbert Fleet - 3**

Harry gave Fleet a nod when the Hufflepuff keeper looked up at him. He then signaled Fleet to return to the Hufflepuff stand.

Miles Bletchley became the final contestant for that day.

Harry noticed that the noise within the pitch intensified. All throughout the corner of the stadium, the Gryffindor battle cry "GO! GO! GRYFFINDOR!" was heard. It was clear to him that everyone with the exception of Slytherin wanted Gryffindor to take down that last contestant.

But Harry was not going to fall for that. If Bletchley proved his worth, he will be the new keeper for the team even if he was a Slytherin.

The stage had been set. Bletchley hovered ready in his position. Every Gryffindor player was also ready.

Harry brought the whistle to his mouth.

He then blew it.

**To be continued...**

A/n: Many thanks to 'Guest' (whoever your name is) for pointing out that one glaring error. Correction had been made.

As always, thanks for the reviews guys. I appreciate it.
30. Chapter 30

Chapter 29

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He then blew it.

Two bludgers came in from behind. One came in from 45 degrees to Fred’s right and one came from below, heading directly towards George. Both beaters were ready. Fred swung his bat as hard as he can and hit the bludger right towards Bletchley. George turned upside down on his broom and did the same.

Angelina who was holding the quaffle passed it to Katie who in turned passed it to Alicia. The three chasers kept on passing the quaffle towards each other until at one point Katie pivoted and kicked the quaffle as hard as she could, aiming it at an imaginary point a few meters in front of Bletchley so that it crossed the other two bludgers, hoping that it would confused Bletchley.

It worked brilliantly. Bletchley was forced to duck underneath the two bludgers heading towards him and was unable to stop the quaffle from sailing through the left hoop.

Cheers and roars erupted throughout the pitch. Everyone with the exception of the Slytherins was elated, thinking that the Bletchley would be sent packing and the position in the end would be given to the Hufflepuff.

The Gryffindor, now more determined than ever, began to push the game higher and higher. Fred and George zigged-zagged in front of Bletchley and continuously attacking the Slytherin keeper non-stop, the bludgers flew towards him from right, left and center. And the three Chasers used all the chances created by the beaters to score goals. And by the time the first five minutes had passed, the score was:-

**Gryffindor - 15 Miles Bletchley - 0**

For that five minutes Harry just hovered there, high above the pitch, and watched the proceeding calmly. His eyes were fixed on Bletchley.

His lips twitched into a smile.

The rest of the spectators may cheered and roared whenever Bletchley let pass a quaffle but they did not see what he saw. From the look of Bletchley’s face and the movement of his eyes, he knew right there and then that Bletchley was simply playing his part. The Slytherin was studying his opponents, probably more closely than he ever had during all those matches they had. This was something that went missing from the other two candidates. Both Grant Page and Herbert Fleet never bothered to study. Only time will tell if Bletchley could produce some sort of countermeasure against the incessant Gryffindor’s attacks. But even with that in mind, Harry found himself rooting for Bletchley. That thought surprises even himself. And he had a feeling that the Slytherin’s keeper will be the one who would win the spot.

His thought proved prophetic on seventh minute.

Harry watched as a bludger came from Bletchley’s right, heading towards his head and another came from his extreme left, heading towards Bletchley’s broom. Both would arrive at the same time. Harry knew that the only way to avoid being hit was to go sideways down. But that would mean Bletchley will once again missed catching the quaffle that was now flying at great speed in the direction over his head.

Just as the bludgers and the quaffle reached a distance of a few meters in front of him, Bletchley suddenly thrust his broom upward. One of the bludgers graced against his left ankle. He then quickly did a barrel roll and extended his hand downward.

A roar of cheers coming in from Slytherin signaled that Bletchley managed to catch his first
quaffle of the day.

The Gryffindor was of course furious. Their attacks intensified right after that but Bletchley, upon finding his own tempo and rhythm, managed to keep up. And by the end of the tensed eight minutes, the score was undisputable:

Gryffindor - 35 Miles Bletchley - 12

The only cheers came from the Slytherin's stand. They shouted and they cheered loudly. Bletchley who knew he had won the spot was inundated by hugs from the rest of the Slytherin when he returned to their stand. They had totally forgotten that they had practically hand over one of their own to their supposed enemy.

The other houses just watched in silence as the Slytherin celebrated their victory. Fleur and her friends looked around towards their Ravenclaw counterpart in confusion. The same thing also happened to the Durmstrang. All of them were also confused by the reaction given out by the rest of Hogwarts students.

Harry descended towards where his teammate gathered. Fred and George looked furious. The girls looked wildly disappointed. All of them seemed to unable to accept the outcome of the tryout.

"Harry, you can't do this. You can't accept him," said George the moment Harry arrived.

"George's right," said Alicia. "There's no way we could work with him, Harry. Please. Think this through."

But Harry held up his hand. "He won fair and square," he said firmly. "Wait for me inside the locker room, all of you," he instructed them.

Fred looked like he wanted to have a say in this but in the end, decided to keep his mouth shut. He glared at Harry and immediately flew down towards the locker room. The others followed him in his wake.

The moment his teammate left, Harry flew towards the Slytherin stand.

The Slytherin who were still celebrating immediately went silent the moment the saw Harry approached them. They stared at him just as he arrived in front of Bletchley.

"Congratulations, Bletchley," said Harry as he extended his hand towards him. "The keeper position is yours."

Bletchley stared momentarily at Harry's offered hand. Slowly but surely, he took it and they both shook hands.

Harry smiled. He expected that Bletchley would try to crush his fingers but the handgrip the Slytherin keeper gave him was nothing like that. It was firm of course but at the same time, it felt friendly.

And once again Harry was surprised by the genuine smile Bletchley gave him in return. He looked over towards the Slytherin. They were still staring at him. But unusual enough, the loatheness that usually accompanied their stare had gone, replaced by something else. Was it respect?

He turned back to Bletchley. "Follow me please."

Bletchley simply nodded.

Harry gave a nod towards the Slytherin, he saw Daphne smiling widely at him, and together with Bletchley, he flew down towards the Gryffindor locker room.

His teammates, all sitting on the benches, were waiting silently for him when he and Bletchley made their entrance. He gestured Bletchley to take a seat. The newly appointed keeper took a seat on a bench a little farther from everyone else.

"Well, our team is now complete," he began. "All that is left now is the training and then the match."

His teammates however did not give any reaction to that. All of them were looking down their feet, brooding.

Harry gritted his teeth. He totally did not like this at all.

"If any of you have anything to say, say it now," he said. "Don't keep it. Be honest. It could spare us a lot of headaches and heartaches later on."
His teammates did not say anything at first. Instead, they glanced at each other. It was as if they were silently communicating to one another on who should be the one doing the talking.

In the end, Fred decided to take that role.

"I know he won fair and square," Fred began, nudging towards Bletchley. "But working with him is a whole different matter. I think you know what I'm talking about."

Harry knew what Fred was talking about. Fred was mentioning about the distrust that was sowed between the two houses many years ago until now. But Harry was not going to let that get into his way of doing things. After all he saw what the future holds. Things could change. If not, he would not have enjoyed a good relationship with an adult Draco Malfoy.

Harry turned towards Bletchley and asked, "Well, Bletchley? Are you willing to work with us?"

"Why else would I be here if not for that?" said Bletchley.

Harry turned back to Fred. "You hear that, Fred?" he asked. "I see no reason on why it cannot go both ways. Unless of course if you guys don't want it to."

But Fred just shook his head and muttered under his breath on how the cooperation between the Gryffindor and Slytherin would never happen.

Harry lost his patience when he heard that.

"I shall bear responsibilities if we lose the match against Durmstrang," he said. "Just as long as we set aside our differences and work together. I know you guys don't want Bletchley to be in our team but I'm not going to kick him out just because of that and induct someone else who clearly failed to perform in the tryout!"

His teammates remained silent.

"Fine," he said finally. "If you guys can't change your mind about the whole thing and could not respect my decision, we could call the whole thing off. I'll meet Krum and explain it to him. You will have my resignation right after that."

His teammates eyes widened in surprise upon hearing what he just said. Bletchley himself lifted an eyebrow in disbelief.

"You're not going to do that, Harry," said Angelina. "You can't."

"I can and I will. Both the captaincy and the team," said Harry, firmly. "Not even McGonagall can stop me. This is not about Gryffindors. This is about Hogwarts. It's true that I told the Slytherin to send in their candidates but it was more of an invitation rather than an ultimatum. I gave them choices and they choose to participate. Do you think they forget that Bletchley will be working with us?"

George shook his head. "We're exposing us to them, Harry."

"And you think that they have yet to figure out our secret, George?" Harry retorted. "They're our schoolmates. They know a lot. They saw how we played. It's just the matter of discipline and talent plus the ability to evolve that separates the winner from the loser."

George went silent.

Harry shook his head in disappointment. "Look guys, I really don't want to put a pressure on your heads. If you still can't accept Bletchley being the winner to the keeper position, that's fine. I'll just call the whole thing off but know that I'm resigning not because of Bletchley. I'm resigning because I feel ashamed. Not because of Bletchley, but because of our inability to adapt and being open minded as we're supposed to be. The Gryffindor are supposed to be the most open minded house of them all and yet here we are. If the Slytherin could open up their mind to the possibility of working together with us, why not us?"

His teammates just stared at him.

Harry sighed and shook his head. "Until midnight. You have until midnight to make up your mind. If your decision remains as it is or if I don't get any final words from you guys by then, I will call the whole thing off and I shall tender my resignation by tomorrow. That would be all."

Harry then turned towards Bletchley. "If this thing goes through, I may need some help from the Slytherin. Will your house help us?"

Bletchley stood up, saddled his broom over his shoulder and said, "Yeah, sure. I'll talk with Marcus and the rest. Just tell me what you need."
"Thank you."

Without waiting for the rest of his teammates, Harry made his exit out of the locker room. He saw Hermione and the rest of his dorm mates were waiting for him just outside the locker room. The Beauxbaton and the Durmstrang were there as well.

"Harry?"

But Harry ignored the call. He walked past them and many other students including the Beauxbaton and the Durmstrang and made his way alone back to the castle.

Harry threw his Firebolt into the broom cupboard the moment he arrived at the Gryffindor Tower and made his way towards his dormitory. He took a long shower after that.

All of his dorm mates were already present when he came out of the shower. He ignored them. He went to dress in silence and once that done, he proceeded to walk out of the dorm. He knew they were looking at him and they want to speak to him. He just did not care.

The truth is, he was truly disappointed. He knew that it was to be expected of course. But he knew that he got to do it. Some things needed to be changed. His friends and the rest of Hogwarts students, they need to evolve. Someone got to do it. Someone got to be the trigger.

Harry kept to himself during the dinner that night. He did not respond to any question and any attempt to hold conversations by his housemates. Hermione and Ron kept glancing at him. Harry knew they were worried and anxious.

Harry just did not want to care. And he would keep on not caring until he had his way.

Viktor and his friends also kept quiet. It was as if they knew something had gone wrong. And indeed they were right.

Rumors were circulating. Something had suspiciously gone wrong after the tryouts. There were talks about how the rest of the Gryffindor team rejected Mile Bletchley even though he won the tryout. They also heard about how Harry vehemently defended Bletchley and how he threatened to call everything off and resigned both his captaining and his position as the seeker in the Gryffindor Quidditch team.

A Gryffindor defending a Slytherin. That had never happened before. And it was the main cause on why every pair of eyes, both the students and the teachers, was on him that night.

Harry glanced once and a while towards the Ravenclaw table. Fleur was indeed looking at him.

And she looked worried.

It was ten minutes before nine. Harry was preparing to go back to the Gryffindor Tower. A year one boy walked up to him just as he was about to stand up and took his leave.

"Err... Har-, Harry Potter?" the boy stuttered.

Harry looked at him questionably. He saw that the boy was a Hufflepuff.

"Yes?"

"Thi-, this is f., for you," said the boy.

Harry looked down and saw the boy was holding a small piece of parchment. He took it and muttered thanks.

The boy did not say anything. He simply ran back to the Hufflepuff table.

Harry opened up the parchment. He immediately recognized the handwriting.

It belongs to Dumbledore. And he wanted Harry to follow him that very instance.

Harry folded the parchment. "I'll see you guys back at the common room," he said to Hermione and Ron.

And without waiting for his best friends' response, he stood and made his way towards the staff table. And like before, every eye within the Great Hall trailed him.

Professor McGonagall was standing beside Dumbledore. From the look on her face, Harry knew she was concerned. But Harry said nothing to her.
McGonagall put her hand on Harry's shoulder and gave it a squeeze.

Dumbledore gestured Harry to follow him. Harry obliged and they both disappeared behind the staff door.

Hermione's eyes followed Harry's every foot step. She then turned to look at the Ravenclaw table. She saw that the whole of the Beauxbaton students were staring at the door where Harry and Dumbledore both disappeared into.

She suddenly stood up and made her way towards the Ravenclaw table.

"Hi!" she greeted Fleur and her friends.

"'Ello," greeted Marianne back. "You are 'Arry's friend, yes?"

"Indeed I am," replied Hermione. "Can we talk?"

"Of course."

Marianne scooted a little, making a small space beside her and gestured Hermione to sit.

Hermione obliged and found herself sitting directly opposite Fleur.

"So what iz it zhat you want to talk about?" asked Cassandra.

Hermione paused for a while.

"I need your help," she said moments later. "This is about Harry."

To be continued...

A/n: A short chapter this time. Not gonna lie, I wrote this in a hurry. Corrections will be made later.

As for what contains in my profile, it will depend on the type of readers you are. If you're an open minded person, there's nothing to worry about. If you're a rigid one and only believe stories should only go one way, yeah there are tons of red flag in there. I put the notice up just to help you guys decide whether this story would be worth your time. That's all.

Anyway, thanks for all the reviews. I appreciate it. Phase one nearly done. Phase two is coming. The next few chapters will go up until Hogsmeade and the First Task. And there gonna be a lot of Fleur in it.
"Sit down, Harry."

Harry obliged and sat on one of the available chairs. His eyes watched Dumbledore maneuvering himself around his desk and sat on the headmaster's chair.

"I heard what happened today," said Dumbledore, leaning forward, his hands clasped on the desk. He smiled and his eyes twinkled with pride. "I can't say that I am more proud than I am right now for what you did, Harry. The first step to being accepted by others is to accept them yourself. You did it really well."

"I just wish that the others think as you do, sir," said Harry in frustration. "But unfortunately."

Dumbledore nodded in understanding. He leaned against the back of his chair and said, "Your friends are definitely not alone. Even the teachers find it really hard to believe what just happened. Professor McGonagall in particular, is concerned about the backlash you will receive from the rest of her house for your action."

"I don't care," said Harry in defiance. "They can isolate me. They can snub me. But I faced enough prejudices to last me a lifetime. This has to end. Someone needs to make the change. If it would be me, then so be it."

Dumbledore smiled widely. "I would take my hat off to you if am wearing it right now. But at the same time, you have to forgive them, Harry. They neither have the knowledge nor had they experienced what you had gone through. It would be difficult for them to understand."

"Then let's hope that this time around, they don't have to."

Dumbledore once again nodded. "Enough of that," he said. "Let us move on the real reason on why you're here. You will be delighted, I assume, to know that everything went smoothly in regard of Barty Crouch. He had agreed to work with us and to play his part until all of these are over. But he did request a few things from us."

"And what would that be?" asked Harry.

"One of his requests is that he needs a personal security guard, a protective agent if you will, to accompany him all the time. Apparently the events that happened to him rattled him to no end and he was deeply concern about the possibility of a relapse."

"Who would that be?" asked Harry.

"I volunteered Remus Lupin," said Dumbledore.

"And?"

"Barty agrees. Remus will be his personal escort alongside Nymphadora. He will make arrangements for Remus to be inducted into the Ministry," said Dumbledore, smiling. "It shall be finalized sometime within next week."

All of his disappointment and worries were immediately erased from his mind once he heard the happy news. "That's great! That's really great, professor!" Harry said with utmost delight. But then, he remembered something. Something that threatened to take away the feeling of happiness from him. "But, don't they know that he is a werewolf? I'm sure they won't let him in."

Back in the old timeline, Harry and Hermione and several others worked hard to defend the rights of those non-normals such as werewolves. But it wasn't until thirty years after the Second War that the first werewolf was inducted into the Ministry, that time lead by Hermione.

"Barty may have been demoted in the wake of his scandal thirteen years ago Harry, but his words still hold weight within the Ministry. I think he will meet minimal resistances in trying to recruit Remus," said Dumbledore.
Harry nodded satisfactorily. "Just as long as Rita Skeeter doesn't get a sniff about it. It would be a huge nightmare for Remus and the Ministry. Well, at least Remus would be out of the street and into full employment. I can't bear watching him begging for the continuation of his survival."

"Yes, I know. Remus will need to prove himself however so that others like him can be help. As for that Daily Prophet reporter, that would be the risk we have no choice but to take," said Dumbledore.

"I understand," said Harry. "But if she does try to make trouble, just tell her that you know her secrets. Tell her that you know that she is an unregistered Animagus and her Animagus form is a beetle. Tell her that you know she was using her Animagus form to try to seek out stories, spying, and eavesdropping in her quest to destroy people's life. Warn her that someday, someone might accidentally squish her out of existence while she's on the job."

This did take Dumbledore by surprise. "This is certainly unexpected but nevertheless welcoming. Yes, perhaps we could use that. Thank you, Harry. I shall tell the others to keep a sharp look out."

Harry nodded. "On a different note sir, any news regarding the Grimmauld Place?"

"Yes I was coming to that," said Dumbledore. "Kingsley as you would already know, had played a huge role in ensuring that Sirius won't be captured. He and Elphias Doge had volunteered to take over the watch of Grimmauld Place. It's up to you now, Harry. We can go to that place anytime you desire."

"I haven't spoken to Sirius yet," said Harry. "I have agree to meet him during Hogsmeade outing. I presume the schedule of the outing doesn't change?"

"There won't be any changes," replied Dumbledore. "A sign shall be posted by the end of next week along with the announcement of the First Task which will be held on the 24th this month."

"Good," said Harry. "I have to talk to Sirius first. I know he will hesitate. London will be too dangerous for him at this point I know but we really don't have any other choice. I shall inform you once there is a consensus. We shall set the date after that."

"Very well, Harry. But I assume that no one else knows about this?" asked Dumbledore.

Harry sighed upon hearing this. "I really wish it wouldn't come to this," he said.

He got off his chair and began pacing around in the circular office. His eyes traveled around, looking at the headmasters' portraits and all the silvery trinkets until it stopped at the Sorting Hat, now resting high on top of one of the shelves.

Harry waited for Dumbledore to ask further questions, but nothing came.

With his eyes still resting on the Sorting Hat, he continued, "Hermione. I had no choice. She was suspicious of me ever since we arrived here at Hogwarts. She knew something wasn't right... with me. I just found out about it today. I promised to them that I will tell them things they needed to know."

"You're not going to tell them everything," stated Dumbledore.

"Definitely not," said Harry. "How can I tell them that I was in fact a time traveler? They will think that I had gone bonkers. Hermione will definitely drag me all the way to the hospital wing and ask Madam Pomfrey to dissect my brain or something. You know how she can be. No, only the essential. That should be more than enough."


"I really don't want them to get involve," said Harry, his back still facing Dumbledore. "I want them to continue their life the way it always been. I made a promise to myself that I won't take them away from their families. Enough is enough. It was bleak back where I came from. Thousands of people perished. Muggles. Wizards. The human life was cheap back then that it could be taken without any price and reason. Ron, Hermione and I set out to search and destroy the horcruxes a few weeks after your death. Ron lost his two brothers in the end. But it was nothing compared to Hermione. She had it worst."

"Her whole family died," stated Dumbledore.

But Harry shook his head. "No professor. They were alive. Both of them. Before we set out on our quest, Hermione made a move to protect her parents. She obliviated them and planted false memories and made them move to Australia under new identity, not knowing whom they truly were and that they left behind a daughter. After the war, she came back for them, only to
find that her enchantment worked a little bit too well that it destroyed every original memory her parents had. All of their former life and their memories of her being their daughter, all of it were lost. I only knew that during our graduation ceremony. The Grangers that attended our graduation weren't her parents but her relatives. I don't how she made them agreed to come."

Harry paused for a while. Deep sadness began to build inside of him.

"Mr. and Mrs. Granger might seem alive but in truth, they were nothing more than a pair of empty shells inhabited by false memories. For the rest of Hermione's life she was forced to watch only from afar and she wanted nothing more than to love them, to embrace them, to make them come back. But she couldn't. She had lost them forever. When they died, she attended their funerals, not as their daughter, but as an outsider who could only watch from behind the gates of the cemetery."

He pulled his eyes away from the Sorting Hat and it landed on Fawkes. The phoenix looked at him intently, it was as if the bird understood everything that he said and it was listening to him.

"Every year after that she never fail to visit their grave, weeping and wishing that everything would be different," continued Harry. "She attended my wife's funeral and as we stood together over her grave, Hermione confessed her desire. She confessed to me that she wished that she was the one who lay beneath the stone slab instead of Fleur. She told me how much she missed her mom and dad, that she was looking forward for their reunion. All she wanted to do is embrace them, to tell them how much she loved them and to tell them that she was sorry for what she did."

Tears came before he could stop them. He wiped them off with the back of his hand.

"All those years, I never knew that she was suffering. She never told anyone, not even her husband and her children. She acted strong in front of them and in front of everyone, when in fact deep inside, she was broken."

Harry then turned to look at Dumbledore. His voice grew stronger as he spoke, "As for me, I lived a seventy years worth of happiness with my wife and my children. Oblivious to the fact that one of my bestest friends, the one that had gone to hell and back with me, the one I trusted with every fiber of my being, suffered endlessly! There's no justice in this, professor."

Professor Dumbledore got off his chair and walked around his table towards Harry. "Professor Trelawney told me everything, Harry," the moment he arrived in front of Harry.

"I know. You mentioned that to me the other night. I told her not to tell anyone, unfortunately. I should not have trusted her."

Dumbledore nodded. "Professor Trelawney mentioned that to me. She felt guilty but at the same time she knew it would be prudent to let me know. Don't be angry with her, Harry. She, just like me, wants you to be alive and survive all of these."

Harry looked straight into Dumbledore's eyes. "My destiny is not of your making, professor," Harry said softly. "Or anyone else. The future had not yet been set and I fully intend for it to follow a different path this time. I'm ready to accept whatever fate has in store for me. You once said to me that I should pity only the living and those who knew no love. I pity them. This time, fewer lives will be maimed and fewer families will be torn apart. I will promise that. And for me, it remains a worthy cause. Do not worry about me, professor. I had led a wonderful life. This time around, it shall be their turn to see the future and it will be different."

Dumbledore shook his head and sighed. "You give out hope and yet you keep none for yourself. This new future you're talking about, couldn't you see yourself being part of it?"

Harry smiled. "One thing I did learn though is not to hold too much on hope. If I make it, that would be great. As I said before, do not worry about me. What you need to worry about is the future. Pray that it won't follow the same path as before."

And they both stood there in silence for a long moment, looking into each other's faces.

"Would there be anything else, professor?" asked Harry.

"No. That would be all for tonight, Harry. You may go."

"Thank you, professor."

Harry turned around and made his way towards the door. But just as he was about to open it, Dumbledore spoke.

"Not all what it seems to be, Harry."
Harry's eyebrows creased. "I don't understand, professor."

Dumbledore smiled at him. "Someday, you will know that there is something worth staying for. Good night, Harry," he said.

Harry stared at Dumbledore for a long moment.

"Good night, professor," he said finally.

With that, he opened the door and exited the headmaster's office.

"Someday, you will know that there is something worth staying for."

Harry could not make the head or the tail from what Dumbledore said. And he was so preoccupied by it that he did not realize that he had already arrived at the portrait hole.

"Gryffindor House working together with the Slytherin. That never happened before," said the Fat Lady to him.

"And you like everyone else disapprove it," stated Harry irritably.

"I didn't say that I disapprove it," countered the Fat Lady. "As a matter a fact I, like nearly every portrait here, am looking forward to it. The rivalry had gone for far too long."

Harry tilted his head and lifted an eyebrow. "Really?"

The Fat Lady nodded. "They are waiting for you inside. You should go in," she said.

Harry sighed. *Here we go again,* he thought.

"Balderdash!"

The portrait swung open.

Harry climbed into the passageway and out into the common room on the other side where he found that every Gryffindorians was waiting for him.

There was a tense silence as Harry stood there near the portrait hole. Every pair of eyes within the common room was onto him. Ron and Hermione were there too along with his dorm mates, sitting at their usual spot. Hermione in particular looked worried.

Fred slowly stood up and walked towards him. He stopped right in front of Harry and said, "Me and the rest of the team had a talk. We thought of everything you said back at the locker room and we already made our decision. You're the best Seeker that we got. Everything that you did for us, we don't forget. We don't want you to resign and we're willing to accept you decision unconditionally. We hope that you're right about the Slytherin."

That did take Harry by surprise. He was expecting hostility when he entered the common room. He breathed the sigh of relief when he got the opposite.

Harry's lips curved into a smile. "If we lose due to the Slytherin's treachery. I shall bear the responsibilities," he reiterated his commitment earlier. "Like I said before, let us set aside our differences and work together. The Slytherin had given their commitment. We should too. Perhaps something would change from all of these. Thank you."

He held out his hand to Fred.

Fred took it and they both shook hands. And much to Harry's surprise, Fred suddenly pulled him into a tight hug.

"Glad that you're with us, mate," said Fred.

And all the Gryffindorians around them rose from their seats and began clapping their hands.

Fred let go of him moments later. He gave Harry this odd look and said, "You're not crying, are you Harry?"

Harry just laughed. "Definitely not."

"So, Harry," said Alicia who came up to them with the other girls. "When are we going to start the training?"

"This week will be good," replied Harry. "But first, I need to show you guys where we're going to train. We're not going to let the Durmstrang know our secrets, are we?"
"Really? So where is it?" asked Katie.

"You'll see. This Wednesday afternoon will be good. I'll show you and we can start the training immediately. Angelina, I take it that you will have no problem in setting up our training schedule?"

"Yeah, okay," said Angelina. "But we'll need to fit in Bletchley as well. I'm not use to talking to him so..."

"Leave it to me, Angelina. Thanks," said Harry.

The team then dispersed.

Harry walked up towards his usual spot where Ron, Hermione and the rest of his dorm mate were waiting for him. He beamed at them.

"You know, while all of this look good and all, but I can't help but feel something might go wrong," said Seamus the moment Harry sat down with them. "Are you really sure about this?"

"Have faith, Seamus," said Harry. "What's important is that the match can go as plan. We may not be going to win, but you can be sure as hell that we won't go down without a fight."

"That's the spirit, Harry," said Hermione, smiling at him.

And for the rest of the hour they continued to talk, mostly about the eventual match. Harry told them that unless Krum was being modest, he pretty much knew how the Durmstrang Seeker played. He also admitted to them that he suspected Krum's secret weapon will be the Wronski Feint maneuver which Krum executed really well over and over again.

"Unless he has some other secret weapons up his sleeve that I don't know about," said Harry.

"You know, you did basically the same last year;" pointed out Ron. "Remember the match with the Ravenclaw?"

"Yeah I remember," said Harry thoughtfully. "So right now I guess the important thing is on how to not let myself be fooled by such maneuver. Mind you, it would be difficult. There are chances that Krum might catch the snitch while I just sit there doing nothing. Or I might crash if I take the bait."

"What about their brooms?" asked Neville. "Do you know what kind of broom they're using?"

"Neville brought up a valid point, Harry," said Dean.

"I know. Ron brought up that subject once before. I know for one Krum is using the Firebolt. They can't be all using Firebolt, can they?" said Harry.

Harry began to feel worried. The rest of his teammates were using the old Cleansweep. While their skills were formidable - the match with Slytherin who were using the Nimbus 2001 was a good example - against the Firebolt and with Krum at the helm, they won't stand a chance. He was optimistic when his teammate made him the captain. Now, he was not so sure.

"If all of them using Firebolt, we're screwed," said Seamus. "They're definitely going to blast us wide open, Harry."

"All the more reason on why we need to spy on them," said Harry. "Fred and George will handle the spying thing."

"We'll help too," said Seamus. "Me and Dean can help you on that."

The night is getting late.

The occupants of the common room began trickle out. Seamus, Dean and Neville excused themselves an hour ago and went back to their dormitory, leaving Harry, Ron and Hermione.

The trio was doing their homework.

Just as the last of the common room occupant took leave, Hermione immediately rolled up her parchment and said, "Harry? Your promise."

Harry looked up at her. He then looked around. Satisfied that no one else was there with them, he said, "I know. I didn't forget."

He rolled his parchment and kept away his quill and ink bottle. Ron did the same. Sitting up straight opposite of Hermione and Ron, he began to tell the story.
He told them about what really happened in the DADA classroom. He told them about Dumbledore's intervention and what they spoke of in the headmaster office. He told them about the event after he exited the Beauxbaton carriage and about Barty Crouch. All the while, he took precaution by filtering out all the things he deemed they should not know such as who he truly was, his plans, his knowledge of what really will happen and the horcruxes. He was not ready to divulge to them. It would only happen if he really needed to.

Both of his best friends faces grew paler and paler as the story went on.

"Blimey," said Ron in astonishment. "So you mean to say that Moody isn't really Moody? And he was here to make sure that you'll become one of the champions? The fourth Champion?"

"Yes. That's what he said. Luckily he failed. For whatever reasons."

"But Harry, there can't be more than three champions," said Hermione. "There's a reason on why they call it the Triwizard Tournament. The Goblet of Fire will pick only three at most. And there's the age line."

"And you think something as paltry as the age line can't be fooled?" asked Harry back. "And you're wrong about the Goblet of Fire picking up only three contestants. The truth is, the goblet can pick out as many champions as it wanted to. Just write your name and a fake school name on a piece of parchment and throw it into the goblet. I guarantee that you will be picked, especially if you're the only candidates from that fake school. As for the age line, who's to say that anyone from sixth or seventh years couldn't nominate Colin Creevey for the tournament? The Triwizard is just a word, Hermione."

"But why would he wanted to do that?" asked Ron.

"Dunno," said Harry. "Maybe he wanted to get me killed. Barty Jr. is a death eater. It won't be too far off to assume that. And by putting my name under a different school, there's a one hundred percent chance I will be nominated."

"One thing I don't understand though is that you already know all of these way back then. Why didn't you tell us?" asked Ron.

"I don't want both of you to become panic," reasoned Harry. "And the time isn't right. Sorry."

"Oh Harry," said Hermione. "To think that he nearly get to you. I don't know what's going to happen if he did. Oh Harry."

"I assume that it won't be pretty," said Harry. "Relax, Hermione. It's safe now. Barty Jr. had been apprehended. All the security measures had been taken. The Moody that you'll be looking at is the real Alastor Moody. Nothing is going to happen after this I assure you. The Goblet of Fire had been extinguished and it will only reignite at the beginning of the next tournament. There won't be a fourth champion this time. I think we should just enjoy the show from now on."

"I hope you're right, Harry."

"It's getting late," said Harry, looking up towards the wall clock. It showed thirty minutes past eleven. "We should go to sleep. We have classes tomorrow."

The three of them got to their feet.

"Goodnight, Hermione."

"Goodnight, Harry. Ron."

The very next morning when the trio entered the Great Hall, Harry looked over towards the Slytherin table. He found that Bletchley was looking expectantly at him.

Harry gave Bletchley a thumb up and mouthed 'We're good to go' at him.

Bletchley replied with a thumb up of his own.

Viktor Krum was waiting for him at the Gryffindor table. Judging from the lighter mood the Gryffindorians were exhibiting that morning, he assumed that everything had gone well.

"I assume that the match is still on?" asked Viktor the moment Harry sat down in front of him.

"Yes Viktor. As plan," said Harry, smiling at him. "Just a few things that needs to be ironed out, that's all. We all good now."

"Good to hear that," said Viktor.
"So I guess you can start training," said Harry as he took an empty plate and began loading it with sausages and scrambled eggs.

"Oh, we already have," said Viktor. "Right after our first meeting."

Harry looked at Viktor in shock. "Really? But I didn't see you guys training. The Quidditch pitch is almost always empty. And how can you be sure that the match will happen when you offered it?"

"Oh ve know," said Viktor nonchalantly. "When I offered you the match, I saw the look in your friends' face. I know that you and everyone will do everything you can to make sure it will happen. That is why ve decided to train early. Oh, ve didn't use your pitch. Ve trained somewhere else."

"Really?" asked Harry curiously. "Where?"

But Viktor just smiled at him. "Eat your breakfast, Harry."

Harry and the rest of his teammates looked at each other and he could see the shock that registered on their faces.

"Harry, what now?" asked Ron as all fourth year Gryffindorians made their way towards the History of Magic classroom after breakfast.

"I don't know, Ron," replied Harry. "All I know is that things had gotten more difficult for us."

Days went by.

The shock created by the news of Gryffindor working with Slytherin had subsided. Everyone was beginning to accept that it will happen in the end. Both the Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw Quidditch captain voiced their disappointment that their man were not being selected to be part of the team that will face Durmstrang. Harry told Cedric Diggory outright that his house already held the honor to represent Hogwarts in the Triwizard Tournament so there was no reason for him to be disappointed. To Roger Davies, he told him that his keeper did not perform in the tryout, plain and simple.

Reports coming in from all Gryffindorians. They observed huge changes of Slytherin's treatment towards them. The Slytherin had become much more amiable and friendly towards the Gryffindor. Fred and George told Harry that Snape himself no longer deducted points from them. It was something that never happened before.

"It was the strangest Potion class I had ever been into," said George.

"Yeah," agreed Fred. "Snape no longer shout at us."

"He was even more forgiving. Colin Chapman accidentally blew up his cauldron. Snape didn't scold him. He simply told him to clean up the mess and move on," said Lee Jordan.

Wednesday came.

Harry found himself in the library after the first break. They were supposed to have Charm on the second period but it was canceled at the last minute. Hermione suggested to the two boys that they should instead spend the unexpected free time at the library before going to lunch. Harry and Ron both agreed.

He sat alone at their usual table inside the library. Both Hermione and Ron had gone off to see Professor Flitwick and she asked Ron to accompany him. Ron reluctantly agreed. They both did promise to return after that.

Ten minutes went by after they left. Harry was busy reading a book on Transfiguration when someone greeted him.

"Hi Harry."

Harry looked up and saw Daphne Greengrass, standing near the end of the long table looking at him. And with her was Tracy Davis, another Slytherin girl who was quite pretty. Daphne was holding a book to her chest. She was smiling at him.

"Oh, hey Daphne."

Daphne walked up to him. " Aren't you supposed to be in class at this hour, Harry?" she asked.

"Class got cancelled at the very last minute," said Harry. "Well, why don't you take a seat?"
"Thank you," said Daphne. She noticed that there were two school bags already there on two of the seats. "Your friends. They aren't here."

"Oh, Ron and Hermione went to see Professor Flitwick," said Harry. "They'll be back."

"I see," said Daphne as both she and Tracy Davis took seats a little bit further away from Ron and Hermione's bag.

"So what are you doing here?" asked Harry.

"I always go to the library during free time, Harry," said Daphne as she placed the book she held onto the table. "I'm here to say thank you."

"For what?"

"For defending us. For believing in us. For giving us the chance. I don't think anyone else would do that for us," said Daphne. "Not even the teachers."

"I just did what I could. That's all, Daphne," said Harry.

Daphne smiled even wider. "Always the modest one you are."

Harry just smiled and shook his head. "So what's the response from the rest of the Slytherin? How they took it?"

"There were a few of us who opposed sending one of us to the tryouts. Marcus had his doubt but Miles wanted to try. All those who opposed changed their mind after seeing Miles excelled in the tryouts. And after seeing your treatment of Miles and hearing his story of what really happened in the locker room, we decided that it's time to make changes. We held a meeting among us and unanimously agreed to make peace with the Gryffindor," explained Daphne.

"What about Malfoy?" asked Harry.

"Draco strongly opposed at first but even he changed his mind in the end. Next Potion class will be interesting, don't you think?"

"Yeah I suppose so," said Harry.

He then remembered something. He leaned forward towards Daphne and asked, "I know I shouldn't be asking this. I was just curious."

Daphne tilted her head. A few strands of hair fell over her beautiful face. She tucked them away. "Just ask away, Harry," she said.

"How come no one here knows who you truly are? And how come you ended up in Slytherin? Why go to Hogwarts? Why not go to Beauxbaton instead?" asked Harry.

Daphne smiled.

Harry was temporarily mesmerized by that smile before he shook it off.

"That's the question isn't it? Except for Tracy, no one else knew who I am truly. All they know is that I am that beautiful but cold hearted girl from Slytherin. I am able to turn off my abilities remember? So no one knows. As for how I got into Slytherin, I can say that I was terrified at first when McGonagall put the Sorting Hat on me during the sorting. I was afraid that the Hat will spell out my heritage for the entire world to hear. Luckily for me, that didn't happen. You remember the conversation between us and the Hat only appeared inside our heads? The hat did tell me that it knew who I truly am and advised me to keep it under wrap so that I'll be safe from backlashes. As for how I got into Slytherin, it's the trait I possess apparently," said Daphne.

Harry nodded. "Okay, but why Hogwarts? Why not Beauxbaton? You know they were kinder to your kind?"

"My father is the current French diplomat to Britain. I was born in Nice and we stayed there until I was eight. We moved here when Papa transferred here. Mama wanted to send me to Beauxbaton once I reached eleven years old but I declined. I told them that I wanted to be near to them so they send me here. Madame Maxime was frustrated apparently. She was hoping for me and my sister to attend her school instead," said Daphne. "Maybe we will after Papa's term ends. We'll be moving back to Nice by then."

"So you and Madame Maxime are close?" asked Harry.

"Erm-hmm," nodded Daphne. "She is dear friend of our family, Harry. And she is also a dear friend of the Delacour."
"How about your friend here, Tracy?"

Daphne glanced at Tracy. "Tracy is a childhood friend. She's the daughter of one of the French Embassy officer here in Britain. We became friends since as far as I remember."

"Yes, Potter. I know who she is," Tracy chimed in. "Don't you worry about a thing. Her secrets are safe with me. Spilling out everything will be the last thing I would do."

"Good to know that," nodded Harry.

Daphne laughed. "Tracy wanted to attend Beauxbaton. I begged her not to."

"And I still want to. You know I hate it here, Daphne," said Tracy.

"And you want to leave me alone out here? How could you?" Daphne pouted her lips.

Tracy just rolled her eyes. "I can't wait for papa's term to end. Then we can go back to France."

Harry just shook his head, smiling at the girls' antics. "So only both of you here?" he asked.

Daphne shook her head. "Not really. Just waiting for... ah! Here they come."

Harry turned to look in the same direction as Daphne.

Through the many cavities of the bookshelves, he saw a group of students wearing light blue uniform heading towards them.

To be continued...

A/n: There's not much to say. But thanks for all the reviews.

Oh, I forgot. I took the liberty of changing Hermione's history a little bit. Just so you guys know.

Enjoy.
"Sentence" - normal conversation

"Sentence" - conversation in French/Bulgarian

Sentence - thought

It had been three days since the last he saw her. Before Dumbledore whisked him away unannounced. Before he made the leap of faith in the middle of a battle. Before Barty Crouch nearly broke his neck. Before the keepers tryout. And before a Slytherin player was controversially inducted into the Gryffindor team.

Indeed, many things happened after their last meeting. He did see her during meal times at the Great Hall but there was never a chance for any meaningful interactions to happen between them within those three days. Exchanging glances was all they did. Strangely enough, he did not feel any frustration. Perhaps his understanding of the reason caused him to not feel that way. Both of them were busy, especially Fleur. While a Triwizard Champion was exempted from exams and may skip certain classes if warranted, Harry knew Fleur never took lightly her education. Back then when they were married, she told him that she took every exam her school had in place despite the rigors of the tournament. She passed all of them in flying colors. The final exam was particularly hard, he was told. Not because of the questions, but because of the emotional trauma she experienced due to Cedric’s death.

Through the gaps of books neatly arranged on the bookshelves, Harry watched as the group of students walked along the library aisle, heading towards them. He could not see their faces but he knew it was them via their uniform. And one of them was Fleur.

His heart was beating fast.

He watched as Daphne waved at them.

"Bonjour, Fleur," greeted Daphne the moment the group arrived at the table. "Hi, everyone."

"Bonjour, Daphne. Tracy," greeted Fleur back. "Hope we’re not too late. How long have you been here?"

"Not long. Me and Tracy came here after first period lesson," replied Daphne. She then nodded towards the opposite end of the table. "We were waiting for all of you when we found him."

Fleur looked down the table and was surprised to see Harry, sitting alone at the end of the table, looking at her:

"'Arry?"

"'Arry!"

Raphael elbowed the girls out of the way and walked towards Harry. He extended his hand and they both shook hands.

"Hey Raphael," said Harry, smiling at him.

"'Arry, I 'ope you are well?" asked Raphael pompously in a style not unlike Percy when the latter first became the Head Boy.

"Very well, thanks."

Harry had a hard time trying not to laugh. The way Raphael acted that time, it reminded him a lot of Percy Weasley.

Raphael immediately took the seat beside Harry. "It iz absolutely splendid to see you again, 'Arry. Zhat waz quite an exit you made back zhen. You gave us quite a fright."

Harry did not answer at first. He looked over Raphael’s shoulder and saw the girls were scowling at Raphael.

"Yeah, sorry about that," said Harry, returning to Raphael. "It was my headmaster. Nothing happened really. You know you sounded just like one of my friends who last year became the Head Boy of Hogwarts. Talking to him is like talking to a mayor or a prime minister."
"Really? We did talk to 'im. 'E seems a 'umble person."

"No, not the current Head Boy. The one I'm talking about already graduated last year," said Harry. "He now works with the Ministry."

After Percy graduated, a new Head Boy had been selected. This time the title holder went to a Ravenclaw. The new Head Boy was indeed polite and humble. He had none of Percy's pomposity.

It was at this point when Daphne Lavinge chose to march up to them.

"Raphael! What are you doing?!" Lavinge half whispered, a little bit heatedly at the same time. "You are going to get us all kick out of the library!"

Raphael turned idly towards her.

"I was just talking to him," said Raphael. "Relax Daphne. They're not going to kick us out because of that."

"They definitely will if you don't keep your voice down," interjected Lavinge. "If you really want to have a chat, go somewhere else."

"Huh? Is that so?" said Raphael. He then turned to Harry. "Come on 'Arry. Let's go someplace else. We better not disturb the girls from studying."

Harry was about to reply when Lavinge suddenly placed her hand on his shoulder.

"Not you, 'Arry," she said. Glancing at Raphael, she continued, "You can stay. Just 'im."

Raphael just shrugged.

"I actually don't intend to go anywhere. I came here with my friends. I was waiting for them to return," explained Harry, gesturing towards the two unattended school bags now reside, each on its own chair at the opposite side of the table. "They'll be back soon. But please, sit down."

Lavinge nodded at the rest of her friends.

The rest of the vacant chair began to fill up.

Harry watched as Fleur chose to sit on the chair right beside the one filled with Ron's school bag. Cassandra sat beside her. Meanwhile Daphne Greengrass and Tracy remained at where they are. But from her expression, Harry somehow could guess that the younger veela was itching to sit closer. It was her respect for Tracy that prevented her from doing that. The arrangement now would be Harry sitting opposite Hermione. Raphael would be facing Ron. And Fleur would sit beside Ron. Harry silently wondered what Ron's reaction will be when he sees who sat beside him. He knew Ron had a huge crush on her.

Lavinge meanwhile having disposing her bag onto the chair beside Raphael, made her way to the row of bookshelves. Few of the Beauxbaton girls and the boys followed suit as well.

"So what brings you here?" asked Harry to Fleur.

Fleur, leaning against the back of the chair, nodded towards Lavinge. "Daphne," she said. "Not Daphne, my cousin. Daphne Lavinge. She asked Madame Maxime if she could visit 'Ogwarts library. We already got permission from Professor Dumbledore two days ago. Unfortunately, we could only come 'ere today because we were very busy. Thankfully my cousin is available to accompany us today. Never thought that we would find you 'ere."

"Well, I don't always be here. Not really a fan of the library to be honest. I prefer to do all my studying at our common room. Much more liberating that way," said Harry.

"Oh I know zhat."

"Really?" said Harry, lifting an eyebrow.

"You'll be surprised to know on 'ow much my cousin knows about you, 'Arry," Raphael, who had been watching the conversation, chimed in.

Harry was too busy processing this info that he missed the warning look Raphael received from Fleur and the rest of the girls who sat there.

"Just ignore 'im, 'Arry," said Cassandra as she gave the most disapproving look she could muster at Raphael. "'E is just being crazy. So 'Arry, where are your friends?" she asked in an attempt to steer the conversation away.
Harry looked over towards the bags. "They went to see a teacher. It's about an assignment the teacher gave us last week. It's supposed to due by tomorrow. My friend got stuck doing it apparently. So you got the permission to use the library. How about the meal at the carriage request? Did Dumbledore approve that too?"

"Oh yes 'e did," answered Fleur. "Madame Maxime told us zhat zhe arrangement 'as been made. We will 'ave our breakfast, lunch, dinner and supper at our carriage starting zhe day after tomorrow."

"Oh. So I guess I won't be seeing all of you more often then," said Harry, feeling a little bit disappointed.

Fleur tilted her head. She seemed to be able to read his mind. "Of course you will still be able to see us, 'Arry. We will be 'ere for zhe rest of zhe year," she said softly.

Harry nodded. "Well that is true. That's okay though. I certainly don't want to see you having to brave the sometime unforgivable Scottish weather just to have a decent meal."

"Zhat iz zoughful of you, 'Arry."

Lavinge chose that time to return with a few books in her hands. She carefully placed the books on the table and sat down beside Raphael. She leaned around Raphael and asked, "'Arry, zhat gated section at zhe far end of zhis library, zhe one with zhe Restriction Section signage, what iz it in?"

Harry pondered for a while on how best to describe it to her. In the end, he settled for "The foulest books you'll ever read in your lifetime."

Lavinge's eyes widened. "You mean-?"

"Yes. Dark Arts books. You can read nearly everything about it in there. Mind you, depending on your subject of interest, you'll need the corresponding teacher's permission to go in there. And getting that permission won't be easy."

"But why would 'Ogwarts 'ave zhose kind of 'orrible books if zhey will only cause trouble?" asked Lavinge, perplexed. "I zought only zhe Durmstrang studies Dark Arts. It doesn't make any sense. At Beauxbaton, we don't 'ave such a book."

Harry shook his head. "Yes I know," said Harry. What he said somehow caused quite a few eyebrows raised. Fleur and Cassandra themselves glanced knowingly at each other.

"Hogwarts kept those books as a mean of solutions to problems. We don't exactly study it in order to practice it. We studied it just to find something that could act as a counteract to it," continued Harry.

"I bet it didn't do too much good on you," said Raphael. "Does 'e-who-must-not-be-named sound familiar?"

"Raphael!" scolded Lavinge. She proceed to pinch Raphael's arm hard. "You insensitive prick! You know what that monster did to his parents!"

"Sorry, 'Arry," said Raphael apologetically, rubbing his arm. "I didn't mean to 'urt your feeling."

But Harry waved off Raphael's apology. "That's okay, Raphael. What he said is true, Daphne. Nothing's going to change that. In Hogswarts defense, rule enforcement was a bit lacking back then. Hogwarts adopted a much more open minded policy when You-Know-Who was still in school. It wasn't in the syllabus, but everyone was free to study Dark Arts on their own if they want to. Only when Dumbledore took over that the rules and the bylaws were tightened. I don't blame anyone to be honest. Only the perpetrator."

"You seem to 'andle your tragedy really well, 'Arry," said Cassandra.

Harry chuckled. "Well, I'm not going to spend all the time moping around, am I? What's the point of doing that, right?"

"Good for you, 'Arry," said Lavinge. Turning over her attention towards the books she brought with her, she took out her glasses from a small beaded bag she was carrying and after putting them on, she began to read.

"Thanks," said Harry simply. Turning to Fleur, he asked, "So Fleur, the First Task. Did they tell you what you'll be up against?"
Harry of course knew that at this point, the nature of the First Task remained a mystery. He asked just to gauge Fleur’s knowledge of the coming event.

Fleur pondered for a moment. She later shook her head. "No. Zhey didn't tell me anything. All zhey tell me iz when zhe First Task will be held."

"Which will be on the 24th this month," stated Harry.

Fleur lifted an eyebrow. "You knew?"

"Professor Dumbledore told me," explained Harry. "A sign will be posted at the Great Hall later this week together with the announcement for the first Hogsmeade visit this term. Have you been to Hogsmeade?"

Fleur smiled. And once again like Daphne, Harry was nearly overwhelmed by that smile, perhaps even more.

"I could imagine it," said Fleur, still smiling.

Harry had absolutely no idea what she meant by that but he decided not to press it further.

"Did you know anything about zhe First Task, 'Arry?" asked Fleur, taking advantage of Harry's momentary silence.

Harry silently wondered if he should tell her that he knew. Back in the old timeline, Madame Maxime had been a great help to Fleur. There won't be any different this time around. He knew that sooner or later, Madame Maxime with the help of Hagrid of course, will find out what the First Task will be. And she will inform her most prized student in advance so that she could prepare beforehand.

"'Arry?" said Fleur after seeing Harry remained silence.

"Hmm? Oh sorry. I zoned out," Harry apologized. "Errmm... I don't know. Maybe you need to face some magical beasts. A thunderbird? Or a dragon maybe?"

"Dragon?" said Adrienne, who like Lavinge, came back with a few books in her hands and was busy reading when she heard what Harry just said. "Are you sure?"

Harry just shrugged. "I was just guessing. It could be, right? Those tasks they laid out, none of them would be easy I figure given the promise of eternal glory and the prize of a thousand Galleons. And what about the facts that only come of ages students are allowed to enter? Make it even so, right?"

"And 'ow do you think Fleur would survive in zhis tournament? Any advice maybe you could give to our dear old champion?" asked Marianne this time.

Harry turned to look at Fleur. He knew he couldn't help her much without making it too obvious, no matter how much he wanted to. Still, a few little advice won't hurt, he thinks.

"Well, you could start by conquering your own fear. Fear is when people make bad decisions. Try not to lose your nerves. Come up with a strategy. The more the better. Think clearly and feel. Keep your head held high and your wand closer to you. Out there, your wand is your friend. And remember, your eyes can fool you but your other sensory will not. Use them wisely. And finally, always be aware of your weaknesses. Conceal them so that your opponent wouldn't know," said Harry to her. "More importantly, know your own strength. And try to learn about your opponent as well as you can."

"She 'ad yet knows what she will face," stated Adrienne. "'Ow can she learn zhem?"

Harry just smiled at this.

"You're right. She doesn't know. She have never met her opponent so how would she know what to do? Right? Looking at the brighter side of things, her opponent doesn't know her too. One thing I know from all of my lifelong experience is that life will only take on us when we're not ready. And when you're not ready, you'll be slow to learn. And when you're slow to learn, you'll lose."

He paused. And then he let out a smile.

"Fleur is ready to face anything. I have no doubt about her. I think she can do really well. She will quickly learn and she will conquer her opponent," he finished.

The rest of those who sat there at the table stared at him.

"Zhank you," said Fleur. "I will always remember zhat."
Harry smiled and nodded. "No problem," he said.

"For a fourteen year old boy, you are extremely knowledgeable," stated Cassandra. "It looks like you 'ave quite a lot of experience behind you. I don't zhink you are what you are, Mr. Potter."

Harry shook his head. "I really don't understand what you meant by that, Miss Cassandra," he said. "Whatever it is, I'm still a fourteen year old me." "No fourteen years old I know could give zhat kind of advice, Mr. Potter," said Lavinge, without looking at him. Her eyes were still on the book. "Forty one years old? Maybe. But fourteen? Believe it or not, even some much older men I know acted like children."

Harry began to feel uncomfortable. Luckily for him, Fleur saw it.

"That would be enough," she said to her friends. "Girls, remember what we came here for."

There were noises of chairs scraping as the girls, with the exception of Lavinge and Adrienne and a few other boys, suddenly stood up and made their way towards the rows of bookshelves.

Fleur was the last one to stand up. She suddenly paused and turned to Harry. "Zhis iz first time I 'ad been in zhis library. I would appreciate it if someone would be kind enough to give me a tour."

It took a while for him to register what she said before he too stood up and said, "Yeah, sure. After you." He then turned to Raphael, who was watching them amusingly. "Want to tag along?"

But Raphael shook his head. "No. I'm good. I don't love books az much az zese girls. You go ahead."

Feeling relieve that for the first time ever he got some time alone with Fleur, he nodded and gestured the veela to follow him.

He showed her the library counter, the help desk and how the book borrowing procedure works. He introduced her to Madam Pince, Hogwarts one and only librarian at that point and whom at that point, took the advantage to spell out the whole bylaws of the library to Fleur. He showed her the private room where the teachers usually use whenever they went to the library and even the Special Section which, just like the Restricted Section, requires written permission from the teachers should a student wanted to use it. There were reasons for that of course. The Special Section did not contain books but rather memory crystals. A small, portable altar can be found in a small room where a user can view memories of their choosing. Unlike the Pensieve, the images that appear on that altar would be in holographic form whenever a memory crystal is placed on it.

"So answer me this," said Harry as he watched Fleur's long finger tracing the spine of many books neatly arranged on one of the shelves. "Beauxbaton mostly use French as the language medium. Why the interest with Hogwarts library? You know only English and Latin books are available here."

"It's just languages, 'Arry," said Fleur without looking at him. Her finger was still tracing the spine of the books. "Zhe knowledge would still be zhe same. English. French. Latin. Spanish. It all does not matter. We still use zhe same incantation whenever we want to do spell, no? Anyway, using zhe 'Ogwarts library would mean zhat we could still see each ozher. Izn't zhat what we want?"

"Well, you made a good point there."

Fleur just smirked. Her finger stopped at one particular book. She pulled it out and began poring over it. It was book on Charm.

Harry knew it was her favorite subject. The same subject she would eventually teach at Beauxbaton.

Standing beside her this close was an otherworldly experience. Her unparallel and breathtaking beauty. The way she moves. The way she smells. The way her finger tracing the pages of the book. And that soft and inviting pair of lips. It was all intoxicating.

Scared that he would do something untoward to her and feeling the need to get away from those unusual attractions he currently experienced, he said. "So how's your family?"

Fleur paused her reading and glanced at him.

"Zhey are well," she said. "I miss zhem especially my little seester, Gabrielle. She will be thrill if she knew I met you."
Harry chuckled and nodded. "Yeah, she is a fine young woman, that Gabby. I miss her too."

"What did you say?" asked Fleur. Her eyebrows cocked.

Harry realized that he had made a blunder. He accidentally thought that he was talking to his wife when the woman in front of him was not.

*She isn't your wife, Harry! She isn't your wife! Your wife is already dead!*

He kept on repeating it to himself over and over again.

"'Arry?"

"Ermmm... sorry. I was-, I was talking about other Gabrielle. Someone I knew. It had nothing to do with your sister. I'm sorry."

Harry cursed himself. *That was a bad excuse, he thought to himself.* He began to wonder on what really went wrong with him.

Fleur however remained calm. There was no anger in her expression.

"It iz okay, 'Arry," she said softly. "Zhere iz no need for you to apologize. On zhe ozher hand, you are not a good liar, are you?"

"I can assure you that I took no pride from it," said Harry.

"Indeed," said Fleur. "I know a man who isn't a good liar, just like you. I caught him once for trying to lie to me. Let just say zhat zhings between us are not good for zhe next few weeks from zhen."

Harry became curious. And at the same time, felt a bit jealous.

"So what did he do? Did he cheat on you?" he asked. His heart thumped wildly.

Fleur however shook her head. "No," she said. "'E did zhings zhat I do not like. 'E tried to weave his way out of it. Like I said, 'e wasn't a good liar so I caught 'im. Luckily zhat was a one time zhing. 'E never did it again."

"Do you like him?" asked Harry. "It sounds like you really like him."

"Of course I do. 'E iz a wonderful man who never break 'is promise to me. 'E always been zhere whenever I need 'im and 'e never left me. 'E iz brave, 'onest, loyal and unselfish. 'E always zhinks about ozhers before 'im. Zhe stunning purity of 'is soul beneath everything he did and zhing zhat had been done to 'im, zhat I would always cling on to," said Fleur. Her eyes became distant when she spoke those words, as if she was trying to see someone from afar. "'E iz my rock, 'Arry."

Harry, feeling dejected, said, "Well, I'm happy for you. You're lucky to have him. And he was lucky to have you."

Fleur just smiled. "Indeed I am," she said. "We both are lucky. You will meet 'im soon, I zhink."

Harry just rolled his eyes. "Yeah. Can't wait to meet him," he said. His voice dripping with sarcasm.

Fleur who was watching Harry's expression with such amusement, said, "If you want to know, my family will be coming sometime next week before zhe First Task. Would you like to meet zhem?"

"Oh, they're coming here?" Harry croaked.

Fleur nodded. "Yes. Ozhers families will come too. Zhey want to see zhe tournament," she said.

"Okay. It won't hurt I guess to meet your family," said Harry.

"Good. I will inform you later."

Harry just nodded at this.

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Daphne and Tracy joined them sometime after that. The four of them continued to chat.

It was nearing lunch time when the four of them return to their table. Hermione and Ron were already there. Hermione was busy talking to the Beauxbaton students when she spotted him.
"Hey, Harry!" she greeted him. She smiled at Fleur when she saw her.

Fleur returned the smile.

Ron meanwhile all of a sudden stood rigid behind Hermione. He became completely messed up from the look of his expression. Harry was puzzle at first before he saw the reason. It was Daphne. She was smirking at that time. Apparently, he was caught in the waves of allure that was coming from her.

Harry, Fleur, Daphne and Tracy each took their seat and the conversation resumed. It did not last long though. Madam Pince came to them, reminding them of the library rules and regulations and shooed them out.

"It's already lunch time. Out you go, all of you. You can come back later," she said.

They obliged. They packed up their bags and made a beeline out of the library and towards the Great Hall.

But just before they entered the Great Hall, Fleur held Harry back.

"Do you want blueberry pies, 'Arry?" asked Fleur suddenly.

"You're planning to bake them again?" asked Harry.

Fleur nodded. "Yes. I know you love zhem. We still 'ave many ingredients left at our kitchen. If you want, I can bring you zhe pies tomorrow at dinner."

"Well, if it doesn't trouble you, yeah sure. I would love some of those pies."

"It iz no trouble," she said. "So I see you at dinner tomorrow."

"Okay."

And with that, they both entered the Great Hall.

To be continued...

A/n:

"I cant understand what's bigger. The time travel portion of your story or yours mother's pussycat."

This came from one of the reviews I got. This guy clearly had crossed the line. Please don't do this. We are all civilized people here. We loved the same thing. I'm still considering whether or not to report this dude. Maybe I will.

I had been longing to write this chapter. And it came out just as what I expected, thankfully.

Anyway. Enjoy.
33. Chapter 33

Chapter 32
"Sentence" - English conversation
"Sentence" - Conversation in French/Bulgarian
Sentence - Thought

Lunch was pretty much the usual affair. The dishes were plentiful and delicious as always.

Viktor Krum dropped the bombshell that starting the next day, they will no longer be having their meals at the Great Hall. He revealed that Professor Dumbledore apparently had extended the same offer as the Beauxbaton and Professor Karkaroff had gladly accepted it.

"Ve vill no longer meet in the Great Hall," he announced to Harry. "But ve can still meet at the Quidditch Pitch. As a matter a fact, I vas about to ask you if you could come to the pitch this afternoon. To practice."

"I'm sorry Viktor, but I can't," said Harry apologetically. "My team, we're going to start training this afternoon. Maybe some other day?"

"Owh. Vell of course. Some other day."

Despite that, Viktor did look disappointed.

Lunch time ended an hour later.

Harry slings his bag over his shoulder. Just as he and Ron was about to leave, he noticed Viktor smiled and nodded at Hermione. He saw Hermione blushed a little bit. She must probably remembered the event at Durmstrang ship.

They threw down their bags once they arrived at the Common Room. Harry and Ron each collapsed into their seats, feeling exhausted and full at the same time. Hermione though, unlike the other two, immediately rummaged through her bags, pulling out assorted books, parchments, quills and a bottle of ink, spread all of them onto the table and began to write.

"Aren't you two going to do your homework?" she asked.

Ron, his eyes closed, just shook his head.

"I'll do them tonight," said Harry. "I got Quidditch practice this afternoon. I just want to rest first."

"Ron? You don't have anything this afternoon. You should get started," urged Hermione.

Ron opened his eyes and looked at Hermione. "Can't a guy get some rest, Hermione? I'll do it. Just not now."

"Fine," said Hermione and she continued to write. "Procrastinate. Whatever. Just don't come crying to me five minutes before due."

"You know that never happen," defended Ron. "Anyway, I thought we already have an agreement."

"What agreement?"

"Well it's kinda like, I'll do the writing and you do all the corrections. On the other hand... hmmm." Ron tapped his chin thoughtfully. "I tell you what," he continued. "We could change it to I do the writing based on what you wrote so you don't have to waste your time doing all the corrections. Voila! It's a win-win, Hermione."

Hermione looked at Ron incredulously. "You're not going to copy my homework, Ron. Do it yourself!"

She immediately pulled all of her books and parchments towards her and away from Ron and resumed writing.

"I don't get it. Why must you do everything the hard way, Hermione?"

Hermione did not answer however. She continued to ignore Ron.
Ron just shrugged. He turned to Harry and said, “She really doesn’t know how to appreciate a good opportunity when she sees one.”

It was fifteen minutes before four pm. Clad in Gryffindor Quidditch team uniform and lugging his Firebolt over his shoulder, Harry and the rest of the team made their way towards the Entrance Hall. Miles Bletchley was already waiting for them.

Arranging the training schedule was difficult owing to the different class schedules every team member had and it was made even harder by the inclusion of Bletchley. It took Harry two days straight before he could hammer out a deal with Bletchley.

“Ready?” asked Harry to Bletchley the moment they arrived.

Bletchley just nodded.

“Follow me then.”

Harry then turned and made his way towards the left corridor. But just as he was about to enter the corridor, he paused. He just realized that he was walking alone. None of his teammates were following him. He turned around and saw they were still standing within the Entrance Hall, staring at him.

“Harry, I thought we’re going to the pitch,” said Alicia.

“We are.”

“That’s not the right way to the pitch,” stated Katie, her head tilted. “Where exactly are you taking us, Harry?”

“We are going to the pitch,” said Harry, smiling. “Please. Follow me.”

His teammates hesitated at first, wondering to where they will be heading to. But in the end, they followed him anyway.

It took them a little more than five minutes for them to arrive at Harry’s intended destination. They found themselves inside a deserted corridor on the seventh floor of the Hogwarts Castle. A tapestry depicting the attempt of Barnabas the Barmy to teach the trolls ballet dancing can be found on the right side of the corridor. The left side of the corridor consisted mainly of blank wall.

“I think I know what you’re trying to do, Potter,” said Bletchley in amusement. “But seriously, here?”

“So you know about the room,” said Harry, grinning.

“Well yeah. Most sixth and seventh year student knows about the room. I guess the Weasleys told you about the Come and Go Room, huh?”

But Harry shook his head. “No. Someone else told me about it. Fred. George. You guys know about this room?”

“Well duh. We know about the Come and Go Room. Just haven’t got around telling everyone else. Are you sure this is going to work? What you’re requesting out of this room isn’t exactly small, you know,” stated George.

“I guess we’ll just have to find out,” said Harry.

Harry then put himself in the middle of the corridor opposite of the Barnabas’s tapestry. With his eyes closed, he began pacing back and forth in front of the tapestry. As he finished pacing the third time, a large oak door materialized out of the blank wall. He proceeded to push open the door and gestured them to follow him.

What they saw made their jaws dropped.

Ceiling as high as they can go. Space as wide as they can be. And within the space stood a full fledge Quidditch pitch, completed with spectators stands, scoreboard and the ubiquitous goal hoops, three on each of the opposite sides. Bright light arrays, not unlike the one available at the muggle stadiums provided the illumination.

“Spank my butt and call me Merlin,” said Fred, earning odd looks given by the rest of the teammates. “I never thought it could do that. I mean, wow, my mind is completely blown away.”

Even Bletchley was rendered speechless.
“Harry, how do you know that this room could do such a thing?” asked Angelina, completely astonished by what she saw.

“I don’t,” said Harry, his eyes wandered around impressively. He too was completely blown away by what he saw. “I just wing it. I really don’t know what will happen when I wish for a Quidditch Pitch inside the Room of Requirement. Lucky eh? So, do you all like it?”

“Harry, this is marvelous,” said Katie. “Now we could train in secrecy nobody else will know about it.”

“Yeah. We don’t have to worry about the weather too,” added George.

“Guys, I think we should consider all weather training to be included in the schedule. You know, just in case. I don’t know if this room could simulate outside weather. I guess we could try,” said Harry.

“Not now,” Angelina quickly cut him off. “I don’t want to go back to the common room dripping wet and covered in mud. Let us prepare first before we do any all weather training.”


All of them walked into one of the available locker room. They gathered around a table. Angeline pulled out parchment from her bag and spread it out on the table.

“So this is the training schedule I came up with,” she said to Bletchley. “Based on what you told Harry, Everyone else already agreed to it. It’s up to you now. See if there’s any conflict on your part.”

Bletchley pulled the parchment towards him and pored over it. Moments later he passed it back to Angelina and said, “Just a few but I think I know what to about it. I’ll seek Professor Snape’s help if it comes to it. I agree with the schedule.”

“Will he help?” asked Harry.

“He wants to win as much as you guys. Don’t worry about it, Potter.”

Harry nodded. “Good. Then there shouldn’t be anything to worry. All that is left now is the training.”

He then looked around towards his teammates.

Fred.

George.

Angelina.

Katie.

Alicia.

And Miles.

“So this is it. This is our chance. We may not get a shot at the Triwizard Tournament but in its place, we got something just as good. As a matter a fact even better. A friendly match against the Durmstrang. We’re going to fight Viktor Krum and his teammates. Even Oliver Wood doesn’t get the same chance as we do. This will be just like the World Cup. We’re not going to under estimate them. It would be foolish to do so. But we will be sure to give everything that we got. We want to win. If fate tells us that we will go down, it won’t be without a fight,” he began. “We got three superb Chasers.”

Harry pointed towards Angelina, Alicia and Katie.

“And two unbeatable Beaters.”

Fred and George nodded proudly.

“And a keeper who performed really well in the tryout. Miles. Can I call you Miles?”

Bletchley pondered for a moment. He then shrugged and said, “Yeah okay.”

Harry nodded.

“And don’t forget, we got a Seeker who never failed to catch a snitch. You,” said Fred.
"I failed. Once," Harry pointed out.

"Bah! That was one time and it all because of the Dementors. If not for those creature, you would have beaten that pretty face Diggory," said George. Clearly he had not forgotten how the Hufflepuff beat the Gryffindor in a match last year. "On a positive note, that incident did give you that Firebolt you're now possessing so I guess it's not all bad."

"Yes well, let's hope none of those creatures appear uninvited to the match. So let's begin."

Full of determination, the team began the training sessions, scheduled to be three or four times a week depending on availability. The first training session did not go really well at first. Miles as a Slytherin player, was trained differently from the Gryffindor so it was hard for him and everyone else to find a rhythm everyone could accustom to. The chemistry between them was virtually non-existent at first. But he tried really hard and after a while, managed to accustom himself with the way the Gryffindor trained and before long, everything went smoothly. By the time the training ended that evening, everyone was tired but felt really pleased.

"Good job everyone," said Harry as they made their way back to the locker room. "We did good today. Let's call it a day and get some rest. Don't forget our next training session this weekend."

"We won't," said the twins in unison.

"Oh, before we leave, Fred? George? Anything on the Durmstrang?" asked Harry.

The twins shook their heads.

"None," said Fred.

"Nada," said George.

"What about you, Miles. Anything?" asked Harry to the Slytherin.

But Miles too shook his head. "Me and Marcus, we spied on them for the whole evening yesterday. Found nothing. Are you sure they already started training?"

"That's what Krum told me," replied Harry. "I don't think he would lie about it. The only thing he refused to tell me is the location of their training. It's okay. Just keep on looking, will you?"

Miles nodded.

It was nearly dinnertime when he arrived at the Gryffindor Common Room. Hermione and Ron were already waiting for him.

Fred, George, Angelina, Katie and Alicia walked past him on their way to their respective dormitories after depositing their brooms into the broom cupboard.

"See you at dinner, Harry," they said.

"So how's the training?" asked Ron, watching Harry placing the Firebolt carefully into the cupboard.

"It went well," said Harry.

"Really? Bletchley didn't give you guys problems during the training?"

"Well, we do have a little bit of a problem at the beginning of the session but it was all because of the way he trained which was different compared to us. Plus we got so used with Oliver that we're having quite a difficulty in adjusting ourselves with Miles. We did manage to overcome it eventually. He worked really hard, you know," explained Harry.

"Woah. So it's Miles now? Never thought I would hear those kind of words about a Slytherin," muttered Ron.

"Yeah well, things changed, Ron. He's one of us now. Anyway, you guys going to dinner?"

"We were waiting for you, Harry," said Hermione.

Harry nodded. "Give me ten minutes," he said, heading towards his dormitory.

Indeed, in a little over ten minutes, the trio made their way to the Great Hall.

Dinner that night once again a usual affair.
Viktor kept on assuring to Harry that they still can see each other despite the fact that he and his schoolmates no longer will be having their meals at the Great Hall and Harry kept on assuring Viktor that he did not mind at all. He told him that he understood the reason why.

There was a lot of glance exchanging between him and Fleur that night. He saw Roger Davies striking up a conversation with Fleur. Like always.

Harry decided not to worry about it. That dinner that night would be the last she has at the Great Hall anyway. As much as he saddened by the fact that there will be lesser chances for him to see her; he was glad that he would no longer have to endure watching Roger flirting with Fleur every meal time.

Dinnertime soon ended. Harry gave Fleur one last look for the night as he rose from the bench. Their eyes met and the veela threw him a smile.

That smile would accompany him for the rest of the night. That smile would be the last thing he remembered before sleep took over him.

The very next day...

Nothing much happened on Thursday except that Professor McGonagall made an announcement regarding the Hogsmeade outing that will occur by the end of next week on 21st November and the First Task that will happen three days after that.

"A sign will be posted in regards of these events. Like before, I would expect all of you to uphold Hogwarts traditions of great sportsmanship when it comes to supporting Hogwarts champion in all Tasks. No hooliganism behavior!" she reminded them.

Harry and his classmates had Defense Against the Dark Arts class after lunch. After the incident with the impostor, which thankfully remained a secret only a few kept, students were commenting on how Professor Moody nowadays was completely different. His classes were no longer as highly charge as before.

"It was boring!" Fred complaint during the lunch.

"Yeah," agreed Lee Jordan. "It was like he had lost all of his steam. Why though? We want to see more."

Harry did not care about that. All he cared about was that night.

Dinnertime came.

Harry entered the Great Hall with great expectations. He looked over to the Ravenclaw table.

But she was not there. And for the whole night, she was absent.

His shoulder slouched. He became extremely disappointed. Had Fleur forgotten all about that night? She did promise to him anyway.

Harry cleared the thought of Fleur forgetting her promise out of his mind. He knew Fleur would not do that. Well at least the Fleur he knew. This Fleur should not be any different. She probably had something else need doing. Madame Maxime probably won’t let her out this time of night anyway. There’s still time. He immediately masked his disappointment and treated everything as usual. The last thing he wanted was for people to ask what went wrong with him.

Dinnertime finally over. The trio remained at the table and waited for the lines of students to thin out before they made their way back to the common room.

"Sure there a lot of differences when Krum’s not around," mused Seamus as he, Dean and several others waited at the table. "I was so getting used to seeing him during meal times that I find tonight a little bit odd. Why Dumbledore doesn’t just invite them to stay in the castle? We have a lot of rooms. Surely we can spare some."

"Probably the same reason why they won't want us to stay inside their buildings," said Hermione. "Every magical school has secrets they want to keep. Dumbledore did allow the Beauxbaton to use our library though. That is as far as he can go in term of leniency I suspect."

"I think we can go," said Harry who was keenly monitoring the traffic at the Great Hall entrance. The lines at that time were thinning. "Come on."

Together, they rose from the benches and made a beeline towards the entrance.
But just as he passed over the threshold and made a turn towards the Gryffindor Tower, someone called out to him:-

"'Arry!"

He turned to look and there she was.

Fleur, standing at near the stairs that led down to the Entrance Hall. She was wearing a light brown tight pants and a pair of fur boots of the same color. A beige colored hoody completed the whole package. She wore her silvery blonde hair in a ponytail. A few strands of it framed her face. She was holding something covered in a piece of white cloth at that time.

She looked heavenly. The fact that nearly every boy present there stood rigidly and gawking stupidly at her was a testimony to that.

"You guys go ahead," said Harry to Hermione and Ron. "I'll catch up later."

Hermione nodded. She then pulled Ron's hand who at that time was staring at Fleur with his mouth hanging wide open, gesturing him to follow her. "Come on, Ron. And stop acting stupid!"

But before she left, she threw a smile at Fleur. The later replied.

Harry walked up to Fleur. The smell of a freshly baked blueberry pie reached his nose even before he arrived in front of her.

"Hi," he greeted her.

"'Ello, 'Arry."

Feeling that the place might not be the best for them to strike a conversation given that so many boys were still gawking at her, Harry said, "Shall we go someplace else more private?"

Fleur lifted her eyebrows.

"I didn't mean it that way," Harry hastily added.

Fleur nodded. "After you."

Together, both of them walked down the stairs and into the Entrance Hall.

"I thought you didn't come," said Harry once the boys were out of sight. They both were now standing in the middle of the Entrance Hall.

Fleur tilted her head. "I like to 'old on to my promise, 'Arry. Just like you, I presumed. Anyway, I no longer 'ave my meals in zhe Great 'All, remember? It won't do for me to continue to appear in zhere when different arrangement 'ad been made."

Harry chuckled embarrassingly, running his hand through the back of his head. "Yeah, I remember. Sorry. Once again, I don't mean it that way. After all, we still have a lot of time, do we?"

Fleur smiled. "Indeed we 'ave," she said. She then presented the pie to Harry. "'Ere you go. Az promise, 'Arry."

Harry took it. He took off the cover and admired the beautifully done pie. "Look and smell delicious. Like always," he said, covering back the pie.

Fleur smiled widely at this. "Zhank you," she said. "So I guess I better get going. Good night, 'Arry."

Harry nodded. "Yeah. It's getting late. Good night, Fleur."

But just as Fleur made her way towards the stairway that led down to the castle's lawn, Harry suddenly realized something.

"Fleur, wait!" he called out to her.

She stopped and looked quizzically at him.

Harry looked around and realized that she was alone.

"You came here all the way by yourself?" he asked.

It took a while for her to come up with a reply. "Maybe?" she said.
It was a vague answer as far as Harry could tell. But he decided not to think much about it. The fact is the girl was alone. And he couldn't leave her that way.

He walked up to her. "Fleur, it's dark outside. I can't believe you came here all alone."

At this point Fleur began to shift her weight from one foot to another.

"So?" she asked.

She sounded defiant but her face told him the truth. She was expecting something from him.

Harry did not need to think twice. He knew what he needed to do. "Come on. I'll escort you back to the carriage," he offered.

"You don't 'ave to, 'Arry," said Fleur.

"I know I don't have to. I want to. As a matter a fact, I insist."

Fleur once again smiled widely at this. "In zhat case, I accept."

"Shall we?" said Harry, gesturing Fleur to follow him.

She obliged.

That night was indeed dark. There was no moon and the sky, given the lack of stars was cloudy. As it always was in November. They both had to rely on the illumination provided by Harry's wand as the many lights shone through the many windows of Hogwarts Castle were not enough to lit the lawn.

They thread carefully on the near slippery grass wetted by that night's dew.

"So did you already know when your family will arrive here at Hogwarts?" he asked.

"Zhey are supposed to arrive on Wednesday," said Fleur. Her face glowed against the light of Harry's wand. "But mama told me today zhat zhere 'ad been a change in plan. Zhey will arrive zhis weekend, on Sunday."

"Oh. That is early. So where they will be staying?"

"At zhe carriage," replied Fleur. "Along with ozher families including Daphne's and Tracy's. My sister was impatient."

"Gabby?" said Harry. "Yeah, I can imagine that."

Fleur shot a side glance at Harry. She said nothing though.

"So the boy you talked about yesterday, will he be here too?" asked Harry.

Fleur smiled at this. "I don't know," she simply said. "Maybe 'e will, maybe 'e won't."

Harry lifted an eyebrow. "Sounds like you both don't really communicate with each other. Is there a problem between you two?"

"Not really," said Fleur. A lone firefly flew right past her. "Zhere were... complications need to be address first. But if it's done right, perhaps 'e will make an appearance."

He totally had no idea what she meant by that.

"You really want to see him," stated Harry. "Don't you?"

Fleur glanced sideways at him. He smiled at her in return.

"Of course," she said, turning her face back to the front. "I am yearning to see 'im."

"Do you love him?"

It's now or never.

Without turning to look at Harry, she said, "Zhe real question, Mr. Potter, iz would 'e still be in love with me? Would 'e still want me?"

Against himself he replied, "I'm sure he will. Why won't he? I mean, look at you."

Fleur's expression suddenly clouded upon hearing what Harry just said. He was worried for a while. Afraid that his words hurt her.
"Iz beauty zhe only zhing men saw in me, 'Arry Potter?" asked Fleur softly.

"If you manage to strike a relationship with him, I'm pretty sure he sees you more than that," Harry hastily replied. "Someone once told me that beauty can both be a blessing and a curse. A relationship could begin with it. At the same time, it could end with it. Always. But what contains behind all those beauty will decide whether a relationship could stand the test of time. Sounds to me that you both are all set. All that is left is for you to go forward with it. Other men will always see you for your beauty, Fleur. Just ignore them."

Fleur's lip curved into a smile. "So you are saying zhat I should lead 'im closer to me. Make 'im see?"

Harry pulled a deep breath. He truly could not believe he would be saying this but he decided to just get on with it.

"Yes. I think you should. If he's really that valuable to you."

His heart ached a little bit.

Fleur smiled widely. "I am proud of my beauty, 'Arry. And my 'eritage," she said. "Even among zhe veelas, I am zhe most beautiful of zhem all. Zhat beauty shall be my gift for 'im. No one else shall 'ave it. It will be for 'im and for 'im alone."

Harry's heart fell even further. He smiled, albeit bitterly. "Well, I'm glad to hear that. He's a lucky man."

"Indeed 'e iz," said Fleur, still smiling. She suddenly stopped walking. "Tonight isn't a romantic night, don't you zhink? No moon. No stars," she said, looking up onto the night sky.

He copied her. "It's definitely not. But even with the brightest moon and the glittering stars, it would mean nothing if you're not with the one you love."

"Zhat iz true," murmured Fleur. Her eyes were still staring onto the sky. "Tell me, 'Arry. In your 'eart, iz zhere someone in zhere?"

Harry paused at this. "I'm-a little bit young for that, Fleur."

"Just be 'onest with me, 'Arry."

Alright. Blunt it is.

"There is one," he admitted.

"'Ere in 'Ogwarts? Zhat red headed girl?"

Harry shook his head. "No. Definitely not. The girl I'm talking about, she's... far away."

"Far away? As in?"

Harry pondered for a while. "Let just say that she's now probably out of my reach."

"I see," said Fleur, now looking sideways at him as they resumed walking towards the carriage. "And you don't see any future with 'er?"

"I wish I could see the future," lamented Harry. "But I can't. It doesn't matter."

"Don't you zhink zhat she iz probably seeking you as well?"

"If she did, I wouldn't know about it," he said, chuckling. "But you know what they say, if you love someone, you set them free. If they come back to you, you both are meant to be."

"Don't give up 'ope, 'Arry. Someday, you'll see 'er. You probably be surprised," said Fleur.

"Really?"

Fleur nodded. "If it was me, if I love someone, I won't let 'im go. I will tie 'im closer to me. Zhat I will do."

"Well, like I said. Lucky him."

Fleur just smiled.

They finally reached the carriage.

"So here we are," said Harry. "You're safe now. Thank you for the pie."
But before Fleur could reply, the door into the carriage suddenly burst open.

"So zhere you are!"

It was Marianne.

Harry's face reddened when he saw what Marianne was wearing. A very revealing night gown. The light that shone from behind through her gown showed her every curve. He gathered himself, cleared his throat and said, "You let Fleur go to the castle all alone? Do you know how dark it is out here? Something could happen to her, you know."

Marianne tilted her head and replied hotly, "No we are not! We-"

"Mary!"

Fleur suddenly cut Marianne off. She lifted an eyebrow at her.

Marianne's eyes darted between Harry and Fleur. A sudden realization dawned upon her. "Owh. I mean yes. She went up zhere all alone. No one is following 'er. Yes. I mean why couldn't she? She iz a Trizwizad champion, after all," she stammered.

"Mary," said Fleur. "You should go inside."

"Err... yes. *I should probably go inside now. Nothing happened. Don't worry about me,*" said Marianne. She immediately went back inside, closing the door behind her.

"I'm sorry, 'Arry."

"That's okay," said Harry. "I won't say that it didn't look awkward though."

"Yes, Mary can be a little bit awkward," said Fleur. "Do you know she likes to sleep naked?"

Harry's eyes widened. "Thanks for the mental images, Fleur." He immediately, like a puppy trying to shake itself dry, shook his head in an attempt to disperse those images out of his mind.

Fleur suddenly laughed. It was not the usual giggling she always did whenever she was with her friends. That laugh was musical, throaty and more genuine than anything he heard before. A remnant of Fleur of the old.

It took a while for her to stop.

"You look cute whenever you do zhat. So I guess zhis iz it. I'll let you know through Daphne when zhe next time we will go to your library."

"Yeah. Sure thing, Fleur;" said Harry, still feeling embarrassed.

Fleur smiled widely at him. Then suddenly without warning, she leaned towards him and planted a kiss on his cheek, dangerously close to his lips. He felt the place where her lips touched him felt hot.

"Good night, 'Arry. Her brilliant blue eyes glittered as she said that.

Without waiting for his reply, she turned around, walked up the carriage's golden step and closed the door behind her.

For a long time he just stood there, staring at the door.

"Good night, Fleur," he whispered.

**To be continued...**

_A/n: There won't be any update for the next one or two weeks. I will be very busy throughout that period. Also, starting next chapter, author note will only be included if I have something to announce._
That medium sized pie was carefully stored inside his trunk, fully wrapped in a sheet of aluminum paper. He even put a spell on the aluminum sheet to ensure that the content remained fresh.

Harry shared a few slices of the pie with his dorm mates. He knew he won't be able to finish the whole thing all at once. Thinking that Fleur won't make her appearance that night, he decided to have a sizeable dinner and he was already full when he met her. Remembering how he had to subsist with increasingly stale pies, cakes and sweets at the Dursleys during the summer break that year and knowing that the pie would face the same fate, it was a logical course of action.

If only his younger self knew the spell to keep food fresh no matter how long it had been stored.

Fleur's pie received heaps of praises from his friends. Even Ron admitted that it was a lot better than what his mother made. Seamus however berated him for forgetting to ask Krum about the Bulgarian Firewhisky.

Friday came.

They had History of Magic that morning and as before, Harry and Hermione were the only one who managed to stay awake for the whole duration. A fifteen minutes break followed before the next lesson began. Deciding that it would be best for them to arrive early at Professor Flitwick's class, they headed towards classroom 2E, located on the third floor of the castle.

Someone however, chose that time to corner Harry.

It was Roger Davies. The trio was just entering the corridor that led to the said classroom when he found them.

"Harry," said Roger. "Can I talk to you for a second?"

"Sure."

Roger glanced at Ron and Hermione who remained by Harry's side.

"Preferably just you," he said to Harry.

Hearing this, Hermione immediately pulled Ron's hand and they both made their way to the Charm class.

"We'll see you in class, Harry," said Hermione.

Ron however said nothing. He looked back and stared at Roger curiously just as Hermione towed him away.

"So what is it you want to talk about?" asked Harry to Roger the moment the two were out of earshot. He had a hunch though, given the Ravenclaw captain seemed to be bothered about something.

Roger considered Harry for a moment.

"Fleur Delacour."

Harry lifted his eyebrows. "What about her?" he asked.

"What is it about you and her?" said Roger. "Last night they told me you met her outside of the Great Hall after dinner. They told me she brought you something I don't know what and you escorted her back to her carriage and only came back much-much later. And earlier I heard that she invited you to her carriage last weekend. Is something going on between you two?"

No doubt. Roger's friends were the one behind this. They must have seen him. They would also know all about Roger's intention on winning Fleur.

"Her friends. They were the one who invited me to their carriage, not her," Harry corrected him. "And it was for something I did for one of them earlier. As for last night, she had quite a few ingredients left in the carriage's kitchen so she made pies and she offered me one. As for your last concern, we're-"
Harry hesitated at this point.
"We're what?" asked Roger impatiently.
"We're just friends," said Harry.

Roger's eyebrows creased. He crossed his hands to his chest and spoke, "Really?"

Harry sighed. He knew Roger did not believe him.
"Really."

That was all he could say.

Roger pondered for a while. His expression though did not change a bit.

"It's hard to believe that. She seems too nice to you," he stated.

"And what's wrong with that?" asked Harry incredulously. "She's a nice person. There's nothing wrong with her being nice to everyone. I'm sure I'm not the only one she's being nice to."

Roger however said nothing. His eyes continued to stare at Harry.

Harry once again sighed. "Look, my class will begin in the next few minutes and I don't want to be late. If you have something to say, say it now. If not, I shall take my leave," said Harry.

Harry was about to walk away when Roger's hand suddenly shot out and held his shoulder back.

"Like I said, she seems too nice to you," said Roger, his hand was still holding Harry's shoulder, gripping it tightly. "And honestly, I don't like it. Look, I really like her and I wish to know her more. Maybe I could form a relationship with her if I have the chance but the thing is, I can't do any of that if someone gets in my way."

"And that someone is me," stated Harry. "You know a lot of boys and men wanted her. You know that, right? That's quite a lot of males you got to plow through in order to get to her. There's no reason for you to single me out."

Roger nodded. He slowly released his grip on Harry's shoulder and put his hand down. "I know that," he said. "But you're my immediate threat, Harry. I needed to make sure that there wasn't more than what it seems between you and her. You said that you're just a friend of hers, I'm going to accept that. I hope that it will remain as it is and won't be growing into something else. I can't stress that importantly enough."

But Harry who had more life experiences than Roger, knew what the boy really meant by that. It wasn't the first time men trying to nick Fleur away from him. It happened on nearly constant basis throughout their marriage. Only strong trust that developed between both of them held them together. It was not easy for him. Keeping his head on the level and continually trust his wife was the only thing he could do.

"You want me to stay away from her," said Harry. "That's what you really want, isn't it?"

"If possible," said Roger. "Look Harry, please don't take this personally. The thing is, you're just a fourteen year old boy. And she, she's already seventeen. You might be the Boy Who Lived, but that won't be enough. To be honest with you, I think you were just lucky that night. There's no other explanation. If she wants to be with someone, she will definitely pick a man who is at least the same age as her; someone who would be a better fit to her stature. Someone who is better looking. You unfortunately don't fit in any of those criteria. You know that, right? That's the way the world goes. She probably looks to you as a little brother she never had. Nothing more. I hope you understand that."

"I see," said Harry. Internally he was seething with anger. But he managed to keep it cool however. "If you say so, Roger. But might I point out to you that she's not looking to foster any relationship at this point."

His voice remained calm.

"Who told you this?" asked Roger.

"She did," answered Harry. "Back then at the carriage."

"Well, maybe she said that to you because she didn't want to get your hope high," said Roger dismissively. "Maybe you're trying to hit on her. That's why she said that. With the right person, I'm sure she won't say no."

Harry just rolled his eyes. "Whatever makes you happy, Roger."
Roger did not miss that gesture however and he did not take that kindly. "You can roll your eyes as much as you want Harry, but you won't get her. I don't mean to be disrespectful, but I hope from this moment forth, you'll remember your place."

Roger gave Harry a pat on his shoulder, a little bit harder than usual, and proceeded to walk away.

Rubbing his shoulder, Harry stared at Roger's receding back.

"So what does he wants?" asked Hermione, concerned, the moment he returned to them. They, together with the rest of the Gryffindorians and Hufflepuff, were waiting for Professor Flitwick.

"Yeah mate. Things didn't seem to be going that well between you two. What's wrong?" asked Ron.

"Nothing," said Harry simply.

"Nothing? Even Ron could see that that is a lie. Tell us, Harry," said Hermione, a little bit more firmly this time.

Harry sighed. He looked around. There were too many people congregating around them at that time. "This isn't the best place," he said to Hermione. "Maybe later."

Hermione nodded. "Fine. At lunch, we'll talk."

To be continued...

A/n: Sorry! Sorry! Sorry! Things had been very busy for me lately. We had just gone past the end of the fiscal quarter at where I work. Things had been very hectic I couldn't even find the time to breathe. Fortunately, work is beginning to wind down a little bit however so I finally manage to find some time to write.

This chapter is just a reminder that this story is very much alive. Next much longer chapter will come up in a few days time.
"Blimey! That's what he says!" said Ron.

The trio was sitting at the farthest side of the table near the entrance into the hall. Not many students like to sit there due to the high traffic that occurred every meal time. It did however, present the best spot to have conversations if one did not wish to be heard. Aside from using the Muffliato spell that is.

"Yeap. That's what he says," said Harry, taking a gulp of ice cold pumpkin juice.

Ron glanced at the Ravenclaw table and then back to Harry. "It's hard to imagine he would do something like that. You know from the way he looks, walks and talks. You think he's the kind of bloke who didn't really care much about all of these, about girls and stuffs."

"Yeah well, you didn't really know him that well, did you?" said Harry. "And unfortunately, so did I. Who would have guessed he was in fact one easily jealous bloke? Probably a control freak at the same time."

"I'm more surprise that you didn't do anything in retaliation," said Ron, jabbing a sausage and putting it into his mouth. "If it was me, I'll break this nose."

Harry shook his head. "I'm not going to fight him over a girl," he said. "Fleur isn't my girlfriend after all. But if he tries to do something bad to her, he will regret it for a long time."

"But what about that Greengrass girl? Hermione told me you rescued her. She isn't your girlfriend you know. What's the difference?" Ron pointed out.

"Daphne was able to defend herself," explained Harry. "She was the one who brought Malfoy down. I merely defended her from Crabbe and Goyle. She would have been able to take them down too if she didn't turn her back on them."

"It still counts," said Ron. "And it does explain why she seemed little bit taken by you. Just like my sister. She keeps talking about you nearly all summer to the point my ears are in danger of falling off and would only shut up when you came to the Burrow. Anyway, I heard that you relieved them off their wands. Also I heard that they were having trouble performing spells since then. Strange isn't it?"

Harry paused at this information. So apparently Crabbe and Goyle's wands already changed their allegiances, probably to him. Not that he really wanted their wands. He was happy enough with the one he had.

"That is strange," said Harry.

"Whatever it is, I'm glad that you keep a cool head and did not retaliate," chimed Hermione who had taken to listen to the conversation between Harry and Ron from the moment they entered the Great Hall. "Fighting someone over a girl, that's too low. Of course it will be a whole different story if the said girl is your - what do you call it - girlfriend?"

Harry stared at Hermione. "I can't tell if that's a compliment or sarcasm."

"Yeah, Hermione. First you complimented him then you're just being sarcastic. Make up your mind," said Ron.

"Take it however you wish," said Hermione briskly. "My point is, people tend to not to see or think highly of those who fight over a girl. You might think that the girl might be flattered and the boy might feel that he's some kind of a hero, most of the time, they don't. Imagine what Fleur and her friends will think if Harry involved in a squabble with Roger just because of her."

"Have you ever, you know, had someone fought over you, Hermione?" asked Ron.

Hermione gave the sternest stare she could ever muster to Ron. "No. And I hope that no one ever will. Anyway..."

Hermione put away the book she was holding and spoke to Harry. "Roger wanted you to stay away from Fleur. How do you think you're going to do that?"

Harry stared back at Hermione. "You're saying that as if I already agree to bow down to Roger's demand."
Hermione cocked her brown eyebrows. "Good to know that. I figure that it won’t be that easy for you to stay away from her."

"As a matter a fact, it is completely doable," countered Harry. "I just refuse to do it because of Roger."

That did give Hermione a pause. "I see."

"Fleur and I, we’re just friends. I can easily evade her anytime I wish. But I’m not going to do that because of him. You can count on that."

This time, Hermione looked a little bit worried. "Well, I hope you never have to," she said. "It will hurt her feelings, you know. But still, you need to watch out for Roger. He’s going to keep his eyes on you."

Harry stared at Hermione in amusement "If my memory didn’t fail me you didn’t like her when she first came here. Don’t worry, Hermione. I won’t let him catch me unprepared."

Hermione just remained silent.

They returned to the common room right after they finished eating, intending to get some rest before their next lesson which will begin in a little less than an hour. When they entered, they were greeted by a huge crowd gathering around a newly erected sign beside the portrait hole.

"Hey, Lee. What's up?" greeted Harry.

"Hogsmeade visit and the First Task announcement," replied Lee Jordan who was standing at the rear end of the crowd. "I can't see the date though. There are too many people here. Ah George!"

George eased his way through the crowd and made his way towards Lee. "Hogsmeade visit, next Saturday on the 21st. The First Task will be on Tuesday 24th," he announced. "Just in time. I need to visit Zonko's. I've already run out of ingredients for the canary cream."

Fred joined them moment later. "Hogsmeade will be crammed with people next Saturday. What with the First Task happening a few days after that. You reckon he will be there too?" he asked both George and Lee.

"Who? Ludo?" asked Lee.

"Yeap."

"Well, he should be," said George. "He's one of the Triwizard Tournament committee members. I guess it’s payback time and I mean it literally."

"Literally?" asked Hermione, confused. "Don't you mean figuratively?"

"No. Literally. As in he needs to pay us back our money he owes us. Say Harry, will there be Quidditch training on that day?" asked George.

"I need to check the schedule first. Most likely there is because I told Angelina we will train every weekend. I guess we could cancel the training that day. I have things to do as well," said Harry.

George nodded. "Alright. I’ll tell Angelina that you told me to tell her that next Saturday's training is cancelled."

"Okay, cool."

Fred, George and Lee then moved away and made their way towards their dormitory.

The trio proceeded to their usual spot.

"Ah, Hogsmeade. Finally!" said Ron, leaning against the back of his chair. "Been waiting to visit it all summer. Honeydukes. Zonko's. Crumpets and butterbeers at Three Broomsticks. I miss them all. Sure the Diagon Alley is much bigger but there's something in Hogsmeade that Diagon Alley doesn’t have. How about you, Harry?"

"I."

"Urggh! I need to buy ink and new quills," interrupted Hermione who was rummaging her school bag at that time. She took out a bottle of ink and began shaking it. "It’s half full. I can’t believe I ran through two bottles of it already."
"Already?!" asked Ron incredulously.

Hermione gave Ron a nasty look. "Yes. Already. If you're like me, you'll know why."

"That's not fair. We did homework too, you know. Right, Harry?"

Hermione just rolled her eyes. "Yeah, right and I'm Madam Rosmerta. That's what Diagon Alley doesn't have."

Ron's face blushed at this.

"Look!" a First year boy said, pointing towards the window.

The trio turned to look and saw a brown owl flying through the window and into the common room. It landed right in front of Harry. The owl straightened up importantly and stuck its leg out to Harry. There was a crest stuck to the owl's chest. Harry recognized that crest. This owl belonged to the Durmstrang Institute. And tied to its leg was a parchment.

Harry hastily untied the parchment and began to read.

"What does it say?" asked Ron. "Who is it? Is it Sirius?"

"No. Viktor," replied Harry. He then took a quill from his bag and began scribbling on the same piece of parchment. "He wants to meet me at the Quidditch pitch this afternoon for some practicing. He asked me to give my reply through the same owl. There you go."

He tied the parchment back to the owl's leg.

Once done, the owl stretched its wing and flew out of the common room.

"So what did you say?"

"I say yes. But I told him I will only be free after Potions. Figure that I don't really have anything to do after that, so why not?"

"Can I tag along?" asked Ron hopefully.

"Sure."

Potions that afternoon, like on Tuesday, was pleasant. Even for Neville who used to experience total mental breakdown whenever Professor Snape was in vicinity. Professor Snape for some reason no longer terrorized him or everyone else. He remained stern and unsmiling though. For all non-Slytherin, that was good enough. Daphne had taken this chance to mingle quite a lot with Harry. Malfoy said nothing about that though. Probably because Pansy Parkinson was nearby and was watching him.

A truce seemed to develop between Daphne and Hermione. The two girls chatted a little bit during the practical lesson. It was something that even Ron took note of. He however did nothing about that.

"You two go ahead," said Hermione once the class ended. "There's something I got to do and some place I need to go. I'll see you both tonight."

"Yeah okay. Come on, Ron," said Harry who decided it was none of his business to know what Hermione was doing.

"She probably headed for the library. Something for the SPEW I guess," whispered Ron to Harry as they both walked away.

Without the two boys knowing, Hermione met up with Daphne and Tracy outside the dungeon and the three of them then made their way to the Entrance Hall.

Harry spent the whole afternoon practicing with Viktor at the Quidditch pitch. They tried a few maneuvers, one of them was the Wrongski Feint. Viktor was clearly the master of this one particular move. Out of twenty five attempts, Harry fell for his trick seventeen times.

"You clearly need to learn on how to detect a Wrongski Feint and how to recover quickly if you fall for it," said Viktor after Harry nearly crashed into one of the pillars. "That was lucky, Harry. Next time, you could probably be carried out of the field on a stretcher."

But Viktor also noted that Harry flew really-really well and he was able to utilize his Firebolt's abilities to the max, efficiently and consistently. He also noted of Harry willingness to take risk no matter how dangerous it was.
"Not many Seekers possessed those abilities," Viktor pointed out. "Luckily you have it. Also your eyes, although you're wearing glasses, are as quick as mine. What you really need is more training."

"You're training me to defeat you," stated Harry.

Viktor smiled at this. "No," he said. "I'm training you so that when the time comes, you can push me to the extreme. Not many manage to do that. I'm not afraid of losing. What I'm afraid of is complacency. Come. Let's try again."

The practice continued and only ended at 6.30pm.

"So have you given any thought about the actual date for the match?" asked Viktor. They were resting at one of the spectators stand. Ron and for some reason Seamus, were there as well. "I know you suggest some time after New Year."

Harry pondered for a moment. "Mid January would be good. Preferably on weekends. Saturday would be good."

Viktor took out a piece of parchment and much to Harry's surprise, a muggle pen from his pocket. He unfolded it and laid it out in front of Harry.

"I thought so too," said Viktor. "I looked at the calendar and these are the dates that I think would be suitable."

Harry pulled the parchment towards him and began poring over it.

"Either on the 14th or 21st. 21st I think would be the best. Of course it would depend on when the Second Task would be held. I think that will happen sometime in February so I figure it won't affect your preparation by then," said Harry, sharing a little bit of what he knew about the Triwizard Tournament. Of course he was right. The Second Task would only be held on 24th February so there were plenty of time for Viktor and the rest of the champions to prepare. The only difference was that the three champions only knew about the First Task so far. Even then, their knowledge was incomplete. None of them knew what they will be facing. At least for now.

Viktor nodded.

"Yes. 21st January looks good," he said. He pulled the parchment towards him and began scribbling on it. "I will inform Professor Karkaroff about the date."

"Alright. I shall do the same. Professor Dumbledore will want to know as well," said Harry. "It's getting late. Dinner time."

"Yes it is," said Viktor, observing the sun that was disappearing beneath the horizon. "So I'll see you next time for the next practice."

"Sure. Just drop me an owl."

But just they were about to part ways, Seamus nudged Harry on his elbow.

Harry, remembering what Seamus was asking, called out to Viktor.

"Hey Viktor!"

Viktor who had just getting ready to fly away towards his boat paused.

"What is it, Harry?" he asked.

Harry came up to him. "Sorry but do you have any more of that Bulgarian Firewhisky? Can you spare a bottle?"

Viktor just smiled and shook his head. He then took out his wand. "Accio!"

They did not have to wait for long. From the distance and in the semi darkness, they saw a bottle flying at high speed towards them. Viktor caught the bottle the moment it came near him and handed it over to Harry.

"Enjoy it, Harry," said Viktor.

"Oh this wasn't for me," said Harry as he handed the bottle over to Seamus who received it gratefully. "My friend here, he had been badgering me about the firewhisky since that day. Remember?"

"I see," said Viktor, watching Seamus with great apprehension. "Vell tell your friend to be
careful. And please tell him not to tell anyone from who he got it."

"Hear that Seamus?" asked Harry.

But Seamus was too engrossed with that bottle of firewhisky that he did not hear what Harry and Viktor just said.

"Don't worry, Viktor," said Harry, who too was beginning to worry about Seamus. "I'll keep a sharp eye on him."

Viktor nodded. They then parted ways.

"I'll go keep this at our dormitory," announced Seamus once they arrived at the Entrance Hall. He then immediately made his way towards the common room.

But just as he approached a few feet away from Harry and Ron, Harry took out his wand and covertly put a locking spell on that bottle of firewhisky.

"What did you do?" asked Ron curiously.

"Preventing Seamus from drinking that whisky," said Harry, stowing his wand back into his pocket. "At least not without supervision. Come on, Ron."

"But why would you do that?" asked Ron as they both walked into the Great Hall.

"Notice that look on his face, Ron?" asked Harry. "That is the look of someone who's going to down that bottle in one go. Bulgarian firewhisky has different effect on different people. Ernie McMillan told me he had just a few sips and he ended up running around his house in his underwear. With Seamus, I'm afraid things could go batshit crazy."

Ron nodded in understanding. "And he will lay out in details from who he gets it," he said.

"Exactly. He'll be a loose cannon doing who knows what," said Harry.

They arrived at their usual spot inside the Great Hall. And they found Hermione was not there.

"Wonder where she's been to," said Harry as he sat down.

"Probably at the library," said Ron as he pulled a clean plate towards him and began filling it up with food. "You know her, Harry."

Harry placed his Firebolt beside him and leaned towards Dean Thomas who at that time was striking a conversation with Ginny. "Hey Dean, have you seen Hermione?" he asked.

Dean however shook his head. "No. Haven't seen her since Potion."

"Alright. Thanks Dean."

"Relax, Harry. We'll see her. Don't worry about it," said Ron, his mouth was so full of scrambled eggs that a few landed near Harry's plate when he talked.

Harry shrugged. He began filling his plate and began to eat.

Hermione was still absent when they arrived at the common room. The absence of her school bags showed that she had yet to return to the Gryffindor Tower.

"I'm going upstairs to take shower then come back down here after that. Hopefully we'll see her by then," said Harry after storing his broom inside the broom cabinet.

"Yeah me too. I'm filthy," said Ron who was also visibly worried about Hermione.

They entered their dormitory, only to be greeted by the sight of a very sweaty Seamus trying his darndest to uncork the firewhisky bottle. Neville was sitting beside him, watching nervously as Seamus grunted and growled in his effort to access the content of the bottle.

"I. Can't. Open. This. Goddamn. Bottle. Of. Firewhisky!" growled Seamus with frustration. He gave up after giving it another try. Sighing, he looked up and saw Harry and Ron staring at him. He held up the bottle high towards them and said, almost pleading, "I can't open it."

"Really?" asked Harry innocently. "Why not?"

Ron meanwhile tried hard not to laugh.
Seamus just shook his head. He began to rummage his bedside drawer and pulled out his wand.

Harry knew what Seamus intended to do.

"I won't do that if I were you," he spoke. "You tend to make things explode, remember? That's a nice bottle of whisky you got there. It's a pity if it ended up splattering all over the floor."

Seamus groaned loudly at this.

"Listen, Seamus," said Harry, grabbing his towel nearby and throwing it over his shoulder. "Why don't you put away that bottle for now. We'll think of something later."

Seamus sighed. "You're right, Harry," he said. He then turned to the bottle, now cradling it like a newborn baby and cooed, "It's alright. Papa Seamus will try to find a way. Don't worry." He then carefully placed the bottle on top of his bed and covered it lovingly with his blanket.

Harry just rolled his eyes and shook his head as he made his way towards the bathroom.

After a quick shower and donning a fresh pair of shirt and pant, Harry together with Ron head back towards the common room.

Much to their surprise, Hermione's bag was still absent.

"I give her half an hour," said Harry to Ron. "Not more than that. If she fails to return by then, we'll go out and look for her."

Ron nodded in agreement. "Deal," he said.

They then sat down, pulled out all their books and parchments and began doing their homework.

It turned out they did not have to go out searching for her. Hermione made her presences known five minutes before deadline. Both Harry and Ron just watched as Hermione emerged from the portrait hole and made her way towards them.

"Hi!" she greeted them.

"You look cheerful tonight," commented Ron as he watched Hermione put her bag down and took a seat opposite of Harry. "Anything me and Harry should know about?"

"No," said Hermione simply. "But I do feel tired though."

At this point, Harry noticed that Hermione was giving a meaningful look at him.

"Well of course you do," stated Ron. "You didn't even have your dinner. What were you doing at the library anyway?"

"I had dinner," said Hermione. "And who says I'm at the library?"

She once again glanced at Harry.

"Well, where else would you be? You had been missing all afternoon and only show up just now. You had us worried you know," said Ron.

"Where I been is none of your business, Ron."

Ron was about to reply when Harry interrupted.

"In that case, it is also none of your business to know what I was doing and to where I went to, Hermione," said Harry.

Hermione was taken aback at this. "But-"

"No buts," said Harry firmly. "Sharing goes both ways. You don't want to tell, that's fine. I'll do the same. Same thing with Ron. No one telling anything. No one bugging anyone. Fair and square. Deal?"

Hermione's mouth opened and closed several times. No word came out though.

"I... gotta go," said Hermione finally. "I'll talk to you later. Good night, Harry."

Harry and Ron just watched as she stood up and sped off towards her dormitory.

Harry and Ron stared at each other.
"What is with her?" asked Ron.

Harry just shrugged.

"Dunno. But if that will take her off my back even for a while, I'll accept."

Saturday came.

Hermione was already there when the two arrived at the Great Hall. After their customary morning greeting, they sat down and began eating their breakfast.

Hermione was unusually quiet that morning. That was fine with Harry though. He was sure that she will come to her senses sooner or later.

At fifteen minutes past nine, Harry together with the rest of the Quidditch team, stood and made their way out of the Great Hall. Miles did the same as well.

Harry took a glance towards the Ravenclaw table. He saw Roger giving a very stern look at him. The Ravenclaw raised two fingers to his eyes and then pointing them towards him, as if he was saying he had his eyes on him. Harry ignored him and continued his way out of the hall.

Hermione’s eyes followed Harry until he disappeared out of view. She then turned to look towards the Slytherin table. She saw Daphne. The veela was staring at Roger with a thinly disguised anger. She then turned towards Hermione. Their eyes met and Daphne’s expression immediately softened but apparently, the veela sensed something went wrong and ended up looking questioningly at her.

Harry and his team had a short meeting before the practice session began. They all agreed to cancel next Saturday practice due to Hogsmeade visit. Harry also told them that he and Viktor Krum reached an agreement to hold the friendly match on 21st January the next year. Formal announcement will be made in time. Harry told them that he will meet Professor Dumbledore later regarding the date of the match.

Training was over five minutes before lunch.

But just as they arrived at the Entrance Hall on their way to lunch, students were hastily making their way down the stairs towards the castle’s lawn. Everyone was excited from the look at it.

"Wut?" said Miles. "What happened? What's going on?" he asked Harry.

"Dunno," said Harry. "Come on!"

Together, Harry and his team followed the students and once they were outside, their jaw dropped.

Row upon row of wooden planks, metal sheets and construction materials flew through the air towards a rocky valley located a couple of miles away at the far eastern side of the school compound.

"Where do all of these come from?" asked Fred.

"Hogsmeade. Look!" said George, pointing towards the direction from where all those construction materials flew from.

"Oh my gawd! Is that-, is that what I think it is?" asked Angelina pointing towards a structure still under construction inside the rocky valley.

Harry nodded. "It’s the arena for the First Task," he said.

"Wow. It's huge. Wonder what the champions will be up against with?"

Harry subtly admitted that even he was at awe. So this is how they built it, he thought. Back then, he did not really give much attention to anything else. He was more concern about his life and his struggle to sail through all the shit half of the school threw at him for becoming the fourth champion.

The dragon will come soon probably sometime next week. Both Viktor and Fleur will know about it soon. But Cedric?

Harry turned to look at the Hogwarts Champion who was standing not far from him. Cedric was oblivious to the fact that he will be facing a very dangerous creature and based from what Harry remembered, while he fared better than Viktor, his act did not go that too well.
A plan hatched inside Harry's mind and he will act upon it soon.

Sunday came and like on the previous day, morning was filled with training.

That afternoon, Harry followed Ron to the Great Hall for tea. Ron for some reason was getting hungry even though he already ate twice his body weight at lunch. Hermione did not follow them though, saying that she had something to do. Just like Saturday when she disappeared for the whole afternoon and only emerged at dinner. And as before, Harry and Ron decided not to bother with her.

They found a small crowd gathering at the corridor overlooking the castle lawn near the entrance into the Great Hall. He and Ron joined them and saw what they were looking at.

White pagoda tents were sprouting all around the Beauxbaton carriage. There were a lot of people, adults and students alike, and rows of table with food on it. It looked like they were having some sort of party.

"Who are those people?" asked Ron curiously.

"Student's families," said Harry. "They came to see the tournament."

"How do you know that?"

"Fleur told me her parents and her sister will be coming this weekend," explained Harry. "They weren't the only one apparently."

Harry scanned those crowds below. He saw Cassandra and Marianne sitting together with their respective family but he did not see Fleur's family anywhere however. They must have been staying inside the carriage. But he did saw Dumbledore, much to his surprise. The headmaster, together with several others, were climbing the golden steps and into the carriage at that time.

He could not remember if there was such a gathering at the Beauxbaton carriage back then. But then, he was too preoccupied with his newly acquired title as the fourth champion that he became blind and deaf to anything else.

Hermione joined them at the common room that night. She did not speak much though and the boys did not asked her anything either. Together they continued finishing up their homework. But from the way she moved, acted and looked at him, it was clear to Harry that she was bursting to say something to him.

He decided not to egged her about it. He won't tell her anything if she refused to do the same.

To be continued...
36. Chapter 36

Chapter 35

"Cedric is getting jittery lately," whispered Ernie to Harry. He looked a little bit worried.

Gryffindor and Hufflepuff were having Herbology as their first lesson that Monday morning. Ernie was sitting at the same table together with Harry, Ron, Hermione, Neville and Hannah Abbott. They were taking notes on the additional properties of Bubotuber pus. Professor Sprout also indicated that there will be practical lesson on how to safely collect and store the pus near the end of the period.

"Any idea why?" whispered Harry back, his quill traveled across the parchment as he continued taking notes from the blackboard.

"Probably due to what we saw last Saturday. Remember when we were all gathering at the school compound watching the supposedly First Task arena being built? Cedric and a few of us decided to take a closer look. Man, the arena looks really intimidating. We can’t see what’s inside but several seventh years who ventured into the rocky valley before told us you could only find big boulders and really sharp rocks there. Seriously though, what do you think they expect the champions to face?" said Ernie.

"Well, it is a Triwizard Tournament," said Harry as a matter a factly. "You can’t expect them to make it easy for the champions."

"Yeah I know that," said Ernie. He looked around before continuing. "Cedric is having a second thought about the whole Triwizard thing. I think he was beginning to regret it. I’m worried. You think they’ll tell the champions what they will be up against with before Tuesday?"

"As far as I know they won’t tell you until right before the task begins. Cedric can’t back away now. Not when a binding magical contract is in place," said Harry.

"That’s the problem isn’t it? How do they expect the champions to be prepared when they have no idea what they will be facing? I wonder what’ll happen to them if they break the magical contract," said Ernie.

"Well I think the idea is that the champion has to be prepared and be on alert not matter what the circumstances are," explained Harry. "Eternal glory and a thousand galleons prize money. That’s your clue. About the repercussion of breaking the contract, I have no idea. So far everyone who put their name in the Triwizard Tournament history didn’t back away."

"That’s it, isn’t it? If Cedric keeps on going like this, Hogwarts will lose, badly."

"Something will come up, I’m sure of it. Just tell Cedric to keep on practicing. He’s our only hope now," said Harry. "The Goblet didn’t choose him for nothing, you know. I’m confident he can get through."

Second period...

Harry was busy tending his Blast-Ended Skrewt when Daphne came up to him. The Gryffindorians were having Care for Magical Creatures together with the Slytherin.

"Hey, Harry," she greeted him.

"Hey, Daphne," greeted Harry without looking back at her. He was busy not trying to get himself injured by the skrewts. At the same time, that rotting fish smell was beginning to get to him. He swore he will lose his sense of smell and his nose will reduce into something not unlike Voldemort’s nostril by the end of the year if this keeps on going.

"I heard someone gave you trouble a few days ago," she said.

Harry paused at this. He turned to look at Daphne who was looking at him expectantly.

"You heard wrong," said Harry as he returned to his skrewt. "There’s really nothing going on."

"So no one's threatening you?" asked Daphne.

Once again Harry paused. He looked around and found Hermione, who was looking furtively at him and Daphne. The bushy haired girl immediately looked away when she saw Harry was staring at her.

"It’s under control," said Harry, returning to his skrewt. "Besides, I’m used to be threatened."
Didn't bother me much. There's nothing to worry about. Teenage hormones. That's what they said."

"I see."

"So you're going to Hogsmeade this weekend?" asked Harry in an attempt to change the topic of the conversation.

"Most likely not," said Daphne. Lucky for Harry, she decided to follow suit.

"Why not?"

"Believe it or not, I'm not fond of places like that, including Diagon Alley. I've grown tired of men flirting with me every time I go to those kinds of places. I've only gone to Hogsmeade once last year, you know the first time we were allowed to visit there. You can't believe the amount of crap men put me through. The Three Broomsticks was the worst. Luckily there was Madam Puddifoot's Tea Shop where I could take refuge. Me and Tracy got back into the castle before noon. She complained about it though. She really wanted to visit all the shops there," explained Daphne.

Harry nodded in understanding. "Poor Tracy," he said, earning a playful jab on the shoulder from Daphne. "Yeah I guess it would be better if you stay away from Hogsmeade this weekend. That small town will be crowded, what with the Tournament next Tuesday."

"I know, right?" said Daphne. "Me and my sister will probably spend our time with our family and cousins on that day."

"Oh, they'll be here too?" asked Harry.

"Yes. Along with Tracy's and many others. They were here yesterday but my parents already went back to London last night along with Tracy's. They promised they'll return this Friday. They'll be staying at the carriage these weekends," said Daphne.

"I saw Cassandra's and Marianne's family but no Delacours," stated Harry.

"Oh so you notice the students-parents reunion party we had yesterday?" asked Daphne to which Harry nodded. "They're here. Her parents arrived early on Friday evening. Aunt Appoline and Gabby will be staying here until after Christmas. Her father had gone back to France this morning but he'll return this weekend. They didn't come out. They stayed inside the carriage all day yesterday."

"I see. Well at least you can look forward to something other than simply being stuck inside the castle for the whole day," said Harry.

Daphne smiled. "Yeah I know. Anyway, Fleur will be busy with her studies, practices and her family throughout this week so if you want to see her, I'm afraid that would be a no. She won't be coming to the castle until probably after the First Task."

Harry just shook his head and smiled. "I assure you I can manage. By the way, send her my regards will you? And tell her I said good luck."

"Sure."

At this point, Hagrid suddenly called out to all the students, telling them the class had reach its end and told them to simply leave the Blast-Ended Skrewt they were tending.

"I hope you can continue keeping that boy's hormone under control," said Daphne to Harry as they both picked up their bags. "Because we won't tolerate those who try to bring harm to someone we cared about. Bad things could happen to him. And please be gentle with Hermione. She simply wants to look out for you."

Daphne then took leave, rejoining the Slytherin as they headed back to the castle.

For some reason, Hermione walked a little bit farther away from Harry and Ron on their way to the castle. But just before they entered the Great Hall, Harry immediately caught up with Hermione and held her back.

"We need to talk," said Harry. Turning to Ron who was looking curiously at them, he said, "You go ahead. We'll catch up in a bit."

Ron just nodded and proceeded to walk into the Great Hall.

Scores of students walked past by as they made their way for lunch. It was not until the entrance courtyard was nearly devoid of students that Harry began to talk.
"I'm not angry," he said.

Harry noticed that Hermione was a lot paler than usual and looked frightened.

"I'm not angry," he repeated. "I promise, I just want to make it clear about something. Look, you're my best friend and I loved you both very much. I know you're just trying to look out for me. Believe me, I am grateful. But I also need a little bit of space and I really don't appreciate being put under the microscope constantly. I don't know what kind of arrangement you had with Fleur, Daphne and her friends but this whole spying on me thing got to stop. Do I make myself clear?"

Hermione who was looking at her feet slowly looked up to him. Then slowly but surely, she nodded. "I'm sorry, Harry. I was just worried," she said. "And you're not helping," she continued, a little bit defiantly.

"The problem is you were being suspicious of me at the same time. Yeah, Ron told me," said Harry upon seeing Hermione's eyes widened. "There're a lot of things you could worry about, Hermione. Those things should not include me. Tell Fleur and her friends that I will be fine. Tell them that I appreciate their concerns. But be it as it may, this whole spying thing need to stop. I'm having none of it."

Hermione stared at him for a very long time. She then slowly nodded.

And without warning, Harry pulled her into a tight hug. This took Hermione by surprise but nevertheless, she reciprocated.

"Everything is going to be alright, Hermione," Harry whispered to her. "Everything is going to be fine. I just need you to be strong. I need them to be strong. Will you do that for me?"

Without Harry knowing, a single tear fell down her cheek.

"I will."

Two days went by without a hitch. Harry had Quidditch practice on Wednesday afternoon. It went really well. The players integrated better than before, much to his satisfaction. Miles was beginning to gel well with the rest of the Gryffindor players that even the twins found nothing they could complaint about.

But come Thursday morning though, he found himself facing a very angry looking Professor McGonagall after Transfiguration class ended. And it was all because of an event that happened the night before:-

Seamus had been following Harry around like a love sick puppy ever since he got possession of the Bulgarian Firewhisky. For some reason, that Irish wizard thought Harry could solve his dilemma. Harry finally caved in on early Wednesday night. He unlocked the bottle, but not after making Seamus promised that he will drink the whisky sparingly and takes only a small amount at a time.

Harry was busy doing revision of the day's lesson with Ron and Hermione when suddenly he heard someone shouting, a little bit slurring, at the top of their lung:-

"WHO'S BIRTHDAY IS IT?!"

All of the common room inhabitants looked up and saw Seamus, face reddened and clad only in his underwear, standing on ledge of the short corridor that led to his dormitory.

"WHO LOVES ME?!"

To everyone astonishment, he jumped down the ledge and made a perfect landing at the middle of the common room.

A group of third year girls screamed and ran away when Seamus jumped to on top of their table and began to dance, grinding his hip in a weird, erotic way.

"Oh no you don't!" yelled George. He and the rest of the sixth year boys rushed to Seamus as the later reached for his underwear and began pulling it down.

"THANK YOU FOR THE FIREWHISKY, HARRY! THANK YOU! I LOVE YOU HARRY!" yelled Seamus as they brought him down the table and carried him up to his dormitory.

All eyes within the common room went towards Harry who was face palming at that time. Ron's mouth opened and closed several times but no words come out. As for Hermione, once again she was bursting with a lot of things to say to him.
"I wouldn't be surprised if this comes from the twins, Mr. Potter," said Professor McGonagall. "But you?"

"I'm so sorry, Professor McGonagall. I really am. I already told him on how he should take it. Apparently he didn't listen," Harry tried to explain.

"Apparently you gave an underage student something unlawful to drink," stated McGonagall. "That is the real cause here, Mr. Potter. The Durmstrang may have more relaxed rules when it comes to drinking but at Hogwarts, we don't. I thought all those rules and regulations we meticulously put in place would at least mean something to you. A formal complaint shall be filed to Professor Karkaroff. Twenty points shall be taken from Gryffindor and you will not be allowed to visit Hogsmeade this Saturday. I would have added detention above all the punishments but the rest of the teachers and myself included are very busy at the moment. Be warned, I will not hesitated to instate it if you toe out of line. Do I make myself clear, Mr. Potter?"

Harry decided not to contest Professor McGonagall's decision. He just nodded and said, "Crystal clear, Professor."

"Good. Then out you go."

He met Ron, Hermione, Dean and Neville outside the classroom. The four of them were waiting for him. They were planning to visit Seamus at the hospital wing after Transfiguration.

"So, how it go?" asked Ron.

"Fantastic," said Harry sarcastically as they began walking towards the hospital wing. "Never better. I had just lost Gryffindor twenty points and I'm not allowed to visit Hogsmeade this coming Saturday. If only Professor McGonagall added a few extra detentions to top it off. That would be great."

"This isn't funny, Harry!" said Hermione.

"I'm not trying to," said Harry. "You really need to learn how to differentiate between being sarcastic and being funny, Hermione."

At the hospital wing...

"I'm sorry, Harry."

They arrived at the hospital wing. Seamus, while still lying on one of the beds, was wide awake after being unconscious for nearly the whole night.

"That's okay, Seamus," said Harry, smiling as he squeezed Seamus's shoulder. "Don't worry about it. It's my fault. I shouldn't have left you alone and unsupervised after I uncorked that bottle. I didn't know that the temptation would be too great for you."

Seamus sighed. "So what did Professor McGonagall have to say? Did she know?"

"Yeah. She knows," said Harry. "Gryffindor now short of twenty points and I'm not allowed to visit Hogsmeade the day after tomorrow. The upside is that since every teacher is busy with the upcoming First Task and everything, I didn't get any detention."

"I could hardly call it an upside, Harry," said Hermione.

"In my case, I take whatever it is I can get, Hermione," said Harry. Turning to Seamus, he asked, "So, any idea when you'll be release from this prison, Seamus?"

"Well she told me that she can let me go today. Apparently there's nothing wrong with me except for being under intoxication. Anyway, mind telling me what really going on last night? I can't remember anything," said Seamus.

Harry and the rest of his friends exchanged glances. Hermione meanwhile was blushing madly.

"What? Tell me, Harry," Seamus repeated the question.

"Well," said Harry, scratching his neck. He was not sure on how to deliver the news to Seamus. "Let just say that starting from last night, your private part is no longer private."

"What?! That's what happened?!"
"Yeah. Pretty much," said Harry. "You were standing on the ledge just outside our dormitory, wearing only your underwear and were yelling at the top of your lungs. You then jumped down, climbed on top of one of the tables and began dancing. You then tried to pull down your underwear. Few of us rushed towards you but it was already too late. Your underwear was already down to your knees. Every single person within the common room saw your Mr. Winny. It wasn't a pretty sight to be honest."

Seamus's mouth opened and closed a few times. "Then what happened?" he croaked.

"You were still babbling like mad when we got you to our dormitory. It was then I found you downed the whole bottle in one go. You keep on trying to pull your underwear down. We decided to bring you to the hospital wing. We dressed you up and carried you out of the tower. Unfortunately, we came across Professor McGonagall who happened to be on the night patrol while on the way there. We tried to shush you but you ended up telling her everything. You even tried to pull down your pants in front of her. You asked her if she wants to see 'it'."

Seamus put his face into his hands and groaned. "I'm so sorry, Harry. Merlin's beard, this is so embarrassing," he said.

Harry once again squeezed Seamus's shoulder. "Don't worry about it, mate. Things happened. Everyone lost their sanity once in a while. She didn't get to see your Mr. Winny so all is good I guess."

They left for the Great Hall five minutes before lunch time.

"So how is he?" asked George who had just arrived together with the rest of his years. Harry was already eating at that time.

"He's good and well," answered Harry. "Told that bloke everything."

"Did you tell him that I nearly ate a bar of soap this morning? I can't unsee it, you know? It gave me nightmares. I really wish I could just wash my brain clean," said Lee, shuddering.

Harry chuckled. "No but I'll make a note of that. I'll tell him the next time I see him."

"So what McGonagall had to say about this?" asked Fred.

"Harry won't be allowed to go to Hogsmeade," interjected Hermione. "And we lost twenty points. He didn't get detentions though."

Fred lifted his eyebrows. "Just twenty? You broke the record by losing us 150 points in your first year, Harry. Where's the fire? Has it gone?"

Harry stared at Fred in disbelief. "I hope you were just being sarcastic, Fred."

"And you didn't even get detentions," stated Lee. "You let us down, Harry."

"On the bright side, at least he wasn't allowed to go to Hogsmeade," stated George. "But you're not going to let that stop you, eh Harry?"

George then winked at Harry.

Harry's mouth crooked into a smile. "Definitely not," he said.

"See? He's still has a sliver of hope in him. He's still salvageable," said George to Fred and Lee.

"And we praise the Maker for it," said Fred and Lee in unison.

Harry turned to look at Hermione who was staring at him in exasperation.

"You are going to do it, aren't you?" asked Hermione. Lunch time had ended. They were on their way to the DADA classroom.

"Yes."

Hermione just sighed. "Just- try to be careful. Professor McGonagall will throw a fit if she ever finds out."

"Don't worry, Hermione. She won't. Anyway, I already made a promise. I can't back away now, can I?"

"A promise?" asked Hermione curiously. "To whom?"
Harry did not answer at first. They were walking with the rest of the fourth year on their way to Professor Moody's class.

"I'll tell you later."

To be continued...
"Harry, why me and Hermione never know about this?"

The DADA class had ended. True to what everyone said, the class had become too boring. Moody was no longer as super charged as he 'used' to be. He was more contented to follow the syllabus outlined by the school rigidly rather than introducing some of his own persona to the teaching which meant that there were more talking, less action. But of course, this Moody was an ex-auror who mostly let his wand do the talking when he was still under the Ministry employment and had zero teaching experience. Unlike the other Moody who was in fact an impostor.

Everyone was beginning to talk about how far more enjoyable Professor Lupin's classes were despite knowing that he was a werewolf.

The Beauxbaton also no longer attended Moody's classes after the incident with Harry.

The trio was on their way back to the Gryffindor Tower when Harry told them about his plan for Saturday. He purposely waited for everyone else to leave before he talked.

"I was going to," lied Harry. Once again he felt bad about it but circumstances dictated that he had no other choices. He did not want to tell them at first but after realizing that both Hermione and Ron would expected him to join them for the whole duration of the visit, it would make things a lot difficult for him. Also, telling them that he did not intend to tell them his plan would produce even more questions, something that he keenly wanted to avoid. "It just slipped out of my mind," he continued.

"It doesn't matter," said Hermione. "Don't worry about it. The problem is how are you going to meet him given that you were barred from going to Hogsmeade?"

"When there is a will, there is a way."

"Knew you would say that," said Hermione, shaking her head. "Well in that case, we're coming with you."

Harry abruptly stopped walking.

"What is it, Harry?" asked Hermione, mirroring him.

"No, you guys can't," said Harry.

Perplexed, Hermione asked, "But why not?"

The truth was, he really did not want them to accompany him to see Sirius, given his true intention on meeting his godfather. He won't be able to talk as freely if Ron and Hermione were there. He had plans and he much rather his two friends not know about it. Lucky for him, a strong excuse was already at hand.

"Sirius is a fugitive, in case you both forgot about that," he said. "And that incident with Wormtail happened just a few months ago. The Ministry is still hot on his trail. What they didn't know is that he's somewhere near here. Now Hogsmeade will be packed with students, visitors, spectators, journalists and the likes. Aurors will be there too. Security will be tightened. People will ask question if they saw three students walked out into the woods when they shouldn't. He will be exposed and when that happens, it would be Azkaban all over again for him. He may not be able to escape the second time. He's prime for the Dementor Kiss, remember? I can't let that happen. I hope you both understand."

"But Harry, they will notice you too. It's still the same thing. Besides, you're not allowed anywhere outside the school compound, remember?" said Hermione. "If they find out-"

"I know my way in and out if you've forgotten about that," Harry cut her off. "And I know how to make myself invisible. You worried too much, Hermione. Besides, I'm just going to send him some food and a few stuffs that will make his life a bit more comfortable. Nothing fancy."

Hermione bit her lips. It took some time before she finally nodded.

"Alright Harry, if that's what you say," she said. "Are there anything we could help?"

Harry pondered for a moment.

"Well, you could start by acting normally the whole day tomorrow," he said. "If anyone asks, just tell them I'm stuck at the castle and couldn't get out. I'll be brooding inside the dormitory
lamenting my fate for not being able to spend the day visiting Hogsmeade. Just buy a few things for me just in case. I'll pay you back later. If I manage to get back early, I'll find you two at Hogsmeade."

But Hermione shook her head.

"No, you better not," she said. "I think you should just go back straight to the castle after your meeting with Sirius ends. I'm still uncomfortable knowing that someone might see you where they shouldn't. Remember last year? I'll buy something for you before me and Ron goes back."

Harry just shrugged.

"Suit yourself," he said. "Come on. Let's go back to our dormitory. There's something else I need to do before this day ends. Say, do you both want to follow me to the kitchen?"

"Harry, we're not allowed inside the kitchen!" said Hermione.

"I want to go to the kitchen," said Ron. "Who knows what we'll find in there."

"I know what else you'll find in there. More food," said Hermione.

Harry gave an odd look at Hermione. How ironic it was when in fact back in the old timeline, she was the one who urged Harry to follow her to the kitchen. She was the one who broke the rule before he and Ron did.

"I already got the permission, Hermione," said Harry.

"From who?"

"Dumbledore. He knows about Sirius and he wants to help. He gave me permission to raid the kitchen anytime I want. He even provided sleeping bags for Sirius. Now do you want to tag along or not?" said Harry.

Hermione hesitated.

"I don't know, Harry," she said. "I got things to do too this afternoon."

"Like going to the Beauxbaton carriage, perhaps?" guessed Harry, smirking.

Hermione immediately went silent.

"It's okay, Hermione. Whatever it is, I'm glad that you become their friends and of Daphne. But I must impress the importance of keeping what we just talk about a secret. Can I count on you on that?" asked Harry.

Hermione thought for a moment. Harry could almost see the gears grinding inside her head. He knew she was hesitating. Or maybe she was planning a work around, who knows? Girls were so complicated, at least to him.

"I won't tell," Hermione gave a short reply.

Harry nodded. He'll just have to accept that for now and hope that Hermione would stick to her words.

"Come on, Ron," he said.

Harry and Ron quickly changed their uniforms. Once done, Harry opened up his trunk and grabbed the beaded bag Dumbledore gave him. Before he left, he looked around.

The rest of his dorm mate had yet to return.

"What's that?" asked Ron, pointing to the beaded bag Harry was carrying with him as they walked through and out of the portrait hole. Hermione did not accompany them this time.

"Something Dumbledore gave me many nights ago," said Harry as they both walked towards the Great Hall. "It'll help me to store all the things I'm going to bring to Sirius."

"That small?"

Harry stared at Ron in disbelief.


"Oh, right."
They reached the entrance of the Great Hall but they did not go in. Instead Harry turned right towards the marble staircase that led down and into the Entrance Hall. They walked down the staircase and Harry immediately turned left once they reached the bottom with Ron following him. They then hurried towards a door. Harry opened it and they found a flight of stone steps that went further down in front of them.

"Where are we, Harry?" asked Ron as they walked down the steps.

"Somewhere beneath the Great Hall," answered Harry, his voice echoed through the passage as they made their descent. "This is the same path Hufflepuffs use to return to their common room. Come on."

Once they reached at the bottom, they found themselves in a brightly lit stone corridor. Cheerful paintings of foods decorated the wall on both sides of the corridor.

"Hufflepuff's common room entrance is dead ahead," explained Harry as they both walked along the corridor. "But that's not where we're going to. Ah, here it is."

They stopped in front of a painting of a green pear inside a gigantic silver fruit bowl.

"So now what?" asked Ron.

Harry did not answer. Instead he stretched out his forefinger to the painting and began tickling the huge green pear. The pear squirmed, chuckled and all of a sudden turned into a large green door handle. Harry grabbed it and began pulling the door opened. They both then made their entrance.

"Blimey!" marveled Ron.

They both found themselves inside an enormous, high ceiling room, as large as the Great Hall above it. Lots of glittering brass pots and pans heaped around the stone walls and right at the farthest end of room was a great big fire place.

Harry however could only briefly appreciated the view in front of him when all of a sudden something small and fast knocked the wind out of him.

"Harry Potter, Sir! Harry Potter!"

Harry looked down and saw a small elf hugging him hard at his midriff, so tightly that he thought his ribs would break. He recognized who that elf was.

"Dobby?" he gasped.

"It is Dobby, sir! It is!" squealed the voice from somewhere around his navel. "Dobby has been hoping and hoping to see you, sir, and today he got his wish granted. Oh, this is the happiest day of his life, Harry Potter!"

Dobby then let go of him and took a few steps back. He beamed up at Harry, his enormous, green, tennis ball shaped eyes were brimming with tears.

Dobby looked almost exactly as the last time Harry saw him. That pencil shaped long nose, that bat like ears, that long and thin fingers and legs. Except for the clothes he currently wore. It remained a strange mixture of garments, socks, singlets, underwears, but it was definitely a lot better than what he wore when he was still under the Malfoy's servitude.

And also better than when he died in Harry's arm.

Harry remembered Dobby's death really well. The loyal house elf died by Bellatrix's silver dagger in the midst of a rescue effort. Harry, Ron, Hermione and several others including Ollivander. They all survived Malfoy Manor except for Dobby.

That incident had a profound effect on Harry. His respect for the house elves would only grow from there. Their loyalties were second to none, something that Harry found lacking even among the human wizards and muggles alike. He ended up treating his own house elves including Kreacher really well because of that. He even arranged for a proper burial when Kreacher died.

Dobby did not only save his life. He changed him. And he would keep on thinking about Dobby for the rest of his life.

Harry knelt down on one knee in front of Dobby.

"How are you, Dobby?" he asked, smiling.

"Dobby is fine, sir Harry Potter," said the house elf excitedly. But he then suddenly paused.
"You did not look surprised to see him, sir."

Harry chuckled. "Actually I am kind of expecting you here. When did you arrived, Dobby?"

"Many weeks ago," answered Dobby. "Dobby came to Hogwarts to see Professor Dumbledore. He gave Dobby and Winky jobs, sir."

"Winky? She's here?" said Ron.

Winky was Bartemius Crouch former house elf. Both Harry and Ron remembered the incident at the Quidditch World Cup clearly like it just happened yesterday. In a fit of rage, Bartemius expelled Winky from his household despite the house elf's pleas.

"Yes sir, yes!" said Dobby. He then pulled Harry's hand and pulled him off into the kitchen between the four long wooden tables that were somehow positioned exactly beneath the four House Tables within the Great Hall above. At the moment, half of the tables were already laden with food. Dinnertime would arrive within an hour or so. Some of the elves were busy with the cooking and preparing foods. But even when busy working, they would still bowing and curtsying when Harry and Ron walked past them. They were all wearing the same uniform consisted of a tea towel stamped with Hogwarts crest and tied like a toga.

Dobby stopped in front of the big fireplace and pointed.

"That's Winky, sir!" said Dobby. Winky was sitting on a stool close by the fire. Her eyes were close, in her hand there was a bottle. She was still wearing the same garment the night Bartemius disowned her. It was filthy. Soup stains covered all of her blouse. And there was a burnt hole on her skirt.

The female house elf must have drank herself to sleep.

Harry, knowing that there would be nothing he could do for her at this point, decided that it would better to leave Winky alone.

"I think we should just leave her alone," he said to Dobby. "But you could keep an eye on her just in case, could you, Dobby?"

"Of course, Harry Potter," replied Dobby. "Would Harry Potter and his friend like a cup of tea?" he offered.

Harry glanced at Ron.

The ginger head boy nodded at him.

"Sure," said Harry.

Almost instantly, about six house elves came trotting up behind them carrying a tray laden with a teapot, cups and a large plate of biscuits.

Dobby whisked them towards a small table not far from the fireplace. The house elves placed the fully laden tray on the table and Harry and Ron took their seats.

"Good service!" said Ron, impressed.

The house elves looked delighted. They bowed very low and retreated, returning to their chores.

"Lucky Hermione isn't here," said Ron as Dobby passed a cup of piping hot tea to him. "She's going to burst a blood vessel in her brain if she finds out what it's like being here."

Harry just nodded. He muttered thanks to Dobby when he received his own cup of tea.

Dobby then just stood there expectantly, beaming at him. "Would there be anything else, sir?" he asked.

Harry knew that the next logical thing to do was to ask Dobby about his adventure after being freed from Malfoy. But the thing was, he already knew those and he was not keen on repeating the question. Besides, it was not that Ron would even bother with it. The boy was busy with his biscuits to concentrate on anything else.

"Actually there is," he said. "That is, if you can help."

"Of course, sir! Dobby can help! Just tell him anything! He will do it!" squeaked Dobby in delight.

"Alright. Calm down, Dobby," said Harry, smiling at the overexcited elf. He took out the
beaded bag out of his pocket and handed it over to Dobby, who received it gladly. "I need you
to fill this up with food," he said. He paused a moment before continuing, "Maybe some soap
and shampoo while you're at it. I will need it on Saturday morning. Can you do it?"

Dobby gave Harry a salute. "Of course, Harry Potter! Dobby will have it ready for you, sir, on
Saturday morning. He could also send it to Harry Potter's dormitory if sir Harry Potter wants
him to."

"Well if you could do that, yeah why not," said Harry, thinking that it would make his job a lot
easier.

"Then Dobby shall do it!"

They both stayed inside the kitchen for the whole afternoon, watching the house elves doing
their chores.

"Come on, Ron," said Harry, looking at the wall clock. "It's nearly dinner."

"Alright."

They both stood up. Dobby, knowing that the boys were about to leave, came hurriedly back to
them, carrying assorted snacks, cake and pies for them to take back upstairs. Ron took them
but Harry declined, much to Dobby's disappointment. But he told Dobby that he will be having
dinner in the Great Hall. That somehow perked the little elf a bit.

The four long tables creaked under heavy load foods on top of them as they walked past by.
Harry suddenly stopped and turned to Ron.

"Want to see something cool, Ron? Take a look."

They then stood there, watching the tables intently. Seconds ticking by. And right on schedule,
all the foods turned into really bright pillars of white light that shoot up through the ceiling,
leaving the table completely empty.

"Wicked," said Ron in awe.

They made their exit, only to be greeted by someone else who apparently, was waiting outside
the kitchen for them.

Professor Dumbledore.

Ron's face ashen, thinking that he had broken the rule or something. Harry though remained
calm. Putting his hand on Ron's shoulder, he said, "Professor Dumbledore, I didn't expect you
to be here. Were you waiting for us? You did give me your permission, remember?"

Professor Dumbledore smiled.

"Of course I remember, Harry," said Dumbledore. "You can tell Mr. Weasley here that he's not
exactly in trouble."

"Not exactly?"

"The permission is given only to you, Harry. But I am willing to forgive Mr. Weasley. For now. I
must impress that Hogwarts kitchen remains as one of the highest security area for reasons
that I think you understand. Don't let other students let you to believe otherwise," said
Dumbledore seriously.

Harry nodded. "Understood, professor."

Dumbledore's smile returned. "Now, do you have everything?" he asked.

"Not yet but Dobby will take care of it," replied Harry. "He will have it ready by Saturday
morning. While we are on the subject, I would like to thank you for accepting Dobby as part of
your staff."

"You're welcome," said Dumbledore. He then turned towards Ron and spoke, "Now, Mr.
Weasley. Harry and I have some important matter to discuss. Will you please excuse us?"

"Yes, sir," said Ron. "Of course, sir."

"I'll see you at dinner, Ron," said Harry.

"See ya, Harry."
Ron immediately departed.

Harry spoke after Ron walked up the stone steps and disappeared out of sight, "What is it, professor?"

Dumbledore's smile immediately disappeared; the initial expression was replaced by a grim looking concern.

"Kingsley, together with a few members of the Order raided Lestrange Manor two nights ago," he began. "They found nothing, Harry."

"Are you sure?" asked Harry. "Have they check everything? Do they know how the cup looks like?"

"They left no stone unturned," said Dumbledore. "And yes they know what the cup looks like. They also went to the house once owned by Hepzibah Smith. Her granddaughter now lived there. They found nothing as well."

Harry deflated. He sighed and said, "So now Gringotts is all that is left."

"Just for the sake of satisfying my own curiosity, Harry, but what really happened the last time? I guess that you manage to get your hands on the cup one way or another," said Dumbledore.

"Yes, I manage to obtain the cup," admitted Harry. "Half of Gringotts building destroyed in the process. It wasn't pretty, professor."

Dumbledore nodded. "I see. Well I hope it would not come to that."

But Harry shook his head. "I can't guarantee that, professor. All I know that as long as one horcrux exists, Tom can never die. I think you of all the people understand that fact the most. But of course if there is another way to get that cup out without dealing Gringotts too much damage, I'll take it."

"We shall see about that, Harry. We shall find a way, I promise. Now it's already dinner time. Let's get you to the Great Hall," said Dumbledore.

Together, they walked towards the stone steps.

"You do know that I was banned from visiting Hogsmeade," stated Harry.

"Yes," said Dumbledore casually. "Professor McGonagall informed me everything about the incident regarding you and Mr. Finnigan. She was extremely embarrassed by Mr. Finnigan's action that she considered much sterner actions to both of you. Lucky for you, she backed down eventually and considered the current punishments were more than enough. She did lodge a complaint to Professor Karkaroff though."

"So Seamus is also being punished as well as me?"

"Yes. Another twenty points deducted from Gryffindor and he won't be allowed to visit Hogsmeade this weekend," said Dumbledore.

"You know I'm going to break the rules and yet you will do nothing," stated Harry.

Dumbledore somehow smiled widely at this.

"My dear boy, I am merely suspicious of what you're going to do," he said. "And I cannot act merely on suspicions. I have to see the crime being committed before any action can be taken which is why on this Saturday, I shall lock myself inside the headmaster office with all the curtains close, have the food and drink be sent to me while I sit on my chair plucking lemon drops into my mouth, blissfully unaware of the comings and goings inside the castle. Ah, I think we had just arrived."

They both indeed had arrived at the entrance into the Great Hall.

"I shall leave you here, Harry," said Dumbledore. "Give my regards to Padfoot, would you?"

"Of course, sir," replied Harry.

Dumbledore then took leave, heading towards the headmaster office.

"So what does he want?" asked Ron, watching Harry took the seat in front of him.

"He just wants me to send Padfoot his regards. That's all, Ron. And a few other stuffs. Nothing important," said Harry.
"Who's Padfoot?" asked Dean, who at that time, happened to be sitting right beside Harry and can't help but to eavesdrop in Harry's conversation.

"Just... someone I know, Dean."

Dean just shrugged and immediately returned to his meal and Ginny.

That late night with his Invisibility Cloak covering him, Harry sneaked out of the Gryffindor Tower and made his way towards the owlery.

Friday had been unkind to Seamus.

And to some extent to Harry as well.

The story of what happened on Wednesday night inside the Gryffindor Tower spread all over the school. Virtually everyone knew, both the students and the staffs. And to make matters worse, not only they knew about Seamus's antics in details that night, they also knew that Harry was behind it. Both genders reacted differently to the news though. Both Harry and Seamus got a pat on their back given by nearly every male student they met, thinking that it was the best prank they had ever seen throughout their school years.

As for the girls, shaking their heads was all they could do. Even Daphne who usually would become extremely talkative whenever Harry was around was lost for words. She did mouthed 'She will know about this' to him during Double Potions that afternoon though.

True to what Dumbledore said, Seamus was given the same punishment as Harry's. He was barred from leaving the castle on Saturday and Gryffindor lost forty points in total.

Saturday came.

Everyone woke up early that morning. They were all excited about the itinerary that day. Arrangements were made on the previous night. Friends made promise with friends. Couples made promise with each other. All of them would be going to the same destination.

Hogsmeade.

Not all of them shared the enthusiasm of course. All students below the third years were one of them. And then there were Harry and Seamus.

Harry woke early that morning along with the rest of his dorm mates. But instead of performing his morning routines, he simply lay on his bed, idly watching Ron, Dean and Neville made preparation for the outing.

"I'll see you in a bit, Harry," said Ron, while at the same time winking at Harry as he made his exit.

"Okay. Have fun you three," said Harry.

"Harry, do you want to go to breakfast?" asked Seamus after their dorm mates disappeared behind the door. He had already taken his shower and changed his clothes.

Harry however shook his head. "No. I think I'm going to have a lie in for today. You go ahead, Seamus."

Seamus sighed in frustration and shook his head as he walked out of the dormitory. Harry heard him mumbling just as he closed the door behind him.

Harry waited for a couple of minutes. After he was sure that his dorm mates won't make their return that very instance, he leaped out of his bed and made his way towards the bathroom.

Dobby was already waiting for him when he got out of the bathroom.

"Harry Potter, sir. Dobby is bringing the item as he requested," said the house elf, bowing deeply to Harry.

"Thank you, Dobby," said Harry as he received the beaded bag from Dobby.

"Is there anything else he wants Dobby to do?"

Harry shook his head.

"No. That would be all for today. You can go back to the kitchen, Dobby. I will of course call out to you if I need anything else," he said.
"Of course, Master Harry," said Dobby, once again bowed deeply to him. "Dobby is glad to be of service to sir Harry Potter."

With that, Dobby vanished, leaving Harry finally alone inside the dormitory.

Harry quickly put on his clothes. He opened his trunk and grabbed his Invisible Cloak and a bag of money. Despite what Hermione said, he intended to visit Hogsmeade after his meeting with Sirius. There was a small jewellery store where girls loved to visit in Hogsmeade. Maybe he could find something for Fleur as a token of their friendship.

He then put the items together with the beaded bag inside the pocket of his hoodies. And without further ado, he spun and dissipated out of the dormitory.

With a pop, Harry appeared out of thin air at somewhere near the outskirt of Hogsmeade. He knew where he was. He was now within the wild countryside that surrounded Hogsmeade. There was a lane in front of him. That lane led to the foot of the mountains and to the location where Sirius will meet him. He just hoped that his godfather got the message he sent out earlier on Thursday night.

After ensuring that no one else was there but him, he pulled his hood over his head and began walking up the winding and increasingly steep lane until he reached the fork where Sirius promised to meet him.

And indeed, his godfather was there. In a shape of a big black, shaggy dog. There were newspapers inside his mouth. Harry knew what those newspapers were for.

"Hello Padfoot," said Harry as he knelt down and began petting the dog.

The dog let out a bark. It sniffed Harry's pocket hopefully, wagged his tail once, turned around and began trotting away from him along the lane the led higher towards the foot of the mountain. Harry followed him until they both reached a stile at the end of the lane. The dog jumped over the stile. Harry followed the dog by climbing over the stile.

Harry remembered that stile. It was the location where he, Hermione and Ron met Sirius back in the old timeline.

Sirius led him to the very foot of the mountain where the ground was covered with rocks and boulders. Easy for a dog but for a human, it was a difficult terrain. One slip and one could end up in the deep ravine hundreds of feet below. Luckily for Harry, his experience as an auror thought him on how to deal with such terrain. He knew where to put his foot safely and which surface offered the most grip. That and the fact that his younger body felt lighter mean that he could cruise through the boulders and rocks with minimal effort and difficulties.

After nearly an hour walking up the steep and winding path, they finally reached their destination. Sirius slipped through a narrow fissure in the rock. Harry followed him and once inside, he witnessed Sirius's transformation back into a man.

Sirius was wearing the same old ragged grey robes he wore when he escaped Azkaban. His hair was a lot longer and untidy than Harry remembered. He was also very thin. He of course looked better the last time Harry saw him at Grimmauld Place.

"Did you bring it?" asked Sirius hopefully after he removed the newspapers from his mouth.

Harry smiled at him. "Yes, I bring it."

He then dug into his hoodies pocket and handed the beaded bag over to Sirius.

Sirius received the bag gratefully and muttered thanks. He then began emptying the bag and spread it contents on the floor all around him.

"What's this?" he asked Harry when he pulled out a sleeping bag out of the bag.

"Sleeping bag," said Harry who had found a nice small boulder for him to sit on. "I brought two. Dumbledore told me to give them to you. It'll help to make your night a little bit more comfortable. He sent you his regards."

"Well, that's nice of him," said Sirius. He pulled the sleeping bags completely out of the bag and put them aside. He dived into the bag once again and this time, he pulled out several bar of soaps and bottles of shampoo. He showed them to Harry.


Harry grinned. "Let's be honest, you're not only look filthy, you smell like one. I think a wet dog smell nicer than you," he said. "Those things can help you with that."
Sirius just grumbled as he put aside those bars of soap and shampoos, making Harry's grin even wider.

"What I need is a pair of new clothes, boy," said Sirius.

"I thought of that but I don't know your size. Sorry," said Harry.

And for the next few minutes, Harry sat and watched silently as Sirius devoured the chickens, breads, cakes and pies he brought him. The way Sirius ate made him hungry. Of course in his excitement to meet his godfather, Harry forgot to take his breakfast. But he decided that he won't take anything from Sirius. He could have a full satisfying meal back in the castle. Sirius might have to start catching mice once again after this.

Even at this point, Harry had a hard time to convince himself that this man in front of him was really alive. He saw Sirius fell through veil. That episode in his life hit him really hard.

Harry suddenly heard a sound. He turned towards the source of the sound and saw a half grey horse, half giant eagle tethered firmly at the other end of Sirius's cavern. He recognized that animal. It was Buckbeak.

"Thank goodness for this," said Sirius as he dug his teeth into a large succulent drumstick. "I've been living off rats mostly. Can't steal too much from Hogsmeade. I'll draw attention to myself."

Harry did not spoke. He just continued to watch Sirius eating.

"Things aren't going too well outside of Hogwarts if you want to know," continued Sirius. He was now munching on a slice of pie. "I've been stealing newspapers every time someone throws one out and from the look of it, I'm not the only one who's getting worried. What with the incident at the Quidditch World Cup and all."

"What have you heard, Sirius?"

"Rumors regarding the Death Eaters," said Sirius. "And of Barty Crouch."

Harry's eyebrows creased.

"Barty?" he said. "What about him?"

"A couple of weeks ago he was completely absent from work. Also there were no public appearance whatsoever. Knowing Barty, that was odd. There were a lot of rumors concerning his well being and everything. Not that I'm interested in it. Then all of a sudden, he showed up a few days ago, completely healthy and all. It was like nothing ever happened," said Sirius.

"He returned to his office," stated Harry.

Sirius nodded.

"I see that Arthur's son became his personal assistant," he said. "Saw that in the Daily Prophet."

"Yeah. Percy. I think he is in love with Barty," said Harry, adjusting the way he sat. "Probably wouldn't go back to the Burrow if nobody forces him to. He could announce his engagement with Barty any day now."

Sirius sneered in disgust.

"Is that so? Huh! Never like that boy anyway. There would always be one bad apple in every family, Harry," said Sirius.

"No doubt," agreed Harry.

"Any news on Wormtail?" asked Sirius.

Harry shook his head. "No. That vermin probably found his way back to his master. But we'll find a way to get him back. He's the key to your freedom after all."

Sirius paused at this.

"Is he? I honestly don't care anymore, Harry."

"You no longer care about your freedom?" asked Harry.

"I do," said Sirius. "It just that, things aren't the same anymore."

"I know. That is why I'm here. Fulfilling my duty as your godfather. If anything happens, I want to be the first to arrive at the scene."

All the foods were finally wiped clean. Sirius gathered all the chicken bones and threw it all at Buckbeak who gladly took it all up. He wiped his hands off his robes and proceeded to grab a flask containing pumpkin juice. He open it and downed it all in one go.

Wiping his mouth using the back of his hand, he asked, "Got anymore story to tell, Harry?"

"Not much."

Sirius placed the flask back into the beaded bag and hand it over back to Harry. Harry took it and put it back into his pocket.

"How's your scar? Does it still hurt?" asked Sirius as he chose another boulder not far from Harry and sat on it.

"It comes and goes," replied Harry.

He was not keen on repeating the same conversation he had in the previous timeline. He was not keen talking about Bartemius Crouch, what the old man did to Sirius, the incident at the World Cup, Winky, the Dark Mark and everything for he already knew it all. He just wanted to concentrate on the true reason he was here now with Sirius.

"But that's not the reason why I'm here," he continued.

"Oh? Then what is it?" asked Sirius.

"How much do you remember about your home, Sirius?" asked Harry.

Sirius's eyebrows creased. "You mean No. 12, Grimmauld Place? Yes I remember it. Really well. What about it?"

"Do you think you could still access it?"

Sirius's eyebrows creased even further.

"I'm not going back to that place, Harry," said Sirius sternly.

"I know you hated that place, Sirius. And I know that London is dangerous for you at this time. But Sirius, I really need to get inside your house. This is important. I won't ask you if it's not," said Harry. "You're the only one who could help me."

"Why? What's so important about that house?" asked Sirius curiously.

"It's not about the house. It's about something that being kept inside the house. I need to retrieve it. Old houses that belong to magical families will undoubtedly have protections built into them. In your house cases, you're the key to unlock those protections," explained Harry.

"What things? Can't Dumbledore help?"

"You'll see it when we get there. No, Dumbledore can't help. I could call in Curse Breakers but even then there won't be any guarantee that they will succeed. It has to be you, Sirius," said Harry in earnest.

Sirius stood up and began pacing around the cave in silence. He ran his fingers through his hair, shook his head, turned to face Harry and said, "I can't do it. Sorry."

"Sirius, you have to," said Harry, now also standing up.

"I just got out of Azkaban, Harry," said Sirius. "I'm not going back in there."

"I know that," said Harry. "It's true that the Ministry was keeping a close watch on Grimmauld Place. But Dumbledore already made his move. With Kingsley help, he had slowly replaced all the aurors tasked to patrol the area with the ones from the Order. Kingsley also had been feeding the Ministry false information on your where about. That's why they failed to catch you. It wasn't just your ingenuity that saved you, Sirius. It's the culmination of work of a lot of people."

"So Dumbledore is in as well?" asked Sirius.

Harry nodded.
"Yes. He and everyone else. We're just waiting for you."

Sirius sighed.

"I don't know, Harry," he said in hesitation.

Harry walked up to Sirius and put his hand on Sirius shoulder.

"Look, you're among the bravest man that I know, Sirius. You're a risk taker. I know you're not afraid of the Ministry. They were just your excuses. You're afraid to face your past and you refused to get over your hatred. But the thing is, if you keep doing that, there won't be any future for any of us. Face your past. Put aside your hatred. You got to do this. We all got to," said Harry.

Sirius stared at Harry for a long time.

"I need some time, Harry," he said finally.

Harry nodded.

"And you shall have it," he said. "But I hope in the end, you would agree."

Harry stayed inside Sirius's cavern for another half an hour. He met Buckbeak and proceeded to pet him. Sirius took this advantage to tell Harry his adventure after his narrow escape from Hogwarts.

"Harry?"

Sirius called out to him just as Harry was about to walk out the cavern. Harry stopped and turned around to look at him.

"You really look like James. And you have your mother's eyes," said Sirius.

Harry smiled.

"Yeah. I know."

Harry made his exit. After walking a few paces away from the cave entrance, Harry spun and dissaparated out of there.

He popped into existence within a back alley in Hogsmeade. He looked up and down the alley. After ensuring that there was no one else there but him, he pulled his hood over his head and walked into the high street, merging unnoticeably with the crowd.

It was nearly noon. Hogsmeade was jam packed with people. All accommodations including the Three Broomstick were full in anticipation of the First Task of the Triwizard Tournament. Harry slowly eased his way through the crowd until he found what he was looking for. He knew that Ron and Hermione had not gone back to the castle yet. He decided not to look for them.

The Madam Popkins Jewellery Shop was located right beside Gladrags Wizardwear, a sock shop. And as anticipated, there were a lot of Hogwarts female students in there.

Harry eased his way in. This was the first time he entered the shop. He began to look around.

Madam Popkins shop sells mostly cheap jewelleries - beads, necklaces, rings, earrings, tiaras, bracelets - the one that the students and the inhabitant of the village can afford. But it was no mean of low quality. As a matter a fact as Harry could testify as he looked around, the quality of the goods was on par with the one sold in Diagon Alley.

Rows and rows of necklace and bracelets hanged on the walls. And inside the glass display one could find rings, earrings, tiaras, beads in many shapes, sizes and forms. The shop could also create custom jewellery if a customer fancied it.

After a few minutes of looking, Harry found a really beautiful necklace with swirly pattern made out of silver. A light blue opal stone was encrusted at the center of that necklace. The necklace was kept inside a beautiful opened box of the same color as the opal. He knew that it will match perfectly with her eyes.

That necklace cost a little bit but Harry bought it anyway. Thinking that it would be odd that only Fleur receiving gift from him, Harry bought assorted jewelleries for her friends, Daphne, Tracy and Hermione.

Fifteen minutes later, he walked out of the shop, laden with a bag full of jewelleries.
Rejoining the crowd, he made his way down the street until he reached the location where the school carriages were waiting to bring back students from Hogsmeade. He jumped into one and the carriage immediately drove off.

Harry jumped off the carriage the moment they arrived. Feeling lucky that there was no one else waiting at the bottom of the marble staircase that led up to the Entrance Hall, Harry immediately walked down the school compound towards the Beauxbaton carriage.

But just as he got nearer to the carriage, his heart stopped. He quickly took cover in one of the bushes and watched.

He did not expect to see him there.

To be continued...

A/n: To those who are well verse in the GoF book, you'll know I changed a bit regarding Dobby to suit this story.
Chapter 38

Aftermath and Revelation - A flashback

"text" - conversation in English

"text" - conversation in French/Bulgarian depending on the speaker

Text - thought

Her car skidded to a halt on the gravel right in front of the marble entrance steps. She exited the car and walked up the steps hurriedly and entered the chateau. The sound of the door slamming hard behind her echoed through the chateau’s lobby.

She walked past the house elf who was staring at her in confusion and was about to walk up the grand marble staircase when someone else called out to her:-

"Fleur?"

She turned around to look.

It was her mother. She came in from the living room. There was a book in her hand. Apparently the noise Fleur made when she made her entrance distracted her mother’s reading so her mother decided to take a look.

Appoline noticed the look on her daughter’s face and her eyebrows creased. She put down her book on top a small table nearby and walked up to Fleur.

"Is there anything wrong, honey?" asked Appoline gently. Her voice however laced with deep concern. She caressed her daughter’s cheek and asked again, "What happened?"

Fleur shook her head.

"Nothing happened, mama," replied Fleur. She concocted a faint smile. "I'm fine. I'm just... a little bit tired."

Appoline nodded. She then noticed that Fleur was alone.

"Where is Harry?" she asked.

Apparently Fleur noticed that too. In her anger, she had totally forgotten all about him. She was supposed to bring him back to the chateau for dinner with her family that evening. She instead left him alone at the park at the bank of River Isere.

Not that it matters anyway. It was his fault. He should not have done it.

"He could not come. He apologized," said Fleur.

"I see," spoke Appoline. She then smiled and grabbed both Fleur’s hands, gave them a squeeze and said, "You do look tired. Go and get some rest. We’ll have dinner together once your father arrives from work."

Fleur nodded. She then leaned forward and allowed her mother to kiss her on both cheeks before retreating to her bedroom.

Appoline’s eyes followed her daughter as Fleur climbed the staircase and disappeared behind the door of her bedroom.

She knew that Fleur lied to her.

Fleur put her bag on the dressing table and threw herself onto her bed. Staring at the ceiling, the memory of the event on that day went through her mind.

She could not believe that Harry would have the audacity to do that to her. She could not believe that he would propose. What did he think she was, a widow who craved men’s attention? Was that what she was in the eyes of men? That she could not live without them?

Maybe she should not have greeted him back at the Elysee Palace. Maybe she should have left him alone and allowed him to do his job as he was supposed to. Maybe she should have remembered her lesson that when it comes to her, men will always misunderstand. They will always misunderstand her intention, even when it was
plainly obvious that she just wanted to be friends. Not more than that.

Harry clearly misunderstood her. Like every other man, he thought that she wanted to strike a relationship with him. He was wrong. Dead wrong.

She just wanted to be friends with him for he, apart from Hermione and the Weasleys, were the only connections she got left with the British Isle. The war had inevitably brought all of them closer together. Fleur did not want to lose any of them. She knew that Hermione and the Weasleys would write to her. Except Harry. She knew him too well that he definitely won’t do the same if nobody goaded him which was why she made Harry agree to write to her before she left the Burrow after Bill’s funeral.

Much to her disappointment, despite the agreement, he still did not write to her. Only letters from Hermione and Molly provided solace to her. It was only after their reunion at the Elysee Palace that things changed between them.

Harry was a good man. She knew that. But despite his heroic tribute during the war, he would still be that ‘leetle boy’ she first met within that chamber after the Triwizard Champion selection to her eyes.

For her love remained only to Bill. And to Bill alone. And nothing and no one would ever change that.

She rolled to her side and laid her eyes on that one single framed portrait that was now perching proudly on top of her bedside table. It was a picture of her and Bill in their happier times. They both, standing side by side and hugging each other tightly, were smiling and waving at her. Her head can be seen resting on Bill’s chest. She extended her hand and slowly her finger caressed Bill in that picture. It was in the moments like this that she began to miss her late husband so much.

She sighed. Retracting her hand, she got off the bed and walked towards her dressing table. She rummaged her handbag and took out her phone and began checking for any text or call she might miss.

She was half expecting that her phone would be inundated by lots of missed calls and text messages from Harry. There were none.

Shaking her head, Fleur put down her phone on top of her dressing table and made her way to the bathroom.

Dinner that night was a silent affair. There were only three of them. Gabrielle was at Beauxbaton. Summer school break won’t arrive for another few months. Both Monsieur Delacour and Appoline glanced at each other. They knew that something had gone wrong. Fleur was unusually silent and looked sullen that night.

After helping her mother washed the dishes, she went back to her room. The first thing she checked was her phone. Indeed there were a few missed calls and text messages came in when she was having dinner. All of them were from Harry. All of those missed texts had apologetic headlines on them. She deleted each and every one of them including all the texts he sent her prior, not wanting to have anything to do with them. She even deleted his number from her phone.

That night Cassandra called her. She, along with the rest of the squad got themselves mobile phones after seeing Fleur and Harry using it and realized how convenient it was to have one. They talked for about an hour. Cassandra told her that she got apprenticeship at St. Mungo and will be departing to England within the next two weeks. Fleur asked her why she did not get an apprenticeship in France, like in Paris for instance. Cassandra told her that the man she was currently dating had moved to London a month ago due to job relocation and he had asked her to follow him. She agreed. Much to Fleur’s surprise, Cassandra told her that she already engaged to that man and they were planning to hold a wedding ceremony within six months.

"When did this happen? You didn't tell me you were engaged?" said Fleur, surprised.

"He proposed to me a week before he departed to London. Sorry, I didn't mean to keep it a secret but my fiancée told me not to tell anyone before the time comes. But now you know! Just try not to tell anyone else about this, will you Fleur? The girls didn't know yet. He and I want to make it a surprise," pleaded Cassandra.

"I won't tell. I promise. And I am happy for you, Cassy," said Fleur. "Just don't forget to invite me to your wedding. I won't talk to you anymore if you forget."

Cassandra laughed.
"No, I won't," said Cassandra. "There'll be no question of forgetting because you my dear Fleur, together with Gabby are going to be my bridesmaids along with the girls for the wedding. My fiancée and I already planned it all. You'll receive our invitation cards soon. Your parents will also be invited."

"Thank you. I am so looking forward to it. Just make sure we bridesmaids get the best dress you can find. And no pink."

"You got it," said Cassandra, laughing. Once her laughter died down, in a more serious tone she asked, "So how about you, Fleur?"

"I'm good."

"You know what I'm talking about, Fleur. It's been two years since your husband's passing. You know that, right?" said Cassandra.

"I know what you're talking about, Cassy. I'm just... not ready."

Fleur could hear Cassandra sighing over the phone.

"You always say that," said Cassandra. "You know at this rate, you'll never be ready. You're going to die alone, you know that?"

"And what's wrong with that?" asked Fleur.

"Believe me, there's a lot of things wrong with that mindset of yours, Fleur. Look, I know you still love your late husband and you still can't get over him. You had been refusing to move on for the past couple of years. The thing is, you're still young, Fleur. You still have your life ahead of you. You don't want to be forever alone, do you?" said Cassandra. "I'm sure Bill will understand."

"You don't know that! Bill is dead, remember?" said Fleur, a little bit heatedly this time.

"I know he is. Do you think I forget? You're right. I will never know what he will be thinking but your friends including me and your parents will want you to be happy. We want you to live your life the way it should be. It won't do to dwell just on memories, Fleur. It's not safe. And it's not healthy," said Cassandra.

Cassandra had been pestering her about moving on from Bill. Fleur knew that the attempt that night won't be the last. She needed to give Cassandra some sort of guarantee so that she could stop from pestering her, even if it just for temporary.

"I'll think about it," said Fleur. She rolled over and laid her back on her bed. Her fingers ran through her long silvery blonde hair. "Maybe if I could find the right man at the right place and at the right time, perhaps I could move on."

"What about Harry?" asked Cassandra.

"He's just a friend. I don't intend for him to go past that. Besides, he's too young for me. I don't think we'll be a perfect match," said Fleur.

"Alright. I understand. When it comes to love and happiness, you need someone you could really click with. They said there should be some kind of spark... I don't know. I'm not the romantic type. But you know, you have been the happiest person I've seen these past few months since Bill died. Maybe there's something to it," said Cassandra. "But whatever it is, please-oh-please consider what I just said. You really deserve to be happy, Fleur."

Fleur chuckled. "I'll consider it. Thanks for being my best friend, Cassy."

They continued to talk for the next few minutes.

What Cassandra said to her did give her a pause after they hang up. Her best friend was right. These past few months were among the happiest she ever felt in her life. She had forgotten all her sadness and sorrows since Bill passing. She smiled and laughed a lot and was far more engaging and lively than ever before. She was practically glowing with happiness. She could not deny that even her parents and her sister were extremely pleased to see the changes in her attitude.

Could that all be attributed to Harry, she silently wondered. But then again, all her friends managed to make her happy, she reasoned. It could not be just Harry, could it? Could it?

All these thoughts began to make her confused. She began to feel a tinge of regret.
She began to wonder if she did the right thing by pushing Harry away.

But Harry had crossed the boundary by proposing to her. He had broken her trust. She would never be able to love him like she loved Bill. That man should have realized it. They never talked about anything romantic anyway. How could he think that she wanted a relationship with him?

Her anger to Harry rose once again. She decided that pushing Harry away was the right thing to do.

Soft knocks from the door woke her from her stupor.

"Come in," she said.

Her bedroom door opened, revealing her mother.

Fleur rose and sat on her bed. "Hi, mama," she greeted.

"Still awake, Fleur? It's already thirty minutes past ten," said Appoline, entering Fleur's bedroom and proceeded to sit on the bed beside Fleur. "It's getting late. You need to rise early tomorrow. You got an early class next morning, remember?"

"I was going to sleep when Cassandra called," Fleur explained. "We talked for about an hour. She sent you her regards. Oh, she's inviting all of us to her wedding."

Appoline's eyebrows lifted. "She's getting married? That is wonderful. When and where?"

"In six months time. She had yet told me the venue but she promised that she will send us invitation cards," answered Fleur.

Appoline nodded. "So what about Harry? When do you plan to see him again?"

Fleur glanced sideway towards her mother.

"I don't know."

"Fleur, is there something wrong going on between you two?" asked her mother.

"There's nothing wrong going on between us, mama. Harry was just busy. He's an auror, remember? And he is the head of the DMLE. There'll be lesser time for us to be together," said Fleur.

Appoline nodded in understanding.

"I was just curious. I am glad that all is well between both of you. Send my regards to him the next time you speak to him, would you?" she said.

"Yes, mama."

Appoline leaned over and gave Fleur a kiss on her cheek. After saying good night, she made her exit from the room.

Fleur just watched her bedroom's door closed. She could not tell her parents what really went down between Harry and her. Not yet anyway.

She gave her phone one last check before she went to sleep. There were two missed calls and a text message coming from Harry. She deleted them and put her phone on top of her bedside table, pulled the cover over her and immediately went to sleep.

May had gone by. July came along.

The next two months set the tone between her and Harry. He kept calling her and sent her text messages. She ignored all of them. The calls and text messages only stopped after she blocked his number. The owl mail then came. Once again she ignored them. She would pick all the mails with Harry's writing on it and threw it into the fireplace. It finally stopped after a couple of weeks. She did not hear anything from him since then.

She felt relieved but at the same time, there was the feeling of strange emptiness creeping inside her heart that she could not explain. She did not deny that she missed the days when she and Harry were still in good term. Those were the happier times. As time went by, the feeling got stronger than ever that she ended up unblocking his number every once in awhile just to see if he tried to contact her.
None came by.

Until August came. It was the third Saturday of that month.

She had just got back from breakfast with her family. Gabrielle returned home on Friday evening for her summer break. Her parents decided to have breakfast at a café in Grenoble that morning to celebrate Gabby's return from the academy. There was a letter neatly placed on her bed when she entered her bedroom. She picked it up and her heart leapt when she saw Harry's writing on the envelope.

If that letter came three months ago, she would have burnt it inside the fireplace. But by this time, her anger to him had evaporated. She was beginning to miss him. A lot. And the appearance of that letter made her happy.

The next logical step would be to read the letter. And that was what she was about to do.

But just she was about to tear the envelope open, she froze.

For the past few weeks, she thought of contacting Harry. She wanted to hear his voice. She wanted to know what he had been up to. She wanted to know if he already gained a girlfriend, which much to her own surprise, hope that he had not. But every time she picked up her phone, she ended up putting it back. She felt the embarrassment and felt guilty for what she did. She finally realized that she was over reacting. She could have just said it nicely to him when he proposed. She could have explained to him on why she rejected him instead of ghosting on him. Harry would have accepted her explanations and they would still be friends, hanging out together and just being happy.

But the damage had been done. There won't be any turning back now.

She could contact Hermione and asked her about Harry. The only thing that prevented her from doing that was that Hermione would inevitably knew what really happened between Harry and her. After all, she always said that everything between them were fine whenever she and Hermione conversed on phone.

She stared at Harry's handwriting for a very long time. No matter how curious she was, she could not find the courage to read what was inside of it.

She opened her bedside table drawer and carefully placed the letter inside. She silently hoped that she would find the courage soon.

Three months went by since then. And she spent those times contemplating whether or not she should contacted him. But every time she reached for her phone or her quill, she faltered.

The weather was getting colder as November arrived at their doorstep.

She, Gabrielle and their mother were preparing dinner on that fateful day.

Right at 6.30pm, Monsieur Delacour's Rolls Royce arrived at entrance of the house. Monsieur Delacour walked in, greeted by his wife. For some reason, he looked disheveled and worried that evening. Appoline asked her husband what was wrong. Monsieur Delacour said that he will talk about it later. He also asked if Fleur was there. Appoline told him that their eldest daughter was busy helping her preparing dinner.

That night during dinner:-

"Fleur," Monsieur Delacour began. "Are you still in contact with Harry Potter?"

Fleur hesitated for a moment. "Yes," she later replied.

"Would you mind telling me where he is?" asked Monsieur Delacour.

Fleur's gaze darted between her father and her mother.

"He's in London. Why?" she said.

Her father stared at her for a few moments.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

Fleur did not respond. She just stared back at her father.
"When was the last time you were in contact with him?" asked Monsieur Delacour.

Still no response.

Monsieur Delacour sighed and shook his head.

"Harry wasn't in London if you must know," said Monsieur Delacour. "He was in Russia for the past three months on a mission under the behest of the Russian Government. The British won't tell me the nature of his mission but they did mention that it was a Class 1 Priority. That mean it is a very high risk mission involving the searching and neutralizing a certain very dangerous wizard. Unfortunately, the Russian lost contact of him five weeks ago. They promptly sent a rescue team to his last known location but found nothing. The British scrambled their own rescue team to assist the Russian immediately after they were alerted. Minister Kingsley Shacklebolt told me that Harry is now classified as missing in action and to make matters worse, given all the clues currently they have, the Russian suspected that Harry was killed given the nature of his mission. The British however refused to accept that which is why they asked for our help. We are sending a group of aurors to Russia this evening. Germany, the United States and a few other nations will send theirs as well. They will rally together with the British and the Russian in search for him. Unfortunately, the area of search is too vast and there are dangers of the search parties being attacked by whoever it is that causes this tragedy in the first place. If the search continues to be fruitless within the next few weeks, we would just have to accept that he might have been killed which is why it is important that you share any information you had on him. So far the media had yet to know about this. You said that you are still in contact with him. Did he tell you anything?"

Fleur once again failed to answer. Instead, she got off the chair and ran towards her bedroom. She grabbed her phone and frantically dialled Harry's number. She already had his number unblocked ever since the day that one single letter arrived, waiting and hoping that he will make a contact.

"The number you had dialed is not in service."

"No!"

She tried dialing once more and again was greeted with same voicemail message.

She thought hard. Suddenly she remembered Hermione. The Gryffindor brightest girl who worked with Harry. She would know on what was really going on.

Fleur frantically dialed Hermione's number. It was only after three tries that she managed to get through.

"Hello?"

"'Ello? 'Ermione, it iz me, Fleur," said Fleur.

"Oh, hi Fleur! It's been a while since we last talked. How have you been?" said Hermione.

"I am fine. Listen, 'Ermione. Zhis iz about 'Arry. What 'appen to 'im? Iz zhere anything you could tell me?"

"Oh, you heard about him huh? The truth is I don't know," said Hermione. Her voice sounded worried. "I'm going to Moscow tonight. Neville and Ronald were already there a few weeks ago. So far they found nothing. Maybe I'll find out even more and could help them with something when I get there."

"'Ermione, I'm worried," said Fleur. She was on the verge of tears. "Zhey said-, zhey said 'e waz killed."

"Don't say that. He is the strongest person I know. He'll live," consoled Hermione. "You're not the only one. All of us here are worried about him too. My mother in law totally broke down when she heard the news. She practically begged me to search for him. Well, you know how Harry is. He never gives any thought about his safety and well being just as long as the job gets done. But please have faith. Maybe he is okay after all. Look, I need to get ready. I will tell you what I find out once I got to Moscow. Alright?" said Hermione.

"Alright. 'Ave a safe journey, 'Ermione. And zhank you," said Fleur.

"You're welcome."

She put down her phone.
"Fleur?"

It was her mother. She was watching her daughter from the threshold of the room. Fleur immediately ran to her mother and hugged her tightly.

"It's my fault! This is all my fault!" she bawled.

Resting her head on her mother's chest, crying, Fleur began to tell her everything, on what really happened between her and Harry for the past few months.

Gabrielle who stood beside her mother looked stunned. She was lost of words to say.

As for Monsieur Delacour, he simply watched the event unfolded in front of him in silence.

---

Morning came.

Fleur sat on her bed. She had been staring at the wall for the past couple of hours since she woke up. There was an opened letter that laid beside her.

Appoline stayed with her daughter for the whole night. She was afraid that her daughter might do something foolish in result of her grief. She brought her daughter breakfast. It remained untouched though.

There was a knock on the door.

Fleur did not answer it. She remained at where she was.

The door opened a little.

"May I come in?"

It was Monsieur Delacour.

Fleur remained silent. She did not even turn to look. Her eyes remained fixated to the wall.

Monsieur Delacour decided to let himself in. He closed the door behind him and proceeded to sat beside Fleur on her bed. He noticed the opened letter. He took it and began to read:-

XXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Fleur,

I hope you would read this. I had been trying to reach you through any means necessary. We both know how it went.

I am sorry. I am sorry for what I did. I know it was wrong. I know it was foolish of me to try. I should have known that you would still love Bill, that it would be foolish of me trying to replace him. It was totally uncalled for. Nobody is going to replace him. I know that now.

The truth is Fleur, I had been in love with you for quite some time. But I didn't know if you would reply in kind. Now I know. There won't be any place for me in your heart. I figure that since this will be the last letter I sent you, I might as well tell you the truth.

I will forever cherish what we had before. I will always remember our friendship. I pray and hope that someday and somewhere, you will find the person who will love you as much as you will love him. I promise that I won't stand in the way and I promise that I won't disturb you anymore.

Thank you for everything.

Goodbye,

Harry James Potter.

XXXXXXXXXXX

Monsieur Delacour put down the letter. He glanced sideways at his daughter.
"I am not angry," he began. "As a matter a fact, I come here to apologize."

Fleur did not say anything.

"I admit, it was my fault," he continued. "I am the one who told Harry to propose. I apologize. I never knew it would end this way."

Fleur's head slowly turned to look at him. There was a look of surprise on her face.

"You?" she said.

Monsieur Delacour solemnly nodded.

"After your husband died, you were a complete mess. You were falling down into the deep and dark abyss of sadness and despair. Whatever light that used to grace your eyes had all but gone. Your mother and I could only watch. We were so helpless. Even the veela priestesses were unable to do much. Until Harry came along. For the past few months since then I watched both of you. And I could not be happier by what I saw. I saw what he did to you. He changed you from someone who was grieving into someone who's full of life. Happiness glowed from within you and it infected everyone around you. The light in your eyes returned, shining even brighter than ever before. From someone who was riddled with sadness and despair, you became a person who's full of love and hope. To be honest, I have never seen you like that before. I feel indebted to him. It was from that moment, I knew that he was the one who's right for you. I knew that he will take good care of you after my passing. After all, he is a good man."

Fleur said nothing. She continued to stare at her father.

"I guess I was an ignorant old fool. I wanted both of you to ended being together so much that I underestimated your love for William. I ignored your right to dictate your life, on how it's going to be. Once again, I apologize. If you must know, Harry refused to bow down to my wish at first. He was deeply aware of the deep feeling you held for William. He admitted to me that he had fallen in love with you but at the same time, he did not want to hurt you. He cared too much for you. He was worried that by proposing to you, it will destroy everything you both shared together. It took some convincing on my part but he finally agreed. I never thought that what he feared came true. Fleur, it wasn't his fault. It was mine," continued Monsieur Delacour.

Fleur slowly looked down and away from her father. And for the next few minutes, they sat there together in silence.

"If he is still alive," said Fleur softly, breaking the silence. "If he comes back and if his proposal still holds, I will gladly accept him. I will never leave him."

Tears once again fell down her beautiful face. But it was not the tears of sadness. It was the tears of hope.

Monsieur Delacour let out a faint smile. He pulled Fleur into a hug and kissed her forehead.

"Everything will be alright, my dear flower. Everything will be alright."

But things had just gotten worst from there.

For the next few weeks, Fleur continuously kept in touch with Hermione. Monsieur Delacour himself went to Moscow several times as he continued to keep watch on the search and rescue effort.

As predicted, several search and rescue team were ambushed by wizards suspected to be Khrushchev loyalist. Several members of the teams were badly injured in results of the attack. Luckily, no one ended up dead.

One particularly bad news came in one evening. One of the teams found an abandoned camping site somewhere deep within Northern Siberia. They reported to have found items believed to be belonging to Harry. The team intensified their search throughout the surrounding area but they found nothing. Most worryingly though, a few of those items were covered in blood.

"It was Harry's blood. We confirmed it. We can't be certain on what really happened but given the evidences, it was clear that he was involved in a really fierce fight," said Hermione to Fleur in one of their phone conversations. "Unfortunately we can't be sure of what his true fate really is. There's no bod-..."
At this point, Hermione could not continue. She could not entertain the fact of Harry could already be dead.

As for Fleur, she continued to pray for her future fiancée's safety.

January came.

And still there were no news of Harry's fate for the past few months. A lot of nations that joined the search coalition began to pull their team back. Even the British were beginning to accept that Harry did not survive. Only the Russian remained adamant. They had promised to continue with the search. At the same time, a new team had been formed. Their task would be to take over the mission to seek and neutralized Khrushchev for that wizard remained a dangerous threat to the north western hemisphere.

Plans had been to announce Harry's demise. It will be just a matter of time before the announcement will be made.

As for Fleur, she had begun wearing black since before Christmas. She too was beginning to lose hope. Cassandra who understood Fleur's feeling at this moment had agreed to postpone her wedding until after a conclusive answer on Harry's fate had been found.

She was grieving again. The only difference was that this time around, she refused to be weak. She knew that Harry, and to some extent Bill, would not want her to live continuously in despair. She promised to herself that she would be strong for them and for her family.

It was fifteenth of March.

Formal announcement had been made in middle February. And everyone was in mourning.

Fleur was sitting alone inside her office at Beauxbaton. And as before, she wore black. She was busy grading her student's homework when all of a sudden, her phone beeped. She took it out of her handbag and noticed that a message had arrived.

It was from Hermione:-

"Call me! Stats!"

She became curious. She began to dial Hermione's number. The other side picked up once they connected but before Fleur could say anything, Hermione's voice came loudly through the speaker:-

"Fleur! You won't believe what I'm about to tell you! Harry! He's alive!"

Fleur cupped her mouth and nearly dropped her phone.

"Are you certain, 'Ermione?" she asked. Her voice trembled.

"Yes! Yes! Just got the news from Moscow this morning!" said Hermione excitedly.

"Zhey found 'im?" asked Fleur.

"No they didn't," said Hermione. "As a matter a fact, he was the one who came to them. They told me he just came bursting through the door at Kremlin and demanded that they spare him a team of aurors. They told me that he doesn't look good. They tried to get him to treatment but he flatly refused. He left half an hour after that with a team of Russian aurors in tow. They told me they were heading to Poland. I'm going there today. I'll keep you posted."

"'Ave a safe journey, 'Ermione. Please take good care of 'im."

"I will. Thank you, Fleur."

Fleur put down her phone. Without her realizing, tears fell down her cheeks. This time though, it was the tears of happiness.

But it took quite a few weeks to convince herself that she should see him. She was afraid of what his reaction would be after she unceremoniously ditched him. Her friends, after knowing the true story between her and Harry urged her to go to London. They told her that Harry won't be that cruel.
May came. It was Friday.

It was only at this time, she finally managed to muster enough courage to go to Britain. Hermione told her that Harry had returned to London two weeks ago.

She emerged out of Ministry of Magic fireplace. It was lunch time and the Ministry sprawling lobby was busy with visitors. She told Hermione that she will be coming to her office that day. Hermione agreed to wait for her right at the fireplace. As they both headed towards the DMLE office, people gawked stupidly at the beautiful girl who walked beside Hermione.

Hermione ushered her into Harry's office and told her to wait. Fleur obliged.

"Wait here," said Hermione. "Harry went out to lunch. He'll be back soon."

"Zthank you, 'Ermione."

And she waited. Her heart beat fast with every second that went past.

At half an hour past one the door opened. And Harry came in.

Fleur looked up. The moment she saw him, she immediately rushed towards Harry and gave him a tight hug. Harry replied in kind.

"What are you doing here?" asked Harry after Fleur released him.

Fleur looked up towards Harry bearded face. She noticed there was a new thin scar that ran along his left cheek. The man in front of her looked entirely different from the one she left behind a year ago. This man looked extremely battle hardened.

"I need to talk to you," answered Fleur. "You-." She suddenly paused. Her eyes travelled up and down him. "You don't 'ave your phone with you."

"No I don't. I threw it away," confessed Harry. "I have no use of it anymore."

"And my letters?"

"I burnt them."

"I see," said Fleur softly. "I 'eard what 'appened in Russia. You didn't tell me-."

"What is there to tell, Fleur?" Harry interrupted. "You did read my last letter, didn't you? I made a promise, remember? Besides, I have decided to move on."

Fleur bit her lips and looked down. A few moments later, she nodded.

Seeing Fleur remained silent, Harry said, "And I'm not someone who would willingly go back on my promise. What is it, Fleur? Why have you come here?"

Fleur sighed. "We need to talk but here may not be the best place."

Harry nodded. "Very well," he said. "But you need to wait. It would be a few more hours before I could get out of here."

Fleur nodded. "I'll wait."

Along the riverbank of Thames, London...

Harry finally managed to settle all of the day's work and get out of his office at a quarter before six.

They both walked along the bank of the famous River of Thames, watching boats sailing by. Nobody said anything at first. At a three point junction of the path they were walking, Fleur suddenly stopped. Her eyes were fixed on a boathouse that glides lazily nearby.

"Tell me, 'Arry. Will I regret it?" she asked.

"What? Regret? I'm not sure I understand what you are talking about," said Harry as he looked at her questionably.

"You know what I am talking about, 'Arry. Just answer the question. Tell me, will I regret it?"
At this point, Harry had a hunch of what Fleur meant about. It was about his proposal many months ago. He then turned his gaze towards the river and said, "I have no control over that."

Fleur cocked her eyebrows.

Without looking at her, he continued, "But I can tell these to any girl I will eventually marry. I will tell them that I can't make any regret that they might have disappear and I can't give them back all the time they wasted on me. I will tell them what I can and will do. I can love them. I can care for them. I can defend their honour and uphold their trust to the best of my abilities. And I will not abandon them. And I will always be with them until my dying breath."

Fleur smiled satisfactorily as she heard what Harry had just said. She then took Harry's hand and leaned forward to give a surprised Harry a light kiss on his lips.

"Very well zhen, Monsieur Potter," she said softly. "If zhat is zhe case, zhen my answer will be yes."

But much to her disappointment, Harry remained unconvinced. She then proceeded to tell him everything on what really happened. She told him that even though her father was behind all of these, that her decision to be with him would be hers alone. She told him that she was ready to move on. She told him that she was ready to learn to love him. She told him that everything that happened taught her to cherish whatever it was she had before she lost it forever.

"I know it will be difficult. Bill iz my first love. But I can try. I can change, 'Arry. All I'm asking from you iz forgiveness and zhe chance to prove myself. Will you give me zhat, 'Arry? Will you accept me for who I am?" she asked. Her eyes glittered as she looked deeply into his.

It took a while before Harry took her hands and gave them a gentle squeeze.

"I accept," he said.

Exactly a year ago, she left him alone at the bank of a river. This time, once again at the bank of a river, they both reunited.

And as always they would say, the rest is history.

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Flashback ends...

A/n: The title of this chapter was taken from one of my favorite stories within this website. Unfortunately, the author never make any attempt to finish it for whatever reason.

This flashback ties with Chapter 8. Some of you point out that I neglected to explain why Harry accepted Fleur in the end within that chapter. Well, here's your answer. I have my own reason on why only now I choose to reveal what really happened. You'll know it as this story progress further. Oh, there will be more flashbacks in the near future.

The continuation of Chapter 36 will happen in the next chapter.
39. Chapter 39

Chapter 37

He thought he was seeing things. He thought that it won't be possible. After all, this was a school compound. Despite him being a former student, unless it had something to do with the said school, he had no business in being here.

Clutching the shopping bag to his side, Harry continued to observe from his hiding place. He had a hard time believing it at first but the longer he watched, the more he became convinced that this was no mere mirage or illusion.

Bill Weasley was there. He was really there. And he was joined by Fleur and her friends.

Throughout their marriage, despite Fleur’s assurance that she could change, that she could learn to love him and despite her effort in throwing away all the memorabilia associated with Bill, he doubted that Fleur’s heart really belong to him. Whenever they visited the Burrow, several times Harry caught her staring longingly at Bill’s portrait, hung together with the rest of the family’s portraits. There were also times when she simply looked confuse. Harry never raised the issue of course. He kept it to himself all the time. He was already aware of the emotional baggage that would inevitably carry over when they married. He did not want that to stand between him and Fleur and his quest for a happy marriage. After all, he made a promise to her and by all means, he would keep it. But as their marriage entered fourth year, Fleur herself suggested that they should no longer visit the Weasley. Harry did ask her the reason why. She told him that she simply want to concentrate on their marriage. Harry felt there was more to it but he decided not to press into the matter further. He did felt relieve though. He personally took it as a sign that Fleur had indeed finally ready to move on.

Returning to the scene in front of him, Harry did not how it really happened but from the way things looked, Fleur and her friends, together with a few of their relatives it seemed were spending their time outside the carriage. Gabrielle was there too. A small garden was established overnight outside the carriage complete with benches, small tables and was decorated with blooming flowers, built most likely to cater for the staying guests and parents. They probably were staying outside enjoying themselves when Bill found them.

Tall, with the long red hair tied back in a ponytail, Bill was the coolest looking Weasley ever to grace that family. He wore the same fang earring Harry once saw at the Burrow. His apparels, like always, would not look out of place at a rock concert. Except this time, instead of wearing a dragon hide boots, he wore a pair of expensive looking leather boots.

This was Bill Weasley before Fenrir Greyback wounded him that night when Dumbledore died. This was Bill before he developed fetishes for raw meat. This was Bill before his face was gashed by the scar. Taller than Fleur, the veela's height could only reached up to his shoulder. This was a really good looking Bill. It was a small wonder on why Fleur's friends were swooning all over him.

From the look of it, even Fleur herself could not take her eyes off Bill.

The way she looked at him, the way she talked and the way she sometimes played with her hair; everything about it screamed about a person who was smitten by someone else.

That look on her face, how he wished that she would look at him that way. His heart was aching. It was like a thousand needles piercing into it over and over again. And he found himself could no longer bear to watch. He needed to get out of there before he really fell apart.

He slowly took a few steps back but just as he was about to turn around and leave, all of a sudden someone called out to him:-

“Hey Harry!”

He froze. He turned to look and saw it was Hagrid who at that time was sitting outside his hut with another Weasley, Charlie. He must have saw Harry hiding behind the bushes at that time.

Hagrid was waving at him.

Harry closed his eyes and gave a deep sigh. Now the Beauxbaton students would know that he was there. He glanced at the carriage and saw them looking questioningly between Hagrid and the bushes he was hiding in.

"Hey Harry!” Hagrid called again. “Come 'ere!"

The path that led to Hagrid's hut was just a couple of hundred feet away from the carriage and it was in plain sight. They will definitely saw him walking towards Hagrid. Unfortunately
though, he had no choice. He could not turn away now.

Harry straightened up and walked out of the bushes.

"Hey Hagrid!" he bellowed back, waving at Hagrid as he continued walking. He tried hard not to look at the carriage at the same time. It was not easy though. He felt like a prisoner walking in an identification parade. Many pair of eyes was looking at him. He felt he was intensely scrutinized.

"Harry!"

This time, it came from Bill.

Harry was forced to stop and look. Bill was waving at him.

Forcing out a smile, Harry waved back. "Hey, Bill!" Harry greeted back. "Didn't see you there. What are you doing here?"

"I took the day off," replied Bill. "Came to see Charlie here," he continued, nodding pointedly at Hagrid's hut. He then noticed the shopping bag Harry was carrying. His eyebrows lifted. "Just got back from Hogsmeade, eh Harry? Madam Popkins? Who's the lucky girl?"

"What?"

Harry immediately looked down. Indeed, the logo and the name of Madam Popkins Jewellery Shop were clearly imprinted outside the shopping bag he was holding. He immediately hid it behind his back.

Oh damn!

He looked up and saw Fleur's friends were whispering to each other. Fleur on the other hand was giving him an odd, questioning look. Even Gabrielle who got so excited the moment she saw him ended up with the same expression as her sister.

"Oh, yeah there could be a girl there. Can't tell you right here right now. Maybe later?"

It might be just his feeling, but he noticed that there was a look of surprise on Fleur's face once she heard what he just said.

Bill nodded and gave him a thumb up and his attention returned to Fleur.

Harry moved his eyes away from Bill and the Beauxbaton and hastened his way towards Hagrid.

"Hey, Harry," greeted Charlie as he rose from his seat and offered his hand.

Harry took it and they both shook hands.

"Hey, Charlie," Harry greeted back. "Just visiting?"

Charlie shook his head. Taking his seat back, he said, "Working".

"I see."

"I thought yeh weren't allowed to go to Hogsmeade, Harry," interrupted Hagrid. "Professor McGonagall lifted the ban for yeh?"

"Actually no," confessed Harry. He honestly did not like to lie in front of Hagrid. That and the fact that his mind was kind of screwed up by what he witnessed just now. "I sneaked out. Sorry."

"You were ban from visiting, Hogsmeade?" asked Charlie in surprise. "What did you do?"

"It's a long story, Charlie. Suffice to say, it involved a friend, an alcoholic beverage supplied by me and the said friend's desire to go naked in front of everyone else resulted from drinking that said beverage," explained Harry.

Charlie blinked several times. "Wow! And here I thought Fred and George are the worse."

Harry just shrugged. "Yeah. And Gryffindor already lost forty points because of that. Won't deny, it was my mistake anyway. I guess we're going to lose a lot more given that Hagrid caught me disobeying Professor McGonagall's orders. So what it will be, Hagrid? What's my punishment?"

"Who want some tea?" said Hagrid instead. He acted as if he did not hear what Harry just
“Hagrid?” repeated Harry.

“Oh, I just forgot. I just put a fresh batch of rock cakes in the oven. I better check on ‘em, see that they don’t get burnt. Come on inside. I’ll make yeh two some tea,” said Hagrid a little bit louder. He then immediately ducked into his cabin.

Harry and Charlie glanced at each other. Charlie was grinning at him.

“I don’t think he wants to punish you, Harry,” said Charlie.

Harry could not agree more.

Harry stole a look at the carriage just as he was about to enter Hagrid’s hut. Bill was still there and so is Fleur.

Sighing, he followed Charlie into the hut.

A plate of rock cakes was already served on the table when Harry got in. Hagrid meanwhile, was busy with the kettle making tea.

Harry touched one of the rock cakes. It was cold. And the oven was not fired up. He smiled and shook his head. He put down his shopping on one of the available chairs and took a seat beside Charlie.

He pushed the ‘Bill vs Fleur’ matter out of his mind. He did not want to be seen looking sad and gloomy in front of Hagrid and Charlie.

“So you’re working?” asked Harry to Charlie.

Charlie nodded.

“Yeap.”

“This has something to do with the Triwizard Tournament, is it?” said Harry.

Charlie smiled.

“Right again, Harry.”

“So how many did you bring this time?” asked Harry.

He of course would already know the answer. He just wanted to be sure.

“Just three, Harry,” answered Charlie. “Let me tell you that it’s not easy to transport three fully adult and still nesting dragons from Romania to Britain. I really hope we don’t have to do this again. The logistic is a nightmare. The planning alone took nearly a year.” He then shook his head.

“I know what you mean,” said Harry.

“Swedish Short-Snout, Common Green Welsh and the Chinese Fireball,” said Hagrid as he returned with a teapot full of piping hot tea. He carefully poured the tea into the cups and began distributing them to Harry and Charlie. He then took a seat near Charlie and continued, “Can’t wait ter see them tonight. Yeh can come along too if yeh want, Harry.”

No wonder Hagrid looked extra cheerful.

Harry however declined.

“Thank you Hagrid but no. I think I’ll just watch them during the First Task,” he said. “I don’t think Professor McGonagall would take it kindly if she knew I slipped out during the night. Not if she knew I disobeyed her by going to Hogsmeade.”

“Oh right,” said Hagrid. “I forgot about that. I’ve been asking Charlie here if he could bring Norbert along.”

“Three fully grown dragons are already hard enough, Hagrid. I told you that. And it’s Norberta, not Norbert,” said Charlie.

Hagrid gave out a loud sigh.

“I really miss that one dragon of mine,” he said.
At that point, the door suddenly opened and Bill stepped in.

"Ah the Romeo has returned. That was fast," stated Charlie, watching his brother closed the door behind him. "Any luck with the Juliet?"

"They went back into the carriage," said Bill. "She's a bit secretive. Refused to tell me much."

He walked towards one of the windows, pushed aside the curtain and began peering outside.

"Well what do you expect? That she tells you her innermost desire the first time you both met? She doesn't know you that well you know," said Charlie sarcastically.

"I got her name though," continued Bill as he continued to peer outside towards the carriage. "And a few other things. Man, I think I'm in love."

"A girl as beautiful as her, guys would be crazy not to fall in love with her. She could even convert any straight woman to be honest," said Charlie. Crossing his arms across his chest, he asked, "How did you do it?"

"Do what?" asked Bill. He was still looking through the window.

"You didn't drool," said Charlie.

"You drooled?" said Harry to Charlie.

"Halfway through. We had just arrived at Hagrid's hut when we saw them. Bill saw that girl. He wanted to meet her and he asked me to tag along. I agreed. Halfway there I began to drool uncontrollably however. I had to stay behind and let Bill go alone. Looks like he already got himself a girlfriend," admitted Charlie, shaking his head.

At that point, Bill closed the curtain, walked towards them and took a seat beside Harry. Hagrid gave him a cup of tea. Bill muttered thanks and took a sip. "Not yet, Charlie. But with a little bit more effort, maybe she will. To answer your question Charlie, it wasn't easy. I nearly drooled in front of her a few times. And there are times I simply forgot what I wanted to say."

"Yeah, that's what happened when you confront a veela. What's her name again?" said Charlie.

"Fleur Delacour," answered Bill. "Catchy name. As beautiful as its owner."

"Maybe you could hook me with one of her friends," suggested Charlie. "I haven't had any luck with woman so far. Especially after they heard what I do for a living."

"Sure but first, I need to get the girl," said Bill, putting down his cup of tea. "Then I can hook you up. How long you'll be here?"

"Until after the First Task," said Charlie. "It'll take three or four days to arrange everything before we could go back to Romania."

Bill pondered for a moment.

"There's still time. That is if I can get more off days. You know how Gringotts is. Anyway," said Bill. Turning to Harry, he asked, "Who's the girl, Harry?" asked Bill to Harry, grinning.

"Err..."

Bill chuckled. "I get it. It's a secret. That's okay, Harry," he said, patting Harry at the back. "We all have secrets."

"Glad you understand," said Harry. "So, what else did you get from her? From Fleur?"

"Well, I got to know her sister. Gabrielle I think her name is. And she gave me permission to write to her. I asked her if she already have a boyfriend," said Bill.

Harry's curiosity peaked at this.

"So what did she say?" asked Harry.

Bill leaned back against his chair. Once again he pondered.

"She just smiled," he said. "I really don't know what that means. I pressed on but she won't say. I think she already have someone."

"You should leave her alone if she already has someone else, Bill," warned Charlie. "Mom
won't like it if she knew you're stealing other people's property."

"I'm not going to steal other man's girlfriend, Charlie," interjected Bill. "I'll leave her alone if she really had someone. The problem is, there's no definitive answer to whether she really belongs to someone else. She won't say it."

"Maybe she was too embarrassed to admit it," pointed out Charlie. "You know her friends were there. Maybe she doesn't want to talk about it in front of them."

Bill paused for a thought.

"Maybe you're right," he said. "Maybe I could ask her through writing. Maybe she will tell me then. Damn, I really hope she's single. I really like her you know. She's perfect."

"Perfect as in?" asked Charlie.

"Well," said Bill, scratching his chin. "She's beautiful. Intelligent. She seems kind hearted. And she's already seventeen. She'll be graduating this year. It's perfect."

"Ah I understand," said Charlie. "Another attempt to shut mom down. Bring a girl home and she'll shut up. She had been harassing Bill, asking if he already got a girlfriend," said Charlie to Harry.

"Shut up, Charlie!" said Bill. His face reddened.

Harry felt odd at this. He remembered in the prior timeline, Molly kept on whining and complaining about how fast Bill was getting on with Fleur. Of course her attitude to Fleur changed after Bill was attacked by Greyback but still.

"And mom hated his hair," said Charlie, again to Harry.

Bill just rolled his eyes.

"Yeh could ask Harry 'ere," said Hagrid who was watching the Weasleys banter in silence. "He visited their carriage days ago."

Both Bill and Charlie stared at Harry.

"Wow! Really?" asked Charlie.

"It was nothing," said Harry, fuming a little bit at Hagrid for failing to keep his mouth shut. "I once assisted one of them. They just want to offer their gratitude."

"That's what Olympé told me," Hagrid barged in. "They owe yeh their gratitude, Harry."

"I don't think this had anything with homework," said Charlie, still staring at Harry. "So what is it?"

"One of them was harassed by Malfoy and his goons. I was there just in time," said Harry.

"That's going to score you quite a few points with them," said Charlie impressively.

"Did you get to speak to Fleur?" asked Bill eagerly.

"Yes."

"So what did she told you?"

Harry began to feel irritated. Bill was a good person and Harry liked him. But it did not mean that he was okay with Bill asking a lot of things about Fleur. Especially when Harry was at a complete disadvantage.

"Not much. If you want to know if she already has a boyfriend, sorry I don't have anything on that. I didn't ask her," said Harry.

Bill sighed.

"Oh well. There's always another way," he said. He lean against the back of his chair, put his hands over and behind his head and stared at the ceiling.

"She did tell me about missing someone though," added Harry.

Bill turned to look at Harry.
"Any idea who that person is?" asked Bill.

Harry shook his head.

"I didn't ask. I don't think she wanted to tell either," replied Harry.

"Secretive," muttered Bill, turning his gaze back to the ceiling. Moments later, he then put down his hands, got of the chair and walked towards the window. He pushed away the curtain and once again peered outside.

Harry watched Bill intently. He knew Bill had a huge crush on Fleur. He could see it from Bill's face. Despite Bill's assurance that he will never try to take away anyone else's girlfriend, Harry had a feeling that Fleur would be an exception.

It was forty five minutes before dinner time when Harry excused himself. Hagrid, Bill and Charlie went outside together with him. Charlie was putting on his travelling cloak. He needed to get back into the Forbidden Forest where his charges were held. As for Bill, he just stood there staring at the carriage.

There were people still loitering outside the carriage. No Fleur and her friends though.

After shaking hands with Bill and Charlie, Harry walked back to the castle. He glanced at Bill and the carriage as he walked past them. Bill returned his gaze to the carriage as soon as he left.

Halfway through to the castle and deeply engrossed in his own thought, Harry very nearly, accidentally bumped into someone.

"Harry! Watch it!"

Harry looked up.

It was Daphne. And Tracy was there as well.

"Sorry," apologized Harry.

Daphne lifted an eyebrow, crossed her arms over her chest and said, "Your body is here but your mind's at somewhere else. What were you thinking exactly?"

"A lot of things," admitted Harry. "I thought you were spending your time at the carriage. Your parents are here, are they not?"

"They're here alright," said Daphne. "I was just accompanying Tracy here. She needs to get something from our dormitory. Where you're from?"

Harry was about to reply when Tracy suddenly spoke, "Hogsmeade! You just came back from Hogsmeade!"

She immediately pointed towards the bag Harry was carrying.

"Didn't Professor McGonagall tells you not to go to Hogsmeade, Potter?" she asked.

Daphne's eyes moved towards the said bag. She then looked back at Harry. "Didn't you were banned from Hogsmeade visit, Harry?" she asked.

"Yes."

Daphne shook her head upon hearing that.

"They said you were a habitual rule breaker, Harry. I wonder how many points Gryffindor will lose this time if they knew," she said slyly.

"You're going to tattletale on me, Daphne?" challenged Harry.

"I'll consider it," replied Daphne, smirking. "Are you forgetting that the two girls in front of you right now belong to Slytherin House? We don't like Gryffindor. We won't miss the chance to put your house down to where it belongs."

Harry rolled his eyes.

"And yet here you are having a nice conversation with someone you're supposed to hate," he said.

"I don't hate you," said Daphne.
"Well you should. I'm a Gryffindor. We aren't supposed to be friends, remember? We're supposed to be enemies. You should go back to the castle and right away see Professor McGonagall and tell her that I disobeyed her. You could also bring this bag as a proof," said Harry, handing over the shopping bag to Daphne.

Daphne however refused to take the bag from Harry. She was at lost on what to say to him. She just stood there, staring at him.

Harry meanwhile was enjoying seeing the look on Daphne's face.

"No?" he said moments later. "Okay then."

He was about to leave when Daphne called him back.

"Harry!"

Harry stopped on his tracks and looked back at Daphne questioningly.

"That bag. You're buying something for someone. Who is it?" said Daphne.

Harry looked down to the bag and then to her. He thought hard for awhile before he ended up walking back to her. Once he reached her, he dived into the bag and pulled out a small box. He then gave it to her.

Daphne gingerly received it from him. She opened the velvet box and her eyes widened when she saw what was inside.

A small silver necklace with emerald stones encrusted in it resided in the box.

"Harry, I don't know what to say," said Daphne.

"I thought it will match perfectly with your eyes," said Harry.

His hand once again dived into the bag and fished out another small box. He then handed it over to Tracy.

Tracy hesitated at first.

"As a token of our friendship and as a thank you for being such a good friend to Daphne even though you already know who she is," said Harry.

Upon hearing this, Tracy took the box from Harry.

"Thank you," said Tracy, staring at Harry.

Harry smiled and nodded.

"There's more in the bag, isn't it?" said Tracy.

Harry did not say anything at first. Instead his hand dived into the bag for the third time and this time, a slightly bigger, velvet covered box came out of the bag. He glanced at the carriage for a few moments.

Turning back to Daphne, he said, "This is for Fleur. I intended to give to her myself but..." He sighed. "Can you give this to her, please? The rest of the girls' presents are in this bag. You could give those to them as well."

Daphne looked hard at Harry. She then grabbed the bag from Harry's hand. She however did not take the bigger velvet box from him.

"I'll pass the presents to them, Harry," she said. "You however will have to give that box to Fleur yourself."

"I don't think that's possible," said Harry.

"And why is that? Harry, is there something else you want to tell me?" asked Daphne in curiosity.

Harry however shook his head.

"No. Nothing."

Daphne nodded. She reached out to him and touched him on his cheek.

"You can trust me, Harry. You know that right?" said Daphne softly. She then leaned forward
and kissed him on his cheek. "Go to her," she whispered into his ear.

She then gave him a smile and together with Tracy, who became a lot friendlier with him, took their leave.

Dusk settled in.

He stared out of the window of his dormitory overlooking the castle ground. The carriage was still there. Lights could be seen from its windows. Bill, Hagrid and Charlie were no longer hanging out in front of Hagrid’s hut.

He was still holding the box containing the necklace.

The ball was in Fleur's court now. Everything would now be up to her.

Sunday came.

As planned, the morning would be filled with Quidditch training.

He and the rest of the team were heading for lunch after training when he spotted Cedric who had just came out of the Great Hall.

"You guys go ahead," he said to his teammates. "There's something I need to do."

"Alright, Harry."

Harry sped up towards Cedric.

"Hey Cedric!" he called out to the Hufflepuff captain.

Cedric who was about to walk down the stairs towards Hufflepuff common room stopped on his track. He turned to look and saw Harry coming towards him.

"Hey Harry. Just finish training?" he said.

"Yeah," said Harry just as he arrived in front of him. "So how's it going?"

"Not much," replied Cedric. "Just preparing and keep on preparing."

Harry nodded. He then looked around. After ensuring that no one else was there, he spoke, "I got back from Hagrid's hut yesterday. Know who I met? Ron's brother."

Cedric looked puzzle.

"And this is important because?" said Cedric.

"Charlie. His name is Charlie," Harry pressed on. "He worked in Romania at a dragon's sanctuary. He did not come here to visit. He's here on a work assignment. He will only go back to Romania sometime later next week after the First Task."

Cedric paused at this.

Harry could almost see the gears within Cedric’s head grinding against each other.

Then all of a sudden, Cedric's eyes widened.

"He did not come here to catch a dragon, did he?" he asked.

"There's no dragon to catch in the Forbidden Forest," said Harry. "And yet his whole team is here. And they'll stay after the First Task."

"Holy sh-! You don't mean?!" he exclaimed.

Harry nodded satisfactorily. His message was well understood by the Hogwarts champion.

"That's right, Cedric," said Harry.

"Dragons! What were they thinking? Are you sure? Do you think the other two champions know about this?" asked Cedric.

"I think they will," said Harry. "They will try to find anything about the First Task. No doubt about that. You'll be the only one who knew nothing if no one tells you."
“Good grief!” said Cedric. His face whitened. He was beginning to panic. “Dragons!”

Harry reached out and held Cedric’s shoulder. “Don't panic, Cedric. I know you can do it. Just keep on practicing. Find a way. Remember that the Goblet won't choose you if it know you can’t do it. I believe in you.”

Cedric nodded.

“Thanks, mate. I owe you one,” he said.

“You're welcome.”

They later went their separate ways with Cedric still muttering about dragons as he continued his way towards the Hufflepuff common room.

Harry knew Cedric would easily trust him because this time, he was not one of the champions.

**Tuesday 24th November...**

It was after lunch. The whole school began to march towards the First Task arena.

Ernie came racing towards him on Monday morning during breakfast. The Hufflepuff asked him whether it was true about what he told Cedric on Sunday.

“Yes. No doubt. That's what he's going to face,” said Harry, half whispering.

“Blimey!”

“How is he?”

“Well, he was muttering about something when he entered the common room that day. We thought he was reciting some kind of mantra or something. That’s when he announced it to us,” said Ernie. “We were in complete shock, you know.”

“Yeah well, try to calm him down the best you guys can, Ernie. And make sure he eats his food. He'll need all the strength he could muster tomorrow,” advised Harry.

“You got it, Harry.”

A sense of excitement rose like a palpable cloud as they all made their way to the arena. Excited chatter were everywhere, everyone was quivering with anticipation, wondering what the champions would face in the First Task. Of course with the exception of the Hufflepuff, not many knew what the champions were about to face. It felt just like before the match between Ireland and Bulgaria began at the Quidditch World Cup.

Harry was walking together with Hermione and his dorm mates. Ernie joined them as well. The majority of students were wearing Hufflepuff yellow scarf around their neck as a sign of support for the Hogwarts champion. Seamus, having fully recovered from previous embarrassment, and his besties Dean, much to Ginny's displeasure, went further ahead by painting their face the same shade of yellow. There were no ‘Support Cedric, the real HOGWARTS champion; Potter Stinks' badges this time though. Everyone around them were talking and joking loudly, even Harry himself could not stop himself from enjoying the highly charged atmosphere throughout the twenty five minutes journey to the rocky valley where the arena stood proudly.

As they approached the arena, Harry saw the enclosed red tent attached to the arena not far from where they were walking. He remembered that tent really well. That was where he and the rest of the champions received their ‘sentences' back in the previous timeline. He remembered feeling the relief that he was not the only one was scared shit at that time.

Fleur, Cedric and Viktor would be in there right now. What he would not give to be in there with her, to calm her and to tell her that everything will be alright. But he was not one of the champions. The tent would be out of bound for him.

It was a long climb through the multi level steps before they reached the top of the stands.

"Blimey! How high this thing goes?!” complained Ron as they made the climb on the steep, narrow stairs.

Everyone was sweating profusely once they reach the top.

Harry immediately went to look over the safety railing down into the arena. Then it hit him.

He began to understand why the rocky valley was selected as the arena to face the dragon.
One could not see from ground level but from where he stood, he could see that the combination of the many rocks, deep creases and boulders provided a good cover from a dragon's attack and also to launch an attack itself. It will be up to the champions on whether or not they wanted to fully utilized that advantage.

From what he remembered, they did not. Including him.

Harry silently wondered if the official would allow him to have a go at one of the dragons. Just for fun sake.

"Blimey! This is one mean arena," said Seamus who was standing beside Harry, gawking down into the arena. "They’re nuts."

But Harry did not really listen to him. He was busy looking around. At one of the arch of the oval shaped arena, a platform had been raised. On it were five small tables. That would be where the judges - Madame Maxime, Ludo Bagman, Professor Dumbledore, Professor Karkaroff and Mr. Crouch - would sit. Indeed, as of now, Harry could see them entering the platform. There were other people as well. Professor Moody, Kingsley Shacklebolt and, much to Harry's surprise, Remus Lupin. He together with Tonks stood rigidly behind Mr. Crouch as the later took his seat on the platform. Remus was much better looking now. Gone has his ragged clothing, replaced with neat buttoned up black shirt and pant. His hair was much better groomed. Harry also spotted him wearing the cloak usually reserved for aurors. Remus looked much more confident than before.

Harry smiled. So Mr. Crouch finally did it. He managed to bring Remus into the Ministry's fold. And he could not be happier for his parents' best friend.

Harry tore his eyes away from the judge's platform and continued looking around. His heart nearly stopped when he looked at the opposite stand of the arena.

Rita Skeeter was there. The gossip columnist at that time was busy observing the judge's platform. There was a wide smirk on her face.

Apparently the vile journalist had found her prize. And Harry undoubtedly knew that she saw Remus. He knew that he needed to do something.

He covertly took out his wand out of his pocket and pointed it towards Skeeter.

"Obliviate," muttered Harry under his breath.

The force of the spell hit Skeeter on her face with full force. Her mouth hang opened as she stupidly stared blankly into space.

Harry purposely did not measure the force of his spell when he attacked Skeeter. He probably had erased all Skeeter's memories right from her childhood. He found that he did not care. Rita Skeeter had destroyed people's life through her quill in the past and she will do so again without remorse. That had to stop.

Stowing his wand back into his pocket, he turned his attention back to the arena.

Minutes later, he saw Ludo Bagman walk hurriedly towards the podium erected not far from the judge’s table.

Ludo pulled out his wand and directed it to his throat. And when he spoke, his voiced echoed, booming through every corner of the arena.

"Welcome ladies and gentlemen to the First Task of the Triwizard Tournament!"

**To be continued...**
Chapter 40

"Welcome, ladies and gentlemen to the First Task of the Triwizard Tournament!"

The spectators screamed and clapped. Fred, George, Lee and several Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws immediately brandished a huge yellow colored banner with 'Support Cedric! The true winner of the Triwizard Tournament!' written on it. Their act was subsequently booed by the students from other schools.

Harry looked across the arena to where the Beauxbaton students were sitting. They were all wearing their school uniform. He could also see their accompanying visitors as well. The Delacours – Monsieur Delacour, Appoline and Gabrielle – were there too. All of them were wearing the same color outfit as the Beauxbaton uniform as a show of support to the French magical academy.

His eyes then travelled to the Durmstrang side of the stand. Like the Beauxbaton, they also wore their school uniforms. And like the Beauxbaton, there were outside visitors sitting among the Durmstrang. Harry could only guess that Viktor’s parents were among the visitors.

"It had been nearly two hundred years since last Triwizard Tournament was held and thanks to many efforts and hard work by many fine gentlemen, and of course ladies, we finally managed to organize the 126th Triwizard Tournament!"

Another thunderous applause came.

"Before we begin, let me introduce you the line of judges that will preside over the First Task of the Triwizard Tournament. Sitting at the furthest left is Madame Olympé Maxime, the principal of Beauxbatons Academy of Magic. Sitting beside her is Mr. Barty Crouch, Head of the Department of International Magical Cooperation. As many of you would be well aware of, Mr. Crouch is one of the leading men that lead the revival of the Triwizard Tournament. And next we have Professor Albus Dumbledore, the current headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and finally, Professor Karkaroff, the current headmaster of the Durmstrang Institute."

Ludo Bagman paused.

"And the final judges would be me. At your service," added Bagman as an afterthought.

There were laughter coming in from all corners of the arena.

But those laughter immediately died as a loud roar suddenly booming throughout the arena.

Bagman smirked upon seeing the reaction of all the spectators.

"Yes," he announced. "That was the roar of one of the dragons. In the First Task, contestant will be required to obtain something valuable, a golden egg, from a pile of real dragon eggs. I would like to point to you dear audiences, that those dragons are still nesting. Contestants will have to depend on their wits, skills, bravery and everything they had learn in order to get past the dragon and collect the golden egg."

Indeed as Harry looked down, he saw several dragon keepers, Charlie was one of them, with their wands out, were levitating the eggs towards one spot in the middle of the arena.

And much to his surprise, Bill was there too. The eldest son of the Weasley however did not join the dragon keepers. He simply stood a little bit further away from the dragon keepers, watching them as they did their job. He silently wondered on why exactly Bill was there.

Once done, the dragon keepers immediately took their respective places beside the stand and away from the pile of eggs. Bill meanwhile positioned himself closer to the entrance where the champions will come out.

Loud rumble was heard as a huge steel cage was brought into the arena. There was another loud roar as the Swedish Short-Snout inside the cage spit and hissed towards the audience and dragon keepers. One of the dragon's legs was tied up with a strong chain, long enough to allow the dragon some freedom of movement but not enough to pose danger to the spectators and dragon keepers alike.

Once the cage was in position, the top of the cage lifted off and all four walls of the cage fell to the ground. The dragon, upon sensing freedom, immediately scurried towards her eggs. With the eggs now safely within her possession, she let out another roar and shot a jet of fire towards every direction of the arena, as if she was challenging anyone who would be foolish enough to pry the eggs from her.
Harry looked to his side. Ron’s face was whiter than a piece of chalk. Hermione meanwhile cupped her mouth.

"Our first contestant," announced Bagman. "Hailing from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Mr. CEDRIC DIGGORY!"

Another thunderous applause from the spectators and Cedric came out of the entrance. Cedric’s face was as white as Ron’s. Harry could see him trembling a bit.

At this time, both Cedric and the dragon were locking their gaze onto each other. Cedric tore his eyes away from the dragon and began to look around. After a few moments, he seemed to find what he was looking for. He raised his wand towards a rock lying not far from him and transfigured it into a Labrador.

With his wand still pointing towards the 'Labrador', he began to guide the dog carefully towards the dragon and away from him. That tactic seemed to work. The dragon shifted her attention away from Cedric and began to take interest on the dog. It began to move slowly towards the dog and away from her eggs.

Cedric took this advantage and with him guiding the dog and his eyes still trained on the dragon, began to move slowly towards the pile of eggs. He succeeded in reaching the egg pile. Slowly but surely, he reached out and grabbed the golden egg.

But there was never a time to celebrate. Just as he picked up the egg, spectators began to scream. Cedric who was a little bit preoccupied with the golden egg looked up and saw the dragon was charging towards him. Seeing this, Cedric began to run as fast as his legs could carry him towards the entrance. It was not easy though. The weight of the golden egg was bearing down on him. The dragon shot a jet of fire towards him. It missed. It roared in anger as it continued to chase Cedric. Just as Cedric was about to reach safety, the dragon let out another stream of fire. This time Cedric was not so lucky. The flame hit his left shoulder and his uniform caught fire. Ignoring his burnt shoulder, Cedric kept on running until he reached safety. Few of the dragon keepers dashed towards him. One of them pointed his wand towards Cedric and began shooting jet of water towards him. The fire was extinguished within second. Two of the dragon keepers slid their hands under Cedric’s arm and guided him towards the champion’s entrance.

And throughout the ordeal, Ludo Bagman kept on commenting.

"He did it! He did it! His tactics didn't work as well as he probably hopes for and it took him more than fifteen minutes to get the egg but all the same. He did it! A round of applause for our first champion!"

Harry clapped hard together with the rest of the spectators.

"And now, the mark from the judges please!"

All attention was now onto the judges.

Madame Maxime raised her wand. What looked like a long silver ribbon shot out of it, which twisted itself into a large figure six. Mr. Crouch came next. He shot out a number seven into the air. Dumbledore shot out a number seven, Karkaroff shot out a number four; much to the displeasure of all Hogwarts students, and Ludo Bagman himself gave an eight to Cedric. All together, Cedric scored 32 points.

The Swedish Short-Snout and her eggs were taken away and the process was then repeated. This time, out came the Chinese Fireball.

Once everything was in place, Bagman announced, "Next, our contestant shall be none other than Mr. Viktor Krum! Hailing from the Durmstrang Institute and a well known Quidditch player, Mr. Krum will face the same task as the previous champion! Good luck!"

Viktor rushed out of the champion’s entrance to the applause of the spectators. Unlike Cedric, he chose not to wait. He raised his wand and began to shoot spells towards the dragon. One of it hit the dragon directly in the eye. It worked. Being temporarily blind, the dragon could no longer see. Viktor used this to his advantage. He began to advance towards the egg pile. Unfortunately though, Viktor's spell had also hurt the dragon’s eyes. And in its agony, the Chinese Fireball trampled around. It nearly hit him twice. But much to Viktor's horror, the dragon accidentally squished nearly half of all her eggs as she continued trampling around. At one point, her tail swung around and hit the golden egg. The force exerted by the tail swing was so great that golden egg flew and hit the rocky wall near Viktor. It got dented in the process. Viktor wasted no time. He quickly retrieved the egg and dashed towards the champion’s entrance.

"The quickest to get his egg so far," announced Ludo Bagman. "At approximately seven minutes. Unfortunately, the destruction of the dragon’s eggs will count against Mr. Krum."
We’ll handover to the judges to decide."

Viktor’s estimated time was indeed the shortest but the damage had also being done. He only received twenty five points overall.

The Chinese Fireball dragon and her damaged eggs were subsequently removed from the arena.

The next would be the Welsh Green dragon. And its challenger would be Fleur.

"Our third and final contestant!" announced Bagman. "Hailing from Beauxbaton Academy of Magic, let me introduce you to the lovely Miss Fleur Delacour!"

The applause were a lot louder this time, especially from the male spectators.

Harry had a déjà vu. It happened exactly the same way as before. It was like watching repeated day time television soap opera episodes. And he had no doubt that for Fleur, it would happen the same way again. Fleur will try putting the dragon to sleep and she will try to fetch the egg while she was at it.

It was not exactly a bad thing. Fleur had a really beautiful voice when she sang. The problem was, as before, the dragon would snort fire and her skirt would catch fire. She got the egg though. He could only hope that Fleur would be more careful.

But then, she would not know what is going to happen, would she? She had yet to experience them anyway.

The curtain of the champion's entrance swung apart and out came Fleur Delacour.

Her appearance this time took Harry by surprise.

She did not wear the same outfit as before. Well, not all were different actually. She still wore the same blue colored long sleeve shirt as before, but this time around, a pair of pants covered her legs. Gone has the short skirt which exposed her beautiful long legs she wore in the previous timeline. A protective vest in the same color as the rest of her outfit covered her chest.

Clearly, she looked really well prepared. Harry of course wholeheartedly approved it though he silently admitted that he was a little bit puzzled by the change.

The applause soon died down.

And Fleur began to make her move.

The dragon growled menacingly as it watched Fleur walked closer to it. It inched closer to its eggs in an attempt to protect it better.

Fleur stopped a few hundred feet away from the dragon and began to access the situation.

"Two minutes had past, Miss Delacour," reminded Bagman after seeing Fleur stood there doing nothing.

Fleur glanced upwards towards the judges table. Then without warning, she raised her wand and shot a spell.

The spell flew past the dragon on the right and it hit a boulder nearby. That boulder exploded into tiny little pieces. The dragon turned its head to look. And by this time, Fleur made a dash towards the egg pile on its left.

But the dragon did not stare at the boulder for long. It turned back to look and found Fleur was running towards its egg. The spectator gasped as the dragon shot a jet of fire towards her. But she was ready for it. She skidded into a halt and sidestepped the flame. The jet of fire missed her by mere inches and pulverized the rock behind her.

She did not waste any time though. As soon as the flame extinguished, she ran towards the opposite direction to the dragon's right side. And as she ran, once again she shot a spell, this time to the dragon's left side.

But the dragon was not fooled this time. Its yellow slit pair of eyes followed Fleur closely instead. Just as Fleur approached a boulder not far from it, the dragon once again shot out a flame with the attention to trap her. But Fleur was faster. She immediately dropped down and rolled out of the line of fire. Once it was safe to do so, she quickly got up and resumed running, this time towards the opposite direction from before. She shot a spell for the third time. This time though, she kept on running while throwing several more spells in
rapid succession towards the dragon at the same time. All those spells hit the dragon squarely.

"Good aim and what an excellent wandwork! And she is quick on her feet too. But all those spell do not have any effect on the dragon. If she is trying to hurt the dragon the way Mr. Krum, it did not work!" appraised Bagman.

But Harry by this time did not think that hurting the dragon was Fleur’s main aim. His lips curved into a smile.

She kept on running, throwing spells at the dragon and randomly changing direction of her run in quick succession. She spun, she sidestepped, she dodged, she leapt over the boulders and landed cleanly and continued her sprint. The dragon’s flame of fire and its tail missed her just mere inches every time the dragon tried to hit her.

"Oh! That was a close one! And another one! You need to be careful! OH! My goodness!" exclaimed Bagman.

The audience at the same time gasped and screamed. Ron and the rest of the boys watched with their jaws hanged open. Hermione meanwhile was clutching her face. The dragon keepers meanwhile already had their wands out just in case.

Harry’s smile by this time widened.

Fleur did not mean to hurt the dragon and from the way things were looking, she was not really in immediate danger at all. It was clear to him that the veela was more than capable to increase to distance between her and the dragon’s attack. She just chose not to do so. She was dangling the carrot in front of the dragon by offering herself as a bait. Also by purposely making every attack by the dragon a near miss, she was giving the dragon the illusion that she was an easy prey. All it needed was to get closer to her. She was using the same diversionary tactic Harry once employed back in the previous timeline. The only difference was that this time, there was no broom. She relied only on her speed and skills.

And it worked brilliantly.

The dragon was now become so focused in getting to Fleur that it had completely forgotten all about protecting her eggs. It rose from the pile, growling and hissing menacingly, putting one clawed leg after another, and began to crawl slowly towards Fleur.

Fleur saw this. She kept on with her tactics and continued to lure the dragon slowly away from her eggs. She even began to let the dragon get closer to her this time, knowing that the dragon would not miss the chance to devour; or at least kill her.

Then all of a sudden, she suddenly stopped running and stood rigidly in front of the dragon.

The dragon did not miss this chance. Its mouth opened wide and...

"Miss Delacour!" shouted Bagman.

All the keepers and Bill included, with their wands out rush towards Fleur. But it was too late.

The flame coming out from the dragon’s mouth completely engulfed Fleur:

"No!" shouted Harry. He did not expect this to happen.

All the Delacours stood up. Gabrielle cried. Both Monsieur Delacour and Appoline stood in horror as the flame continued to engulf their eldest daughter.

The keepers tried with all their might to lure the dragon away but they failed. The dragon was so determined to kill Fleur that it ignored all the spells and the curses the keepers threw at it. Flames, ball of flames, continued to exit the dragon’s mouth. It went that way until the dragon finally ran out of energy.

The spectators once again gasped once the flame subsided. The ground where Fleur stood continued to burn. Rocks melted. But she was not there.

Everyone looked around in puzzlement. Then suddenly:-

"There she is!"

One of the spectators pointed. The rest of them looked towards the direction he was pointing.

And there she was, standing over the pile of eggs with one of her hands resting on the golden egg.
The dragon realized its mistakes but it was too late.

Fleur smirked at the dragon. She then grabbed the egg with both hands and spun. She dissipated and reappeared with the golden egg right at the champion's entrance.

It took a while before everyone registered on what really happened. Then slowly the whole arena broke into cheers and applaudes.

"BRILLIANT! THAT WAS ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT!" shouted Bagman. “So it was all a trick! I love it! I really love it! The time taken was a little bit longer than Mr. Krum but she did it without hurting herself or damaging the eggs! This will definitely increase the odd in her favor! But we’ll let the judges decided."

Madame Maxime raised her wand and shot out a figure ten. Dumbledore, Mr. Crouch and Ludo Bagman himself gave Fleur the same score as Madame Maxime. Karkaroff however gave her a five.

Fleur, with golden egg in her hand, bowed to the judges. She was now leading the tournament with a score of forty five.

Bill came over to her and congratulated her. They both talked for a while. Professor McGonagall came out of the tent and gestured Fleur to come into the tent. She obliged. Bill followed Fleur into the tent.

Harry should be jealous by the sight of this.

He however did not.

Instead he was thinking. Cedric and Viktor had their event went as expected. Except for Fleur. The way she acted down there. The way she faced the Common Green Welsh dragon, her expression, it was as if she had done this before. There was no fear in her eyes, only determination and confident.

It was at this point that he began to wonder on who Fleur really was.

He was so preoccupied with his thought that he failed to realize that the First Task had ended and everyone was leaving the arena. Bagman announced that the Second Task date and venue will be made known soon before declaring the formal ending of the First Task.

"Come on, Harry," said Hermione, tapping his shoulder and waking him up from his stupor. "Let's go to the champion's tent. I want to see them."

Harry did not feel that it was good idea for him to tag along but he followed her anyway.

Champion's tent...

The Beauxbaton students, the Durmstrang students and the whole of Hufflepuff House were already waiting in front of the tent when the trio arrived. Daphne and Tracy were there too.

The Hufflepuffs were so happy with their second place. The Durmstrang looked a little bit subdued. As for the Beauxbatons, they tried to keep it under control. Harry though knew that they were extremely pleased with the outcome of the First Task.

Hermione was the first to congratulate the Beauxbaton. Harry did not do the same though. Instead, he went to congratulate the Hufflepuff, feeling that it was a correct course of action. They were the one representing Hogwarts anyway.

Viktor was the first to emerge from the tent. He looked really disappointed. His friends immediately gathered around him and tried their best to console him in any way they can.

Harry went up to him. He noticed that Viktor was holding the dented golden egg in his hand.

"Hey Viktor," said Harry. "You did good."

Viktor smiled bitterly and nodded at him. He did not speak any word though. He was about to turn and leave before Harry's hand shot out and held him back.

"I know you're disappointed but there's always another chance. This is just the beginning, Viktor," said Harry.

Viktor once again nodded.

"Thank you, Harry," said Viktor.
Viktor then, together with all of his friends, took leave.

Cedric was the second to emerge from the tent. His left shoulder was in bandage. All of the Hufflepuffs greeted him enthusiastically. The boys immediately heaved him over their shoulder and began carrying him towards the castle. Harry smiled and gave Cedric a thumb up when the Hogwarts champion saw him. Cedric smiled back. He mouthe the word ‘thank you’ to him.

Now it was just Harry, Hermione, Ron, Daphne, Tracy and the Beauxbaton students outside the tent.

Marianne came over to him. "Zhank you," she said.

"For what?" asked Harry.

"Zhe presents," she said. "We love zhem. You do know 'ow to pick a gift. But why didn't you give zhem to us yourself? You where zhere, remember?"

"Oh. Well, something came up. Sorry," said Harry.

"You didn't give any to Fleur," stated Marianne.

Harry considered telling Marianne that Daphne wanted him to present Fleur the gift himself but in the end, he settled for, "I forgot. It must have slipped off my mind."

Marianne stared at Harry for a few moments.

"It iz okay," she said. "You can give it to 'er anytime later."

Harry just nodded.

By this time, all of Fleur's friend gathered around him and told him how they appreciated Harry's gift to them.

"But zhere waz one extra," said Addriene. "We zhought zhat it waz for Fleur but Daphne said it wasn't."

"You bought them gifts?" said Hermione to Harry.

Harry looked to and fro between Hermione and the rest of the girls. He then face palmed.

"I'm sorry," said Harry moments later, putting down his hands. "That one is for you Hermione. I just forgot."

Hermione looked surprise.

"For me?" she asked.

Harry nodded.

"Yes. For you as a token of our friendship," explain Harry. "Can you girls give it to her, please?" asked Harry to Adrianne.

"Of course," said Adrienne. Turning to Hermione, she said, "You can come with us to zhe carriage, 'Ermione. Don't worry, zhe box already 'ave you name on it, just like everyone else."

"Thank you, Harry," said Hermione.

"You're welcome."

"Hey! Where iz my gift?!" said Raphael to Harry, crossing his arm to his chest. "You 'ave forgotten me, 'Arry!"

Harry just rolled his eyes.

"If you like necklace, ring and those kinds of stuff, yeah I'll buy you one the next time I visit Hogsmeade," he said.

Raphael shuddered.

"Urghh. No zhanks."

The curtain into the tent suddenly pushed open, revealing Fleur. She stepped out of the tent, clutching the golden egg with her right arm.
Fleur’s friends immediately gathered around her, congratulating her. Harry however stayed behind. He just watched as Bill appeared behind her.

“You know I can help carry the golden egg for you,” said Bill to Fleur. "It's no big deal."

But Fleur declined.

“You are sweet. It iz okay, Bill,” said Fleur. "I can carry it myself."

Bill smiled and shook his head.

"Then in that case, will you allow me to escort you back to the carriage?" he asked.

"Yes. I zhink you can," she said.

Bill smiled widely at this.

"Then, let's go," he said.

Fleur nodded.

They were just about to leave when Fleur suddenly saw Harry who was standing alone, a bit farther from everyone else.

"'Arry!" she said in surprise. She looked happy to see him though.

Harry smiled at her. He then walked right up to her.

"Congratulations," he said the moment he arrived in front of her. "That was truly a brilliant performance you gave back there. I was beginning to wonder if this really is the first time you encountered a dragon."

Fleur's expression changed upon hearing that. Her smile faltered a little bit.

"I learnt from someone," she said.

"Then I guess a congratulation should also be in order for that person. You did really good, Fleur. I couldn't be more proud than I am right now," said Harry.

"Zhank you," said Fleur softly.

Harry nodded.

"You should go," said Harry. "The rest of your friends probably couldn't wait to celebrate your success. I bid you good luck for the Second Task."

Harry was about to leave when Fleur's hand shot out and held him back.

"You should come too, 'Arry," said Fleur.

Harry looked down towards her hand that was now holding his arm. Slowly and gently he pushed her hand away.

"This is your party," said Harry. "It won't be appropriate for me to be there. Anyway, Hogwarts is celebrating too, remember? I should be celebrating with them."

Fleur bit her lips and nodded.

Harry gave Fleur and Bill a nod. He then turned to leave.

But before he could get far from them, Fleur called to him.

"I will see you again, yes?" she asked.

Harry stopped and turned to look.

"Of course. It's not like I'll be going anywhere anytime soon. I'm stuck in that castle until next summer," said Harry. "Anyway, you and Bill look great together, you know that?"

Fleur just stared at him.

"I better get going. I'll see you later, Bill," he said. With that, he strode off towards the castle leaving everyone behind.
He should be hurt. But he did not. As a matter a fact, he felt relieved. For the first time ever since he returned, he felt the heavy burden lifted off his shoulder. His mind could not be any clearer. He was now free. Free to dedicate himself to his mission, free from the ghost of his past.

As he walked alone towards the castle, he began to contemplate everything that happened before and all that were about to happen.

Fleur was now in safe hands. Nothing would come to hurt her, both mentally and physically. As for him, his life awaits him if he survived his mission. He was still young, at least physically anyway. Perhaps someday somewhere, he would meet someone special whom he could call his own.

Hermione came to him after dinner that night. They, together with Ron, were resting inside the common room.

The Hufflepuff invited Harry to their party that night but Harry declined. He told them that he needed some rest.

"Thank you for the gift, Harry," said Hermione, taking the seat in front of him.

Harry looked up to her from his book. He smiled.

"You're welcome," he said. Returning to his book, he asked, "So, how's the party?"

"It was fun," said Hermione.

"Good."

Hermione leaned closer to him. "Bill wasn't allowed inside the carriage if you want to know."

"Why not?" said Harry, disinterestedly.

"He's an outsider, Harry. Of course Madam Maxime won't let him in," said Hermione.

"I'm an outsider too but they let me in. I'm sure Fleur would vouch for him. She vouched for me before, you know," said Harry idly.

"See that's the thing. She did not vouch for him," said Hermione.

Harry looked up at her momentarily before returning to his book.

"She will. Eventually."

**Room of Requirement, after midnight...**

He stood alone inside the room surrounded by hundreds of Death Eaters.

His wand unsheathed. He cracked his neck, watching and calculating the Death Eaters every move.

"Alright. Let's do this."

He leapt into the air and made a clean landing right in the middle of the Death Eaters.

Against him, they won't stand a chance.

**To be continued...**

* A/n: I feel a party and a dance coming. 
He stood there among the fallen Death Eaters, breathing heavily. Sweats ran down his face. Faint white smoke that came out of the tip of his holly and phoenix feather wand indicated the level of stress that object was placed under a few minutes ago.

He looked up towards the huge indicator counter hanged on the wall nearby. The reading stopped exactly at 179.

179 Death Eaters killed. Not bad for a few minutes work.

But then, those bodies that were lying around him were not the bodies of real Death Eaters. They were simply a part of a simulation constructed by Harry with the help of the Room of Requirement. And like those bad guys in many video games, they had limited skills and intelligences. But they were perfect for what he wanted to do that night. He was not seeking to increase his skill. He just wanted to test his limits, on how far he could go before his core overpower his body and deal permanent damage to it.

He grabbed the bottle of water on a table nearby and drank it all up. He then placed the bottle back on top of the table and returned to middle of the room.

"Reset!"

The bodies immediately vanished, replaced by perfectly alive and healthy clones of Death Eaters. All of them, wearing black hoods and masks with snake-like eye slit, were staring menacingly at him, ready to attack him at a moment notice.

Once again, Harry cracked his neck.

"Fame columnist Rita Skeeter was attacked during the First Task of the Triwizard Tournament!"

-The Daily Prophets.

"How did it happen?" - Julia R.

"Serves her right, that woman! She's a poison! Destroying people's life, that's all she did! - David K.

"I'm a huge fan of her. How did this happen? Oh, I hope she's alright." - Linda W.

"She's pretty." - John L.

For the next few days after the First Task, the news of Rita Skeeter's attack became the topic of the week in Hogwarts. Aurors can be seen come and go as they continued their investigation over the incident. Quite a few times Harry could see Kingsley, Nymphadora, Elphias and sometime Remus coming over to Hogwarts. They spoke to every staff. Even Professor Karkaroff and Madame Maxime were not spared in their investigation, much to their displeasure.

It was Friday, three days after the First Task ended. Harry and the rest of his friends were having their lunch at the Great Hall. They had to bring Seamus and Dean to the hospital wing after Charms that morning because the paint on those two best friends' face refused to come off. Madam Pomfrey blew her top off the moment she saw the two entering the hospital wing.

"THREE DAYS AGO IT WAS THE DRAGON! NOW IT'S YOU! WHAT NEXT?!

screamed Madam Pomfrey at Seamus and Dean.

At the High Table, Kingsley and Elphias were having a serious discussion with Dumbledore, Snape, McGonagall and Flitwick. Madame Maxime and Karkaroff were present as well.

"I got a letter from mom this morning," said Ginny who had just arrived from the hospital wing. She joined Harry and the rest of the gang by sitting next to George. "I think I know what happened to Rita."

"So what happened?" asked Hermione curiously.

"Someone obliviated her. They don't know when and how it happened but they suspected that she was attacked during the course of the First Task. Her photographer only realized it when the First Task ended. It was bad," explained Ginny.
"Bad as in?" asked Katie.

"Remember Professor Lockhart?" said Ginny. "At least the former teacher remembered bits and pieces from his past. His memory is in shambles but he still is Gilderoy Lockhart. Rita Skeeter can't even remember her own name. Dad told mom that she's now basically an empty shell. They got her a place at St. Mungos, inside the Janus Thickey Ward. She'll be Professor Lockhart's roommate."

Harry listened to Ginny in silence. He remembered Janus Thickey Ward really well. The first time he went there was during his fifth year where he and the rest of the Weasley went to visit Arthur. He met Lockhart of course and witnessed the true fate that befell Neville's parents.

Patients of Janus Thickey Ward never last long. Lockhart passed away seven years after the war ended.

"So that's where Professor Lockhart ended in," said Hermione. "I always wonder where had he gone to after he left Hogwarts. What?!"

Ron was staring at Hermione with unmasked amusement.

"Still can't get over your crush, eh Hermione?" said Ron, sniggering.

Hermione blushed at this.

"I was just curious! There's nothing wrong with that!" she said, heatedly.

Ron, returning to his food and continued to snigger.

"Idiot!" said Hermione with a huff. Turning her attention back to Ginny, she asked, "So did your father know who's behind the attack?"

Ginny shook her head however. "No. But dad did mention to mom that only an exceptionally powerful wizard will be able to replicate the Dementor Kiss effect on someone else. This wizard not only performed the wizard version of the Dementor Kiss on Rita, he also was able to mask his attack really well. Dad said it could be the work of a dangerous assassin."

"Assassin? But if that's the case, why didn't he just killed her?" asked Hermione.

"Dunno," said Ginny.

"Bill once said that being kissed by the Dementor is a lot worse than being killed. This person, whoever it is who employed the assassin in the first place probably wanted to make a statement. Rita Skeeter does have a lot of enemies, you know," said Fred.

"Well, one thing is clear. Mom is frustrated. She's a huge fan of Rita Skeeter. Every time the owl delivers the Daily Prophet, her column would be the first mom searches for," said Ginny, shaking her head.

Harry continued to keep silence. If only they knew that the so called assassin was sitting there among them.

He watched as Dumbledore escorted Kingsley and Elphias out of the Great Hall. Madame Maxime and Karkaroff followed from behind. Dumbledore glanced at Harry as he walked pass him and his friends and subtly nodded at him before continuing his way out of the Great Hall.

Rita Skeeter remained a favorite conversational piece for the next two weeks. Up until now, no one knew on who did it or why she was attacked. The DMLE was clearly at lost on how to proceed with the investigation. This was evidenced by the presence of Amelia Bones, the current head of the DMLE who looked troubled.

As for Harry, having a clear objective and direction minus any burden changed him. He became more focused and resolved than ever before in everything he did. His performance in classes improved by leaps and bounds. Of course having learnt everything, both in theory in practical, meant that every subject was hugely easy for him. But it was his hard work that virtually every teacher took notice of. Even Snape who would love to criticize Harry in everything was lost for words seeing that Harry kept on punching out perfectly brewed potion time and time again. Not only that, his team mates also noticed the changes in him during training. His Seeker's skills kept getting better and better which each training.

Little that they realized that being busy with schoolwork and extracurricular activities, both official and non-official, was his way of dealing with the grief, anguish and sorrow he currently experiencing.

As for Fleur, he heard no news from her since the First Task ended. Even Daphne did not offer
him anything in regard of her cousin. As a matter a fact, she seemed a little bit cold and distant. She even stopped approaching him whenever Slytherin had classes together with Gryffindor and started ignoring him.

Having used to Daphne seeking him whenever she had the chances, her attitude changes towards him puzzled him nonetheless.

There was an upside to all of these. Being busy and being ignored did allow Harry to temporarily forget Fleur and his feelings for her. It would be a slow process, but he was confident that someday, he will be able to get over her.

It was Wednesday, two weeks after the First Task. Harry and his friends were on their way from Transfiguration classroom back to Gryffindor Tower that afternoon. They were supposed to have two free periods but Professor McGonagall decided to use that free periods to hold extra classes. Apparently, she was displeased with the class's progress which was why the extra classes were scheduled. Dinner won't be for another thirty minutes. They would be going to deposit their bag in the common room and returned to Great Hall for dinner after that.

The food was already served when they arrived for dinner. Harry was about to dig in when all of a sudden, someone came to him.

"Potter."

Harry looked up from his food.

It was Malfoy. He had come all the way from the Slytherin table. Alone.

"What is it, Malfoy?" asked Harry.

"We need to talk," said Malfoy. "I need you to come to our table. Right now."

"What's so important that you can't even say it here, Malfoy?" asked Hermione. She and the rest of the Gryffindor were staring at the blonde boy with great dislike.

"I have my reason," said Malfoy. "You can ask him when he returns. Come on, Potter."

"This better be good, Malfoy," said Harry as he get off from the bench.

"Trust me, Potter. You'll want to hear this," said Malfoy, gesturing Harry to follow him.

"Alright."

Together, they headed towards the Slytherin table.

Marcus Flint gestured Harry to sit. Cassius Warrington scooted a little bit to make space for Harry. Harry obliged without question. Malfoy meanwhile took his place beside Marcus.

Harry looked around. He saw Daphne and Tracy, sitting a little bit farther away from them. Daphne glanced at him before turning away to continue her conversation with Tracy and other Slytherin girls.

One person was absent though.

"Where's Miles?" he asked.

Marcus, who did not miss to notice the usage of Bletchley's first name, leaned towards him and said, "He's in the hospital wing right now. He accidentally touched a poison ivy plant while spying with Draco."

"Spying?"

"He and Draco saw Krum and his teammates took off from their ship on brooms. They headed north of the Black Lake. Both Draco and Miles followed from behind," explained Marcus. "You won't like it if you see it, Potter."

"Explain," said Harry.

"Firebolts, Potter," said Malfoy. "All of them use Firebolts. And the way they trained, it's like they're out for blood."

They continued to talk. Harry listened as Malfoy laid out everything that he and Miles saw when they were spying on the Durmstrang.
And during that time, little that he realized that virtually every eyes within the Great Hall, including the teachers, was watching him. A Gryffindor, sitting and conversing at the Slytherin table. That never happened before in the History of Hogwarts.

"I would like to see them train," said Harry. "Do you still remember the location?"

"I remember. But you'll have to wait. They already gone back to the ship," said Malfoy. "Me and Miles, we had to hide for quite a long time after they left. Don't want to let them know that we know. We know you want to see them with your own eyes."

A warm feeling began to envelop Harry. He never knew that Malfoy would think that far. It seemed that his animosity towards Harry in regard of Daphne had evaporated. At least that was what he hoped for.

"I appreciate that. Keep a close watch of them and inform me. Well, I better get back to the Gryffindor table. I'm going to visit Miles after dinner," said Harry as he rose from his seat.

"We're going to see him too," said Marcus. "You can have your dinner here, Potter. We can go together."

Harry thought for a moment. Seeing that there was nothing wrong in accepting the Slytherin's invitation to have dinner at their table, he obliged and returned to his seat. After all, one of them is his team mate.

Dinner soon ended.

"Wait for me outside the Great Hall," said Harry to the Slytherins. "I'm going to get the rest of the team to go with us."

"Sure," said Marcus.

Harry returned to the Gryffindor table while the Slytherin heads out.

"I thought you already become one of them," said Fred. "How's the food there?"

"The same as you all have here. And I'm still a Gryffindor," said Harry. "I have news and it won't be good. But before that, we need to go to the hospital wing."

"What for?"

"Miles. He's been warded."

"For what?" asked George.

"Something to do with Quidditch. Come on. They're waiting for us outside," urged Harry.

"The Slytherins are going as well?" asked Lee.

"Yes. That won't be a problem, would it?"

"No. Not at all," said Katie, getting off the bench. Angelina and Alicia both mirrored her.

"Come on you guys. Let's go see Miles."

Fred and George were well known to be a little bit submissive when it comes to their female teammates. They did not like it, Harry could see from the look on their face, but they would still do it. The twins grudgingly rose from their seat and followed the rest out of the Great Hall.

Together with the Slytherin, they headed towards the hospital wing.

At the hospital wing...

"Hey, Potter."

"Hey, Miles."

The Slytherin keeper was lying on one of the beds in the hospital wing. Angry red rashes covered all over his body. His face swollen so bad that his eyes were reduced to a slit. It was a wonder that he could still see through those slits. Plastic tubing ran from a ventilator to his nose.

"You look bad," said Harry. "I don't think poison ivy did this."

"You heard, huh? No, this is no poison ivy. It's something else," said Miles, his breathing
labored and wheezed. "Madam Pomfrey informed Professor Sprout of my condition. She came
to take a look at me, took some sample of my skin and asked a few questions. She said she'll
come back later."

"Madam Pomfrey didn't give you anything to ease the pain?" asked Harry.

"She did," answered Miles. "Feel a lot better now. Still having trouble breathing though. She
advised me not to talk too much."

Harry nodded in understanding. "I understand. You can go back to rest, Miles. We'll talk about
your findings with Malfoy once you're okay."

"So they told you everything? Did Malfoy inform you about my proposal?" asked Miles.

Harry lifted his eyebrows. He turned to Malfoy.

"Proposal?" he asked.

Malfoy was about to reply when suddenly the door into the hospital wing opened.

They watched as Daphne and a few Slytherin girls including Pansy Parkinson entered the
hospital wing.

The girls were surprised to see the condition Miles was in.

"Malfoy?" Harry called out to Malfoy who was staring at Daphne, much to Pansy's displeasure.
Daphne however gave no indication that she was aware of Malfoy's presence there.

"Malfoy? The proposal if you please?" repeated Harry.

"Draco!" said Pansy a little bit heatedly. "Potter's talking to you!"

Malfoy turned back to Harry. He blushed a little bit, feeling embarrassed that he was caught
staring.

Malfoy cleared his throat. "Err... right. I haven't discussed it with the rest of them, Bletchley."

Marcus's eyes darted between Malfoy and Miles.

"What proposal? Draco?" he asked.

Malfoy looked hesitant.

"Just tell them, Draco!" said Miles.

Malfoy sighed. He turned to look at his teammates.

"Bletchley. He suggested that we let the Gryffindor use our broom," he said.

Everyone within the vicinity was taken by surprise by this. Including Harry. He glanced at his
teammates. All of them were staring at Malfoy in disbelief.

The Slytherin team indeed had better and faster flying brooms compared to the Gryffindor.
With the exception of Harry, all of them still used the cheaper and slower Cleansweep Five.
Not that the Nimbus 2001 helped the Slytherin anyway. Gryffindor team still managed to
show the Slytherin the way out virtually in every Quidditch match due to their prodigious
skills.

"There won't be any need for that," said Angelina, her lips tightened. Clearly, she did not like
the proposal at all. Borrowing someone else broom, especially from their supposed enemies
and competitors was unthinkable. It was undignified. Especially when someone like Malfoy
involved. "Our brooms serve us well."

"Like I said, I haven't discussed it yet," said Malfoy. "Your cheap brooms won't get you far this
time. I can guarantee it," he sneered.

Angelina turned to Harry.

"Why are we here, Harry?" she asked angrily.

Harry held up his hand, signalling her to calm down.

"We're here to visit Miles, Angelina. He's our teammate," said Harry. Turning to Miles, he
said, "I am grateful really, but you don't have to. We'll find a way."
"Potter, we saw them. We saw how they trained. This is no pushover team we're up against with. We won't win, Potter," said Miles however. "I can tell you right now. We won't win. At least not without a proper broom."

"I know they use Firebolts. Look, I have yet to see how they train. I am planning to which is why I need you guys to have a look out. We'll see what we're going to do after that," said Harry reassuringly. "You need to rest. We need you to recover quickly."

Miles went silent.

"Firebolts?" asked Alicia incredulously. "All of them?"

"That's what they told me," said Harry. "If what they told me is true, this is no mere school team we're up against with. I still need to take a look though. Only then can we predict if we'll end up like a fly squashed to the wall."

The Gryffindorians glanced at each other worriedly.

"Normally I would enjoy seeing you and your team downtrodden like this," said Marcus a-matter-factly. "But one of us is in your team. We're not going to share the same embarrassment if you lose, Potter. So think of a way."

"I am and I will. Just keep me posted, Flint."

"Do you think by borrowing our brooms would help?" asked Marcus.

"Are you and your teammates willing to lend us your brooms with the knowledge that it will be us who will be riding it?" asked Harry in return.

"We'll see."

Harry nodded.

"You have a week at most to decide," he said. "In the meantime, keep a sharp lookout for the Durmstrang. I don't care if we have classes that time. I still want to see them train."

"Agreed."

"Harry, you can't be serious," said Katie.

"Unusual situations requires unusual solutions. If they're willing to lend us their brooms, I suggest that all of you take it," said Harry.

Katie went silent.

"I think we overstay our welcome," said Harry to the rest of the students there.

Indeed, Madam Pomfrey who just came out of her office immediately shooed them away.

"Get well soon, Miles," said Fred and George as they headed out of the hospital wing.

Miles slowly raised his right hand and gave the twins a thumbs up.

If Harry's team ended up using the Nimbus 2001, he'll have to make changes to their tactical strategy to compensate with that broom's burst of speed which was why he needed the Slytherin to make their decision fast. He silently agreed with Miles's assessment. Skills alone just won't be enough. They needed speed too and so far, only he had that. Even if the Durmstrang ended up having the same set of skills with the Gryffindor, they would still slaughter the Hogwarts team via the Firebolt alone.

He had just exited the hospital wing when all of a sudden, Daphne grabbed his arm.

"We need to talk," she said.

Harry gestured for his teammates to leave.

"I'll see you guys at the common room," he said.

His teammates nodded and continued their way to the Gryffindor Tower.

Malfoy also was about to stop when Pansy grabbed his hand and pulled him away. Harry could hear them bickering just as the two disappeared behind the corner.

Now it was only him, Daphne and Tracy that were left.
Daphne let go of his arm.

"What is it, Daphne?" asked Harry.

Folding her arms to her chest and unsmiling, she said, "It's funny to see how mature and professional you were back in there when two weeks ago, you acted like a three years old boy who threw up a tantrum just because someone took away your lollipop!"

Harry was taken aback by the accusation.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," said Harry. "And I definitely did not throw a tantrum."

"Really, Potter?" said Daphne, her eyebrows lifted. "She just won the First Task of the fricking Triwizard Tournament. She deserves to be happy and you took that away from her. And it all because you can't handle your jealousy problem!"

"So it's Potter now? Jealousy problem?"

"'Anyway, you and Bill look great together, you know that?' mocked Daphne. "That sentence spells jealousy, Potter. You were jealous of that Weasley. You know what? For your information, That Weasley came to see her a few more times after the First Task. I think there's something going on between them. And you know what's more? Her friends approved. That does make your blood boil, doesn't it?"

"And you're telling me this for what exactly?"

"I'm telling you this because you're jealous of them two!"

By this time, it was clear to Harry that Daphne was trying to bait him. She was trying to raise his anger and elicited a response from him. What kind of response that she wanted he didn't know but it was clear as the daylight to him that she wanted him to respond.

And he wasn't about to fall for that.

He leaned towards her - her flowery scent invaded his senses but he shrugged it off - and with his face mere inches away from Daphne, he spoke, "I just met her. I never knew her before. And I'm not that easy to fall for anyone at any moment. Ever."

Daphne was taken aback by this. She struggled momentarily before she could come up with,

"Then why seek her? That day outside the carriage?"

Harry drew back. "Just a token of friendship that I extended to her. From a new friend to a new friend. That's what the Triwizard Tournament is all about, isn't it? Forging new friendship et. cetera. It was nothing more than that."

"I don't believe you!"

"Believe whatever it is you want to believe. It's your choice and it's yours alone. I'm not going to be a part of it."

Daphne fell silent.

"Someone told me that the celebratory party was fun even without my presence. My presence or rather my absence, just like at the Hufflepuff party, would make no difference," continued Harry. "By the way, you can keep on calling me Potter, Greengrass. I won't mind."

For the next few moments, they stood in silence.

Thinking that they both already done talking, Harry turned around. But just as he was about to walk away-

"Harry!"

He stopped and looked back towards Daphne.

"What is it, Greengrass?"

"I-.."

But nothing else came out from her.

Harry cocked his eyebrows.

"Good night to you then."
He then took his leave.

As he walked back towards the Gryffindor Tower, his mind rewinded to the moment from the first time he met Fleur until his latest encounter with Daphne. What he said to the girl just then was indeed an ultimatum. That he no longer want to have anything to do with her or anyone else within her circle.

His mission. That was his priority. He may survived. Maybe he won’t. But if he did survives...

Harry's mind at that time went back to that cute girl in that café whom he met in the previous timeline before Dumbledore picked him up. He had no idea why she crept into his mind at this point. He even did not know if the girl was already working at the café, nor did he know her name. He never had the chance to ask. Perhaps he could try to look for her someday. London was not a strange place for him anyway.

His lips crooked into a smile. The subway cafe will be a good place to restart everything.

Thursday came.

That night, Professor McGonagall gathered all of the Gryffindorians within the common room. Harry and Ron were having a sword fight with Fred and George's fake wands when she came in with Seamus, Neville and Dean watching.

"Now that all of you are gathered here, I have an announcement to make," said McGonagall, looking around at each and every face present.

"The Yule Ball, a traditional part of the Triwizard Tournament will be held on coming Christmas night. It is an—"

Harry, who had forgotten all about the Yule Ball and upon remembering the disastrous night he went through in the previous timeline, suddenly groaned loudly.

"Is there any problem, Mr. Potter?" asked Professor McGonagall, irritably. Apparently, Harry's groan was loud enough for everyone to hear, without him realizing of course.

"Err… no. There's no problem, Professor. Sorry," Harry, feeling embarrassed, apologized.

"You don't have to attend the ball if you don't want to, Mr. Potter," said McGonagall, throwing an angry look at him. "Only the champions are obligated to attend because they are required to open the ball."

_I know that_, thought Harry.

"I understand, Professor. Sorry," said Harry, once again apologizing.

Professor McGonagall shook her head.

"Now," she continued. "As I was saying before we were rudely interrupted, it is an opportunity for us to socialize with our foreign guest. Mind you that the ball is only open to fourth year and above. You may however invite a younger student should you wish."

Lavender Brown let out a shrill giggle. Parvati Patil nudged her hard in her ribs, her face working furiously as she too fought not to giggle. Ginny and Dean meanwhile glanced at each other with the later winking at her. She smiled and mouthed 'yes' to him.

"Dress robes is mandatory," said McGonagall. "And the ball will start at eight o'clock on Christmas Day, finishing at midnight at the Great Hall. Now, the Yule Ball is of course a chance for us all to er… let our hair down. But that does not mean that we will be relaxing the standards or behavior we expect from Hogwarts students. I will be most seriously displeased if a Gryffindor student caught embarrassing the school in any form and in any way."

At this point, her eyes were laid on the Weasley twins.

"Now," she went on. "Dance classes will be held for those who wish to learn under the supervision of Professor Vector, Professor Sinistra and me. A timetable of such classes will be put up at the Great Hall. Places are limited so please schedule your lesson accordingly. That will be all."

The atmosphere within the castle changed dramatically after the Yule Ball announcement.

Every student, even those who would not be allowed to attend became so obsessed with the ball. Girls giggling and whispering in the corridors, shrieking with laughter as boys passed
them and excitedly comparing notes on what they will be wearing to the ball. The boys meanwhile stared and gawked as they made their attempt successfully and unsuccessfully to secure a dance partner to the ball. The lucky ones were the couples though. Dean invited Ginny to be his dance partner on the same night McGonagall made the announcement. She agreed. Fred and George in the mean time managed to snap up Katie and Angelina by day two. Alicia will be going with a seventh year Gryffindor. Much to everyone’s surprises, will be attending the ball with Hannah Abbot. Cho Chang was rumored to be attending the Ball with Cedric.

The twins told Harry these one afternoon when they were loitering within the common room. They came to the trio, intending to borrow Ron’s owl. Pigwidgeon however was out delivering mail at that time.

“So you lot got dates for the ball yet?” asked Fred, now sitting opposite Harry.

“Nope,” said Ron.

“Well you better hurry up mate, or all the good ones will be taken,” said Fred.

“When did you both invited Katie and Angelina?” asked Ron.

“The day after the announcement,” replied George. “Piece of cake, Ron. It’s not that hard.”

“Easy for you to say,” grumbled Ron.

“Stop being such a quitter, Ron. Come on, George. We better use the school owl then,” said Fred.

“After you, Fred,” said George.

They both got to their feet and made their way to the portrait hole.

“We should get a move on, you know. We got to ask someone. Fred’s right. We don’t want to end up with a pair of trolls,” said Ron to Harry.

Hermione let out a sputter of indignation.

“I’m sorry, what were you saying? A pair of what?” she asked.

“Well you know,” said Ron, shrugging. “I rather go alone rather than, say, Eloise Midgen.”

“She’s not that bad looking, Ron. And she’s really nice.”

“Her nose is off center,” pointed out Ron.

“I see,” said Hermione, bristling. “So basically you’re saying that you’ll only take the best looking girl who will have you, even if she has a horrible personality?”

“Well, yeah,” said Ron.

Hermione shook her head in disgust. “I’m going upstairs,” she snapped and swept off towards the staircase without another word.

“What with her?” asked Ron to Harry.

The Hogwarts staff, demonstrating a continued desire to impress the visitors from Beauxbatons and Durmstrang, seemed determined to show the castle at its best this Christmas. When the decorations went up, Harry noticed that they were the most stunning he had yet seen inside the school. Everlasting icicles had been attached to the banisters of the marble staircase; the usual twelve Christmas trees in the Great Hall were bedecked with everything from luminous holly berries to real, hooting, golden owls, and the suits of armor had all been bewitched to sing carols whenever anyone passed them. It was quite something to hear “Ow Come, All Ye Faithful” sung by empty helmets that only knew half the words. Several times Filch the caretaker had to extract Peeves from inside the armor, where he had taken to hiding, filling in the gaps in the songs with lyrics of his own invention, all of which were very rude.

“Why do they have to move in packs?” Ron asked Harry as a dozen or so girls walked past them, sniggering and staring at them. “How’re you supposed to get one on their own to ask them?”

Ron, like Seamus, had been complaining about the difficulties in getting girls to agree to come with them. At this point, it seemed that he had started freaking out.
The inability to get a dance partner did not bother Harry though. He did not care if he got a partner or not. He would still attend the ball but just to eat, drink and watch. As a matter of fact, he did voice to Dumbledore to proceed with the plan of going to London right during the Yule Ball.

"I can go by myself, Professor. Me and Sirius, we can take it from there," he said to Dumbledore.

Professor Dumbledore however prohibited him from going through with his plan.

"I'm sorry Harry, but I am advising you not to do that. I know this mission of yours is very important but there are times when you might want to kick back and relax. The Yule Ball is one of those times. Forget about the mission for just one night, Harry. Instead try to enjoy the night for a change. There may not be a second chance after this," said Dumbledore.

Harry had no choice but to oblige.

"If you worry so much about finding a dance partner, you can invite Hermione," suggested Harry to Ron.

"What? Her? No! I can't. no," said Ron. "She's like my sister to me, Harry."

"You already have a sister, Ron. And that's Ginny. Ask Hermione, Ron. I promise you, you won't be disappointed," urged Harry.

"I don't know, Harry."

"Just do it, Ron!"

"Okay! Okay!"

Ron did ask Hermione in the end, only to be snapped at:-

"No, I can't," snapped Hermione.

"Oh come on," he said impatiently. "We need partners, we're going to look really stupid if we haven't got any, everyone else has them."

"I can't come with you," said Hermione, now blushing, "because I'm already going with someone."

"No, you're not!" said Ron. "You said that because you were embarrassed that you haven't got a date!"

"Oh did I?" said Hermione, and her eyes flashed dangerously. "Just because it's taken you three years to notice, Ron, doesn't mean no one else has spotted I'm a girl!"

Ron stared at her. Then he grinned again.

"Okay, okay, we know you're a girl," he said. "That'll do? Will you go with me?"

"I've already told you!" Hermione said very angrily. "I'm going with someone else!"

And she stormed off toward the girls' dormitories again.

"She's lying," said Ron flatly, watching her go.

"She's not," said Ginny quietly.

"So who is it then?" said Ron sharply. "Who invited her?"

"I'm not telling you, it's her business," said Ginny firmly.

Ron once again got depressed.

And apparently, Ron was not the only one.

Daphne, who used to be obscured inevitably became the number one girl, alongside Fleur, boys wanted to invite to the Yule Ball. Her friendship with Harry meant that boys and girls began to notice her beauty. Every day she received a huge number of invitations. Boys presented her a lot of gifts, flowers, chocolates and cards in the hope that she would agree to be their date for the night. As a matter a fact, it had gotten so bad that she stopped taking meals at the Great Hall altogether. She did glance at Harry during the classes, silently pleading to him. Harry did not do anything though. Not because of he was angry or hated her. It was because the only thing he could do to help her was to become her date. He truly was
not looking forward to become anyone's date at that moment. She did finally get a date though but even then, she still kept on getting propositions from other boys even when they knew she would be going to the ball with someone.

But what she experienced pales in comparison to what Fleur experienced. Suitors came to the carriage day and night, and like Daphne, she was showered with hundreds of gifts, flowers, chocolates and cards. One particular highlight was Roger Davies. He came to the carriage with the intention to invite her as his date to the Ball. He fell onto his knees, begging Fleur to agree to go with him outside the carriage. He refused to leave even when Fleur told him that she won't be going with him and kept on begging. At one point, he tried to grab her hands and dragged her back to the castle. Things had gotten out of control that Professor Snape had to come down to intervene. It was rumoured that Roger received a month detention and was barred from attending the Yule Ball. But that did not stop other boys from trying.

Harry did not know with whom she will be going to Ball with. He had a hunch that he would see that lucky bastard at the Ball anyway. Fleur would have to agree to go with someone in the end though.

It was two days before Christmas.

Ron and Seamus both finally got their dates. Ron will be going with Lavender Brown and Seamus's dance partner will be Parvati Patil. Harry could only shake his head when Ron informed him about his date.

As for Harry, he remained single.

Harry had gotten back from the snowball fight with the boys that day. Snow had begun to fall a lot heavier that afternoon.

Shivering, he entered his dormitory. But once inside, he was greeted by none other than Hedwig.

"Hedwig!" he exclaimed.

The white snowy owl hooted and flew towards him and perched on his shoulder.

Harry caressed Hedwig fondly. For these past few weeks, he had missed Hedwig so much.

The owl hooted and extended its leg towards Harry. There was a letter tied to it.

"For me?" he asked.

The owl hooted back.

He gingerly untied the letter, unfolded it and began to read. Much to his surprise, instead of words, there was only one huge question mark drawn in it. And at the bottom there was a signature which belongs to Fleur.

He was puzzled at first. Then all of a sudden, something clicked within him. He suddenly knew what to do. He took Hedwig off his shoulder and placed her on top of his bedside table.

"I'll be back, Hedwig," he said and dashed towards the door.

He did not know what will happen but he knew to where he would be heading.

The Beauxbaton carriage.

To be continued...
42. Chapter 42

Chapter 40

Voldemort, Death Eaters, dark wizards and dragons.

They all had one thing in common. Their unparallel drive to gain whatever it was they desired and to protect whatever it was they considered their interest. It was pretty much straightforward really, and Harry knew exactly how to deal with them. His and his men safety and how much collateral damages resulted from a mission executed were the only questions he needed the answer to. Even then, as before, it was pretty much straightforward and easy to understand and handled.

It was different thing when it comes to women though.

He never had much luck when it comes to romantic relationships. His relationship with ChoChang ended up on a bad note. His ineptitude in dealing with a girl's feeling and the fact that ChoChang was unable to get over with Cedric threw a spanner in their initially blossoming relationship. He had better luck with Ginny but it did not last. They both had reach more than halfway to building a long lasting relationship that would eventually led to a marriage when Ginny suddenly got cold feet and called everything off. As for Fleur; the only thing that saved their relationship was her insistence in taking him back after that disastrous proposal. If it was not for that, he would continue to be alone, buried in his work for ‘who knows how long’, at least until he found someone to fall in love with.

The snow was still falling heavily. His clothes were wet from the snowball fight he had earlier. And he was shivering from the cold. And the warmth of the castle was oh-so inviting.

There at the foot of the marble staircase, he stood and wondered if he should proceed. His brain told him that it would be prudent to go back to his dormitory and changed to dry clothes. His heart however warned him that he should continue on as there are good chances that he would change his mind completely the moment he got back to the dormitory. He probably decides to stay indoors and enjoy the warmth, especially when there was hardly any incentive for him to brave the snow.

After spending a few minutes of deliberations, he decided to heed the warning and took the first step into the snow.

The thick snow made the walking difficult. He had a hard time putting his foot in front of another without it ended up digging too deep into the snow. His clothing was thick but given that it was already wet, it failed to provide him the comfort of warmth. He was already shivering madly halfway and would have made a u-turn back to the castle if it was not for his resolve.

He reached the carriage eventually. Cold, wet and all. It was now or never.

He knocked on the door of the carriage and took a few steps back.

The door opened. It was not Fleur who answered the door however. It was an adult man in his fifties, presumably one of the parents that came visiting. He stared at Harry in the most unfriendly way.

"I assume that you want to see Fleur Delacour," said the man, sternly.

"Yes, sir," said Harry politely.

"You cannot see 'er," said the man, glaring at him. "We 'ave enough of your kind coming 'ere begging to see 'er and disturbing our peace. Go back to your school boy, or I will report you to your 'eadmaster!"

The man was about to shut the door when Harry called to him.

"Sir! Please wait! Tell her that it's Harry Potter!"

The man paused immediately. His eyes flicked upwards towards where Harry's lightning scar lies.

Harry raised his hand to his forehead and pushed away the hair that covered his scar so that the man could see the proof clearly.

The man's expression softened a little bit.
"What iz it zhat you want with 'er, 'Arry Potter?" asked the man. "You come 'ere to invite 'er to zhe Yule Ball like everybody else?"

But Harry shook his head.

"No, sir," said Harry.

The man raised his eyebrows.

"The Yule Ball is only two days away. She probably gotten a date to the Ball by now, given her popularity. I simply want to speak to her, just to straighten out a few things. I will leave once I'm done, I promise," said Harry, subtly referring to the incident with Roger Davies many days ago.

In the cold, deep snow he stood, watching the man weighing his decision.

"Very well, 'Arry Potter," said the man after a few moments of deliberation. "I shall 'old you to your promise. Whatever zhat will be 'appen, I want you to leave after you are done."

"Of course, sir. Thank you."

The man closed the door and Harry waited.

He folded his hands tightly to his chest, shivering as the snow continued to fall all around him, wondering if it all would be worth it. The coldness had reached to his bones. Five minutes more and he will probably turned into a frozen furry popsicle.

The door creaked open a few minutes later. He looked up and there she was.

Fleur.

She stood at the door, staring silently at him.

He took a few steps forward and stopped a few feet from her.

"I got your letter," he began. "And I heard what happened the other day. I come here to say that I'm sorry."

Fleur gave him no response. She continued to stare silently at him. There was no smile on her face but there was no anger either.

Harry was beginning to feel frustrated with the lack of feedback coming from her but he decided to continue anyway.

"I'm not the most romantic man there is," he said. "I don't shower you with gifts, flowers and chocolates like everybody else. I don't know how to string words together to form a beautiful poetry as a gift to you and I don't have such deep imagination that will allow me to write love stories that will melt your heart and make you cry. I don't really know how to dance. This clothes I'm wearing, they're wet. We just had a snowball fight earlier." He chuckled a little bit before continuing. "I didn't bother to change before coming here which said enough about how bad I am at presenting myself. I'm probably the biggest idiot of them all."

He paused to see if there were responses from Fleur.

None came his way.

He sighed. Indeed, he already felt stupid and embarrassed for coming. He had a hunch that this won't go well. But he was already there and he might as well finish it and get his arse out of there before he really turned frozen solid.

"But God knows I care and I care too much," he continued. "I know this is too late. I know this is inappropriate. But if you already have someone else, that would be it. We could forget all of these ever happen and things will go the way it was. But if you don't, it would be an honor for me to accompany you to the Ball."

From the moment that letter with a huge question mark arrived in his hand, he knew he had to do it. He had to know. This was a test in which he hoped that the result will be in his favor. He had to know if Fleur really had something with Bill. That letter answered some of his questions. This would confirm all of it. Anyway, despite what he told that man earlier, he had a hunch that Fleur had yet got a date to the Ball. If she did, she won't be bothered writing to him.

And he stood in silent, in coldness and shivering, waiting for her judgment to fall onto him.

Yet, Fleur remained silent.
And Harry knew what that mean.
"I'm sorry," he said. "I shall take my leave now."
But as he was about to walk away, Fleur called back to him.
"Come inside."
Harry stopped and turned back to face her. That was not the answer he was looking for.
"It's okay, Fleur. The castle isn't that far. I can make it," he said.

Once again, just as he was about to walk away, Fleur called back to him.
"You're not going to escort me to the Ball if you catch cold, 'Arry," she said.

Harry stared at her in disbelief.
"So-,. so that's a yes?" he asked.

"Come inside," she answered instead. She held out her hand, waiting for Harry to hold it.

He walked up to her and reached out for her hand. She grabbed his hand and gently pulled him in into the carriage. Once he was inside, she closed the door behind her.

Warmth, comfortable warmth washed over him. He had forgotten how cold he was out there. He shivered, his teeth chattered. His lips nearly turned bluish. His fingers felt numb that he felt he might be suffering from frostbite.

"You're nearly freezing," said Fleur in deep concern.

She took a warm towel from Cassandra who appeared to be ready with it even before he entered the carriage and began wiping his face, his neck and his hands.

"Th-, thanks," said Harry.

"We need to get you out of these clothes, 'Arry," said Fleur, handing back the towel to Cassandra. "'Zhey're wet. You will catch cold in no time if you continue wearing zhem."

"Err..."

"Don't worry, cousin. I'll take it from here," said Raphael with unmasked amusement. "Come, 'Arry."

Raphael grabbed Harry's arm and guided him towards the stairway that led to the first floor.

Along the way, Harry suddenly realized there were a lot of people loitering within the lobby. All of them were watching him. He saw the man who greeted him earlier. He was sitting with a red haired woman together with a boy whom he assumed a student of Beauxbaton on a sofa not far from the stairway. That man raised a glass of drink to Harry. Harry nodded in acknowledgement.

Together with Raphael, he walked up the stairway. He looked up and saw Madame Maxime, together with the Delacours, standing at the top end of the stairs, watching him wordlessly.

"Take him to your room, Monsieur Bertrand. Have his clothes dried. Bring him back after you are done," said Madame Maxime to Raphael the moment they both reached to the top.


Harry gave Madame Maxime and the Delacours a nod. He and Raphael then continued on and walked into the verandah that led to the boys dormitory. Raphael ushered him into his living quarters.

"'Ere," said Raphael, handing Harry a dry towel. "Take your clothes off and give them to me. I will dry them for you."

Harry obliged. He took his clothes off and wore the towel. He then gave his clothes to Raphael who took it gingerly.

Holding Harry's shirt with one hand and a wand with another, Raphael muttered the incantation. Hot air blasted out of the tip of his wand. Raphael waved his wand over Harry's shirt several times until it dried up. He then repeated the task with Harry's trouser.

All that time, Harry just watched. He of course knew how to dry his clothes but felt that it
would be impolite to reject Raphael's offer to help.

"All dried up," said Raphael as he handed back all the dried clothes to Harry.

"Thanks, Raphael," said Harry, receiving the clothes from the Beauxbaton student.

"No problem," said Raphael, watching Harry putting on his clothes. "Zhat waz some choice of words you spoke to 'er just now. I didn't know you're good at it. Ozher boys simply would straight away asked 'er the direct question. Most of zhem just drool zhe moment she appears. Can't say zhat I did not enjoy watching zhem embarrassed zhemselves. Zhey all of course brought her gifts in zhe 'ope zhat she will agree.'

"I'm the only one who didn't bring her anything, I guess," sputtered Harry, pulling his shirt over his head after he finished donning his trouser.

"I don't zhink you really need to. Zhey told me not to tell you, but my cousin waz waiting for you to invite 'er to zhe Ball," stated Raphael.

Harry paused at this.

"I didn't know that," he admitted truthfully.

"Well, she waz which iz why she refused everyone else. Madame Maxime waz pressing 'er, telling 'er zhat she needs to find a dance partner soon because she will be zhe first champion to open zhe Ball. We tried to help by suggesting zhis boy and zhat boy to 'er but she flatly rejected all our suggestions. She still wants you, you know," explained Raphael.

"I see."

Leaning against the wardrobe, Raphael continued, "Inviting 'er just two days before zhe Ball, zhat waz uncalled for, 'Arry. You should not 'ave wait zhat long. Zhere won't be much time to prepare. And you could embarrass 'er and us during zhe dance."

Harry hung his head in embarrassment.

"I know. It is all my fault. I'm sorry. In my defense, there were... mixed signals before this. I don't really know how to make sense any of that. I thought she would pick someone else. I don't really care much about the Yule Ball actually. I mean, I'm still going but I planned to go alone," explained Harry. "I would have invited her earlier if I knew. But I will make it up for her, I promise."

Raphael nodded.

Harry finished donning his clothes.

"Let's 'ope so. Now come. I need to bring you back to see Madame Maxime," said Raphael. "Anyway, I zhink you and Fleur will need a long talk about zhe Ball. You really need to plan carefully. Our school's reputation is at stake."

"Afters."

They both exited Raphael's living quarters and headed back to stairways.

"Who will you be going with, Raphael?" asked Harry as they walked along the verandah.

"Mary. She wanted to 'ex me when I proposed. I still got 'er in zhe end zhough. My arse feels funny afterwards 'owever," said Raphael.

"So she did hex you," stated Harry.

"Yes. Right at my arse. But it waz worth it. All of us got our date to zhe Ball within a few days after zhe Ball's announcement. Fleur only got 'er date a few minutes ago, no zhanks to you," said Raphael.

Harry rolled his eyes.

"No need to continuously rub it in, Raphael. I get it," said Harry.

Raphael just smirked at him.

They reached the stairways. But this time, instead of Madame Maxime, Fleur was the one who was waiting for them.

"Thank you, Raphael," said Fleur as she grabbed Harry's hand. "I'll take it from here."
"Be gentle with him, cuzz," said Raphael, winking at Fleur.

"He invited me only two days before the Ball. What do you think?" replied Fleur. She then steered Harry away towards the back of the carriage.

Harry who understood what they said sweated a little bit.

"Good luck, 'Arry!" said Raphael, waving at them.

Good luck indeed, thought Harry.

He still memorized the layout of the carriage from his last visit. They both were going to the carriage's dining room from the looks of it.

"I'll take you to my room if I can but my parents won't like it," said Fleur, glancing sideways to him as they continued to walk. "Zhey already 'ave issues when zhey found out I brought you into my room before. Lucky for me, Madame Maxime sided with me. She told zhem zhat I waz not alone with you."

Harry who was wondering if Fleur's anger with him had diminished decided not to press the matter.

"They were just worried. It is normal for them to feel so," said Harry.

"Zhat iz true," said Fleur. "But being worried izn't their main reason for being 'ere."

"So there's more besides simply wanting to watch the tournament?" asked Harry.

"Yes."

"So what is it?"

"They were... curious," answered Fleur.

"Of what?" asked Harry.

But Fleur did not answer him this time.

They finally reached the dining room. Fleur pushed open the door and ushered him inside.

Harry found himself facing the Delacours. They were already sitting around a polished dining table made out of oak. He saw another woman, also wearing silvery blonde locks on her head like Fleur and looked not much older than Fleur's mother and yet just as beautiful. He immediately recognized who she was.

Fleur's maternal grandmother on her mother's side, Catherina Dubois.

Madame Maxime was there as well, sitting beside Catherina.

There were a few plates of cakes on top of the dining table. Each of them already had a cup of tea placed in front of them except for Monsieur Delacour.

Monsieur Delacour stood.

"I bid you welcome, Monsieur Potter," said Monsieur Delacour.

Harry politely bowed to him.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "It is an honor to be here."

"Please, 'ave a seat," invited Monsieur Delacour.

Fleur immediately guided Harry towards one of the available chairs. She pulled out the chair and gestured him to sit down. He obliged and took the seat.

He found himself sitting exactly the opposite of Appoline. Monsieur Delacour was sitting on her left side. Gabrielle meanwhile was flank by her mother and her grandmother. The youngest child in the family was staring at Harry with awe.

Gabby was still young at eight years old. She still looked childish at that time. Her silvery locks presented the only clue that pointed to her true heritage. Harry knew all too well that it would be wrong to underestimate Gabrielle at this time. She had yet reached puberty. When she does, she would look just as lovely as her older sister, as Harry had witnessed.

"'Arry?"
Harry looked up and saw Fleur, standing beside him and holding a mug. Thin white smoke can be seen coming out of that mug. From the smell, Harry knew what was in it.

She handed over the steaming mug to him.

"Drink this, 'Arry," said Fleur.

Harry however hesitated. He knew the embarrassing thing that would happen if he drank the Pepperup Potion.

"I think I'm okay, Fleur. I feel a lot better now, thanks," said Harry.

Fleur however did not want to have any of it.

"You 'ad been standing outside in the cold deep snow for quite some time, Monsieur Potter. You still looked paler than you usually are. I need my date to be in 'is top form when we attend the Yule Ball. Drink this potion, if you please," said Fleur.

It seemed that he really had no other choice other than to oblige with Fleur's request. He carefully accepted the mug, his fingers brushed against her silky smooth hands like before, and he downed the potion in full.

The Delacours and Madame Maxime stared at him in amusement as jet of steam shot out of both Harry's ears. Gabrielle ended up giggling madly at him. Appoline tried to shush Gabrielle but even she could not help but smirked.

The jet of steam continued to shoot out of his ears for the next five minutes. Harry who had been keeping his eyes tightly closed for the whole duration, opened his eyes the moment the steam jet dissipated. His face reddened, he could not tell whether it was from the heat generated from the potion that washed over his body or from the extreme embarrassment he just felt. That potion did make him feel a lot better though.

"Feeling better now, Monsieur Potter?" asked Appoline, still smiling.

Harry nodded as he handed the still steaming mug back to Fleur who set it on a small table not far away from them. She then returned and took the seat beside Harry.

"Yes, madam. I feel a lot better now," answered Harry, still feeling embarrassed. "Thanks."

"I made that potion, if you want to know," said Appoline.

"Fleur told me you're excellent in Potion making," blurted Harry.

"I did?" asked Fleur, looking sideways at Harry. Her silvery eyebrows raised.

Harry nearly face palmed.

Of course he knew that Fleur's mother was a really accomplished potion maker. She was at least on par with Severus Snape. Both her daughters inherited her talents though between the two, Gabrielle was better at it. Fleur in turn excelled in Charms.

He really was in dire need to control what he wanted to say. It won't be easy. Seventy years of living together means that some of Fleur's manners rubbed off on him. He had become almost as blunt as she was. He had better control than her however.

"I mean-"

Appoline held up her hand. Her pink lips curved into a smile.

"Zhat iz okay," she said. "We all says zhings zhat we did not meant to say, iz it, Monsieur Potter? All we could do iz apologize and 'ope zhat zhe person iz willing to forgive us."

Harry couldn't agree more.

"That is absolutely true, madam. Please forgive me," said Harry.

Appoline however waved off Harry's apology.

"Zhere iz no need to apologize," she said. "You 'ad done nozhing wrong. Except of course for zhe fact zhat you took zhis long to invite my daughter to zhe Ball."

"I apologize for that too, madam. I am sorry," said Harry earnestly. "I didn't know that she could not get a date in a timely manner."

"Az a matter a fact, my daughter could date any man she wanted, Monsieur Potter," said
Monsieur Delacour who decided to join in the conversation. "Of course zhere are certain condition zhat needs to be met. I zink you know zhis really well."

"As a matter a fact, I do, sir," said Harry.

Monsieur Delacour nodded. He suddenly stood up.

"I need a drink," said Monsieur Delacour to his wife.

He walked around the table, tracing his finger along table's surface. Just as he got near to Harry, his hand suddenly went wide and knocked the nearest cup of tea and its saucer off the table.

Harry's reflexes immediately took over him. His hand shot out and immediately took hold of both the cup and the saucer before it hit the floor. Not a single drop of the tea spilled out onto the floor. He then carefully placed the cup and its saucer back on the table.

"I apologize. Zhat waz clumsy of me. But zhat iz an excellent reflexes you 'ave, Monsieur Potter," said Monsieur Delacour, looking calmly back at Harry.

"Yeah. They die hard," said Harry.

"Only a fully trained and 'ighly experienced wizard can do zhat," stated Monsieur Delacour as he continued on towards the nearest side table where a teapot and several cups were set upon it and returned with a cup of tea. "In which case, it usually zhe aurors."

Harry tensed up a little bit.

Fleur who noticed Harry tensing up placed her hand on his arm and gave it a soft squeeze. She smiled at him reassuringly.

"It will be sometime before zhe snowfall subsides and you will be able to go back to zhe castle," announced Monsieur Delacour. "Come. Let's eat. We 'ave so much to talk about."

It took some time but the tensed atmosphere earlier did finally unravel. And as the conversation went on, Harry began to get more and more comfortable with the Delacours. Their ability to make guests feel at home was legendary and it seemed to him, they still have it.

Monsieur Delacour asked him about the incident at the Quidditch World Cup after Harry told him that he was there together with the Weasleys. He had to rack his brain in order to remember what really happened back then. That incident might seemed new to his younger self but to his older self, it happened more than half a century ago. Monsieur Delacour was indeed taken aback by Mr. Crouch's action back then and told Harry that the former head of the DMLE did does not make sense.

"Did you recognize any of zhe perpetrators, 'Arry?" asked Monsieur Delacour.

Harry shook his head.

"Unfortunately no," he said. "They all wore masks. The Death Eaters mask. It was so chaotic that I could not even recognize their voices."

Monsieur Delacour nodded in understanding.

"France shares zhe same concern with Britain when it comes to You-Know-Who. We fortified our borders and our coastline right after we got a whiff of zhe incident at zhe World Cup. We don't want zhe war to spill over zhe borders and into France. Zhe were zhose who criticized us for our action, saying zhat zhe war would remain in Britain and only in Britain. I don't buy zhat. Once You-Know-Who iz done with zhe British Isles, he will expand. He will conquer. I know zhis because it iz what every power hungry maniac will do," said Monsieur Delacour.

"That is a wise decision on a whole, sir," said Harry, giving his support. "I agree with your assessment that Voldemort will turn to look beyond borders once Britain is his."

"Could you at least stop talking about work, dear?" Appoline scolded her husband. "Our daughter will be attending the Ball in two days time and she had yet prepare anything."

Monsieur Delacour just shrugged.

Harry turned to Fleur.

"You didn't prepare at all?" he asked in astonishment.

"Don't listen to my mozher, 'Arry," said Fleur, giving her mother an annoyed look. "I am
I just do not know with whom I will be going to the Ball with. Now I know so there is nothing to worry about."

"That won't be enough, dear. There're the dresses and the flowers. Everything needs to match perfectly. And you both hadn't practice dancing yet," said Appoline in earnest.

"You worry too much, mother. Everything will be fine. Harry and I will figure something out. I promise," said Fleur.

"I know, dear. Being a mother, I can't help getting worried. I want this Ball to be the most memorable moment in your life," said Appoline.

"It will be, mother."

"I have to agree with your mother on this one, Fleur," said Harry worriedly to Fleur. "We both aren't really that well prepared. We didn't even learn the Ball opening dance."

"I can say that this is your fault but I'm not going to," said Fleur casually. "Something will come up, I am sure of it."

"Well, if you are certain," said Harry.

"I am certain," said Fleur.

"I wish I have your confident," said Harry, shaking his head.

Instead of answering him, Fleur took his hand into hers, leaned towards him and whispered into his ear. "Something will come up. Stop worrying, 'Arry."

"They will be fine," Catherina suddenly chimed in. She smiled at both Harry and Fleur. She had been watching and observing both Harry and Fleur all these while. "Let them decide their own course, Appoline. Let them decide what they want. They are old enough to do that."

"Thank you, grand-mère," said Fleur, glancing at her mother.

Appoline had no choice but to admit defeat.

Turning to Harry, Catherina asked, "Do you have anything to wear to the Ball, my dear?"

Harry turned to Fleur, wondering if he should reveal to them that he could also speak fluent French.

Fleur, knowing what Harry was thinking, said, "You can understand French which means that you can speak our language. Just answer 'er question, 'Arry."

Alright. French it is.

Turning to Catherina, he spoke, "I have. A dress robe."

"What's it look like? What color?" asked Catherina.

Harry paused at this. The truth was, he remembered faintly what the dress robe that now resided within his trunk looks like. All that he remembered that it had long tail and was black in color.

"The truth is, I have no idea," said Harry, earning the look of bewilderment from the rest of the room inhabitants. "The mother of my friend bought it for me. I didn't have the chance to take a proper look at it yet. I do remember it was black in color though," he proceeded to explain.

"The mother of your friend, you say?" said Catherina.

"The Weasleys. One of their boys is Harry's best friend," explained Fleur.

"That man who is interested in you, he is a Weasley too?"

Fleur nodded.

"Yes, grand-mère. Things had change. It may not be the same as before."

At this point, Harry silently wondered if they were talking about Bill Weasley.

Catherina nodded.

"That will be fine, my dear. Black matches with a lot of things including the dress Fleur will be
wearing for the Ball," she said to Harry.

Harry just nodded.

He wanted to ask Fleur what she will be wearing for the Ball but felt that it would be inappropriate to do that in front of her parents. He however made a mental note to ask her before he leaves the carriage.

They continued to talk with the Delacours asking him about his home away from Hogwarts, his first until third year in Hogwarts and the Dursleys. Harry told them everything. And for the whole duration, Fleur continued to hold his hand.

The snowfall finally subsided. It was time for him to return to the castle. The Delacours however insisted that he should have dinner with them, given that it was already dinnertime. Once again Harry agreed.

Fleur and Gabrielle walked him out once the dinner ended. He met Daphne at the lobby on his way to the exit.

Crossing her arms to her chest, she said, "So things had change apparently."

"Apparently so," he replied.

Daphne glanced at Fleur. "So you're right about him."

"Right about what?" asked Harry curiously.

"It doesn't matter, Harry. Anyway, good night."

She then walked past Harry, her arm brushed Harry's, and proceeded to climb the stairs.

Harry noticed that Daphne was acting cold towards him. Then again it was probably due to the small confrontation they had earlier. Daphne must still be seething from it. However he also noticed that Daphne started calling him by his first name again so he wasn't sure what Daphne really felt about him at this point.

The snowfall had stopped. The night had fallen. Hogwarts lights provided the required illumination for him to walk back to the castle so it was not a problem for him however.

"Now," said Fleur as she tended to Harry's shirt. "Be 'ere on Christmas Day at 7.30pm sharp. Don't be late. I shall be wearing silver."

"Duly noted," said Harry.

Fleur smiled, leaned towards him and kissed him on his cheek.

The snow was thicker than before on his way back but Harry did not feel a thing. It felt as if he was walking on a perfectly flat and dry ground. Such was the effect of the happiness that was now engulfing him. Now all he had to do was to be prepared and wait for Christmas Day.

Little that he realised as he walked, from one of the windows adorning the carriage, a pair of beautiful green eyes was watching him.

He had just arrived at the Entrance Hall when he found Professor Dumbledore was waiting for him.

Dumbledore smiled.

"I trust that everything had gone well, Harry?" he said.

"Perfectly well, sir," said Harry, also smiling.

"I am glad to hear that," said Dumbledore. "Now would you please follow me. Padfoot is here to see you."

To be continued...
43. Chapter 43

Chapter 41

Sirius Black! In Hogwarts!

“You let him in?” asked Harry.

“Yes.”

Harry stared at Dumbledore in complete disbelief.

Sirius having to run for his life was bad enough but allowing him into a place where aurors kept coming in due to recent event was even worse. Harry did not care how effective his ‘camouflage’ was. Back in the previous timeline, Sirius died when he was supposed to be well hidden.

He was about to respond when suddenly a band of students appeared. All of them were staring curiously at Harry and Dumbledore as they entered the Great Hall.

“We should go to my office,” suggested Dumbledore, turning back to Harry. “You can have your dinner there.”

Harry nodded in agreement. Having a row with Dumbledore at a place as busy as the Great Hall foyer was unwise, especially the topic of the argument concerned Sirius.

It was only after they were out of earshot from the Great Hall foyer that Harry cornered Dumbledore.

“I hope you have a good explanation for doing this, professor,” he said, fuming. “You know the risk. You know that Hogwarts is dangerous for him at this moment. Rita Skeeter’s investigation had yet to be concluded. The DMLE will keep on sending their aurors here for as long as they deem necessary. What do you think will happen if they find out a highly sought prisoner is here hiding in Hogwarts?”

“Nobody knows he is here, Harry. He is well hidden,” said Dumbledore calmly. “And if you must know, he requested it.”

Harry sighed.

“We all thought that he was perfectly safe and secure back then, protected by the member of the Order. And yet, he died. Like I said, there must be a strong reason for you to justify your action. Sirius requesting it is not enough. Unless you were implying that he is no longer safe out there,” said Harry.

“He is no longer safe,” said Dumbledore a matter a factly.

Harry paused at this.

“The DMLE encroached the mountains?” he asked.

Dumbledore nodded grimly.

“Let’s walk, Harry,” he said.

Harry obliged.

“How close?” he asked.

“Too close,” answered Dumbledore.

The headmaster office...

Dumbledore close and locked the door behind him and applied the Imperturbable Charm on it as an added measure.

Harry looked around. All the windows and curtains were closed. Dumbledore’s office was now effectively sealed from the inside.

A big black, shaggy dog was sitting on the headmaster’s chair when they both came in.

“It is safe now, Sirius,” said Dumbledore, stowing his wand back into his cloak.
"Is it really now, Dumbledore?" said Sirius once his transformation back into human completed. His gaze then landed on Harry. "Hey pup!" he greeted his godson.

"Hogwarts and its ground are now under watch, Sirius." said Dumbledore. He then gestured Harry to take a seat. "Measures had to be taken. I know that you're a risk taker; that you'll dive into a situation within giving it a second thought, but you'll want to be more careful next time. We don't always see dogs roaming around inside the castle at any given moment and none of the students own a dog. You're lucky Rufus Scrimgeour decided that you're harmless the moment he saw you."

Sirius just shrugged.

"You walked directly into Hogwarts?" asked Harry.

Sirius nodded.

"Right through the front door, in my usual disguise of course," said Sirius, taking the seat beside Harry. "I was waiting at the bottom of the headmaster's office entrance stairs when Amelia and Rufus saw me. They had just come out of Dumbledore's office. She thankfully ignored me but Rufus, having known to own several dogs and a self proclaimed dog lover, came over and petted me. He's the odd one there. He probably thought that I belong to Hagrid. Not saying that I don't feel scared for me life at that time though."

"What about Buckbeak?" asked Harry.

Sirius gave Harry a mock offended look.

"Geez Harry. I just had a brush with people who want to drag me back to Azkaban. I thought that your godfather well being is more important to you than that hippogriff," he said.

"Hippogriffs aren't exactly native around here, Sirius," said Harry. "The ones still here belongs to the herd owned by Hogwarts. You can only find them in the wild in Continental Europe. The Ministry considered Buckbeak missing, not killed. And remember that you went missing on the same day as Buckbeak. They'll put the two and two together if they found him. You'll be in greater danger than you are right now."

"You worry too much, pup. He's still inside the cave, well hidden," said Sirius.

"You didn't try to bring him to safety? You could at least let him go, tell him to fly as far away as possible from here," said Harry.

"I couldn't and I don't think he wants to stay away from me either. Buckbeak is getting too attached to me. I was resting, getting ready for the evening when the ward I set up went off. I took a look and saw several aurors climbing their way up the mountain. I couldn't get Buckbeak out without them seeing so I tied him inside and placed a strong concealment charm at the cave entrance before I hightailed out of there. That's the best I could do," explained Sirius. "Whether or not they'll find him will depend on if they knew there is a hidden cave there," he said. "And whether or not they're as dimwitted as I hope they are. Guess we'll find out tomorrow if they found him. It will be all over the pages of the Daily Prophets."

"You need to get out of here if they found Buckbeak, Sirius," said Harry. "Get away as far as you can."

Sirius shook his head.

"Not an option," he said.

But Harry interjected.

"It is an option. It is viable for as long as you're one step ahead of them. I'm not going to have you being sent back to Azkaban."

"I am always one step ahead of them, pup," said Sirius smugly. "They'll have problem catching me. Don't worry about it. And you forgot that you'll need me to access Grimmauld Place."

"Don't be too cocky, Sirius," said Harry in a much serious tone. "Cocky people go down a lot faster. I didn't forget. The thing is, if you get caught, we won't be able to enter your ancestral home at all. For as long as you're free, there's still chance. We can always have it plan later."

Sirius said nothing at first. He turned away from Harry, his eyes gazed into the distance.

"There is one place that you could be safe," said Dumbledore all of a sudden, breaking the silence. He was sitting on his chair, watching the interaction between Sirius and his godson. "For as long as you remain in there and for as long as I live, nobody will found you."
"Your office?" said Harry. He could already guess what Dumbledore meant.

"For as long as I am the headmaster to be precise but yes. My office," said Dumbledore.

"Here, Albus?" said Sirius doubtfully. "I can hardly call this office safe. I figure that Amelia and her underlings will continue visiting here for as long as that Rita Skeeter case remains unsolved. Harry's right. I have to get as far away from here as I can."

Sirius was about to get off his seat when Dumbledore reached across his desk and grabbed Sirius's arm.

"Sit down, Sirius," he said. "Please. I haven't quite finish."

"Do as he says, Sirius," said Harry, glancing at Dumbledore. "I smell a proposal coming along."

Sirius sank back into his chair. His eyebrows lifted.

"Proposal?" he said to Dumbledore.

"Not exactly a proposal. It is more like a suggestion," said Dumbledore as he leaned against the back of his chair. "It is true that the security surrounding Hogwarts and its ground will be upgraded. That was what Amelia told me and it will be done for the sake of the safety of the students, staffs and visitors. Aurors will be placed here in Hogwarts for the whole duration of the Triwizard Tournament. She however had yet to decide how many will be stationed here. As for the Rita Skeeter case, the DMLE found no evidence that the perpetrator is lurking here in Hogwarts and its surrounding area. They will turn their investigation away from here once they reach that conclusion which I think won't be long."

"Unless they found Buckbeak," blurted Harry.

Dumbledore nodded.

"Unless they found Buckbeak," he echoed. "But that will be another matter only to be discussed if the situation demands it. They won't expect Sirius to be here given the tightened security unless evidences suggest otherwise. Now back to my suggestion. You can stay here Sirius, for as long as you like. I have a spare living quarters available. You can use it. Now Harry, days ago, you came to me asking if you can go to the Grimmauld Place during the Yule Ball."

"Err... there has been a slight change in the plan," said Harry.

Indeed he wanted so badly to go the Grimmauld Place initially. He felt that he had been putting his plan on hold for far too long. He would have done it if it was not for the fact that he needed the Order's help to ensure that Sirius remained out of reach from DMLE.

"We can go after the Yule Ball concluded. You're not the only one who won't be able to get away from the Ball, Harry. I think this will present an ample opportunity for us to visit Sirius's ancestral home without attracting too much attention. All eyes will be on the Yule Ball and many will be busy celebrating the festivities. For a short period of time, London will be a little bit magically unsecure," said Dumbledore.

Killing two birds with one stone. Harry liked it. He could fulfill his obligation to Fleur and at the same time get his mission back on track.

"We could go with that," said Harry in agreement, his eyes darted between Sirius and Dumbledore. "We meet here after the Ball then we can apparate there. But you need to alert the Order. They need to do a full sweep on the area before we can proceed."

"Just leave that to me, Harry," said Dumbledore.

Sirius however shook his head and sighed. He just realized that he was shanghaied into agreeing with the plan.

"It's been awhile since the last time I apparated. Kinda bit rusty in that department and London is too far from here. I could end up getting splinched. My kidneys could end up somewhere in Wales and my scrotum could end up on someone's dinner plate in Dundee," he said.

Harry gave a pat on his godfather's thigh.

"Don't worry, Sirius. I'll guide you. You can apparate with me," said Harry, chuckling. "We'll make sure all your body parts come along."

Sirius stared at Harry in amusement.
"You? You're just a fourteen years old boy, Harry," he said.

"You'll be surprise of what your godson can actually do, Sirius," said Dumbledore.

"Right," said Sirius, one of his eyebrows lifted. Clasping his hands together, he asked, "So when is dinner? I'm starving."

The three of them were having a nice and peaceful dinner on the upper deck of Dumbledore's office. There was a small dining table usually reserved for the headmaster's guests located there. The menu served that night was exactly the same as what everyone else ate at the Great Hall with the exception of two glasses of fully matured mead now sat besides Sirius and Dumbledore's plate. Harry didn't eat much though for he already had dinner at the Beauxbaton carriage.

Dumbledore took this opportunity to fill Sirius up on what transpired after he made his daring escape earlier that year and that includes the revelation of the House of Crouch.

"So the father was under Voldemort's influence and the son tried to enter Harry into the Tournament? I thought the contestants are limited to three. That's why it's call the Triwizard Tournament," said Sirius, taking a sip from his glass.

"The Goblet of Fire is an old object created hundreds of years ago. We have yet fully understood how it works but it is possible that the limit was set by humans rather than the goblet itself. While it was programmed to select only one contestant from each school, it is possible that the number of contestants can be increase by enrolling them under different schools. We think that was what Barty Crouch Jr. tried to do when he tried to enter Harry into the tournament," said Dumbledore.

"And you stopped him from doing it," said Sirius to Harry. "I'm impressed. How did you know what he was planning?"

"I had doubts about him," said Harry, attacking a treacle tart. "I was proven right."

Dumbledore glanced at Harry. He knew that Harry was concealing the truth from Sirius. He kept quiet however.

"Well, at least you're safe. And Remus is now under the Ministry employment. Good for him. Joining the Ministry would be the last thing I thought he would do considering that little furry problem of his," said Sirius.

"And it all because of Barty," said Dumbledore.

"Nothing is going to change my mind about Crouch," said Sirius, his voice laced with venom. "He sent me to Azkaban without a proper trial, if you forget. Only my anger kept me sane while I was in there."

He put down his knife and fork after finishing his steak and drank the whole mead in one go. Wiping his mouth with a handkerchief, he said to Harry, "I heard about the Yule Ball. So, you got a date to the Ball, pup? Who's the lucky Gryffindor? Hermione?"

Harry shook his head. He felt a bit embarrassed.

"She's not a Gryffindor," said Harry sheepishly.

"Branching out eh? So who is she? A Hufflepuff? A Ravenclaw? Don't tell me your date is a Slytherin," said Sirius.

Harry chuckled.

"Definitely not Slytherin," said Harry while at the same time wondering what Sirius will say if he knew how far things had changed. "She's a Beauxbaton."

Sirius's eyebrows lifted. He grinned widely.

"Didn't know you would branch out that far. So you develop a taste for French lassies. So tell me, is she hot?" asked Sirius, still wearing his signature grin.

Harry was about to answer when Dumbledore beat him to it.

"I think some of James and your traits rubbed off on him, Sirius. That girl is a veela," said Dumbledore. He then winked at Harry.

Harry could only shake his head at Dumbledore.
"A veela?! You clearly upstaged both of us, boy! James is going to be so proud of you! So how do you got her? I could learn a thing or two from you, you know," said Sirius impressively. He then began to ramble about his days in Hogwarts, girls he dated, his romantic flings, that kind of stuffs. And his adoration of Amelia Bones, much to Harry's surprise.

"James was just like me you know, until he got to know your mother. He was so fixated on her that he refused other girls' advances," continued Sirius. "Poor Linda Bosworth. She tried to give Love Potion to James. Luckily Remus caught her. Can't imagine what'll happen if James ended up with her. She got two months detention from that."

They continued to talk. Luckily for Harry, Sirius did not push him to tell on how he got Fleur in the first place. Harry honestly did not know how tell him what really happened.

It was nearly ten o'clock when Harry excused himself from the headmaster's office. He got the chance to take a look at Sirius's temporary residence before he left. It was only a small room containing a single bed, a small desk, a wardrobe and its own bathroom. It was a lot more comfortable than that small prison cell he inhabited for the past thirteen years and that cave he shared with Buckbeak. Sirius himself did not complaint. As a matter a fact, he was grateful for that little slice of luxury he was receiving.

The Gryffindor common room was bustling with activities when he made his entrance. He saw Ron, sitting at a corner together with Lavender Brown. From the way they were talking, Harry could guess that it was about the Yule Ball. Hermione was nowhere to be seen though. Groups of girls and boys hurding together here and there, probably exchanging notes and ideas about what they were going to wear to the Ball and with whom they would be going. After greeting both Fred and George, he made his way to his dormitory.

No news about Buckbeak for the past couple of days which was a relief for Harry. Sirius's charm worked really well. Dumbledore had promise that food will be sent to the cave for Buckbeak. The hippogriff's welfare it seemed had been taken care of, much to both Harry and Sirius's delight.

The night before Christmas was an enjoyable one. All of them, students and staffs, families, Hogwarts, Beauxbaton and Durmstrang, gathered together inside the Great Hall to have dinner and to sing Yuletide songs. Sirius was there too, albeit in his Animagus form. He sat beside Harry at the Gryffindor table. For the whole duration, Harry and Fleur exchanged glances and smiles. She was sitting together with her family at their own table which had been set especially for visiting families.

He got a good look on Daphne and Astoria's parents for the first time. Their mother had an uncanny resemblance to Appoline, albeit her hair was black rather than blonde. Their father was a little bit taller than Monsieur Delacour though which was not surprising given that Monsieur Delacour himself was a bit shorter than his wife.

Harry noticed that Viktor glanced at Hermione every now and then. She did not look back at Viktor, but from the way her face reddened, Harry was sure that Hermione knew that the famous Seeker was looking at her.

Christmas morning came.

The snow had stopped falling. Everything was covered by thick blanket of powdery ice. The sun rose and its light shone softly above the horizon. It was a beautiful morning and it held a promise that the day would truly be bless.

"Harry! Harry! Wake up!"

Harry groaned.

"I'm up! I'm up! What is it Ron?" said Harry as he rubbed his eyes.

"Merry Christmas, Harry!" greeted Ron.

Harry's eye flew opened. He saw Ron bending over him. The ginger boy was already wearing the customary maroon sweater Molly knitted for him.

"Oh, Merry Christmas, Ron," Harry greeted back.

Ron looked over towards the feet of Harry's bed.

"You got a lot more presents this time, Harry," he said. "A lot more than me apparently."

"Really?" said Harry. He immediately rose and sat on his bed.

Indeed there was a huge lump of presents sat at the foot of his bed. He felt amused.
His younger self would be thrilled by the sight of the presents. His older self on the other hand...

But still, you don't celebrate Christmas everyday. And since right at this moment he looked like a teenage boy, might as well he acted like one.

Harry got off his bed and made his way towards his lump of presents. Clearly, his lump was the biggest of all his dorm mates, even bigger than Ron’s who used to win when it comes to Christmas presents. There were of course the customary Weasley’s presents. Molly never failed to knit him a Christmas sweater. He always got the green colored ones. Molly said it matched his eyes. And then there were the sweets, pastries and cookies courtesy of her cooking. Hermione got him a set of new quills. Uncle Vernon’s present as always was the worse. Harry decided not to bother opening the envelope bearing his writing. He gave it to Ron who after opening it, was delighted to see a fifty cents coin coming out of it.

Sirius did not get him any presents though but it was perfectly understandable given his situation.

The rest came from the Beauxbaton. He got a bottle of cologne from Cassandra. Marianne gave him a beautiful neck scarf. Daphne Lavinge got him a book written in French and Camille got him a nice fountain pen. Daphne and Tracy also got him presents as well. Like Cassandra, Daphne gave him a bottle of cologne. Tracy meanwhile gave him a new leather bound diary. Raphael, as funny as he was, decided that Harry desperately needed a box full of bright colored underwear.

Monsieur and Appoline were kind enough to present him an expensive Breguet wrist watch with leather strap. Ron watched with awe as Harry took the beautiful watch out of its box. Gabrielle in turn got him a Christmas card full in which she poured her heart out. She even did not forget to draw heart symbols all over the card. He got goosebumps all over his body when he read Gabby’s card.

Fleur got him a card too. In it, she wrote:-

Merry Christmas Harry,

Hope you have a beautiful day, knowing that there will always be someone who would care so much about you. I didn’t include my present to you at this time. I decided to give it to you personally, tonight at the Yule Ball. I promise you, it will be a surprise.

Until tonight.

Love,

Fleur Isabelle Delacour.

Harry smiled widely as he reread Fleur’s card.

Today would indeed be the most beautiful day of his life.

To be continued...
"You got another one, Harry."

He had just got out of the bathroom when Ron, who was wearing a Chudley Cannon hat Harry gave him as Christmas present, spoke.

Harry and the rest of his dorm mates spent the last fifteen minutes going over and comparing the presents they got. Harry remembered the last time he was at school, he was always the loser. His pile was always the smallest. If it was not for Mrs. Weasley's kindness, an envelope containing the saddest Christmas present ever sent by Uncle Vernon would all he would received. This time though, he was the clear winner.

"Another one?" he asked as he grabbed another dry towel to dry his hair. He looked towards Ron and saw a house elf standing right in the middle of the room near his pile of presents. He recognized that elf.

"Merry Christmas, Dobby," greeted Harry, smiling fondly at the house elf and putting away the towel.

"Merry Christmas, Harry Potter sir," squealed Dobby in delight. Delighted that for the first time ever in his life, it was a wizard who wished him first. "Dobby is hoping-, he is hoping that he could give Harry Potter his present, sir. Can-, can Dobby give Harry Potter his present?" he asked tentatively.

Indeed, he was holding a messily wrapped in brown paper bundle in his hands.

Memories of the first time Dobby gave him Christmas present flooded his mind. He remembered it all too well.

"Of course you can," replied Harry. He paused for a moment before continuing, "Before that, I have something for you."

Dobby's bulbous eyes followed Harry as he walked over towards his trunk and opened it. He pulled out a particularly knobbly rolled-up pair of socks and one of the old sweaters Mrs. Weasley gave him and handed them over to Dobby.

"Sorry. Being quite busy lately. I haven't had the time to wrap them up. But there you go," said Harry apologetically.

Dobby however was utterly delighted.

"Socks are Dobby's favorite, favorite clothes, sir!" he said, ripping off his odd ones and pulling on the one Harry gave him. "I has seven now, sir! But sir," he said, his eyes widening as he looked down, having pulled both socks up to their highest extent, so that they reached to the bottom of his shorts. "They has made a mistake in the shop, Harry Potter, they is giving you two of the same!"

Harry just shook his head and laughed.

"Oh no Harry, how come you didn't spot that?" said Ron, grinning over from his own bed, which was now strewn with crumpled wrapping papers. "Tell you what, Dobby. Here you go. Take these socks and you can mix them up properly. And here's your sweater."

He threw Dobby a pair of violet socks he had unwrapped and the hand knitted sweater he was wearing earlier.

So Dobby now had two pair of socks and sweaters. He became quite overwhelmed.

"Sir is very kind!" he squeaked, his eyes brimming with tears again, bowing deeply to Ron. "Dobby knew sir must be a great wizard, for he is Harry Potter's greatest friend, but Dobby did not know that he was also as generous of spirit, as noble, as selfless ."

"They're only socks," said Ron, who had gone slightly pink around the ears, though he looked rather pleased all the same.
Dobby now handed Harry a small package, which turned out to be - socks.

"Dobby is making them himself, sir!" the elf said happily. "He is buying the wool out of his wages, sir!"

The left sock was bright red and had a pattern of broomsticks upon it; the right sock was green with a pattern of Snitches.

“They're ... they're really ... uh... well, thanks, Dobby," said Harry, glancing at Ron who was snickering at him.

"I think he wants to see you wear them, mate," said Ron, grinning widely at Harry.

Indeed, Dobby was looking at Harry expectantly.

Not wanting to let Dobby down, Harry put them on, causing Dobby's eyes to leak with happiness again. So now he was shirtless with a towel wrapped around his waist and wearing a pair of mismatched socks.

Dean, Seamus and Ron completely lost it. They were rolling around on the floor, laughing at Harry.

Dobby however felt proud that Harry was willing to wear his gift.

"Dobby must go now, sir, we is already making Christmas dinner in the kitchens!" said Dobby. He apparated out of the dormitory but not before waving good-bye to Ron and the others.

"Already?" said Ron who had just recovered from the incessant laughter. "But we haven't had our breakfast yet. Better put on your clothes, Harry. I'm hungry."

"Hungry? You just ate half of the chicken pie your mom made, Ron," pointed out Harry as he pulled off Dobby's sock and began dressing.

"Not enough," said Ron, now standing up and waited impatiently for Harry to finish donning his clothes. "Besides, there're a lot more choices of food at the Great Hall. And you know how special a Christmas breakfast can be."

Harry could only roll his eyes.

Harry and Ron met Hermione down at the common room and together, they made their way towards the Great Hall.

"Do you think there's time?" asked Ron to Harry as they walked along the corridor towards the Great Hall. Seamus, Dean and several Gryffindorians followed them from behind.

"Time for what?" asked Harry back.

"My dress robe," said Ron worriedly. "Remember what I told you last night. It needs fixing."

"What's wrong with your dress robe?" asked Hermione, glancing sideways to Ron. "It got damage? Torn?"

Ron shook his head.

"No, nothing like that," he said.

"Then why do you think it needs fixing?" said Hermione.

At this time, Ron went pink around the ears.

"It's just... it looks horrible," said Ron sheepishly.

"Oh I'm sure it won't be that bad," said Hermione dismissively.

"Really, Hermione? Have you seen it?" asked Ron.

"No."

"Trust me on this. It does look horrible. I can't go to the Ball with Lavender in that," said Ron.

Hermione put up her hands as a sign that she did not want to be involved any longer in Ron's problem.

"Whatever," she said.
Harry could not help but noticed her expression hardened when she heard Ron mentioning Lavender Brown.

"By the way, you haven't told us with whom you're going with," said Ron to Hermione.

"It's none of your business, Ron!" said Hermione irritably.

"Fine," said Ron. Turning to Harry, he spoke, "So how do you think we're going to fix it?"

"Transfiguration," said Harry. "Like I told you last night."

"Are you sure? I know you're getting really good at it for whatever reason I do not understand but are you sure it's going to work?" said Ron worriedly. "I really want to make a good impression tonight, Harry."

"We could try," said Harry. "If it involves simple modifications, I'm sure there won't be any problem."

"Will it hold?" asked Ron.

"This isn't Cinderella Ron, where the magic cease to exist at the stroke of midnight. It will hold," Harry assured Ron. "But I am more concern about what your mom will say if she sees the changes we're going to make."

"We'll change it back once this is all over. I much rather face her wrath than being embarrassed in front of a girl. By the way, what's a Cinderella?" asked Ron curiously.

"It's a muggle fairy tale, Ron," explained Hermione. "It's about a fairy godmother, a beautiful girl and magic."

"Huh? Odd," said Ron. "I thought all muggles hate magic."

"Well, apparently not. If all muggles hate magic, Hermione won't be here," said Harry.

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**The Great Hall...**

The hall, like every other Christmas Day, looked spectacular. Festoons of holly and mistletoe hung all around the walls, and no less than twelve towering Christmas trees stood around the room, some sparkling with tiny icicles and some glittering with hundreds of candles. The path between Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw table had been widened to make way for a huge, highly decorated Christmas tree which meant that Hufflepuff and Gryffindor would sit closer together. It was the same with Ravenclaw and Slytherin.

The Christmas tree, its height reached near the hall ceiling, was elaborately decorated with ornaments such as bells, candles, candy canes, garlands, stockings of various colors, snow globes and Santa dolls. Small golden fairies flew around the tree, sprinkling what looked like golden fairy dusts from their wands that washed over the tree. And at the foot of the tree was a toy train running in its circular track laid out between various boxes of presents.

The food itself was equally good. Piles of sandwiches, pies, cakes, minty sweets, crumpets, sausages, scrambled eggs, Christmas cakes and cookies, just everything one could think of that would make a breakfast so lavish, were laid on the table.

After soaking in the splendid view of the Great Hall, Harry together with his friends began piling up their plates with everything within their reaches and began to eat.

He was halfway through his turkey sandwich when all of a sudden Hermione nudged him.

"What is it, Hermione?" asked Harry.

"Look," said Hermione, nodding pointedly towards the entrance of the hall.

He followed her and was surprise to see Raphael and a few other Beauxbaton male students standing awkwadly at the hall's entrance.

Raphael was looking around the hall, taking in its surrounding when his eyes found Harry. He gestured his friends and together, they made their way towards the Gryffindor table.

Even from afar, Harry could see Raphael looked dishevel. His hair was unkempt and from the way he look, Harry could guess that Raphael had yet taken his morning bath. Curiosity rose within him, wondering what went wrong this time.

"Merry Christmas, Raphael," greeted Harry the moment they arrived. "Didn't expect you to be here."
Raphael did not reply Harry's greeting. Instead, he stared at Harry for a few moments.

"Can we sit 'ere with you?" asked Raphael to Harry.

"Yeah, sure," said Harry.

He and the others nearby scooted over, making some space for Raphael and his friends to sit. Luckily due the absences of most first years until third years students, there were a lot of room left at the table.

Raphael took a seat opposite Harry. He looked around the table at first. He then grabbed a plate, piled everything on it and immediately began to eat.

Harry spent a few moments staring at Raphael. Fleur's cousin was acting rather odd that morning.

Harry leaned forward and asked tentatively, "Are you okay, Raphael?"

Raphael did not answer at first. He continued to eat this breakfast, starting with a turkey sandwich, a slice of chicken pie, bacon slices and washed it all down with a goblet of fresh orange juice.

And through it all, Harry waited for him patiently.

"Zhe girls," said Raphael, wiping his mouth with a clean handkerchief. "Zhe are driving me crazy! Zhey're driving us crazy!"

"Crazy? What did they do to you?" asked Harry.

He though had a hunch that it all has to do with that night's event.

"You know about zhe Ball tonight, right?" said Raphael. "Clothes! Dresses! Makeup! Jewellery! Zhe noise zhe girls make, you won't believe it. My date keeps chasing me all day and night, talking my ears off about 'ow she wants everything to be perfect! She complaints a lot about my dress robes! My shoes! My 'air! My pimples! Zhe way I dance! Even zhe way I walk! It iz ridiculous!"

"Marrianne?" said Harry.

Raphael nodded. Pointing his finger to Harry, he continued, "You're lucky, you know zhat?"

"And why is that?" asked Harry.

"Well, first of all you're not in zhe middle of chaos like we did," said Raphael, scratching his chin. "Secondly, your date seems to 'ave everything figured out. She was zhe only girl who remained compose. She did end up 'aving to run around 'elping ozher girls zough. She was busy assisting Camille when I came 'ere. Luckily Aunt Appoline and Grand-mere Catherina togezher with zhe parents were zhere to lend zheir 'ands."

Harry nodded. That did not come as a surprise to him. Fleur was known to possess an innate sense when it came to fashion advice. Throughout his marriage to her, not once Fleur suffered missteps when it came to the things she wore.

"Good to know that. But I hope she'll have time for herself or at least get some rest before the Ball tonight. I don't want her to get exhausted before the main event happens. She will have a great deal to do tonight," said Harry, expressing his concern.

"I know," said Raphael. "Aunt Appoline voiced zhe same concern but you know Fleur. When people especially 'er friends came to 'er seeking 'elp, she never 'as zhe 'eart to say no."

Harry smiled.

*That's my Fleur,* he thought.

Raphael shook his head and sighed heavily.

"If you must know, me and my friends 'ere, we slept at three am last night. We zought zhat since today iz 'oliday, we could 'ave a sleep in and only need to wake up near noon. We only 'ad two 'ours of sleep before zhe noise zhe girls make woke us up. It iz complete chaos back at zhe carriage," he explained.

Harry glanced at Raphael's friends and indeed noticed that they were in the same sleep deprived state as Raphael. From time to time they yawn.

"I noticed that. Is there anything I could do to help? You and your friends clearly need some
good sleep," said Harry.

"If you can 'elp, zhat would be great, 'Arry," said Raphael appreciatively. "Anyway, did you wear it?"

"Wear what?"

"Zhe zhing zhat I gave you as present," said Raphael. "Did you wear it?"

"I'm not going to wear thongs on Christmas morning, Raphael," said Harry, deadpanned.

Raphael and his friends together with his dorm mates including Fred and George who were listening keenly to the conversation responded with laughter. Hermione blushed madly though.

Harry shook his head and looked around at his dorm mates.

"We could offer them our beds," he said once the laughter died down. "Just for a couple of hours. Would you guys agree?"

"Harry, McGonagall won't agree," said Ron wiping tears from his eyes. "As much as I'm willing, you know the rules."

"I have no problem with that," said Dean. "But you need to talk to McGonagall."

Neville and Seamus both nodded their heads.

Hermione though gave Harry the same look every time she thought Harry was about to break some rules. Fortunately this time, instead of voicing her opinion, she decided to keep quiet.

"'Arry, if it brings you too much difficulties, you don't 'ave to. I still appreciate zhat you're trying to 'elp," said Raphael.

Harry though held up his hand.

"Wait here," he said to Raphael.

Harry leapt to his feet and departed for the High Table. Professor McGonagall was there, sitting beside Dumbledore.

McGonagall was busy striking a conversation with Professor Sprout when she saw Harry walking towards her.

"Mr. Potter," she said the moment he arrived in front of her. "Merry Christmas."

"Merry Christmas to you too, professor," said Harry smiling. "Can I ask for your permission?" he asked, thinking that it would be better to just go straight to the point.

"For what might I ask?" asked McGonagall.

"To bring five Beauxbaton students into my dormitory," said Harry.

The smile on McGonagall's lip disappeared, replaced by a deep frown. With all seriousness, she spoke, "Potter, you know the rules. Outsiders are not allowed into students' living quarters. Not even students from different houses can visit other house's common room and dormitories. I thought I've already made it clear of that."

Harry however was ready with his argument.

"I am well aware of the rules, professor," he said. "I was just hoping that you could be a little bit more lenient. After all, the Beauxbaton and the Durmstrang were willing to relax their rule. So why can't you?"

Professor McGonagall's eyebrows creased.

"What are you talking about, Potter?" she asked.

"You may not know this but a few weeks ago, I was given the chance to visit the Beauxbaton's carriage and the Durmstrang's ship. They gave me a tour and showed me nearly everything. I even got the chance to see where their champions were sleeping," said Harry.

McGonagall's eyes widened at this.

"Even Miss Delacour's bedroom?" she said, astounded.
So apparently Professor McGonagall knew Fleur slept alone.

Harry nodded.

"Yes, I assure you that I wasn't alone with her," he quickly explained upon seeing Professor McGonagall's eyes widened and her eyebrows lifted high. "Her friends were there too so nothing happened. But my point is, if they could trust me, why can't I trust them? Why can't you? After all, I'm only bringing just a few outside students into my dormitory. I'm not really showing them the whole castle. It wouldn't be fair, would it?"

Professor McGonagall leaned to the side and looked past Harry towards the Gryffindor table.

"Those five students?" she asked.

Harry glanced at Raphael and his friends before turning back to McGonagall.

"Yes. They just need a place to sleep. Apparently the carriage was a little bit chaotic at this moment. They only managed to have two hours of sleep before the noise woke them up. Me and my dorm mates, we're offering them our beds," said Harry.

"Chaotic?"

"The girls. It's Yule Ball tonight, professor," said Harry, grinning. "I think you know why."

"Of course I know why. I was once young like yourself," said McGonagall.

Harry could see that McGonagall was still unsure about letting in foreign students into the Gryffindor sanctuary. He could guess that she was more incline to say no to his request. He was readying himself for further arguments when Professor Dumbledore spoke. The headmaster apparently was listening to his conversation with Professor McGonagall.

"I see no problem in letting the students into the Gryffindor Tower," said Professor Dumbledore to Professor McGonagall. "They were simply asking for a place to sleep, that is all. Why, I certainly would have offered places to sleep inside the Gryffindor Tower to the foreign students if the Triwizard Tournament happened when I was still the head of the house of Gryffindor and the Transfiguration teacher."

"You would?" asked Harry to Dumbledore in surprise. "So why didn't you offer them this time?"

"I did," said Professor Dumbledore. "My offer was declined. The level of mistrust it seems is a lot higher than I expected even after all these times. On another note, will you come to my office after the foreign students have been settled?"

Professor Dumbledore subtly winked at Harry.

Harry understood what Dumbledore meant and smiled widely.

"Of course, professor," he said.

Professor McGonagall stared at Professor Dumbledore and sighed. Knowing that she had no other choices and was overruled, she said to Harry, "Very well, Potter. You have my permission. But please make sure that our guests continue to obey our rules when you bring them into your dormitory. And please remind the prefect that a change of password is needed after your friends left."

"I will. Thank you, professor," said Harry gratefully. He was about to head back to the Gryffindor table when all of a sudden, he remembered something. He turned back and once again addressed Professor McGonagall.

"I forgot to mention that I promised both the Beauxbaton and Durmstrang students that I will bring them on a tour of the Gryffindor Tower. The date had not been set yet. I'll inform you once it happens," he said.

"Potter!"

"I'm sorry Professor McGonagall, but a promise is a promise," said Harry. "Like I said, it won't be fair. I'll inform you once it happens. Thank you, professor."

He then turned around and made his way back to the Gryffindor table, leaving an exasperated Professor McGonagall and a grinning Professor Dumbledore behind.

"So?" asked Raphael hopefully.

Harry gave a thumb up to Raphael to which he replied with a smile.
The Fat Lady raised her eyebrows when she saw a few foreign students were amongst the group that made their return from the Great Hall.

"I didn't know that we're allowing guests inside the tower," she said.

"I got permission from Professor McGonagall to bring them in," said Harry. "You can ask her that if you want proof."

"The password will be compromised, Potter," reminded the Fat Lady. "Remember your third year?"

"I am aware of that," said Harry. "I'll inform the prefects afterwards. Will you let us in?"

The Fat Lady sighed. 

"Very well. But don't blame me if anything happens," she said. "Password?"

"Banana fritters."

The portrait then swung open, revealing a small hole behind it.

Raphael and his friends were particularly impressed the moment they stepped into the Gryffindor common room. Their appearance did take a few Gryffindorians that were already there by surprise.

"Cozy," said the one named Sebastian Beaulieu, looking around impressively at the common room. "It looks old worldly but nevertheless very cozy. Our common room is a lot simpler but more modern."

"Those are nice beds," said Raphael, admiring the four posters bed once they were inside Harry's dormitory. "So which one is yours?"

Harry pointed to the bed nearest to the exit.

The dormitory at that time was cluttered with Christmas gifts and torn wrappers. Harry told the guests to wait while he and his dorm mates did a cleanup. His guests obliged.

Raphael chose Harry's bed. He and his friends immediately dozed off the moment their heads hit the pillow.

Harry and his dorm mates then tip toed their way out of dormitory.

"So that is Raphael," said Seamus as they made their way down to the common room. "The one that gave you that box of underwear."

"Yeah. That's the one."

"You should introduce him to Fred and George. They'll make great mates, you know," suggested Seamus.

"I know, right?" said Harry. "I will."

"So who's your dance partner, Harry?" asked Neville.

They had just arrived at the common room. Hermione was there, sitting at her usual spot, holding a book.

"Really, Hermione?" said Ron. "It's Christmas. Can't you put down that book just for a second?"

"What else I'm going to do then?" said Hermione, looking up from her book towards Ron.

"Just enjoy the holiday maybe? Sit by the fire, toasting marshmallows or something," suggested Ron.

"Is that what you always do at the Burrow, Ron?" asked Hermione skeptically.

Ron just shrugged.

Turning away from Ron and Hermione, Harry asked, "What is it you asked, Neville?"

"Your date is a Beauxbaton, right?" said Neville. "So who is it? I thought you decided not find one for the Yule Ball."

A few girls that sat nearby immediately straightened up the moment they heard what Neville
said. They looked disappointed. Harry noticed them and could only guess that they could not get a date to the Yule Ball and were upset when they heard that Harry chose to go with a Beauxbaton instead of finding one from Gryffindor.

Harry felt bad but there was nothing he could do at that point. If only they knew why.

Turning back to Neville, whom Harry felt surprised to hear that he did not catch with the conversation Harry had with Raphael. he said, "Didn't you hear what me and Raphael talked about during breakfast, Neville?"

Neville shook his head.

"I was a little bit preoccupied with the Ball tonight, Harry," he said.

"I see. Well, you'll see who she is tonight, Neville. Anyway, I need to go to the headmaster's office. See you guys in a bit," said Harry as he made his move towards the portrait hole.

Both Ron and Hermione looked surprised.

"On Christmas morning? What for?" asked Ron incredulously. "What about my dress robe, Harry?"

"Dumbledore's request," said Harry. "It won't be long. I'll attend to your dress robe once I get back. There's still time. Don't worry about it. Promise is a promise, Ron."

"Oh, okay."

With that, Harry left for the portrait hole.

Sirius berated him for not seeing him early in the morning, saying that he had been waiting for his godson to arrive and wishing him Merry Christmas ever since he woke up that morning.

"This is about me not getting you anything for Christmas, isn't it?" he said.

Sirius was wearing much newer, cleaner clothes. His hair looked better groomed and his beard neatly trimmed and he smelled nicer than before. Courtesy of Dumbledore, Harry supposed.

"No Sirius, that's not it," said Harry and proceeded to explain what he did that morning.

Harry spent the rest of the morning together with Sirius and Dumbledore at the headmaster office. He even had lunch there. They did have a little bit of discussion pertaining the event that will happen after the Yule Ball during lunch. He returned to the Gryffindor Tower at five minutes before one pm. Raphael and his friends had left and they sent Harry their warmest regards to him via Ron.

Ron himself was waiting for him with his dress robe. They had a little a bit of a discussion on what changes needed to be done for that old dress robe. In the end, Harry decided to transfigure Ron's dress robe into one just like his own. The only different was that Harry's dress robe was in black. Ron's dress robe would be in maroon.

Ron was absolutely delighted to see his 'new' dress robe. He told Harry that he could not wait to show it to Lavender Brown that evening. Harry in turn reminded him that they will need to change the dress robe back into its original form after the Yule Ball concluded. Ron agreed.

Harry and the rest of the gang then went outside to participate in a snowball fight. Viktorn and his friends together with Raphael and the rest of the Beauxbaton boys joined in fifteen minutes after it began. The snowball fight ended at five pm when they all returned to their respective abode to prepare for the Yule Ball that evening.

7.15pm that evening...

Fully dressed, Harry and the rest of the male Gryffindorians stood inside the common room. With the exception of Harry, they were all waiting for their dates to come down from their dormitories. A few of them including Neville whose dates belong to other houses, left earlier that evening.

Harry looked at the blue colored tiffany box containing the necklace and glanced at the Breguet wrist watch he was wearing.

It was time.
"I got to go," said Harry to Ron. "I'll meet you at the Great Hall."

"Okay. See ya, Harry," said Ron.

Someone had cleared the path towards the Beauxbaton's carriage and the Durmstrang's ship through the snow it seemed. Rows of floating yellow orbs of light lined both side of the pathway that lead from the carriage and the ship towards the castle.

A few soft knocks and the door into the carriage flung open, revealing a woman in her mid 40s.

She smiled at him.

"Please come in, Monsieur Potter," she said.

"Thank you," said Harry.

She stepped aside, making way for Harry to enter the carriage.

Inside the crowded lobby, he saw most of them, both the students and the parents, were already there. They were just waiting for Madame Maxime and a few others before they made their way to the castle.

Everyone was wearing their best. The sense of excitement was palpable and infectious.

"'Arry!"

Harry turned to look and saw Adrienne walking towards him. She was wearing a milky white gown, her hair tied in a bun. A silver bracelet, the one he bought her, fit snugly on her wrist.

They hugged.

"You look nice," she complimented him once they broke apart.

"And you look fabulous," said Harry in return.

"Zhank you," said Adrienne, smiling widely at him. "She's on 'er way, 'Arry. Iz zhat for 'er?" she asked, pointing towards the tiffany box Harry was carrying.

"Yes," replied Harry.

"Good, because she iz anticipating it," said Adrienne.

Harry nodded.

"Hey, Harry."

He glanced over his shoulder and saw Daphne, standing behind him.

Daphne's beauty, even when she was in her school uniform with her veela traits completely suppressed, was astounding. But the girl that stood in front of him was in whole new level. She was wearing a light green glitter laced mermaid gown with the v-shaped neckline exposing a little bit of her cleavage. The silver necklace Harry gave her adorned her neck.

Her gown flowed down to her feet but a slit that went up to just above her knee exposed her smooth, just waxed looking leg. Her shiny black hair usually tied in ponytail, fell freely over her shoulder.

Harry wasn't sure how to respond at first given the events beforehand but much to his surprise, she acted first. She walked up to him and hugged him. She even placed a kiss on his cheek. The place where her lips touched him felt burn.

"You look beautiful," he complimented her once they broke apart.

"Thank you," said Daphne. "So do you, I mean."

Daphne immediately went red.

Harry just chuckled.

"I think the word you're looking for is nice," he said.

"Yes! That's it! Sorry," said Daphne, still in embarrassment.

"So, where's your date?" he asked.
Daphne nodded pointedly towards a blonde haired boy standing, with whom Harry assumed were his parents, not far from them.

The boy smiled and gave Harry a nod.

Harry smiled back.

"He's handsome," said Harry, turning back to Daphne.

Daphne just rolled her eyes, much to Harry's amusement.

"So I guess we're good?" he asked.

"That will depends," she replied. "You could offer me something."

"Like what?"

"I don't know. What do you have?"

Harry suddenly realised at that time that Daphne was unhappy. She looked miserable at that time. He began racking his brain, searching for ideas.

"I could offer you a dance if that'll make you smile?"

Much to his surprise, it did make Daphne smile. And she was smiling widely.

"Really? You're offering me a dance? With you?"

He replied, "Yes. I'm offering you a dance. Of course I have to request permission from my dancing partner first but I hate seeing a girl being unhappy and miserable in a night like this. Hopefully she understands."

Daphne leaned forward and once again kissed his cheek. "I look forward to it," she whispered.

Harry spent the next few minutes greeting and hugging everyone that he knew. Raphael asked him loudly, much to Harry's embarrassment, if he wears that underwear he gave him. Harry said no.

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He was talking with a few of the parents when Raphael came over to him and patted him on his shoulder.

"Get ready, 'Arry. 'Ere she comes," said Raphael, pointing towards the top of the marble stairway.

Harry's eyes followed him.

And his jaw dropped to the floor by what he saw.

**To be continued...**

*A/n : Have you ever get caught in a situation where everyone was pulling you into all sorts of different directions, all at once? Feels like giving them a big, fat middle finger, eh?*

Anyway, Dobby's grammatical error was intentional. I'm simply following JK Rowling's example. Other grammatical errors however were not.
45. Chapter 45

Chapter 43

A great collective sigh issued from the assembled wizards and witches within the carriage's lobby.

There weren't that many women entering his life at any given moment. Unlike some men whom he knew changed their woman like changing their clothes. He was known to be a bit reclusive when it comes to striking a relationship with a girl he liked. But even with that disparity, those few women that entered his life were beautiful in their own right. Unlike some of the girls some his friends dated.

Cho Chang was his first crush. Her beauty was eye catching, no doubt a byproduct of her heritage. Small wonder she caught the eyes of Cedric Diggory. Rumor has it that even Roger Davies and many boys tried to coax her to date them. The seventh year Hufflepuff snagged her in the end. Harry replaced him after the Hogwarts champion died but that relationship was short lived however after Harry realized that he was just a Cho Chang's rebound. And then there was Ginny. A fair, green eyed, fiery red-headed Gryffindor. Everything went so well after they started dating but any chance of that relationship blossoming into a marriage was quashed after she unceremoniously broke off with him after Bill died.

Many years passed by after that and he spent it all by burying himself into his work.

Until Fleur came into his life on that fateful night.

Harry was used to seeing beauty, his experience with Fleur notwithstanding, but nothing would prepare him for this.

"You got to be kidding me," he muttered as his eyes remained transfixed to the top of the marble staircase.

And he indeed was not alone. Virtually every male, especially the younger ones, was staring at the same spot at him, some of them had their mouth gaping.

Her usual straight, thick silver locks - this time she wore it in wavy form - fell over her left shoulder. It glittered within the bright lights of the lobby. Her hair style that night reminded him of a certain British actress by the name of Kate Beckinsale. Her dress, a silvery metallic halter-neck dress with cut-out sides and a thigh split that ended in the mid of her thigh, held onto her body tightly, accentuating her every curves. A pair of silver earrings and bracelets adorning her wrist completed the package. Her neck however was curiously devoid of any form of jewellery.

Her radiance shone through and it beautified everyone it fell upon.

Appoline at that time was giving a disapproving look at her eldest daughter, most likely due to the sexy nature of the dress her daughter wore. As for Monsieur Delacour, he could only shake his head in a defeated manner.

For a few minutes Harry stood, rooted to the spot, unable to tear his eyes away from her, unable to do anything.

Someone punched him on his left shoulder.

He looked over his shoulder and saw it was Marianne. She was standing beside Raphael at that time and was glaring at both Harry and her date.

"Stop staring at 'er like an idiot and go to 'er," she urged, pushing Harry towards the marble staircase.

Fleur's brilliant blue eyes followed him as he made the climb to the top of the stairs. Gabrielle who stood beside her sister glanced jealously at the two.

Harry was rendered speechless for a few moments when he reached her. It took a while for him to find his voice. He found his brain addled from both her beauty and her perfume that invaded his nostril midway through the climb.

"I could think of a few words that could describe the way you look," he said finally. "But none of them would do justice nor will they properly portray on how beautiful you look tonight."

Fleur smiled at this. She held his hand towards him. Harry took her hand and kissed the back of it. She then leaned forward and planted a kiss on Harry's cheek.

"Zhank you, 'Arry," she said.
He took out the tiffany box he carried with him and proceeded to open the lid. Inside was the beautiful necklace with the light blue opal which he bought at Madam Popkins in Hogsmeade.

Fleur's eyes lit up when she saw the necklace.

"It iz beautiful," she said.

"I don't know what else to give to you as a Christmas gift," he said. "I thought maybe this may be perfect."

"Not yet," she said softly, her eyes glittered beneath the light of the lobby.

She slowly turned to face opposite of him, reached up and lifted the back of her hair.

Harry knew what he had to do. He took out the necklace from its box. With her back facing him and at the same time, fighting hard the urge to kiss that beautiful and slender neck of hers, Harry lifted the necklace over her head and began fixing the necklace around her neck. He fumbled with the necklace's clasp at first but in the end, managed to hook the necklace clasp perfectly. Much to his surprise, the necklace fitted her neck nicely.

Fleur turned to face Harry.

"Now it is perfect," said Harry, smiling at her. "Merry Christmas, Fleur."

Fleur smiled back.

"Merry Christmas, 'Arry."

Harry turned to Fleur's parent and bowed to them in respect.

"You may have notice that Fleur had agreed to come with me to the Ball," he said politely. "But custom dictates that it is still my duty to ask for your permission. Mr. and Mrs. Delacour, will you allow your daughter to go to the Ball with me?"

Appoline who looked visibly relief after witnessing the exchange between Harry and her daughter smiled and nodded.

"You 'ave my permission, Monsieur Potter," said Monsieur Delacour. "For tonight, I trusted my daughter's safety to you. Take good care of 'er and treat 'er well."

Harry once again bowed to them.

"You have my word, Mr. Delacour," he said. "And thank you."

He glanced at Madame Maxime who stood beside Appoline and was giving him an approval look. He smiled back at her.

Turning to Fleur, he offered his arm and said, "Shall we?"

Fleur smiled. She wrapped her arm around his in return.

"After you, Monsieur Potter."

The Beauxbaton delegate met the Durmstrang halfway to the castle. Viktor and his friends were surprised to see Harry walking hand in hand with Fleur. Viktor himself rendered speechless the moment he laid his eyes on Fleur. Harry had to snap his finger loudly in front of Viktor's face to bring the Triwizard champion back to reality.

Viktor shook his head like a wet dog trying to dry itself.

"She's your date?" he asked in astonishment while at the same time, tried very hard not to look at her way again.

"Yes."

"I got the impression that you don't want to invite anyone to the Ball," stated Viktor.

"Plan's changed."

"I see. Well this is not the first time I met a veela. They usually don't affected me much but your date tonight... wow! She is one potent girl," admitted Viktor to Harry. "Never seen anything like her."

Harry said nothing at first. He looked over towards the Durmstrang delegate and sure
enough, saw all the boys staring, mouth gaping at Fleur. As for the girls, they were also
staring at Fleur, albeit with a hint of envy and jealousy.

"Yes well, you might want your friends to snap out of their stupor or else we will all stuck here
for the rest of the night," said Harry.

Viktor looked over towards his friends and shook his head.

"You're right," he said and proceeded to attend to his friends.

Harry pulled Fleur a little bit further away from the Durmstrang. Lucky for him, Fleur's
friends understood. They immediately surrounded both of them.

After all the Durmstrang boys came back to their senses, they resumed their journey towards
the castle.

"So where's your date, Viktor?" asked Harry who was now walking a little bit further away
from the Durmstrang champion.

"She's up there," answered Viktor, pointing towards the castle. "Waiting for me. I think you
know her."

Viktor grinned at Harry.

Harry grinned back.

"Yeah I have a feeling I know who she is. Just remember that she like intelligent
conversations. Ace that and you're off to a good start," advised Harry.

"I'll remember that. Thank you, Harry," said Viktor appreciatively.

"With whom Viktor will be going with, 'Arry?" asked Fleur.

"Hermione," replied Harry.

"I see. And that friend of 'er? Zhe red 'eaded boy?"

"He snagged another girl from our house. I have a feeling that they're serious this time," said
Harry.

There was a look of surprise on Fleur's face.

"Ow do you know zhat?" she asked.

"I don't. It's just gut feeling. Fleur. I was expecting the other way around but maybe things
will be different this time."

Fleur nodded in understanding.

"You are right. Zhis time, everything will be different," she said.

Harry glanced sideways at her. That was a very odd thing to say.

Fleur glanced back at him and smiled. She squeezed his arm gently before turning to look to
the front.

Questions upon questions popped into his mind. He however had to push all of them out of his
mind after seeing that they had now arrived at the Entrance Hall. Professor McGonagall was
already waiting for them. Standing beside her were Cedric Diggory, Cho Chang and Hermione.

Hermione beamed at him the moment she saw him. She was wearing a pink tiered ombre
gown. Her usually bushy hair was now straight and tied into a bun with strands of it falling
over the either side of her face. She looked really lovely. Cedric and Cho Chang meanwhile
stared with astonishment as they both watched Harry entered the Entrance Hall with Fleur
beside him.

Viktor immediately walked over towards Hermione. He held out his hand. Hermione took it
and Viktor proceeded to kiss it. Harry could see that she was blushing like mad.

The six of them watched as Professor McGonagall walked towards both Madame Maxime and
Professor Karkaroff. With the exception of Cedric who was forced to shake his head every few
seconds to avoid the embarrassment in front of Fleur every time he laid his eyes on her, the
rest of them were having a nice chat with the girls complementing each other. Harry though
could not help but observed a small amount of jealousy radiated from Cho Chang every time
the girl laid her eyes on Fleur.
Both Professor Karkaroff and Madame Maxime began ushering their students towards the Great Hall, leaving the champions and their dancing partners behind in the hands of Professor McGonagall.

"As the champions of the Triwizard Tournament, I am sure that your respective headmasters had given all of you a thorough briefing of what you need to do, and that all of you had been given proper training in regard of the Yule Ball opening dance," said Professor McGonagall. She then laid her eyes on Harry. "Except for you, Mister Potter. I didn’t see you attending any of the dancing classes me and the other teachers organized. Are you sure you know what you were doing?"

Harry felt worried. He had forgotten all about the dance until a few seconds ago and embarrassing Fleur would be the last thing he wanted to do. He had training in the old timeline, but that was like centuries ago and he memorized only a little bit of it. He did remember that it was disastrous though. While he and Fleur danced at every Ball they attended during their marriage, those were different type of dances compared to what they were about to do.

Fleur glanced at her partner and seemed to understand his situation. Once again she squeezed his arm. Turning to Professor McGonagall, she said, "Don’t worry about us, Professor McGonagall. We’ll manage."

"Very well. If you say so, Miss Delacour," she said. "Now all of you please follow me."

The champions and their dancing partner followed Professor McGonagall up the marble staircase. Professor Flitwick was waiting for them at the entrance to the Great Hall. Both teachers instructed the pairs to line up with Fleur and Harry making up the front, Viktor and Hermione making up the rear and Cedric and ChoChang sandwiched between them.

Noises can be heard coming out from within the bowels of the Great Hall. The rest of the students, staffs and teachers were already in there, waiting for the Yule Ball to begin.

Professor Flitwick took out his chain watch.

"It is time, Minerva," he said, stowing the watch back into his robe's pocket.

Professor McGonagall nodded.

Turning to the champions, she said, "In you go."

Professor McGonagall released them into the Great Hall pair by pair.

White was the theme of the Great Hall's decoration that night. Multitude wall decorations, lines of banners and bouquet of flowers, all in white, hanged along all four walls. The huge Christmas tree was now placed on top of the platform where the High Table previously resided. Meanwhile, all but one long table were replaced with multiple circulars ones, all neatly arranged at the either side of the Hall, creating a space for the dance floor right in the middle. That long table, placed at the usual side of Gryffindor table, was filled by extra foods and drinks. Most of the circular tables were already filled with students, parents and staffs alike.

A sense of déjà vu hit Harry. Never he thought that he would once again play a part in opening the Yule Ball, despite him no longer being the champion. He remembered back then when he was 'force' to dance with Parvati Patil. Parvati, like every other girl, was so into it. But Harry instead danced like a certain gold plated protocol droid, much to Parvati’s disappointment. They 'broke off' later that evening with Parvati dancing the night away with other boys.

Harry felt every eye within the Great Hall fell onto him, or rather to the girl beside him, as they made their entrance. Ron and the rest of his dorm mates’ eyes grew into the size of a tennis ball the moment they saw Fleur. Malfoy and other boys were not spared either. They found themselves unable to take their eyes off Fleur and they became completely forgotten about their date sitting beside them.

The champions and their partners took their places on the dance floor. The opening dance was about to begin.

Harry placed his right hand around Fleur's waist with the other clasping one of Fleur's hands. Fleur herself placed her other free hand on Harry's shoulder. Knowing all too well that he could seriously messed up the dance, panic began to grip Harry. He glanced at the other two pairs. Both Cedric and Viktor and their respective partners looked calm and relax. No doubt they came fully prepared and would of course remember the Yule Ball opening dance routine.

He turned and gave Fleur an apologetic look. Fleur however looked back at him calmly. She
smiled.

"Don't worry, 'Arry," she softly said. "Just dance like we used to."

Harry was taken aback, surprised and puzzled by what Fleur just said. He was about to ask Fleur for clarification when the music began.

Both Cedric and Viktor were off. They and their partners followed rigidly to dance routine taught within all those dance classes.

The Yule Ball opening dance routine was simple, designed to be easily remembered with lesser chance of overwhelming the young and inexperienced dancers. Shuffling their feet forward, backward, right and left was all they needed to do. Stepping on their partner's toes and taking care of the timing were the only thing they need to watch out for. There was one drawback though. The dance routine did not match with the music played which was tuneful, harmonious and melodic.

Harry and Fleur started late but Fleur seemed not to care. With their hands still connected, slowly but surely, she began to dance. Her feet shuffled, her body swaying to the rhythm of the music, stepping forward and backward, her chest brushed against him a few times as the music dictated it. A hummed tune unexpectedly escaped her lips. Her face meanwhile bore a look of calm enjoyment as her brilliant blue eyes drilled deep into him.

Harry tried to follow suit. He watched her body movement. He listened to the tune she hummed.

Her body movements and that tune she hummed, it inadvertently brought back the memories when he and his wife were attending a Valentine Day Ball at one of her relatives' villa ten years into their marriage, Harry at that time was already proficient in dancing, thanks to a small part in his wife's effort. That was indeed one of the best dances they ever had.

Then it hit him. He now understood on what to do.

Throwing caution away, slowly he took over the lead from Fleur. Fleur upon recognizing the change in her role immediately became submissive, responding to every input Harry gave out. Their feet shuffled, bodies swaying to the rhythm of the music, circling each other in the process and from time to time, Fleur would twirl underneath their raised hands. It did not take long for them to find their chemistry and without a moment to lose, they danced their hearts out.

Like Beauty and the Beast. Like Gabriele Goffredo and Anna Matus. Like Charles-Guillaume Schmitt and Elena Salikhova. It was nothing like Hogwarts had ever seen and it did not take long for all of them to notice.

"Why do they dance differently?"

"Never seen anything like it!"

"This is the most beautiful ballroom dance I had ever seen! I mean seriously!"

"Harry could dance! Seriously, where the hell did he learn to dance like that?!"

Those were among the responses given by the stunned spectators. Even Viktor and Cedric and their dancing partners inadvertently slowed down and ended up watching Harry and Fleur conquering the dance floor in awe from the sideline.

All eyes were onto them but Harry found that he did not care, nor did Fleur. They had their eyes only onto each other as they glided through the dance floor. They were drowning in their own cocoon, away from everyone and the chaos of the world. Calm enjoyment bored on their faces and a sense of deep contentment radiated from both of them as they continued to dance.

The music soon ended and Harry and Fleur stood there right in the middle of the dance floor in each other's embrace.

Eyes locking onto each other, Harry felt something, more like a strong urge took over him. Slowly he leaned forward. Fleur did the same. She leaned towards him. Her glossy pink lips parted.

Unfortunately before the kiss could happen, they both were jolted by a sudden thunderous applause. They looked around saw everyone were giving them a huge standing ovation. Madame Maxime was looking at them proudly. Appoline and Catherina were wiping their eyes with white handkerchiefs. Monsieur Delacour shook his head but nevertheless smiling. Professor Dumbledore's eyes twinkled and gave Harry a subtle wink. Padfoot was there too, sitting beside Dumbledore and being doglike and everything.
Cedric, Viktor, Hermione and Cho Chang walk over to them.

"You didn't tell me that you can dance!" exclaimed Viktor while at the same time shaking Harry's hand. "You could have taught me!"

"Those are some serious dance moves, Harry. From which teacher did you learn to dance?" asked Cedric.

Harry of course did not know on how to answer to that.

"That was the most beautiful dance I have ever seen, Harry," complimented Hermione. Without waiting for Harry's reply, she said to Fleur, "You're lucky one, Fleur. Everything works so well so far."

She then gave Fleur a wink.

Fleur smiled.

"Zhank you, 'Ermione," she said, glancing at Harry who was busy talking to Cedric and Viktor that he failed to notice Hermione's winking.

Cho Chang meanwhile did not say anything but there was that look of surprise plastered on her face.

Professor McGonagall came over to them.

"Dinner is about to begin," she said. "Follow me, please."

She then ushered them all to the champion's table.

The three headmasters stood up when the champions arrived. The champions and their partners chose their seats and together, they sat down. Madame Maxime still beaming proudly at her champion and her partner. Professor Karkaroff and Professor Dumbledore gave Harry a subtle nod. Padfoot meanwhile sat on the floor between Harry and Fleur. Fleur cooed and petted the black shaggy dog. Harry just rolled his eyes when Padfoot placed his chin on Fleur's thigh, much to Fleur's amusement.

And the Christmas dinner soon began.

Harry looked around and saw that all the visiting parents were sitting at the tables surrounding the champion's table. The Delacour family themselves was sitting at the closest table to them. Monsieur Delacour raised a glass to Harry.

He replied with a smile.

It was a really pleasant atmosphere, far removed from the one he experienced back in the past. They were eating and having really nice conversations among themselves. No topic about the Triwizard Tournament being brought up however, much to everyone's relief.

Midway through dinner, the music restarted. Most couples stood up and took to the dance floor.

Viktor offered his hand to Hermione. She blushed but nevertheless she took it. They both then went off to the dance floor. Cedric and Cho Chang then followed suit, leaving Harry and Fleur behind.

Harry glanced at Fleur. The girl looked back at him expectantly. He offered his hand. She took it and they both went off to the dance floor.

There was an unexpected circumstances resulting from that opening dance performance he and Fleur put out earlier. He found himself in hot demand by girls wanting to dance with him. He had to turn down a lot of the girls' invitations so that he could make time for Fleur. He did however end up dancing with every member of Fleur's squad. He fulfilled his promise to Daphne by inviting her to dance with him. He even got to dance with Tracy and Hermione.

Fleur was in hot demand too, even more than Harry, but she was not as lucky. Every boy who proposed to her ended up standing in front of her in an uncanny resemblance of a lamp post. A drooling lamp post if you will so she ended up going back to Harry again and again.

More than a quarter of the night passed by.

A slow number was being played this time. His hands wrapped tightly around her waist and her hands around his neck as their joined bodies swayed gently to the music. Fleur, being
taller than Harry, rested her chin on Harry's shoulder. Her eyes were closed but her face betrayed deep contentment. Fleur was totally at peace.

Midway through the song, she opened up her eyes and looked at Harry.

"I don't want to be with the crowd tonight," she whispered to him. "I want to go somewhere peaceful and quiet, just you and me."

Harry smiled at her.

"I think I know where to find that," he whispered back.

Without waiting for her response, he took her hand and they both snaked their way out of the crowded Great Hall.

The Hogwarts compound had turned into a beautifully decorated park purposely for the Yule Ball. Soft colored orbs illuminated the park. Most of the couples who were done with dancing and eating went there to enjoy the night scenery.

But that was not where Harry was taking Fleur.

After making a few turns into the many corridors and climbing many flight of stairs, they both arrived at the Astronomy Tower. There was no one else there but them.

From one of the tower's balcony, looking down they could see the park and the castle's sprawling lawn. Small dots can be seen coming in and going out of the park.

It was a moonless night but the stars, glittering like diamonds, decorated the clear night sky. Soft wind blew in from the north, bringing in old memories when he and his wife would sit down together outside of their home at night watching the moon and the stars.

Fleur leaned against the steel railing with her arms resting comfortably on top of it. That soft wind blew a few strands of her hair across her face. She raised her hands and tucked those strands of hair away from her face.

She let out a soft sigh.

"Beautiful night, isn't it?" she said.

"It is," said Harry.

"It bring back a lot of memories," said Fleur.

"Beautiful memories."

Fleur's lip curved into a smile.

"Yes," she said.

"Do you ever shared moments like this with someone?"

"Of course."

Harry nodded. He decided to not delve into Fleur's personal matter any further. If she wanted to share it, it would be on her own accord. But he did have one pressing question he was meaning to ask since the dance began.

"Can I ask you something?" said Harry.

"Ask away, 'Arry."

"The thing that you said before the dance began, what do you mean by that?"

"Which part?"

"The one about everything. Everything is going to be different?"

Fleur glanced sideways at Harry. Her smile widened at this.

"'Ow iz your summer, 'Arry?" she instead asked.

So she did not want to answer that question. That's fine. Harry did not want to ruin that night so he decided to follow suit.
"The usual. Nothing much to tell, really," he said, looking away from her.

The Dursleys. Every summer would remind him of the Dursleys. It was not something he wanted to remember, to be honest. But then again, having to live through it until the age of seventeen, it was not something he could easily forget either. He once thought of Memory Charm, but ultimately decided against it after realizing that all those memories shaped him into the man he was.

"Zhey are still 'orrible to you, yes?" said Fleur. "Your relatives?"

"It wasn't that bad. We're just... not close. That's all," said Harry, looking back at Fleur.

"So you're fine going back to zhem every summer?"

"I-... don't really have any choice actually. But yeah.. it's not that bad."

"Not zhat bad zhat you're more willing to stay at 'Ogwarts zhe whole summer rather zhan going back to Surrey?"

Harry was rendered speechless by this. The girl in front of him seriously knew a lot about him. And he began to wonder from where and how she got those kind of information.

Fleur smiled. From her expression, it was as if she knew what he was thinking. "I have my own source and you are not zhat 'ard to decipher, 'Arry," she said. "To me, you're an open book. From zhe front to zhe back."

"That's the thing about being known as the Boy-Who-Lived, I guess. Everyone knows and want to know everything about you," said was the only explanation he could come up with.

Fleur just smiled.

"So what about you? How's your summer?" he asked.

Harry actually knew what Fleur did that summer. His wife told him that she and her friends went to French Riviera and stayed at the villa owned by the Delacour for a couple of weeks. But it would be nice to have her telling the story all over again.

"Eventful," said Fleur. "Very eventful."

"You went on a vacation, I suppose?"

Fleur however shook her head at this.

"Not really. I did spend my time at one zhe veela villages and visited the veela temple. A lot of people came to our 'ouse. There isn't much else I waz able to do actually. Me and my friends planned to visit French Riviera but the plan 'ad to be scuttled at zhe very last minute," she explained.

This took Harry by surprise. The flow of the time must have changed something and somewhere, he thought.

"I see. May I ask why you had to cancel your vacation? I mean you must feel very disappointed not being able to go."

Fleur once again shook her head.

"We can visit the Riviera anytime we want, 'Arry. Somezhing came up which was why we 'ad to cancel zhe plan," she said. "I was more looking forward to come to 'Ogwarts actually."

"Really? But you did not seem to like it here," said Harry.

Fleur nodded.

"You're right I don't. I still 'ate it here. Zhe weather is too wet and cold and zhe food iz too greasy to my taste. But zhere iz somezhing zhat I was looking forward to," said Fleur.

"The Triwizard Tournament?"

Fleur however shook her head at this.

"No," she said. "I was looking forward to meet someone. Someone very dear to me."

"Bill Weasley."

Those two words jumped out of his mouth without him thinking about it.
Fleur raised her eyebrows and stared at him questioningly.

"Sorry. It's just that I saw both of you the other day and after the First Task," continued Harry. "You seem to get along with him really well. It was he who you really want to see, wasn't it?"

Fleur stared at him. Her expression hardened a bit.

"Despite what you saw, it wasn't 'im I was looking forward to see. And seriously 'Arry, I only met him here at 'Ogwarts. 'Ow can I be looking forward to meet someone I never knew existed before?"

"I-"

At this point, Harry felt so foolish.

"And while we are still on the same subject, you really don't 'ave to apologize. We are the one who 'urt you, not the other way around," added Fleur.

"If I didn't apologize, you would have gone to the Ball with someone else and I will be going alone," said Harry.

Fleur was taken by surprise by this.

"You did not seek date for the Ball at all?" she asked.

Harry shook his head.

"No and like what Professor McGonagall said, I didn't attend any of the dancing lessons. My initial plan was to come to the Great Hall, eat and call it a day," said Harry.

Fleur went silent.

"So who is this person you're looking for? Did you meet him or her? I can help you with the search if you haven't," he offered.

"Zhat iz very kind of you, 'Arry, but you don't 'ave to," said Fleur. "I already met 'im."

"Care to tell me who he is? If you don't mind me asking," asked Harry. His curiosity intensified.

Fleur pondered for a moment. Turning away from Harry, her gaze went down towards the park below, she said, "'E iz zhe most thickheaded person I 'ave ever met. Despite all zhe signs I threw at 'im, still 'e 'ad no clue of who I am. If you want to know 'im, you 'ave to answer zhis one question."

"That's harsh but yeah of course," said Harry. His curiosity peaked.

"And you 'ave to be 'onest with me. No lies."

"I won't lie. I promise," said Harry.

Fleur nodded satisfactorily. She turned to face him and with all seriousness, spoke, "Very well. Now answer me zhis 'Arry, what was zhe last zhing I said to you before I died?"

It hit him like a freight train. He took a few steps backward, unable to believe what he just heard.

_It can't be_, he thought.

"What did you say?" he asked.

"I have been watching you, Harry," said Fleur, all her French accent were gone. She sounded very much like Fleur of old. The Fleur that left him.

Fleur walked closer to him. A tear fell down her cheek.

"I want to know if it's really you, the man I married."

Next chapter : The Story of Fleur Delacour

A/n: I was infected by Lazinus Titanus. Lucky for me I got my groove back. Let’s hope that this time it will last.

The next few chapters will center around Fleur Delacour. I want to show snap shots of what really happened to her from that fateful day until Yule Ball and it will run for
a few chapters. Once her side is done, the story will return to the continuation of this chapter.

To those who groaned at the prospect of another multi flashbacks, well, keep on groaning. I could use the entertainment.
She closed her eyes as that warm, soft lip touched hers. Her breathing slowed down until it finally stopped altogether.

Dying. It did not hurt at all. The pain from the cancer she suffered had all gone.

Darkness took over her. She found herself alone, floating in nothingness, losing the track of time and silently wondering to where this will lead her. Is this the purgatory? Is this the border between the world of the living and the dead? Will she be trapped in here forever?

Her pondering was disrupted when she saw a dim, white light appeared suddenly far ahead of her. She stared at the light intently, wondering what it was and should she try to reach out to it. And if she wanted to, how would she do it?

She found that she did not have to wonder any longer. The light began to grow closer, bigger and brighter each passing moment, at one point she had to shield her eyes from the intensity of the light, until finally, it consumed her.

She knew no more.

Her eyes fluttered open to a view of a clean, white ceiling together with four flushmount light fixtures neatly located at near the end of the four corners of the ceiling.

She was lying on a big, soft and warm bed with white sheet and pillows. A white, thick blanket covered her body up to her chest.

The air felt fresh and warm. Soft ray of sunshine poured in through the white curtained window.

*So this must be heaven*, she thought, smiling to herself. *It's quite nice*.

But the smile faltered as fast as it came when she remembered the ones she left behind. Her husband and her children.

She was not worried about Victoire, Louise and Dominic for they already had their life sorted out. They would be fine and continued to be fine for as long as they lived, surrounded by their love ones.

But Harry. The man she spent her life with for more than seventy years. He would be alone without her looking after him. She knew that she should not worry about him. Harry had assured to her many times when she was bedridden and he proved it! He did everything from cooking to cleaning to attending her. Luckily, he was already retired from active service with the Ministry when she fell ill so there was never any problem of having to juggle between work and attending to her needs.

Harry himself at the age of 90 years old was not in a prime condition but despite that fact, not once he complains.

Their marriage did not go as smoothly initially as one would expect. For the first few years, she had a really hard time letting Harry into her heart. She was conflicted between her struggle to love Harry and her strong feeling and continuous devotion for her deceased husband, Bill Weasley. There were many nights where they had to sleep in separate bedrooms just because she found that she couldn't stand him.

But she did not want to lose Harry either. The events preceding their reunion in London shook her to the core.

She had that nagging feeling that Harry somehow knew what she was thinking. He never brought it up however. All the time her husband would put a brave face in front of her. He would smile and treated her as any good husband treated their wife, even more. But she knew all of that were just a façade. Many instants she caught her husband's face fell, that smile on his face would instantly disappear and replaced by sadness and grieve whenever she looked away.
She felt guilty.

But with each passing day, there was one little voice within her head that kept telling her to give her second marriage a chance. That everything will be alright in the end. And that was what she did. She gave Harry a chance.

Harry had proven himself to be a very patient man. He treated her like every good man would. He listened to her and let her have her own personal space whenever she needed it. He never failed to remind her that it was not her beauty he was marrying to, but rather her persona. He of course admitted that he felt lucky that he got to marry one of the most beautiful woman, probably in the world but that was not the reason on why he knelt to her.

"Ginny is a beautiful girl," he said to her one day. "Strong. Ambitious. Brave. Passionate. Her heart is always in the right places. You and her share a lot when it comes to personality. The only difference is that she never gives me a chance which is I why didn't see any future with her. But you gave me that chance and for as long as the chance exists, there will always be a future for both of us."

She remembered those words until the end of her days.

Time went by. Slowly she began to open her heart to him until on one bright sunny day while she was watching her husband pruning the roses in their garden, she fell in love with him. His patience, his love and compassion finally won her over. And that night, much to his surprise, she declared to him that she loved him and that she wanted him to fathered her children.

The rest as they would have say, was history.

A tear ran down her beautiful cheek as she continued to reminisce her time together with Harry. She never wants to leave him. But what choice does she have? Death was inevitable whether one like it or not and she could do nothing about it. But there was one thing she could do. She could wait for him and wait for him she will. No matter how many years and decades it would take, she would wait.

She wiped away the tears, pushed herself up and sat on the bed. Her eyes wandered around. That was a nice room she was in. It must be part of a big house or mansion. She wondered if anyone else lived there. She wondered if she would see her mother and father again.

No matter. She would know it soon enough. The time had come for her to get acquaintances with her new surroundings. So many things to learn and so many things to explore. Perhaps someday when her husband arrived, she could in turn show it to him.

She got off the bed and put on the pair of slippers that surprisingly, was already available. Eager to see what outside looked like, she walked towards the window, pushed away the curtains and pushed open the window. What felt like warm, fresh summer air blew in, hitting her face and she took it all in.

She was not disappointed.

Huge sprawling garden, littered by bushes of white and red roses, lily, daisy and orchid, laid before her very eyes. Birds chirped as they flew past by her. Snow capped mountain range lined up the horizon and to her right, a huge swimming pool.

She giggled. So heaven also had a swimming pool. That was nice.

Her eyes continued to wander. She found a multiple car garage to her left with a few cars parked right in front of it. Apparently heaven had cars too. Again that was nice.

She leaned against the window sill, her arms rested comfortably on it and continued to take in the surrounding. It was as beautiful as what she imagined except for one tiny fact that began to bug her.

Everything looked too familiar.

She stared at one of the cars, a dark crimson 1993 Roll-Royce Silver Spirit Mark III. It looked like one of the car her father used to own before he upgraded to Silver Seraph and eventually Phantom models. She glanced at the car's license plate. It was the same! She recognized it! And that swimming pool! She suddenly recognized that swimming pool! It was in the same shape and sizes. Even the lounge chairs were the same!

She turned around. The familiarity continued inside the room she currently inhabited. The bed, the wardrobes, the dressing table, the carpet, the door into the bathroom, the decorations and the paintings and that television placed at the end of the bed! It was the same! She was inside her own bedroom, or at least a perfect facsimile of it.
She noticed a little white fur ball curled comfortably on top her bed. She recognized what it was. Her cat.

"Cuddles?" she croaked.

Cuddles seemed to hear her. It stretched it long body and yawned. It turned to look and gave out a soft meow when it saw her.

Suddenly she heard another noise.

The door into the bathroom clicked open and out came a pretty teenage girl. White towels wrapped around her body and hair. She was walking towards the dressing table when she noticed her.

"Finally!" that girl said. "You woke up. Hurry up, Fleur. The girls will be here any minute!"

The girl in the towels looked really familiar. But Fleur could not be so sure. She knew that she saw that girl before.

"Who are you?" asked Fleur.

The girl paused. She was holding a hair dryer at that time. She then laugh and began drying her hair. "Very funny, Fleur. Didn't know you can speak perfect English."

Except that Fleur wasn't trying to be funny. She just stood rigidly at her place.

The girl noticed. She lowered her hair dryer.

"Did you fall off the bed and knock your head on the floor really hard last night, Fleur? Hello! It's me! Daphne Greengrass! Your cousin extraordinaire! Me and my sister were here for the past three days and I have been your roommate since then and it all because of you insisted that I sleep in your bedroom instead of taking refuge at the guest room. We're going to Riviera today, remember? We had it planned for months. And since when you can speak English?" said Daphne, all the while she gave an odd look at her.

Fleur though said nothing. She remained rooted to the spot, staring wide eyed at Daphne. Her hands clenched the window sill as if she was looking for a support.

"Are you okay, Fleur?" asked Daphne in concern, putting down the hair dryer. She walked up to Fleur and took her hands. "Talk to me."

"We died, remember?" said Fleur. She then cocked a smile. "It's so good to see you again."

It was Daphne's turn to stare wide eyed. She stared deep into Fleur's eyes, desperate to see if her cousin indeed was joking. But Fleur's deadpanned expression told her otherwise. She then turned to look at Fleur's forehead, seeking any sign of bruises that could point to her cousin suffering concussion. There was none.

"I definitely am not! Neither did you! This is not funny, Fleur!" said Daphne, shaking Fleur's shoulder.

"But I'm not trying to be funny. I saw the news. I cried."

"Wait! What news?!" asked Daphne, this time in English.

"You and your family were murdered. Don't you remember? It was all over the news," said Fleur.

Daphne's mouth opened and closed several times but nothing came out.

"Okay. I am officially freaking out right now," she said when she found back her voice. "Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to put some clothes on and I'm going to run downstairs and I'm going back here with your mother. In the mean time, you stay here. Don't go anywhere and don't do anything. Don't even think of jumping out the window!"

Worried that Fleur might do anything rash, Daphne walked towards the window and closed and locked it. She then hastily put on her clothes.

"Stay right where you are! I'll be back!" said Daphne before she disappeared behind the door.

Fleur was left alone. Her hands still clenched the window sill.

"Daphne?"

Suddenly she noticed the reflection within the mirror hanged not far away from her. She saw
a woman within that mirror that looked like her. But that woman looked a lot younger, almost teenage like.

She reached up and touched her cheek. The woman in the mirror copied her. It was at this point that she realized that she was looking at her own reflection. She was no longer a 93 years old woman. She was now a teenage girl.

Panic gripped her. She began to hyperventilate.

It did not take long for Daphne to return. After a brief commotion outside of Fleur's bedroom, the door promptly threw open and in came a beautiful woman in her early forties. Daphne and a couple of other girls followed from behind.

The woman stopped midway when she saw Fleur standing beside the window and clutching her chest, hyperventilating.

"Fleur!" that woman cried. She immediately rushed to Fleur's side. Taking both Fleur's hands, she asked, "What's wrong, sweetheart? What happened?!"

But Fleur who was completely in panic failed to hear her.

"What is this place?! Why am I here?! What is happening to me?!" cried Fleur.

"Calm down, Fleur! This is me, your mother!"

"No, you're not! You're not my mother!" shouted Fleur.

Cuddles ran out of the room after it heard Fleur shouting.

Fleur tried to wrestle her way out of there. But Appoline, upon realizing what her daughter intended to do, quickly hug her tightly.

"Let me go! HARRY! HARRY!" cried Fleur hysterically as she continuously tried to break her mother's grip.

Appoline nearly lost her balance. Fleur was very strong, her strength somehow came out of nowhere. Knowing that she won't be able to contain her daughter any longer, she turned to Daphne, "Daphne! Calm her!"

Daphne rushed to Fleur's side. She placed her hand on Fleur's forehead and muttered some incantations. Her hand glowed white.

The effect was immediate. Fleur ceased to struggle and immediately collapsed into her mother's arms. Both Appoline and Daphne managed to hold her up before she fell onto the floor.

"Harry..."

That was the last word she whispered before she fell unconscious.

Appoline and Daphne carried Fleur to her bed and carefully laid her on it. Appoline sat beside her daughter. Her hand ran through her daughter's hair. She then turned to Daphne and asked, "Who's Harry, Daphne?"

Daphne, who was standing beside her aunt, said, "I don't know, Aunt Appoline."

"Her boyfriend? Someone she knew?"

Daphne shook her head.

"I don't know. But I do know that Fleur doesn't have a boyfriend. If she has one, me and the rest of the girls will know. She will tell us," said Daphne.

Appoline knew her niece did not lie. Fleur had been living a sheltered life ever since she was born. Contact with outside males was minimal.

"Maybe this 'Harry' is one of the students at Beauxbaton perhaps?" suggested Daphne.

"Maybe he did something to her? Because he wanted her very badly?"

Appoline pondered for a moment. Men using spells, potion and incantations to subdued a veela, making her submissive wasn't unheard of. It almost always happened when a particular veela rejected a man's advance. They would resort to dirty tricks to get what they wanted. She knew this because once she nearly becomes a victim.

She turned to look at Fleur. Fleur's eyes were shut and her chest rise and fall in constant
rhythm. She looked peaceful, a far cry compared to what happened just a few minutes ago. Daphne's spell worked really well.

Appoline suddenly stood up.

"I need to talk to the headmistress. Stay here beside Fleur, Daphne," she said.

"Yes, Aunt Appoline," said Daphne. She then sat down on the bed beside Fleur.

Appoline glanced at Fleur before making her exit from the room.

Fleur's friends including Raphael arrived in droves at Château Delacour later that morning, each of them was so excited to go visit French Riviera, basking in the sun at Saint-Tropez, cruising the Mediterranean Sea on one of Monsieur Delacour's luxury yachts, spending their time shopping and dining at one of Monaco's famous restaurants, and maybe tried to catch a glimpse or two at famous celebrities that made Cote d'Azur their home. Also they were planning to celebrate Camille and Adrienne's birthday that will come in a few days time. The girls would stay at a five star hotel for the first couple of days and later gathered at the Delacour's villa together with all their parents who would arrive later and stayed there until the end of their two week vacation.

They had it all laid out a few months before the summer break began, only to find that their plan went up in flame the moment they arrived at Château Delacour.

They gathered around Fleur's bed. Cassandra herself sat beside Fleur who remained unconscious. She continuously caressed Fleur's hand. Streak of tears ran down her cheeks.

Daphne wasted no time in telling them what really happened earlier that morning. All of them expressed shock after hearing Fleur's ordeal.

"I've checked the register. There's no student named Harry in Beauxbaton, Appoline," said Madame Maxime. Being Appoline's closest friend and a kind of mother figure to Fleur and Gabrielle, she was the earliest to arrive at the chateau. Both Olympe and Appoline were standing at the foot of Fleur's bed.

"Are you sure, Olympe?" said Appoline worriedly.

"Very sure," replied Madame Maxime. "Did she ever come in contact with any outsiders?"

Appoline shook her head.

"I don't think so, Fleur will only go out with either us or her friends. She would never venture out alone. Besides, her friends are very protective of her. I don't think any sort of contact ever happens," said Appoline.

Madame Maxime nodded at this.

"The problem right now is, who is this 'Harry' Fleur was calling to?" continued Appoline. "The way she called out his name, it was like she had known him for a long time and trusted him deeply. It's like they both share a bond."

"Sis can speak English," added Gabrielle who was listening intently to her mother's conversation with Madame Maxime.

"Yes. That one too," said Appoline.

Monsieur Delacour returned to the château early that day after his wife called him at his office. She wasted no time in telling him what happened that morning.

"Harry?" asked Monsieur Delacour to his wife. He was standing at the foot of Fleur's bed.

His wife nodded.

"Yes. Harry. We don't know who he is unfortunately," said Appoline. "Only she can tell who that man is."

Monsieur Delacour went into deep thought.

After a few minutes, he spoke, "Prepare a Calming Draught, honey. We shall hear what Fleur has to say when she wakes up."

Appoline nodded. She immediately dashed towards the kitchen and began preparing the draught as instructed.
The Calming Draught worked brilliantly.

Monsieur tipped a few drops of it into Fleur's mouth and instructed Daphne to lift her spell off Fleur.

Daphne did as told.

Fleur's eyes fluttered open. Her eyes immediately went wide the moment she saw so many people surrounded her bed. Everyone readied themselves for any further outburst coming in from her just in case the draught failed to work. None came, much to everyone's relieve.

"Fleur?" said Cassandra gently to her.

Fleur gave no response. Instead, she just stared unblinkingingly at her best friend.

Monsieur Delacour walked up towards Fleur.

"Fleur?" he said, smiling kindly at his daughter.

Fleur's eyes moved from Cassandra to her father. Again, she gave out no response to his greeting.

"Don't be afraid," continued Monsieur Delacour. "You still remember who I am, yes? These are your friends, parents and teacher. None of the people here want to hurt you. We care for you and we love you. But there are several questions that we've only you can answer. We of course won't force you if you don't feel like sharing anything but it will be a great help to us if you agree."

Fleur continued to stare at her father.

Monsieur Delacour continued to smile kindly at his daughter. He silently hoped that this gesture of his would make Fleur open up willingly to him.

It took a while but Monsieur Delacour did finally get what he had hoped for.

"My name is Fleur Isabelle Potter. I am 93 years old. Harry James Potter is my husband. We have been together for more than 70 years. We have three children - Victoire, Louis and Dominic Potter. Harry isn't my first husband actually. I was married once to a man named Bill Weasley. I met him after I graduated from Beauxbaton. We got married shortly after that but my first husband died when trying to apprehend a dark wizard. This happened after the Second Wizarding War ended. I was reunited with Harry Potter whom I first met during the Triwizard Tournament at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry after that. We got married a year later and have been married ever since. I became sick and bedridden. My husband had taken good care of me. I died in the end but for some reason, I ended up here. I have no idea as to why."

She was sitting on a chair, surrounded by her friends, relatives and a teacher when she spoke. Appoline sat beside her. Her mother continuously caressed her hand while looking worriedly at her daughter.

Everyone within the vicinity exchanged glances. Gabrielle and Astoria stared at her, mouth opened wide. Daphne meanwhile was staring hard at her cousin.

They had a hard time in believing what she just said and Fleur could see this.

Monsieur Delacour's eyebrows creased.

"I know all of you don't believe me but that is the truth," said Fleur. She then stood and began pacing around. She was confused and frightened by the fact that there was no knowing of what really happened to her.

If only Harry was there with her. She dearly wished that.

But then all of a sudden something clicked within her. She stopped pacing and looked at each and everyone within the bedroom. She suddenly noticed that all of them looked a lot younger than she remembered.

"What year is this?" she asked.

"1994", replied Adrienne. "Why?"

"Are you sure?" asked Fleur.

"Yes. If you don't believe me you can look at the calendar behind you, Fleur," said Adrienne.
Fleur turned around and indeed, there was a calendar hanged on the wall behind her. The number ‘1994’ was prominently displayed on it.

Fleur immediately cupped her mouth with both her hands. So she did not die at all.

"I time travelled," she muttered.

"That’s not possible!" said Raphael who was watching the proceeding in silence the whole time. He was leaning against the door frame when he spoke.

"Raphael, time travelling is possible! We have time turner, remember?" Marianne interjected.

"Yes but not at this magnitude. She claimed to be a 93 years old woman. Do you realize how many years does it take to get back to 17? How many turns do you think she needs to do on the time turner? Besides, no time turner we know currently in existence is powerful enough to bring back a person this far. One other thing, if she really used a time turner, she would know about it. I say someone did something to her," argued Raphael. "Anyway, if she really uses a time turner, she would still look old. Time turner won't make you younger."

"You have no proof of that," said Marianne.

Raphael scoffed.

"And you have proof that Fleur time travelled? Show it!" challenged Raphael.

Fleur did not really hear what Raphael and Marianne were bickering about. She was deep in her thought.

1994.

Something happened in 1994 but in her confusion, she had forgotten all about it. She dug deep into her memory but found nothing.

"That’s enough," said Monsieur Delacour, raising his hand.

Raphael and Marianne’s bickering immediately stopped.

"I believe you," said Monsieur Delacour to Fleur. "Get some rest, sweetheart. I know this is a difficult day for you but we will help you the best we can. Now please excuse me."

Monsieur Delacour was about to walk out the door when Appoline called back to him.

"Where are you going?" she asked her husband.

"I need to call an old friend. I think you should call your mother. We’re going to need her help," said Monsieur Delacour. To the rest of them, he announced, "I’m sorry but the vacation plan has to be postpone to a later date. Please alert your parents about the latest changes."

And with that, he exited the room.

Appoline’s mother arrived at the château later that evening. She had been holing up in Fleur’s bedroom ever since.

Monsieur Delacour was pacing around in front of the chateau’s lobby fireplace. He was expecting someone to arrive.

Right on schedule, a green flame erupted within the fireplace. An elderly man, his clothes as eccentric as it could get and sporting a white beard so long that it reached his abdomen, emerged from the flame.

Both men exchanged hug.

"Good to see you again, old friend," greeted the newcomer.

"Good to see you again, Albus Dumbledore."

To be continued...

A/n: I didn’t consider the Curse Child book in this story. I didn’t read it. Yeah I know the plot involved time turner or something like it.

Aside from being too lazy, starting the last chapter was a little bit difficult and mostly stem from my desire to portray Fleur properly. I can understand why many fanfic authors and even J.K. Rowling herself skipped on it when it comes to
describing her appearance. Beauty standards vary based on the eye of beholder so I decided to use Kate Beckinsale as a template. Yes she’s my celebrity crush and yes to my eyes, she’s really gorgeous. Cheryl Cole comes second. If you guys want a visual description on how Fleur looked like going to the Yule Ball in this story, google 'Kate Beckinsale Vanity Fair 2014' but with silver hair and silver dress of the same design. I don’t know if that dress is suitable for ballroom dancing though. But that design is pretty.

I made some corrections the best I could to the last chapter and while at it, made some changes. You guys can check if you have the time.

The Story of Fleur Delacour will span no more than five chapters. Chapters will be a lot longer after this. This chapter is just a prologue.
"She literally screamed for 'im, Albus."

Monsieur Delacour went straight into story telling mode the moment Dumbledore arrived at the château.

"It waz not easy but I managed to coax it out of 'er. I really don't know what's going on, Albus. To my knowledge, my daughter 'ad never met anyone, let alone a Briton, apart from 'er school friends and relatives. Of course in zhis magical world we live in, anyzhing can 'appen. I understand zhat zhis 'Arry Potter iz one of your students. I would like to meet 'im. I want to know what 'e 'ad done to my daughter. She iz now out of 'er mind! I may press charge if he is proven guilty!" threatened Monsieur Delacour.

Dumbledore, who was listening attentively to Monsieur Delacour's story, up until now said nothing. Him being surprised at what Monsieur Delacour said was an understatement. He knew that Monsieur Delacour's threat was real. He was one of the most powerful men, both in magical and non-magical world, in France after all. Unfortunately, bringing Harry to France for questioning meant risking catastrophic consequences, both to Harry and Britain. There was a huge chance that Harry would not be able to return to Britain after Monsieur Delacour had done with him. On the other hand, if he refused to bring Harry to France, there were possibilities that Monsieur Delacour would brand Harry as a criminal for magically tampering a person's mind and initiate an extradition process which in any way will force Harry to come to France and face the charges. While Dumbledore was sure that Cornelius Fudge would do everything in his power to prevent that from happening, he doubted that Fudge would be able to do much.

Dumbledore knew he had to prevent that from happening. Anyway, there would always be two sides of a story that can be told and he was confident that Harry was innocent. There was no way that Harry and the daughter of the man that now stood in front of him could have ever met.

"Your daughter specifically mentioned that it was Harry Potter. From Hogwarts?" said Dumbledore.

"Yes. She stated zhat clearly," replied Monsieur Delacour. "Are zhere more zhan one 'Arry Potter in 'Ogwarts?"

Dumbledore shook his head.

"No. Only one."


"The very same."

"Is act iz commendable. Under normal circumstances, I would 'ave been very proud and honored if my daughter caught zhe eye of such man. Given current situation, I'm afraid to say zhat I can't. I waz 'opping zhat you could bring 'im 'ere. We 'ave known each other for a long time and I really don't want to get our government involved which iz why I asked you to come. I will use diplomatic channel if I do not get what I want. Will you oblige?" said Monsieur Delacour.

Indeed Dumbledore's acquaintance with Monsieur Delacour went as far back during the invasion of Continental Europe led by Gellert Grindelwald. Monsieur Delacour was a young wizard back then. More of an entrepreneur than an auror and possessing a healthy dose of interest in politics, he was called upon to serve in defending France from Grindelwald Army's incursion. Situations were bleak back then. Monsieur Delacour witnessed his comrades fell in battlefield one by one. Things only began to look up when Dumbledore agreed to join in the fight.

There was one bright spot from all the miseries however. He met his future wife after he defended her family when Grindelwald Army attacked one of the veela's sanctuaries in the village of St-Guilhem-le-Désert.

"I think that bringing Harry here won't solve a thing," said Dumbledore.

Monsieur Delacour was perplexed.

"And why did you say zhat?" he asked.
"When you mentioned Harry Potter and your daughter, I immediately got in touch with one of my contacts who lived near Harry's residence. She told me that nothing unusual happened. Harry never left that place. You see, Harry Potter now lives under protection. You heard this story, Monsieur: There aren't many places that he is allowed go and I assure you that until now, that status quo remains. Now, you said that your daughter never met any strangers, let alone a Briton. Harry had never gone to France and I assume that your daughter had never been to Britain. How do you think they would have met? Harry may hardly ever know her," said Dumbledore.

"Are you implying that my daughter lied?" asked Monsieur Delacour. "That she is making up stories?"

"No. I’m implying that there are more than what your daughter told you. She spoke about the Triwizard Tournament in Hogwarts. She spoke about meeting Harry there. You and I both know that the Tournament will be held this year at my school. And don't forget that she spoke about the Second Wizarding War. That war had yet to happen," stressed Dumbledore.

"Yet?"

"Yes. Yet. It will happen and I can only hope that by that time, we will be ready. You see, your daughter is talking about the future. She was talking about the aftermath of the war. I need to speak with your daughter. With your permission, of course," said Dumbledore.

"What about my request?" asked Monsieur Delacour.

Dumbledore paused for a moment.

"About that, we’ll let your daughter decide," said Dumbledore.

"My daughter? I don't understand, Albus," said Monsieur in surprise.

"You'll see. Now, shall we?" said Dumbledore.

Monsieur Delacour pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed.

"Very well. Follow me, Albus," he said.

In Fleur's bedroom...

"I don't really know much about Harry Potter," said Daphne.

They were gathering around Daphne, interested to know what she knew about him. They knew that she went to the same school as Harry and that she was in the same year with him. When she first admitted to Hogwarts, she did mention about Harry Potter attending the same school as she was to them. But given that she ended up in a different house from Harry, the rivalry between the Gryffindor and Slytherin notwithstanding and with her being bullied into joining the Anti-Harry group, there was not much she could tell them. She herself never made any effort to know him better. To her eyes, Harry was just an ordinary boy with no special talent whatsoever: This was what she told them at the end of her first year despite the rumors of what happened between him and Professor Quirrell and the rumors of the existence of the Sorcerer Stone. The fact that her house suffered defeat at the last minute in the hands of the Gryffindor by a mere ten points stung her quite a bit. Daphne may not possess the same level of loyalty to her house as the rest of the Slytherin but nevertheless, just like Fleur, the competitive streak in her would still want her house to win.

Fleur turned Daphne's world upside down that day. To say that she was simply surprised was an understatement.

"You spent the last three years going to the same school with him and still you don't know much about him? That's ridiculous!" said Raphael. "He's the Boy-Who-Lived! Everyone wants to know everything about him."

"Not me! I certainly don't want to have anything to do with him!" replied Daphne hotly."He's just an ordinary boy, never failed to get himself in a spot of trouble. He kept losing house points the whole time. He lost his house 150 points during his first year: They nearly expelled him early in our second year because he and that red headed boy brought a flying car to Hogwarts. He had a run in with a werewolf a couple of months ago. He's a trouble magnet. He's not even that good looking. He excels in Quidditch though. He's probably the best Seeker Hogwarts had seen in years. Never fail to catch the snitch and beat us in every match but that's about it. To be honest, I'm not even sure why Fleur should even bother with him."

She gave Fleur a glare.

Fleur gave no response. She just sat there on her bed with her mother and grandmother.
flanking her, listening to everything Daphne said.

"I was told that he lived with his relatives now that his parents had gone. They're muggles. I heard they were mean to him. It's astonishing that he held no grudges on them. He surprised quite a few of us as well," she continued.

"For someone who claimed that she knew little about Harry Potter and held no interest in him, that is quite a lot of info you have about him. Are you sure you're not interested in him?" said Raphael, lifting an eyebrow and smirking at Daphne. "Careful, Daphne. Fleur might think she has a competitor in her hands."

Daphne hissed at this.

"I don't like him. I don't even like that school. I have to go there because I don't want to stay that far away from my parents. I really hope my parents' stint in London end as quickly as possible so that we can go back to France and I can attend Beauxbaton instead," said Daphne. "I hate having to hide my heritage 24-7. I just want to be myself."

Indeed, both Daphne and her sister were offered a place at Beauxbaton but they both chose to attend Hogwarts instead and it all because of their parents were posted to the French Embassy in London a year before Daphne started her first year of schooling.

Raphael just shook his head.

Fleur knew that everything Daphne said about Harry was true. But what really surprised her was the fact that Daphne knew quite a lot about him. She was well aware about the rivalry between Gryffindor and Slytherin but to have a Slytherin knowing this much about someone they supposedly hated, it seemed that there was more to them than meets the eye.

It was true that she never told Harry the truth about Daphne and Raphael. The Bertrand, Greengrass and Delacour family were once very close. But business and political rivalry took their toll on their relationship and things got really sour just when the Second Wizarding War erupted in Britain and threatened to spill into mainland Europe. Greengrass and Bertrand family unexpectedly perished a couple of years after the end of that war when a splinter Death Eaters group loyal to Voldemort's ideal mounted attacks on French top and affluent families. The Delacour were spared however. Monsieur Delacour managed to get his family to safety before the Wand of Death get to them. That group was also responsible for Bill's murder.

Veelas had this habit of never sharing their sorrow. It was part of Fleur for as long as she remembered. The death of her mother's sister and her husband broke her. She found that the easiest way to deal with it is by burying it deep and not to think too much about it.

"Is it true what Daphne said about Harry, Fleur?" asked Appoline.

Fleur just nodded. She of course knew more but did not feel to share any of it at that time.

"Well, for someone labeled as the Boy-Who-Lived and responsible for vanquishing the Dark Lord, he seems to be ordinary," said Camille. "I was hoping for something more to be honest."


Every girl in the vicinity murmured in agreement.

Daphne however stared at them, her eyes widened.

"You girls are going to be so disappointed but I'll let you judge when you see him," she said.

"The Triwizard Tournament. All of us are going to Hogwarts," said Raphael.

Fleur's eyes shot up the moment she heard what Raphael said.

"The Triwizard Tournament?" she said.

Raphael nodded.

"Yes. You remember it, don't you? So if it's true that you time travelled, who won? Who will represent Beauxbaton in the tournament?" he asked.

"Raphael! How can you ask that?! You're betting with the boys again, aren't you?" Marianne reprimanded him.
There's nothing wrong with that. I'm just asking," defended Raphael. Turning back to Fleur and smirking, he once again asked, "So cuz? Anything you like to share? How many tasks were there? You don't want your dear old cousin to lose badly, do you?"

Fleur glared at Raphael. She decided to ignore him.

The Triwizard Tournament. She remembered it now. All its glory and all its horror. The four champions. Harry, Viktor Krum. Her and Cedric Diggory who met his demise at the end of the Third Task. The return of Voldemort. She felt the sudden urge to warn them.

But before she could do anything, there was a knock at the door. Marianne who was standing closest to the door opened it.

There at the threshold, stood Monsieur Delacour and Albus Dumbledore.

"Professor Dumbledore!"

"Your husband?"

She sat on the chair opposite of Dumbledore. Her father meanwhile was standing next to the Hogwarts headmaster. There were only three of them in her bedroom. Monsieur Delacour was about leave the two when Dumbledore insisted that he should join them as well. Fleur had just finished telling Dumbledore her story.

Fleur nodded.

"Yes."

"Did you meet him prior going to Hogwarts?" asked Dumbledore.

Fleur shook her head.

"No. As I told you before, I met him at Hogwarts," replied Fleur. "Not before that."

"Did you remember anything you did and places you went for the past few days?" asked Dumbledore.

Fleur's eyebrows creased as she dug into her memory, trying to remember the events for the past three or four days.

"I don't really remember," she said moments later. "If I'm not mistaken, I stayed at home. My cousins came here three days ago. If you want details, you'll have to ask my parents or my younger self, Professor Dumbledore. I came back from seventy years into the future just this morning. That's a lot to remember. My brain is not as big as yours."

Professor Dumbledore smiled at Fleur's cheeky remarks.

"You are sure that you did not meet any strangers and that you had never been to Britain prior going to Hogwarts?"

"I am sure, Professor. My father, having three veelas in his household, will care a lot about our safety and security. Britain isn't exactly friendly to our kind. That I truly remember," said Fleur.

Dumbledore nodded. He then withdrew his wand from its sleeve and stood up.

"Will you please stand up, Miss Delacour?" he said.

Fleur obliged. She stood and patiently waited for whatever Dumbledore would be doing next.

Dumbledore walked up to her and began waving his wand from her head to her toes.

Fleur's body suddenly glowed brightly. Blobs of white and blue light, dancing around each other, emanated from within her. Some of the white blobs were in the process of merging with the blue ones. Dumbledore could see it clearly.

"Fascinating," he muttered.

"What do you mean, Albus?" asked Monsieur Delacour who was watching the proceeding in silence.

Dumbledore lifted off his wand. The glow immediately extinguished.

He then motioned Fleur to sit down. Turning to Monsieur Delacour, he said, "Your daughter is
telling the truth. There are no dark magic at play here."

"Surely there will be a better explanation to all of these, Albus," said Monsieur. "But my daughter time travelling?"

"I don't have a better explanation than the one I just gave, Monsieur. I'm sorry," said Dumbledore. Turning to Fleur, he said, "Harry is fine. He's now staying with his relatives in Surrey. I'm sure you know that. Someone I know live nearby to him. She said that he is fine. Nothing changed at all."

Fleur deflated a little bit. She knew what Dumbledore meant by that. Harry. Her Harry was just a fourteen year old boy. Nothing more. But even that did not extinguish her desire to see him which had grown from strength to strength ever since she returned.

"I understand, Professor," she said.

Dumbledore pondered for a moment. "Would you like to meet him?" he asked.

Fleur's face immediately brightened. She stood up and said excitedly, "You'll bring him her-

Her excitement however came screeching to a halt the moment she saw that unsmiling look on her father's face. She knew that look. Harry will be in deep trouble the moment he put his feet on French's soil.

"No. Don't bring him here," she said, glancing at her father. "Don't bring him to France. I'm going to Hogwarts, Professor Dumbledore. I will meet him there. Please watch over him and please don't do anything that will scare him. Keep him safe. Please don't mention to him about me. I want to do it myself."

Dumbledore smiled satisfactorily. Monsieur Delacour could only shake his head.

"As you wish, Miss Delacour," said Dumbledore. Turning to Monsieur Delacour, he said. "We both heard her. Might as well we respect her wish. I'm afraid that there's nothing else I can do, my friend. I don't have as much exposure to veela as you. You know what to do."

With that, Dumbledore took leave.

Daphne greeted Dumbledore the moment he exited Fleur's bedroom.

"Hello, Professor," she said.

Daphne and the rest were gathering outside the bedroom when Dumbledore made his exit.

Dumbledore, surprised to see one of his students there said, "Well, I certainly did not expect to see you here. How is your summer, Miss Greengrass?"

"It was fun," said Daphne. "Fleur is my cousin, you see. So what is it, Professor? What happened to her?"

Dumbledore noticed that everyone around him was staring at him, interested to see his take of what happened to the Delacour heiress.

"Miss Delacour will be fine. A lot of things will change after this but whatever happens, she is still first and foremost, your cousin and your friend and therefore should not be treated any differently," said Dumbledore while glancing at everyone there. "Don't leave her. Stay by her side. Give her all the support and the love she needs."

"We won't leave her. You have our promise, Professor Dumbledore. But what about Potter?" said Daphne.

Dumbledore lifted his eyebrows.

"Do you believe that Harry Potter is behind all these?" he asked.

"Could be. I like to believe that," she said. "Especially given all the adventures he had at Hogwarts and all the troubles he got himself into. He's got quite a resume."

Dumbledore paused. His electric blue eyes continued to observe Daphne, as if he was scanning her.

"Yes. Quite a resume he had. Tell me, how do you think they both met?" asked Dumbledore.

"I don't know," admitted Daphne. "Fleur only told us that she met him at Hogwarts during the Triwizard Tournament."
"And that tournament had yet to happen," said Dumbledore. "Trust me when I say that when it comes to travelling and meeting new people, Harry Potter had really few of those. You know about the Delacour family more than I do. Does your instinct tell you that Harry Potter is still responsible?"

"I don't know," she said truthfully. "Like I said, I like to believe that."

Dumbledore nodded.

"First impression, like always, can be very deceiving. You might want to learn from your cousin on why she likes him so much. You'll see that he is more than what you might have heard or imagine," he said.

Daphne could only stare at her headmaster.

"I shall take my leave," said Dumbledore to Monsieur Delacour. "I will meet Harry within a few days time to discuss the event pertaining to your daughter."

"Why not straight away meet 'im?" asked Monsieur Delacour. "Why wait?"

"I have my reason but let just say that it will be a lot more comfortable to have the discussion away from Harry's current residence. He will be taken to one of my contacts' home in a few days time," explained Dumbledore.

"Mind sharing who iz zhis contact of yours?" asked Monsieur Delacour.

"Arthur Weasley. One of the members of the Order," answered Dumbledore.

Monsieur Delacour's eyebrows creased.

"Arthur Weazley. Does zhis Arthur Weazley 'appen to 'ave any relation with someone by zhe name of Bill Weazley?"

"Bill Weasley is his son who currently working at Gringotts. Why?" asked Dumbledore curiously.

Monsieur Delacour however shook his head and said, "Nozhing. I shall expect an update. Please don't disappoint me, Albus."

"I won't," said Dumbledore in the most reassuring way.

Dumbledore then spent a few minutes chatting with Madame Maxime before he took his leave.

Fleur's friends and cousins spent the next few days at Château Delacour. They were frustrated for not being able to visit French Riviera but nevertheless understood what Fleur had gone through. Their friendship and support for her remained unwavering.

Fleur slept with her grandmother, Daphne and Cassandra. The rest of the guest rooms within the château were occupied by the rest of the girls. Raphael found himself having to sleep inside Monsieur Delacour's library since all the rooms were occupied.

Fleur was appreciative for what they did. She however, expressed deep dislike when they asked her about their future. How can she tell Daphne, Astoria and Raphael that they will die in cold blooded murder? She did appease all of them though by telling that they will live a really good live, get married and have kids, that the girls' husband would be handsome, strapping young men, much to their delight. She however teased Raphael that he will someday fall in love with a man and eventually marry him.

That was the nastiest scowl she ever received from him.

Deep inside, Fleur hoped that this time things will be different, that their families will remain close and all of them live until old age claim them.

Her friends and cousins returned to their respective homes five days later. Before going back to her home, Daphne made a promise to Fleur that she will monitor Harry closely once she got back to Hogwarts.

"Professor Dumbledore was right. Perhaps I shouldn't judge too quickly. Perhaps I should learn. Let's hope that I don't end up falling in love with him or I might keep him for myself. You know how hard for us to find really good men these days," said Daphne, smirking at her cousin.

Fleur pinched her cousin's right arm.
"Now I'm really worried, Daphne. Perhaps it's best if you stay away from him," she said. There was a warning undertone laced in her voice.

"I don't mind sharing," Daphne responded, laughing as she received another pinch from Fleur.

On Catherina's advice, Fleur spent the next two weeks at a veela's sanctuary somewhere within the village of St-Guilhem-le-Désert. Her grandmother brought her to see the veela priestesses at the veela temple. It was then they finally get to confirm what those blue and white blobs really were. The blue blobs represented her younger self and the white blobs represented her older self. Her younger and older self was in the process of merging when Dumbledore did a scan on her. The priestesses' finding inadvertently confirmed Fleur's story and led to Monsieur Delacour's decision to abandon his plan to pursue Harry, and that he finally accepted that Fleur really had return from the future.

The priestesses did warn Fleur's parent about the possible changes in Fleur's personality once the merging is complete, that she may thread back and forth between her younger and older self. The merging would take many days to complete so until then, Fleur would have to stay at the temple.

And stayed at the temple she did.

She spent most of her waking time meditating inside one of the temple's meditation chamber under the guidance of a priestess that went by the name Adelais Bellerose.

"It is rare for a person to time travel. It is even rarer to find a person who ends up merging with his or her younger self. You are definitely the first of our kind to experience event such as this. We truly did not know what will happen. There may be complications which is why it is important that you stay here so that we can monitor," said Adelais to Fleur during one of their meditation session.

They both were sitting cross legged and facing in each other within the chamber one afternoon.

"What kind of complications?" asked Fleur.

"We don't know. We could only guess. But we know for sure that everything happens for a reason. As I sit here, I can see it," said Adelais.

"See what?" asked Fleur curiously.

"The bond between both you. Made out for love. It is clear to me like a mottled band of light that stretches as far as the eyes can see," said Adelais.

"Band of light," Fleur whispered. "So my destiny with him is assured?" she asked.

"That will be for you to decide."

"Decide? I don't understand."

"One day my dear Fleur, you will have to choose either to stay with him or leave him. You will know when that time comes and you will understand. It will be the hardest test you will ever face," explained Adelais as she took both Fleur's hands into hers and caressed them.

"You're talking about consequences," said Fleur.

"Consequences yes. Sacrifice. One of you will do it. Either you or him."

What Adelais said to her hung over her head for many days to come.

On the seventh day of her stay, Fleur received news of the attack at the Quidditch World Cup purportedly orchestrated by Voldemort's Death Eaters. She read about it from the French version of the Daily Prophet, La-Gazette-du-Sorcier. While she knew what really happened, that Harry would be alright, it did not stop her from being worried for him. She could only breathe the sigh of relief when her father brought her the news that Harry was indeed safe.

Changes happened to her during her stay at the temple. Her magic strengthened and so did every aspect of her veela's characteristic. Fleur's allure had always been one of the strongest but this time it strengthened up to the point that she could no longer conceal it. Her inner glow and her beauty increased as well until it greatly overshadowed every other veela that lived within the sanctuary. The changes only stopped on the twelfth day of her stay when the merging of both her persona finally completed.

Madame Maxime visited her on the thirteenth day and she brought some bad news to her. Apparently, her parents were arguing on whether or not to let her continue her education at Beauxbaton. Their argument was based on the fact that Fleur in her current condition, could
be unstable and would be needed to be looked after. Madame Maxime of course fought back and told them that she had absolute confident in Fleur, and that all her knowledge she gathered would be useful. She also warned them that Fleur still did not have the certificate to qualify her for life after her education, that she would not be able to go anywhere without it. Furthermore, rumors will spread if the Delacour heiress was failed to be seen anywhere at the Beauxbaton campus. She reprimanded them for being worried too much for her safety and that having to repeat schooling was not a bad thing. Her parents relented but ultimately decided that Fleur would not be allowed to join the delegates to Hogwarts despite Madame Maxime’s recommendation made a few months earlier. Madame Maxime had no choice but to agree to that.

Heated argument ensued when Fleur confronted her parents. Her parents argued that they were concerned about her safety, and that everything that happened for the past few weeks had heightened their feeling of insecurity. Fleur countered them, saying that they worried too much.

"I am more than capable of taking care of myself, Papa! I've been in a great war before. I brought down many Death Eaters and I am not afraid to do that again. I am not afraid of them. Plus I am the best candidate for the Triwizard Tournament there is. Madame Maxime says so. You not wanting me to go will only hinder my school chance of success!" argued Fleur.

Monsieur Delacour stared at his daughter, seeing her steely determination to go to Hogwarts whether or not he gave her the approval. He had a hunch:-

"This isn't about the Triwizard Tournament, is it? This is about Harry Potter," he said.

Fleur said nothing. Instead, she went to sit on the nearest chair. She looked down towards her hands, placed neatly on her lap.

"You don't have to bring him into this, Papa," she said softly. "I know him better than you do. Despite all your reservation, I--"

She could not continue. She sniffed. Her shoulder began to shake.

Monsieur Delacour sighed. He walked towards his daughter and knelt in front of her. Both his hands held and lovingly caressed Fleur’s shoulder.

"I have a feeling that in time, I will get to know him. My reservations had all gone. I know why you want to seek him. I understand. You must have led a really good life with him. Probably more so than your first husband. You go to Hogwarts, you will undoubtedly meet him. The question is, what next? He may not know you. He may even reject you. What will happen then? Will you be able to bear the pain of rejection? After all, he's younger than you," he said softly.

Fleur looked up to her father. Tears streamed down her pale, white cheek. She reached up to wipe them off via the back of her hand.

Men rejecting her. Such an alien concept that was. No men would dare pushing her away although the same cannot be said for Harry. He rejected her once. It was painful.

"He may not remember me but I remember him. He may not love me but I love him. He won't reject me, I know it. The only thing I need to do is to make him see. Age is never an issue, Papa. He's only slightly younger than me after all. Even without the memories, he is still the same person I always knew," she said.

Monsieur Delacour nodded in understanding. He felt visibly relief, knowing that his daughter would be fine no matter the circumstances would be.

"It seems to me that you already have a plan," he said. "If that is the case, you have my full support."

He then leaned forward and hugged his daughter.

She had a plan indeed. She devised it during her stay at the temple. Go to Hogwarts. Get herself elected as the Beauxbaton’s champion for the Triwizard Tournament. Find a way to get close to the fourth champion which undoubtedly be Harry and work together. She already knew what was in store for the next whole year. She purposely kept the knowledge from everyone, thinking that nobody would believe her. But if they do, the prospect of the tournament being cancelled was not what she wanted either. She won't be able to meet Harry. She would however, share everything with him. About Professor Moody, Voldemort's plan and perhaps worked together to prevent Cedric’s death. Harry would believe her. She knew it.
re-acquaintance with everything and everyone in her family. Like what the veela priestesses said, she changed a lot. She was lot mature now though from time to time, her teen persona did emerge out of the blue. She ended up being a much better cook than her mother; up to the point that Monsieur Delacour said how he will miss Fleur’s cooking once she returned to Beauxbaton. She was even more accomplished at household magic, much to the approval of her mother and disapproval of the house elves.

Despite the lightened mood, Fleur had this nagging feeling that her parents were worried about her. They were careful not to express it in front of her of course but every time she looked away, it shows.

The day finally arrived for her return to her old school.

With the exception of her first years, Fleur had always traveled to Beauxbaton via Floo Network. She was about to enter, or rather re-enter, the seventh year of her education at the prestigious school. Previously, she used the same mode of travel when going back for her seventh year. This time, it would be different. When she asked her father, he told her that things might go wrong during her travel by the magical network. Remembering what Harry experienced during his first time travelling by the Floo, Fleur had to agree.

She and her family would travel by a helicopter instead from their property to the Grenoble airport. From there, they would take a private plane to Paris and from Charles De Gaulle Airport, they would take a car to Beauxbaton. Along the way, a band of security personnel consisted of both muggle and wizards will escort them. The time taken to reach Beauxbaton would be longer but at least, Monsieur Delacour knew that he and the rest of the security personnel would still be in complete control should any unforeseen circumstances arises.

The French Wizarding institute was known to have the most beautiful campuses of all magical establishments but in 1994, it was nothing compared to seventy years into the future. Within the seventy years, Beauxbaton grew by leaps and bounds. More campus buildings would be built. Better and more advance facilities would be added. Fleur’s former dormitory would be torn down to make way for higher, multi stories dormitory complete with wi-fi, heating and air condition and... elevators.

That’s right. Beauxbaton like before, would continue to mix both muggle and wizarding aspects in their daily operations. All of these were done without sacrificing its famous school compound. As a matter a fact, the school compound also increases in size with more amenities than before. Compared to Beauxbaton in 2064, the 1994s Beauxbaton looked like Hogwarts.

Still, her lips never failed to curve into a smile whenever she saw it. This time, it was no different.

As per tradition and unlike Hogwarts, students arrived during day time. They would arrived at their designated dormitories, put away all their belongings, took some rest and do some catching up with their friends. They then would gather inside the Assembly Hall in the evening for the welcoming feast.

Fleur’s parents left after spending an hour inside her dormitory she shared with Cassandra. Her squad gathered inside her dormitory that late afternoon. They knew of her time spent at the veela sanctuary. Fleur told them everything. They also acknowledged the changes she exhibited. She got a lot more beautiful than before. She practically glowed. She also acted more maturely but somehow a lot more trigger happy as well, especially when the teenage side of her surfaced.

The boys noticed her a lot more this time around. Usually she did not care but this time, she did. The Welcoming Feast had yet to begin and she already hexed four boys who tried to flirt with her.

"You’re going to get yourself in a lot of trouble this school term, Fleur. You might want to reel it in a little bit," warned Daphne Lavinge.

Fleur had been known to be one of the brightest and most accomplish witches in her generation in Beauxbaton. Small wonder that Madame Maxime pinned high hope on her to win the Triwizard Cup for the school. Of course nothing changes when she reentered school. Her performances in classes remained one of the best.

Three weeks into schooling, she received a letter from Daphne Greengrass. The younger veela told her that she had began her fourth year in Hogwarts two weeks prior and had been watching Harry ever since. What Daphne wrote gave Fleur a pause:-

Dear Fleur,

How’s it going? Aunt Appoline told me in the letter about the time you spent at St-Guilhem-le-Desert. I hope everything work out well. So you did return from the future hub?
And now for some Harry Potter reports. I began my fourth year two weeks ago and had been watching Potter ever since. Physical appearance, nothing changes. He's just a messy looking boy as he always was. He's still the best friend of that ginger head boy and that bushy haired girl. I think you know who they are.

Are you sure you're the only one who returned? Outwardly there's nothing different about him. But the way he acted and the way he spoke. He's a lot more mature and calmer than I remember and he excels in virtually every fourth year subject there is, even Potions! You should have seen the look on Professor Snape's face! You know him, don't you?

I don't know how to describe it to you. I normally won't say this but I confess that Potter seems a lot more interesting nowadays. There's something about him that I can't put my finger on. I let you see him for yourself when you arrive at Hogwarts. Like I said before, I don't know him as well as you do. You'll be the judge. Your mother told me about not letting you to come here. I disagree with her. I'm happy that they changed their mind.

Until then, please stay safe. Can't wait to see you and the rest of the girls here.

Love,

Daphne Greengrass.

Fleur folded the letter carefully.

Her heart leapt with joy. And all of a sudden, the date of departure to Hogwarts could not come fast enough.

Friday 30th October, early morning...

It was a chilly Friday morning. Fleur pulled her cloak closer to her.

As expected, she was among the chosen ones to be part of the delegates to Hogwarts. They were lining up in front of a gigantic, powder blue, horse drawn carriage the size of a house at the school's helipad. Twelve elephant sized, palomino wing horses lined up at the front, their harnesses were strapped to the carriage.

Beauxbaton only used the carriage on special occasions, preferring instead to use conventional transport both magical and non-magical for daily purposes.

This would be the second time Fleur would be travelling via the carriage. She already knew what to expect.

Their luggage had been brought into the carriage. At 8.30am sharp, Madame Maxime signaled them to board the carriage.

Fleur followed behind Adrienne as she climbed into the carriage. Inside, they found rows and rows of seats with seat belts attached to them. She chose the seat right next to the window. Cassandra sat right next to her.

Madame Maxime was the last to climb into the carriage. The door closed behind her and she took the frontmost seat.

They felt a huge tug from behind. Moments later, they were off.

The carriage flew higher and higher above the Paris skyline until it entered the cloud.

Fleur spent most of her time watching the cloud flew past by. They were flying over the English Channel now and on their way to Scotland. Suddenly she felt someone touching her hand. She turned to look and saw it was Cassandra.

She was smiling at her.

"You're nervous, aren't you?" asked Cassandra.

Fleur simply smiled.

Cassandra nodded and gently squeezed Fleur's hand.

"You'll see him, Fleur. But will he remember?"

Fleur did not answer at first. She simply turned back to look at the clouds.
"It doesn't matter," she said softly. "I remember him."

To be continued...

A/n: I rolled my eyes and said whatever.
Most of the time, a non-stop flight from Paris to say, Glasgow, would take no more than two hours. One could have his breakfast in Paris and later on lunched inside one of the restaurants at the capital city of Scotland virtually on the same day.

Madame Maxime told her students that they would arrive at Hogwarts late in the evening of the same day, much to everyone's surprise.

"That long? But Madame, my family and I once flew to Aberdeen from Paris by aircraft. It only took us a little bit more than two hours to reach our destination. That can't be right, can it?" pointed out one of the boys.

"Non-magics don't possess the same concern as we do, Basil. For one, they don't have to hide. We can get to Hogwarts in a little more than one hour but we will risk exposure. We are flying away from their busiest flight routes and may have to take detours if we have too. I don't want pictures of this carriage flying high up in the air printed in their newspapers and showed on their television due to our negligence," explained Madame Maxime from her seat.

The boy named Basil went silent. He and his friend who sat beside him exchanged glances. They shrugged and turned back to stare out the window.

What Madame Maxime said reminded Fleur of one of Harry's story when he and Ron flew Mr. Weasley's car to Hogwarts. The sighting of a car flying over London airspace got over the news, both the muggles and Daily Prophet. King Cross Station's parking lot was always busy. In their anxiousness to get to Hogwarts, they forgot that the sky blue Ford Anglia rose up to the sky right in plain sight of every muggle there. The news became an overnight sensation all over Britain with people flocking to King Cross Station hoping to catch a sighting or two of the so called 'Flying Car' and listening to stories from those who claimed to see it with their own eyes. Of course there was no further sighting and the news sensation died just as quickly.

"That cloud seems to be following us," said Camille. She was looking out the window at that time. "Do you see it? Why is that? Why does it follow?"

"That cloud is our camouflage. We have to take additional measure of not being seen," said Madame Maxime. "Of course with that in mind, news about a bunch of fluffy clouds travelling the heaven at the speed of sound appearing on non-magic news isn't what I want either."

"Why can't we just go invisible?" asked Raphael. "Can this carriage do that? We can fly faster that way."

"We'll risk crashing head on with wizards and witches on broomstick," answered Madame Maxime. There was an air of impatient in her voice. "Now be quiet and just enjoy the ride. I know all of you could not wait to see Hogwarts with your own eyes. You'll see it."

Cassandra leaned sideways towards Fleur and whispered, "After what you told us about Hogwarts the other day, I don't think so. The later we get there the better."

Fleur just smiled.

The carriage crossed over the British Isle coastline near Exmouth half an hour before noon. They had to take detour a couple of times over the strait to avoid a British Airways and a Lufthansa jetplane that were en route to Mainland Europe. From Exmouth, the carriage turned north towards Scotland.

Lunch packs were distributed at 12.30pm. Most of the boys immediately dozed off after their bellies were full.

Raphael himself was sleeping on his seat with his mouth hung wide opened. With his head lolled to the side, trail of saliva can be seen at the corner of his mouth.

"If only I have my camera with me," said Marianne, grinning wickedly. She was staring at Raphael. "I can blackmail him into doing anything I ask of him for the rest of his school year."

Marianne apparently was not the only one who wanted to prank Raphael. Adrienne had been twiddling with her wand, wondering aloud on whether or not she should summon a large hairy spider into Raphael's wide opened mouth.

Fleur remained silent throughout the journey. She kept looking out the window, watching the topography of the UK moved thousands of feet down below. A small white leather bag resided beside her.
The majority of the students had experience in flying via muggle jetplanes. Each of them agreed that the carriage was much more comfortable despite the speed deficit. There were no jet engine noise, no mid air turbulences, the seats were wider and the legroom was mightily generous. The only thing lacking was the in-flight entertainment. The food was good though.

Hours went by. The sun hung lower above the western horizon. The Scottish Highlands loomed ahead.

"We are nearing Hogwarts!" announced Madame Maxime.

The students were ready. Fully clad in the Beauxbaton uniform, they waited patiently at their seats for the carriage to land. Thanks to Fleur's warning, each of them wore cloak this time around to keep warm. Some of them even brought along scarves and shawls, just in case.

The carriage began to descend. And Fleur's heart skipped a beat once the carriage broke the cloud cover.

Loomed ahead was a huge castle, perching proudly on top of a cliff beside a huge lake. And as the carriage got nearer, she could see that their hosts were already waiting for them.

He is down there, she thought.

"Harry."

The carriage continued to descend further and further until at one point it began to level. The coachman carefully navigated the carriage past the mountain ridge and over the Black Lake and the Forbidden Forest as it continued its way towards the ancient castle up ahead.

Pressing his face against the window, one of the boys spoke, "They are waiting for us. Lots of them."

Few of them looked out the windows in response and sure enough, they saw a huge crowd congregated right at the entrance of the castle. A path split the crowd right the center that lead to a marble staircase.

The carriage descended further and began to slow down. With a slight jolt, it landed with a mighty crash. Surprisingly enough, the occupants felt nothing despite the noise made.

Madame Maxime turned to Fleur.

"Keep your wand to yourself, Fleur. I don't want any incident like what happened at the campus, do you understand? Your father is watching. I certainly don't want to be at the receiving end of his wrath," she said.

"It won't happen, Madame," Fleur gave her assurance to Madame Maxime.

Madame Maxime nodded.

Indeed for the past few weeks since the term started, there had been many incidents involving her and the boys of Beauxbaton. She found herself got irritated too quickly whenever boys approached her. Things never ended well for the boys. Either they got thrown down the hall or ended up in the hospital wing courtesy of her. It happened so often that Monsieur Delacour himself had to come to the campus and reprimanded her. Only Raphael was spared but even he threaded really carefully whenever Fleur was in the vicinity. The male students gave her a wide berth in the end and she got a new nickname – The Ice Queen of Beauxbaton.

She found that she did not care. Not a bit.

"You will want to cover yourself a little bit more. Hogwarts' males are not used to veelas and you my dear, unfortunately can't conceal your true identity as well as your cousins which makes me worry even more. I hope bringing you along won't be a big mistake," she said.

Fleur stayed silent.

"I would expect exceptional discipline from all of you," addressed Madame Maxime to the rest of the member of the delegate. "Keep the Beauxbaton's name in high esteem. Show them the best of what we are. Be proud of who we are."

"Yes, Madame Maxime," replied the students in unison.

Madame Maxime stood. The students followed suit and they automatically lined up behind their headmistress, waiting for the door to be opened.
Madame Maxime called up to one of the male students nearest to her and instructed him to open the door. He obliged. A blast of cold air entered the carriage as the door went ajar. The occupants shivered.

"Oh my God. Scotland will be this cold? You certainly did not mince your word, Fleur," said Daphne Lavinge as she wrapped her scarf around her neck and pulled her cloak closer to her body. "I knew we shouldn't wear skirts."

"Are we walking into a fridge?" grumbled Raphael. Like everyone else, he pulled his cloak closer to him. "I didn't realize it would be this cold. How can they live and study in this condition?"

Madame Maxime was the first to step out of the carriage, followed by her students. Except Fleur. She quickly pulled Cassandra to the side and spoke.

"You go ahead, Cassy," she said. "I'll be right behind."

"Why? What is it, Fleur?" asked Cassandra.

"I need to put on these. You heard what Madame said," replied Fleur. She showed Cassandra a pair of shawl and scarf she took out of the white bag earlier.

Cassandra nodded in understanding.

"Alright. Don't take too long," she said. She squeezed Fleur's hand and made her exit from the carriage.

She began putting on the shawl and the scarf. Once done, only her brilliant blue eyes and a little bit of her forehead were exposed.

Torrents of emotions hit Fleur all of a sudden. She could almost sense him out there among the crowd. She was not sure if she was ready for this.

She took a deep breath and stepped into the fading sunlight.

She paused at the door frame and began to take in the surrounding.

Madame Maxime was up ahead, following Dumbledore as the Hogwarts headmaster introduced her to Hogwarts line of staffs. All of her friends meanwhile were converging around their headmistress.

Fleur's appearance drew quite an interest from all of Hogwarts' students. They seemed to be intrigued with the girl who came out late and had most of her face covered.

Her eyes wandered around. She saw Daphne and Tracy among the crowd. The two girls recognized her and immediately they beamed at her. She then saw Hermione. The bushy haired girl was frowning at her at that time. Knowing Hermione, she suspected that the Gryffindor cleverest girl must have seen something that she did not like although she could not tell what it was.

But Fleur did not care about that. It won't matter. What really matter was the person who stood right next to Hermione.

There he was, standing among the crowd, looking at her. Their eyes met. She remembered that emerald eyes of his.

Her pulse racing and her palms began to sweat. She quickly tore her eyes away from him before the urge to throw herself to him became unbearable and overtook her. It would be an embarrassing sight if that really happen. Harry was a really good hugger. That was one of his wonderful traits and she found that she truly missed that.

There's still time, she thought to herself. Plenty of time in fact.

Reminding herself that patience is virtue, she drew another deep breath and slowly walked down the steps towards where the rest of Beauxbaton students were gathering. Camille saw her and immediately she grabbed Fleur's hand and pulled her to join the rest of them.

All of her friends were looking gloomily at the huge building with many turrets right in front of them. Clearly, they were unimpressed. Several of them shivered in the cold Scottish's evening despite the cloak they wore. Unfortunately for them, Madame Maxime was still conversing and greeting Hogwarts staffs. They had no choice but to wait.
It felt like hours had gone past when they were finally led into the warmth of the castle by Professor McGonagall. The Transfiguration teacher brought them into a small waiting area just beside the Great Hall where they were told to wait. The Beauxbaton delegates obliged.

The room was decorated with Jack-O-Lanterns and candles that floated near its ceiling. Of course, Halloween was near.

"Woah! You guys should really see this!" said Raphael all of a sudden. Everyone there turned to look at him and saw him waving his hand here and there. Bluish aura engulfed his arms and small sparks ignited as he continuously waved his arm. Some of them copied him and was impressed by what they saw.

"This is incredible! Have you seen anything like this? This place, this castle is strong with magic!" he continued.

"Of course it is," said Madame Maxime idly. "This castle was built directly on top of the crossing of two geographic ley-lines which is quite rare. Magic tends to have strong presence at those crossings."

"What about our campuses?" asked a male student.

"Beauxbaton was built based on convenience," answered Madame Maxime.

"So, Hogwarts students are more exceptional in magic?"

Madame Maxime glared at the student. The said student cowered under his headmistress' stare.

"That would be for each of you to decide. I for one believe that a student's potential is based on his abilities and his efforts. It doesn't matter which school you attended. If you work hard, you will win even without outside help," she said. "For years Beauxbaton's students proved themselves in many fields' expertise after they graduated. I expect no less from each one of you. Show them that we don't need a magical castle's help to win."

The students glanced at each other. Their attention was diverted when they saw another group of students approaching them. They were also led by Professor McGonagall. Each and every one of the newcomers looked burly. They wore some kind of cloak made out of shaggy, matted fur. A ushanka hat covered each of their head.

The newcomers stopped a few feet away from the Beauxbaton delegates. They looked at the Beauxbaton students with great interest. Some of them even pointed to the Beauxbaton as they whispered to each other. Once again, Fleur gained most of their attention despite her face being covered.

Cassandra leaned to Fleur and whispered, "They're Durmstrang, right?"

"Right."

"Thought so."

Madame Maxime approached who could only be the Durmstrang headmaster. They both shook hands and began to converse.

Professor McGonagall returned together with Professor Dumbledore to them a few minutes later and beckoned both delegates to follow them.

Led by Professor Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall, they entered the Great Hall which already packed with students.

Professor McGonagall turned towards the foreign students and spoke, "I have to apologize. As you can see, the hall is full to the brim at the moment but we manage to squeeze some space out of each of the table. You are free to choose anywhere you want to sit. It will only be temporary, I promise."

The students simply nodded.

"I see more space at that table," said Madame Maxime to her students. She nodded pointedly at the Ravenclaw table. "I suggest that all of you sit there."

"Yes, Madame Maxime," said her students in unison.
She, together with the Durmstrang headmaster who simply left his students on their own to choose whichever table they want to sit at, then left her students and followed Professor McGonagall and Professor Dumbledore to the High Table.

Marianne leaned towards Fleur.

"So, where is he?" she asked.

"He's here," answered Fleur knowing fully well to whom Marianne was referring to.

"Where?"

"Well, I can't point him for you, can I? They'll see us."

"You can lead us to the table where he sits," suggested Daphne Lavinge.

"Even if I wanted to, I can't. You heard what Madame said. I'm not going to disobey her. Come on you girls. Let's take our seats. Everyone is watching," said Fleur.

Sure enough, all Hogwarts students were watching them. All of them were probably wondering which table the foreigner would eventually choose as their dining table for the rest of the year.

The Beauxbaton delegate made their way towards the Ravenclaw table, leaving the Durmstrang delegate at the entrance into the Great Hall. They saw vacant seats at the end of the table nearest to High Table and immediately headed there.

"I," Daphne Lavinge greeted an Asian-looking female student. "Iz zese seats vacant? Can we sit 'ere?"

The Asian-looking female student replied, "Of course."

Smiling, she gestured the Beauxbaton delegate to sit.

"My name is ChoChang. And you would be?" she said as she extended her hand to Daphne Lavinge.

"Daphne. Daphne Lavinge. Zthank you," said Daphne Lavinge as she and the rest of her friends sat down.

The Beauxbaton and the Ravenclaw members then spent the next few minutes greeting and getting to know each other. Their conversations were interrupted when they heard seats shuffling and a few whoops and hoorays. They turned around and saw the Durmstrang delegate taking their seats at the Slytherin table, much to the members of that house delight.

Fleur glanced at Harry who was sitting at the table right next to Hufflepuff. The boy at that point was busy talking to a frustrated looking ginger headed boy and was not looking at her. She felt a little bit irritated by Harry's action somehow. She silently wondered why she got all worked up just because Harry did not look at her. After all, the young Harry would be just like any other Hogwarts boys who did not know her prior to her coming to Hogwarts.

Gloominess engulfed the whole of Beauxbaton delegate. They clearly did not like what they saw. The excitement of finding strong magic within Hogwarts castle had faded away. Frustration was clearly plastered on their faces despite their effort to conceal it from their host.

Cassandra leaned to Fleur.

"Point me," she said.

"Point you to what?" asked Fleur.

"Harry Potter," said Cassandra.

The rest of her friends immediately paid attention to Fleur the moment they heard the word 'Harry Potter' being uttered.

"He's sitting at the table at the other end of this hall. It's difficult for me to point at him without anyone else noticing. You'll just have to wait," said Fleur.

"Wait? For what?"

"I don't know. I'll think of something," said Fleur.

ChoChang and her friends in the mean time were watching Fleur and her friends curiously.
They heard the name Harry Potter being mentioned but since they did not know French, there was not much else they could understand.

Their attention was diverted however when Professor Dumbledore stood and began his speech.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, ghosts and particularly our honoured guest," said Professor Dumbledore, beaming around at the foreign students. "I have great pleasure in welcoming all of you to Hogwarts. I hope and trust that your stay here will be both comfortable and enjoyable."

Not all of the foreign students shared Dumbledore's enthusiasm. While the Durmstrang delegate had comfortably made themselves at home, most of the Beauxbaton students looked at their surrounding with gloom expression.

"The tournament will officially be opened at the end of the feast," continued Dumbledore. "I now invite you all to eat and drink and make yourself at home."

Dumbledore then sat down.

Almost immediately, the empty plates in front of them filled with food. The Beauxbaton students were expecting to be presented with only British foods and delicacies. They were surprised to find a variety of French cuisines as well.

"What's that?" asked Marianne, pointing towards one of the dishes that looked like greasy pastries with vegetable fillings. "I don't recognize that dish."

"That's banitsa. It's a Bulgarian dish. Quite popular in its native country. Taste good too," explained Raphael as he reached over to grab some of the banitsa.

"How do you—oh, I forgot. You went there before. I'll take your word for it," said Marianne.

"Try it," urged Raphael. "You'll love it."

"No thanks. I don't like greasy food."

All of her friends had already begun to eat. Fleur was the only who had not touch anything. She pondered on whether or not she should take off her scarf and shawl. After a few moments of deliberation, she decided that she was not going to bed hungry. Slowly she reached up and undid her shawl. Long and gleaming silvery hair fell over her shoulder. She then slowly pulled off her scarf and put it aside together with her shawl.

Cho Chang and the rest of her friends stared at her with astonishment. The male Ravenclaws stopped on their track; some of them had their spoon halted midair as they continued to gawk at the veela. The Ravenclaws were not the only victim however. The Slytherin and the nearby Hufflepuff also took notice of her. Only the Beauxbaton fared better. Their males had learned on how to handle her attractiveness and managed to exert better self control. They just shrugged, shook their heads and continued to eat.

Fleur ignored all the attention she was gaining. Once again she reached up and began to tie her hair into a ponytail, leaving a few strands fencing her face. She then began to eat.

She had just finished a plate of Escargots de Bourgogne when Adrienne suddenly moaned. She took a gulp of pumpkin juice and asked, "What is it, Adrienne?"

"Apparently, Hogwarts too love bouillabaisse," said Adrienne, showing the now empty plate of the said dish.

Both of them began to look up and down the table to see if there was any more plate of bouillabaisse remained untouched. They saw one right at the other end of the table. Unfortunately, that other end of table was occupied only by boys.

"I'm not going there," said Fleur.

"Me too."

They continued to look around.

"I see an untouched bouillabaisse over there." said Adrienne, nodding towards an untouched plate of bouillabaisse resting on the Hufflepuff table.

Fleur looked at the same direction as Adrienne.

And as fate would have it, her eyes met Harry for the second time that day. And then, she saw a plate of lightly touched bouillabaisse sitting right in front of Harry.
An idea suddenly flew into her head.

She remembered asking for a plate of bouillabaisse from Harry back in the past. She knew then on what to do. Adrienne was still preoccupied with the plate of bouillabaisse resting on the Hufflepuff table. This would be her chance.

Without saying anything, Fleur slowly got off her seat.

“What are you doing, Fleur? Where are you going?” asked Cassandra.

But Fleur ignored her closest friend. Her friends watched her nervously as she navigated her way around the Ravenclaw table towards the Gryffindor table.

The air suddenly went very still. The time became frozen solid.

All eyes within the Great Hall fell upon her. All of them, the students, the teachers, the staffs and the ghosts, stared at her as if she was some sort of goddess.

But she ignored all of them.

Holding her head high, she walked past the Hufflepuff table, much to Adrienne’s surprise, towards the Gryffindor table. All the while her eyes remained fixed towards her target. She stopped right behind Hermione who at that time was sitting opposite of Harry.

Pushing away her emotions and the urges she once again experienced and ignoring the stares she received from the Gryffindor table, she smiled at him and began to address Harry directly:-

“Excuse me,” she said to him. “Are you still wanting the bouillabaisse?”

Harry was about to reply when all of a sudden, a loud gurgling noise was heard coming from beside him. He turned and saw it was the red headed boy who somehow turned a brilliant shade of purple from the sight of a beautiful girl now standing in front of him.

Fleur could feel Harry’s irritation and embarrassment. She too felt the same way.

Ronald Bilius Weasley. That boy lacked self control like always. If only she could pull out her wand and blast the youngest Weasley male into smithereen.

She took this opportunity to take a good look at Harry. She admitted that she was slightly taken aback by Harry’s younger appearances. She was so used to adult Harry that she had completely forgotten how a fourteen years old Harry looked like. Adult Harry was quite a looker. No longer the teenage boy he used to be, he had grown taller and his body had become more athletic, most likely due to the Auror training he underwent. His thin, scruffy beard added further to his charm. His hair was still messy though.

This younger Harry in front of her simply looked… messy all over. He also was a little bit too thin compared to his peers. If it was not for that lightning shaped scar that graced his forehead, he would be just another ordinary boy.

Fleur did like good looking men but her experiences with Bill and Harry taught her to look underneath the skin rather than over it.

Feeling annoyed and revolted at the sight of drool dripping out of the corner of Ron’s mouth, she turned her attention back to Harry.

“Well?” she asked him.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” said Harry. He then carefully lifted the plate of bouillabaisse and hand it over to Fleur. “Here, you can have it.”

Fleur gracefully accepted it. She however went further by purposely gracing her silky smooth hands against Harry’s fingers. She could see his face reddened.

She found that she did not care. She yearned to touch him anyway. Besides, she would be his future wife when the time comes.

“You ’ave finish with it?” she asked. Her brilliant blue eyes continued to drill into Harry’s.

But before Harry could speak, Ron suddenly chimed in.

“Yeah. The boula-boiu-boui-boo-what-base. They were excellent,” he said in earnest. It was as if he was trying desperately to gain Fleur’s utmost attention.

But Fleur of course did not give poor Ron any of it. She just gave Ron an annoyed glance
before returning to Harry.

"Thank you," she said to him.

She then carefully carried the dish back to the Ravenclaw table. Along the way, she heard people whispering:

"We have that dish on our table. Why would she have to travel all the way there?"

"She seems to be interested with Harry. Why though?"

"Because he's the chosen one?"

She paid no attention to any of it.

It took a while after she sat back down before normalcy returned to the Great Hall. Of course, Fleur became the new topic of the day.

Her friends reprimanded her for what she just did.

"Fleur, the plate of bouillabaisse I was talking about was just right there over that table!" scolded Adrienne. "Why in the world would you go that far?!"

"Adrienne is right," said Cassandra. "You don't have to walk that far to get it. You're exposing yourself to everyone. We were worried, you know. You should have someone else to get it for you. We all can do it."

"It doesn't matter," said Fleur as she scooped some of the bouillabaisse into her plate. "They will know more about me eventually. We're staying here for the whole school year, remember? Anyway, see that boy I was talking to? That is Harry Potter."

"Really?!"

All of them turned to look. Sure enough, they saw Harry.

"Are you sure that's him?" said Camille. She was still looking over her shoulder towards Harry. "He doesn't look like -" "What you imagined?" finished Fleur, glancing at Camille.

"Well, yes."

"I thought he would be taller," said Daphne Lavinge.

"And handsomer," added Marianne.

"He looks as if a small breeze could blow him away," said Adrienne. "Now I know what Daphne meant. If this boy is really your Harry, you can have him. You don't have to worry about competing with me or any of us, Fleur."

At this point Fleur was feeling a little bit surprise and annoyed. She could not believe how shallow her friends could be. She remembered her treatment at Molly's hand. It took a werewolf attack on Bill to change her former mother in law's mind about her, that she was not as shallow and haughty as they always imagined.

She put down her spoon and fork. Resting her arms on the table, she spoke with all seriousness, "If I remember correctly, the three of you begged me to pass Harry over to any of you should I get bored with him."

"What? Who?" asked Adrienne.

"Marianne, Camille and you," said Fleur. "That happened after you girls finished interrogating him. You were so hank up by his looks and manners that you forgot that it was my boyfriend you were talking about."

"What? Marianne said that?!!" asked Raphael. He was eavesdropping on the girls' conversation when he heard what Fleur said.

"Shut up, Raphael!!"

"I definitely am not! I never will!" Marianne objected. "He's not my type."

"Oh you will, Marianne. You will. He's only fourteen years old now. Give him another ten years and you'll see what I mean. You'll probably grovel at his feet by then," said Fleur.
Marianne was about to reply when Cassandra decided to interrupt.

"That's enough, Marianne," she said. Looking around at all the females of Beauxbaton, she continued, "Look girls, we don't know Harry as well as she does. Fleur knows what she's doing. Our job as her friends is to support her all the way. Although, we still hold the right to interrogate him as we please, right Fleur?"

At this point, Cassandra crossed her arms to her chest and stared at Fleur, as if she was challenging the veela to contradict what she just said.

Fleur though just shrugged at this.

"Sure. Be my guess. Just make sure he's still breathing after your girls are done with him," she said.

"And we're still entitle to give you our opinion," added Daphne Lavinge.

"Okay."

At this point, Professor Dumbledore took to the stage and began to announce the launching of the Triwizard Tournament. All within the Great Hall clapped when he introduced the people behind the tournament and when the Goblet of Fire was brought out for display.

All except Fleur.

At this point, she was staring hard at one lone figure, standing discreetly behind Professor Flitwick.

Alastor Moody.

Or rather someone impersonating as Alastor Moody.

She would know this. Bill and Harry told her all about the real Moody and everything that transpired behind the scenes during her first Triwizard Tournament. The real Alastor Moody had an uncanny ability to divide his attentions without sparing any single one of them. He would not concentrate it all just to one man.

But this impersonator did just that. Both his real and his magical eye were transfixed to the back of Mr. Crouch, current head of British's Department of International Magical Cooperation. Fleur could almost see the fierce hatred burning in those eyes.

In twenty-four hours the impersonator’s plan would begin. But it won't matter. She would be there and she would stand by Harry no matter what.

Later that night...

The Triwizard Tournament opening ceremony had been concluded. The line around the Goblet of Fire had been drawn. Now it was just the matter of who would be brave enough to take the challenge and who inevitably had to take the challenge despite not wanting to.

There were noises of chairs shuffling as Professor Dumbledore dismissed all the students.

Fleur glanced at the Gryffindor table. She saw Harry holding Hermione’s shoulder and pointed towards the Great Hall entrance. The girl sat back down.

She felt a little bit jealous after witnessing the closeness between Harry and Hermione. Of course there should be nothing she should worry about. Harry told her that Hermione was like a sister to him, that they would always look out for each other no matter what despite being informal siblings.

But Fleur knew more than that. Yes, they were close. Yes, they both saw each other as nothing more than a brother and a sister but she could not help but feel that it would take only a slight nudge in the right direction to turn them both into a pair of lovers.

She shook her head. No. It would not come to that. Harry was hers.

Madame Maxime and Professor Karkaroff both came to their students and began herding them back to their place of accommodation. Fleur, now having her shawl and scarf back on, gave Harry her last glance of the night and followed her friends towards the exit.

The interior of the carriage had changed. All the seats were gone. Instead, Fleur and her friends found themselves inside a smaller facsimile of the Beauxbaton’s main lobby.

"Girls dormitories are on the right and boys dormitories are on the left. First floor. You can
It did not take long for her to find her room for each door had signage imprinted with the name of the occupants. The two-person bedroom was modestly sized and comfortable. Each of them would get a single bed, a wardrobe and a small desk facing the window. They would have to share a dressing table though. One nice thing about their dormitory was that each room would get their own bathroom. Warm air can be felt gushing out of the ceiling air vent.

It was ten minutes before lights off. Fully freshened up and wearing a silk sleeping dress, Fleur found herself sitting on the chair looking out the window.

The Hogwarts castle towered right in front of her. Light came out of its many windows and illuminated its compound. And right from her vantage point, she saw that one huge, thick turret which would be the Gryffindor Tower. She would know the location, of course. Harry showed her when they both came to visit Victoire in her second year.

Harry would be in it. She wondered what he was doing at this very moment. Probably preparing for the night sleep, she mused. Would he be looking out the window towards the carriage this very instance?

Oh, how she wished he would.

Cassandra came out of the bathroom, wearing a pair of pink pajamas. Carrying a comb, she went on to sit on the chair opposite of Fleur and began combing her long, silky black hair.

"Can you see him from here?" she asked.

"Hmmm?"

"Harry Potter. Inside the castle, where does he sleep? His dormitory, can you see it?"

Cassandra rephrased her question.

Without a word, Fleur raised her hand and pointed towards the Gryffindor Tower.

Cassandra’s eyes followed. She nodded.

"Is it true?"

"About what?" Fleur asked.

"Marianne, Adrienne and Camille. About them being crazy about Harry when they saw him, you know, back in your past?" said Cassandra.

"Oh yes, they were. They practically fangirled him. If I had known better I’ll say they probably worship the ground he walked on," said Fleur nonchalantly.

Cassandra cringed at this.

"Yikes! That is one vision I really don’t need. Anyway, just for the sake of being curious, what about me?"

Fleur lifted an eyebrow.

"You?"

"Yes, me. Did I suffer the same fate as them?" said Cassandra.

Fleur smiled and stared amusingly at her closest friend.

"What? Come on, tell me!" said Cassandra impatiently.

Fleur let out a small laugh and shook her head.

"No, you did not suffer the same fate as them," said Fleur. "You have a lot more self control."

"Really? Thank goodness. I was really afraid that happened. You know, me being falling in love with my best friend’s boyfriend. I watched too much television shows to know the consequences," said Cassandra, feeling visibly relief. She then however, paused. "Did I really were not smitten by Harry?" she asked.

Fleur shook her head.
"I don't know," said Fleur. "If you were, you didn't show it. I'm not a mind reader but I know you're an expert at masking your feeling, just like Daphne."

"Now I'm worried."

Fleur smiled. She reached out and grabbed hold of Cassandra's hands. She then said, "Don't be. I trust you just like I trust all of our friends. And I know Harry better than any of you. I'm not worried."

Cassandra returned her smile. She then leaned forward and gave Fleur a peck on her cheek.

The light suddenly turned off, plunging both of them into darkness.

Both of them immediately stood up and went to bed.

Snuggling comfortably within the warmth of her blanket, Fleur lay on her back and stared at the ceiling.

Morning could not come soon enough.

"Fleur?"

"Hmm?"

"I was just wondering about your first husband. He is still alive at this point, right? What if you meet him while you're here? What will happen then?" asked Cassandra in the darkness.

Fleur went silent.

In all honesty, she did not have any answer to that.

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**Early next morning...**

It was a cold and cloudy morning. It was Halloween.

They woke up early, had their morning shower and were now clad in their uniform. They would be having their breakfast at the Great Hall that day and later put their names into the Goblet of Fire. Unlike the boys who look like that they did not have any sleep at all during the night, the girls looked fresh as ever. Raphael and a few boys can be seen yawning every now and then. They were not used to waking up early on weekends.

All of them were waiting for Madame Maxime inside the carriage's lobby. Floating candles and carved pumpkins can be seen floating near the lobby's ceiling. The decorations were not as elaborate as what they had at the campuses though.

She came to them after a few minutes of waiting. After she done briefing her students, all of them then set off towards the castle.

It did not take long. It did not take them far when all of a sudden, one the female students screamed. All of them turned to her and saw her pointing towards the castle. They then turned to look at the direction that girl was pointing and gasped.

Fleur herself cupped her mouth. She became speechless.

She saw a boy, someone she recognized, jumping off the castle's tallest tower.

"Wait! Is that Harry Potter?! Fleur?!" said Camille.

But Fleur said nothing for she was in a complete shock at that time.

All of them saw Harry continued his uncontrolled descent. Few of the girls immediately covered their eyes as Harry got nearer to the ground, unwilling to witness the effect of a human body crashing onto the hard cold ground.

There was another scream.

But there was no thud, no sound of a body crashing onto the ground. Just as Harry reached a few feet above the ground, he grabbed the broom, mounted it and sped off into the distance.

The Beauxbaton delegate just stood there, watching as Harry flew towards them. They saw him looking down at them. There was a look of surprise on his face as he flew over them. They saw him shrugged, pointed his broom upwards and with a mighty burst of speed, disappeared behind the gray clouds.
Madame Maxime glanced at Fleur and shook her head.

"I will talk with his headmaster about this. That was reckless on his part," she said.

"You boyfriend is crazy, you know that?" said Camille.

Fleur remained silent.

They stayed on for a while, waiting to see if Harry would be burst through the cloud. It didn't happened so they decided to resume their journey.

Walking on the wet grass was not easy. A few them slipped and nearly fell onto the ground.

"Urghh I hate these grasses. I hate the cold. I hate everything here!" Adrienne grumbled as she continued to struggle walking on the wet, slippery grass. She had to hold on to Camille for support. She glared at Fleur. "Camille is right. Your man is crazy!" she continued.

Fleur did not give any response to that. Her mind was more preoccupied with Harry. Every now and then she would look up towards the clouds, wondering how long he would stay up there.

The Durmstrang lots were already gathering at the top of the marble stairs when the Beauxbaton delegate arrived. Professor Karkaroff was there as well. They were looking out towards the lawn and were very excited about something. And they were not the only one. There were Hogwarts students too and all of them were looking towards the same direction as the Durmstrang.

Fleur saw the Weasley twins chatting excitedly. Both of them were eating their toast and were pointing at something. She and the rest of her friends turned to look and saw what it was.

All of them were looking towards a huge structure which Fleur knew to be Hogwarts Quidditch pitch. There they saw Harry.

Harry was whizzing around the pitch at breakneck speed, winding his way expertly in and out and around the pillars. There were cheers and whooping whenever he did an acrobatic stunt. At one point, he was going so fast that all they could see was a blur.

"By golly, look at him go!"

"Never seen anything like it!"

"He's not going to slow down, is he?"

"Oh how I wish we have Quidditch match this year. Gryffindor is going to blow everyone else out of the water. Mark my word!"

Fleur caught Krum staring at the twins. Apparently he heard the word Quidditch uttered by them. He then turned his attention back to the Quidditch pitch. His lip formed a smile.

So Krum found out that Harry was a Quidditch player.

Fleur saw the Bulgarian Seeker whispering to his headmaster. Karkaroff gave Krum a nod.

"Come. There's nothing else to see," said Madame Maxime.

The Beauxbaton students followed their headmistress up the stairs and into the Great Hall. Breakfast had been served.

They sat at the same location as they were the night before. Madame Maxime meanwhile went straight to the High Table.

The Ravenclaw table was mostly empty at that time. Fleur could guess that most of them were either still asleep or standing outside the Great Hall watching Harry doing his stunts.

Fleur was buttering her toast when Raphael leaned towards her.

"Harry is a Quidditch player?" he asked.

"Yes. How did you guess?"

"Duh. Look at him fly. Only a Quidditch player can do all those stunts!"

The Great Hall began to fill up half an hour later. All of the students who just entered were talking excitedly about Harry, including ChoChang and her friends. ChoChang greeted the Beauxbaton students when she arrived and right after that, her conversation with her friends
immediately steered towards Harry.

Fleur and her friends just sat silently as they listened to ChoChang and her friends’ conversation.

"Didn't you say that you like Harry, Cho?" asked one of the Ravenclaw girls.

ChoChang looked embarrassed.

"I did?" she asked.

"Yes, you did. Many times."

"Oh! Well, maybe I am," said ChoChang.

"I heard there's going to be a Ball this Christmas. Maybe you could ask him to be your partner. I have to warn you though. Cedric Diggory is interested in you. I think he likes you," said the girl.

"The Hufflepuff captain?" asked ChoChang.

"Yes. The one and only. He's handsome you know."

ChoChang looked thoughtful.

"I don't know. I like Harry more," she said moments later.

Fleur nearly broke the spoon she was holding into two.

She then decided that she did not want to listen any longer. She of course knew all about ChoChang. She remembered Harry telling her that ChoChang was his first choice as a dance partner to the Yule Ball. He was unlucky as Cedric beat him to her. He had to settle with one of Patil sisters.

She turned to look at the High Table. Madame Maxime was in deep conversation with Professor Dumbledore. The Hogwarts headmaster could be seen nodding a few times at what Madame Maxime said. As for Professor Karkaroff, he just sat there, shaking his head at whatever Madame Maxime said.

They must be talking about Harry.

History could repeat itself this time. Given the attention Harry now gained, it was a huge possibility that ChoChang would reject Cedric's advance and accept Harry's invitation instead and end up as Harry's date to the Yule Ball.

Unless.....

All of a sudden, night could not come any sooner.

Fleur's reminiscent did not last long.

"Look!"

The noise within the Great Hall suddenly died down. Fleur looked around and saw the reason why.

There he was, standing awkwardly at the entrance into the Great Hall. All eyes within the hall were on him.

Then slowly, one of the Gryffindor boys stood. He was followed by the Weasley twins and another two Gryffindor boys. They began to clap and like a falling stack of dominoes, the rest of the Gryffindors followed suit. Fleur saw one of the older boys pulled Harry’s hand toward him and along the way, he received many handshakes and pat on the back. It went all the way until he finally took a seat opposite of Ronald Weasley.

Fleur felt someone was walking behind her. She turned around and saw it was Viktor Krum. She and the rest of the hall’s inhabitant watched as the famous Seeker navigated his way around the tables until he stopped exactly behind Ron.

The noise within the hall once again subsided as everyone was watching the interaction between Harry and Krum.

The interaction did not take long but when Krum left, there was a wide smile on his face. As for the Gryffindors, they looked very elated.
"Do you have any idea what's going on between the two?" asked Cassandra as Krum sat back down and began to huddle together with his friends.

Fleur shook her head.

"No but it looks like they had agreed on something," she said.

Madame Maxime came to her students.

"It is time," she said to them.

Fleur gave a glance at Harry as she stood up. This time their eyes met. She gave him a faint smile before proceeding to join the rest of her friends.

It was at noon when they heard about the 1-on-1 match between Harry and Viktor Krum and the eventual friendly match between Durmstrang and the House of Gryffindor. The news was delivered by Madame Maxime herself when she came to visit Fleur at her quarters. An idea suddenly flew into Fleur's head. She immediately asked Madame Maxime if they can watch the match.

"I see no problem with that," said Madame Maxime. "After all, all of you have free time this afternoon and your new timetable will only be ready by tomorrow. Yes, we can go watch the match."

"I didn't know you like Quidditch," said Camille after Madame Maxime left. All of the female delegates were gathering inside Fleur/Cassandra's quarters at that time.

"I don't. It's not the match I'm interested in," said Fleur. Camille grinned.

"I see," she said. "Well, you might want to be quick. You got a competitor in your hands, Fleur."

Indeed, ChoChang had become a hot topic between them. Virtually all of Fleur's friend expressed dislike at the Ravenclaw Seeker.

"Couldn't you just go to him and explain how you feel and who you truly are?" asked one of the Beauxbaton female students. Her name was Jeanne Penmeller. She was not part of Fleur's squad but given that she was close to Daphne Lavinge, she got a whiff of Fleur's story. For some reason unknown, she seemed to believe it.

"I don't think that will work, Jeanne," said Cassandra.

"Why not?"

"Cassy's right, Jeanne. It won't be that simple. I know Harry better than any of you. Remember last night? Harry was the only one who managed to hold a civilized conversation with me," said Fleur who at that time was standing with her back against the windows. She paused for a moment. "Except maybe Raphael but he's my cousin so he doesn't count. And his self control while better than most, is still patchy. I can make him pee in his pants if I want to," she continued.

"Yes, we saw that," said Jeanne.

"And did any of you know that I had to force Harry to write to me and that he rejected and pushed me away once?" asked Fleur.

"WHAT?!

Her friends clearly were unprepared to hear the revelation. It took them by surprise, greatly.

"He rejected you?!" said Cassandra in astonishment.

Fleur calmly nodded.

"Yes. I can tell you, it was very painful. I really don't want to go all over it again," she said.

"A male rejecting a veela was unheard of," Adrienne pondered. "If what you said is true, Harry would be the first male who managed to do that."

"Well, I don't know about that. Veela history went back thousands of years so it is possible that he wasn't the first but yes, what I said is true. He rejected me," said Fleur.
"You know, you never really told us about your history with Harry," said Daphne Lavinge who at that time was sitting on Fleur's bed and hugging one of the pillows. "If you want us to help you, a little bit of background information might help."

There were murmurs of agreement.

"You girls never ask," Fleur stated

"We want to but you were kind of unstable back then," said Marianne. "So we decided to wait."

"Well, wonder no more," said Fleur as she took a seat beside Daphne Lavinge. "Because I am about to tell you the story about me and him. Perhaps this time, you will understand."

To be continued...

A/n: Just as an information, the update for the planned five chapters of Fleur Delacour will be slow, mainly due to the complexity of it. I can't give you the exact date of publishing because I can never fulfill it but let me assure you that this story will see its end. Unless of course something really bad happens to me. We don't want that, do we?

Enjoy.
The Story of Fleur Delacour

She was standing at the foot of a small grassy hill, overlooking a lush green valley nestled between low, grain covered mountains. The sun hung low in the western sky, casting streamers of yellow and pink along the horizon. Warm summer air blew from the east, a few strands of her long, untied silvery hair cascading down over her shoulder, fell over her face. She pushed them away.

Then she saw him.

He was at the foot of the hill, strolling along a grassy path that reached up to his knees and heading towards the western horizon.

"Harry!" she called out to him.

But Harry did not hear her. He just kept on going, walking towards destination unknown. Not once he looked back to her.

"Harry!"

She began to walk towards him, threading her steps carefully so that she would not accidentally tumble down the hill. The slippery grass did not make her endeavor any easier. For some reason, despite her utmost effort, the distances between them weren't closing. Instead, it grew ever wider.

"Harry!" she called to him again.

Still, there was no response from him and Harry was getting further and further away from her.

Feeling desperate and having absolutely no idea on why Harry ignored her, she threw caution to the wind and broke into a run. She slipped and nearly fell several times but she did finally reach to the bottom of the hill. But Harry was still further away.

"Harry!"

She dashed towards him, fully intended to catch up with him and throw herself to him. And maybe asked him a few questions on why he ignored her.

Halfway through, Harry suddenly stopped walking. He turned around and saw Fleur came running.

Feeling relief that Harry finally noticed her, she slowed down a little bit, knowing that Harry won't be going anywhere, that he would wait for her and embraced her like he always did.

How wrong she was.

She arrived in front of him.

"Harry," she said, breathing heavily from all those running. "I've been calling out to you. Didn't you hear me? Why do you ignore me?"

Harry remained silent. His emerald eye continued to gaze at the woman in front of him.

Her eyebrows creased. She felt uneasy. This wasn't typical Harry's response.

She stepped closer to him. "Harry?"

Still Harry failed to respond.

She reached up to him, clasping both his hands into her own. "Harry, please. Talk to me. What's wrong?"

Still Harry said nothing. Freeing one hand from her clasp, he reached up and began to stroke her cheek. Then he smiled. It was a smile that contained both longing and sadness.

And without warning, he vanished into thin air.

She just stood there, staring at an empty space once occupied by the man she loved.
"HARRY!"

Fleur jerked upright, sweat scattering from her sudden motion. She took a deep breath, forcing her racing heart to slow down. It took a while before her eye could adjust with the complete darkness that engulfed her. A thick, comfy blanket that covered the bottom half of her body told her that she was still inside her bedroom.

She slowly wiped the sweat off her face. She then looked up towards the small alarm clock that resided on the bedside table.

It was three in the morning. She was still on her bed inside her dormitory at Beauxbaton. She looked to the bed adjacent to hers. Cassandra was still fast asleep.

She sighed and slowly laid her back on the bed once again. Try as she might, she found that she couldn't sleep. Her mind was racing. The dream she had kept on replaying.

And in the darkness of the night, she continued to stare at the ceiling above her. It took a while but drowsiness finally took over her. One word escaped her mouth just before her eyes closed.

"Harry."

"How high do we have to climb this thing?!" grumbled Marianne.

She and the rest of the Beauxbaton and Ravenclaw students were climbing the stairs within the spectator stand tower. The afternoon weather wasn't exactly hot, Scottish weather was mostly moderate, but since the tower was fully covered banners with no proper ventilation, the air inside tended to warm up and got very stuffy. And the fact that they had to climb up to near ten stories high didn't help either.

There were already a lot of students at the Quidditch pitch when they arrived. They met Professor Flitwick and McGonagall who whisked Madame Maxime away to join them at the teacher stand. Fleur and her friends meanwhile followed the Ravenclaw students towards their stand.

A rush of cold air greeting them meant that they had reached the top.

"Finally!" said Marianne in relief as the sun once again shone on their face when they came out into the open.

The Beauxbaton students took the front most row of seat together with ChoChang and her friends. From their vantage point, they could see the whole of the stadium. Students were still piling into their respective stands. They saw three large hoops at the each opposite end of the pitch. There was a large scoreboard located above the teacher stand. Madame Maxime and Professor Karkaroff could be seen sitting there together with several Hogwarts’ teachers.

Each spectators stand was covered by banner of various colors. Fleur knew what they meant and she had her eyes fixed to the one covered with red and gold banners.

"Owh, he's already here," said Cassandra.

"Who?" asked Fleur, her eyes were still fixed to the same tower.

"Viktor Krum," replied Cassandra, pointing towards a lone figure hovering high above the pitch.

Fleur gave a short glance at Krum before turning her attention back to the Gryffindor stand.

The energy was palpable at the pitch. Everyone was so excited to see what’s in store for them. Theories abound about how Harry and Krum were going to slug it out. Some said Harry and Krum would be having a broom race. Some said that both Seekers would try to see who’s the fastest in catching the snitch. Some said it could be a mixture of both.

The noise at the pitch suddenly rose to unprecedented level. Through the corner of her eyes, Fleur watched as ChoChang, like most Hogwarts students, jumped to her feet and clapped loudly.

She knew why.

Harry had made his appearance.

She and her friends watched as Harry mounted his broom and sped off towards Krum.
Camille leaned towards Fleur after a few minutes. "What are they doing?" she asked. "Can you see them?"

Fleur didn’t answer at first. She too like everyone else didn’t know what was really going on. All they were that Harry and Krum spent the next few minutes talking. But being a veela, she was blessed with far sharper eyes than normal human beings so from where she sat, she could see the confusion on both Harry and Krum’s face.

"Talking. They look confused," she said.

"Confused? Of what?"

Fleur just raised her shoulder. "I don't know. Probably because things didn't go as plan?"

"That doesn't make sens... owh." Camille began to understand. She looked up and down the pitch. "They didn't expect a crowd this size."

"Most likely."

"Well they should know better. He's a world class Quidditch player and he's the boy who is not killed. Of course everyone wants to see them."

Fleur just roll her eyes at Camille's attempt to mangle Harry's infamous title but she knew that it wasn't intentional. While they still have some doubt about Harry even after she finished telling them her story, their interest in Harry grew stronger. Even Daphne Lavinge, the most laidback girl within group was bold enough to suggest that they should find a way to get Harry to come to the carriage so that they could determine if Harry was really as legit as what Fleur claimed.

A sudden movement from the above snapped Fleur from her momentary stupor. She looked up and saw Krum flew towards the stand where the Durmstrang students sat. They saw him talking to one of the boys. The boy nodded and together with another male student, he departed from the stand. Krum then returned to Harry.

At this point, the crowd was getting louder and impatient. They began to chant Harry and Krum's name.

It didn't take long before the two boys returned. They both were flying on their brooms while carrying a small wooden chest.

Another bout of talking, and they were off.

Swarms of snitches flew all over the pitch. The girls screamed as the snitches flew towards them, nearly hitting them. Some boys tried to catch the snitches but none of them could. The snitches were just too fast for them.

Fleur tried to track Harry but she couldn’t. Even with her natural abilities, Harry was just too fast for her eyes to follow. And the swarm of snitches did not help either. From time to time, she had to cover her face and ducked whenever she saw a snitch approached her. On every stands, things were just as chaotic as the students tried to protect themselves from the incoming snitches.

Minutes went past. Fleur was beginning to feel irritated. It was getting tiresome trying to protect part of her body from getting hit by a snitch. Of course none of the snitch ever hit anyone but the way they approached made her think that she could get killed by any of them at any given moment.

There was another boom of applause. By this time though, she stopped caring. She even began to regret coming here.

Someone grabbed her arm. She turned to look and saw it was Cassandra.

"This is useless! I can't stand this anymore! We should go back!" said Cassandra.

Fleur couldn't agree more. She beckoned everyone and told them that they were leaving. They rose from the seat but before they could do anything else, somebody screamed...

"Look out!"

She looked and saw Harry came barreling towards them. Her eyes widened. Chaos resumed as everyone scrambled to get out of Harry's way. Fleur herself lost her footing and landed hard on her bottom.

Her bottom hurt and she had never felt so humiliated.
Hovering above her was Harry. She saw him holding a black snitch. There was a triumphant look on his face.

She felt a little bit angry with him for thinking only about the snitch and ignoring her.

She felt someone putting their hands around her arm and tried to lift her up. She looked and saw it was Cassandra.

"Come on, Fleur. Get up," said Cassandra.

It was at the very same moment that Harry chose to look down. He looked towards them, towards her. His eyes widened in surprise. He then immediately threw the caught snitch into his pouch and hovered closer towards her and extended his hand to her.

Cassandra upon seeing this immediately stood aside and watched.

Fleur's eyes darted between Harry's eyes and his offered hand. She was pondering on whether or not to accept his help. Part of her told her not to for he was the one responsible for her current predicament. Funnily enough, another part of her seemed to agree with the other one.

But what Harry said next, or rather the tone of his voice, completely changed her mind.

"I'm sorry, Princess," said Harry softly. "It was my fault. Let me help. You don't want to continue sitting on the floor, do you?"

For some reason, he sounded very much like Harry of old. That one Harry whom she used to remember. There was so much sweetness and warmthness in his voice. It was basically the two things that she dearly missed ever since she returned.

Her expression softened. Slowly but surely, she reached up for his hand and very gently, he pulled her up.

"You're okay?" asked Harry.

Fleur nodded.

And for the next few moments, they lost within each other's eyes.

His eyes. They looked exactly like she used to remember. She saw warmthness, peace and compassion in them, just like always. She remembered getting lost within those pair of eyes whenever they were alone together.

A loud gong startled them.

Harry turned to look at the scoreboard.

"Awh damn!" he cursed. He then turned to her and said, "Listen. I'm sorry for what happened. I'll make it up to you, I promise. But now I need to go." He then looked down. "I may need my hand back, Princess."

Fleur mirrored him and saw that she was still holding his hand and rather tightly at that.

"Oh, I'm sorry," she said as she slowly let go of his hand. For some reason, she was truly reluctant to do that.

Harry smiled kindly at her. "You have a firm grip," he said. He then gave everyone else a nod and sped off into the distance.

Fleur could feel the jealousy emanating from the girls, particularly from the Ravenclaw but she didn't care. She walked towards the metal railing and stood there, silently watching as Harry continued his quest to beat Krum.

Someone walked up and stood beside her.

"I have never seen you giving that look to anyone." It was Cassandra. She took hold of Fleur's hand and smiled at her. "He is really something, isn't he?"

Later that evening...

Krum beat Harry. He beat Harry fair and square.

But the girls of Beauxbaton refused to accept it.
"It wasn't really fair, you know," said Camille. She was lying on Fleur's bed at that time. "He's a world class player and Harry is just a student. It's a lopsided competition. Harry would have beaten him if the playing field is even."

"You watched all that? I can't even see anything with all those stupid things flying around," said Adrienne in disgust.

To say that Fleur was surprised with her friends' reaction to Harry's defeat is an understatement. But she had moved past all that.

Her concern now rest with the one event that will happened that night.

"You're awfully quiet ever since we got back, Fleur. Something's wrong?" asked Lavinge.

Fleur shook her head. "Nothing's wrong, Daphne. I'm just feeling a little bit… tired."

"Oh I know what happened," said Camille while smirking at Fleur. "Didn't you girls see? Harry did a number on her back at the pitch and now she's completely and hopelessly in loooovvvveeeeee…"

Fleur glared at Camille. She picked up a pillow and threw it at the girl. Camille ducked and giggled rather loudly.

Cassandra just shook her heads at Camille's antics. "Alright, that's enough. We don't want to make Fleur more uncomfortable than she already is. So, tonight. Who do you think the goblet will pick? Someone among us maybe?"

"Well, I know for one that Viktor Krum will be the champion of Durmstrang," said Jeanne. "He looks like their best candidate so far. I'll choose Harry to become Hogwarts champion if he's qualified but unfortunately he's not so Harry's off the table. Us?" She looked around. "I don't know. Fleur maybe? If you're really from the future, you would know a lot, won't you? You'll be better than all of us put together."

What Jeanne said took Fleur by surprise.

"I don't care if I'm selected or not," interrupted Camille. "Honestly I really don't understand what the fuss is all about."

"Then why do you tag along if you don't intend to compete, Camille?" asked Cassandra who apparently felt surprised at the revelation. "You could just stay in Paris, you know."

Camille tilted her head and raised an eyebrow at Cassandra. "And just let you girls have all the fun? There's no way I'm going to be left alone and bored at the campus, Cassy. Anyway, Madame Maxime was the one who do the choosing. I can't turn her down, can I?"

Cassandra shook her head.

"Although, if I do get to compete in which I confidently say I won't, I hope you girls won't put too much hope on me. I can't handle the pressure," continued Camille.

"Can't guarantee that," said Marianne as she unwrapped a candy she took out from her pocket and threw it into her mouth. "For one would like to see you compete. We're going to put a lot of pressure on you because we want you to win. But don't worry. I'll write you a beautiful epitaph. You know, just in case."

She then threw a smirk at Camille.

Camille in turn blew a raspberry at Marianne who just giggled in response.

All these while, Fleur was drown in her own thought. She wondered about the event that night, on what would happen once Harry gets chosen. She already knew what her response would be. She would stand by his side. But how can she get to him? She knew she had to be careful with her words. She remembered vividly the event that happened within the small chamber.

But more worryingly, what about her friends? Would they turn against him like what happened before?

In the old timeline, they didn't take kindly of Harry becoming the fourth champion. They were so angry with him and threw a lot of insults at him, claiming that he was nothing than a low life form who cheated because apparently, simply being the Boy-Who-Lived wasn't enough. Of course at that time, she agreed with them. She too was very angry at Harry. She too threw a lot of insults at him.

This was basically the main reason why she didn't tell them that Harry would become the
fourth champion. It was because of the uncertainty of it.

She sighed. For now, all she could hope that they would side with her as much as she would side with Harry.

At 8.00 pm that evening...

They arrived at the Great Hall that evening, fully clad in Beauxbaton uniform. The hall was nearly full when they made their entrance. And as before, they made their way to the Ravenclaw table. For some reason, Cho Chang and her friends acted a little bit cold with them but the Beauxbaton delegates just shrugged it off. They politely greeted their Hogwarts counterparts and took their seats.

The Hogwarts house elves once again outdid themselves, delivering the most sumptuous and luxurious dinner they had ever seen. But hardly any of the Beauxbaton students, especially the girls, had any appetite for it. They seemed to be losing their nerves. More so with Fleur who hardly touched anything on her plate.

This may not be the first time she went through the champion selection but the tension remained the same. She pondered on whether or not she would be selected this time. As before, she dearly wanted to be the champion but this time around, it was for a whole different reason. She kept on glancing towards the Gryffindor table. Several times her eyes met Harry and every time she noticed that concern look he had on his face. She wondered if Harry sensed her anxiety.

She would have to find another way to approach Harry should she wasn't selected to compete.

The dinner was finally over. The last of the golden plates had been wiped clean.

The noise within the hall immediately died down as Professor Dumbledore took to the stage. He was escorted by both Professor Karkaroff and Madame Maxime who looked as tense and expectant as anyone else.

"Well, the goblet is almost ready to make its decision," he said. "I estimate that it will require another minute or so. Now, when the champion's names are called, I would ask them to present themselves in front and go into the next chamber." He then indicated the door behind the staff table. "In there, they shall wait for further instruction."

Dumbledore took out his wand and gave a long sweep with it. All the candles except those inside the floating pumpkins were extinguished. In the state of semi darkness, the Goblet of Fire shone more brightly than ever. Everyone patiently waited. Few of them can be seen checking their watches every now and then.

All of a sudden, the sparkling bright and bluish flames of the goblet turned red. Sparks flew out of it. Next moment, a tongue of flame shot into the air along with a charred piece of parchment. Dumbledore caught it and held the parchment at arm’s length. By this time, the goblet’s flame had return to its original state.

"The champion for Durmstrang," Dumbledore announced in a loud and clear voice. "Will be Mr. Viktor Krum!"

Krum rose to a storm of applause and cheers. Everyone around him, both from Gryffindor and Durmstrang patted his back and shook his hand.

Fleur and her friends watched as Krum then went up to Dumbledore, shook the headmaster's hand and disappeared behind the door to the next chamber.

The clapping and cheering died down. Once again everyone's focus turned towards the goblet. The flame turned red and out came from it another parchment.

"The champion for Beauxbaton," announced Dumbledore.

Fleur held her breath.

"...is Miss Fleur Delacour!"

This time, the applause given out was much louder than before, especially from the male students who finally got to know the name of the extremely beautiful girl.

Fleur let out a sigh of relief. She was once again chosen. The path was now clear for her.

Her friends clapped and cheered for her.

"Always know it would be you, Fleur," said Cassandra, who leaned and gave Fleur a peck on
her cheek.

Fleur muttered 'thank you' to Cassandra. She then stood gracefully. She gave Harry a knowing glance before echoing Viktor and disappeared behind the same door.

Krum who was standing close to the fireplace looked up towards the door when she entered. He gave her a smile. Fleur in turn gave him a curt nod before walking towards the opposite wall and stood facing the entrance into the chamber.

She took the time to observe the chamber. It was just the same as she used to remember. Dimly lit with the only source of illumination came from one small fireplace, the only furniture it had was a couple of old chairs arranged neatly against the wall. As before, portraits of wizards and witches lined up all four walls.

The door into the chamber opened and in came Cedric Diggory. The Hogwarts champion was grinning from ear to ear when he entered but the moment he saw Fleur, his face reddened and he nearly stumbled on his own feet.

Fleur just rolled her eyes and turned her attention back to the door. It would be any minute now. Harry would come through the door. He would receive a few tongue lashings from the adults as before. This time around though, he won't be alone. She would step up and defend him against them. She knew how traumatizing the experience can be for him. She would use that pull him closer to her. She would rebuild his confidence and from then on, they both would work together. She and Harry would chart their own path in this messy tournament. Their friendship would flourish and perhaps when the time is right, it would turn into something more.

At least that was what she hoped for.

The door opened once again. Someone walked in.

But it wasn't whom she expected...

To be continued...

A/n: 2018 has been unkind to me. There were major restructuring/changes within the company I work for. The good news is no one is being let go but I for one had been given extra responsibilities which in turn eat into whatever spare time I got left. There are a lot of other things as well that causes me to unable to keep to my plan but I don't want to bore you guys with those details. This however has given me a different perspective on how I’m going tackle with the writing process. There will be some major changes. All will be done so that I can get the update speed back on track. However the plot shall remain the same.

Anyway, this chapter should at least be 4-5 times longer but I’ve decided that you guys had waited long enough so I decided to put it up. The writing of the next chapter had already begun with planned update within the first two weeks of May.

Many of you PM me asking about the update. I’m sorry that I didn't respond. The main reason is that I can't make a promise nor can I guarantee of when the update can happen.
The Story of Fleur Delacour – 5

But it wasn't who she expected. Instead the grand entrance was made by a short, rosy skin and blue-eyed blonde wizard. He was grinning from ear to ear when he entered the small chamber.

She of course recognized who that wizard was. Ludo Bagman, the Head of the Department of Magical Games and Sports.

Krum straightened up when he saw Ludo entered. Diggory meanwhile just continued to grin. He was clearly over the moon with him being selected to represent Hogwarts in the tournament.

As for Fleur, she just stood there in shock.

Ludo was followed by a large group of people – Professor Dumbledore, Mr. Crouch, Professor Karkaroff, Madame Maxime, Professor Sprout and Professor Moody. Madame Maxime beamed proudly at Fleur the moment she saw her.

"Well done!" Bagman began addressing the three champions. "Well done to the three of you for being chosen as this year's champions of the Triwizard Tournament! As you all would have know, it wasn't easy. Yes it wasn't easy but we made it. A thousand galleons worth in prize money and the chance that your name will forever be up there among the greatest wizards and witches of all time!" He stopped, bouncing on his feet and beaming to all three selected champions standing in front of him. "I am sure that all of you have been hoping to be chosen for weeks and weeks. Now the honor is yours." He then turned towards Mr. Crouch. "Shall we proceed, Barty?"

"Ah yes," said Mr. Crouch. He seemed to be coming out of deep reverie. "Yes… yes we shall proceed. Urm… the First Task."

He moved into the light. Fleur's eyes followed him. It struck her that he seemed to be looking a little bit ill. There were dark shadows beneath his eyes and now that she could look at him a little bit closer, his skin looked a little bit too wrinkly for someone his age. Harry told her a bit about what happened to Mr. Crouch during the Triwizard Tournament. She knew that Mr. Crouch was under some kind of spell and knew that in time, he would be murdered by none other than someone who was also inside the very same room with her. But that wasn't her main concern at that point. Before she could stop herself:-

"Excuse me," she said. "There are only three of us. Shouldn't it be four?"

The whole room became quiet. Only the crackling of the fire burning within the fireplace can be heard. Several of the adults raised their eyebrows. Professor Moody himself began to survey her with interest. As for the other two champions, they just stared at her in astonishment.

"But Miss Delacour, as a matter a fact there should be no more than three champions representing each school. You don't see a fourth school, do you? We don't merely named the tournament as it is for nothing," said Bagman.

By this time, Fleur realized the blunder she just made. "My apologies, Mr. Bagman," she said.

But Bagman just waved Fleur's apology off. "That's alright, Miss Delacour. We all make mistakes," he said smilingly. His cheerfulness returned. "But might I comment you on your good command of English. If I hadn't known you I would have thought you're a British. A very pretty one that is."

Fleur cringed at this. It was another blunder she made. She forgot to mask her accent. She indeed sounded very British. She was about to speak when she felt Madame Maxime who was standing beside her at that time placed her hand around Fleur's shoulder.

"My student iz tired," said Madame Maxime. "Monsieur Crouch if you will, pleez."

She then looked down towards Fleur, subtly warning her not to speak another word.

Fleur obliged.

Mr. Crouch nodded. "Yes... well of course. Shall we continue then?"

With everyone's agreement, Mr. Crouch continued his briefing.

As for Fleur, she just stood there in silent, watching helplessly as her plan fell apart.
All party exited the small chamber nearly twenty minutes later. All concerns had been laid to rest and all questions about the tournament had been answered. Everyone was satisfied. Professor Moody was the first to take his leave but not before he gave Fleur a glance. Fleur however glared back at him. She did nothing to mask her hatred for him.

The Gryffindor table was the first thing she looked once she was out of the chamber but there was no one there. The Great Hall was largely vacant at that time. Everyone else had already returned to their place of accommodation. They were the only one left within the hall.

"What do you mean by a fourth champion, Fleur?" asked Madame Maxime to Fleur as they both made their way along the grassy path towards the carriage.

Fleur shook her head. "It was nothing, Madame Maxime. You're right. I am tired." She then smiled, albeit unconvincingly, at her headmistress.

Madame Maxime glanced sideways at Fleur for a very long time. Much to Fleur’s relief however, she appeared to decide not to press the matter any further.

"I have been meaning to ask you this," said Madame Maxime. "but did we win last time, Fleur?" She apparently decided that a change in the topic of conversation was in order.

Fleur shook her head for the second time. "No. I was caught quite unprepared."

"So, who won?"

"Hogwarts," answered Fleur. She silently hoped that her headmistress wouldn't ask who the winner really was.

Madame Maxime nodded. "I see. Fleur, despite everything I said to you before, I do actually have a second thought about letting you join us, let alone letting you enter the tournament especially after everything you went through. But perhaps you could repay my confidence in you by winning it this time? It will also satiate your parent’s concerns too. After all, this isn't your first time. You would have seen what the other champions, especially the winner, could do. You can use that. I’ll be honest with you. After seeing Hogwarts champion, I doubt he will be lucky this time."

Fleur deduced that Madame Maxime thought that Cedric Diggory was the winner of the Triwizard Tournament in the old timeline. She decided not to correct her headmistress.

"I shall do my best, Madame."

"And I shall expect no less," said Madame Maxime. "You know, when I first took the job, your father was the only one who had absolute confident in me. He said that it is time for a woman to take helm, that Beauxbaton is in overdue for a woman's touch. I want to proof him right."

"But Madame, you did really well as the headmistress of the academy," said Fleur. "Beauxbaton performed really well under your leadership."

Madame Maxime smiled widely at Fleur. "It is true but one shouldn't rest on her laurel. Remember that, Fleur," she said.

They finally arrived at the carriage. The door opened and Madame Maxime graciously let Fleur to enter the carriage ahead of her.

Her friends gathered inside Fleur's living quarter that night, excited to hear of what really went on inside the small chamber. She told them of course but she was careful to leave out the blunders she made earlier.

Madame Maxime came to her room at eleven and announced that beginning that night, Fleur would move to a different living quarter prepped especially for Beauxbaton's champion. They visited Fleur's new living quarter which was at least three times as large as the one Fleur currently shared with Cassandra and much better equipped as well. Like Fleur’s previous quarters, it too had its own bathroom albeit larger. Her friends voiced their jealousy, especially after knowing that Fleur would have the room all to herself.

"Fleur and Cassy are lucky," muttered Camille jealously.

"Lucky? Me? In what way?" asked Cassandra. "I'm about to lose my roommate. How can you call that lucky?"

"Lucky as in you'll be having your room all to yourself," said Camille. She was sitting on the queen sized bed at that time. Madame Maxime left them after she showed Fleur her new room.
"Oh, right."

"Girls, you all can come here anytime you want. You can even sleep here if you want to," said Fleur who sat together with Camille on the bed. "I mean, the room is big."

"What are you talking about, Fleur? You used to sleep in large rooms, remember?" retorted Marianne.

"Yes, but not this far from home." She paused. Thinking. "I take that back. I do have a large bedroom when we resided here in Britain after me and Harry married. But that was before and I seldom sleep alone. I tell you what, why don't each of you take turns sleeping here. I could use some company."

"Harry would be insane if he dares to leave you alone on the bed. I know I won't," Marianne teased. She let out a laugh when she saw Fleur's face reddened.

Fleur just glared at her.

"I think that's a good idea," Adrienne agreed. "We also can have sleepovers once in a while."

"I absolutely love that idea. Maybe I'm not the champion but at least I can brag back at home that I had the chance to sleep inside a Triwizard Champion's bedroom," said Marianne.

"That is if Fleur doesn't make you sleep on the floor after you teased her, Mary," said Camille. She sniggered once she saw the look on Marianne's face.

"Yikes! You won't, would you?" asked Marianne to Fleur.

"I'll think about it," said Fleur. She looked down and rubbed her sole to the polished hardwood floor. "The floor does looks comfortable, Mary," she continued and looked slyly at Marianne who at that time was staring wide-eyed at her.

"But not tonight," interrupted Cassandra who at that time was shaking her head at Fleur and Camille's antics. "Tonight we're going to let Fleur have this room all to herself. We'll decide on the rotation tomorrow."

Everyone murmured their agreement.

"I'll take the last rotation if you girls don't mind. Hopefully by then Fleur will forget what I said," said Camille.

"You wish."

Madame Maxime came to the room at 11.30pm and began shooing the girls. "It's getting late and all of you will have classes tomorrow morning. Get back to your room, all of you."

The girls bid Fleur goodnight and they exited the living quarters, leaving only Madame Maxime and Fleur.

Madame Maxime walked over towards the bed and sat on it. She gestured Fleur to sit with her.

Fleur obliged.

"Will you be okay sleeping alone, Fleur?" asked Madame Maxime.

"I will be fine, Madame. Thank you," said Fleur. "But I would like one of my friends to accompany me every night starting tomorrow. That is, if you don't mind."

Madame Maxime nodded. "Of course. This is your room now, Fleur. You can do whatever you want just as long as you do not overstep the boundaries as outlined in our rules and regulations."

Fleur smirked at Madame Maxime. "Well, you know me, Madame. My day won't be complete if I don't break at least ten rules before breakfast."

Any other students would be given detentions if they tried to be cheeky with Madame Maxime but this was Fleur. She always got away with everything but then again, she was never a troublemaker to begin with and had never misused her preferential treatment. That was part of the reasons on why Madame Maxime was so fond of her.

The Beauxbaton headmistress laughed and shook her head at her favorite student's remark. She went on to playfully pinch Fleur's cheek. "You must be tired. Get some rest tonight, darling. Your classes start tomorrow. There will be changes to the classes' schedule and since you're a Triwizard champion now, special arrangements shall be made for you. We obviously
They had a free period before lunch in which they spent most of it inside the carriage's
Fleur and the rest returned to their rooms half an hour before lunch to freshen up. She was just coming out of the bathroom when she noticed something outside her bedroom windows. She stepped closer to the windows and stood watch as Harry and the rest of his classmates were having their class with Hogwarts gamekeeper and Madame Maxime's future husband, Rubeus Hagrid.

Crouching and with a quill and a parchment within his hands, Harry was busy watching an odd looking creature crawling on the grass. Her husband once told her that he was never an attentive student in classes. This Harry however was just as attentive as she was.

Fleur shook her head. There was no way any of these could be more confusing.

Realizing that her friends would be waiting for her at the lobby before they leave for the castle to have lunch, she turned around and was about to leave when she suddenly spotted Daphne Greengrass walking over towards Harry. She decided to stay and watch.

It took him a while but Harry did finally notice Daphne standing beside him. He gave her a brisk acknowledgement and immediately returned to his task. Not once he showed any interest in striking a conversation with Hogwarts' only veela. Well, make that two since Astoria also was one.

Fleur found this amusing but totally not unexpected. It was so far the only similarity she noticed between this 'new' Harry and the old one. He was just like her father who was able to resist veela's charm and beauty and Daphne can be quite formidable whenever she unbound and free from her restraint.

Daphne crouched really close to Harry and they continued to talk. Both their backs were facing Fleur so she couldn't really tell if Harry’s reaction remained the same. She saw him pointing at something during the course of their conversation. After a while, Harry stood up and was about to walk away when Daphne called him back. He stayed and they continued to talk. At one point, Daphne leaned closer to him but midway, she stopped. Her face reddened a little bit. She walked away after that but not before she held and squeezed Harry’s hand.

Fleur froze on the spot. She knew that look on Daphne's face. She knew what it meant. The veela with the lush, dark hair was attracted to Harry.

They were waiting for Madame Maxime at the lobby. The Beauxbaton headmistress was having an important meeting with one of the school directors. She hadn’t come out from the meeting room yet.

Fleur was awfully quiet during the wait. Not only that, her friends had to come to her room to get her when she failed to turn up at the lobby on time. They even had to knock on her door for a long time before she answered. She was planning to excuse herself from lunch before she remembered that the next meal won't be until that night. They were not planning on going for tea break since none of them felt like walking to the castle multiple times in one afternoon. Begrudgingly, she joined them in the end.

The scene between Harry and Daphne kept on replaying in her mind during the wait. It wasn’t uncommon for veelas to become attracted to their fellow’s mate or spouse and she was well aware that throughout her marriage, many veelas held deep interest in Harry. They did nothing about it though. There was an unwritten rule about the restriction of veelias interfering with other veelas’ affair. As far as she knows, no veela ever break that rule.

But then, Daphne Greengrass was put in the House of Slytherin and Fleur was aware of that house’s traits. She wouldn’t put it past Daphne to break the rule and claimed Harry as hers.

Madame Maxime and the director came to them at last. The director greeted them and congratulated Fleur personally for being selected as Beauxbaton's representative in the prestigious tournament. Madame Maxime then escorted him to the fireplace before returning to them. She gestured them to follow her.

Madame Maxime greeted someone just as she stepped out of the carriage.

"Monsieur Hagrid," she said.

"Olympe," a gruff voice responded. "Shall we?"

Madame Maxime's huge frame filled up the door space so Fleur couldn't see who was outside the carriage but she recognized the owner of that voice. It belongs to Hagrid, Hogwarts gamekeeper cum teacher.

Madame Maxime stepped down the ladder. "My students must come wiz us," she said.

"Of course," replied Hagrid.
"Come," said Madame Maxime, waving her hands towards her students.

One by one they stepped out of the carriage and began gathering around Madame Maxime. Fleur followed Marianne and stepped into the sunlight. It took a while for her eyes to adjust to the brightness but when it did, she was surprised to see someone she totally wasn't expecting.

Harry Potter.

The boy was standing not far from Hagrid with Hermione and Ronald Weasley flanking him.

She looked around and noticed that the trio was the only one there. The rest of his class must have gone back to the castle. It was lunch time anyway. The trio must have decided to accompany Hagrid which was why they stayed behind.

Her friends were eyeing Harry. She noticed that. But with Madame Maxime around, there was nothing they could do.

All of them began making their way towards the castle. Fleur herself was walking in the middle of the group with Harry, Ron and Hermione making up the rear. For some reason during the walk, she felt something or rather someone was drilling through the back of her head. She glanced sideways and saw Harry staring at her every now and then. His expression, it was as if he had something he wanted to say to her but couldn't. She quickly looked back to the front and began pondering on whether or not she should give him that chance. She was still a little bit furious with Harry's interaction with Daphne. She knew Harry didn't really give Daphne much room to maneuver but her woman's heart still ache.

Then again, it wasn't Harry's fault. It wasn't him who made the approach. It was Daphne. It would be unfair to punish him.

She made her decision and began to slow down her pace until at one point she ended up walking just in front of him. Just as she expected, Harry took the bait. He dashed forward and began walking beside her.

"Hi," he greeted her.

"'Ello, 'Arry Potter," she replied, still looking to the front.

"Listen, I didn't get to congratulate you on becoming one of the champions," he said.

"It iz okay. You don't ave to," she said.

"So, how do you feel?" he asked.

She glanced sideways at him and from his expression, knew that he worried about her. "I will be fine. I promise," she said, hoping that it would somewhat appease his concern for her safety.

Harry nodded. "I know you will be. And I'm sorry for what happened back at the Quidditch field," he said softly. He sounded very apologetic and genuinely sincere, much like Harry of old, she noticed.

Her heart leapt a little. She ended up giving him a smile. "Your apology 'as been accepted, Monsieur Potter," she said. "I know you mean well."

Harry nodded once again. "Well, yes. So I better go now. Have a great lunch."

Fleur felt surprise and was taken aback on how quickly Harry wanted to leave. She wanted him to stay so that they could talk more. Unfortunately, there was nothing she could do at that moment. She just watched him as he fell back towards Hermione and Ron.

It was at this point that Cassandra, who was closely watching the interaction between Fleur and Harry, decided to chime in.

"Wait! You can withstand 'er! 'Ow?!"

The whole Beauxbaton females immediately stopped walking and stared at Harry.

Fleur watched Harry became uneasy. The boy nevertheless managed to cook up a smile at Cassandra. "I honestly don't know. Perhaps it wasn't her beauty that I saw. Maybe it was something else," he said.

Harry's excuse was pretty lame but nevertheless it reminded Fleur to Harry of old. She herself did asked her husband on why veelas had no effect on him. He told her that he had no idea. The only different was that unlike this one, the old Harry didn't mumble nonsense. Perhaps veelas did have an effect on this 'new' Harry.
Cassandra raised an eyebrow. Fleur could tell that she was deeply amused by Harry.

"Such as what?" asked Cassandra.

Harry just shrugged. "I'm just a fourteen year old boy, Cassandra. I don't think I'm really qualified to talk things such as these."

Another lame excuse but that wasn't the reason why all of them were baffled.

Cassandra's eyebrows furrowed. "'Ow did you know my name? I never told you zhem!"

Silence crept in. The girls exchanged glances between them. They also gave Fleur a knowing look. Fleur in turn wondered the same thing. The only thing they seemed to unable to agree upon was on how to respond to it.

"We never met you before, 'Arry Potter. 'Ow did you know 'er name?" asked Camille.

"Is it that strange that I know her name?"

"Yes it iz. You called 'er by 'er first name. Strangers don't usually do zhat. And zhe way you spoke to 'er; it waz az if you already know 'er for long," explained Camille.

It took a while but Harry did manage to come up with another excuse. "I heard you girls talking. It was from that there that I got her name. On why I used her first name? It was because I don't know her family name or her middle name if she has any. I don't know how else I'm going to call her:"

Finally, an excuse that made sense. Unfortunately for Harry, and silently acknowledged by Fleur, that excuse gave Cassandra another bullet for her to shoot Harry with.

Cassandra crossed her arms to her chest. "So you understand French," she assumed. "You know we only talk between ourselves in zhat language. But it still doesn't answer the question on why you can withstand 'er. We want to know why, 'Arry Potter."

Fleur felt that Cassandra was asking the wrong question. It didn't matter that Harry can withstand her allure. Her father could and no one asked any question about it. She was about to voice her opinion when suddenly-

"What iz zhis all about?!"

It was Madame Maxime. She came marching towards them after realizing that only she and Hagrid had reached the castle. Hagrid trailed her from behind. She gave a look of surprise when she saw Harry standing beside Fleur. That apparently drew her ire.

"'Arry Potter, if zhis iz one of your attempt to sabotage the Beauxbaton champion, I shall 'ave you reported to your 'eadmaster for -"

"No-, no it wasn't like that, Madame Maxime," Harry quickly interrupted her. "I was just congratulating Fleur on her being the champion for her school. And I also want to apologize to her for what happened yesterday at the Quidditch pitch."

"I could 'ardly believe zhat. You're too close with zhe Durmstrang champion and zhe rest of 'iz friends," Madame Maxime retorted. "Zhere maybe risk."

"Madame Maxime, the reason I am close to Viktor Krum is because we both share the same passion that is Quidditch and the main reason why he and his friends moved to Gryffindor table is because they could not stand the Slytherin," explained Harry. "You can ask any of them yourself if you want to."

Madame Maxime crossed her arm to her chest. "It still doesn't give you zhe right to get close to our champion, 'Arry Potter. I want you to stay away from 'er az far az possible."

"Olympe," said Hagrid. "I'm sure Harry doesn't mean ter do anythin' ter yer students. They're with me. I'm just escorting them back ter the castle."

But Hagrid's reasoning fell to deaf ear.

All the while Fleur was watching Harry. She saw anger boiling in him. She raised her hand to touch him on his shoulder and hope that gesture would calm him down somewhat. But before her hand could reach him, Harry already fired his own retort:-

"You have no problem with your students sitting and mingling with the Ravenclaw when you know they will vouch for Cedric Diggory anyway. Why the double standard, Madame? Do you think we the Gryffindor would rally behind the Durmstrang just because they sit at our table and Viktor being my friend? Why do you and your students even come here if this is the way
you are going to act?"

Madame Maxime's eyes narrowed when she heard what he just said. "Zhat iz rude of you to say zhat. I won't 'ave it!"

"Madame, please," Fleur suddenly cut in before Harry could reply. "Harry Potter was telling the truth. He was just congratulating me and apologizing for what he did yesterday. I don't think he meant me any harm."

"He still should not get that close to you, my dear," replied Madame Maxime. Her voice softened. "You know as well as I do on what happened every time boys and men tried to approach you. Bad things happened. You are our champion. I don't want you to divert your focus away from the tournament and losing it."

"I assure you Madame, my focus will remain on the tournament and I am fully capable of taking care of myself. I do want to win," said Fleur. "As you can see, Harry Potter manages to remain as himself even as I stand here right beside him. Nothing bad happened. I can vouch for him." She turned to look at him. "I trust him. Completely."

"You just met him, Fleur. How can you trust him that easily?"

Fleur's eyebrows furrowed. She began to wonder if Madame Maxime had forgotten everything that happened for the past few weeks. But of course she couldn't bring that matter up right there and then, especially when Harry, Ron and Hermione were around.

Fleur took a few moments to glance at Harry. Turning back to Madame Maxime, she answered, "Something tells me that I should trust him."

Madame Maxime went forward and put her massive hands on Fleur's shoulder. "I made a promise to your parents that I will take good care of you and your sister when she attends Beauxbaton. It is an oath that I do not take lightly."

"I am aware of that, Madame. All I ask is that you give him a chance. If he isn't the person whom I think he is, he will have me to deal with. The consequences can be," she turned to look at Harry. ":severe."

Harry cocked his eyebrows at Fleur's warning. It took a while before Madame Maxime finally nodded. From her expression, Fleur could see that she began to understand what Fleur really meant.

"Very well," she said. She then turned to face Harry. "Fleur vouched for you, 'Arry Potter. She trusted you and zherefore so shall I. I will accept everyzhing zhat she said but you would do well to remember to not being rude to a teacher."

Fleur could see that Harry was grinding his teeth. He was still boiling on the inside, she could feel it. She could only hope that Harry won't fan the flames even further.

"I'm sorry," he finally said, much to Fleur's relief. "I apologize for being rude, Madame. I'm sorry if I hurt your feeling and I apologize for disturbing your champion. It was never my intention to do her any harm. I bid her good luck in the competition and I hope that the odd will be in her favour. It won't be for nothing that the Goblet of Fire chose her as the champion. I'm sure she will do great."

Madame Maxime stared at him for the moment. She finally gave him a nod and left for the castle.

Hagrid gave Harry a nod of approval and a wink before he followed Madame Maxime.

One potential crisis averted.

"You're not out of zhe woods yet, 'Arry Potter," reminded Cassandra. "You still 'ave us to contend with."

He just rolled his eyes. "Like I didn't know that."

"Excusez-moi?!"

"Err nothing," he quickly replied. "All of you should go and take your lunch while there's still time. I'm sorry for holding you girls up." He was about to rejoin Ron and Hermione when Cassandra called him back.

"Where are you going?"

Harry turned back. "Back to the castle. With them." He pointed to both Hermione and Ron.
who were standing awkwardly nearby. Ron was petrified, no doubt due to the after effect of having Fleur standing just a few feet away from him.

Cassandra cocked an eyebrow. "I told you zhat you still 'ave us to contend with."

"So?"

"You are going to walk with us. Your friends can join us," said Cassandra. "Come."

"Do I have a choice?"

"No!"

Harry nearly jumped backward when all of Fleur's squad members answered him in unison. He looked at Fleur. She gave him an imperceptible nod and a look that said 'Just do whatever it is they say and get it over with.'

He raised both of his hand as a sign of defeat and said, "Alright." He then gestured to his two best friends to join the Beauxbaton group.

Together with the Beauxbaton male students, they began to walk towards the castle.

"You 'aven't answered our question, 'Arry Potter," said Camille.

"And that question is important because-?"

"The reason iz not important," said Camille, glancing at Fleur.

"Fine," said Harry. "I think I know the reason why but I'm not going to state the obvious. You want to know the answer I'll give you one. Then answer is... I don't know."

Camille cocked an eyebrow. "You seriously don't know?"

Harry glanced at Fleur who looked back at him calmly. "Yeah," he nodded. "I truly don't know. I know men will melt or go crazy whenever she is around. I truly don't know why I did not end that way. I wish I know why."

"Self control?" wondered Camille. "Or maybe perhaps you're into men?" she teased. Few of the girls and the boys sniggered.


"Az a matter a fact, you are zhe first," Marianne who was walking at the opposite side of Fleur. "Wiz zhe exception of Monsieur Delacour. By zhe way, remember Pierre, Fleur?"

Fleur snorted in disgust. "I really wish that you would stop bring him up, Mary. You know as well as I do he's very disgusting."

"I know. Luckily he's now no longer in Beauxbaton."

It was at that point that Marianne noticed the changes in Harry's demeanour. "Harry? Are you alright?" she asked.

Fleur was also staring at him in concern.

"Yeah. Yeah I'm fine," Harry hastily answered.

"Somezhing bothered you?" asked Marianne again.

Harry shook his head. "No. I'm fine. I'm good."

Marianne nodded. "Can I ask you a question?"

Harry just shrugged.

"What iz izat you want from Fleur?" she asked.

"Nothing."

"Nozhing? Are you sure?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah. There's nothing I want from her. Maybe a friendship? That is if she is gracious enough."
He gave Fleur a faint smile before he looked away and continued his journey towards the castle ahead of her.

"Do you think what I think?" Cassandra whispered to Fleur as they followed Harry from behind.

"As much as I want to believe it, it's far too early to make any conclusions, Cassy. We need proof," Fleur whispered back.

Cassandra nodded. "You're right. It's all up to you now, Fleur."

"Me?"

"Yes. You. The rest of us just met him. You're the one who really know him, remember?" stated Cassandra. "You know what he's like."

"Shhh!"

They finally arrived at the castle but before they entered the Great Hall, Cassandra stretched out her hand and held Harry back. "We will see you again, yes?"

"Yeah. If you want to," said Harry. "I'm stuck in this castle for at least a year. I don't plan to go anywhere else."

Cassandra let go of his arm and nodded satisfactorily. "Good. We're still not finish. We'll see you again soon. Come, Fleur."

Her eyes and Harry's met. She gave him a reassuring smile before she turned to follow her friends. Harry however failed to reply to that smile, leaving Fleur dumbfounded.

Back at the carriage...

They had one lesson that afternoon, Advance Charm. It was supposedly Fleur's most favourite subject but for some reason, she just wanted the lesson to end as early as it can.

The girls gathered inside Fleur's room after the lesson ended. Marianne brought along her CD boombox. The song 'The Last to Know' sung by Celine Dion was played at that time.

Fleur was pacing around within her room when the girls arrived. Cassandra berated her for failing to change her school uniform despite their last lesson of the day ended half an hour ago and for failing to properly eat her lunch. Indeed, Fleur ate very little during lunch that day.

"I know you're thinking about Harry but please for the love of God change your uniform or else I'm going to start calling you 'the beautiful but smelly' Fleur from now on," said Cassandra.

Fleur pouted her lips but nevertheless, she obliged.

"Harry doesn't look very happy," said Adrienne when Fleur, now fully freshened up and in new clothing rejoined them.

"You noticed?" said Camille as she dug into a jar of homemade almond macaroons she brought along with her.

Adrienne nodded. "Wonder why."

"His mood changed after both of you mentioned Pierre," said Daphne Lavinge to Fleur and Marianne. The three of them were sitting at the dining table.

"You saw that too, huh?" said Marianne to which Daphne Lavinge nodded.

"Is there any chance that you might mention anything about Pierre in your previous life, Fleur?" asked Daphne Lavinge.

Fleur pondered for a moment. "I told him everything Pierre did to me," said Fleur as she took the jar of almond macaroons Camille gave her. But instead taking one of the cookies, she simply placed the jar in the middle of the table. She really didn't feel hungry. "He was... beyond angry. He said that if he ever meets Pierre, he will murder that little bastard, bring him back to life and kill him again. And he won't use the Unforgiveable Curse simply because it's too easy!"
"He said that?"

Fleur nodded. "Word by word."

"That's... cold. Very cold," said Daphne Lavinge.

"I know but honestly I don't care. I hate Pierre anyway," said Fleur.

"That explains it," said Adrienne.

"That explains nothing, Adrienne," Daphne Lavinge interjected. "Look, Fleur is right and I'm trying to be realistic here. It's still too early to deduce anything. That mood changes we saw from Harry, it could be either he remembers about Pierre and is still mad at him or he knows nothing about that boy and is simply jealous because we mention some other boy's name."

"I know Harry isn't the jealous type," said Fleur. "At least that much I know from my Harry. This Harry, well... I don't know. He's... odd. Just odd."

"That's bad news," said Cassandra.

"I know. But it isn't just Harry I'm interested in. I need to know why I'm back. There must be a reason on why I was put back here, in this time. I may need to do something. I just don't know what it is," said Fleur. She then got off her seat and began pacing the room once again. "I've been giving a lot of thought ever since I got back here. If this Harry isn't my Harry, that's fine. I will find my way back to him. My only hope is that his fundamental doesn't change, that underneath he is still the same man, just lacking the memory. That alone is good enough for me. I can work with that."

"And you still think that you can reel him in?" asked Marianne.

"Well, I'm a veela."

"I don't think that would be enough if what you told us about your past is true." Fleur stopped pacing. She crossed her arm to her chest and sighed. She stared into the distance, to a place only she knew and for the next few minutes, she spoke nothing.

"Fleur?"

Fleur turned to Marianne. "As long as I don't repeat my past mistakes, I can make him mine again. All I need is patience and perseverance. Anyway, if I remember correctly, Harry doesn't really attracted to anyone at this point." She paused. She suddenly remembered Cho Chang, the Asian girl Harry used to tell her about. She knew Harry once had a crush on that girl and for a brief period dated her. It didn't work as well as he would like which she privately felt thankful.

"But what about that girl, the one with her name start with a G if I'm not mistaken," asked Adrienne before Fleur could continue speaking.

Fleur scoffed at that. "Ginny Weasley? I'm not worried about her. She's just a push over. Wait till Harry finds out what she's really like," said Fleur as she took back her seat beside Cassandra. "Like I said, I'm a veela."

It was at that point that Fleur's stomach chose to grumble loudly, taking everyone in surprise. Marianne, Camille and Adrienne were rolling on the floor. They laughed uncontrollably. Daphne Lavinge just shook her head but she nevertheless smiled.

"Annnd... you're hungry!" said Cassandra, laughing as she pushed the jar of almond macaroons towards one superbly embarrassed Fleur.

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**That night...**

She ignored him most of the time during dinner just out of spite. Old Harry knew that she didn't like to be ignored. This younger Harry apparently needed to be taught the same lesson.

They hammered out a plan that afternoon, courtesy of Marianne. She suggested that they invited Harry to the carriage. Daphne Lavinge objected. She told them that Madam Maxime won't allow any outsiders to enter. Marianne countered by saying that Madame Maxime would agree to every Fleur's request.

"How else are we going learn more about him?" she reasoned. "We don't spend our time at the castle except during meal times. We can't stop him right in the middle of the corridor and have a lengthy and intimate conversation with him without starting rumors."
Inviting him to the carriage alone is enough to start rumors, Mary," stated Daphne Lavinge. "Yes but we can at least have a lengthy and intimate conversation with him without anyone breathing down our neck."

Fleur cocked an eyebrow. "Intimate?"

"Yes," replied Marianne rather enthusiastically.

Fleur tilted her head and smiled. "Well if you want to know how Harry and I spent our alone time together; no can do. That's our secret. If this Harry is indeed mine, I'll make sure that he won't tell either."

Marianne pouted her lips. "Killjoy."

It took some persuasion but Fleur finally agreed to the plan. She was surprisingly the most resistive to the idea of the group. She agreed to ask Madame Maxime to allow Harry into their carriage. All it matters now was to set the date of his visit. Cassandra suggested Saturday coming weekend. They agreed. Cassandra took the role of writing the invitation note. All they need was to find someone who could act as a messenger. They found it in a third year Ravenclaw girl. The girl looked at Cassandra in a rather suspicious way but still she took the note. They saw her walking towards the trio at the end of the dinner and handed the note to Harry just as he was about to exit the Great Hall. The boy took it. He gave Fleur one last look in which she replied before leaving the dining hall.

The very next morning...

She was greeted by a sight of a beautiful snowy owl when she came out of the bathroom that morning. That owl was perching on the table beside the window at that time. The owl gave her a hoot.

"Hello," she greeted the owl.

The owl hooted back.

The owl seemed to look familiar to her. She knew that she had seen it before but she couldn't remember when or where.

"We got a reply from Harry," said Cassandra who at that time was sitting on the edge of the bed she shared with Fleur the night before. "Apparently, the Durmstrang got to him first before we do."

She then held out the letter to Fleur who gingerly took it.

"So I guess we'll just have to wait then," said Fleur, putting down the letter after she finished reading it.

"Seems like it," said Cassandra. "I would have thought that he would be more interested to come here than going to the Durmstrang ship."

"He's a man of his word, Cassy. He won't back down on his promise."

Cassandra shrugged. "If he is indeed your man, Fleur. Or at least the man you used to know. That's what we need to find out. That's the reason why we invited him, remember?" She then got off the bed and walked towards the owl and began stroking it. "This is a truly beautiful owl. I don't think this owl belongs to the school. Most likely it has an owner. Probably Harry."

Then it struck Fleur. Of course she had seen it. At the Burrow when she was staying there to get to know the Weasley better. She was just being employed by The Gringotts Bank as a curse breaker at that time. Her first husband was the one who invited her. She could only admire the owl from afar. Hedwig won't let her get near it. Hedwig died nearly a year after that. Harry would tell her the tale of Hedwig every time they saw a white snowy owl. Fleur could tell he really missed his loyal companion.

"Of course it didn't belong to the school! This owl is indeed belongs to Harry. Hedwig is her name!" she said. She rushed to the owl, only to stop midway. She wondered if Hedwig would allow her to get close to it. But the owl did seem to be comfortable with Cassandra's presence.

Cassandra sensed Fleur's reluctance. She gestured the veela to get closer while she continued stroking the bird. "It's okay."

Gathering her courage, Fleur walked towards Hedwig. Much to her surprise, Hedwig didn't snap its beak at her this time. It allowed Fleur to get closer to it. It even allowed Fleur to stroke her.

"So its name is Hedwig?" asked Cassandra to which Fleur nodded.
“Yes. Harry is very fond of her. She was the only friend he had while he was staying with his relatives during the summer,” said Fleur as she continued to stroke the bird. “Hedwig died while protecting Harry from the attack launched by Voldemort’s Death Eaters.”

Cassandra gasped at this. "You mentioned the Dark Lord’s name! You shouldn't do that!"

Indeed, Voldemort was well known even on continental Europe despite his reign of terror was mostly concentrated on the British Isle.

Fleur looked sharply at her closest friend. "I fought him and his legion during the war. I'm not afraid of him." Turning back to Hedwig, she continued, "Besides, it's just a name."

"Wish I'm as brave as you," said Cassandra, shaking her head. Then she remembered something. "Am I to understand that Harry never had a good summer while he was in school?"

Fleur shook her head. "No. His relatives were horrible to him. Hedwig was the only friend he got and that's why he loved her deeply. It's a long story, Cassy."

Cassandra nodded in understanding.

Suddenly a brilliant idea struck Fleur. She turned to Cassandra, grinning. "I think I know how to get Harry to come here this Saturday."

"How?" asked Cassandra curiously.

Still grinning, Fleur didn’t answer. Instead, she turned back to look at Hedwig. "You're going to stay here. You're not going back," she cooed at the bird while at the same time continued to stroke the bird. Hedwig at the same time nipped her beak affectionately at Fleur. "I will take good care of you. From now on, you're my insurance, Hedwig."

The rest of the day went without a hitch. Fleur however did receive an owl from Gabrielle who berated her for not writing back. She nearly slapped herself when she realized she didn’t write to her family ever since she arrived at Scotland. She hastily wrote a letter back to Gabrielle, apologizing to her and telling her sister everything that happened for the past couple of days. She also wrote a letter to her parents and told them everything she found out so far about Harry. She mentioned about inviting Harry to the carriage. She hoped that she would receive no objection from her mother and father.

She was busy revising the day's lesson at the carriage's library when someone came to visit her unexpectedly that night. It was the last person she wanted to see in the whole wide world. Someone she formerly trusts but now couldn’t.

Daphne Greengrass.

To be continued...

A/n: I want to end 'The story of Fleur Delacour’ this chapter but that couldn’t happen. Hopefully it will within the next chapter so that I can get back to the main story. So I'll see you guys again in the next two years hahahahaha!
51. Chapter 51

The Story of Fleur Delacour - 6

It was supposed to be a lovely and relaxing night. She and the rest of the girls were planning to gather inside her room after the prep hours, drinking some hot cocoa and talking about their plans that coming weekend.

But Daphne's unannounced visitation soured her mood greatly.

The beautiful brunette however was oblivious to all of that. Daphne, standing beside her, continued beaming her smile to Fleur. "Good evening," she said. Without waiting for Fleur's response, she pulled out the empty chair beside Fleur and sat on it.

"Good to see you again, Daphne," greeted Cassandra who was sitting opposite of Fleur. "It's been a while. I expect you to come see us a lot sooner."

"I know. I'm sorry," said Daphne apologetically. "I want to come earlier but I'm just too busy. You know what with the school works, Halloween and the Triwizard Tournament. Speaking of that." She turned to Fleur. "Congratulations!"

Fleur however failed to respond to Daphne's congratulatory greeting. She just continued to stare at the girl sitting beside her.

"You didn't bring along your sister and Tracy with you," stated Daphne Lavinge who noticed that the other Daphne was alone. "Do they allow you to venture out of the castle at this time of night?"

"It's not curfew hours yet so it's fine. This castle is well protected. As long as I don't venture into the Dark Forest like a certain boy who lived who did, I'm safe. My sister and Tracy actually want to come but they couldn't. Astoria is attending her House meeting as we speak. Tracy got detention, unfortunately. But I promised to them that I'll bring them along next time," explained Daphne. "The castle compound really needs more lighting though. I can hardly see a thing," she grumbled.

Adrienne looked up from her book. Her eyebrows creased. "You mean the forest bordering Hogwarts? That forest? What's he doing in there?" she asked.

Daphne shrugged her shoulders. "No idea. He's a trouble magnet but I'm sure my cousin here won't mind." She smirked at Fleur and reached out to squeeze her cousin's thigh. "That's probably one of his traits that made Fleur attracted to him in the first place."

"Tracy's been given detention? What did she do?" asked Marianne, changing the subject.

"She attacked two boys in our common room this afternoon. It's a long story," said Daphne who at that time was beginning to get visibly uncomfortable. She kept shooting glances at Fleur ever since she got there actually.

Given the way Daphne acted at that point, Fleur had a hunch that whatever happened to Tracy must have something to do with Daphne. The girl clearly wanted to talk to her about it but she was probably too embarrassed. In the past, time and time again Daphne would tell her about how boys tried to seduce her. They literally tried everything just to gain her attention. Flowers. Gifts. Love notes. Love potions. It began as soon as Daphne entered Hogwarts for her first year. Even at eleven years old, like Fleur, her beauty was astounding. Daphne kept rigidly to herself which helped tone down her popularity and her being a Ravenclaw dared to get close to her. Tracy had always been Daphne's guardian angel, protecting her from the boys. Boys seemed to hate Tracy for that. What Daphne had gone through certainly was no different from what she experienced which was why both of them could relate to each other. Daphne was lucky though. Unlike Fleur, she had the ability to conceal her allure. If she hadn't, things could get a lot worse.

The carriage's library won't be a suitable place for a heart to heart conversation. There would be other place for that.

"Does this have something to do with you? You can tell us," urged Marianne. What Daphne said apparently caught her attention and she was eager to listen to the rest of it.

But Daphne seemed wasn't too keen to tell them more about it. "It was nothing. It's just one of those stupid things she did, really. I'll talk to her when I see her again tonight." Turning back to Fleur, she said, "By the way, you got flowers. Lots of them by the look of it."

Fleur was surprised by this. She though didn't see Daphne carrying any bouquet of flowers with her.
"Well, where did you put it? Who sent her those flowers?" asked Cassandra curiously.

"Oh, I'm not the messenger. Madame Maxime showed them to me when I arrived at the lobby. She was on the way to destroy them. She said she began intercepting those bouquets of flowers a couple of days ago. They came from Hogwarts. She reasoned that those flower bouquets might be tempered with which is why she wants to destroy them instead of handing them over to you. She showed me some of the cards that came along with the bouquet. Didn't know Roger Davies was a hopeless romantic. You should have seen what he wrote in his card," said Daphne, shaking her head. "Sadly, Harry Potter wasn't one of the senders."

Daphne was clearly a little bit over cheerful when she uttered that last sentence which was a little bit ironic.

Fleur of course remembered Roger Davies and their disastrous Yule Ball date. She dumped him right on the same night when he tried to outrage her modesty when they were sitting together at the castle compound after they had done dancing. Part of it was her fault anyway. She was the one who ensnare Davies in the first place and it all because of he was quite a good looking boy and she wanted someone who matches her looks. She thought that given his soft spoken manner he would be a perfect fit for her and that he would be able to control himself. Apparently she was asking too much of him and ended up disappointed. It was Pierre all over again. She remembered flirting with Cedric Diggory once before going for Roger Davies and would have wanted him to be her date for the Yule Ball. Cedric being a champion put an end to her hope.

"Who's Roger Davies?" asked Cassandra.

Daphne was about to answer when Fleur beat her to it.

"He's a Ravenclaw. He always sits not far from us at the Great Hall."

"You recognize him?"

Fleur nodded. "As a matter a fact, I know him. He was my date during the previous Yule Ball. I mean in my previous life," explained Fleur. She then proceeded to tell the whole story of what transpired that night from the start of the Yule Ball until the end. She however was careful enough to leave out the part where she flirted with both Davies and Diggory. She felt embarrass by it.

"In retrospect, I should have seen that coming," she said as she finished her story.

"Remind me to put a curse on that boy the next time we see him," said Cassandra. She was fuming after she heard what Roger Davies did to Fleur.

"You do no such thing, Cassy. Roger had yet done anything to me this time. How are you going to explain to them when they find out you attack a boy from another school without any valid reason?"

"We can call it a preemptive measure. You know, just in case," said Cassandra.

But Fleur shook her head in disagreement and gave Cassandra a warning look.

By this time, all the girls including those who weren't members of Fleur's squad were listening to their conversation with rapt attention. Books and home works all forgotten.

"Can we call it a day and go to your room, Fleur?" asked Camille.

"Have you finished writing Madame Aubel essay? It's due tomorrow if you forget," said Marianne.

Camille began shuffling her parchments and putting away her books and quills. "I only need to do the conclusion. I'll do it later tonight. I'm not in the mood right now. These conversations we're having are far more interesting than studying apparently," she said. She then stood up and looked around at her friends. "I heard a mug of hot chocolate calling my name. Let's go!" she urged.

There was no need to tell the girls twice.

**Fleur's living quarters later that night...**

They made a stop at the carriages's kitchen to make themselves each a mug of hot chocolate before retreating to Fleur's bedroom.

Daphne voiced her amazement at the sight of Fleur's bedroom and its amenities.
"This is as big as my dormitory except that I have to share it with four other girls. Tracy and Astoria should have come and see this," she said. There was a hint of jealousy in her voice.

The conversation that evening centered on the coming weekend when Harry supposedly came to visit the carriage. Adrienne questioned on whether or not Harry will agree to come. She like the rest of the girls had read Harry’s reply. Fleur told her that she already has a way to ensure that Harry won’t shy away from coming to the carriage.

"How?" asked Adrienne.

"By having an insurance."

"Insurance?"

"Yes."

Fleur nodded pointedly towards a snowy white owl that was sitting comfortably on its perch at the far end of the room.

"Oh my goodness!" said Daphne Lavinge in awe.

She wasn't the only one. Virtually everyone within the room stared at Hedwig in amazement.

"It's beautiful," said Jeanne. She immediately stood up and dashed towards Hedwig and began petting her. Hedwig didn’t seem to mind at all. She allowed Jeanne to pet her. Soon a few more girls followed suit. "I love her! Who's owl is this?" asked Jeanne.

"Harry. I don't know its name though," Daphne offered her reply.

"This is Harry's owl?" asked Jeanne.

Daphne nodded. "I saw the bird flew to Harry several times at the Great Hall. Almost all girls in Hogwarts like that bird. We think it's beautiful and so far it's the only white owl we had in the owlery. We tried to pet her every time we visited the owlery but she never let us touches her. Most of us didn't even know its name." She suddenly paused. She immediately turned to Fleur and said, "Are you holding this owl hostage?"

"Yes," answered Fleur who at that time was sitting on a couch not far from her. She took a sip off her mug and continued to stare at Daphne. "If he wants her back, he would have to come to get her by himself."

Daphne shook her head. "You scare me sometimes, you know that? The things you're willing to do and the distance you're willing to go just to get what you wanted. They're just scary. Harry will definitely come visiting this weekend. There won't be any doubt about that. What's the owl's name again?"

"Hedwig."

Daphne nodded. She went back to her drink, unwilling to look Fleur directly at her eyes.

For the rest of the evening Daphne kept to herself, preferring instead to listen idly to the girls’ conversation as they tried to decide on what to do when Harry comes visiting and tending to her mug of hot chocolate. Her silence didn't go unnoticed however. Cassandra once asked her on why she was keeping quiet and didn't join in the conversation. She simply replied that she didn't have anything to add but she did voice her desire to join them, and maybe stay a night or two inside the carriage that weekend.

It was fifteen minutes after ten pm. Some of the girls were getting drowsy. Camille herself yawned several times. "I'm super sleepy," she said as she did a little bit of stretching. "I guess I better get going. We have classes early tomorrow morning. Good night." Carrying her mug, she made her exit from Fleur's room.

The other girls followed suit after wishing Fleur good night.

"Me too. It's already past curfew," said Daphne. She stood up and passed her still half full mug to Cassandra, asking the Beauxbaton to put it away for her. "I better get going. Hopefully I can get back to the dungeon without crashing head on to any prefects. Good night, Fleur."

Fleur put away her now emptied mug. "Do you have classes next morning, Daphne?" she asked the younger veela who also was about to exit the room.

"I do but morning classes only start at 10.00 am tomorrow," she replied, pausing at the door."Why?"
"It's late. Stay here tonight," said Fleur. "We'll escort you to the castle tomorrow morning."

Daphne however shook her head. "No, I really have to go back. Tracy will be worried for me. Besides I really don't have anything to wear for tonight."

But Fleur wasn't about to let her get away that easy. There were still some questions that need to be answered. "Did Tracy know you're coming here?"

Daphne nodded.

"Then there's nothing she needs to worry about. She'll know that you're safe even if you didn't return to your dormitory tonight. As for the nightwear, it can be arranged." Fleur then walked towards her wardrobe, pulled out a fresh towel and gave it to Daphne.

Daphne hesitated for a moment before taking the towel from Fleur.

"Use the bathroom. I'll come back with something suitable for you to wear tonight," said Fleur. She then walked past Daphne and made her way out of her bedroom. She was about to offer Daphne her nightdress before she realized that Daphne was shorter than her. But she knew where to get one matched to Daphne's size.

Daphne was still in the bathroom when she returned with a light blue nightdress she borrowed from Camille. She handed the nightdress to Daphne when the later came out before she herself went into the bathroom.

Her cousin was sitting on her bed when she came out. She was already wearing the nightdress Fleur brought her. Fleur changed into her nightwear. She took a comb from on top of the dressing table and proceeded towards her bed.

Daphne scooted over to make way for her older cousin to sit. There was a moment of silence between both of them and all that moment was spent watching her cousin combing her long silvery white hair.

Fleur reached up to tied her hair into a ponytail. She then offered the comb to Daphne. The later took it.

"So," she spoke as she watched Daphne combed her hair. "Is there anything you wish to tell me?"

Daphne paused. She later shook her head moments later and resumed combing her hair.

"Are you sure?"

Daphne nodded.

"Okay. Mind if I ask a few questions?"

Daphne shook her head.

"Why did Tracy attack those two boys? What did they do to deserve that?"

Daphne paused again. "It was nothing," she slowly said.

Fleur cocked an eyebrow. "Really? Are you sure it was nothing?"

Daphne didn't answer. She slowly put away the comb and looked down. She seemed unable to look Fleur in the eye. She seemed to regret allowing Fleur to question her.

But this only made Fleur even more curious.

"Was it embarrassing? You can tell me. You know I won't tell anyone especially if it's embarrassing," Fleur urged further.

Again Fleur's questions were met with silence.

"You never hesitated before, Daphne," said Fleur softly. "You always tell whenever things like this happened. But this time you hesitated. What's wrong? Is it has something to do with me?"

Fleur knew she was grasping straws but she was desperate to know why Daphne was acting so peculiar that night. And there were several other concerns as well that need to be addressed. Like the way Daphne acted whenever Harry was around.

Daphne sighed. She got off the bed and walked towards the opposite wall. There she stood with her back facing Fleur. A few moments of silence went past before she finally spoke,
"Earlier this evening, Harry saved me."

Fleur slowly got off her bed. And the scene where Harry saved Gabrielle during the Triwizard Tournament a lifetime ago suddenly came into her mind.

**To be continued...**

A/N: I know this is short but I needed something to jump start the writing engine. I just found the time to write a couple of weeks ago but apparently I forgot a lot of things pertaining to this story so I had to do a little bit of refreshing and studying.
She failed. She had to bail out. She only lasted fifteen minutes into the Second Task. Those nasty grindylows stopped her dead on her track.

The moment she solved the clue laid out by the Golden Egg, she could already foresee the problem. It not that she wasn’t a good swimmer. Far from it. She wasn’t worried about having to breathe under water for a prolong period either. She knew what to do.

Her anxiety however centered around dark and gloomy places. She also disliked cold. And she feared what was hidden beneath the surface of the Black Lake.

Unfortunately for her, her fear indeed came to fruition.

And there she was, on the platform, shivering and crying. She cried for a her failure in completing the Task but most importantly, she cried because she wasn’t able to save Gabriele. Madame Maxime and her friends tried to console her but to no avail.

The Hogwarts champions returned with his rescuee in about an hour. The Durmstrang champion returned a couple minutes later. At this point, she began to panic. She frantically looked around, wondering and silently pleading to anyone who would jump into the water and rescue her sister. But everyone else was too busy looking at the surface of the lake. They were waiting for someone.

They didn't have to wait long.

The moment she saw her sister, she felt as if a huge burden lifted off her shoulder. She was very happy. She was very grateful. She felt deeply indebted. And she felt remorse.

The ‘false’ Hogwarts champion, as she and her friends called him, was the most hated person among the Beauxbatons. She and her friends would called him a liar, A cheater. A scum. A celebrity who became so intoxicated with fame that he wanted more. Being The-Boy-Who-Lived just wasn't enough anymore. He craved more popularity. He wanted more attention. He wanted more glory. And what can be better than being a Triwizard Champion?

But this ‘false’ champion was the one who rescued her sister. This same person rescued Gabby when he didn't have to. The Beauxbatons delegates watched in silence as the boy pushed Gabriele out of the water and onto the platform. They listened to Dumbledore's explanation of what truly transpired when Gabrielle rescues was underway. They saw him shivering. They saw his lip turning blue. They saw him having difficulties in breathing. And yet the safety of Gabby and the red head boy was all he cared about.

No publicity craving celebrity would do such a thing.

They later found out that Gabriele wasn't really in danger, that a team of rescuers was already in place to retrieve the victim in the event of failures. Still it didn’t stop them from changing their view about him. They stopped talking behind the boy’s back soon thereafter. Gabby ended up having a huge crush on the boy. She couldn’t stop talking about him. She even dreamt about him. As for her, she began to respect him. She even began to see him as a friend. Someone she could trust. Someone she can be loyal to.

And that was what she did. She became his friend and a loyal ally. She fought with him. She bled for him.

And it all because of what he did on morning 24th. February.

Daphne finished her story.

"You grew up, thinking that only your family and closest friends will look after you. They'll be the only one who would watch your back," she said. "I never expected that someday I'll be
They both were sitting on Fleur’s bed. All the while, Fleur listened with rapt attention. She held both her cousin’s hands throughout the story telling.

"Through the years spent you lived a sheltered life. You thought that the world was never going to change. You believe that the world is going to get you," Daphne continued. "You stop believing that there are decent people out there. They never existed. They’re just a myth. And then one day, he appears. And your world came tumbling down. The next thing you know, you questioned your own belief."

There was a pause.

"I never thought that."

At this point, Daphne couldn’t continue. She could only looked down, not willing to meet Fleur’s eyes.

"Never thought of what?" Fleur asked gently.

But Daphne kept quiet.

"Daphne?" Fleur kept on prodding. She had a hunch. All she needed right at that moment was confirmation.

Daphne sighed. She bit her lip. Her face. Her expression, it looked as if she was in pain. Not a physical pain mind you, but more of an emotional pain. Something was bottling inside of her.

Fleur could see it.

It took a while-

"Did you know that Harry never see me as a friend?" asked Daphne moments later.

"I didn’t know that," answered Fleur. "But I can see why. You’re a Slytherin and he is a Gryffindor. I think you realize that too."

Daphne scoffed at that. She got off the bed, walked a few distance from Fleur and turned back to face her cousin.

"Your husband told you that?!" said Daphne, making an air quote when she spoke the word husband to Fleur. "I thought people when they get older they’ll be more mature. They’ll stop with this 'because you’re in different houses in Hogwarts so we can’t be friends’ nonsense eventually."

"If you must know, Harry and Draco Malfoy do become friends once they reach adulthood. It wasn’t an easy friendship mind you but yes, they became friends," said Fleur. "On second thought, maybe acquaintance is a better word."

"Acquaintanceship," muttered Daphne. Her fierce expression softened and replaced by genuine sadness. She walked back towards the bed and sat beside Fleur. She stared down at her hands now resting on her lap. "Perhaps that’s what Harry will always thought of me. An acquaintance. Nothing more than that."

"You never care about such a thing before, Daphne," Fleur pointed out. "Why now?"

Daphne didn’t reply at first. She continued to stare down at her hands.

"Maybe I do care. Maybe I always care. Maybe I just chose not to show it," replied Daphne softly. She then slowly looked up. Her green eyes met Fleur’s blue ones.

"Is it wrong, Fleur? Is it wrong for me wanting to be part of someone’s life?" she asked.

Fleur went silent for she truly didn’t have any answer for that.

The clock kept on ticking. Seconds turned into minutes. Minutes turned into hours. Fleur found herself unable to sleep that night. Laying on the bed, she stared at the ceiling for the past couple of hours. The conversation she had earlier kept on replaying inside her head.

One thing for sure, she wasn’t the only one who was still awake.

Next morning...

They left the carriage early. Daphne parted ways with Beauxbatons once they reached the
Entrance Hall. She headed straight towards the dungeon. There was no exchange of words between her and Fleur that morning. Luckily for Fleur, her friends failed to notice that.

There weren't many people within the Great Hall when they entered. Fleur took a glance at the Gryffindor table. Harry wasn't there yet and neither was his friends.

Camille suddenly nudged her on her shoulder. "Your admirer is here," she whispered.

She turned to look.

There, waiting at the Ravenclaw Table was Roger Davies. And he had a bouquet of red roses in his hand.

To be continued...

A/n: Not exactly an ending to a chapter that I had in mind but I guess this will have to do. For now that is.

Work, health scares and my laptop giving up on me were among the reason I'm unable to write. Yeah I know it has been more than a year since the last time I update but I really couldn't do anything about it.

This chapter is supposed to be 20+k words long. My initial plan was to wrap up Fleur's side of the story in this chapter and proceed with Harry in the next chapter. Given everything that happened, that would be impossible. There'll be huge changes in the layout of the story. I need something to make my life a little bit easier.

Follow if you still want to follow. Leave if you think otherwise. Further author notes will only be written if needed.
It was a bright morning. A rarity since how gloomy the daily weather of the British Isle can be.

The same couldn't be said about her mood though. Daphne's problem needed to be dealt with. Another headache was the last thing she needed that day. Seeing Roger Davies dampened her mood even further. She literally groaned when she saw him.

"Can we sit someplace else?" she asked.

Students trickled rather slowly into the Great Hall that morning. The Ravenclaw Table was largely vacant at that time. They could sit elsewhere in her opinion.

Her friends could see the problem. But Cassandra, always being the rational one of the group, argued, "We can but that means we're taking someone else spot at the table. That may not be a good thing to do. Even you don't like people taking up your favorite seat back at the dining hall at the campus."

Fleur couldn't argue with that. Back at the campus, she bristled every time she saw someone else taking up her favorite spot, be it at the dining hall or the library. Or even the garden by the lake where she would spent every afternoon with the girls.

"In that case, back me up. I'm not in the mood. I'll probably send him to the hospital wing in matchboxes before he finishes saying hi," said Fleur.

"Sure."

Roger Davies grinned widely when he saw the girls walking towards him. He stood up and gestured Fleur to sit right next to him. But just as the girls got nearer, Cammille suddenly cut in front of Fleur and proceeded to sit at the spot where Roger gestured Fleur to sit before.

"Zhank you, Monsieur Roger," she said.

"Ummm that's Fleur's seat," he said.

Cammille raised her eyebrows. "Really? I don't see 'er name? Do you see 'er name written anywhere 'ere?"

"No."

"Zhen it iz anyone's seat. Please sit down," said Cammille.

Except that Roger didn't. He just stood there, completely flummoxed by Cammille's unexpected move.

By this time, Fleur and the rest of her squad already taken up their seat. Fleur herself sat a bit further away. Cammille and Cassandra sat between her and Roger. She usually sat at the spot where Roger gestured her to sit. That was her spot. But unlike before, she gladded that someone else took it.

"Iz zhere a problem, Monsieur Roger?" asked Cammille who saw Roger didn't do as he was told.

"No," replied Roger. "But I would really like to sit beside her if you don't mind."

Cammille glanced at Fleur.

Fleur said nothing at that point. She didn't even looked back at Cammille. Instead, she solely concentrated on her breakfast. A plan suddenly hatched inside her head however.

Turning back to Roger, Cammille said, "She izn't zhat far away. You can still talk to 'er. Now sit."
"But you don't understand."

"Understand what? Or do you rather 'ave us sitting at anozer table? Maybe zhat table?" she said pointing at Gryffindor Table. "So zhat you can 'ave a one on one with Fleur? We don't mind giving you zhat chance. But bear in mind, Fleur follows us wherever we go."

"No, not that. It's just."

Cammille again raised her eyebrows. "Just what? You know in our custom, it iz very rude to ask a girl to move from 'er seat just because you want to flirt with zhe ozher girl. We French people don't like zhat."

Fleur and her friends smirked. They knew Cammille was simply playing with Roger.

Roger sighed. He knew that there was no getting around Cammille. But he needed to do what he had planned a few days ago. He wasn't going to back out this time. The Great Hall was still largely vacant. He needed to grab that chance.

He grabbed the bouquet of red roses he placed on the table. The Beauxbatons, both the girls and the boys, watched as he made his way towards Fleur.

Fleur sensed someone was standing behind her. She turned to look and saw it was Roger. She said nothing. She watched him kneel. She saw that he had a really hard time controlling himself. Her allure was attacking him. Not that she had any control over that.

"Good morning," said Roger.

Okay, that was a fail. And he only had that one job. The girls began to giggle. The boys smirked.

Roger somehow failed to realize that. Mustering whatever courage he got left, he continued, "I really like you. I hope we all can fall in love. I mean we both fall in love."

He then presented the flower he carried with him to Fleur. "Here's a bouquet of flowers. They're beautiful. Just like you. I hope you'll like it. Please take it."

But Fleur didn't take the flower offered to her. Something else caught her eyes instead.

Madame Maxime was heading towards them. And Roger hadn't realized it yet for he was too occupied with Fleur.

Madame Maxime cleared her throat loudly. It woke Roger from his reverie. He looked up and saw Madame Maxime, now towering over him, smiling.

"Zhe flowers, are zhey for me?" she boomed.

"I."

Before Roger could respond, Madame Maxime flicked her wrist and the flower bouquet shot out of Roger's grasp. It then floated within a feet from Madame Maxime. The Beauxbatons Headmistress studied it momentarily before she turned back to Roger, "Zhe flowers are beautiful. 'Ow do you know I like red roses? Monsieur-?"

By this time, the girls of Beauxbaton were giggling hard. Even Fleur herself smiled and shook her head.

"Roger. His name is Roger Davies," said Cammille as she continued to giggle.

"Monsieur Roger, I see. You're a 'andsome boy. We should go out on a date sometimes. I'll see if I 'ave free time zhis weekend. Oh by zhe way, I 'ave instructed my students not to accept anyzhing from ozher schools. Everyzhing 'as to go through me. Of course zhere will be exceptions," she said, glancing and winked at Fleur.

Fleur smiled back. She knew what her headmistress meant.

"I shall go back to my table. Zhank you for zhe flowers, Monsieur Roger," finished Madame Maxime. She bent and kissed Roger on his cheek. She then took leave, Roger's flower floated behind her as it followed her in her wake.

Roger remained frozen to his spot.

By this time, the majority of the Ravenclaws had already arrived. They saw and heard everything.

"Mate!" exclaimed Grant Page who was watching the event unfold with his mouth opened. "I
know you said you're going big. I didn't know it would be this big."

Roger suffered ridicules from his friends for the rest of the breakfast period. Everyone was talking about his misfire earlier.

"Going straight for the headmistress, eh? That's a bold move, mate," said Duncan Inglebee. "On the plus side for us, we got a chance with the Beauxbaton's champion. We thank you for that."

Roger could only glare at the Ravenclaw Beater.

Fleur rolled her eyes when she heard what Duncan said. From the conversation she heard between Roger's friends, she got to know that Roger was completely obsessed with her, to the point that he won't shut up about her 24-7. She also got to know that Roger had been planning his latest move a few days ago.

Things didn't go as plan. He 'got' Madame Maxime instead. And Fleur was very thankful for that. She got Roger off her back for the time being. Then again, perhaps it was her fault. She entertained Roger every time the boy struck up a conversation with her. He probably misinterpreted her intention. He must have thought that she was opening up to him. She actually was merely being polite.

The boy would try again, she had no doubt about that. Perhaps she should be less polite to him the very next time.

Harry and his friends arrived at the Great Hall just as she and her friends was about to leave. As always, they exchanged meaningful look and that somehow managed to brighten her mood a little bit.

On their way down to the carriage, Madame Maxime slapped them with an announcement. She was planning an arrangement with Professor Dumbledore to have Hogwarts kitchen send the meals directly to the carriage which would mean that they no longer have to brave the weather for their meal. When asked why she didn't just asked the campus cafeteria to do just that, she replied that it was the Hogwarts Headmaster himself who insisted the arrangement be made and it would begin once he and Madame Maxime ironed out the proper security procedure and such.

They were elated of course. Fleur herself was surprised by this. This was exactly what she thought to ask her headmistress during the breakfast before. Of course this would mean that she would be seeing less and less Harry, but at the very least it would give her a little bit peace of mind from the rest of Hogwarts male population. They were less upfront than the Beauxbaton males which was commendable however.

As for Harry, she would deal with him later. They were inviting him to the carriage after all.

That reminded her of something else however. She had yet asked Madame Maxime for permission.

And speaking of Harry...

She had yet told the girls about her conversation with Daphne. She silently wondered if she should.

And speaking of Daphne...

She hadn't seeing the younger veela during breakfast. She saw Astoria though who never failed to wave at her every time they saw each other at the Great Hall.

She became slightly worried for Daphne and hoped that the Greengrass heiress will be alright.

Something else caught her attention just as they arrived at the carriage. She saw Professor Moody coming out of the Dark Forest a little bit further away from Hagrid's hut. He was carrying a large brown sack over his shoulder. And he was walking quickly towards the castle.

All of a sudden Professor Moody stopped on his track. He swiveled around and saw the Beauxbaton's delegates. He was surprised to see them apparently.

Fleur quickly looked away and pretended not to notice him. But from the corner of her eyes, she could see what Moody was doing.

Moody immediately hid the sack behind his back. He kept on staring at them. It went on until she entered the carriage.
Fleur of course knew the story. Of how an impostor, posing as Alastor Moody, orchestrated everything from Harry unwittingly becoming the fourth champion to Voldemort's resurrection. The impostor also became responsible for Cedric Diggory's death. And the Moody that was now standing at the edge of the Dark Forest looking at them was the impostor. And to think that this impostor had access to Harry made her uncomfortable.

But then again, maybe there was no impostor this time. Harry didn't become the fourth champion, did he?

Everything had become so confusing.

She entered her room and immediately went to look out the window. The Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher had gone.

Maybe this time there was no impostor. But that brown sack he was trying to hide from them. And that look of surprise on his face.

Fleur knew that she had to make sure.

The lessons that morning went without a hitch. Due to unforeseen circumstances ie. the teacher wasn't feeling well, there was no class after lunch so Fleur spent the whole afternoon training for the tournament. Her friends questioned her decision though given that she entered the tournament in her past life and knew what to expect. She reasoned that it would be prudent for her not to be complacent and it had been a while since the last time she raised her wand in order to defend herself. She purposely left out the fact that she didn't do very well in her last outing as the Triwizard champion though.

"Didn't I tell you girls what to expect in this tournament?" she asked as she wiped the sweat of her face with a small towel. She was training within a room set up dedicatedly for her. The room or chamber if you rather called it that, was magically fortified so that Fleur won't accidentally destroy the carriage whenever she trained.

"Well yes," said Marianne. "You said there's going to be dragons, the lake where you have to rescue someone and the maze."

"And those aren't scary enough for you?"

"A little bit?"

Fleur just shook her head.

The truth was even she wasn't sure if the challenges remained the same as before. For all she knew this time it could be different. Then again, it pays to be prepared no matter what she was going to face. She could only hope she didn't lose her nerves. It happened before. Despite her lifelong experience, there was never any guarantee that it won't happen again.

The Beauxbaton students were having their meal at the carriage that night. The twelve course dinner was catered directly from a famous restaurant in Paris, courtesy of the Delacour family. It was indeed a pleasant surprise for the students. Madame Maxime only announced it late in the evening, much to the delight of her students. Even Fleur had no idea her family would plan that sort of thing.

They retired early that night. But before the girls said goodbye for the night, as always they would gather inside Fleur's quarters. Jars containing various cakes and cookies lined up on top of the window side table, again courtesy of her family. Her friends loved them. Fleur on the other hand wondered loudly if her parents wanted to fatten her up.

"Don't be ridiculous," said Cammille as she dug into a jar containing blueberry butter cakes. "You can't get fat. Veelas don't get fat. I don't get fat. Actually I wish I don't get fat."

Astoria came to her mid breakfast the very next day.

"Have you seen my sister?" asked the younger Greengrass.

"No, I haven't," replied Fleur. "I was wondering the same thing. Haven't you in any contact with your sister?"

Astoria shook her head. "No. I haven't seen her during breakfast, lunch and dinner since a few days ago. I'm afraid to ask though," she said, glancing at the Slytherin Table. "I want to ask Tracy but I haven't seen her as well. I sent owls but Daphne never respond. Things aren't going so well with her, or so I heard. But the fourth years told me she's present in all of her classes so at least I know she's not in any immediate danger."
Owls. Maybe she should try sending Daphne one, thought Fleur.

"Danger?" said Cassandra who had been giving rapt attention to the conversation between Fleur and Astoria. "What happened? What's going on? Astoria? Fleur?"

Ignoring Cassandra, Fleur continued to ask, "Do you have any idea how your sister have her meal? She can't go hungry for these past few days, can she?"

"Well she told me about how her seniors, the older boys actually, would sneak into Hogwarts kitchen for snacks. I don't see her doing the same thing though," said Astoria.

Fleur thought the same as well. Daphne can be brash sometimes but she didn't think the younger veela would do something undignified like sneaking into the kitchen when she knew it was against the rule. Daphne was hardly a rule breaker as far as she could tell.

"Well, all the same. Keep sending owls to her, Astoria. Tell her that we're all worried," said Fleur.

Astoria nodded. "Will do." She then went on to rejoin her friends.

"Care to tell us what's going on, Fleur?" asked Cassandra.

By this time, Fleur noticed all of her friends were staring at her.

"Something happened a few days ago," she began. "I'm not sure if that have anything to do with Daphne's current situation. I hope not. But still, the only way of knowing is to ask her directly. As you can see, I can't."

"Sounds serious," said Marianne, her eyebrows creased. "Come on, tell us!"

"Later. I promised," said Fleur.

Something else occupied her mind later on. Just as she and her friends headed out of the Great Hall, she heard a conversation between several Hufflepuffs boys.

"The Unforgivable Curses?! Are you serious?!" said one of the boys.

"That's what the sixth year told us," replied the other. "The bloke told us Moody just blew everyone's mind away when he demoed the curses."

One of them immediately took out his timetable. "We're having Defense Against the Dark Arts this afternoon! Wicked!" he exclaimed.

All of a sudden, Fleur veered off course and walked straight towards the boys.

"Fleur! Where are you going?!" said Cassandra who was taken by surprise by Fleur's unexpected move.

But the veela ignored her.

The boys and the several others froze when they saw who was coming towards them.

She smiled at them the moment she reached them.

"Good morning," she greeted them.

There was no response.

"I apologize but I can't 'elp but 'ear what you just said. Iz it true Professor Moody demonstrated zhe Unforgiveable Curse within 'is classes?" she asked.

Still no response.

"Can you tell me anything? Do you 'ave Professor Moody's class togezher with zhe Gryffindor zhis afternoon?" she asked again.

By this time, she noticed the boys' eyes became glassy. A few of them began to drool as they continued to stare at her.

Fleur just rolled her eyes and shook her head. She hated being a veela sometimes.

She looked over towards the Gryffindor Table. Harry was busy discussing something with the other two boys whom she recognized as his dorm mate. He didn't notice that she was standing at the Hufflepuff Table, looking at him.
There was no sign of Ronald Weasley. Hermione on the other hand was staring curiously at her.

She now knew what to do.

Fleur gave a subtle nod at Hermione. She then turned around, leaving the boys who were now drooling like there's no tomorrow, and walked back towards her friends who was waiting for her.

"What was that all about?" asked Cassandra as they continued their journey back to their carriage.

"Do you know that the male salivary gland can produce so much saliva that they're able to fill Lac du Bourget ten times over?" said Fleur.

"How is that relevant to what I asked?"

"I was asking the boys some questions."

"And?"

"And all I got is saliva."

"Fleur, really what's going on?"

Fleur suddenly stopped on her tracks. Her friends followed suit. Turning to them, she asked, "How do you feel about joining the Hogwarts students in one of their classes?"

"WHAT?!!"

Harry told her once about Moody demonstrating the Unforgivable Curse in front of the students. She was of course shocked to hear that.

They were sitting at the balcony on one nice Sunday afternoon, watching young Victoire playing with the dog Harry just got her in the garden.

"But that is forbidden! How can he show them to the students?!!" exclaimed Fleur.

"I know, right?" replied Harry. "But there you go. You know Dumbledore. You can bring three dragons to Hogwarts and tell him you want to train the students on how to defeat a dragon and he'll be like 'yeah okay'. I should have seen it coming. But then how would I know the man in front of me was actually an imposter?"

"You don't," said Fleur. "But still, Professor Dumbledore really shouldn't allow him to do that."

"True. But the truth is, I'm glad he showed it to us," said Harry, much to Fleur's surprise. "It help me a lot back then. I never understand why Barty Jr. did that though. Even until now."

"You're suspecting he had some sort of ulterior motive," stated Fleur.

Harry shook his head. "Not really. But now that you mention it, I do begin to think maybe he had some sort of plans. He placed the Imperious Curse on each of us on the pretext that he wanted to train us on how to throw the curse off completely."

"And?"

"And train us he did," said Harry. "Well not all of us. Just me. I'm the only one who was not completely affected by the spell. He placed the curse again and again until I was able to force it out completely. Just imagine, what if I was just like everybody else? What if the Imperious Curse took me over completely? What will happened to me then?"

Fleur dashed into her room once they got back to the carriage. She took out a piece of blank parchment and a quill and hastily wrote a note. Once done, she immediately dashed to the carriage's owlery.

"Make sure that she replies to this note at once," she said as tied the note to one of the owls' leg. "And don't come back without a reply."

The black owl hooted importantly. It then stretched its wing and took off.
Fleur stood there watching the owl became smaller and smaller. All she could do now is pray that her plan works.

*To be continued...*
54. Chapter 54

The Story of Fleur Delacour - 9

"italic" - conversation in French/Bulgarian
"normal" - conversation in English
italic - thought

"Absolutely not!"
"But Madame."
"Are you out of your mind, Miss Delacour?"

Cassandra who stood beside her gave her the 'I told you so' look.

They both were standing within Madame Maxime's makeshift office inside the carriage. Fleur was just relaying her suggestion to the headmistress.

Early on, all of her friends flatly disapproved her idea. Even Cassandra who had always being supportive of her couldn't agree with her this time. But of course being Fleur's closest friend, she still escorted Fleur to see Madame Maxime when the veela decided to give her plan a go ahead.

"I expect Madame will blow her top off when she hears what you have to say," she said as they both made their way to the headmistress office.

Fleur shrugged. "I am not expecting any lesser than that," she said.

"Have you thought this through?"
"Yes."
"You actually didn't think this through, did you?"
"No."

Cassandra sighed.

And blew her top off Madame Maxime did. She was now standing behind her desk looking livid. She got off her chair so quickly and abruptly that it toppled over with a mighty crash. Cassandra shrank, she took a few steps backward in response.

As for Fleur, she remained rigid. She looked calmly back at her headmistress.

"My mind is sound, Madame. I can assure you that. It's just a small request. Just one class. I don't see why that should be a problem," said Fleur.

Madame Maxime shook her head. Pinching her nose bridge, she said, "We already have Defense Against the Dark Arts courses at our school and our teachers are no less competence. Why would you want to learn the same subject with a Hogwarts teacher?"

"Because it's Professor Moody? One of Britain's greatest auror?"

Britain's second greatest auror actually, Fleur thought to herself. She already had in mind who held the first place.

"An auror no matter how great he is does not necessarily make a great teacher. Surely you understand this. You were a teacher back in your past life. You said it yourself back at the campus. Surely you know what constituted a good teacher," argued Madame Maxime.

"Well, his students seems to like him. They said he is better than all the previous Defense Against the Dark Arts teachers combined," said Fleur. "That's quite a resume he has, don't you think?"

"Yes, quite a resume. I know all about Professor Dumbledore having to search for a new teacher to teach the subject every year, he told me about it. His students may like him but I'm not. And I do not plan to leave my pupils with him now matter how good he is," said Madame Maxime.

Fleur became curious at this.
"Why? Because of his appearance?" she asked.

Alastor Moody's physical appearance did tend to throw people off the edge. Like Fleur, people wouldn't stop talking about the way he looks every time he was in their vicinity. Just not in a good way.

"It's not that. There's something about him that I don't like," replied Madame Maxime. Her eyebrows creased. She acted as if she was trying to observe something from afar. It went that way for a few moments.

"Madame?" said Fleur.

Madame Maxime woke up from her stupor via Fleur's voice.

"Where was I? Oh yes. No. You and your friends won't be having classes with him. That is my decision," said Madame Maxime with an air of finality.

"I wish you would still consider it," said Fleur. She wasn't about to give up. Her plan had to work no matter what.

"Even if I want to, I can't. It is not easy to organize the Triwizard Tournament, surely you realize this. It took months and years to hammer out an agreement where everyone would be happy with and one of the clauses within that agreement clearly stated that no school shall interfere with another school's affair. Having classes with a teacher from another school is a form of interference. I am sorry, my dear. I can't entertain your request this time," said Madame Maxime.

At this point, Fleur knew it was time for her to unsheathe her last weapon.

"Understandable, Madame," she said. "But I think you would be interested to know that the Durmstrang is about to break the very same clause you spoke of earlier."

"What do you mean, Miss Delacour?" asked Madame Maxime curiously.

"They're inviting Harry Potter to their ship. The visit will happen very soon," said Fleur.

"How soon? And how do you know this?"

"Harry Potter told me," said Fleur. "In a letter," she hastily added when she saw Madame Maxime cocked her eyebrows.

"I didn't know you've been writing to him."

"I don't exactly wrote to him actually. We don't exchange letters if that what you mean."

Madame Maxime once again cocked her eyebrow.

"I do hope things will change between me and him," Fleur added. "Eventually."

"Are you sure he's telling the truth?"

"I spent seventy years of my life with him," Fleur reminded Madame Maxime. She felt a little bit annoyed that time. "This young Harry may be different but I do believe his fundamental remains the same. He won't lie especially about something such as this."

But Madame Maxime was still skeptical about what Fleur told her.

"I don't think Professor Karkaroff would allow that," she said.

"And I don't think his students would dare to do anything behind his back, Madame," countered Fleur. "They would have asked him in the first place and he would have agreed. He's not Professor Dumbledore."

"Yes. I agree with you on that. Negotiating with Albus Dumbledore was easy. Igor Karkaroff in turn was a pig. He's a nightmare if you asked me," said Madame Maxime.

Fleur knew she was winning. But still she knew that she had to be careful. She knew that she still had to tread the path lightly. She knew that she needed to make her headmistress see. Especially when there was a second request she intended to make.

"If the Durmstrang is willing to bend the rules, so can we. We don't want to be seen as an outcast, do we? This is about the international magical cooperation after all. Isn't that why we agreed to join the tournament in the first place?" said Fleur.

Madame Maxime shook her head. "I still don't see why you need to have a class with a foreign
"No, they don't but like you always say, learning never stops. There'll be always something new for us to explore. Maybe Professor Moody, seeing that he was an auror, could show us something different related to his experience as a law enforcer. None of the current Beauxbaton's teachers fought a Death Eater before," said Fleur calmly. "All we ever learn back in the campus were second-hand accounts told by someone else. Even the teachers never feels what it's like to go out there, what it feels like to face the danger on your own. It's a completely different experiences, Madame."

"Well, seeing that you fought the Death Eaters back in your past life, maybe you should hold the honor of teaching your classmates the intricacies of the Defense Against the Dark Art. Maybe you could tell them what it feels like to go out there and face the danger. The way I see it, you're just as qualified as Alastor Moody," stated Madame Maxime.

Fleur smiled widely at this. "I would love to, but I can't. I don't have the papers and I'm only seventeen," she said. "What would everyone say if they know Beauxbaton let an unqualified teacher teaches the students?"

Madame Maxime went silent. From where she stood, Fleur could almost see Madame Maxime's brain chugging. All that Madame Maxime needed was a little bit push from her.

"Just one class, Madame," said Fleur softly.

Madame Maxime stared at her favorite student. She later sighed and shook her head in defeat.

"Very well. I'll talk with Professor Dumbledore. Perhaps he could find a slot to fit you and your friends in."

"Yes! thought Fleur. "Thank you, Madame. As for the slot, I think I can help you with that. I'll get back to you later. If this happens, perhaps we could find out why you dislike Alastor Moody in the first place," she said.

"Perhaps," replied Madame Maxime.

Both Fleur and Cassandra excused themselves but just as they was about to walk out of Madame Maxime's office, Fleur suddenly stopped. Turning back to Madame Maxime, she spoke, "Something happened to my cousin a few days ago."

Madame Maxime looked back at her. She had just replaced her fallen chair and was about to sit on it.

"Your cousin? Which one? I take it wasn't Raphael," she said.

"No. It wasn't Raphael," said Fleur. "It was Daphne."

"What happened? Was it bad?" asked Madame Maxime.

"She was a little bit traumatized but otherwise unharmed. Some boys attacked her few days ago. She was lucky someone else arrived just in time to rescue her. Her would be attackers got it pretty bad in return," said Fleur.

"Did she tells you who her rescuer was?"

"She did. She told me it was Harry Potter," answered Fleur.

"I see. Do you know anything about the motive behind the attack?" asked Madame Maxime.

"No."

Fleur of course knew why the attack happened. It just that she didn't feel the need to share it with Madame Maxime. At least not yet.

Madame Maxime nodded. "Well in that case, send my regards to Harry Potter when you write to him. Tell him that we appreciated what he did and he have our thanks. Daphne's father and your aunt would want to thank him too I believe."

Fleur took a few steps forward back into the office. "I was coming to that actually," she said.

Madame Maxime looked at her questioningly.
"I am thinking about inviting Harry Potter over to this carriage so that I could thank him personally. I was hoping that you will allow him to come," Fleur continued without waiting for Madame Maxime's response. "Of course there's more to that. I also would like to know him better. I admit I have questions. Questions that need answering. I hope that his visit, if you allow it, will alleviate some of my curiosities."

Madame Maxime sat on her chair. There was a pause after that.

Madame Maxime lean back on her chair. "I can see why this is important to you," she said after taking the moment of silence to give full consideration to Fleur's request. "You have my permission, Fleur."

Fleur smiled widely. She was indeed feeling grateful.

"Thank you, Madame," she said.

She then bowed to Madame Maxime and together with Cassandra, exited the office.

"Is it true?" asked Cassandra as they both walked along the corridor towards the students living quarters.

"Yes, it's true," replied Fleur. She knew what Cassandra meant by that question.

"That probably explain why we don't see Daphne these past few days. You really don't have any clue why it happened?"

"That have nothing to do with Daphne's hiatus actually," answered Fleur. "Anyway, jealousy was the main motive behind the attack. Stupid thing really. A boy had a huge crush on her. She refused him naturally so he with the help of his friends tried to do it the hard way."

"And Harry came to the rescue just in time," stated Cassandra. "Why didn't you just tell Madame Maxime?"

"I just don't want to bother Madame Maxime with simplistic teenage matters such as this which is why I denied any knowledge of the reason. Anyway, come. Let's get the girls. It's story telling time."

"We should plan for Harry's visit as well. Maybe we could do something special for him," suggested Cassandra.

"Yes, we should."

Things worked well for her. At least so far. While it was true that she wanted to thank Harry for what he did for Daphne, getting to know him better was the main and only reason why she wanted him to visit. And she found herself waiting impatiently for that day to come.

Later that evening...

The weather was getting colder. And yet there she was, standing alone on the bank of the Black Lake.

She was wearing a black wool overcoat that hide a pair of thick roll neck jumper and skinny jeans of the same color underneath it. A pair of black Ugg boots completed the package. She wore her silvery hair in a messy mid ponytail style. Strand of hairs falling to the side of her face accentuated her beauty even further.

Her bright blue eyes gazed towards surface of the lake, mainly to the location where the Second Task was held back in her previous life. A lot of things happened back then. It was there that she learnt that nothing is certain and not everything what it seemed to be. Like the calmness of the surface of the Black Lake. Something sinister hid underneath it. It fooled nearly everyone.

She was there for a reason. She got her answer earlier that day. She was now waiting for that person to appear.

"Hello."

That person had arrived.

Fleur turned to look. She then smiled.

"Hello, Hermione."

The Gryffindor girl was standing not far away from her.
Fleur walked towards Hermione.

All the while Hermione watched her. Her brown eyes went up and down the moment Fleur arrived in front of her. "You looked good," she said before she could stop herself. Cupping her mouth, she immediately apologized.

"I'm sorry. I-, wasn't supposed to say that."

But Fleur waved off her apology. "There's no need for an apology, Hermione. I'm glad that you're willing to meet me. As a matter a fact, it is me who should apologize. I'm sorry if I take some of your time. I know you're busy," she said.

"As matter a fact, I'm not. I don't have anything to do at this moment really," replied Hermione.

That's a first, thought Fleur.

'Well then. Let's take a walk shall we?' she said.

And taking a walk they did. There were quite a lot of people loitering around the lake that day. Fleur purposely chose the path with the least people present. She didn't want anyone to interrupt and she didn't want anyone to eavesdrop either. But even then it still didn't stopped some boys who were unfortunate enough to cross their path from gawking stupidly at her.

"I take it that the Ravenclaw told you about me," Hermione began. "That's part of the reason why you know my name."

"Maybe."

"So what is it? Why do you want to meet me?" asked Hermione.

"I just want to have a conversation with you. I want us to get to know each other better," came the reply.

Hermione cocked her eyebrow. "Owh."

"Why? Is it so strange for me wanting to get to know you?" asked Fleur upon seeing Hermione's reaction to what she just said.

"No, Actually I am flattered. I always wanted a friend from abroad," admitted Hermione.

Fleur smiled. "And now you got one," she said.

"And now I got one," agreed Hermione. "Forgive me for being upfront in our first meeting, but I can't help but feel there's more to it."

"And why do you feel that?"

"Well, you could have picked any Ravenclaw. I saw you spoke to some of them inside the Great Hall," said Hermione. "But the only Gryffindor you ever had conversation with was Harry. Harry Potter. This is about him, isn't it?"

Fleur said nothing at first. She knew that Hermione was a clever girl but she didn't realize that she was also this perceptive.

"Go on," she said, egging Hermione to continue.

Hermione, upon seeing that Fleur neither agreed nor denied her statement, proceeded, "I've been watching. Or rather observing if you can call it that. You were staring at Harry every now and then whenever you're in the Great Hall. But even with that in mind, I have a feeling that you're not one of those fangirls who are obsessed with him and I know quite a few. I know this from the way you looked at Harry. That night when you came to our table asking for our plate of bouillabaisse, the way you looked at him, it wasn't the look of infatuation nor obsession. It was a look of recognition. You were looking at him as if you had known him for long."

Fleur glanced sideways towards Hermione. She was indeed very surprise at this revelation. She never knew that Hermione can be very, very perceptive. More than she would expected.

Seeing that Fleur gave no response to what she said, Hermione continued, "Or maybe I have gone bonkers. I'm sorry. That was rude. I shouldn't barge at you like this. Especially when we just first met."

Fleur suddenly stopped walking.
Hermione followed suit. She looked worryingly at the veela.

Fleur looked afar. Her eyes traced the dim outlook of the opposite bank of the Black Lake.

"You're not going bonkers, Hermione," said Fleur softly. "And once again, there is no need for you to apologize. You're right. I am interested in Harry. More than I care to admit."

"Have you met him before?" asked Hermione.

"I rather not say," came the reply.

Hermione nodded. "Harry doesn't meet a lot of people especially outside of school. He never had a good summer as a matter of fact."

"I see," said Fleur. She of course knew this.

"I pity him. But then again Harry was never the one who dwells on other people's pity. He has a strong heart. He's resilient. That's what I came to admire about him," said Hermione.

"Not just you."

"You seem to know quite a bit about him," said Hermione.

"Who doesn't? He's the Boy-Who-Lived, isn't he?"

Hermione scoffed at that statement. "Yes he's the Boy-Who-Lived. Some even went on to call him the Chosen One. Stupid thing really. Being admired for something he doesn't even remember doing."

"I know. They never know the real man within him. All they see is the facade. And the scar," said Fleur.

They then resumed walking, heading towards one of the rocky outcrops dotting the landscape surrounding the lake. A few of the rocks jutting out from the ground had flat top surface, perfect enough to be used as a seat. Fleur and Hermione each chose one to sit on.

"Speaking of the term 'real man', I actually never speak to anyone about this before," said Hermione.

"About what?" asked Fleur.

"About Harry. I don't know how to say about this, but he seems odd."

"In what way?"

"Well, he changed somewhat. He's now a lot more mature. A lot more calmer. The way he speaks and the way he act, it all changed. And you should look at his schoolwork. He practically excels in everything. He doesn't even ask my help regarding homework anymore. And it all happened overnight! Not that I'm jealous but there you go. It feels like I'm befriending someone who looks like Harry but isn't Harry," said Hermione.

Fleur froze at this.

"It's like befriending someone who is older than you," she whispered.

Hermione somehow heard her.

"Yes! As a matter a fact, a lot older," she said. "For some reason, I feel safe whenever he's around. It's like knowing someone will protect you. It feels like you know that someone is watching your back. I never felt like that before. Before, I always feel that he is the one who needed protection. Not this time. This time it felt the opposite."

Fleur knew that feeling. It was the same feeling she had whenever Harry was around. She tried hard to conceal her pent-up emotions at that point. Like an overflowing dam, it threatened to spill out.

"Since when, Hermione?" asked Fleur.

"It started on Hogwarts Train. We were on our way here when..."

Hermione began to regale everything. She told Fleur how Harry, in the middle of a conversation, suddenly collapsed. She told Fleur how they tried to revive him, and when he finally came around, he looked confused as heck and started acting strange and asking strange questions. She told Fleur on how Harry changed more and more as days went past until she and Fleur met.
And throughout the story telling, Fleur remained silent.

"It's like I don't know him anymore," said Hermione after she was done with the story telling. "I just acted normal whenever he's around but the truth is, I'm scared. I'm scared for him."

"Don't be scared, Hermione. I'm sure there's explanation behind all these. What matters is that he is safe," said Fleur.

Hermione nodded slowly. "I feel that I can trust you," she said softly.

Fleur smiled kindly at the young brunette sitting in front of her. She then leaned forward and took both Hermione's hands into hers.

"Of course you can," she said. "Hermione, there are things that I wish I could tell you, but I can't. I'm not sure if you're ready. But someday, I will. I promise. But for now, I want us to be friends. Good friends as a matter a fact. We'll take care of each other, just like me and my friends did. Would you like that?"

Hermione smiled. A tear rolled down her cheek. "That is the nicest thing anyone ever done to me. Yes. I would like that."

Fleur pulled Hermione into a hug. It went that way for a while until they both let go of each other.

Hermione wiped her tears using the back of her hand. "Thank you," she said.

"You're welcome."

They continued their conversation. Hermione shared everything with Fleur. She told her about her life and her family. Fleur did the same. Of course they both had done this before in Fleur's past life which means that Fleur already knew everything about Hermione. But then again, the Hermione now sitting in front of her wouldn't know that, would she?

The sun hung really low. It was time for them to return to their place of accommodation.

"Hermione, can I ask you a question?" said Fleur as they walked back to their respective destination.

"Sure."

"When is the next time you'll be having classes with Professor Moody?"

"This Thursday. After lunch. why?"

"Owh, nothing. It's just that we're planning to attend one of his classes. We just don't know when," explained Fleur.

"Owh. That is a surprise," said Hermione.

"Indeed. So, is he good? I heard people talking. Most of Hogwarts students were impressed by him by the looks of it," said Fleur.

"Well, he's eccentric, I give you that. Borderline lunatic as a matter a fact. Do you know in our first class with him, he demonstrated the Unforgiven Curses in front of us? Poor Neville. But yeah, most students especially the boys loved him. They said his class is the most hard charging ever," said Hermione.

Fleur of course knew this.

"And what of Harry's reaction to him?" she asked.

Hermione creased her eyebrows.

"I didn't really notice him actually. I was more preoccupied with the spiders. Professor Moody used them as test subjects in his demonstration. Maybe... indifference?" she replied.

"I see."

"I'm not looking forward to his next class to be honest. I don't like what he's planning."

"Which is?"

"He wanted to apply one of the Unforgiveable Curses to each one of us. He claimed he wanted to see how we react to it and maybe train us on how to throw it off. Honestly I don't know if that is possible,' said Hermione."
"I take it he will be performing the Imperious Curse on each one of you. He wouldn't possibly performing the other two, would he?" said Fleur.

"Unless he's interested in joining all those he caught in Azkaban that is."

"Interesting," said Fleur thoughtfully. "I would like to see that."

"Well I wouldn't recommend it. Even the simplest of the Unforgiveable Curse is horrible. But if you're still interested maybe you could ask your headmistress. Maybe she could arrange something," suggested Hermione.

"We'll see."

At a junction path near the carriage they parted ways.

"Are you faking your French accent all these time?" asked Hermione before she headed back to the castle.

Fleur smiled. "Very few things escape you, doesn't it?" she said.

"Why didn't you do it just now in our conversation?"

"Because I suspect we're going to have a very long conversation and honestly faking an accent in a long conversation can be very tiring," came the reply.

Hermione shook her head and laughed.

"That's true. Well, good night, Fleur. I hope we'll meet again."

"We will. Good night, Hermione."

Hermione strode off towards the castle but before she got far, Fleur called her back.

"Hermione! Our meeting and what we talked about, can you not tell anyone? At least for now?" asked Fleur.

Hermione nodded. "Of course. Don't worry. I won't," she said before continuing her way.

Fleur watched silently as Hermione walked towards the castle.

She truly wanted to tell Hermione who she truly was but she knew Hermione was always the skeptic one. She may not be ready. Maybe someday. The meeting in turn was a fruitful one however. Fleur got more than what she bargain for.

She wasn't sure of it but she dearly wanted to believe it. The question now would be how she could confirm it.

"So, do you believe her?"

It was nearly bedtime.

Fleur was pacing around within her quarters. She had just told her friends about the contents of her meeting with Hermione. They of course knew about the meeting beforehand. Cassandra and a few others offered to escorted her but she declined. She said it would be better for her to meet Hermione alone. She didn't want the young brunette to feel uncomfortable with the presence of so many people she doesn't know.

"I believe her. I know her. She's not the one who tend to making up stories unless she really has to," replied Fleur to Cassandra's question. "She's known to be pragmatic."

"So what are you going to do now?" asked Daphne Lavinge.

Fleur paused for a moment.

"Regarding Harry? I don't know. Temporarily, I think we should proceed with our plan. We already invited him so we can go with that. We'll see what happen then and what we can learn from his visit. We can deduce on what we need to do next after that," said Fleur.

"There's a much simpler, quicker way," said Cammille.

"Do tell," said Marianne.

"Send a letter to Harry. Tell him that you want to meet him. And once you both meet, ask him. Tell it to his face," said Cammille to Fleur.

Cammille threw a pillow at Marianne but she missed her target.

"I don't mean it like that!"

Fleur shook her head at her friends' antic.

"That's enough you two. Yes Cammille, I can do that. But only if it's proven that Harry also returned to this timeline like I did. I need more time. I really need to be sure," said Fleur.

"It's hard enough to believe one person can time-travel, let alone two," pointed out Daphne Lavinge.

"Time-turner?" said Marianne.

"That doesn't count. What happened to Fleur is entirely different. It's far more complicated."

Everyone in the vicinity nodded in agreement.

"If Harry indeed do return as you did, what next?" asked Cassandra.

"Then it would be the matter of how we're both going to reveal it to each other. Personally I would prefer him to be the one to do it," said Fleur.

"Only if he realize who you truly are," said Cassandra.

Fleur nodded in agreement.

"Yes. Only if. I guess we'll just have to see. As much as I want to believe that he also returns, like I said, I need to be sure. Only then will I be able to decide what to do next. I still got time. I want it to be proper," said Fleur.

Her friends watched in silent as she made her way towards her bedroom windows. She pushed away the curtain and took a peek at the Gryffindor Tower that loomed within the darkness of the night.

With her eyes still gazing at the tower, she spoke, "And his visit shall be a start."

Thursday came.

She and her friends, led by none other than Professor McGonagall, walked silently towards the Defense Against the Dark Art classroom. As they turned into a corridor, right ahead Professor Moody was waiting for them.

And Fleur found herself gripping her wand even tighter.

**To be continued...**

A/n: Some of you guys really need to learn how to differentiate between flirting and being nice/polite to people.

2. Some of you guys are concern about the possibility about this story losing its readership. Well I don't. Between the need to write this story based on my vision and retaining my readership, I choose the former. And I will choose it every time.

3. One of you told me that you will continue disliking/dissing this story until I give in to your demand. I don't appreciate being threatened. You like/dislike this story on your accord. If you find that this story no longer entertains you, do yourself a favor. I don't think I need to tell you what to do.

This story still have a long way to go and it baffles me to see some of you making your own conclusion out of thin air.

I appreciate my readers but a line have to be drawn somewhere.

To “honest reader and writer” (review dated 18th February 2020), a big heartfelt thanks.
The Story of Fleur Delacour - 10

"italic" - conversation in French/Bulgarian

"normal" - conversation in English

italic - thought

The night before...

"This isn't about the teacher and what's he's going to teach. This is about Harry, isn't it?"

Nobody was happy.

It was Wednesday night. As always, her friends would congregate inside her living quarters after dinner and night prep. But unlike before, although the night was cold, the temperature within Fleur's room had risen up a bit more than usual and it all stemmed from a heated debate they were having.

As she correctly assumed, her friends were very resistive to the idea of joining one of Hogwarts' classes. But that wasn't all. The fact that they would be joining Moody's class together with a group of fourth year students made matters even worse. Her male counterparts were a little bit easier to persuade though. They also refused at first but after she explained to them through Raphael what she heard from Hogwarts students, they became interested. Of course they still had issues though.

"But why year four? Why don't we join Hogwarts sixth or seventh year classes?" asked Raphael when he met her that early evening before dinner. She had just told him what she heard from Hogwarts students. Madame Maxime announced earlier that day that they would be attending a class with Professor Moody the very next day. That announcement and the details that followed was what causes him to seek Fleur in the first place.

"Does it matter?" asked Fleur instead.

"It matters and you know it, Fleur. This is about Harry, isn't it?"

"My reasoning is not up for discussion."

Raphael shook his head. "Fine," he said. "The boys aren't happy, you know. Look, I'm interested and I'm sure the boys will be interested too once I tell them what you told me but I can't guarantee that will be enough to win them over. This arrangement doesn't make any sense at all."

"Do what you have to, Raphael. All I'm asking is that you and your friends bear with me this time. But of course if you and the boys still have doubt, you can ask Madame Maxime to exempt you and your friends from the class. I will vouch for you," said Fleur.

"Well I'm not worried. I know you hold quite a sway over Madame Maxime but what are the girls have to say about this?" asked Raphael.

"Don't worry about them. Just do what you have to. Whatever you and the boys decision is, I shall vouch for you," said Fleur before she rejoined her friends for dinner.

"Partly."

"There are other reasons too? Well what is it?" asked Cammille.

Actually Harry was indeed the whole reason why she came up with the idea in the first place. But the fact that that reason had everything to do with Moody made it difficult for Fleur to explain to her friends. They probably would assume that she had gone mad if she told them what she knew.

"Fleur, there are a lot of ways for you to get closer to Harry if that what you really want," said Adrienne without waiting for Fleur's reply. "We already have a plan, don't you remember? We're inviting Harry to this carriage. You will have a lot of chance to get to know him by then. You can do whatever you want. It's not like we're going to stop you or anything."

"I can't bear to think what they'll say back at the campus once they find out we, a group of seventh year students, joined a fourth year class. That would be very embarrassing," added Marianne as she glared at Fleur.
By this time, Fleur realized that she had no other choices. She preferred to fly below the radar of course, and with Harry's help, she would try to change the course of history without anyone else noticing. She would be graduating soon anyway. She would be free to join Harry in his quest by then. At least that was what she planned to do. Unfortunately for her, given the circumstances, keeping her intention from her friends was no longer an option.

She got off her chair and walked towards the windows. She pushed away the curtain and stared into the darkness of the night. The carriage was very well sealed from the sound of the night. She missed the sound of the crickets and the croaking of the toads though.

"I have been wondering," she said. She was still peering outside. "about the true reason for my return. Why this year? Why 1994? Why not earlier? Or later?"

She then turned around. She looked at each and every single face that was inside her quarters at that very moment. "Then I realized that this year is going to be a pivotal year. This is the year when everything will change. Whether it will be for the better or for the worst I don't know but I'm not going to sit idly and just wait for it to happen."

The rest of her friends went silent.

Cassandra's eyebrows creased. "I-, I don't understand. Pivotal? What are you talking about, Fleur?"

"Back from where I came from, many people died," Fleur began. "Hundreds, thousands, perhaps millions perished, both wizards and muggles alike. The Death Eaters were relentless and with their master behind their back, they were unchecked and unchallenged. Muggle-borns and magical beings and veelas alike had to go into hiding. Including myself. Those who were captured were sent for trials and then to Azkaban. It had gotten so bad at one point that being killed was more preferable than a stint inside a wizard prison. They performed the Dementor Kiss to every prisoner they captured. It was better to die than lived on as an empty shell."

She paused momentarily.

"Bertrand. Greengrass. Both these families were among those that perished. None of them lived to see the light of another day' she continued to the gasp of everyone inside the quarters.


"And the seed to that have already been planted. Right at this moment. Right here," said Fleur. She then retook her seat. "Let me tell you what happened in 1994."

And the story began. She told them about Harry being selected as the fourth champion. She told them about how all of them hated Harry so much. She told them how it all changed after the Second Task. She told them the mechanic of the Goblet of Fire when they questioned her claim that Harry became the fourth champion. She told them about the murder of Cedric Diggory. She told them about the return of Voldermort. She told them everything.

"We returned to France scarred and completely shattered. It was like going on a vacation but instead of bringing back happy memories and souvenirs, we brought back pain and a dead body of someone we know. A few of you had to get help. Psychological help due to trauma. Thankfully you recovered but alas, the scar remains. And it showed its ugly face from time to time," said Fleur as she concluded her story.

"But Harry didn't become the fourth champion," said Cammile once the story telling ended. "I mean if history does repeat itself, he should be. Right? And You-Know-Who is already dead. He won't come back."

"I was wondering about that myself. Something must have changed. Harry once told me that he suspected Professor Moody performing the Imperious Curse on each of the students was just a ploy. This is why I need to know. This is why I need to be sure. If Harry do indeed return just as I did, he'll know what to do. But if he's just a fourteen years old boy with no such memory, well he'll be glad that I am there. And no, Cammile. Voldemort is still alive. He's out there bidding his time."

There were gasps all around.

"You spoke his name again! You shouldn't speak his name, didn't we tell you that?!" Marianne reprimanded Fleur.

"I'm not afraid of him or his name. I fought his generals and lieutenants before. I'm ready to do it all over again. Back then we were complacent. We took longer time than necessary to ascertain the truth. It was already too late by then."
There was a moment of silence.
Cassandra slowly stood up moments later.

"If that is the case, We'll be with you. We will be with you all the way, Fleur."

Fleur didn't respond to that. As much as she appreciated her friends support on this matter, putting all of them in the harm's way would be the last thing she wanted to do.

**Thursday...**

They congregated outside of Professor McGonagall’s office after lunch. They were waiting for both Madame Maxime and Professor McGonagall to meet them.

Much to Fleur's surprise, each and every member of the Beauxbaton delegates decided to join the class. Raphael came to her earlier that day. He said that despite the boys' reservation, they were still interested to see what Professor Moody had in store for them.

Madame Maxime and Professor McGonagall finally came out. The Beauxbaton headmistress excused herself and made her way to the carriage after leaving her students in the hands of Professor McGonagall.

Professor Moody was already waiting for them outside his classroom.

"Professor Moody," greeted Professor McGonagall once they arrived. "Well, here you go. The students as promised."

Professor Moody took a sweeping look at each of the Beauxbaton students that were standing in front of him. His eyes lingered a bit longer on Fleur before turning his attention back to Professor McGonagall.

"Tell me again the rationale behind allowing a group of seventh year students to join a fourth year class, Minerva?" asked Professor Moody.

"It came as a specific request from Madame Maxime, Alastor. I tried suggesting another timetable where her students can join a seventh year class to her but she won't budge," explained Professor McGonagall.

"And she still didn't care to provide any reason?" asked Professor Moody.

"She never give you any?"

"She only said that right now is the only free slot they have. I don't have an inkling how Beauxbaton arrange their timetable. Don't have the time to find out and I really don't care. She only mentioned that her students were interested with me. They like to know what it's feels like learning the Defense Against the Dark Art subject with a proper auror. You forgot what she said? You and Dumbledore were there at the Great Hall this morning," said Professor Moody.

"I do not forget. It's just one class. Alastor. Surely you won't have any problem with that. They are our guest after all," said Professor McGonagall.

Professor Moody gave another sweeping look at the students.

"No. There won't any problem," he said. "I'll take it from here, Minerva." He then proceeded to open the classroom door for the foreign students.

Professor McGonagall smiled at the students. "Well, in you go."

"Zhank you, Professor," said the Beauxbaton students in unison.

Fleur and the rest entered the classroom but just as she was about to cross over the threshold, she heard Professor McGonagall speaking:-

"By the way, I heard rumors, Alastor," said Professor McGonagall.

"About what?"

"About you," replied Professor McGonagall. "About you teaching the students things that you should not teach."

"I didn't teach them. I was simply demonstrating to them, Minerva," said Professor Moody. "Those are two different things."
"It is still illegal, Alastor!" argued Professor McGonagall. "I hope you won't spark an international incident due to your ignorance. We already have a lot on our plate as we speak."

"You can bring this matter up with Albus. Don't worry, Minerva. They came into the classroom alive, they will come out alive. Now please excuse me. I got a class to teach."

Fleur who was pausing at the door quickly entered the classroom and rejoined her friends. They were already taking in the surrounding.

The door shut with a mighty slam moments later.

"I don't know how they do it in Beauxbaton," growled Professor Moody. "But I was told that all of you are used to being proper in everything you do. Well you won't find it here. Sit anywhere you like. You can sit on the floor for all I care. Class will begin once the others arrived!"

The cacophonous sound generated by Professor Moody's wooden peg leg echoed throughout the classroom as he walked pass them. He made his way towards the spiral staircase that led to his quarters entrance.

Fleur watched as Professor Moody disappeared behind the door into his quarters.

"Come on. Let's find a seat," said Cassandra.

Fleur looked around. She in fact already had in mind where to sit. It would be at the second row from the front, left column, middle seat.

In other words, Harry's seat.

Without saying another word, she headed straight for it. Cassandra followed her. Soon, Every Beauxbatons students got their seat. They continued to drink in the surrounding.

"He looked scary," whispered Cassandra. "Did you notice his left eye? I wonder what's wrong with it?"

"That's not his eye," said Fleur.

Cassandra was perplexed. "Not his eye? What do you mean?"

"He lost it. I mean the real Alastor Moody lost his left eye. I don't know how or when but yes, he lost it. What you saw is his magical eye."

"Magical eye?"

Fleur nodded. "They said his magical eye can see things beyond any wall and magical concealments. You can forget about ambushing him. Probably why he was so effective back when he was still an auror."

"And this supposed impostor knows how to use it?"

"I'm not sure but I give him credit for his success in fooling everyone including Albus Dumbledore."

Their conversation was cut short when the door into the classroom suddenly reopened.

The new entrees paused at the door. They looked very surprised. And among them was Harry Potter.

The new group of students can be heard whispering to each other. Harry himself could be seen talking to one of the boys as he gave a sweeping look around the class. It took a while but his eyes finally found Fleur. They lingered on her for a few moments.

Fleur gave him a nod in which he replied.

Few of the newcomers already taken their seat leaving Harry and a few others still standing at the back of the classroom.

"Why doesn't he take a seat?" asked Cassandra as she too watched Harry.

"That's because I already took his," said Fleur as she continued eyeing the boy.

Cassandra turned towards Fleur. She raised her eyebrows. "You're now sitting on his chair? Why did you do that?!"

"I don't know. I just want to."
Cassandra stared at Fleur. "You're yearning for him, aren't you? Please control yourself, Fleur."

Fleur just shrugged her shoulders.

It didn't take long for another group of newcomers to enter the classroom.

The newcomers eyed the Gryffindor who had yet taken their seats. One of them spoke, "What are you all-".

But the poor boy with blonde hair never get to finish his sentence. He accidentally looked at Fleur while he was talking. He immediately froze. His mouth opened and he began to drool uncontrollably.

That was Fleur's doing of course. Not by choice actually. She knew she had trouble concealing her own allure due to its immense strength. Even under full control she would still projecting her allure a bit more than any other veelas in existent.

Clearly the blonde haired boy aka. Draco Malfoy wasn't immune to her charm. At least Ronald Weasley possessed more control than Malfoy.

A commotion involving Malfoy and a dark haired girl started right after that. The rest of the class simply watched with no small amount of amusement.

Someone nudged her shoulder. She turned to look. It was Cassandra.

"Are they both a couple?" asked Cassandra.

"Apparently so," said Fleur.

"Hopefully you won't be like her when you and Harry do get together."

Fleur just smirked. She knew there was no need for her to act the way the dark haired girl did. She's a veela and Harry himself wasn't a habitual cheater.

Some of the newly arrived students decided they wanted nothing to do with the quarrel began to disperse. They headed for their seats.

Fleur by this time was already turning her attention towards the front of the class. She and Cassandra continued to chat when all of a sudden, she felt someone approaching her.

It was Harry Potter.

"Hi," he greeted Fleur.

Fleur looked up to him. She smiled. "'Ello, 'Arry Potter."

"So, are you staying or are you leaving?" he asked.

Fleur tilted her head a little and looked at him with amusement. "We 'ave just got 'ere, 'Arry. Why?"

Harry looked confused. He stared at her. "Really? You sure you got to the right classroom, Fleur?"

Fleur was about to answer when all of a sudden-

"Yes they came to the right place, Potter!"

Both she and Harry looked up and saw Professor Moody who was standing on the small balcony in front of the class, looking at them.

"Professor Mcgonagall sent them here," growled Moody as he began to walk down the small spiral staircase. Once he reached at the bottom of the stair, he walked straight towards where Harry was standing. Harry could see his magical eye spinning relentlessly in its socket from that distance. "It came as a special request from Madame Maxime herself," continued Moody. "Do you have any problem with that, Potter?"

Harry shook his head. "No, sir."

"Then take your seat, son," said Moody as he turned around and made his way towards the chalkboard. "Class is about to start."

"There aren't enough seats, sir," Harry pointed out.
Moody turned to look at him. But instead of replying to Harry, he took out his wand and flicked it. Several chairs appeared out of thin air near him.

"There's your seat," said Moody as he stowed his wand back. "Four persons will share one long table each. This classroom isn't big enough for me to add more. Now be quick! I don't have all day!"

Harry gave Fleur a momentary glance before he made his way towards the newly appeared chairs.

There were shuffling noises as the students rearranged their seating all by themselves. Fleur watched Harry as he took one of the chairs Professor Moody provided and made his way towards the second last table from the rear where Ron, Hermione and Neville were waiting for him. He sat beside Ron. Hermione meanwhile sat between Ron and Neville.

Fleur continued to look at him. Their eyes met. And she smiled at him. It was a truly meaningful smile. Inwards, she was hoping that Harry understood what that smile meant. She also saw Hermione and gave a subtle nod to the brunette.

Something else caught her attention while she was staring at Harry. Slowly she turned her gaze in the direction of Cassandra, who also at that time was staring at Harry. But she wasn't actually looking at Cassandra. She was looking at the person who was sitting at the adjacent table.

Cassandra took notice. She looked at Fleur questioningly.

Fleur nodded at Cassandra, signaling her to look towards the adjacent table.

Cassandra did as told. Her eyebrows raised when she saw who were sitting at that table.

It was Daphne Greengrass and Tracy Davis. They both were joined by a couple of other House of Slytherin members.

Daphne was watching Fleur at that very moment.

Both Daphne's and Fleur's eyes met. Fleur gestured Daphne to join her table. The Greengrass heir smiled and obliged. Daphne nudged Tracy and they both, each carrying their own chair, ended up sitting at the same table as Fleur and Cassandra.

"It's been a while," said Fleur. "Where have you been? We are worried about you, you know."

"I didn't go anywhere, Fleur," replied Daphne.

"But we haven't seen you and Tracy at the Great Hall these past few days. Astoria was also looking for you. She said you failed to reply all of her letters. You got all of us worried," said Fleur.

"Oh that. Well."

But Daphne couldn't finish her sentences. Professor Moody began his class at that very moment.

"Alright!" he barked. "Be quiet now! Some of you might ask on why our guests ended up joining the rest of you within this class. Now I'm about to tell you. It seems that the Beauxbaton Academy lack one thing within their standard curriculum – the study of Dark Magic or more correctly, as your headmistress had mentioned, the defense against it. Am I right?"

At this point, Fleur felt odd. Beauxbaton Academy did in fact teach its students defensive magic and they were pretty good at it. Silently she wondered why Madame Maxime gave false information to Professor Moody.

She and Cassandra exchanged looks. In the end, they both decided to just nod. The rest of the Beauxbaton students who also got confused followed suit.

"Well of course I am," continued Moody. "Among the three most prestigious schools in Europe, the Beauxbaton fared the worst when it come to defensive magic. I told your headmistress that all of you should be joining Hogwarts seventh year class but she insisted that you would be better off joining this class instead. She did not state the reason why, however. This is probably the oddest and craziest request anyone made out of me. It doesn't make sense at all."

Fleur and Cassandra once again glanced at each other.

"Right. The fourth year had gone a bit farther in this class," said Moody, still addressing the
Beauxbaton students. "At least in regard of the syllabus outlined specially for the fourth year. But all of you are seventh year students. I shall expect you to know more than your friends here. The Goblet of Fire won't pick someone who is wimpy." At this point, both his eyes fell on Fleur. He paused at her momentarily before continuing. "Be it as it may, Madame Maxime had asked me to put you into the fourth year class. If this class gets too boring for you just because you already know what I'm about to teach, don't blame me. Bring the matter up to your headmistress. I won't entertain any complaints. Now!"

Moody made a heel turn and walked towards the blackboard. "The fourth years had been given a little bit of an introduction on the Unforgivable Curse," he said as he began writing on the blackboard. After he finished writing, he threw the chalk onto the desk and took out the student's register and began to scan it. "Rafael Mercier!"

A blonde boy, sat right in front of Fleur slowly raised his hand. "Sir."

Moody nodded at him. "The Unforgivable Curse. How many are there and give me one."
"There are three, sir," answered Mercier. "One of them is the Imperius Curse."
"Good." Moody scanned the register the second time. "Camille. Camille Louise Moreau."

Camille who sat at the table adjoining Fleur spoke, "The Cruciusus Curse."

Moody nodded. "Correct."

But just as he went back to the register-
"The Killing Curse!"

Moody's eyes shot up. He stared at Fleur. Fleur looked back at him calmly.

"I didn't ask for you, Miss Delacour," said Moody. "But nevertheless, that is correct. You might want to put a little bit of restrain in your in-class behavior the next time or I will be forced to report you to your headmistress. And there is no need to shout. I'm not deaf."

"My apology, sir," said Fleur.

Fleur had no idea why she did that. Something about Professor Moody must had triggered her somewhat. Apparently both Daphne and Cassandra could sense that as well. They immediately put their hands on Fleur's arm in an effort to calm her down.

Moody did not respond to Fleur's apology. He simply closed the register book and placed it back on the teacher's desk. He once again addressed the Beauxbaton lot, "Before you came to this school, I did a practical demonstration using each of Unforgivable Curse to the fourth years."

There were gasps coming in from the Beauxbaton students.

"Don't worry! Nobody's dead. At least not yet. The fourth years already saw it all except you lot. I'm not going to redo the demonstration. As what the fourth years had shown me, some of you may not be able to take it too well and I'm not going to answer to Madame Maxime on what happened to her students. You will have to ask your friends what it feels like. I do hope that none of you will have to experience it however: CONSTANT VIGILANCE!" – nearly everyone jumped – "Those two words will be the key to your survival."

Moody pointed towards the blackboard. "See what I wrote on the board? The Imperious Curse. Despite it being one of the Unforgivable Curse, unlike the other two, this is the only one that did not leave a long lasting effect on its victim. Unlike the Cruciusus that leaves it victims mentally scarred and the Killing Curse that leaves its victims dead, the victims of the Imperious Curse will usually return back to normal once the curse is lifted. Of course if it's not done properly, it could mess with the victim's mind. So this is what we are going to do today. I am going to put each and every one of you in turn under the curse. Let see if any of you could resist it. Now stand up! All of you and gather at the back of the classroom."

This announcement took nearly everyone by surprise.

Fleur glanced at Harry. Much to her surprise, Harry's expression was the one of impassiveness. It almost looked like he was ready for whatever Professor Moody was going to throw at him. He also was the first one to stand up. Fleur watched him as he walked towards the back end of the classroom. Few others followed suit.

"But, but you said it is illegal," said Hermione uncertainly. She stood up like everyone else. However unlike Harry and the rest, she remained at her seat. "You said to use it on other human was-"
“Dumbledore wants you to know what it feels like,” said Moody, his magical swiveled and fixed on her with an eerie, unblinking stare. “Now, if you rather learn it the hard way, fine by me. You’re dismissed. Off you go.”

He pointed one gnarly finger to the door.

Hermione went very pink and muttered something about not meaning that she wanted to leave.

“No?” said Moody. “Then get your arse to the back of the class like everyone else. Quickly now! I don’t have all day!”

Still red faced, Hermione moved to the back of the class and stood beside Ron. The ginger head gave her a sympathetic look and squeezed her hand. Hermione looked towards him, saw him giving her a thin smile in which she replied.

Fleur felt sorry for Hermione. She felt that despite his known eccentricities, shaming a student just because of that student saying the right thing is uncalled for. And she wasn’t sure about Professor Dumbledore’s endorsement either. But then again she was once told that Professor Dumbledore once hired a werewolf as the DADA teacher so him allowing Professor Moody demonstrating the Unforgiven Curse may not be that far from the truth.

With a swipe of his wand, Moody moved the tables and the chairs a bit further to the back, creating just enough empty space at the front of the class. He then beckoned each student to come forward and began putting them under the Imperious Curse.

Fleur silently watched as each of the students doing all sort of unusual things they definitely would not do or unable to do in their normal state. One of them hopped three times across the room and sang the United Kingdom national anthem. One girl imitated a squirrel. One of the boys performed a series of impressive gymnastic moves he probably would not be able to perform in his normal state given his stature. Draco Malfoy in turn impersonated a ferret. Moody also selected a few of the Beauxbaton students to be his guinea pig. Camille ballet danced across the room. Daphne Lavinge in turn imitated a crow.

Fleur readied herself. She was sure that Professor Moody will call her at any moment. But then-

"Potter!” called out Professor Moody. "Front and center!"

Fleur watched as Harry obediently did as told. He stopped and faced Moody once he arrived at the front of the class.

Moody slowly raised his wand, pointed it at Harry and muttered, "Imperio!"

Fleur watched Harry carefully. Her attention was directed more specifically to his face. She was looking for any sign of him falling for the curse.

"Jump on to the desk!" barked Moody.

Fleur held her breath.

"Jump on to the desk!"

Still, no response.

"Jump on to the desk! NOW!"

And much to her dismay, Harry began to bent his knees in absolute obedience and without further ado, he jumped, making a smooth clean landing on top of the desk in front of him. And once on top, he straightened up and once again gave Moody the same blank stare.

Moody's crooked lips formed a smile. He then turned towards the rest of the audience. "You see that?! That is what happened if you were being put under the curse. The perpetrator could force you to do all sort of things you would never do normally. And that includes killing." He then turned back to Harry who was still standing on top of the desk. "You can come down now, son. And take your seat."

Harry obliged. He jumped down and stood beside the desk. Moody took out his wand and began rearranging the tables back to its original locations. "Sit down!" he barked once he was done.

Professor Moody didn’t call her which came as a surprise. Not that she wanted him to. But still...

Harry couldn't throw off the curse. That was unprecedented. Her mind went blank. She
became truly confused.

Harry had returned to his seat and for the rest of the class, Fleur would glanced at him every now and then. It would seem to her that he was suffering from the after effect of the Imperious Curse. It was the same thing that happened to every student who unwittingly became Professor Moody's guinea pig.

The class soon ended.

"Potter!" barked Professor Moody. "Stay behind. There's something we need to talk about. Everyone else, dismiss. Now!"

Fleur began gathering all her belongings and through it all, she and the rest of her friends kept shooting looks towards each other. She didn't realize it at first but it seemed that all of her friends - the female ones - shared her worry.

Harry stayed put on his chair. Fleur and the rest of her squad including Daphne and Tracy walked past him, each of them looked at him with unreadable expression and each of them squeezed his hand in turn.

Fleur wanted to stay but Cassandra nudged her forward.

"We'll wait for him outside," Cassandra whispered.

And waited outside the classroom they did. But only the females though including Daphne and Tracy. All the Beauxbaton male students had already left. Fleur didn't blame them though. They knew nothing of what transpired.

Ron and Hermione exited the DADA classroom minutes later. Ron upon seeing Fleur immediately moved a little bit further away. Apparently he didn't want to end up like Malfoy.

"Hermione!"

Hermione who was in deep thought at that time startled. She looked around and was surprised to see all Beauxbaton female students and a couple of Slytherin congregated at the entrance into the DADA classroom. She then noticed Fleur.

"Fleur. You're still here," she said.

Fleur went up to Hermione. "How is he? What happened in there?" she asked.

Hermione took a momentary glanced at the door before turning her attention back to Fleur. "He's fine. He's suffering from the after effect of the curse. Just like Ronald here."

Indeed Ron as he stood a little bit further away from the group, would skip in place every few seconds. He looked surprised when he saw how casual the interaction was between Hermione and Fleur. But he said nothing though.

"I don't really know what Professor Moody wants with him," continued Hermione. "Me and Ron wanted to stay behind but he chased us out. There's nothing we should worry about, right? He's with a teacher after all. Perhaps we should wait. We can ask him once he comes out."

Fleur could see that the Gryffindor girl was very worried. And so was she. But something told her that it was best not to worsen the situation and so she agreed.

"Yes. Perhaps we should."

And waited for Harry they did. Little did they know that it would be a very long wait.

Minutes went pass.

Hermione became very jittery. Every few seconds or so she would check her wristwatch. Fleur meanwhile stood silently. Not for a second her eyes left the door.

"This isn't right. This has taken too long, Fleur," said Jeanne.

But before Fleur could respond, Ron already made his move. He walked up the door and tried to open it. He found that he couldn't.

"I can't open the door," he said as he tried again and again. "It's locked. I can't even turn the knob."
"Here, let me try," said Hermione. She reached out and tried to twist the door knob. The knob won't budge at all. She then took out her wand and pointed it at the door knob.

"Alohomora!"

A bluish flame erupted from the tip of Hermione's wand. It hit the door knob, but much to her dismay, it dissipated just like that.

"What."

Hermione began to bang on the door. She called out to Harry many times but there were no response.

"Harry! Harry!"

Then all of a sudden-

"Out of the way, Hermione!"

Hermione turned around and saw Fleur, now standing in dueling position, pointed her wand towards her.

"Move aside. Please," said Fleur.

Hermione obliged. She took Ron's hand and pulled him away from the door.

"Fleur wait!"

But Fleur refused to listen to Cassandra. With a single twisting motion, Fleur fired a spell towards the door. A huge red flame erupted from the tip of her wand and hit the door with a loud bang.

But nothing happened. The door remained intact.

She tried once more. Another red flame hit the door. Still nothing happened. The flame simply dissipated. Some of it was absorbed by the door. The door glowed a bit when it absorbed the flame.

And for the next minutes they silently watched Fleur trying to bring down the door again and again with every conceivable spell she knew. But unfortunately for her, all her successive attempts ended up in failures. The door stood proud. It didn't even suffered a scratch on it. But it did glowed a faint red which was the result of all the spells that hit it.

By this time, Fleur began to panic. She began to regret hesitating.

Seeing this, Cassandra immediately held Fleur's arm. "That's enough. I don't think forcing open the door will work. We should call a teacher."

But Fleur wasn't about to give up. She raised her wand once again. "Just one more time," she said.

But before she could do anything else, all of a sudden someone called out to her.

"There won't be any need to repeat your attempt, Miss Delacour!"

All of them turned to look. They saw down the corridor, Professor Dumbledore came marching towards them.

Fleur immediately ran to him. "Professor Dumbledore! It's Harry! He's-"

But she couldn't finished her sentences.

Dumbledore held up his hand, signaling her to speak no more. He walked past her and made his way straight towards the door. Once he arrived, he immediately placed his palm onto the door. He then closed his eyes. It was as if he was trying to reach out to whatever it was behind the door.

Professor Dumbledore opened his eyes. Turning to Fleur, he spoke. "Perhaps you and the rest of your friends should leave. As I understand it, you have an afternoon class which began fifteen minutes ago. The rest of you go back to your common room."

But Fleur wouldn't budge. "But Professor Dumbledore, the door-"

"Is lock. Yes, I know. As this school's headmaster, no doors in this castle would deny me entrance. And don't worry about Harry. He is with a teacher," said Dumbledore.
But Fleur remained unconvinced. She just stood there, staring at Dumbledore.

"If it will ease your worries, I shall provide you with an update as soon as I can. Will that be alright with you?" said Dumbledore.

It took her a while but finally she nodded.

"You should go then. Madame Maxime doesn't take kindly on lateness. And by the way Miss Granger," said Dumbledore, turning his attention towards the Gryffindor. "Try to wake up Mr. Weasley here. He's making a mess of himself. Apparently he's very susceptible to Miss Delacour's enchantment."

Sure enough, Ron was standing rigidly facing Fleur. His eyes unblinking, his mouth wide opened and he was drooling so much that the whole frontal of his uniform drenched with his saliva.

Fleur knew what happened and it happened whenever she was in a distress. There were also occasions where firing a spell or a curse caused the same phenomena. Her allure would go out of control, its intensity would shoot through the roof. Poor Ron must had been hit full blast multiple time when she tried to bring down the door.

Cassandra grabbed Fleur's arm. "Come on. Let's go. Zhank you, Professor Dumbledore."

Professor Dumbledore simply nodded.

Fleur looked over her shoulder as they navigated the corridor heading towards the Entrance Hall. Dumbledore entering the DADA classroom with his wand unsheathed was the last thing she saw before the door closed.

"Will your friend be alright?" asked Daphne Lavinge to Hermione as they continued to walk.

The Entrance Hall was just right ahead. For the past few minutes, throughout the journey nobody said anything. Each of them drowned in their own thought.

Hermione glanced at Ron. She together with the help of - much to her surprise - Daphne Greengrass had been guiding Ron since the boy was still in deep trance. "I don't know. Will he?" she asked worriedly.

"It iz 'ard to say. Different people suffer different symptom but all the time they recover. You 'ave to forgive Fleur. 'Er allure iz the strongest. It iz 'ard for 'er to control it," Daphne Lavinge explained.

"I see."

"Don't worry, Granger," said Daphne Greengrass. "Weasley here will be fine. He probably won't remember what happened outside the DADA classroom but at least he has better control than Draco. That self entitled brat would probably has his brain shooting out through his ears if they switch places."

Hermione went silent.

They finally reached the Entrance Hall. A few people going in and out of the Great Hall stopped to look at the newly arrived group. Confusion plastered on their faces as they watched the Beauxbaton, Slytherin and Gryffindor within the group mingling together.

"I leave you to it then," said Daphne to Hermione as she let go of Ron's arm. "Just sprinkle some water onto his face and maybe get a few glass of pumpkin juice for him to drink while you're at it. That will help calm his nerve once he got out of his trance."

"Thank you," said Hermione.

"Don't mention it." said Daphne. Turning to the rest, she spoke, "Well, I'm heading back to the common room. I'll see you at dinner tonight, I suppose?"

"Will you really be there tonight?" asked Marianne, raising her eyebrows.

"Don't worry. I will. I'll probably follow you girls back to the carriage tonight. I need to know too," said Daphne as she glanced at Fleur.

With that, they parted ways. The Beauxbaton students headed back to their carriage. Daphne and Tracy made their way to the dungeon while Hermione carefully guided Ron into the Great Hall.

Professor Avellino was very unhappy. For the first half of the period he had to teach a half
empty class but that wasn't all. The boys were acting weird. One of them would bark every two minutes. One other boy would purr and lick himself like a cat would. Raphael's roommate ended up crouching on the table with his hands extended forward as if he was fishing for the whole duration of the class. Raphael himself ended up impersonating Madame Maxime every now and then.

Madame Maxime came to them later after the class ended and demanded explanation. Fleur had to tell her basically everything. This made her even more furious.

"Practicing the Unforgiven Curses on my pupil! I shall bring this up with Dumbledore! Alastor Moody shall be expelled from Hogwarts before dinner!"

For the rest of the afternoon Fleur spent worrying about Harry. She silently hoped that she would see him during dinner because that was the only way for her to know that he was safe.

They were just exiting the carriage that late afternoon to go to dinner when they witnessed a commotion at the Durmstrang ship. They heard shouting and saw a brown haired girl being restrained by a red haired boy. Both were surrounded by the Durmstrang students. Professor Karkaroff was there as well.

"But Harry Potter is not here. Ve are telling you the truth!"

"No! You're not telling the truth! I know for one he's on your ship! He's been spending the afternoon with you! I need to see him! I need to know that he is safe!"

Cassandra cupped her mouth. "Is- is that the same girl who was with us outside the DADA class? Hermione is her name, right?"

"Yes it is her: But why?" said Fleur who was also taken by surprise by Hermione's unusual behavior.

By this time Madame Maxime went to stand beside Fleur. She too was watching the commotion. "Did Professor Moody performed the Imperious Curse on her too?" she asked.

"Yes, he did," Fleur answered. "Her name is Hermione. She's a friend of Harry."

Madame Maxime nodded. "Then follow me."

Fleur and the rest of her schoolmate obliged. Just as they got nearer the Hogwarts Harbor, Madame Maxime called out to Professor Karkaroff who was standing on the deck of the ship at that time, "Professor Karkaroff! Might I ask how 'appening 'ere?"

Professor Karkaroff shrugged his shoulder. "This girl has been banging on our door for the last half an hour. I have no idea what she was talking about. Can you help?" he said.

Madame Maxime was about to reply when Fleur interrupted her.

"Madame, allow me," said Fleur.

Without waiting for Madame Maxime's permission, Fleur walked towards Hermione. The Durmstrang students who saw Fleur approaching them immediately gave her a wide berth. Even Ron who was still holding on to Hermione immediately let her go and moved a little bit further away when he saw Fleur coming.

Hermione upon realizing that Ron had release her looked around. Her eyes widened when she saw Fleur coming towards her. She then ran to her.

"Fleur! It's Harry! Please you need to-"

"Shhhh... please calm down, Hermione," said Fleur, holding both Hermione's arm. "You are making a scene."

But Hermione refused to calm down. She instead became even more hysterical. Shaking her head, she spoke, "No! I can't calm down! I couldn't! Harry! He's nowhere around! I looked for him everywhere! Then I thought he must have been on their ship! But they won't let me! Fleur, please tell them!"

Fleur gave a cursory glance at Krum. The Durmstrang champion mouthed to her 'I don't know where Harry is'.

She nodded. Turning back to Hermione, Fleur spoke gently, "It's okay, Hermione. I am sure Harry is fine. As a matter a fact, he's probably waiting for us right now at the Great Hall. Let's go meet him."
"But."

Before Hermione could continue on rambling, Fleur placed the palm of her hand onto Hermione's forehead. Her palm glowed white. The effect was immediate.

Hermione straight away calmed down. Her breathing eased. Her knees gave away but Fleur managed to grab hold of her before she fell onto the ground.

"Come, let's go," Fleur said as she heaved the girl up.

She held Hermione's shoulder and pulled the girl closer to her. She then gave a nod to Madame Maxime and immediately started walking towards the castle with Hermione by her side.

The rest of her school mate followed her.

"Professor Karkaroff, are you and your pupil going to dinner?" asked Madame Maxime.

Professor Karkaroff who was walking down the plank as he made his exit from the ship replied, "As a matter a fact ve are. Thank you. Your champion did veil."

"You are welcome. Walk wiz me, pleez. Zhere iz somezhing I need to tell you," said Madame Maxime.

Fleur glanced at Hermione as they climbed the slope leading up to the entrance stairs. She really hoped that they would see Harry by the time they arrived at the Great Hall.

The Great Hall...

It turned out that she didn't have to hope.

Viktor Krum was the first to notice Harry sitting alone at the Gryffindor table. He immediately alerted the rest.

Hermione, upon seeing Harry, wrestled her way out of Fleur's grasp and marched towards him. Ron and a few other Gryffindors whom they met just outside Great Hall followed suit.

She and her friends were just beginning to interrogate Harry when Fleur arrived at the Gryffindor table.

"I'm fine. You both look sweaty. What? You both finally find out that jogging is good for you?" she heard Harry said.

Viktor sat beside him and spoke, "Harry, this is not a joke. Your friends here are clearly worried."

"Worried? Why?" asked Harry, perplexed.

Hermione proceeded to sit on the other side of him. "We look for you everywhere, Harry," she said. "You didn't show up at all this whole afternoon. What happened? What Professor Moody wants with you?"

"Nothing," he said. "Nothing happened."

Hermione's eyebrows creased. "Are you sure?" she asked. "Tell us the truth, Harry."

"If I'm not okay I won't be here, am I?" he said. "Look, what's really going on, Hermione? Why are they here?" He pointed towards the rest of the group who were now converging around him.

Hermione proceeded to tell the tale. "We were waiting for you outside the class right after Professor Moody dismissed us. Well not just me and Ron but the Beauxbaton as well. Minutes went by and still you haven't come out. It was when one of us tried to open the door and found that it was locked that we began to panic. We tried everything - spells, manually prying open the door - all of them didn't work. We called out for you but you didn't hear us. Dumbledore arrived just as we decided to alert other teachers. He asked us why we were there. We told him everything."

"Everything?" he croaked. "You both knew?"

"Of course we knew, mate," added Ron. He was sampling one of the treacle tarts at the same time. "We were there, don't you remember? We told Dumbledore what happened within the class. Come to think of it, I can't really remember what really happened though."

"That's because you were drooling. Honestly Ron!" said Hermione hotly.
Ron just shrugged his shoulder.

"So, what happened then?" asked Harry.

"Dumbledore took a look at the door;" continued Hermione. "It was as if he was trying to take a peek into something. It went like that for a while until he told us to go back to the common room. He told us that you're going to be fine. We refused but he insisted. We had no choice. We don't know what happen next. Harry, what happened in there? Tell us!"

"Moody gave me quite a tongue lashing for my inability to throw away the curse," Harry began to explain.

"But Harry, nobody would be able to throw away the Imperious Curse!" exclaimed Ron. "Nobody! And we're still young. We're just fourteen... fifteen years old at most! How can he expects you to do that?!"

"Yeah, I know that, Ron. He told me I'm a special case, that I really need to posses that skill," Harry replied.

"So what happened then?" asked Viktor, intrigued. "Did he teach you how to throw away the curse?"

"As a matter a fact he did," replied Harry. "I ace it but not without difficulties."

By this time, Fleur stopped listening. All the while she was watching Harry. She could see how pale he was. She could almost hear the weak undertone of his voice whenever he speaks and how labored his breathing was. She also witnessed how slow his movement were. And above all, he looked very tired. There was only one conclusion she could come up with.

Harry wasn't telling the truth.

Madame Maxime shooed them to the Ravenclaw table. She then had a few quick words with Harry before she and Professor Karkaroff headed towards the High Table.

Fleur and her schoolmate had a quick dinner. They would be attending one last class that night before they call it a day. She and Harry exchanged look once but she immediately looked away.

On their way back to the carriage, Cassandra was telling Daphne and Tracy about Harry's newfound ability to throw off the Imperious Curse when Fleur suddenly cut her off:-

"Cassy, he lied!" said Fleur.

This took them by surprise.

"But, how do you know that he was lying?" asked Daphne.

"I can tell that he wasn't telling the truth," said Fleur without elaborating any further. "Albus Dumbledore promised me an update. He's now my only source for the real story on what really happened to Harry."

Their night class lasted for an hour. When she exited the classroom, Professor Dumbledore was already waiting for her.

To be continued...

A/n: Things are getting dicey where I live. Please stay safe everyone!