

The Next Lord of Kobol Shall We Depart?

The Next Lord of Kobol

Chapter 1 – Shall We Depart?

(Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft March 29th, 1996. Approximately eleven years before the fall of the Twelve Colonies)

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"Well Harry, I suppose we must make preparations to leave now," Albus Dumbledore said looking at the stunned bodies in his office. Fudge and Umbridge, along with the aurors brought to arrest the headmaster of Hogwarts, littered the floor.

Fawkes trilled and the phoenix flexed its wings. The ageless professor chuckled at his familiar and said, "Yes, I can see you're eager to get out and see the world again. Minerva, please see to the others."

"You're taking me with you?" Harry asked, unsure of what to make of the sudden turn of events as his Head of House walked by in a brisk manner. Dumbledore had all but ignored him through the year and only paid attention after Arthur Weasley had been attacked after Christmas.

"Naturally," the headmaster said. "When I learned of what the undersecretary was doing to you in detentions, I knew that her vendetta would not simply vanish were I removed from the picture. We can discuss this in greater detail, but there is much to be done. I have an elf collecting your belongings as we speak. Though I must ask, do you wish to come with me? The path we set upon will be fraught with danger. I will ask you to risk your life soon, perhaps even before this night ends. Can you do that Harry?"

Harry sucked in a deep breath and said, "Yes, I can."

"I never doubted you for a second, Harry."

Dumbledore clapped his hands together and a pair of trunks appeared along with two elves. As he gestured to various shelves containing books from his library and his collection of odd devices, the elves scurried to pack them.

Meanwhile, the ancient wizard stopped by the prone form of Marietta Edgecombe and removed the painful blisters from her forehead. "It seems Miss Granger is a witch that I would not care to cross when she reaches her full potential. I suspect the headmistress of New Salem has no idea what is coming."

"Hermione's leaving? Am I going to New Salem as well?"

"Yes to your first question and, I'm afraid, no to your second. Given my druthers, I would send you with them, but there are complications that force me down this regrettable path. Your friends, along with Arthur and Molly's children are withdrawing and transferring. I believe that constitutes my last official act in this office. Just as Cornelius would attempt to use you as leverage against me, I fear the people pulling this sad excuse for a leader's strings would not hesitate to use your friends against you,"

"Why?"

"I do not doubt that your friends will one day make their mark on society, but I cannot in good conscious ask children to wage war. Given my choice, I would not want you involved, but circumstances often dictate we do things we'd rather not."

To Harry the line of reasoning made sense, but it didn't make him happy. His friends were going into exile for no other reason than their association with Harry Potter. Then again, the quality of instruction at the school was a sore point for an eager witch like Hermione. Compared to Umbridge, Binns, Snape, and Trewlany, New Salem should be a step up even if they miss out on teachers like Flitwick, Sprout, and McGonagall. The instruction here tended to be either exceptionally good or dreadfully poor. There was precious little middle ground.

"Ron?" Harry thought, "He'll get by. He's always going spare over being compared to all his brothers or me. A fresh start where he can be his own man might do wonders for his self-worth."

Harry didn't know what to think about Ginny. Ginny had lots of friends, but not too many close ones. He supposed that was due to Riddle's diary. The ever present rumors of romance between the two of them were becoming more difficult to dismiss as the girl had gotten older. Truth be told, after his disaster with Cho, Harry had started thinking about Ron's sister in a different light. Naturally, what might happen was a moot point now.

"It doesn't sound like I'll have time for a girlfriend anyway," he thought.

There was a lull where the soon-to-be fugitive tried his best to digest everything that had just happened. It didn't go down very easily.

"Where will we go?" Harry asked, thinking he should be doing something right now.

"Places and destinations, my good boy. At the moment, I am not at liberty to say," Dumbledore answered while gesturing to all the portraits no longer pretending to sleep.

The next few minutes passed in a virtual whirlwind for Harry. Dumbledore paused long enough to modify the memories of Fudge and Umbridge along with destroying the DA roster. With a conspiratorial grin, he said, "They will remember the list, but none of the names. Paranoia and uncertainty are two of the most terrible taskmasters for those clinging to power."

An elf Harry recognized as Dobby appeared with his trunk. Moments later, Winky arrived clutching Harry's firebolt and Hedwig in her cage.

"The Great and Powerful Harry Potter is to be leaving Hogwarts?"

"Yes I am," Harry replied, letting the feeling sink in.

"Dobby only works at Hogwarts to serve Harry Potter. Without Harry Potter, Dobby no longer wishes to be here. Dobby is quitting!"

"Would you like to come with us?" Harry asked.

The elf was so overwhelmed that he practically tackled Harry. With Dobby hugging him, Harry saw a slight look of disapproval on the Headmaster's face.

"What is it, sir?"

"Your friend's enthusiasm is commendable, but the ministry has methods of tracking a free elf that could allow them to find us."

"Oh. I'm sorry, Dobby."

Dobby clutched Harry tighter and proclaimed, "Then Dobby must become Harry Potter's elf! That is the way it must be!"

The Gryffindor looked to his headmaster for assistance, but the man simply said, "It would allow him to come with us, and it would make our meals considerably more enjoyable, but the choice is yours."

He thought about Hermione and what her reaction would be, but he also considered who would probably be doing the cooking and cleaning on this expedition. The conclusion was obvious.

"Alright Dobby, I'll do it."

Dobby's screech of joy might have been audible all the way down in the Slytherin dormitory. Harry was still rubbing his ear when there was a tug on his pant leg. The female elf stared up at him with her ears flat against her head and watery eyes.

"Winky would like to serve Harry Potter as well. Winky cares for Dobby and would miss him. Winky hates being a free elf and knows Harry Potter would be a kind master who would never separate Winky from Dobby."

He sighed. "In for a penny, in for a pound I suppose."

The Headmaster nodded, retrieving Godric's sword and strapped the blade and scabbard around his waist before saying, "Indeed. I'll instruct you on how to properly claim your elves later and I'll give you fair warning that should Peeves ask, you should tell him no in the most certain terms possible. Although, I dare say his talents will be on display once we depart."

In spite of the seriousness of the situation, Harry laughed, imagining the unrestrained antics of the school's resident poltergeist.

Dumbledore leaned over his desk and scribbled a few final words on a piece of parchment before instructing one of the other elves to take it to McGonagall. The wizard withdrew a box from inside the desk drawer and tucked it under his arm before standing tall. His gaze moved around the room committing the details to memory.

Sighing deeply, Dumbledore rapped the desk with his knuckles and turned toward Harry, extending his hand. "The time for nostalgia is over. The next great adventure awaits us both. Fawkes, if you would?"

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Their first stop on this journey was The Ancient and Noble House of Black where Sirius was waiting for them with his own bags packed and a tent similar to the one Arthur Weasley used when they attended the World Cup.

As Harry embraced his godfather, Black said, "The Headmaster decided to call in an expert in living life on the run. Here lad, you'll need this."

Sirius handed Harry a wand. He felt a similar rush of magic, though it was just a smidge weaker than his current wand.

When Harry gave a questioning look, Sirius said, "Custom crafted phoenix feather and holly wand with no trace applied. I was planning on giving it to you at the end of the year, so you'd have it for summer, but nothing wrong with giving presents early."

"It's brilliant! But isn't that against the law?" Harry asked, feigning shock.

"Technically, just using it makes you a criminal now, but I think Fudge and his lackeys decided you were one some time ago. I say we might as well take full advantage of that."

"Can't you remove the trace on my wand?"

"Certainly, but you never know when we might need to use it to let the Ministry find us."

It took a second before Harry realized what the Animagus meant. "Oh, I get it, now."

His godfather slapped his back and said, "Congratulations on enrolling in the Sirius Black School

for Exceptional Lawbreaking. Our expectations are high, our adherence to rules is nonexistent, and I'm both your lead instructor as well as the school mascot."

Harry couldn't mask his excitement.

"Calm down there, Harry," Sirius said solemnly. "There is an unpleasant matter to attend to. You still have to pass the entrance exam and initiation."

Harry laughed and said, "I can't even hazard a guess at what you are planning for me."

A chill went up his spine when he realized that neither Sirius nor Dumbledore were laughing.

Dumbledore placed his hand on Harry shoulder. There was no twinkle in his eye.

"Remember what I said to you in my office earlier? The time for jokes is over, Harry. What happened at Christmas confirmed our fears that you have a piece of Voldemort connected to you. It's right where that scar of yours is. We're going to set that straight tonight. There is a significant risk to your life involved but, short of engineering a situation where Tom Riddle strikes you with a killing curse, I can see no other way."

"I have him in my head!" Harry exclaimed and looked back to Sirius, who confirmed it with a nod. It was the sum of all his fears since the moment he got the first headache from his first year Defense teacher.

"Okay," he said slowly. "What are we going to do about it?"

"We're going to let a dementor kiss your scar," Sirius said. "Voldemort has created several objects called horcruxes. They house pieces of his soul. The diary from your second year was one. My brother, Regulus, stole another from where it was hidden and gave it to Kreacher to destroy before he was killed. It was hidden here all along."

Sirius fished a locket out from under his shirt. "This locket belonged to Salazaar Slytherin. We used a dementor to remove the soul piece from it and it left the magic intact. That very same dementor has agreed to help us with you."

"Are you sure it won't get me as well? I thought they were just waiting for Riddle to say the word." Harry asked, frustrated at the quavering in his voice. He sounded like a blasted twelve year old.

There was a pause before Dumbledore said, "The world is made up of individuals. Assigning a single motive to an entire race is a very simplified way of looking at things. Suffice to say they have the capacity to be every bit as complex as we are. In this case, the dementor was one of the two that attacked you at Privet Drive. It sensed the wrongness in you, Harry."

"It did? How did it even tell you?"

"Legilimency is the basis for communicating with them," Dumbledore answered. "I can only say

that this one does not currently intend to harm you at the moment.”

“It has a funny way of showing it,” Sirius added and Harry quickly came to the impression that his godfather wasn’t fully onboard with this plan.

“It will work, Sirius. We will be there to monitor it every step of the way.”

“I know the dementors better than anyone, Dumbledore. You can’t trust them.”

“The prophecy will protect Harry.”

“You’d better hope so, Dumbledore. You’re pinning his life to a bunch of delusional rantings.”

“What prophecy? What are you talking about?”

“Once your connection to Tom Riddle is severed, I will tell you all. But it must be done before you can learn the true meaning of that which we speak. My only other recourse is to wipe this memory from your mind and return you to the castle.”

The boy knew he was at a pivotal juncture in his short life. To refuse meant going back to Umbridge and her methods of instruction.

“I’m as good as dead if I go back there. I’ll do it.”

Sirius led Harry into the next room and got him comfortable. Harry even received his first glasses of firewhiskey. His godfather said it was an essential component in the liquid courage potion. A few minutes after downing the contents, Harry felt like the room was spinning and getting a bit cold.

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“You gave us quite a scare there, boyo.”

“C’mon,” the voice continued. “Open those green eyes for Padfoot.”

Harry's body was a tangled mess of throbbing pain mixed with numbness in certain spots. For better or worse, his connection with Voldemort was gone...yanked out of his head like a badly performed tooth extraction. Instead of some calming muzak and anesthetics, he was treated to the death screams of his parents. Plus, he was fairly certain that he had a hangover.

Still, the analogy seemed to fit, like whenever Harry had actually lost a tooth, he would run his tongue over the voided depression and search for the missing object. Mentally, he did the same thing with his bandaged forehead and swore off drinking for the foreseeable future.

"Trust me, Harry," his godfather said looking a bit ashen even though six hours had passed. "Growing up as a Black, I saw some truly revolting rituals happen in that house. With Merlin as my witness, they all paled on comparison with what just happened in there. Your scar split wide

open and this dark ichor started spraying everywhere. If I'd known that was going to happen, we could have done it in the hallway by my mother's painting. When some of that slime got on me, I could really feel the malevolence."

"So, it's gone?" Harry asked, just wanting to be sure. He barely remembered any of it and what little he did was the stuff of nightmares.

"It most certainly is! At some point, Lily's blood magic kicked in and started attacking the dementor. Everyone says that nothing can destroy one of them, but your mum came pretty damn close to it last night. Albus and I huddled inside of a protective circle while the backlash took most of the house with it. Dumbledore says no magic for you for a week. You need to heal."

The boy looked around the dimly lit room. Things were rather blurry and he'd assumed they were in still in Grimauld place.

"Where are we?"

"Hestia Jones' house in Hogsmeade. She's one of the Order members. Don't know if you've ever met her before, but she's an apprentice healer at St. Mungo's and not too bad on the eyes either, if I do say so myself."

Despite the irritable pain, Harry laughed hard until it gave way to a hacking cough.

Finally he croaked, "Hogsmeade?"

"Naturally, who would look for us right next to the castle?"

Harry coughed again and it was getting painful.

"Easy there, Harry" Sirius said holding a cup of water to his lips and forcing some liquid down his raw throat. "We're going to lay low here for a while so you can recuperate. Dumbledore is borrowing Tonks and she is pretending to be you. The two of them will be seen in magical areas of Switzerland and Germany. That should keep things quiet here in England long enough for you to get on your feet."

"Guess I should feel bad about your house," Harry offered half-heartedly. Sure the place was a hellhole, but it was something that belonged to the Black family and there might have been something in there that he cared about.

"Well if you were, that'd make one person in the world," Sirius answered. "Actually, probably the only thing I do regret is agreeing to Kreacher's terms. He struck a bargain and took me and Albus to the cave where my brother died in exchange for me killing him there. Can't say I liked the miserable beast, but he was just as loyal to Reggie as that elf Dobby is to you. Dumbledore had to stun both him and the female elf to stop them from trying to attack the dementor."

After taking a moment to reflect on what his godfather just said, Harry asked, "What happened at the cave?"

"Not too much. We layered a few traps of our own on top of Riddle's handiwork. As soon as he realizes what we're doing, he'll send someone there to check on it. Maybe he'll even do it himself. Let's just say that we left a few nasty surprises for the next person who visits."

"Do you think I'll be more powerful now that his soul fragment is gone?"

"Dumbledore is probably a better person to ask. As far as we can tell, you're the only person this has ever happened to. Albus thinks that Riddle's soul has been an anchor on you this whole time and you'll be much stronger without it. Still, it could just as easily go the other way and you could find yourself struggling."

With an unintended yawn Harry said, "I could do a quick spell, just something from first year, and find out."

"Don't give me that look, Harry. No magic for one week and I'm keeping both your wands on me until then. Once all of us agree that you're ready, we'll start slowly and see what happens. Hestia's shift at St. Mungo's ends in one hour, so she'll check on you and then while you go back to sleep, I'll check on her."

"You're awful, Sirius," Harry replied and laughed until the coughs came again.

"Fate cursed me with being a rogue," the man answered and tilted his head in a pose. "I must not tempt fate."

The Next Lord of Kobol Paying Delores a Visit

The Next Lord of Kobol

Disclaimer – Do we really still have to put these things? I think it's pretty obvious that it's fanfiction and not mine.

Chapter 2 – Paying Delores a Visit

(Safe house of the Order of the Phoenix Early May 1996. Approximately ten and one half years before the fall of the Twelve Colonies)

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“Seems like you just managed to get back on your feet and now, you're flat on your back again. Maybe we're pushing you too hard? How about you take a nice break and take up knitting or something?”

Struggling against the ropes he wrapped around him, Harry grunted, “Very funny, Sirius. Now let me up and we can go again. You're just cranky that you haven't seen Hestia in a month.”

They'd left Hogsmeade for a chalet in Norway. Supposedly, it belonged to Luna Lovegood's father for when he went here to hunt wifflediffers or other odd fantastical creatures. The weather was nice this time of year and the few instances Harry had been to the nearest city he was impressed by certain aspects of the scenery. Just because he didn't have room in his life for a girlfriend didn't stop him from window shopping, so to speak. He blamed it on bad influences from Sirius.

For the moment, the only scenery he could appreciate was the wooden beams that comprised the ceiling.

“Harry. Harry. Harry. You're supposed to taunt your opponent sometime before he incapacitates you. Isn't anything I'm teaching you sinking in?”

As Sirius continued walking around and mocking him, Harry wiggled his arms more. There was enough room for him to get a weak cutting curse on a section of the rope that freed the tip of his wand. Squeezing it out, Harry lined up his shot. He rolled over and cast a quick body bind. Sirius froze with his arms thrust up in the air. Unfortunately, Harry's momentum caused the wand to

slip from his grasp and roll away, coming to rest under the couch. This left Sirius frozen in mid-taunt and Harry still bound and no longer holding his wand.

“In my mind that went so much better,” Harry said and exhaled upwards from his lower lip blowing the bangs on his forehead away.

Unfortunately, Harry had indeed become more powerful. It would be two hours before his spell on the older wizard wore off.

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“Gentleman,” Dumbledore began. “I believe that I have created the solution to our most dire problem.”

He gestured to a pair of Rune covered bowls filled with a dark red ichor. Harry leaned closer and smelled the metallic odor of blood. If it were anyone else other than Albus Dumbledore, he would be genuinely concerned about a person dabbling in blood magic.

Harry’s relationship with the man had changed. Before, it had been more like that of a kindly grandfather, who had always made himself available to give advice. More often than not, Dumbledore was away on missions or sequestered in his laboratory, but the times he had worked with Harry were now the most intense private lessons he’d ever experienced. After the first time, Harry hadn’t wanted to cast another spell for a full day.

“These,” the elder wizard proudly said, “are horcrux location devices. We simply take the diary and the locket that we have now and place them in the suspension of blood and the traces of the dark magic that once corrupted them will move this needle in the direction of the nearest soul fragment. I do not like to brag, but this most assuredly is my finest work in at least two decades. Eventually, I will have to announce to the world that I have discovered yet another use for Dragon's blood.”

“So it functions much like a Muggle compass?” Harry asked.

“Indeed it does. Instead of finding magnetic north it will locate the pieces of Tom Riddle’s soul. In addition to the Dragon's blood, I also used Phoenix tears and blood freely given from a unicorn and a centaur along with blood that came from a certain wizard who just happens to be standing in this room.”

The former headmaster of Hogwarts placed the two items into their respective bowls and both immediately spun in a clockwise circle three times before coming to rest with the magically affixed needles pointing in the same direction.

“It’s brilliant, but why did you create two?” Sirius asked.

Harry already knew the reason from his primary school science education. “Muggles use a process called triangulation to locate the source of the signal.”

“Precisely,” Dumbledore said. “Under the circumstances I would give you house points, but I am afraid that there is little point in doing so.”

“Do you think it will work even if the object is hidden behind a fidelius charm?”

“We should know if we keep passing by the same area and can’t locate it.”

Sirius Black scratched his beard and looked pensive before saying, “It might lead us straight to Riddle if he is closest.”

“Yes,” Dumbledore replied. “That is a fair assumption. However, I am still in contact with Severus Snape and will have a reasonable idea of where Tom is at the time. Given the nature of his traps, we must still exercise due caution whenever we attempt to approach one. After a good night’s rest, I propose we return to Hogsmeade in the morning and start our search there. We know that Tom chose to hide his foul creations in places that meant something to him or give them to loyal followers such as Lucius Malfoy. Therefore, I suspect there will be one hidden in my school.”

“Albus, do you mind if I head there tonight and scout out the town?” Sirius asked with a broad grin.

It was obvious to all in the room that his reconnaissance would be limited to a thorough investigation of Hestia's dwelling with a special focus on where she slept.

“Very well,” Dumbledore said with a twinkle in his eye. “Do give my regards to Ms. Jones and thank her for providing a safe haven once more.”

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To no one’s surprise, their testing led them directly from Hestia's home in Hogsmeade back to the castle. Sirius made a point to remind the Headmaster how ridiculously easy sneaking into Hogwarts was.

“It appears Delores has let things slide considerably,” the ancient wizard answered.

“True,” Black replied. “However she wasn't here two years ago.”

“When you frame your comment in that context, I am afraid I have to concede the point.”

“It takes far less time to say, Sirius, you are correct.”

“Ah, but words are a gift of life, Mr. Black. As one reaches my advanced age, you might find that the pleasure you once enjoyed so are beyond your physical ability to tolerate. Fortunately, I love sweets and language. At my healer's advice, I limit my candy consumption, and I freely admit to verbally overcompensating.”

His godfather nudged Harry in the ribs with his elbow and said, “I’ll translate the last minute for

you. He likes to talk.”

“Aren't we supposed to be sneaking around?” Harry asked, catching Dumbledore waving to a portrait as they passed.

“Harry,” Dumbledore said. “They can remove Albus Dumbledore from the grounds of this institution, but only Hogwarts can truly remove the Headmaster. The elves, the ghosts, the paintings, and even the wards are mine to command.”

“So, if you wanted, you could have the elves move Umbridge and her bed, while she's asleep, out onto a raft floating in the middle of the lake?”

Running his hand through his beard, Dumbledore considered Black's question. “I suppose something like that would be considered an abuse of my authority, but with the papers labeling me a secret dark lord, perhaps I should be allowed to indulge myself.”

“She'll punish the elves,” Harry cautioned. “She's the kind that takes it out on those that can't fight back.”

Strangely, Harry found himself in the role that his friend Hermione often filled...the voice of restraint. Too often in his previous adventures, it was Harry and Ron ignoring the consequences of rushing headlong into danger. Dumbledore and Sirius had no concerns for their personal safety, convinced they could fight their way out of everything short of Voldemort, but their overconfidence made Harry uneasy.

“Yes, I suppose you are correct, Harry. It seems we are supposed to go up now,” Dumbledore said.

“He's got that school services award in the trophy case,” Harry commented.

“No, I have already examined it at length and it is devoid of any magic.”

“What about the Room of Requirement? Could he have found it?” Harry asked climbing the all too familiar central staircase and consulting the Marauder's Map.

“It is a distinct possibility. Tom was able to discern the location of the Chamber of Secrets.”

Arriving at the seventh floor, the group encountered their first major problem. The door to the Room was already visible. A sign on it proclaimed Hogwart's Headmistress' Office.

Dumbledore arched an eyebrow and said, “Should we knock?”

“This complicates things,” Sirius said.

“You think?” Harry replied.

Dumbledore interjected, “We'll need to ensure that everyone believes we came here for her. The

true nature of our visit must be hidden in our deeds.”

Pausing, as if lost in thought, the Headmaster scowled, before grinning at whatever idea he'd come up with.

“Allow me to handle this,” he said and knocked forcefully on the door three times. A minute later, he repeated the knocks.

Some grumbling could be heard and moments later the door opened up and the woman said, “Do you know what time it is? This had better be...oh my!”

They greeted her with three wands pointed at her flabby jowls.

“Good evening Delores. Did we come at a bad time? We've heard that there is a rather sizeable reward for information about our whereabouts. As you can plainly see, we are right here. If you'd like, I can give you our vault numbers and you can have the funds transferred there.”

“What do you want?” she said trying to sound forceful, but her quavering voice betrayed her.

Dumbledore froze her without any wand motions, incantation, or any sign that he'd cast a spell on Umbridge at all.

“Delores and I are going to visit some friends. Harry, Sirius please get the items from my office that we'd forgotten. Send a patronus when you're ready to leave.”

Fawkes flashed in at an unspoken summons. The fiery phoenix disappeared and took both away. It left a void where they had been.

“Have to admit he does have a flare for the dramatic,” Sirius commented. “Since I've never seen this place before, I'll let you go in first and take control of the room.”

Harry concentrated and thought about a room where he and Sirius could find the hidden horcrux.

Umbridge's office and garish pink bedroom disappeared and was replaced with a something between a warehouse and a city dump. Mounds of items ranging from broken furniture to what appeared to be a giant's skeleton littered the floor.

“Wow! We have to search all of this,” Harry groaned. “Even when we narrow it down to the right pile, it's going to take all night.”

He reached into his bottomless pouch and retrieved his Firebolt, along with a Nimbus 2000 that belonged to Sirius. Black opened up the box containing their two detectors. Slytherin's locket wasn't terribly useful - at least in their quest. It gave the wearer the ability to speak and understand any language, including Parseltongue. It was the kind of object that a politician would find indispensable.

Other than Dumbledore and Amelia Bones, Harry hadn't found too many people in that particular

field who deserved to be called a leader.

"I'll circle clockwise and you go the opposite way and we'll meet wherever the 'crux detectors lead us," Sirius said, taking his broom from Harry's hand.

Flying alongside the heaps of rubbish, the young wizard followed the quick shifts of the locket floating in the rune covered bowl. He considered what his distant friends would think of this version of the Room of Requirement. Ron would likely be interested in anything valuable that could be found in here. Hermione would be fascinated and hoping to find old books full of lost knowledge.

As for Harry, he just saw a means to an end. His vile aunt had drilled into Harry's mind a distaste for places that weren't clean. Making a slow turn around a veritable hill, he wondered how long it would take all the castle elves to clean up this room. Dobby had once told him that this was where all the elves bring everything left behind by the staff and students at the end of every year.

After ten minutes of weaving in and out amongst the piles, Harry and his godfather found themselves going around the same general area. He landed and dismounted, leaving his Firebolt hovering in the event that there was a trap. More pacing and several quick calls to Sirius led him to a table.

"Look!" Sirius said. "That thing under the wig there. I think it's our baby."

Harry held his bowl closer to it and the locket was vibrating so badly that the liquid started sloshing out.

"What do you think it is?"

"Never snuck into Ravenclaw there did you?" Sirius taunted.

"It was pretty far down on my list of things to do," Harry fired back. "Staying alive and holding out hope for competent instruction took precedence."

"Well a least you have me now," Sirius offered.

"Yeah," Harry conceded. "But I'm still waiting for the competent part."

"Oi! That was quite snapish of you."

"Sorry. Just being around one of these things reminds me about my scar. It's funny, I thought my first kiss with Cho's blubbering was bad enough, but my second one was with an effin' Dementor! How screwed up is that?"

"Harry. Don't say effin'. That's just a stupid word people made up to avoid saying fuck. As for the reprehensible state of your love life, I have failed you. Say the word and Uncle Padfoot will show you the true meaning of the word debauchery. There are places in this world, Harry. Places! They make you sign binding contracts on your life and your magic that you can't discuss

what happens there.”

“Really?”

“Yes. When we put all this behind us, we'll go there and find out. Deal?”

Harry mulled it over and smiled before saying, “Deal. So, mind telling me what the fuck this thing is?”

The fugitive of Azkaban guffawed and said, “That's Rowena Ravenclaw's Diadem. There's probably still a bust of her in their tower with it on, but I was after more impressive busts in that place during my visits.”

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“What happened to Umbridge?” Harry asked as they watched the dementor circle around the diadem like an animal.

“We went to visit the centaurs,” Dumbledore answered. “She has certain opinions of magical creatures and I thought she would benefit from spending an evening with them.”

“What did you do?” Sirius inquired. Harry knew from Dumbledore's unusually short answer that something was afoot.

“She may have signed a magical contract while she was out there.”

This clearly pleased Black. “What were the conditions?”

“The contract stated that I would protect her for the evening, her name was Delores Umbridge, and she agrees to these terms for the next two years.”

“I don't get it,” Harry said.

“I may have obliviated the memory of the terms and only given her the page stating that she signed in blood and magic to my terms.”

“Brilliant!” Black declared. “She doesn't know what she agreed to!”

“Indeed,” Dumbledore said and nodded. “I strongly suspect that the students in her care will now receive better treatment and Delores will be walking the straight and narrow for the time being.”

Cast in that light, Harry agreed that it was a smashing idea. On the other side of the room, outside of the protective circle he was forced to stand in, the skeletal hands picked up the horcrux. Harry couldn't be sure, but it looked like the diadem trembled from side-to-side slightly. He'd like to think that the soul fragment knew what was coming.

“This sure beats being on the receiving end,” Harry said staring at the dementor as it sucked

Riddle's soul fragment out of the headpiece. The site was unsettling enough without trying to imagine him being on the other end of the dementor's mouth.

He concluded that it was a good thing he was drunk when the soul piece had been sucked out of his scar.

Sirius, on the other hand, had no compelling reason to drink. The man just liked the taste of alcohol.

"What does the diadem do?" Harry inquired.

Dumbledore replied, while opening a fresh bag of lemon drops and enjoying his own brand of celebration, "It is rumored to temporarily augments your cognitive processes."

With a laugh, Sirius interpreted. "It makes you smarter. Wear it long enough and you might even be able to follow what he's saying...then again, maybe not."

"So, it'll help me learn quicker," Harry said with a gleam in his eyes and a scheme of his own developing.

-x-x-x-x-x-x

"I really want a picture of you in that," Sirius Black said, gesturing to object on Harry's head. "Now if I could get you into a pink dress, you'd make a lovely Harriet Potter."

Barely looking up from the book he was immersed in, the subject of Black's ridicule replied, "Har, har, Sirius. Tell me why I'd even want the opinion of a man with the ability to lick his own balls?"

Harry paused and said, "Wow! This thing even makes my comebacks have more zing."

"That's just your opinion," Sirius dismissed the insult. "Time to take off your crown fair princess. Dumbledore's orders."

Muttering an obscenity or three under his breath, Harry removed the object and said, "Yes, I know he thinks that using Ravenclaw's Diadem for more than two hours a day might inhibit my ability to learn things down the line, but being dead because I didn't learn enough when I had the chance, kind of negates that argument."

His godfather shrugged and said, "I'm actually with him on this one. It's a way to cut corners and a crutch, just like using a wit sharpening potion. The effects will wear off and based on what the Grey Lady told Albus, it works best if you use it and then go back over the same material without the diadem."

"Yes mother," Harry muttered at the man.

"Give Riddle credit. It took balls of mithril to hide it in Hogwarts. Probably not the brightest idea, but he gets points for sheer audacity."

“Good thing the Headmaster is getting the last laugh,” Harry said.

“Too true, young wizard. If you're going to thumb your nose at Albus Dumbledore, you should make damn sure you actually are more clever than he is! I'm going to slip into town later and maybe pick up something nice to give to Hestia next time I see her. Do you want me to pick up something for your special friend?”

Harry scowled and said, “Dumbledore's teaching me Legilimency. Conversing with the dementor is just part of the lesson.”

“Well you two are already kissed,” Sirius joked. “I'm not going to judge, Harry. I just want you to be happy, but tell me which of you is wearing the pants in the relationship? After all, you're the one wearing jewelry meant for a witch when I came into the room.”

“Are you leaving right now, or do you have time for some practice duels? I'm guessing that's your strategy behind trying to rile me up.” Harry said, wanting to try out some of the things he'd just been reading about.

Sirius laughed and said, “You're a bit more difficult to goad into a duel than your dad ever was. We'd already be going at it. Must be Lily's sensibilities holding you back.”

“Not for much longer,” Harry threatened.

“Bring it on, oh terror with a tiara! Loser has to wear lipstick for the rest of the day.”

“Sirius, why do you have lipstick?”

“Every good prankster should carry a tube. If I ever get a chance to stun good old Lucius, I'm going to leave a lipstick stain on his collar and let him go instead of turning him over to the Ministry.”

“Why? Is he your type?”

“No. Because, when Cissy sees it, we won't ever see Lucius again. Trust me on that one.”

The Next Lord of Kobol Even Legends Must Die

Disclaimer – Yeah, not mine, but entertaining nonetheless.

Chapter 3 – Even Legends Must Die

(October 31st, 1996 – approximately ten years before the fall of the twelve colonies)

-X-X-X-X-X-X

“Too bad this won't be as simple as the ring,” Sirius said from the window of a flat overlooking Diagon Alley. The shops were decorated for the all-day Halloween festival. “Old Tommy Boy and all his clever traps didn't count on someone being partnered up with Joe the Rogue Dementor.”

“I don't think it really likes the name, Joe,” Harry said as he winced. The former guardian of Azkaban was nigh invulnerable. It glided through a kaleidoscope of death, including a few things even Dumbledore hadn't seen before and came out the other end with a crude looking ring. Had anyone other than a dementor gone into that storm of magic, Harry would bet that they wouldn't have come out alive.

“I'm entitled to call him anything I want. Spend a decade or so with them busting your backside before you judge me.”

“Easy there, Sirius. No need to be so touchy. I was just having a go at you. Did you figure out why the headmaster got so excited when Joe...curse it all! Now you've got me doing it too. When it brought the ring to him?”

“He did look ready to pee his pants. He said something about victory being assured now, but wouldn't go further than that. I'm glad he's so confident.”

They looked across the room, on the other side of the room where the headmaster slept under the comfort of a silencing charm. Both Harry and Sirius were too wired to sleep. It reminded him of the way he'd felt before a Quidditch match - except the stakes were much higher.

“Too bad Bill Weasley resigned and went with Fleur back to France,” Harry said. “He could've tracked down the vault for us ahead of time.”

His godfather shook his head and said, “No, it would've broken something in his employment

contract if he aided us in any way. Besides, if that little blonde girl asked me to run off with her, I'd have gone too. Well, probably not, but I'd have given it considerable thought.”

Harry remembered Fleur's “leettle boy” comment and smiled at the irony. “At least you didn't say you'd give it serious consideration.”

Of course, Harry was certain if Fleur had asked him to run off to the continent with her, he'd have gone as well.

“Too right you are, Harry! Just think,” Sirius said with a gleam in his eyes. “In less than twenty-four hours, I'll be the only man who has escaped from Azkaban and robbed Gringott's. I'll be a legend! The greatest marauder of them all!”

“Are you looking to replace me as Undesirable Number Two,” Harry asked.

“Bah, I should be Number One.”

“Don't take it so personally, Sirius. I find you as undesirable as they come.”

“It's not too late to ship you off to school. You're missing out on your sixth year, young man. That's the year you're supposed to go wild and chase skirts!”

“Didn't take my OWLs,” Harry answered. “They'd stick me back in fifth year and considering how little was being taught there, I'll stick to life on the run with two people who've taught me more in eight months than Hogwarts did in most of five years. I'll probably make my first full Animagus transformation by the start of the New Year. I've learned enough Occlumency from Dumbledore to keep him out for over two minutes! We've fought and beaten Death Eaters.”

“Too bad Fudge and his Ministry have become so subverted that they just keep letting them right back out. I told Geoffrey Goyle after the third time that I was going to start taking fingers each time I beat his sorry arse.”

“I wondered why that plonker started coming after me. Honestly, I think his kid could take him.”

Harry took a swig from the bottle his godfather offered as he older wizard mussed with the young man's hair and said, “Still I'm damn proud of you, Harry. You have gotten noticeably more powerful. I'm almost worried that you could beat me...well almost...if you were lucky that is.”

“Funny,” Harry said, passing the bottle back to Sirius. “I do wish I'd taken runes though. Didn't realize how bloody important they'd be when it came to enchanting something.”

“You'll catch up soon enough,” Sirius answered. “Just think, after tomorrow it's just Tom and his snake. I still think we should do a group shot with us and all the horcruxes and send it to him.”

The jury was out on whether or not Nagini was actually a horcrux or not. Having seen it kill muggles before he stopped getting visions, Harry just wanted it dead, before Riddle was fine. In fact, Harry wanted to see the look on his face when the snake died.

“If you sell Dumbledore on it,” Harry said, with a wince and took off his glasses. “I’m in, but you should leave out the locket so he goes and checks on it.”

“Are you still having those headaches and blurred vision?”

Harry nodded and said, “Yes. Dumbledore thinks that the horcrux that used to be in my head was attacking me and my eyes were the closest thing to it. Without it, my vision is actually improving. I may not even actually need glasses.”

“But James did,” Sirius said.

“And my mum didn’t,” Harry finished. “He’s going to arrange for me to get some new ones in a couple of days.”

“You should probably try to get some sleep,” Sirius said pulling a tin of wand polish out and setting it on the table.

“Doubt it’s going to happen,” Harry said.

“I’ve got a surefire answer for you.”

“Really? What?”

Sirius smiled and snapped his wand around at Harry and said, “Stupefy.”

-x-x-x-x-x-x

As a rule, goblins aren't morning types and prefer a nocturnal lifestyle. Their customers do their banking during daylight hours, so like any other cutthroat business operators, they adapt as best they can. Still, when the doors open, they often resemble the school students sitting through another boring goblin rebellion lecture from the ghostly professor at Hogwarts.

They also celebrate Halloween. Among their kind the two days leading up to it and the two days after are their holiest days.

Instead of four heavily armed goblin guards at the door, there was one fairly scrawny warrior supervising a pair of security trolls.

All things considered, they were ill prepared for a trio of determined wizards. A clean shaven Albus Dumbledore went first, without his trademark beard and with a smidge of muggle hair coloring, he appeared to be little more than an aging wizard with a crooked nose and pointy chin. His facial hair sacrificed for the greater good, though Harry knew there was a flask of hair restorative waiting for the Headmaster at their prearranged meeting spot...the penthouse hotel room of one of the most expensive London hotels.

Harry, or rather quidditch player Oliver Wood, went next. Puddlemere United was out of the country and Wood would have an airtight alibi should the authorities come looking for him. It

wasn't difficult at all to break in to Wood's flat. The place was a mess and they actually had to stop and look for ways to make it look obvious that intruders had been there.

Also aiding in their endeavors was the fact that the bleary eyed goblins tending the carts do not possess an encyclopedic knowledge of customers and their vault numbers. For someone like Harry, who hadn't been to his vault in years, it was more likely the goblins believed his vault was owned by Molly Weasley.

Harry was still a bit put out by the stunt Sirius pulled last night, but the cart ride on some sleep was far better than experiencing it with no sleep.

As the cart rolled to a stop, Harry stunned the goblin operator and pulled his broom out of his bottomless bag along with the bowl containing Riddle's diary. Sparing a glance at his vault door, Harry thought about his parents. Sirius and Dumbledore had told him that the piles of gold inside were just a portion of his inheritance.

"It's just a pile of cold and uncaring metal," Harry thought and mounted his professional racing broom.

Roughly thirty seconds into his mad dash through the tunnels, gongs sounded and he was certain that Sirius was starting his "distraction." He'd promised that it would be grand, intense and, completely over the top.

Harry was looking forward to seeing his godfather's imagination running amuck in Dumbledore's pensieve tonight.

In the meantime, he had more important things to focus on. The caverns opened and contracted with alarming frequency. Between that and keeping he detector balanced, he couldn't get his broom up to full speed.

The trio couldn't be certain which vault had Helga's cup inside. Since Malfoy had kept the diary at his home and it didn't seem likely that Riddle would entrust Lucius with two pieces of his soul, he seemed unlikely. It was probably with one of the other members of his inner circle. Sirius guessed Bellatrix or her husband. Dumbledore thought it would be one of the others who had been instructed to keep a low profile live Avery, Nott, or McNair.

Rounding a corner, he saw a cartload of goblins carrying crossbows stationary at a four way junction. There was an awkward moment where all parties locked eyes. It was as if the goblins couldn't believe he was actually there. The moment ended when the first one fired his crossbow.

Harry waved his untraceable wand and vanished the bolt. A follow on banisher slammed the cart into the wall. He did his best to ignore the screams. After all, Harry didn't have a problem with the goblin nation and knew full well what the Ministry of Magic could be like.

Dumbledore's overarching concept of "the Greater Good" came to mind. It left a foul taste in the teenager's mouth. Harry dragged some rocks into the tracks to block off pursuit and hurried

onward.

When he reached the open cavern, the detector turned on its end and Harry dived downward. More crossbow bolts arced after him only to be turned aside by blasts of wind from Harry's wand.

Things were looking good for Harry until he saw the first wyvern rider. Grimacing, the wizard used a switching spell to put the detector back into the bag and leaned into his firebolt. The wyvern retracted its wings and plunged after him in a sharp dive with a second one joining the chase.

The winged serpents were only a quarter the size of dragons, but were very maneuverable and quite capable when it came to staying with Harry's erratic flying style. He saw a pair of goblins riding it and hadn't given them much thought until a bolt clanged off a support.

"This isn't a quidditch match. They're trying to kill me," Harry reminded himself and took a deep breath and bought a few seconds of respite with a series of over the shoulder impediment jinxes.

Harry had fought. He had even severely injured Death Eaters and probably killed one or two, but this was different. Stunned or bound with ropes at these heights was the same as dead.

When a third wyvern arrived, Harry knew he had no choice. "Confrigo!"

His blasting curse went wide and tore up a section of track. He could tell they were trying to herd him and began firing wildly forcing the pursuers to dodge the falling debris while reversing his course and heading upwards. Harry didn't see what happened to the other two, but one wyvern without riders plummeted past him hopelessly entangled in a twisted mass of rock, wood, and metal.

Nearing the top of the cavern, Harry choked back the feeling of revulsion at the destruction he'd caused.

It took a moment for Harry to push that disgust into a corner of his mind. Even with magic, it would take weeks to repair. But he was alive and had emerged unscathed. There would be time to second guess himself later.

As he reached into the bag to get the horcrux detector, he saw repeated flashes of light penetrating the dust storm below. His gut said that was where he'd find Dumbledore.

Casting a bubblehead charm so he could breathe, Harry raced in that direction.

-x-x-x-x-x-x

The former headmaster of Hogwarts was unleashing his full fury against a pair of security dragons when Harry arrived. The smaller, a Common Welsh Green was pinned to the ground by a series of giant stone hands jutting from the earth. The largest of the hands wrapped painfully around the beast's snout and kept it shut.

The other dragon, an Ironbelly, refused to be handled like its cousin. Drawing a page from Viktor Krum's playbook, Harry aimed at the eyes and snapped off a series of conjunctivus curses.

It howled and screamed as one eye turned pale. Jets of flame erupted from the dragon's mouth like miniature geysers. Harry targeted the remaining eye while Dumbledore used Fawkes to immediately travel to the creature's blinded side and unleashed a torrent of magic like Harry had never witnessed.

The ground between the headmaster and the beast seemingly liquefied and rose up like a wall of water. Dumbledore pushed his power through the dirt tsunami and sent it crashing over the back of the dragon. It solidified and hardened, reminding Harry of that chocolate coating people dipped ice cream into. The effort visibly winded the elder wizard and Harry rushed to his side and supported him as Fawkes hovered nearby and trilled encouragement.

“As much as I would like to rest Harry, we must press on. I fear even that effort will not hold a creature of that magnitude for long.”

The phoenix snatched both of them by their shoulders and flew them through the narrow pass to a series of very large vault doors. Quickly summoning the detector from his bag, Harry saw the top edge twitch and vibrate wildly before it froze and pointed at an imposing door.

Dumbledore, who could both speak and read the goblin language, translated. The Black family motto was prominently displayed and the other was, “Might Justifies Those Who Use It.”

Clearing his throat, he continued, “I believe that is the Lestrangle family motto and that means I owe Mr. Black a galleon. Now, just as we practiced.”

Harry did as he was instructed and pulled a dozen chisels and a three brass hammers from his bag. Using an animation charm and then an engorgement charm, he had the group of angry metal assailants converging on the door hinges. The magic protecting the door immediately began to counteract the threat, but that left it vulnerable to the water and earth elementals Dumbledore summoned.

While the stone construct pulled on the door, the water swirled along the edges searching for creases and gaps to wiggle in through to the inside of Bellatrix Lestrangle's vault. Harry increased the speed of his chanting and worked the chisels in a xylophone fashion.

The door's defensive enchantments flared and attempted to beat back the determined assault as a warbling noise sounded to summon guards. The tide turned, literally, once the water elemental slither through a gap created by the earth spirit's attack.

Once inside, it started forcing the door open and the three pronged attack broke the vault seal at the upper hinge. The warbling alarm was replaced by the protests of the screeching metal and stone and it gave way with a sudden snap.

Harry stepped forward only to be restrained by Dumbledore's arm.

“Wait until the door is completely off,” he cautioned. “Never trust that a goblin's wards are broken until they are completely undone.”

His words were proven true moments later. As the door fell off the bottom hinge and slammed to the ground, a score of conjured arrows attempted to kill them. Harry's wind charm dashed the majority away while his professor's vanishing destroyed the rest.

“Stay here and cover this area,” Dumbledore ordered. “I'll retrieve the horcrux.”

The impetuous side of Harry, quite possibly nurtured by all this time with his godfather, said he should go instead, but Harry beat back that impulse with the knowledge that the arrows might not be the final defense of the warders employed by Gringott's.

From the roars behind him, at least one of the dragons had broken free. Fortunately, Harry didn't have to worry about going back that way. After a few nerve wracking minutes, Dumbledore and Fawkes exited the damaged vault. Hufflepuff's cup was on display in his hand.

“You performed admirably today, Harry. Fawkes will take us to the rendezvous and celebrate another step on the path to victory.”

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They waited in a rental flat belonging to Amelia Bones. She was being pressured to resign as the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, but had resisted thus far. Unfortunately, today's necessary events might lead to her sacking. Still, Harry enjoyed the irony of her housing them. Madame Bones was cut from the same cloth as Professor McGonagall, who also enjoyed frustrating the Fudge administration to no end.

Lucius Malfoy was minister in all but name and the pureblood agenda would follow soon, but hopefully it wouldn't last long.

Harry was conversing with a portrait of Edgar Bones when he heard the whoosh announcing the arrival of Dumbledore's phoenix. Not even bothering to finish his sentence, he ran into the next room.

“Alright Padfoot,” he said. “Let's hear all about how you ran circles around the ...”

His words trailed off when he saw the body on the ground beneath the hovering bird. At first, he thought his godfather had been hit by a body bind, but he didn't respond when Harry cast a finite incantem. Even though the man's eyes were open and there was a smile frozen on his face, Harry tried enverating him.

That was how the exhausted Dumbledore found Harry Potter minutes later - still trying to wake his godfather up through screams and tears.

The Next Lord of Kobol Athena's Warning

The numbness Harry Potter experienced when Cedric Diggory died paled when compared to what he felt. His godfather was gone. His closest friends shipped to another country. He'd been given an eight month taste of what a family could be like only to have it snatched away.

Sirius had it worse. He man lost over a decade in prison before living his final years on the run.

All he had left was the company of an occasional Order member, his two elves, and the man currently trying, and failing, to talk with him.

"Harry," the old wizard said sitting on the edge of the boy's bed and resting his hand on Harry's shoulder. "I understand the need to grieve and believe me when I say that there is nothing more in this world I would like to do more than give you the time needed to accept Sirius' loss, but we must begin your training again."

"Not today," Harry replied and shook his head from side to side. "I'm not ready."

"No one ever is. Alas, my fears have come to pass. Our attack has alerted Tom to our goal, which is why we saved it for last. Yesterday, he dispatched a pair of his followers to the cave where Regulus Black stole Slytherin's locket. Both died, but he now knows what we have done. My sources in the castle say that Draco Malfoy used the Imperius curse on the Headmistress and they discovered the diadem was missing."

"Wonderful," Harry spat. "If the snake is one, he'll stick it in a Fidelius protected house and we'll never even get close."

"That charm is not foolproof, as we are sadly familiar with. Your debt with Mr. Pettigrew or Professor Snape's true allegiance could easily rectify that problem. A portkey slipped into the creature's food would whisk it away in a similar fashion to Barty Crouch's treachery."

"What's the point?" Harry demanded. "So what if I kill him? Fudge's government is beyond corrupt. I've seen these new anti-Muggleborn laws they're enacting."

Harry hadn't cracked a spellbook in over a week, but he still glanced at the Daily Prophet. Starting next term Muggleborns would not be allowed to attend NEWT level classes without the patronage of the head of a pureblood family. The subsequent articles implied that this was only the

beginning of what was being called "A Return to a Great Society."

He saw it for what it was - a method to obligate the muggleborns to the purebloods. At best it was a form of indentured servitude. At worst it could be the start of enslavement.

"They are but symptoms of the greater problem. Once Tom is defeated, the puppetmasters pulling the Minister's strings will scatter like roaches in the light."

Harry wasn't exactly buying what the ex-headmaster was selling. "Where they will wait for the next opportunity to strike. Malfoy sent the diary in long before he was aware Riddle was coming back. They'll let him get away just like last time."

"Not necessarily, Harry. You were a baby last time. This time, you have your own voice and the people will listen to you. I expect it to be more like when I defeated Gellert Grindelwald. You will be elevated and placed in the limelight. From experience, you already know how uncomfortable that can be."

"Yes," Harry agreed.

"Indeed. What you must do is learn how to use that limelight to your advantage. But, you will not be alone. You will always have my counsel."

"What do you think I should say?"

Dumbledore stood and went to the window. He stared out into the darkness for a moment before saying, "Find an injustice that you want corrected and make it your cause. All these legislations against the muggleborn are, in part, a slight against my personal crusade to bring equality to the magical people of Britain. Since your mother was a muggleborn, it would be a worthy cause for you to adopt."

Harry sighed. He didn't want to make plans for a life after Riddle's defeat. "That's assuming we win. I've been thinking about that prophecy. Neither can live doesn't guarantee that either will live."

Dumbledore sighed and pulled an object out of his pocket. He placed the stone in Harry's hand.

"I see my words fail to inspire you. I will leave that task to those better suited. This stone was on the Peverell ring. Tom was unaware of its true power. It is called the resurrection stone."

"Can it..."

"No Harry," Dumbledore interrupted before Harry could finish. "It does not. What it can do is briefly bridge the gap between and allows you to speak with the spirits of the departed. I will show you how to use it and you make seek both counsel and closure from those in the afterlife. Call upon Sirius, Cedric, and even your parents. Heed their words and release the guilt that burdens you. When you are finished, come to me if you are prepared to live and fight for a better future."

Harry stared at the stone in his hand while Dumbledore explained how to use it and that it was one of the three mythical Deathly Hallows. The bigger surprise was that Dumbledore's wand and Harry's cloak were the other two. Together, the three made the wielder The Master of Death.

"So, I'll be using your wand when I fight Riddle?" Harry asked, showing genuine interest for the first time since the death of his godfather.

"No. I'll be fighting him with the three. Mastery of the Elder Wand must be achieved by winning it from the current owner. My efforts will exhaust him and you will deliver the killing stroke."

Harry felt both relieved and cheated at the same time. His frustration must have been evident because the old man smiled and said, "Then again, if you truly out-duel me during our work together, the wand may indeed align itself with you. I do not make it known, for the legend says the bearer cannot be defeated while holding the wand."

"I'm guessing there's a catch," Harry said.

"Quite correct. Previous wielders have been hunted, dogged to the end of their days by those who desire its power. Some ended up with a never ending line of enemies trying to wrest away control of the wand. For those, every day became a struggle and jealousy mixed with envy destroyed their families and friendships. I value those more than any power in his world. I hope my ramblings make some sense to you."

"I think I understand, sir."

"Good," Dumbledore replied and stood from the edge of the bed. "Now, let me show you how to work the stone and those watching over you can offer words of encouragement."

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"Diggory's right, Harry. You're holding yourself to an impossible standard. I'll take it a step further. Other people are responsible for their actions."

Cedric smiled at Sirius Black and continued where the others left off, "I made the choice to take the cup, Harry. I entered the tournament because I wanted to win it. You didn't. They tricked you into competing. The only people I blame for my death are Voldemort and his followers. You did everything you could."

It did make Harry feel slightly better.

"Besides Harry," Cedric said. "You need to worry about how you're going to handle all the girls once you finish Riddle. If Cho was any indication..."

Suddenly, Harry wanted to crawl into a deep hole while Sirius and the others laughed at his expense. To Cedric, Harry said, "She should still be your girlfriend."

Diggory nodded and replied. "In a perfect world, she would. But things happen and it's not

always fair."

"See Harry!" Sirius broke in. "You've taken this whole chosen one thing to mean that everything is your responsibility. Do you think I should have gone into Gringotts and left you in the lobby to distract them? We needed two people down there to track down the Horcrux. I heard there were two dragons down there. I'm pretty good in a scrap, but two dragons is way, way out of my league."

Harry threw his hands in the air and said, "You could've left when the Death Eaters got involved."

"Yes, I suppose I could have. I could have left you down in the tunnels without knowing whether or not you and Dumbledore had found the cup. I could've ran and just hoped for the best because I'm sure that's what you would have done, right Harry? You would have just abandoned me down there."

"I'd never do that!"

"So why the fuck do you think I would do that to you, Harry? I chose wrong on the night your parents were killed and I lived with the weight of that decision until I died. I chose right in the lobby at Gringotts and my only regret is that I can't do more to help you."

Try as he might, Harry couldn't come up with a response to that. He was sorely tempted to break the connection, but realized it would just prove his godfather correct.

"See," Sirius said. "I was responsible for my actions. I made my choice and if I had to do it again and my choices are die and make sure you live, or run and hope for the best, guess which one I'm going to pick?"

"I think you made your point, old man," another voice joined the conversation. James Potter had been largely silent after the effusive greetings when the spirits were first summoned. Like his wife, they still appeared to be in their early twenties and the father and son likeness really appeared to be more comparable to that of siblings.

Harry wasn't sure what to think when it came to his parents. There was an unexpected level of awkwardness. Harry knew both Cedric and Sirius. He really only knew about James and Lily.

"I resent that Prongs! How many times have I told you that I look distinguished and rakish?"

"Apparently, not enough," James replied. "Harry, of all the bits of advice I have to offer you, I guess I'll pick this one. Do anything for those you care for. If the problem doesn't involve your loved ones, do what is required to solve that problem so you can get back to those that care for you. Other than that, work on your snogging. Everyone agrees that it's truly dreadful."

Even the eternally youthful visage of Lily Potter laughed at her husband's needling before adding, "Not every Potter male needs to be some sort of smarmy Casanova. That kind of rubbish attracts the wrong kind of women."

"Are you saying I married the wrong kind of woman?" James asked.

His wife ignored him and continued her thoughts, "Pretending to be something you're not is a recipe for failure in that arena. After all, it wasn't until the biggest git in history here started to show his sensitive side that I began liking him."

James attempted to appear aghast and whined, "Lily, we're supposed to be telling him how he can beat Tom Riddle."

"Oh yes that," Lily said and tried to look thoughtful. "Step one is to stop beating yourself up for things you can't control. I think we've beat that dead horse enough already. If you feel we haven't, use the stone and find us a dead horse. There's bound to be one around here somewhere."

From all the stories Harry had heard about his mother, he'd thought she was cut from the same cloth as Hermione. Instead, he saw she was sarcastic and confident with a personality that crowded the room and possibly overshadowed her husband's. In hindsight, it was probably why everyone had said how she had so many friends amongst all the houses.

"Where was I?"

"Step two, dear," James said in a teasing manner.

"Thank you. I knew there was a reason I kept you around. Ah yes, step two is get back to work with the Headmaster. Personally, I've got a couple of sore points with him about how he's handled everything, so when you give the stone back to him do tell him that I'd like a word...several in fact. Nevertheless, he is looking out for your interests as far as I can see and you must learn everything you can from him. Step three is follow his lead and do your best. That's all anyone can ask of you. There you have it - victory in three steps."

"You make it sound so easy."

"Harry," she said swishing her hand through his shoulder, in an attempt to pat him. This caused a shiver to travel through his body. "The people that accomplish great things in life...they do so because they can take the big problems and break them down into manageable tasks. They also don't worry about every little problem that gets in their way. They solve the ones directly affecting the current crisis and come back to take care of the others later."

-x-x-x-x-x-x

Well into the night, Harry held court with the spirits of the dead. He met both sets of his grandparents and received a promise from the Evans that they would have words with Petunia when her time came. Harry heard stories about his parents that he would've never known otherwise.

Using the stone, he discovered that the spirits could refuse to answer his call. Of the founders, only Helga Hufflepuff gave him a few minutes of her time. There was a bit of a gap, in the sense

that she spoke the way people did in her time and Harry was forced to find a person who could translate. His answer came in the form of Barty Crouch, Senior. The man and Sirius Black shared several angry glares, but Crouch Senior wanted to make amends with Harry. Through Crouch, Helga kindly explained how her cup worked and told him that it was his to keep. The others, even Godric Gryffindor, declined when he called upon them. For some reason that really disappointed Harry. Helga explained that Godric had a bit of a vanity problem that persisted even in the afterlife and Rowena and Salazaar had gotten into a bit of trouble on her side and Harry got the impression they were being punished for some transgression.

"Harry," his mother said. "You should go now and get your rest. Tomorrow, you must start preparing again. Come back and tell us how your training went."

The spirits disappeared one by one until there was only a single female left. Harry didn't recognize her. She wore a simple, but elegant white tunic and wore a large green medallion with a golden rune Harry had never seen before emblazoned in the metal. Adorning her head was a wreath which held her dark braids in place. Pale blue eyes regarded him.

"Who are you?"

The spirit said something that he couldn't understand and frowned. She gestured to his hand and held hers up.

He did so and mirrored her movements. She went slowly and corrected him several times. On the fourth attempt, there was a sharp tug on his magic. This seemed to please the woman.

"Speak now we can," the woman said.

Harry had heard of translation charms, but they were supposed to be complicated and hard to do, far above NEWT level. This one, though a bit crude, was something that could be done wandlessly.

"Who are you?"

"Athena. I query your names." The spell was definitely off. Maybe he didn't do it perfectly or maybe it would get better as more words were exchanged.

"Harry Potter," he answered and wondered if she was named for the ancient Greek Goddess. The woman did have olive colored skin and high cheekbones.

She repeated his name in her odd accent and then said, "You are the tombwalker. You are known to me. The time of greater suffering approaches."

Harry didn't know what a tombwalker was and wasn't particularly fond of the phrase "greater suffering."

"What are you saying?"

"My gifts wait in my tomb. Use them wisely."

"Where is your tomb?"

"Kobol."

"I don't know where Kobol is."

"You will one day."

"Do I need what is there to defeat Voldemort?"

She shook her head, possibly not understanding the name.

He tried again, "Do I need what's in your tomb to defeat Riddle?"

"My words not riddles are. My bequest needed for the Scylla. To Kobol go you will."

"I don't know what the Scylla is!"

"Know them you will," the woman said in an urgent tone. "All this has happened before. All this will happen again if you fail. Forewarned you now are."

She faded from the room leaving Harry both desperate and confused.

"Wait! Don't go! I need to know more."

He tried to use the stone to call her back, but no one came.

-x-x-x-x-x-x

"Is Harry Potter better now?" Dobby asked.

Harry smiled at his elf and replied, "I'm better. However, I'm kind of hungry, Dobby. Could you get me something to eat?"

Saying that to Dobby was the equivalent of telling a six year old that Christmas would be celebrated twice a year from now on. The elf returned three minutes later with a plate piled high with seven sandwiches. It was a reminder to Harry that he might need to be more specific with his requests to Dobby.

"Dobby, can you tell the Headmaster that I'd like to speak with him?"

"Dobby is happy to do as his master, Harry Potter asks!"

The picked up some dirty glasses and was preparing to leave when Harry thought of something.

"Dobby, have you ever heard of The Scylla?"

“No, Dobby does not know who they are? Is Dobby supposed to know?”

“I’m not sure. Someone just told me about them and I think I may have to fight them, whoever they are.”

“Then Dobby will stand with his powerful master against these Scylla!” The elf exclaimed.

That made Harry chuckle. The memory of seeing the spirit of his other elf’s former master reminded him to send a compliment to Winky as well. She did her best to blend into the background, as opposed to Dobby. “You and Winky are doing a great job, Dobby. Make sure you tell her I said that.”

Based on the elf’s reaction to that, Harry was fairly certain Christmas was now being celebrated four times a year.

-x-x-x-x-x-x

"I can see why this might trouble you, Harry," Dumbledore said. "Though I must say, this translation charm is a thing of simple beauty. Perhaps when all this is over, I'll be able to break this charm down properly and truly understand it."

Harry could feel his anger rising up and said, "But what is a Scylla?"

"I believe in Greek Mythology, it was one of a duo of sea monsters. That one was supposedly a multi-headed creature that perched on a rock. Its partner was a treacherous whirlpool. To sail too close to the Scylla guaranteed you would lose members of your crew, but if you sailed too close to the Charybdis you risked losing your entire ship. Given that woman you spoke with called herself Athena and the Scylla was a term for a monster we can conclude that she is warning you about some race of monsters."

"Have you ever heard of Kobol or know where Athena is buried? Isn't she supposed to be a goddess?"

"Sadly, I have never heard of a place called Kobol or any location known as Athena's tomb. My visits to that part of the world have been limited, but I do have several friends in both Greece and Italy from my days in the ICW. Perhaps one of them can divine some meaning to your encounter. As for your question about the Greek Gods in general, there is a school of thought that they were very long lived and extremely powerful wizards and witches."

"Sirius is right about your talking," Harry said with a hint of a smile.

Dumbledore looked surprised and the young man knew why. It was the first time Harry had been able to say he man's name without anger.

"From what we've gleaned after using the stone. There shall be endless opportunities for me to converse with people. That truly sounds like the next great adventure! But there is much work to be done, Harry. Are you ready to start anew and redouble your efforts?"

Harry nodded and said, "Yes, but my mum said for you to use the stone and call her. She wants to speak with you."

The old man laughed, but it was a hollow one. "I suspected as much. My decisions regarding your upbringing are about to be called in question and Lily will justifiably want her pound of my flesh. So mote it is. Work through you Occlumency exercises and clear your mind while I reap what I hath sown. When I return, we will focus on your object animation skills. Conjuraton can drain you in a protracted duel, but animating and transfiguring the surrounding environment will give you far more returns for your efforts."

The Next Lord of Kobol Silver Hands and Silver Tongues

The Next Lord of Kobol

Chapter 5 – Silver Hands and Silver Tongues

(December 25th, 1996 - Approximately ten years before the fall of the Twelve Colonies)

-X-X-X-X-X-X

It wasn't his father's cloak; for one thing it felt off. Harry didn't like to think of his Uncle Vernon, but he recalled a time when Vernon's overpriced status symbol of a car was in the shop and the drill salesman was forced to use a lesser model. He'd complained about how everything concerning the loaner had felt cheaper.

Strangely, Harry could finally understand what his uncle meant. This cloak belonged to Moody and had probably been used by Dung Fletcher. At least, it smelled like it had. Harry wondered what exactly the point of being invisible was if the smell of stale tobacco and alcohol was overpowering.

"Can't he bloody well get this wretched thing cleaned?"

Harry slid over to a position by a window and cracked it slightly. The bound and gagged werewolf sitting in the chair followed his movements with his eyes, proving just how "invisible" Harry was. Instead, he tried to focus on one of his other senses. He'd removed his glasses for good this morning. Just as Dumbledore suspected, Harry's vision improved by leaps and bounds after the removal of the Horcrux and in just over a half a year, his sight was perfectly normal.

Fortunately, the ability to speak to snakes had remained, even though Harry didn't really have a need for it all that often.

In the other room, Harry heard the sounds of movement and voices. This shook him out of his introspection.

"I can't thank you enough for this gift, Severus. It gives me a chance to eliminate one more reminder of my past."

Snape's caustic tongue cut through the simpering tone of Peter Pettigrew's voice. "We question

Lupin under Veritaserum first. If he knows where Dumbledore or Potter is, we get the information and only then you may kill him. Given our shared history with the creature, I merely wish to be the sole witness to his demise. The rest is up to you."

Lupin tilted his head slightly and moved his leg to ensure that his wand was covered and nodded to where Harry stood. Snape's comments signaled that it was just the two of them.

Still, the hairs on the back of Harry's neck stood up. His faith in his former teacher was nowhere near Dumbledore's. Part of him expected Voldemort to walk in with the duo.

Instinctively, Harry glanced at the Portkey dangling from his belt. Of the many things his late godfather had taught him, one thing stood out above all. It even eclipsed Moody's howls about vigilance. Sirius Black had told him, "No matter where you are, always know your exits."

Remus was equally tense and rustled in his chains. On the surface, the chains appeared to be silver. That was just a minor color illusion. When the command word was uttered, the gag and the chains would return to the base material they'd been transfigured from - in his case cobwebs.

Wormtail was right handed. Harry wisely stood in a spot where Peter would have to pivot in his direction.

"We'll let's get this over with then," Peter cackled. "Hello old friend, did you miss me?"

As the door opened, Harry caught a glimpse of Peter's face and the gleam off the silver hand.

Stunners from Harry, Remus and Snape all met up at roughly the same time where Wormtail stood and Harry breathed a sigh of relief when the Animagus collapsed. Now, it was time for phase two of the plan.

-x-x-x-x-x-x

"Hello Peter," Harry said, doing his best to maintain his calm in the presence of this quivering mass of flesh in front of him.

"Do what you will to me, but the master will survive. He can defy even death!"

Remus Lupin checked on his former friend's restraints, taking special care to avoid the magical limb.

The werewolf said, "It was so nice of you to receive us this evening."

Harry glanced away from the silver handed death eater and around the room. The decor of Spinner's End was cold and impersonal, much like the man who owned it.

"Is this assignment boring you, Potter? I'm certain the Headmaster could find a more suitable task for you if there is some place you'd rather be. You could always go lay another wreath at Black's grave."

"I'm preparing myself for what is necessary, Snape," Harry said. "Unlike you, I'm not ready at a moment's notice to use an Unforgiveable."

"A perfect explanation of why you would fail, were this up to you alone."

"I don't know, Severus," Lupin countered. "Most of us get by rather nicely without having to stain our souls. Albus manages."

Snape crossed his arms and made a sound that was a mixture of a grunt and a laugh. "Feeble, Lupin. The boy is no Dumbledore, even were he to live a thousand years. He isn't even in his father's league."

"Careful Snape," Harry said. "I know for a fact that he and mum are listening. I may not be in my dad's league, but what really mattered was when it came to my mum, you weren't in his league either."

Even Peter gaped at Harry's reply.

"You dare!" Snape bellowed.

"Please Snape," Harry said. "They let me know who told Riddle about the prophecy. Regardless of how this plays out, you will one day be held accountable for what happened to the Potters and let's not forget the Longbottoms either. You've got your little pardon for this life, but the next won't be nearly as forgiving."

Dumbledore had advised Harry to express himself more. His exact words were, "Harry, here is something quite liberating about saying what is on your mind. For the truth is one of the simplest and most powerful magics of all."

Somehow, the young wizard doubted this was what his mentor had intended, but it did feel right to get this off his chest.

"Maybe we could test how well that prophecy protects you," Snape threatened.

"That would be a bad idea," Lupin said as it felt like the temperature dropped ten degrees. "Because I'd finally fulfill Sirius' wish, from all those years ago, and kill you, but this time I wouldn't regret it."

It was obvious to Harry that this group wasn't chosen for their ability to get along. Snape had lured Pettigrew to his home with the promise of killing off Remus Lupin once and for all. Instead, Harry, Remus, and the turncoat Snape captured the rat Animagus.

With the only possible Horcrux left being Riddle's snake, Nagini, the plan called for Harry to place Peter under the Imperius curse and count on Harry's raw power coupled with the debt the rat owed the young wizard to hold Pettigrew under his control long enough to end the reptile's miserable existence. Snape provided a concoction of deadly poisons to be added to the monster's next meal.

Other than placing virtually everything on Harry's ability to control an unforgiveable curse, it wasn't half bad. Snape was also going along for the ride and his devotion to Dumbledore gave Harry hope that the Head of Slytherin would step in, risking his cover, if need be and complete the task.

If he didn't loathe the man, Harry could've found a measure of respect.

"...and if the goblins cared, they'd return the Potter, Dumbledore, and Black fortunes the Ministry gifted them, then everyone could be friends forever!"

One of the things Dumbledore had withheld while Harry was dealing with Sirius Black's death was that the Ministry's version of an apology to the Goblin nation included the two organizations confiscating and splitting the contents of their collective vaults. The goblins had threatened to go to war and Fudge's ministry...or was that Voldemort's ministry...these days the distinction was becoming harder to identify...offered the vaults up to avert a war. Other than the few coins Harry had in his bag, he was a veritable pauper. Somewhere out there, Draco Malfoy's cheeks probably hurt from that shit eating grin that was stuck on it.

Harry didn't really dwell on it. Money wasn't something he craved. Dumbledore wasn't terribly bothered either and had said that there was too much clutter in the family vaults. That said, when the Ministry seized Aberforth Dumbledore's bar in Hogsmeade, Fudge's spacious manor house disintegrated overnight. It didn't burn down. It simply began to age so quickly, like those shows on the telly where Harry had seen time lapse photography used.

Aurors going there found only the foundation and a picture of the Malfoy estate hovering in the center and the minister transfigured into a goat tied up outside.

Aberforth's bar was returned to his possession three hours later.

Harry wouldn't mind sitting down with Aberforth Dumbledore for a quick lesson sometime, but there was a mission to accomplish. "Well this is getting us nowhere," he said. "Let's just get this over with. Peter, I have a job for you to do."

-x-x-x-x-x-x

The Dark Lord shifted on his throne and a troubled expression was evident on his face. Those who had been in his Inner Circle long enough knew not to meet his gaze. Next to the chair was a heavily warded, protective, runic circle where the snake named Nagini circled.

"Speak to me Lucius," Voldemort said. "What news do you have from the elected fool who claims to run this country?"

Malfoy approached and bowed deeply before saying, "He offers little resistance to my control. The sanctions against those of less than pure blood move forward."

Voldemort nodded, and addressed his assembled minions, "Very good. I have heard the rumblings

of discontent among you. There are those who question your master's vision in silence and wonder why I would not simply eliminate the muggleborns from our society. McNair! Should I kill off all the dragons?"

The Death Eater, known for his skill with magical beasts, appeared puzzled for a second and replied, "If that is your will master, it is my wand. If you are asking for my council, I would recommend against it."

"A good answer," Voldemort said as he stood and made a sweeping gesture with his arms. "Why do you suggest I avoid this course of action?"

"Dragons can be powerful guardians, with the proper training. Their blood is useful in many potions and their heartstrings are essential components in many wands."

"So we can agree that dragons have a role in our society, yes?"

Murmurs of agreement met the evil wizard's statement.

"Now take a muggleborn. With the proper training would one be capable of guarding your estate or working in a business owned by you? A particularly fetching one might even make a suitable concubine, if taught to respect our ways and know her place. My loyal friends, England is an island. If we ever wish to step beyond this rock and bring the world under my rule, we'll need expendable fodder and allies beyond our borders. Otherwise, this whole country is nothing more than a glorified version of Azkaban and the rest of the world will simply surround us and cut us off."

The assembled death eaters digested this news. Most nodded, though several chose to keep their thoughts to themselves.

"Consider this," Voldemort added and pointed at ranks of his minions. "You have every right to be proud of your sons and daughters. They are the leaders of tomorrow, just as you are the ones making that possible. When their time comes, they will lead their lesser into battle. Any one of them is worth ten muggleborns and if it is the destiny of those muggleborns to lay down their lives, I say it is far better for them to do so in my service so that a pureborn wizard or witch does not have to."

This time the crowd nodded vigorously. Though the Dark Lord had a less than human face, his charisma and silver tongue could still sway a group as easily as a young Tom Riddle charmed his way through Hogwarts.

"Milord," Peter said and stepped forward and held covered serving tray. "If it pleases you, I have brought a gift for both you and Nagini."

"What do have for me, Wormtail?"

Pettigrew removed the lid and revealed the severed head of a former Hogwarts professor

surrounded by hunks of bloody meat. With a slight cackle, he said, “Milord, I present the head of Remus Lupin, delivered to you on a silver platter. By myself, I tracked him to a hovel in Scotland.”

“Were you able to learn where Dumbledore hides?”

“The werewolf did not break easily,” Peter said, looking at the gore in his hands. “He did not know where the old man and boy were, but he knew they hid in Norway until last month. He strongly suspected that they are in Ireland, under the protection of the clans. That is all I got out of him...well not everything.”

“Indeed,” Voldemort said. “Our trackers will investigate both Norway and Ireland. I congratulate you on your kill. You may feed the werewolf’s head to Nagini.”

“As you command, Master.”

Wormtail walked to the edge of the runic circle and a small gap opened allowing him to slide the tray inside. Slithering forward, the snake opened its maw. With unhinged jaws, it scarfed the head in one bite. The death eaters cheered.

“Now to our next bit of business,” Voldemort said as the noise died down. “Amelia Bones continues to present a problem. Since she will not resign on her own, it is time...”

The Dark Lord’s words were interrupted by a strange sound coming from the snake. It hacked and spit the head back up. This time the head wasn’t that of a werewolf, it was that of a pig and it was on fire.

Nagini hissed and backed away from it, twitching from the internal injuries. The fire spread to the floor and grew with an unholy intensity trapped with the snake inside the protective circle.

“Fiendfyre!” Voldemort screamed. “Seize him!”

The nearest death eater, Yaxley, leapt to the tiny entrance and sent a jet of water into the circle, trying in vain to slow the spread and give the snake a chance to make it to the opening.

Voldemort drew his wand and began unraveling the protective circle. Unfortunately, his spell work was too complex to be undone so quickly.

“No! No! No!”

As the last ring fell, thick black smoke rose obscuring everything. It coalesced into his face and threw back its mouth in a howl before dissolving. Yaxley and two others worked to contain the spread of the eldritch flames.

Wormtail hadn’t struggled and now Voldemort rounded on him.

The man-rodent looked unfazed...clearly bewitched. Pettigrew smiled and said, “I have a

message for you, master. Harry Potter says that even though there are worse things than death, he'll settle for your death! Enjoy the feeling of mortality. You won't have it for long."

"Let him go," Voldemort said.

"What just happened? Master? Master!" Wormtail's scream indicated that he must have been released from the curse holding him as a thrall.

"You have failed me, Peter Pettigrew. I do not tolerate failure."

"Please! Spare me! Potter...he...urk"

Riddle's gesture caused the silver arm to reach up and grab the wizard's throat. Pettigrew spun around clawing at his traitorous appendage with his human hand. The fingers tightened and yanked pulling a handful of flesh with it. The enchanted limb displayed Pettigrew's throat to the former owner as the Animagus sank to his knees gurgling and spilling blood down his front.

Even as the wretch of a man died, the arm thrust itself high into the air displaying the gore for the rest to see.

"That," Voldemort said and watched as the onlookers met his stare and failed miserably to look unafraid. His wand summoned a pillar of fire under the corpse and began reducing it to ash. "That is what awaits those who fail me. You are the only ones who can prevent this from becoming your fate. Do not let this become your fate!"

-x-x-x-x-x-x-

Harry exited the Pensieve containing Snape's memory of Pettigrew's last moments. Voldemort was definitely angry and as far as Harry was concerned, that was a good thing.

On the other side of the room, Dumbledore spoke with Snape as the master brewer applied a salve to his Dark Mark.

Snape grimaced and said, "It will make the pain of resisting his call less intrusive."

"If the pain becomes unbearable, we can always give you a draught of living death. You've done more than I could ever ask, my friend. Others can see this through to the end," Dumbledore offered.

"Perhaps Albus, but I would bear witness to his downfall if I am able. For now, I will endure. Nevertheless, I have answered him for the final time."

Harry looked at the chest by Snape's feet and said, "As well as cleaning out his potion stores."

"Severance pay, Potter. Since I am no longer in his employ, I decided to compensate myself. Much of it was my work, so I am merely taking what is mine. Does that bother you boy?"

Harry shook his head and said, "No, I was actually impressed. It's something Sirius would do."

There was an awkward moment of silence as both tried to figure out whether that was the best or worst backhanded compliment ever.

"I'm going upstairs," Harry said breaking the silence.

Sitting on his bed, Harry listened to the black and silver cassette player that once belonged to Sirius. He'd gotten it in Spain or Portugal. It was sturdy and the sound quality wasn't spectacular and didn't compare to that stereo Dudley had been given during the summer between Harry's fourth and fifth years, but it was one of the few Muggle devices he'd seen that functioned despite being around magic.

It even had a little bit of magic inside. Instead of batteries, it had something that looked like a pair of them, but was in fact a tiny generator with a motion rune on it to produce the correct voltage. All that was required from Harry was a tap of his wand and to funnel a small trickle of his power into the rune.

"Even though it would likely violate some bloody law, Arthur Weasley would love this," thought Harry as he swapped out Genesis for Queen.

Not that Harry had much respect for English laws anymore. He was rapidly coming to the conclusion that it was a nice place to visit, but he didn't want to live there.

Actually, even visiting was a stretch at this point. Using the resurrection stone, he spoke with Sirius and his parents about what to do when this all finally ended. Both Sirius and his mum said he should reconnect with Hermione and the Weasleys on the other side of the pond.

Surprisingly enough, James Potter's advice was to, "Get as far away from England as you possibly can and go where you can be your own man."

Sirius changed his mind and immediately began recalling every myth and half-truth he'd ever heard about the females in Australia and Asia.

Naturally, or as natural as a conversation with the dead could be, James Potter reminded his friend that Sirius had never been anywhere outside of Europe.

"Congratulations on sending Peter over to this side," Sirius said, changing the topic. "Little bastard won't show his face around here, probably stuck in some kind of purgatory for buggers just like him, but I'll run into him eventually."

"Sirius," James said. "I'm glad Peter is dead and we've been avenged, but I'd prefer not to be congratulating my son for killing someone."

"He's in the middle of a war, James," Black replied.

"I'm acutely aware of that. Harry did what was necessary, but he shouldn't celebrate it."

"I suppose you're right," Black conceded.

Harry scowled feeling like he was being treated like a child again. His mother must have recognized the look and approached him.

"Your father is right, Harry," she said. "Fight when you must. Kill when there is no other option."

James agreed and said, "I was lucky enough to be raised in a caring environment. I didn't have the Dursleys like you, or Petunia's jealousy like your mother, or ever present threat of the Black family like Sirius. I was an arrogant berk through much of my Hogwarts years. In my fifth year, as the first war began to heat up, I told my father that I was ready to fight for the light. He gave me a piece of advice and I'll pass it on to you. Do not measure your victory in a battle by the number of foes you defeat. Instead, measure it against the number you did not have to defeat. Does that make sense to you?"

Again Harry was surprised at how the stories of his parents tended to emphasize his mother's brilliance and charm over the attributes of James Potter. Had he lived, his father would have no doubt been a powerful foil to the likes of the Malfoys.

"It does," Harry said.

"Good," James continued. "One way or another, this war will end soon. Do what you must to win and then be prepared to live a long and full life."

A knock at the door interrupted further conversation with his loved ones. Harry said his goodbyes and answered it. Albus Dumbledore stood in the doorway looking as stalwart as ever.

"Sir?"

"As reluctant as I am to interrupt your conversations with the departed, I need the stone. In two days' time, we break Tom's grip on the Ministry and I wish to confer with the spirits of former Unspeakables to finalize my strategy. I thank you again for the use of your cloak and hope its replacement is serviceable until it can be returned."

"Do you happen to know a charm that'll clean it properly?"

Dumbledore laughed and said, "Yes, bring it here and I will demonstrate. Unlike your cloak, great care must be exercised when cleaning them. They are far less durable."

"Maybe Moody should insist Fletcher bathe before using it?" Harry offered.

"I doubt the battle cry of 'Constant Hygiene' would impress our dear Mr. Fletcher," the elder wizard replied.

"Will you return to Hogwarts once the war is over?" Harry asked and handed the smelly cloak to Dumbledore.

“I might like to, but then again, the idea of never attending another staff meeting appeals to me.”

“Are they really that bad?”

With a whimsical look on his face, the ex-headmaster said, “Meetings are the bane of every sensible adult’s life, Harry. They are a purgatory unto themselves. Learn to avoid them whenever possible.”

“I’m not sure I follow you,” Harry said.

Sighing, Dumbledore said, “Sadly, by the time you understand, it will be too late, lad. Now, allow me to demonstrate the charm I told you about.”

The Next Lord of Kobol Veiled Intentions

"Moody's plan stinks!"

That was Harry Potter's conclusion as he stumbled around in the dark, deep under the Ministry of Magic. Harry cleared his throat and looked for another opponent. In his last year before coming to Hogwarts, he'd done a book report on Sir Winston Churchill. Given the state of his home life at that time and his present situation, one of the man's many notable quotes stuck with Harry and it came to the forefront of his mind once more.

"If you're going through hell, keep going."

Harry promised that he next time Dumbledore allowed him to use the Resurrection Stone; he'd call up the legend just to see what he might say.

The battle started in the Department of Mysteries. Harry was told to use his traceable wand, knowing full well that the Death Eaters were monitoring Hopkirk's office. Harry knew the faces of all the members of Dumbledore's Order of the Phoenix. Everyone else was a legitimate target. Voldemort's followers hadn't "dressed" for the occasion, so it was just a mass of people fighting each other. Aurors fought against their coworkers. Chaos reigned throughout.

For the second time, he passed by the room that had a tank filled with things that looked like a cross between jellyfish and human brains, and pulled Moody's invisibility cloak tightly to him.

During the first rush of fighters attacking the archway room, the group Harry had been with fired off a volley of spells and Apparated out of the room. They were supposed to wait ten seconds and reappear on the group's flank and strike again.

It was a superb plan, but someone raised anti-apparition wards in the middle of all that and it scuttled their counter attack. Harry, Hestia Jones, Sturgis Podmore and three others were forced to rely on their crudely drawn maps of the area to make their way back into the fray.

Unfortunately, the six of them ran smack into the second wave of law enforcement and Death Eaters (masquerading as concerned citizens). Hestia pushed him into a room filled with different doors and sealed the one behind him.

Turning his wand on that door, he hesitated, retrieved the borrowed invisibility cloak from his

bottomless bag and donned it. Even with all his training, four wizards or witches attacking at the same time could easily overwhelm him. Without anyone to back him up, he opted for stealth.

Already, the sounds of spellfire had died down on the other side. Harry could only hope Hestia and the others had been captured. He didn't want to entertain the other option.

When he heard the sounds indicating they were trying to break the door open, Harry added his own charms to his side and immediately went to another doorway.

"I still need to find my way back to Dumbledore and the room with the arch. That stupid prophecy says I am the one that has to deliver the finishing blow to Riddle!"

Navigating the passageways, Harry tried to imagine that it was just like sneaking around the castle...minus the wand waving lunatics running around. His godfather's lessons in stealth paid dividends and after eluding the main group, Harry decided to do more than just hide.

"This place is a ruddy maze, Alecto!" Harry recognized the name of one of the Carrow siblings.

"I heard the sounds of fighting at the last junction. We should double back and head in that direction."

"Incarcerous! Stupefy!" Harry's quick wand movements threw open the cloak and he caught the wide eyed expression of the female hag as his ropes encircled her. Her brother dropped like a sack of potatoes to his stunner.

"Help! It's Potter! He's..."

Harry cut off her shrieks with another stunner and summoned ropes for the other. A quick search turned up a pair of wands on the male. The female only appeared to have one and Harry had no urge to search her disgusting form with his hands.

The trio of wands along with a belt containing several potion vials went into his bottomless bag. He didn't take the woman's canvas purse because it probably had size expansion charms on it as well. Both Sirius and Dumbledore had warned him of the instabilities that could occur when placing an object with size expansion charms inside his similarly charmed bag.

Instead, Harry used a sticking charm and attached her purse to the ceiling. A tiny whisper in his mind said to kill them and just be done with it, but he remembered the ghostly words of James Potter.

If he could help it, the only life he'd take tonight would be Tom Riddle's. Dumbledore reasoned that Voldemort's death would take the wind out of the Death Eaters' sails like chopping off the head of a snake.

Harry could live with that analogy. In fact, he planned on it. Finishing up, Harry followed their advice and went to the junction searching for where the sounds of the battle grew louder.

-X-X-X-X-X-X

His collection of captured wands had grown to over a dozen by the time Harry found a familiar passage and knew he was headed in the right direction. The Order had counted on the Ministry and the Death Eaters not being familiar with the Department of Mysteries.

In hindsight, having disillusioned or cloaked wizards creating a disruptive influence might have worked even better based on what Harry was doing.

Unfortunately, all good things had to end. Harry's luck didn't last beyond his ninth victim.

A Death Eater named Yaxley came around the corner and discovered Harry as he finished his most recent ambush.

Harry rolled and sent a body bind. Yaxley blocked and responded with the Killing Curse. He barely dodged the bolt of green death, which hit and killed one of the hapless souls Harry had just stunned.

Harry's strategy changed instantly. "*Confringo!*"

His blasting curse wasn't aimed at the shield Yaxley had reflexively waiting for it, but into the stone floor in front of the man. Chunks of rock went right through the barrier meant to deflect Harry's magic.

Yaxley howled and stumbled right into the cutting curse Harry cast. Despite the dim light, Harry saw the man staring at the huge gash across his chest as dark liquid leaked down his front. His wand twitched and he tried to close the wound. Harry banished the dying man as hard as he could into the group coming around the corner.

With the knowledge that the passageway was too narrow to fight in, Harry ran in the other direction, into the main battle.

-X-X-X-X-X-X

Once inside the Veil Room, Harry banished his way through a group separating him from the area around the veil where Dumbledore was fighting.

Even Harry, who had dueled against Dumbledore, was astonished by the sight before him. It lent credence to the myth of the Deathly Hallows and the Master of Death legend. The venerable wizard fought against Tom Riddle, Bellatrix Lestrange, Augustus Rookwood and Dominic Mulciber all at once and the best the Death Eaters and their master could manage was a stalemate.

The rest of the Order was busy holding the Ministry forces and the rest of the Death Eaters in check with a bloodied Alastor Moody defiantly hurling spells and shouting orders. From Harry's vantage point, it looked like the Ministry and Death Eaters were trying to separate Dumbledore from the rest of the Order.

Conjuring a stun whip, Harry wasn't about to let that happen. The magical construct sliced through the air and cut down four opponents as Harry scrambled into the gap created by their forms falling to the ground.

Flicking his wand upward, Harry sent the last vestiges of the spell into the back of Bellatrix, who stumbled and fell before being sent flying into the chamber wall by Harry's follow-on banisher. He didn't have the chance to admire his handiwork. Instead, he sent a bone breaker directly at Riddle's back.

Saying a prayer to any powers that might be listening, Harry's eyes followed the bright blue pulse of magic to its destination.

Maybe Voldemort saw Bellatrix being thrown through the air, or perhaps he was even capable of sensing the oncoming magic. Either way, the dark wizard raised a shield to parry faster than Harry thought possible. Once more, the Phoenix cry could be heard as the brother wands were forced to fight each other.

"No!" Voldemort yelled as a dome of magic enveloped them.

Harry spared Dumbledore a brief glance and the man nodded.

The two had planned in the event that this happened. Harry's new mission was to keep Riddle in check, which freed Dumbledore to turn his considerable power on the rest of Riddle's entourage and with luck on their side; the pair would turn their combined might on their enemy once the tide had turned.

"I'm going to kill you, whelp!" Riddle screamed trying to disengage from the magical tug of war they were locked in.

Unlike the last time, Harry fought to keep his opponent inside the connection and switched to a two handed grip. "You've been trying and failing for years, Tom. What makes you think tonight's going to be any different? Except for the fact that you're mortal now!"

Harry shouted that last part for those watching. The Order members had been briefed on what happen and kept up their attacks. With his offhand Riddle fumbled in his robes and retrieved a knife. Using a wandless banisher, Riddle sent it toward him.

Harry had wanted to wait a bit longer, but he had no choice. Pulling his spare wand, he used his own banisher to deflect it. It took a tremendous amount of energy to cast that second spell. The exertion forced Harry down to one knee.

Seeing Voldemort's eyes went wide at the sight of Harry's second wand. He searched his mind for a spell that didn't require much power.

"Percuito!" A wounding curse wasn't much, but it drew blood on Riddle's arm and somehow that was a victory in itself.

His enemy attempted to summon a wand from one of the fallen, but it bounce off the dome shield and Harry knew for certain that Voldemort didn't have a spare.

"Undone by his own arrogance! Amazing!"

Riddle dodged the second one and began pushing as hard as he could against their connected wands, trying to overwhelm the Gryffindor's power. Fighting back against the panic, Harry took a calming breath.

"I have to hold him off long enough for something to finish him!" Harry thought.

The bead of power began picking up speed, rushing towards Harry. He thought of it like a rapidly closing snitch and pulled his magic away from it still looking for that one spell.

His mind raced through his inventory. The blasting curses and the Reductors needed more strength than he had. The ice spear or conjured arrows could be dodged. He needed something that couldn't be avoided...he needed...

"Incedius Draconis! Burn you motherfucker!" Harry screamed and dropped to his knees. The spell simulated Dragon's fire. It was easily dispelled or could be interrupted with a gust of wind, but Riddle's magic was still tied up in their connection and the dome shield around them prevented anyone from aiding him.

Unable to block the sheet of flame, Riddle ducked his head into his off arm to try and protect himself.

Harry kept funneling power into his spell, like one of those World War Two flamethrowers, and just like a flamethrower, his flames began to sputter as he ran out of energy.

Then, he heard the most horrible and beautiful sound ever...Tom Riddle screaming. Harry was down on his right elbow and nearing the point where he would pass out when the connection snapped.

The dome collapsed and Harry sensed some of his energy returning. Forcing himself upright, he wasn't sure if he could fight off Hermione's cat, Crookshanks at this point, but the words of Sirius Black came to mind. "Don't let your enemies see you're weak."

He'd gone on to tell him that it was okay to let a pretty girl see you vulnerable, because, "Women really dig that sensitive stuff."

Try as he might, Harry couldn't stop those stupid thoughts from running through his mind as he stumbled across the space separating him from the smoldering carcass nearby. Most of the fighting had died down and he felt the weight of everyone's stares on him. Their battle ended with Voldemort's still form draped over the steps leading up to the platform where the Veil of Death stood.

The smell was awful and part of Harry thought a killing curse would have been kinder. The part

with the voice that sounded like his godfather reminded him that Riddle deserved the most painful death possible. Half of his inhuman face had been melted away and the rest was burnt beyond recognition. It was over!

He bent down and picked up the slightly scorched yew wand and held it aloft. There was a smattering of cheers, led by the Order members. Harry caught the eyes of a few familiar faces. Moody's face was bloody and his one human eye was shut, but the creepy wizard eye was locked on Harry and the crazy bastard was actually smiling.

It wasn't nearly as unnerving as the stench, but it was a close second. Lupin was clutching Nymphadora Tonks close and healing cuts and curses on the injured Metamorphmagus.

Finally, Harry's eyes settled on Albus Dumbledore. The old man, fueled by the power of the Deathly Hallows, looked decades younger and was virtually crackling with magical energy. The Elder wand pointed at the crowd. He spared Harry a proud smile before the young wizard could see the fatigue behind the mask of confidence he wore.

Undesirable Number One cleared his throat and addressed everyone, "The self-styled Lord Voldemort has met his final end at the hands of Harry Potter. His power is broken and the day is won."

Dumbledore started to lower his wand and spun toward Harry. It all happened in slow motion. A dark red spell that Harry knew was a cutting curse streaked by and struck Dumbledore just below his right elbow and Dumbledore grunted in agony as his lower arm and hand, still clutching the Elder wand fell to the ground. The cackling bitch, Bellatrix Lestrange had pulled herself upright and staggered toward the platform.

"Never!" Bellatrix screamed, with the look of utter madness plastered on her face. "Kill them! Kill them all! *Avada Kedavra* !"

Her killing curse was intercepted by Fawkes, protecting his master. She prepared to do it again, but Harry's weak disarming charm managed to knock her wand from her grasp.

All around, the fighting erupted anew. That last spell, cast out of sheer panic left him dizzy. The crazy bint rounded on him and didn't seem to care that she no longer held a wand. She charged at Harry and grabbed him.

He could feel her trying to wrestle any of his wands from him when their momentum carried them backward. Harry heard a strange howling sound and the whisper of voices. Craning his head momentarily, he saw the rustling curtain of the Veil of Death speeding toward them like the Hogwarts Express.

-X-X-X-X-X-X

Apparently, death felt like being turned inside out, thrown into a dryer for what might have only a minute, but seemed far longer. It was like a ride on a broken broomstick with the braking charms

removed.

The insane journey ended with them being dumped on onto the unyielding floor of a poorly lit room.

"I'm not dead? I'm not dead!"

His thoughts were interrupted by Bellatrix clawing at his face. The wand in that hand had rolled into the darkness of the barely lit room. The other was in his hand, but they both had control of it and a stream of sparks emanated from it.

"Die Potter! Die!"

She head butted him and bit his arm. Harry was still seeing stars when he caught a flash of metal in her hand.

"She's got a knife!"

It was probably the twin to Riddle's and Harry knew he was magically exhausted. Bellatrix buried the knife in his shoulder, pulled it out and slashed him with it. The wound on his shoulder was joined by one on his hand. There was a sharp sting followed by a burning sensation spreading across his skin.

"Poison!"

Focusing, Harry did the only thing he could think of as the crazed witch pulled back for another blow. Her next downward strike was met with a larger than expected arm. The serrated edge bit into that arm, past the thick fur that had appeared.

The hand attached to the thick arm didn't stop, and continued up into her face and gripped her around the neck. With strength that belonged to no human possessed he tossed Lestrangle off of him. She hit a column with a sick, wet thud, and slid to the ground.

Ambling to his feet, Harry cautiously made his way to the witch in his unfamiliar body. He'd made partial transformations before, but this was the first time he'd put it all together in one oversized impressive package.

When he and Sirius first figured out what Harry was, Sirius made him watch every single movie in The Planet of the Apes series and proceeded to overuse that, "Take your stinking paws off me, you damned dirty ape" line.

Getting a closer look at the unmoving Lestrangle, he saw her neck was bent at an odd angle with a fittingly insane look frozen on her face.

With one problem solved, he needed to do something about the poison. Even in his Animagus form, it could be lethal. He took a deep breath and focused on his next step.

The sharp pain returned as Harry forced his body back into his human form and immediately went for his pockets. A pair of bezoars went into his mouth as he removed the stopper from a vial and poured the contents into his mouth.

It was Snape's best broad spectrum antidote and Harry briefly worried about whether his former teacher would do something underhanded. The general answer was yes, but not when it came to his creations. The man was a bloody foul monster, but Snape took too much pride in his work. The stinging stopped spreading as Harry assessed his situation.

There was a duplicate of the Veil standing in front of him. He quickly gathered the wands and stumbled toward the archway. Though he wasn't sure how much good he'd be able to do and didn't look forward to reliving the return trip, but Dumbledore and the rest needed him!

Nothing happened...other than Harry smacking into the wall.

"No! No!" Harry shouted. He went through it the other way. That didn't work either. He tried a diagnostic spell. The result was feeble and told him very little.

Still weak from the poison, he slid his normal wand into his holster and put Riddle's into his bottomless bag.

Glancing around, he recognized that this appeared to be some type of museum. Moving over to a bench, Harry sat down, somewhat less than gracefully. He looked at a nearby sign and his best guess was that it was Greek lettering.

Sadly, what little rune work he knew was either Celtic or Norse. Greek was...well all Greek to him.

Fatigue set in as the adrenaline wore off. Magical exhaustion, poison, and everything he'd just been through hit him like a ton of bricks. He considered making a Portkey, but that and Apparition were out of the question in his current state. All Harry could do was holster his wand and hope the Greek Ministry wouldn't treat him too harshly.

Lying down on that bench seemed like a smashing idea right about then.

"I was right, Sirius," Harry mumbled, wondering if his godfather's spirit was watching him at that moment. "I made my transformation before the New Year. Couldn't have done it without you, you old mutt."

The Next Lord of Kobol The Dog Runs Fast

The Next Lord of Kobol

Chapter 7 – The Dog Runs Fast

(Dephi, Caprica approximately three months after Harry's arrival and 10 years before the fall of the Twelve Colonies)

-X-X-X-X-X-X

As Harry pushed the lawn mower back toward the groundskeeper's shed, he heard shouting coming from the open window of the facility director's office. His progress in mastering Colonial Standard still wasn't very good, so he cheated and cast the wandless translation charm that one spirit had shown him.

Dumbledore had speculated that the charm would function better as the caster's exposure to the language increased. Harry wasn't surprised when Dumbledore's theory turned out to be correct.

The words of the older female reorganized into something he was able to comprehend, "...going to quit acting like such an irresponsible teenager. From the number of times I get messages from the High School office I'm practically on a first name basis with everyone there! But cutting school is not good enough for you anymore Maggie, oh no. Now you're being brought back to me by the Chief of Police because you and the rest of your little club are up in the mountains using the trails to run illegal motorcycle races. Well what have you got to say for yourself?"

"I guess I'll make sure I don't get caught next time," the younger female replied in a defiant tone. "Sorry I can't be perfect like my sisters."

"This isn't about them, Margret. This is about you! Your grades are starting to slip and if the Commissioner wasn't a friend of the family, you'd be looking at more than a misdemeanor that goes away when you come of age. How many colleges do you think will take you if you have a criminal record?"

Harry thought Nancy Edmondson had a decent point. Her daughter's rebellious streak was getting progressively more obnoxious and he'd only seen a couple of months of it.

"I hate this place and I hate you! I wish we'd never left our family."

“Well here's a news flash for you young lady, we left because your father died and he and I were bringing in seventy percent of the income. Group families work together for a common goal. Ours didn't. All you and the other children saw was the fun and the parties. One big, happy time!”

“Then why'd you leave?”

“By the Gods, Margret! Don't you understand? I got you and your sisters out of there while I could still afford to send any of you to college. You, Kelsey, and Sue were mine biologically. The others weren't. I have nothing but love for your brothers and sisters we left behind. They weren't a problem...their parents were. They were bleeding us dry!”

“So you chose money over family,” the girl said. It wasn't a question, but an accusation.

“I chose to do what's best for my blood. Maybe one day you'll wake up and realize that.”

Harry was beyond the point where he felt like he was intruding. This whole world was alien to him. People openly practiced group marriages, worshipped ancient Greek gods, and as if that wasn't enough, they also traveled through space to other planets.

When he came to in a hospital room with people poking and prodding him while speaking what he thought was Greek at that time, he hoped that he'd be sent back to England in short order. Those hopes were dashed the moment he looked out the window and saw a number of flying contraptions moving gracefully through the sky in front of a massive reddish planetoid. Astronomy certainly wasn't Harry's forte, but he was no slouch at it either. That object was far too large to be Earth's moon.

He would later learn that it wasn't a large moon, but Caprica's sister planet Gemenon. His father's advice about getting as far away from England as possible might have been taken a bit further than he'd ever imagined.

“Fine! Why'd we come here then? You used to help people and make a difference! Now all you do is watch over a group of vegetables and retarded frakkers like him! Look at him; he can barely put a sentence together!”

Harry had been lost in his thoughts and was suddenly aware that Maggie Edmondson was pointing directly at him. To be honest, Harry did his best to avoid the girl. Best he could tell they were roughly the same age and she attended Delphi Union high school. Beyond that, all he could say about the girl was that she was a hellion.

“Maggie!” her mother exclaimed. “Harry is a sweet young man, who works hard and helps out around here. He's worth at least ten of your so-called friends.”

“He cuts the grass and does chores. He probably even knows how to wipe his ass after he takes a dump. Big frakkin' deal.”

Nancy stood and pointed at the door, “Get out! Go to your room, before I say something I'll

regret. Stay off the grid. Maybe do something crazy, like your homework for change.”

Maggie looked angry. Harry knew their “grid” was some kind of wired electronic network. They used to have some kind of wireless one, but there had been a war with some kind of robots called Cylons several decades ago, and many in the colonies were reluctant to go back.

“What about my bike? It's been impounded.” Maggie didn't seem to care that her mother had dismissed her.

A cold expression crossed the mother's face as she said, “For now my dear you can ride the bus to and from school. No rides home from your friends either. In fact, you're not allowed off the grounds without my say so. As for your bike, I recall the law says that if you don't claim it in thirty days, they put it up for auction. How about you show me your best behavior and we can go pick it up on day twenty-nine?”

Maggie stormed from the room and slammed the door so hard that Harry wondered if he should take a stroll down that hallway and cast a discreet *Reparo* or two.

The short brunette woman left in the room regarded him and sighed before saying, “I don't know how much of that you understood Harry, but I'm sorry you had to hear that. What she said wasn't very kind. Why don't you finish up and then go have fun.”

“Harry like fun,” he answered with a wave and a smile. Still feeling guilty for eavesdropping, Harry feigned a lack of comprehension and began pushing the mower back to the shed for some more fuel.

-x-x-x-x-x-x

Back in his bedroom, roughly the same size as Dudley's spare one he'd been *given* by his aunt and uncle. Glancing at a couple of news clippings about police finding an injured teenager and a dead woman in the Delphi Museum of the Colonies, Harry shook his head remembering Mrs. Edmondson reading it to him. The best theory the police had come up was the woman had lured him there as part of a cult and planned on sacrificing the boy to Hades, the god of the underworld. The teen was assaulted with a knife coated with a type of neurotoxin and is fortunate to have survived the attack. No relatives had come forward to claim the young man and medical professionals say the victim appears to have some kind of language disorder as a result of either the poison or his ordeal.

He supposed he did have a language disorder. That much was true.

Sirius Black's best bit of advice, “Always know your exit” didn't work here. There was no exit. He couldn't speak the language, could only understand it when he was using that translation charm, couldn't read or write. At the moment, his only option was to lay low and play dumb. Of course if Snape knew of his situation, he'd say Harry didn't have to “play.”

The act was a simple enough summary of his first couple of weeks on this world. The more

complex one had police trying to question him as a doctor stood by saying he had the language comprehension of a three year old.

Harry had taken this and run on the third time the detectives came around and managed to say the Colonial words for “bad” and “woman” while making a slashing gesture with his arm.

Two days later, they’d brought his clothes, a plastic bag with the “stick” he’d been clutching, and someone to take him to a place that could help him with his “brain damage.”

Luckily, his bottomless bag was still attached to his belt with a notice-me-not charm on it. Once they took him to the Delphi Convalescent Institute and he was alone, he put a Muggle repeller on the door and inventoried what he had to work with.

Thanks to his method of disabling death eaters and ministry personal, he didn't have to worry about running out of pointy sticks anytime soon. He had his two, Voldemort's, and fifteen others. His Firebolt was there along with the Nimbus 2001 Sirius had bought for himself, but only used three times before his death. There was Moody's old invisibility cloak, a small collection of potions he had with him and the ones he took from Carrows. Of course looking at Hufflepuff's cup, Harry knew his need for basic potions would be met for as long as he possessed it.

Books? He only had a few. The included his sixth and seventh year charms books, an Animagus tome that had already fulfilled its purpose, Gilderoy Lockhart's Tome of Everyday Household Enchantments (which Harry was certain had to have been ghost-written since it contained useful material), a book on Norse runic patterns meant for intermediate practitioners that Harry was about a third of the way through.

There was also an introductory tome into the Art of Arithmancy that Harry had found daunting even when he had the help of the diadem. He'd have to figure some of it out if he ever hoped to craft his own spells.

The diadem and the locket would have been terribly useful, along with a few dozen more spell books and a score of other things Harry thought of on a daily basis. Daily...Harry was grateful, he'd ended up on a planet with the same twenty-four hour clock as Earth. Gemenon rotated more slowly and their “day” was four hours longer.

Next, he had five issues of Quidditch Weekly, two copies of the Quibbler, and an issue of Teen Witch Weekly with his picture on the cover and a dismissive article about “Why Witches Love Bad Boys.” Sirius had picked up a dozen copies of it and threatened to engorge the cover and use it as wallpaper for his bedroom.

Harry picked up the last book. It was his photo album. It wouldn't help him learn a spell or anything like that, but it was one of the most important things he had left. There were a few pictures he'd added to all the ones Hagrid had gathered for him. He smiled when looking at the team picture from third year. Fred and George were messing with Angelina and Alicia. Katie Bell meanwhile, stared longingly at Oliver Wood,

Reaching further into the bag, Harry pulled out a Honeydukes bar, unwrapped it and broke off four squares. He didn't have much in the way of sweets left and had made a little ritual out of eating some when he felt down and washing it away with a butterbeer from Helga's extremely useful cup. Just two more complete bars of chocolate, three chocolate frogs, and six pieces of Drooble's. After that, another piece of Earth was gone. He wasn't sure what he would do when he ran out, but it might involve replacing the butterbeer with a glass of Firewhiskey.

Returning to his album, he looked at Hermione reading in the common room. She looked up smiled, and then went back to her reading. Thirty seconds later, she gave him an annoyed "Quit Staring at me" glare, so he moved on. There was a family picture of the Weasleys that had been taken just before the world cup, and a photo of him in the fourth year boy's dorm with Ron, Neville, Dean and Seamus hamming it up for Colin Creevy's camera before his name popped out of the goblet and everyone got all pissy with him.

Financially, Harry also had an odd assortment of coins - twenty-two galleons, five sickles, and nine knuts at last count. The gold might be worth a decent amount here and selling it was the first thing Harry would do once he wasn't a ward of the state.

Also, he had that cassette player that Sirius had bought and nine tapes, Queen, Genesis, The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, Eric Clapton, The Who, a German band called the Scorpions, and a pair of American bands, Journey and Kansas.

He took special care of these objects. They contained the only English words he might ever hear that didn't come from his mouth.

The last item in the bag was that dodgy Sneakoscope Ron gave him at the beginning of his second year. Up until recently, Harry had always thought it didn't work, but Dumbledore examined it and declared it to be in good working order. They theorized that in reality, it was probably picking up Peter all along.

He used it anytime he had something out of the bag and had saved him from trying out his memory charm on two occasions already.

-x-x-x-x-x-x

Once the Delphi Convalescent Institute lost interest in his case, or more importantly realized that no one was going to be paying the bill, they moved him to one of their nearby affiliates - Amanda's Open Arms. The facility was run by a kind woman named Nancy Edmondson. She had a pair of twin daughters away at college and a turbulent relationship with her youngest.

From what little Harry could gather, Amanda's Open Arms was founded years ago through donations by this Amanda woman. There was no picture of her or even a plaque describing her. Harry found this curious. In what few words he could put together, he asked the polite man, Mr. Kelso, who minded the front desk during the daytime, about that and he said the woman's last name was Graystone and people would rather not talk about her or her husband.

All Harry could do was file that bit of information away for future reference. After a couple of nights at the Arms, he used the secondhand invisibility cloak along with his broom to slip off the property and find someplace where he summoned a few Patroni, cast a couple of heavy duty cutting curses and generally used more than enough spells that if someone was looking for underage magic, or interested in protecting a statue of secrecy, they'd come looking.

Three hours passed before Harry concluded that no one was coming. If there was someone out there, they didn't care. He'd hoped that because the Veil was magical, that meant there were magical people still around. The young wizard was more concerned with the idea that no one was out there and he was completely on his own.

He didn't even have a portrait to talk to. Recalling a title of a book he read back in his Muggle school. It was called *Stranger in a Strange Land*. Somehow it seemed oddly appropriate.

-x-x-x-x-x-x

Fortunately, Harry had made himself handy. All those years around Privet drive doing yard work and all the assorted chores Uncle Vernon concocted were finally being put to good use.

The groundskeeper was an older dark skinned woman named Denise. She was originally from the Libran colony and had a prosthetic left arm. She looked skeptical at him the first time he'd pointed to a set of hedge trimmers and then at the unsightly collection of shrubbery bordering each side of the main driveway. Denise told him to wait there and went to get Mrs. Edmondson. The duo had a discussion (which Harry used the translation charm to listen in).

The ladies eventually decided to let Harry use the trimmers under strict supervision, so he set to work straightening up the landscaping up front. Removing the thick web of creeping vine that had invaded one side was hard work and he was sorely tempted to slip his wand out and use a few of the spells Professor Sprout had taught his Herbology class to speed things along.

Nancy Edmondson brought him a tall glass of lemonade. The ice cubes in it were made out of frozen lemonade as well. Maybe it was something in the soil or the differences between lemons from Earth, but they tasted sweeter.

It took two days to get the hedges out front into a presentable condition. Denise eagerly showed him how to use the Caprican equivalent of a push mower. It was segmented, computerized and had twin blades. Even with all that, it was surprisingly lightweight.

Delphi was much warmer than what Harry was used to. The climate bordered on the tropical and the mountains loomed high in the distance. It was the opposite of being in Scotland. Instead of constantly applying a warming charm, Harry's cooling charm now got all the work.

-x-x-x-x-x-x

Tilting Helga's cup to his mouth, he swallowed the wit sharpening potion. Both Sirius and Dumbledore would probably frown at this, but he wasn't making much headway with learning

how to communicate in Colonial. Their alphabet had all twenty-four of the Greek Letters, plus five more he'd never seen. The translation spell was a cheat and quite frankly he'd never been the most studious in his year, even after taking Hermione out of the equation. After two months of trying it on his own, he had precious little to show for it. Harry could barely speak to another person, he couldn't read anything more complicated than a picture book meant for toddlers. His writing was the worst of the three.

To make matters worse, he stopped attending Muggle schools when he turned eleven. From what he could tell, even if he had sat his A levels and done reasonably well in math and science, he'd be woefully unprepared for the material Maggie was skiving off at her high school. The kind of math, they were learning her probably wasn't taught until a Muggle reached a university back on Earth.

So, he started using the wit sharpening potion, but he remembered that he needed to go back over the material as soon as the effects began wearing off. Finally, he was starting to show improvement. Otherwise, it was unlikely Harry would be released on his own until he was thirty.

Instead of sitting on his bed and working on his basic reader workbook, he took it into the lounge. There were a few others there like the man from the room three doors down who had some form of periodic seizures. He was attended by one of his around-the-clock nurses. Some of the "lounge regulars" were playing this card game that Harry hadn't quite figured out yet.

Sitting in the corner, by herself was Maggie Edmonson. She had her grid box in her lap and a pair of virtual goggles on. Her box wasn't connected to the wall jack, so she had met the letter of her mother's demand while at the same time attempting to be defiant at the same time. Maggie was clearly trying to goad her mother into yelling at her in front of the residents.

"She just doesn't want to let it go," Harry thought.

Unsure why he was doing it, he walked over to her table and sat down, and started working on his pronunciation. Tapping the sentence on the computerized paper, it displayed a picture of a dog running very quickly across the page. Hermione would pee her pants if she saw something as thin as a sheet of paper that worked like a Muggle computer. It flashed occasionally a signal that his innate magic could still interfere with sensitive electronics.

Harry began working on the sentence, "The dog runs fast." Every time the audio sensors thought he got it right the animated dog would stop and chase its tail for a moment and then bark in happiness.

He read the name of the gamepak she had inserted into her gridbox. It took a full minute to translate each letter and he was distracted every few seconds she would lean one way or another.

"Wild Wild Racetrack"

Another thing that distracted him was he'd never seen Maggie Edmondson actually smile. Of course, she had complete control inside her made up world...her own private Room of

Requirement.

-X-X-X-X-X-X

It reminded Harry of a conversation between Ron and Hermione that happened shortly after Harry had shown them that secret room in the castle that could be anything a person wanted. Rather than go outside in the bad weather, Ron had turned it into a place where he and Harry could go flying in an attempt to cheer Harry up after his broom had been confiscated.

Granger sat on a comfortable bench, engrossed in a book, as the duo circled above.

“If I ever learn how, I think I'd build one of these for myself!”

“Well Ronald, I suggest you start studying more.”

Ron turned to Harry and said, *“You know that's her answer to everything, right?”*

“I heard that! You know why I heard that? Because I'm using a sound multiplying charm. How'd I know this charm, you ask? I read it in a book!”

“Really!” Ron yelled as loud as he could. Harry saw Hermione grimace and cover her ears. *“But you never know when you might be outsmarted by your own cleverness!”*

Hermione cancelled the charm and looked rather bent out of shape.

“Wasn't terribly nice,” Harry commented.

“She's using an eavesdropping charm. Fred and George showed it to me after our first year. You don't grow up living with all the barmy blokes in my family without picking up a few things.”

“Hermione does have a point, Ron. This thing probably took years to put together.”

“I know that! But sheesh, give a bloke a chance to dream for a minute before crushing it! Besides, this is bloody brilliant, but it's not real. I like real things. If everyone knew about this place, we'd never have to play a game in bad weather again. Where's the fun in that? Perfection gets old after a while. Take away the randomness like beating your opponent in the driving rain and you take away the appeal. Telling you opponent you can beat them as long as the weather's perfect and there's no wind just isn't the same as telling them that you can beat them anytime, anywhere.”

-X-X-X-X-X-X

Harry got that same impression about these grid boxes and the virtual world they linked to. It seemed like a nice escape, but was a poor substitute for the real thing.

Still, he noticed that Maggie was much prettier when she wasn't wearing a constant scowl.

With no further observations, he went back to his word pronunciation.

That lasted five minutes before she whipped off her glasses and glared at him. He didn't have a translation charm active, but gathered her words formed a less polite version of, "Do you mind?"

"Reading," Harry said and shrugged his shoulders. He hadn't been speaking very loudly and was fairly certain she was just looking for another confrontation.

Being a bit bored, Harry decided to yank her chain and give her one. The few other people his age at The Arms had serious mental problems and he couldn't talk to them.

"Go away," she said very slowly and made a shuffling off gesture. He got that easily enough.

Harry pointed to the door, grinned, and said, "Lounge. All welcome. Shhh! Reading. The dog runs fast."

The exasperated sound of disgust she made was worth every second. Hermione would be proud of him for standing up for "study time." Ron would be proud of him having a go at an ill-tempered bird. Either way, it was a win. If the spirits of the dead could follow him across the universe, Sirius was probably having a good laugh right now.

The girl gave him a suspicious look before standing up and saying, "Wait here."

Harry was tempted to move to a different table just to mess with her, but decided to follow her directive.

She came back two minutes later carrying a second set of glasses and plugged them into a receptacle in the little gray cube and handed them to him. She put her pair of glasses back on.

He closed his reader and slid the glasses onto his face. The weight of wearing glasses was oddly familiar considering he'd only recently had to stop wearing them. There was a disorienting sensation, partway between going into a Pensieve and using a Portkey.

The disturbance ended and Harry stood in front of a high tech motorcycle in the middle of an arena. A huge serpentine course, dotted with ramps, jumps over pits, and moving obstacles. The other rider looked vaguely like Maggie, but was a foot taller, with half her face covered in tattoos, and decked out in black leather.

Harry reasoned that it was easy to make yourself look different in the virtual world.

By contrast, Harry was still in the set of coveralls he currently wore and appeared exactly the same in the reflection from the chrome on the bike.

The amazon walked over to him and pointed at her now substantial chest, "Maggie."

"Harry," he said.

“I know,” she deadpanned. “Get on.”

For a moment he thought about Sirius Black's motorcycle and savored the nostalgia. His godfather had planned on retrieving it from Hagrid at some point. Unfortunately, that point never came. Hopefully, the goblins or the ministry hadn't taken it. Hagrid said he kept it hidden. Maybe it was in the forbidden forest.

“Go fast,” she said, pointing at one set of controls.

“Go slow,” she continued, showing him the brakes.

She placed her index finger on the red button in the center console and said, “Go really fast.”

He was quite impressed at the level of realism in this game. Old Dudders would scream bloody murder if he knew Harry was playing a game this cool. Harry planned to enjoy this.

She climbed onto hers and opened her throttles. He duplicated her motions. Instead of a series of lights, there were giant numbers counting down in the sky.

When the last number disappeared, Harry sped after Maggie. He was a little wobbly on it, but kept his cool. Other than the extra work with his hands and feet, it wasn't too terribly different from riding a broomstick.

Part of him smirked at the idea of taking Maggie for a broom ride in the real world just to see the look on her face.

Even so, it was refreshing to interact with someone other than the staff at Amanda's Open Arms. Harry had enjoyed the past couple of months. He wasn't the boy who lived here, but at the same time he wasn't really anybody here. He went to craft classes that were mildly entertaining and watched what passed for television here. When he could get away with it and no one protested, he'd re-watch the program with his translation charm active, so he could gauge his progress.

Pushing those thoughts aside, Harry pressed the red button which immediately increased his speed and concentrated on catching his opponent... “Ms. Wild, Wild Racetrack.”

The Next Lord of Kobol Offerings and Revelations

The Next Lord of Kobol

Chapter 8

Offerings and Revelations

(Delphi, Caprica – Ten years before the fall of the Twelve Colonies)

-x-x-x-x-x-x

"Mags, I heard you and Mom are fighting again," the slightly older and disappointed voice on the other end of the receiver said.

"I don't need this right now, Kel," Maggie answered her older sister, Kelsey Edmondson. "Mom put you up to this didn't she?"

"No. I called her the last night and had to pry your run in with the police out of her."

Maggie picked up a photo of her older twin sisters, taken at their high school graduation and frowned. "So you're trying to broker a peace agreement, Sis? You'd have better luck getting the toasters to the table."

Her sister huffed at the Cylon armistice reference and said, "At least when the Cylons said they were going to stop fighting, they meant it, Maggie. How many times are we going to have this conversation?"

Maggie Edmondson knew her life was far from perfect. She missed the pleasant weather on Virgon. Even after being in the heat and humidity of Delphi for three years, she still wanted to go back. It hadn't been so bad when Kelsey and Sue were around, but with her older twin sisters in college, her once massive family was down to just Maggie and her mother.

Without anyone else around to act as a buffer, their relationship had suffered and they argued all the time. "Rough patches" were now commonplace and things weren't likely to change in the near future.

"Funny Kel," she said. "She just gets me so frustrated."

"Mom uses those exact same words talking about you."

The twins took after their deceased biological father, Paul. For better or worse, Maggie was much closer in both looks and temperament to her mother. It was also a likely reason for the tremendous sources of friction between them.

"Want me to use a few words she wouldn't?"

"Maggie," Kelsey said with a pleading tone. "How is getting picked up by the police helping things? I'm not asking for a miracle here. Maybe you should try praying to Hestia more often for a little help around home and hearth?"

"Since when is this place a home? I live at a Gods damned mental facility! Besides, aren't you the one who always says I should pray to Athena?"

"Well, I've given up on you and wisdom, Maggie. Just give Mom a break now and then. She might actually ease up on you if you can avoid driving her up the walls. Can you at least try that for me?"

"I suppose," Maggie relented. Kel always seemed to get her way. She decided to change the subject before she agreed to something else. "How goes the hunt for a boyfriend?"

"I can barely keep up with my classwork, much less date. You wouldn't believe how tough things are. Still, I've got a few prospects on my DRADIS. Sue's doing much better in that department. Her boyfriend is taking her to see The Legion next time they come to town and play the Bucs. Are you still with Cyrus?"

"Off and on," Maggie answered. "I know you don't like him, but he's matured since you've been at college. Plus, the pickings are pretty slim at Delphi Union."

"If he's matured, like you say, I suppose he wasn't part of your group tearing up the trails on your motorcycles?"

Maggie grimaced, realizing she walked right into that one. "He wasn't caught," she protested.

"Oh that's a sure sign of maturity. Based on what I have heard, he either threw you to the wolves or you did it on your own knowing the Chief of Police wouldn't punish you since he's got a thing for Mom. The only other explanation is you're slipping Maggie and aren't nearly as good as I remember."

When Maggie didn't immediately reply her sister must have taken that as vindication and said, "I thought so. Maggie, I want you to have fun. Everyone, including Mom, wants you to be happy, but getting into serious trouble for a boy you're not even that in to won't end well. Listen, I'll try and call in a couple of days, but I've got a couple of nasty tests coming my way, so at least think about what I said."

"I will. Tell Sue I said hi."

"I will. Bye!"

Hanging up, Maggie sat at her desk and tried to sort out her life. She stared at the picture of her standing with eight other kids at an amusement park on Virgon. There was a big grin on her face and her brother Shane stood behind her with his hands open like he was about to pounce.

Since the separation went down, she'd only heard from Shane in a couple of letters on her birthdays. Technically, he wasn't really her brother anymore.

Kelsey had been right. She could've gotten away, but let herself get caught because she knew that she'd get off with a slap on the wrist. Cyrus and John were the ones who'd been organizing the races. The two even had a little gambling ring going on.

Sighing at the knowledge her sister was right and Cyrus was just a petty thug who was just bringing her down, Maggie picked up her gridbox and held it up for inspection.

Truth be told, the only "harmless fun" she'd had recently was playing her racing game with that brain damaged kid, Harry.

Cyrus and the others were more into the military games recently like Goldkiller, where you could play a Colonial Marine in a boarding party on a Cylon basestar. The person who makes it through the waves of toasters and the traps without being kicked out of the game and kills the Gold Centurion commanding the ship is the winner. Cyrus was borderline obsessed and had almost managed it two times, but had been eliminated by other players trying to be the sole winner in each case.

She enjoyed racing and flying games. Maggie loved speed and had been suitably shocked when the green eyed teen passed her during the third race. She caught him and won, but she got the impression Harry understood considerably more than everyone gave him credit for.

It made her wonder about him and, if nothing else, Maggie liked a good mystery. Maybe she'd try a few other games with him and see just how cunning he was.

-X-X-X-X-X-X

Three days later, as she approached Harry's door, Maggie felt the strange urge to leave the boy alone and go somewhere else. She started to turn, but saw her mom in the passageway. Her desire to avoid her mom was greater than the odd sense that Harry should be left alone.

She knocked on the door and waited a few seconds before opening it and sticking her head in. "Residents" weren't allowed locks on their doors. Whatever Harry was doing, he managed to hide it from her, but did a poor job of covering the fact that he was hiding something.

"At least he's not pulling his pants up in a hurry," she thought.

"Hi," he said.

"Do you want to play?" She asked and held up the gridbox along with the two sets glasses.

He grinned and nodded. "I win this time."

"New game," she said and kicked herself for starting to talk in monosyllables. "We're playing as a team."

He fumbled over the word team and seemed frustrated. She said, "Don't worry, I'll show you."

"Lounge?"

"We can play here, Harry."

Maggie caught the uncomfortable look and worried that he was drawing pictures of them holding hands or something.

"Nevermind," she said and hoped to save them both from embarrassment. "Let's go to the lounge."

On a physical basis, he had this cute and harmless air about him. The eyes were a big selling point and he was thin and wiry.

She mused that if it wasn't for the brain damage, she could set him up with her friend Dianna, who liked her boys cute and silent.

"I'll go to the lounge and wait for you," she said, giving him a chance to finish his mystery task.

"Okay Maggie," he answered.

Her mom stopped her in the hallway. The woman also had a confused look on her face like she was about to leave. "Maggie, what are you doing in this wing?"

"If you must know, I asked Harry if he wanted to play a game on my gridbox."

"You're not taking him on the grid are you?"

"Gods no! We're playing an offline game. Say, have you noticed he's really smart? But it's like he's never been on the grid before. Harry keeps using his own appearance for an avatar, so he has no clue about security. How come he can barely talk?"

Her mother sighed and said, "You know I can't discuss a patient, even with you. I'm glad you're not taking him into that digital cesspool. What game have you recruited him for?"

"He's going to be my tail gunner in Cylon Strike."

"Well I suppose senseless violence is a step up from what the rest of the grid has to offer. I don't suppose you could just take him to a virtual amusement park or something less explosive?"

"I could, but this game flopped because most of the action is in flying the Raptor. The flight sim part of it is top notch, but the gunnery part gets dull and repetitive. I can never get anyone to play long enough to finish. Of course, we could always go down to the station and get my bike."

"This is a good start Maggie. But show me it's more than an act. Either way, I appreciate the effort you're making."

As her mother walked off and smiled at Harry coming up the hallway, it occurred to Maggie that it was the first cordial conversation she'd had with her sole remaining parent in days.

-X-X-X-X-X-X

Harry listened as the digital version of Maggie showed him the controls for this futuristic turret. She tried to get him to change how he looked in this electronic world, but he was more interested in playing the game.

It was here that Harry had an epiphany...blowing up things was a smashing good time! He learned very quickly to control his rate of fire. Short bursts conserved ammo. They died three times because he'd run dry before Maggie could maneuver over one of the floating orbs that restocked his twin cannon's ammo bays and her forward guns.

Sure, he should be doing something else right now. Looking for a way back to Earth, studying his magic, learning how to read and write...there was probably a dozen things more important than this.

Still, if they lost their last life in this game, they'd have to start all the way back at the beginning and that was pretty important too. The spirits of his parents had wanted him to have some fun, so he decided that all work and no play does indeed make Harry a dull boy.

The flat disc shape of the Cylon raiders made them difficult to hit, but he was getting the hang of it. They typically came in flights of three. Walking his fire in on the left side of the next wave, forced it a little closer to the centerline raider and allowed Harry to sweep his barrage across both of them in the confined space, removing two opponents. The third shifted and spun on its axis, becoming perpendicular and much more difficult to hit.

His panel flashed red and not from low ammo. A cylindrical object appeared in the screen and the Caprican word for lock appeared. Harry tried to remember what Maggie said to do and pushed the yellow button twice. It fired something that was supposed to get rid of the approaching missile.

It didn't.

Harry cut loose with the guns and managed to detonate the missile and the resulting eruption of metal was enough to get rid of the last raider. Large red letters flashed in the sky. Harry's best translation was that the level was complete.

The fact that the Raptor was no longer making pitched hairpin turns said that the program had

taken over and they were going to land somewhere. Maggie was laughing and thumping the armrest on her chair with a fist as Harry looked over his shoulder at her and caught his first glimpse, albeit virtual, of a Colonial Battlestar. The name on the side translated as something close, but not quite, to Atlantis.

Instinctively he whistled, rather impressed with the size of the thing and knowing that these objects existed in real life. It bristled with guns and was surrounded by the smaller attack craft called Vipers and even a few smaller ships escorting it.

His pilot was excited to finish this level. It sounded like it was the first time she'd ever done so.

Even as he played, a nagging thought bothered Harry. *"Maggie almost caught me with my books and wand. I must have been sloppy when I cast the Muggle repeller. It could just be that her will is strong enough to overcome the effects. The other option is that maybe my magic is getting weaker."*

The notion worried him. Harry hadn't gone out casting in over a week and he doubted there were any organized magical people on this planet at all.

"Then again, the Muggle repeller is tricky. The first few times I cast it, people wouldn't go down the hallway. I guess I just cut back on it too much."

Mostly satisfied, he turned his attention to the next group of disk shaped Cylon raiders. Harry made a quick promise to sneak out tonight to practice some spells and gather some rocks to work on his rune carvings.

The waves were coming quicker and his ammo bays emptied. Looking over his shoulder, he said, "I'm out."

Maggie's hands worked the controls frantically as she navigated through an asteroid field at top speed. When an ammunition icon flashed outside, she twisted the ship and angled for it.

A siren wailed and the virtual Raptor shook, indicating they'd been hit. Glancing back out his turret, it hadn't been a Cylon that got them, her turn had been too tight and she'd clipped a piece of floating rock.

Maggie muttered a few choice words and motioned for Harry before removing her glasses.

Slightly sad that the game was over, he followed suit and returned to the lounge area at Amanda's Open Arms.

His pilot continued her tirade and he could only catch every fourth or fifth word. Finally, he reached under the table and cast the translation charm wandlessly.

"...on such a roll and then I go and pull such a frakkin' rookie maneuver. If we keep it up maybe we'll make it to the end of the game at Kobol."

Harry's eyes bulged when she mentioned that place and it caught the girl's attention.

"Is something wrong, Harry?" she asked. Maggie liked this berry flavored gum. Sometimes between her constant monologue and the chewing, it appeared that her mouth never actually stopped moving.

"What is Kobol?"

"You don't remember?"

He shook his head and Maggie looked thoughtful for a minute. Harry knew she was probably trying to think of a simple way to explain this to him.

"Kobol is...Kobol is where we all came from. The Twelve Colonies left Kobol and came here."

"Where is Kobol?" he asked, suddenly very interested in this conversation.

"No one knows. Some people think it's just a legend...I mean made up."

"Athena's...crypt...no tomb?"

"So you do remember something!" she said, quite pleased. "Yes, the Goddess Athena died on Kobol and her tomb is there. C'mon."

She held out her hand and he took it, unsure of what the girl intended. Maggie pulled him down the hallway to the chapel. During his stay here, Harry noticed most staff and many of the more coherent patients stopped by the chapel during the day. A bus would come in the mornings and take others to a nearby temple.

From what he gathered, the Colonials were a very religious people and not in the "go once a week to catch up on gossip" type like his Aunt.

The chapel had twelve statues, one for each of the gods and goddesses. In front of each one, there was a bowl for offerings.

He looked in each of the bowls as they passed. Some had a bag of grain next to them.

An older man with a slight hunch and a fake leg approached. Harry saw Maggie incline her head respectfully. The attending priest's name was Brother Nathan Furillo. Harry knew he was only here for two hours around the midday meal and went to other chapels during the day. He was a pleasant and somewhat jovial man with a perpetual smile on his wrinkled face.

The gray haired priest was the second person from that generation working at this facility using an artificial limb and Harry had seen three others who were patients. It was a reminder that the war with the Cylons had left a long lasting mark.

"Who do you seek guidance from today?"

Maggie answered, "We wish to make offerings and ask for guidance from Athena -- and Hestia, Brother." Harry noted the slight pause before she named the second goddess.

"Very good," the holy man said and took a pair of ornate scissors from a cloth covered table. He wiped them with a smaller piece of cloth and presented them to her. Maggie led Harry to the statue of Athena. It didn't look very much like the woman he saw when he'd used the stone, but the symbol on her amulet was exactly the same.

That bothered Harry quite a bit.

"Come on, Harry. Ever since we came to Caprica, we've been devoted to Athena. Do you remember who you used to pray to?"

"No," Harry said. From what he gathered to this point, people who believed in one God were viewed as either monsters or deviants. He'd never been especially religious growing up, so his answer wasn't really a lie.

Maggie used the scissors and snipped a few hairs from the end of her ponytail before dropping them into the bowl. She bowed her head in silence for about ten seconds and then turned to him holding out the scissors.

Taking them, Harry snipped a couple of strands from the top of his unruly head of hair and deposited them. He mimicked her prayer motion and felt quite awkward.

Maggie took the scissors back to the priest and thanked him. She took Harry over to the Goddess Hestia and took a pinch of grain from the sack and let it fall into the bowl. While she murmured her prayers, Harry looked at the statue of the long haired nude goddess in a seductive pose next to Hestia and figured it must be Aphrodite.

The priest cleared his throat and that caused Maggie to look up and Harry to look over.

The man said, "He lingers too long. It appears he wants to make an offering. Best not to offend the goddess."

The short girl cocked her head and placed one arm on her hip. Her demeanor reminded him of an amused and irritated Ginny Weasley, when dealing with the antics of Dean Thomas.

"Does he now?"

"I do believe so," Brother Furillo said and chuckled.

Harry wasn't sure why he suddenly felt so embarrassed. "I don't...know...I..."

"Sure you don't," Maggie chided. "I get the feeling you know exactly what you're doing."

He didn't, but noticed there was nothing in the offering bowl in front of Aphrodite and no sack of grain, dirt, or anything else. Harry couldn't look more confused if he tried.

"Fine," Maggie said. "I consider myself duped. Let's not make this a habit. I do have a boyfriend already. Close your eyes."

He did as she asked and felt her lean up and kissed him lightly on the lips. It lacked the tears of Cho Chang and the whole soul sucking experience from the Joe the Dementor, so it was a considerable upgrade. The slightest hint of that berry flavored gum lingered on his lips and he was certain he probably looked every bit like the idiot he felt like.

She broke away and whispered, "You need to work on that."

Harry flushed and figured if certain ghosts were observing his life right now, they'd be laughing their collective arses off.

Fighting the burning on his cheeks, he made a quick offering to the goddess Hestia, while thinking more about the witch he'd known by that name and hoping she'd made it out of the Ministry safely.

As they walked out of the chapel, Harry looked over his shoulder at the statue of Athena. Despite his rush of teenage embarrassment, he frowned recalling the spirit's warning about the Scylla and that something was waiting for him in her tomb on Kobol.

It didn't take much to equate the words Scylla and Cylon. The revelation was extremely troubling.

He was barely listening to Maggie, teasing him. Instead, he remembered what Athena had said to him when he replied that he didn't know what one was.

"Know them you shall."

If he hadn't already planned on it, Harry was definitely going out tonight to brush up on his spells.

The Next Lord of Kobol An Unexpected Reunion

The Next Lord of Kobol

Chapter 9

An Unexpected Reunion

(Approximately five months after Harry's arrival at Delphi and roughly nine and one half years before the fall of the Twelve Colonies)

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The cafeteria at Delphi Union was very clique oriented. Most groups staked out their territory and used the "non-affiliated students" as a buffer between them and any rivals. Maggie's racing group always took the tables in the left corner, farthest away from the lunch line.

Maggie set her tray down and plopped into her molded plastic chair. "You ever think the frakkin genius who designed these chairs had no idea what a human body looks like?"

"You're in a mood today, Marge," Dianna said. "I thought you'd be happier being out from under your mom's thumb. Unless you already frakked it up again."

The only place she still had to suffer through being called Maggie was where they lived. Marge had a mature sound to it.

"No, it's been three weeks since I got my bike back and I haven't lost a single privilege yet. What's the over and under on me, Cy?"

Her boyfriend smiled and patted her knee. "Nobody has you lasting until the end of Thargelion."

As everyone at the table laughed, she said, "And you folks are supposed to be my friends?"

"...who know you best," added John. "I've noticed you're doing better in class. Was it that bad at your mom's that it drove you to study?"

Maggie shrugged, "It wasn't that bad, but I'd like to avoid repeating it. I needed to get my grades up for college next year."

She felt a twinge of guilt about never mentioning Harry to her friends, but hanging out and playing games with a mental patient wasn't exactly something they'd approve of.

"Gods! Cy would take a swing at Harry just for that little stunt in the chapel in front of Aphrodite," she thought.

Harry hadn't come back to the chapel with her since then and she worried that she might have taken her teasing a bit too far. She asked Brother Furillo, who said that Harry had come back once or twice on his own and made an offering to Athena.

Maggie also felt guilty that she'd barely spent any time with Harry, since her punishment ended. He seemed to understand and, if she were being honest with herself, was a little distant himself after that first visit to the chapel.

She'd be lying if she said it didn't bother her a little.

When her mother wouldn't answer questions about Harry and how he came to be there, she'd went to the source. He let her see the newspaper clipping about being found at the museum. The poison affecting his brain explained a good deal of why he struggled to say something and couldn't remember anything, but could be shown how to do things. She pitied him. He was intelligent, but unable to really interact.

The fact that he'd also killed the woman who had been trying to sacrifice him in self-defense also made her wary. Try as she might, she couldn't picture Harry Potter, with his grin, child-like wonderment, and green eyes, in a life or death struggle.

Put simply, the boy just didn't have what it took to be a badass.

"Are you still with us Marge? Your mind took a FTL jump, but left your body behind."

She shook the distractions out of her head and said, "So, what are we talking about?"

"We're deciding if we want to go to Rachel's party for the seventh day?"

The beginning of a new month brought numerous parties dedicated to the birthdays of the Gods. With Apollo being the patron deity of Caprica, the seventh day after the start of the month was always the largest festival.

"She only invited us to be polite. She doesn't really want us there," John added.

Cy gave a wicked smile, "Which is why it would be impolite to not go."

Somehow, Maggie knew it wouldn't end well, but just the same she tipped her plastic drink cup to the rest and joined in the group saying, "So say we all."

-x-x-x-x-x-x

Rune carvings were the basic building blocks of enchanting, and warding. After his rushed introduction to the subject, Harry couldn't understand why it wasn't mandatory at Hogwarts. The runic scheme on his Sneakoscope was so tiny that he needed a magnifying glass to see it.

Unfortunately, that dodgy scope was becoming less and less effective. Harry couldn't be sure whether it was just the item's fault or that he was becoming used to the staff here and no longer saw them as a threat. It reinforced something a witch named Luna Lovegood said to him a few days before he abandoned Hogwarts.

"Magic is as fickle as we are, Harry. It understands our intent...sometimes better than we do."

Turning his attention back to the scope and the stones in front of him, he imagined that the enchanter had engorged the object while they worked on it. At the moment, he was trying to craft a set of repelling wards for a more permanent solution to his privacy. His spellwork continued to produce mixed results. Ideally, he hoped that they would move him at some point to the room at the end of the hallway.

With the rune stones, he'd be able to adjust their position and get a better handle on his situation.

His base material was a soft rock similar to soapstone. He'd also picked up a few pieces of igneous rock. Both were easy to polish and work with, but not very durable.

"Ironic though," he thought. "Maggie hasn't come knocking in a couple of weeks. I should've never let her see that news article! The fact I was found with a dead body probably creeped her out."

The other possibility was that Maggie held that kiss in the chapel against him, but he knew less about girls than he did Colonial Standard or Arithmancy for that matter. His grasp of runes was very good, but the other subjects still confused him.

No one would ever confuse him with Hermione. That much was certain.

Still, he needed to be careful. The facility didn't like sharp tools in the hands of their residents and he couldn't afford having them taken away, or performing a memory charm on the unlucky nurse or person who walked in on him.

The fears Harry had about weakening magic were unfounded. He was as strong as ever. Using Moody's old cloak and a bit of apparition, Harry didn't have any problems slipping out at night. Some wandwork and Lockhart's tome of household spells allowed him to treat the hedges with a weed inhibitor charm. Though he didn't mind yard work, he wasn't above cutting corners.

Denise, the groundskeeper, really wasn't any good despite her efforts, but Harry got the impression that she couldn't be fired because of being a veteran.

A couple of times, Maggie had left her gridbox with him, but her mom and the speech therapist he saw every third or fourth day put a stop to that. Instead, since he was showing progress they gave him more exercises to do and used "grid time" as a carrot to encourage better performance.

He looked at the calendar and still couldn't make that much sense of it. They had twelve thirty day months which seemed to start with the "lunar" cycle, for lack of a better word, of Gemenon.

All he could figure out was that the months didn't really include weekends. Instead the first eight days of each new month were set aside for festivals to the various Gods. Try as he might, it just didn't match up with what he was used to.

Renewing the cushioning charm on his bed, he checked over his work and activated the rune stones. Using a sticking charm, followed by a notice-me-not charm, Harry attached the weakest of the three stones to the back of his door. He arranged the two more powerful runes closer to his bed and on the small dresser where he sometimes hid his beaded bag.

Satisfied, the wizard considered his next project and flipped through Lockhart's book to the size expansion charms. His plan was to increase the size of the space under his wastebasket and make it secret. With that and a switching spell, he could hide anything on his bed as quickly as he could cast the spell.

Glancing at the clock, Harry sighed, "I've been at this for hours. I think it's time to take a break and see what Helga's cup is going to give me tonight. He continued to stockpile medicinal potions and had become quite adept at conjuring vials and rubber seals.

He stuck with a simple blood replenisher and, after etching the date on the glass, Harry added it to the cushioned box along with the dozens of others.

Placing the box back into the beaded bag, he thought about what he'd like to drink. Usually, it was a glass of butterbeer, pumpkin or other juices, and even an occasional Coke or Pepsi.

"I need a change of pace," he said aloud and raised the cup. "Let's see, if I've been keeping track of the dates correctly, it should be the middle of May back at the castle. Everyone's in a panic over exams. A tall glass of fire whiskey in honor of all my suffering schoolmates! To Hogwarts!"

Harry coughed it down in a couple of mammoth gulps and felt the rush of the alcohol come into his system. Magical liquor was potent, especially for someone described by one Sirius Black as a lightweight. He managed to get the cup back into the bag and get the bag into its hiding place before the room started to spin.

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"Master Harry Potter is needing to wake up!"

The gentle pat on Harry's arm that was progressively turning into a frantic tug. Forcing his eyes open was a task of Herculean proportions.

"What time is it?"

"Dobby does not know what time it is or even where he is. Dobby has come to help his master, the great Harry Potter."

What would normally take an instant to shake Harry out of his funk instead required a full minute before the enormity of what was happening hit him in the face. Something was off and Harry was confused until he remembered the fire whiskey.

“If it is going to make me have hallucinations, I'm never touching that stuff again!”

Even so, his imagination was doing a credible job of making Dobby seem real. Harry reached out to touch the elf's arm, but missed and ended up touching Dobby on the side of his head. The hallucination felt remarkably real.

“Is Master Harry Potter in need of assistance?” The elf asked with an uncertain expression on his face.

Letting his eyes wander the room, Harry make sure that this was still his room at the Open Arms in Delphi on the planet Caprica. Reaching under his pillow, he grasped the wand he had there and fumbled his way through a sobering charm. From what his Godfather told him, considerable research went into perfecting a nearly foolproof and easy to cast method of countering the effects of alcohol.

Even so, Harry almost flubbed it.

As his spell took hold, the elf in front of him did not disappear.

“Dobby?” Harry asked, not daring to believe his eyes.

“Harry Potter recognizes his elf!” Dobby squealed.

“Quiet Dobby!” Harry hissed, realizing how much noise the two of them were making. A proximity ward, only visible to the caster, glowed and that meant someone was coming to check on them.

“Dobby, hide and make certain you aren't seen,” he said and shoved his wand inside the pillowcase.

Seconds later the door opened and Nurse Gage poked his head in the room. “Is everything okay, Harry?”

“Sorry,” he said switching to Colonial. “Bad dream.”

“Okay,” the man said. “Keep it down and go back to sleep.”

Harry was pleased that the man did not advance any further than the doorway. It gave him hope that his Muggle repelling ward was working as he thought it would.

“Goodnight,” Harry said and tried to look innocent.

The nurse nodded and pulled the door shut. Looking over at the dresser Dobby crouched behind,

Harry held up his hand to indicate that the elf should stay where he was for the moment until the proximity spell's slight glow faded from view.

He retrieved his wand and cast a privacy spell before motioning the smallish creature over and patting the bed.

"How did you get here?" Harry asked, still wondering if he should pinch himself.

"The great Albus Dumbledore sends Dobby through the magic arch to bring his master home!"

The elf snapped his fingers and a letter appeared. "Great Dumbledore could not send message by owl, so he sends Dobby."

Harry took the letter and opened it, eager to see what his headmaster was planning.

My dear Harry,

I am unsure in what state this letter will find you. Only a few days ago did I dare use the stone and attempt to call upon your spirit. I cannot properly express my joy at discovering the minor detail that you have not shuffled off the mortal coil. When I questioned your parents and Godfather, they knew you were alive but could not tell me your current location. Madame Lestrangle's spirit was there in the afterlife, but refused my call.

To that end, I have sent a couple of items in an effort to bring you home. The first is a charmed mirror which Mr. Black's spirit assured me you are familiar with the operation. I first attempted to send a Patronus through, but it would not go into the veil. Strangely, my dear Fawkes also refuses to make the journey. The second item is package of lemon drops, which is, in fact, a Portkey. It will activate when you say Fleur Delacour. If fortune favors us, it should whisk you away to her family's estate in Southern France.

Should neither of these two devices work, I have included the portrait of Phineas Black. He too was not excited about the prospects of undertaking this journey, however unlike my familiar; he did not have a choice, unless he wished to be turned over to the goblins or the ministry as a Black family possession. It is my hope that he will be able to circumvent the magic which deflects my efforts to retrieve you.

Unfortunately my time in England is quite short and I must concede that your skepticism of my plan concerning the defeat of Tom Riddle was quite justified. Lucius Malfoy and his ilk released Fiendfyre at the entrance to the veil chamber and though many of the Order were able to escape when the wards fell, a large number of Ministry employees lost their lives. In that vacuum and during the extended period of time I spent as recovering from my own injuries, Lucius consolidated his control of the country and perpetuated the lie that we were responsible for that slaughter. For their safety, I have relocated the remaining Order members. We appear to have won the battle, but in a sense, lost the war.

Sadly, I must ask that you attempt to return. My magic is greatly diminished and for reasons you

and I both discussed, the elder wand yet serves me, but no longer calls me its master. Part of me hopes you are both safe and happy at your present location and it is only with the utmost reluctance that I make this request. Do not underestimate your importance as a symbol to our people. Assuming you can return, you will become a rallying point for those who see the shackles encircling our society.

Alas, if you cannot rejoin us, I will soldier on to the best of my abilities and if no contact from you is made within a month's time, I will ask your other faithful house elf to join you on the other side of the veil.

Sincerely,

Albus Dumbledore

Upon finishing the letter, Harry used a switching spell to change out of the shorts and T shirt he wore to bed.

Arranging the pillows like he was under the covers, Harry cast an illusion to augment it. Next, he expanded the field of his privacy ward and packed what few items he owned and pulled out the loaner invisibility cloak.

He paused and thought about writing Maggie a goodbye note, but figured he didn't know what he could really say and that it would take too long anyway.

Taking one last look around, the only thing Harry regretted was not having a gridbox of his own. Even so, the computerized paper was very impressive.

"Dobby, get under the cloak with me and take me back to the place where the veil let you out."

With the familiar sensation of house elf travel, Harry disappeared from room twenty-six of Amanda's Open Arms.

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Last time he was here. Harry didn't have much of an opportunity to see the sights at the Delphi Museum of the Colonies. This time he wasn't here for that purpose either.

"Maybe, I'll come back," Harry said. If his interpretation of Athena's words was correct, he might need to. For now, getting home was all that mattered.

Pulling out the small charmed mirror, Harry stepped in front of the arch and said, "Albus Dumbledore."

After a minute, nothing happened. Harry tried again and fear that he wouldn't be able to return began to gnaw at the pit of his stomach. Withdrawing the candy package Portkey from his pocket, he held out his hand to Dobby and said, "Fleur Delacour."

There was no tugging at the naval sensation. The object didn't even vibrate. It was just like any other Portkey he'd tried to make since he arrived on Caprica. Apparition didn't work either and just left him standing in the tiny area between the arch and the wall. Harry waved his wand across it and detected the enchantment was still there, but the magic contained within did not know where to take them. Plucking a leaf from some kind of fern, Harry tried to make one last Portkey. To keep things simple, he visualized the platform on the other side of the veil back in the Department of Mysteries.

It failed as well and Harry's hopes began to plummet back to the earth...actually, he couldn't even say that.

"Dobby," he asked. "Is there any chance you can transport us back to the other side of the veil?"

The determined looking elf said, "Dobby will not fail his master."

The young Wizard could actually feel the strain on the elf's magic. When perhaps ten seconds had elapsed, Harry knew this wasn't going to work either. That's when he saw a trickle of blood coming from the elf's nose.

"Dobby, stop."

"No! The great and wise Harry Potter must return to his home!" The elf shouted through grunts of pain.

"Stop it at once, Dobby," Harry said hating that he had to use the "master's voice."

His friend and servant complied and collapsed to the floor. Scooping the elf up, Harry asked in a worried tone, "Are you okay?"

"Dobby just needs to rest a moment, Harry Potter."

"Take your time. Can I have the painting now? We can still try it," Harry said, but there was little hope in his voice. The ability for paintings to travel from one frame to the other just didn't seem likely to work since everything else so far failed.

Dobby removed the frame from the pocket on his tunic and handed it to him. Harry prepared to be berated by the foul tempered magical shade of the least liked Hogwarts Headmaster in recent history.

The portrait was that of a chair with no one sitting in it. Harry tapped on the frame with his wand, hoping to summon the wizard, but nothing happened. Apparently, the magic of the painting was also no match for the impossible distance separating Harry from Earth.

Seeing the empty frame made Harry miserable. The letdown, on some level, was just as bad as the stares and the whispers at Hogwarts he'd endured during his final months there. Dumbledore had made a good effort, but it had fallen woefully short. There'd be another attempt, but Harry doubted that even magic had a solution to his dilemma.

Still covered by the invisibility cloak, Harry sat down on the very same bench he'd used after killing Bellatrix Lestrange and cradled the elf in his lap like a toddler. He fought back the urge to cry or scream. It didn't serve any purpose, but it did leave him feeling empty and alone...well not quite alone.

"Is Harry Potter not able to go home to England?" the elf asked with a tired and weak sounding voice.

"Looks that way, Dobby."

"Dobby is sad for Harry Potter, but happy that Dobby is with his master once more and knows that Winky will come soon. He feels like he should punish himself, but knows that Greatest Master of All, Harry Potter would not want this."

As bleak as things looked, Dobby's statement gave Harry some small measure of hope. Dumbledore knew he wasn't dead. The two veils combined to make a one way door between worlds.

"You're right. I don't want you to punish yourself ever," Harry answered. "Dobby, have you ever heard of another object like the veil in the Department of Mysteries?"

"Dobby has not."

"But maybe the people at this museum have. I'm guessing that there's another portal that can take us back. We just have to find it. Let's go back and get some rest. I'll finally get to see what this place looks like in the daylight. Hang on, I'll apparate us back to my room. No matter what, I'm happy to see you, Dobby."

His words seemed to cheer the elf up, even if it didn't do much for him.

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"Hey! I'm talking to you Edmondson."

Maggie was sitting on the edge of the fountain in the school courtyard fumbling through her binder trying to find the assignment she needed to complete before the afternoon class. She'd been hung over for most of yesterday and missed the festival for Poseidon, sleeping it off and ignoring her schoolwork.

Looking up, she saw Rachel Talbot in all her fury. "What do you want?"

"That vase. The one you broke at my house was worth two hundred cubits. I'd like to know when I'll be getting payment."

"I'm sorry, but I don't remember breaking anything."

This was a factual statement.

“Maybe if you didn’t get shitfaced, you would.”

Unfortunately, this was also true, as the headache she had the following morning proved.

“Do you have a recording of me doing this? Even a still picture?”

Maggie knew the vid system was disabled and the unspoken rule of unsupervised parties was “no pictures.”

“Just pay up, you dirty Virgon lowlife,” They were starting to attract attention.

Pasting an innocent look on her face, she said, “When you put it so nicely...no. Wait, let me reconsider...oh sorry. The answer is still no.”

“Don’t frak with me, offworld trash,” Rachel hissed and got real close, trying to intimidate her. Maggie sized the girl up. She was much taller and a runner, but she was also kind of prissy. On the other hand, Maggie and her two sisters grew up in a group family where the other five children were all boys.

Standing up, Maggie said, “Sorry, you’re not my type. Besides if the rumors are true, I’d have to update my shots when we were done.”

Several in the crowd let out low whistles and edged closer sensing a fight.

“You should talk, little miss biker girl. From what I hear, you’re a skanky v-tramp who won’t dare try anything in the real world. What’s wrong? Know you won’t measure up or something? Why don’t you go slip on your glasses and let Cyrus blow binary code all over your face. You Virgons are all talk and no action.”

That struck a raw nerve, but Maggie didn’t give in to the urge to beat the girl into the ground.

“Rachel knows I’m not going to pay. She’s trying to goad me into throwing the first punch.”

“Whatever you say, Rachel. I’m proud to be from Virgon and not some jungle animal in heat like you. It’s a good thing you have legs Talbot, otherwise they’d be following you around with a mop and a bucket cleaning up your slime trail.”

Maggie was still mentally patting herself on the back for her insult when Rachel’s hand slapped her across her cheek hard enough to make her see stars.

The crowd probably expected a full on catfight with hair pulling. Maggie Edmondson grew up in a group family with five brothers. She fought like a boy. Bringing her hands up as a distraction, she kicked Talbot in the shin as hard as she could and Rachel screamed in pain. Grabbing the off balance girl, Maggie pull and spun her opponent into the fountain.

Looking down at the sputtering and infuriated girl she said, “If you’re the best Caprica offers, I’m not impressed.”

The Next Lord of Kobol Culture Shock

The Next Lord of Kobol

Chapter 10 – Culture Shock

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"Are you feeling better, Dobby?" Harry asked as he watched the elf gnaw on a couple of biscuits that were part of his lunch. They tasted somewhat like oatmeal raisin, but had a bit of a gritty texture to them.

"Dobby is a bad elf. He makes his master take care of him."

"Do you really think I believe that?"

"No," the elf answered. "Harry Potter is a kind and generous master who sees the best in people and elves."

That made Harry laugh. "I'm not sure about people there Little D, but I know I can count on my elf. The only thing I worry about is how I'm going to keep you busy when you're back on your feet. They've got a pair of maids who come in and clean the room."

His small friend looked crestfallen, so he added, "But they're nowhere near as good as you are, so you'll have to go back behind them. The biggest challenge is making sure you're never seen."

"Dobby will not let the strange Muggles see him," the elf stated.

"Good. I'll probably have you help me do the landscaping."

"Dobby did the landscaping and gardening for bad Malfoy's."

Harry took a swig of his midday glass of butterbeer and said, "You did? So do you know how to recognize magical herbs?"

His servant nodded.

"Good. Once you're all healed up, I'm going to have you go looking for what you can find in the

local area. I need to see what kind of potions I can make here, so I can use the cup's abilities for the more complicated brews."

"Does Harry Potter have a proper cauldron?"

"No, we'll cross that bridge when we get to it. We'll also need a hidden place to grow these plants you find. I'll be able to ward a spot once we find we can use. Let me know when you're better and I'll give you permission to start looking for a location."

He added that last part knowing Dobby would leave the moment he could stand. Up in the mountains there should be plenty of out of the way, maybe even inaccessible, places where he could hide a small greenhouse and enhance it with charms and runes. Herbology wasn't his specialty and Harry was fairly certain that the elf's knowledge easily outstretched his own.

Dobby nodded.

"Good, now you finish resting and be sure to stay out of sight. I gave Maggie the museum brochure at lunch and said I want to go there. She's supposed to be asking her mother if she can take me there. So if you sense me leaving the property, that's where I'm going."

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"So he gave this to you and asked if he could go there?"

"Yes," Maggie replied. "I figured I'd better ask you first, since he's not of age. Do you actually know how old Harry is?"

"No, we've never been able to turn up any records on him. Unfortunately, I can't let you take him by yourself and this has nothing to do with our argument. That's where he was attacked. He could be on the verge of remembering something and it might not be a very nice memory."

The young woman hadn't considered that, but her mother was right.

"Still if he's asking to go, it is definite progress. I believe he should go, but it will have to be supervised. It might help him get past some of the mental blocks he's erected. Let me see what my schedule looks like."

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It was amusing watching Maggie try to convince Mrs. Edmondson that she should take Harry ahead on her motorcycle. Truthfully, he wouldn't mind, but it wasn't in the cards.

They ended up piling into a white van with the facility's logo on the door for the trip. He'd been out several times at night, but this was really the first time he'd seen the city of Delphi properly. The architecture was suitably Greek influenced and Harry had the impression that the city tried to rival Caprica City in vying to be the cultural center of the planet.

Delphi could have been almost any Muggle city on Earth, except for the large number of flying vehicles traversing the skyline. There was a strong military presence in the northwest part of the city by virtue of the Colonial Airbase. Watching all the vehicles darting about made Harry long for his Firebolt and the open sky.

It was a luxury he couldn't afford.

Once they arrived at the museum, it took conscious effort for Harry to restrain himself. He wanted to go straight to the veil, but knew that would be a bad move.

In addition to the mother and daughter, there was a rather large orderly, who was their driver and kept watching Harry. The wizard knew the man's presence was in case he had some kind of breakdown.

Considering his Animagus form could make short work of the surly man, Harry found the whole scene rather amusing.

"Mom, I'm going to the bathroom," Maggie announced.

Nancy Edmondson nodded, looked at Harry, and said, "Do you have to go as well?"

Fighting back a laugh at being addressed like a toddler, Harry nodded his head.

"Okay, Harry. Mr. Hitchens will take you."

They followed Maggie to a silver door. Harry stopped when he stepped inside. It was a loo alright, but it was a female one. There were no stand up urinals. Maggie didn't seem angry they were in there with her. She just went into a stall.

"C'mon!" his burly escort said. "I don't have all day."

"Is something wrong?" Maggie asked.

"The kid's acting funny."

"Funny?" Harry thought. "Funny is men and women not using the same water closet!"

He hadn't really thought of it. The bathrooms at Amanda's Open Arms and the other place he'd briefly stayed at were for patients, so he'd never really considered it. Apparently, this culture didn't build restrooms for the different sexes.

Despite the inhabited planet in the sky, the space travel, and the whole gridbox thing, this was the most disturbing thing Harry had encountered. Maybe it was because this was the first time he was directly interacting with something. Harry thought his Uncle Vernon had said something about having same sex bathrooms in France or something.

"Don't worry, Harry," Maggie said. "No one is going to hurt you."

"If you only knew, Maggie. If you only knew."

Shaking off the memories of a professor being burnt to death by his own hands and going full circle to the point where he used magical fire to kill Tom Riddle, Harry walked slowly into an open stall. Bathrooms might be different, but fortunately toilets were a universal concept.

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When the group rejoined her mother, Maggie pulled her aside and said, "I think something happened to Harry in that bathroom. He was really acting odd."

Both looked over at the young man who was staring at a display describing farming on the planet Arielon.

"Thanks for telling me," she replied. "I know you can take care of yourself, but keep a safe distance around Harry while we're here."

Maggie was skeptical. "Harry's harmless."

"The dead woman with the poisoned knife had a broken neck. It might not have been Harry, but we can't say for certain that it wasn't."

The young woman scowled, trying to imagine Harry intentionally killing anyone. Pasting a smile on her face, she walked back over to him.

"I went to Arielon once," she said. "It was nice."

"You like Virgon better," Harry said.

"Naturally," she said and pointed at display about the Virgon royal family. "We lived in his suburb of Boskirk named for Queen Charlotte. Other colonies say having a monarchy in this day and age is stupid...they just don't understand."

Harry nodded and the sincerity in his eyes made her wonder if he was really from Virgon. Mom believed he might be from Gemenon. She seemed to think that he was being sacrificed in some kind of religious ritual. Some of the nurses thought Sagitteron was more likely, because they hadn't seen signs of childhood immunizations on his arms.

Whenever she asked, Harry shrugged his shoulders and didn't have an answer.

As they moved through the exhibits, Harry had her reading them aloud to her. If any of her friends saw her now, they'd give her no end of grief seeing her playing tour guide. Fortunately, the odds of any of her circle of friends turning up at this museum were roughly the same as the 13th tribe making contact with the Colonies.

Harry listened attentively and often asked a question or two in his halting Colonial. Even though he sounded like a six or seven year old, Maggie found herself starting to treat him more and more

like a peer. She stopped underestimating him in their gridbox sessions and she'd never had such fierce competition playing her favorite games.

At the moment, he was very interested in one display case and tugged gently on her arm.

"Let's see what we have here," she said and stared at the plaque. In the case, were a couple of old books, some sticks, and a few pieces of a loose paper like material that looked odd in a complete rectangle rather than properly trimmed paper. There were also pictures of a mummified arm bearing strange symbols.

Clearing her throat, she said, "The Mystery Cult of the Minoan Arch. When the arch located on the opposite wall was found by archeologists decades ago, a number of bodies were found with it and some of the objects that were also found there are on display here. The books and the pages inside are blank, but some have claimed to be able to see odd symbols if they stare at the pages long enough."

Maggie stopped and stared down at the pages as intently as Harry was. At first there was nothing, but after about a minute, she thought she saw something. Shaking her head, the strange characters vanished.

Harry looked at her. "Sorry, I was trying to see if I could see anything."

"Did you?" he asked.

"Not really. Silly, I guess."

He kept looking at her for a second too long and it made her feel uncomfortable. She turned her gaze back on the plaque.

"Leading scientists claim this group was one of the many cults in that area and that the passageway they used to access the two arches collapsed during an intense period of seismic activity last century."

"Two arches?" Harry asked.

"That's what it says. Let's go see what it says at the arch over there."

Walking over to the arch, she sensed a nervous energy about Harry. She couldn't put her finger on it, but it was definitely noticeable. Her mother's warning came to mind as he pointed to a picture of an excavated temple with two arches.

"The Temple of the Gods on the island of Minoa. The arch to your right is one of a set reputed to be the fabled doorways of the gods. These doorways were said to lead to and from the citadel of the gods in their city of Atlantis and to the world of Kobol itself. Unfortunately the other arch, the Temple of the Gods, and the city of Minoa were destroyed in the war by the Cylons."

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"Harry? Are you okay?"

Harry sat down on the same bench he'd occupied with his injured elf and ignored Maggie's question.

Stunned, he thought, *"Destroyed! The other arch is gone. It sounds like it went to Atlantis anyway and that's gone as well. All I've got left is a one way door from a British Ministry that a bunch of pureblood supremacists are in charge of."*

Nancy Edmondson had moved up and she inspected him closely. Maggie came back with a paper cup filled with some water.

"Here Harry, drink this."

He did as she instructed as Nancy said, "I think we should go. This might have been too much for him to take in."

"No," Harry said, cancelling his pity party or at least postponing it. "I'm better."

"Are you certain?"

"Yes. I'm better." Harry answered and somehow forced a smile onto his face.

"In the cases, I saw pictures of Azkaban tattoos on the mummified bodies. I wonder when the Ministry stopped sending people through. Sometime before it was unearthed..well I guess that's not the right word now is it...uncapricaed? No, that sounds stupid. The wands and the charmed journal probably belonged to some Unspeakables who decided to see what was on the other side."

Their horrid fate could have been his if not for luck or perhaps destiny.

He didn't want to think about that.

Harry could read the damaged pages, with some difficulty. The book probably had a privacy charm on them to keep the words on the pages a secret. It looked to be notes on the arch back in England and he suspected that the book was really some Unspeakable's journal.

Maggie looked like she saw something on those charmed pages. Between that and how she was sometimes able to get through his wards made him wonder if she didn't have a touch of magic about her.

Standing and continuing to smile for the benefit of Maggie and Nancy, Harry made a mental note to see what was in that journal at some point. The wands he didn't really need at the time - he had plenty. A couple of the metal items look like they would have been at home on Dumbledore's shelves. They were instruments of sorts. Everything else appeared to be broken.

"C'mon," Maggie said trying to look cheerful. "I want to show you Apollo's Arrow."

He responded by faking his own enthusiasm. His hopes of immediately returning to Earth had vanished. There were two long term options.

The first was to learn enough about the arches and the magic that ran them. Maybe he could find a way to make the arches turn on themselves and temporarily make that doorway go in both directions.

The only other option involved getting his own starship and go looking in the outer arms of the spiral for a yellow sun with nine planets around it. With a good deal of luck, the third planet will have a single moon and seven continents.

However, neither of those plans sounded like they were going to happen anytime soon. Whether he liked it or not, Harry knew there was a long road ahead. The spirit of his mum once told him that the people who accomplished great things were able to break down their problems into manageable chunks.

"Currently," he thought, "I'm not sure my bottomless bag is big enough to hold all the chunks my problems break down into."

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Dear Maggie,

So I was digging my way through the grid the other day, when I stumbled on the latest cultural sensation here in Charlotte City. It seems there's this pretty girl from Virgon, who is going to school with those stuffy, overbearing, obnoxious, bigoted, Capricans. When this blonde girl starts insulting Virgons in general, the pretty girl whips the other one's frakking ass and leaves poor Blondie drenched in a fountain.

Did I mention his young lady is currently a cultural phenom on her native planet? Well, maybe I'm exaggerating, but my former little sis is at least the flavor of the month. Your grid clip has been viewed on the Virgon channel over two million times and people are using your angry, "I'm not impressed" image everywhere. My other personal favorites are, "Friends don't let friends go to school on Caprica" and the ever popular "Free Margret!"

So how's it feel to be a grid sensation? Hopefully, you still have time to chat with us little folks. It's a shame you aren't coming back to Virgon for college. Maybe that can be a goal of the Free Margret Movement?

I guess this is the part where I talk about me. I'm still working the bar, with the rest. I'm now the off shift manager instead of just the guy slinging the beverages. I don't know if it's a reward for a job well done or really they're just letting Father Vance have the time off. Not a good deal for him since Mother Renee had another boy and his time off is really Renee's. Other than that, I'm taking a class or two where I can fit it in.

One of these days, I'll figure out if I want to start my own family, but the more I see of the stuff

going on behind the scenes, the more difficult it looks.

Ken has started up his band. The name is Helios Epsilon Vipers. He blows massive chunks, and doesn't have a clue how bad he is. We let his band play the bar, but not until the people inside are already too drunk to care.

We added a nice couple to the family last month. It was the first time I'd ever had a real say-so in who joins. They're cool and run a couple of bed and breakfast places over in the valley. Headfather Isaiah seemed impressed by them and hopes the family business will continue to expand into the entertainment sector.

Well, gotta run. Hopefully, you've got time to answer fan mail from former relatives in between all the mayhem you're contemplating. Tell Kel and Sue not to be such strangers and say hi to your mom from me.

Love,

Shane

Maggie put the letter down and smiled. Shane had been her big brother and best friend, even moreso than her sisters, who teased Maggie relentlessly over having a crush on Shane.

When she first started dating Cyrus, Sue kept referring to her boyfriend as "Shane's stand-in." It was even less funny when Kelsey picked it up.

"Sure they both have dirty blond hair and the same body type, but come on!"

Besides, Cyrus already knew they were breaking up when school ended. He was going to a technical school in Telsa and she was joining her sisters in Caprica City. Even by train, they'd be hours away and it just wasn't going to last.

She called up the grid links in Shane's letter and went to some of the places listed. Sure enough, the clip of her and Rachel's fight was in the top fifty most viewed clips for the past standard day. Looking at her messaging filters, she saw there were six hundred messages being held because they weren't on her approved sender list.

Sending the links on to her sisters and her friends, Maggie, sat back and had a good laugh reading her "fan mail."

As she did, Maggie entertained the idea of transferring to Virgon after her first or second year at college. It would be fun to see her former group family again.

-X-X-X-X-X-X

Harry turned the lights out in the lounge as he went back to his room for bed check. Maggie hadn't come out tonight and he added that to the growing list of disappointments he kept in his head. He could've used some company and gratuitous violence. Instead, he made it a little further

in his reader assignments.

"Soon, I might even be done with picture books!" he thought, venting some of his mental frustration.

Opening his door, he went in and sat on his bed. Seeing the face of his elf pop out of the closet, Harry cast a sound dampening charm and said, "You can come out Little D. How are you feeling?"

"Dobby is much better now."

Harry knew his elf didn't care whether they could get back or not. Dobby was just glad to be with Harry and comfortable in the knowledge that his mate, Winky, would eventually come.

The young man knew he needed to start somewhere. To survive on Caprica, he'd need to learn how to speak. To make it off Caprica, he'd need money...cubits was what they called them. Without revealing magic, the best job he could get would be landscaper or other similar types of employment.

He'd need to do better than that. Harry needed a plan.

The Next Lord of Kobol Priorities

The Next Lord of Kobol

Chapter 11 - Priorities

(Delphi Union High School nine years and forty-one days before the fall of the twelve colonies and six months and four days since the arrival of one Harry Potter on Caprica.)

-X-X-X-X-X-X

"I know this is supposed to be an important day in our lives, but when exactly are the frakking speeches going to end?" Maggie whispered to Cyrus as another speaker stepped up to the podium. Graduation ceremonies were a half-day long exercise where each successive speaker made a supreme effort to drive as many audience members as possible into a coma.

"Anxious much, Marge? You're practically squirming in your chair."

"Just want to get this over with before someone decides that they've made a mistake."

He reached over and squeezed her knee while saying, "Marge, my guess is that they know your grades are good enough, you're just a discipline problem. If they failed you, you'd be back next year and already know all the material. You'd have more idle time on your hands and be even more of a pain in the ass. For them, letting you out is a sound business move. Of course they probably don't want to upset a 'Virgon Ambassador of Culture' by forcing her to attend another year of school here on Caprica."

Her monolithic rise off the grid petered out after six days, but she did get to give the top twelve things on Caprica that don't impress her on Backtalk. Her mother hadn't been impressed that Maggie was rewarded for being in a fight, but didn't turn down the free trip to Caprica City and a chance to see Kelsey and Sue.

"Oh, you're hilarious Cy. You'll need better material for the girls in Telsa. They won't be nearly as accommodating as I am."

"If by accommodating you mean easy, then I suppose not."

"If I didn't know that was a lie, I'd say you're being harsh. By the way, did I mention I won a game of Goldkiller the other night?"

"What!" Cyrus said, loud enough to draw angry looks from the few people next to them who were still conscious.

"Put five high explosive rounds through Goldies' chest plate. It was actually kind of a letdown. Next time you're on the grid, look up my avatar and check out my slick new GK crest."

Maggie knew tweaking Cyrus about beating the game he obsessed over was wrong, but he did just imply she was easy. That kind of cheap shot couldn't go unpunished.

Also, she'd have been deres'd several times over if it hadn't been for Harry's game play. For all her skill at the racing games, he was getting really hard to beat and in the shooting games like Goldkiller, he fought like a whirlwind. If it wasn't her console they'd played through, Maggie would have sworn that he had some kind of hack or cheat.

She knew Harry let her take him out of the game. There was no way his rifle jammed. She called him a liar, but he said he'd win it next time and do it just with the pistol they give you at the beginning.

If anyone was capable of doing that, it was him. Now, if they could just figure out how to beat Cylon Strike...

"Did you just freelance or were you part of a pack?"

"I went in with Harry," she said.

"That messed up kid at the group home? Your mom let you take him on the grid?"

Maggie smiled and replied, "She might not know about that."

"Already breaking in my replacement, Marge? I feel so used. You could've at least waited until I left town."

Maggie rolled her eyes at him and said, "It's not like that. He's definitely not your replacement. I don't think of him like that. Harry's just cool to game with. Besides, he's staying here while I go to stay at my Uncle Donovan's in Cap City."

"Too bad you're not coming west with me," Cyrus said.

"We've been over this, several times in fact. You could've gone east with me," she countered.

Her mom couldn't afford tuition plus room and board for all three of her daughters at the same time. She'd made a deal with Uncle Donovan so they could stay there with him and Aunt Linda. If Cyrus had come along, they would have been forced to get an apartment and jobs to support their living arrangements. The planetary capital was significantly more expensive than where

Cyrus planned to continue his education.

"Yeah," Cyrus said. "I suppose I could've, but tell me one thing, Pretty Eyes, why did you just blush when I was asking you about Harry?"

"I did not!" Now, she drew a few cold looks from those nearby.

"You're right," he said with a lopsided grin. "It must've been a trick of the light or something. We've been out in the sun for hours."

"Asshole," she stated.

He scoffed and said, "Really? That's all? You must be trying to clean up your act for the new kid."

Crossing her arms and going for a "haughty" look, she replied, "This is a graduation ceremony, Cyrus. I'm trying to show a bit of decorum."

-x-x-x-x-x-x

As the days passed, Harry grew more concerned. Winky was overdue and he didn't think that was a good omen. Thankfully, Dobby had made a full recovery from his ordeal and was keeping a watch on the arch at the museum. With no guarantee that her arrival would be after closing, Harry wanted her evacuated before any visitors could record her.

The greenhouse project was completed. He had a nice setup in the jungle near a small stream and his elven cohort had located several magical herbs and added them to the collection. One of them was a strong hallucinogenic locally called Chamala. The extract was worth a decent sum. As soon as Harry realized it was illegal in the quantities he was growing, he went ahead and put the greenhouse under the Fidelius charm. Of course if he paid enough cubits, he could buy a distributor's license.

In some ways, Caprica was just as corrupt as the Ministry of Magic. Portions of the Colonies reminded him of all those stories Dudley and his idiot friends told about Amsterdam. The fat oaf swore he was going there once he finished school.

The greenhouse also gave Harry a safe area to go and continue mastering his ape Animagus form. Previously, he'd tripped some kind of automated camera system in the park which got some strange rumors about some kind of beast in the jungles. Fortunately, the photos that showed up were grainy and attributed to a group of pranksters.

No doubt some nonmagical Colonial equivalent of the Lovegoods were out there planning an expedition.

Evolution was not taught here. Humanity came from the planet Kobol a few thousand years ago. Harry's Muggle education begged to differ and he knew that he wouldn't get any kind of answer until he made it to Athena's Tomb.

"Wonder what they would say if I tried to tell them we evolved from primates? Considering I'm already in the Looney Bin, I'm guessing some form of execution for heresy. I should brush up on my Flame-Freezing charm in case they do burnings at the stake."

Harry pondered these thoughts while sitting in the visitors' section, with Nancy and her daughter, Sue. It was the first time he'd met one of Maggie's older sisters. She was taller, with lighter colored hair and a willowy figure...nothing like either of the Edmondsons he was familiar with. She was indifferent to Harry and made the trip because she could afford to miss a class today for Maggie's graduation.

The speeches weren't especially interesting, but he needed all the help he could get with his language skills.

Still after the fifth speaker, Harry'd had enough and started working through his Occlumency exercises. Though the odds of encountering anyone with any Legilimency skills out here wasn't even worth considering, it did improve his focus.

When it came to his own abilities in Legilimency, he'd been scared to try it on someone. It had helped him communicate with Joe the Dementor, but the creature knew English. Harry didn't know what to expect until he could fully understand their language.

He worried about his magic becoming stagnant. To prevent that from happening, he charmed the garden implements, carved far more runes than necessary, and used a large number of *Reparo* charms. Cracks in the walls and some ugly foundation damage reversed themselves.

There were a few setbacks. If he tried to repair anything with electronics in it, the spell didn't work unless Harry understood how the electronics functioned. He was able to fix a toy with a broken light on it, but another one with a tiny computer screen turned into a minor fire hazard, and he might have cost the facility a few hundred cubits when he fixed something and found out there was a live junction panel on the other side of the wall.

He made a mental note to take some electronics courses down the line. It probably wouldn't hurt.

Harry thought about his plan. It was still taking shape and involved mastering the language, learning how to pilot a ship, getting a ship, and finding Earth or Kobol. The greenhouse would give him "seed money" to get things started once the first crops could be harvested. He'd probably have to use a *Confundus* charm or two along the way. An *Imperio* would go further, but he wasn't willing to go there.

It didn't take terribly long to transfigure a passable copy of the Unspeakable's journal and have Dobby switch them out.

Harry's guess that it was a journal had been correct. The owner was a man named Malcolm Lestrangle, which meant that Bellatrix wasn't even the first Lestrangle to die on Caprica. Malcolm appeared to be a fairly vile individual who believed the veil would lead to a land of the dead.

For Malcolm it did. The ironic part was his specialty was Necromancy. His apprentice was a witch named Felicia Bones, who was only two years removed from Hogwarts when she followed this madman to her death in July of 1840. The diagrams of dead bodies included obviously led to the opinion that this was some form of a death cult.

Harry wasn't certain what he would do with two different Inferius rituals and a third that Malcolm was attempting to design. It had something to do with imbuing the corpses with flammable curses or filling them with explosive fluids.

Considering the first thing a wizard or witch was taught about fighting them was to use fire, it was pretty insidious stuff and Harry was reasonably certain that the England was a much better place with Lestrangle's efforts unfinished. The other spells included were useful, but many were of the "darker" variety. Still, Harry began practicing the spells and learning how to wield them effectively.

"Are you okay, Harry?" Nancy asked, interrupting his thoughts.

"Yes. It's hot out today. Maggie seems happy."

His verbal skills were on par with a six or seven year old. Complex sentences were just around the corner! Then again, he might also be dumbing himself down when speaking with Nancy and the therapists. There were less awkward questions that way.

"You're making good progress, Harry," Nancy said. Harry caught Sue arching a questioning eyebrow.

"Thank you. I'm trying hard."

"Yes, you are." The way she said it made him feel like a pet that had learned a new trick. It irked Harry and he worried that he might eventually have problems getting out from under Nancy's overly kind thumb.

On the other hand, he needed to get an identity established and to do that, he needed her.

He felt something grab the back of his leg. Since it was under his chair, there was only one person it could be.

Harry bent over looked under the chair. The elf's eyes looked even larger. Instinctively, he held a finger to his lips. He couldn't use his wand and do a privacy charm or just Apparate out of there. There were limits to illusions and notice-me-not charms.

"Harry, what's wrong?"

Sometimes the simplest answer was the best one.

"I have to go to the bathroom."

"Right now?" Nancy asked.

"Yes. It hurts. I think I might be sick."

"Sue, take him."

"Me?" her older daughter questioned.

"Yes, you know where the nearest bathroom is."

Sue muttered, "For the love of the Gods! C'mon."

Harry maintained his act as she dragged him across the row and toward the stairs, causing more of a commotion than he'd hoped for.

Stumbling down the stairs, Sue looked around quickly and led him to a portable.

"Get in," she commanded.

He did and latched the door. Inside, he drew his wand and cast a silent locking charm on the composite plastic door and an auditory illusion of him retching. Harry layered a silencing charm inside of that and summoned Dobby. The pop was instantaneous.

"What is it?" he asked, probably a bit more harshly than he should have.

"Winky is here! But she is badly hurt, Master Harry."

His annoyance vanished in a split second. "Where is she?"

"I brought her to your room."

"Take me...," Harry stopped and considered his situation. He flicked his wand and conjured a small cot and stuck it to the wall.

"Bring her here and get my potion kit."

Dobby disappeared and Harry took a deep breath, trying to ignore the smell inside the portable loo. His mind flashed back to his earliest outings with the Order. He hadn't been allowed to do much more than assist Hestia Jones as she did her best to save the poor Muggles the Death Eaters used to practice their spells on. He'd picked up a decent amount of knowledge from her...enough that she'd turned him loose on his own three times. Two of his patients lived. The third didn't. Harry hadn't known any of those Muggles. He knew Winky and worried his meager exposure to the art of healing wouldn't be enough.

Seconds later, Dobby reappeared with his fourth patient. Winky looked like a tiny mummy, from his other elf's handiwork.

"Master Harry," Winky whispered.

"I'm here and so is Dobby. What happened?"

"I was with Dumbledore," she said.

"That's not important right now. How did you get hurt?"

"The bad wizards hit me with a spell."

"Dobby, show me where. Winky, did you see what color the curse was?"

"Yellow," she said as Dobby removed the layers of bandages. There was a black scorch mark the size of Harry's balled fist in the center of her back. It oozed reddish puss and the smell almost made Harry throw up. The moment the wound was exposed to air, it began to bubble and the poor she-elf howled in agony.

He didn't have time to appreciate the irony of almost becoming sick. Using his wand, he slit open the wound and had Dobby give her a blood replenisher. His repertoire of counter curses was limited, but he decided to make up for it with power. In an ideal situation, Harry would be doing this in a protective circle with a second wizard or witch assisting. Immobilizing Winky stopped her thrashing.

"Yellow curse that infects the blood. Doesn't kill instantly, but cause intense pain. Sounds like either Mulciber or Rookwood. It's gotta be a blood boiler."

None of the counter curses Harry knew could reverse it. The best his spells could do is slow it down. He'd have to do something more radical.

"Dobby," he said. "I need to cut the infected area off and graft some skin in its place. I need a pig or some kind of animal."

"Take skin from Dobby, Harry Potter will."

"No," Harry said, but knew Dobby's offer made the most sense. Two elves and a human in a portable didn't leave much room for a pig...even a stunned one. Winky's own flesh might be tainted by the curse.

"Please Master. Winky is dying."

To emphasize his point, Dobby pointed at Winky's eyes. They were rapidly changing color and becoming unfocused. Harry didn't know what that meant, but it couldn't be good.

"Alright, I'll take a finger and engorge it. Just the little finger. There should be enough skin to cover her wound."

The male elf, showing tremendous courage, stuck his hand out and didn't so much as wince when

Harry removed the finger with a quick cutter. His next spell caused the severed digit to swell and expand until it was large enough. Harry flayed skin and flesh from the bone, while struggling with the contents of his stomach as he floated the bloody mass in the air and turned his attention to Winky's wound.

Praying to guidance from Poppy Pomfrey and Hestia Jones, Harry cut away just beyond the edges of the cursed area and then lifted the cursed infection away. He poured two vials of wound sealant, a teaspoon of essence of dittany, and blood replenisher directly into the area, along with the most powerful healing draught at his disposal, before dropping the gory poultice of Dobby's donation directly onto the area. Two more vials of wound sealant went on top as he used Episkey spells to bind the flesh together. The wound sealants and healing draughts had phoenix tears in them. He'd had to take some of the muscle under the skin, but he hoped the magical elixirs would fix his piss poor solution.

Only when he stopped did he become aware of the vibrations from the rhythmic pounding on the outside of the portable loo.

Harry's illusion had been getting sick for five minutes. Sue out there was probably getting an earful. As tempting as it was to cast an air freshening charm, the nasty smell really sold the lie. Winky's breathing was shallow but steady. The diagnostic charm didn't show any signs of the curse. He'd done all he could other than bandaging Dobby's hand, which Harry took care of in a second.

"Take her back to my room and keep her hidden. Find me if she gets any worse."

Dobby nodded vigorously and popped away. Harry levitated the infected mass into the hole and reversed the cot transfiguration.

As he removed the silencing charm and the audible illusion, he heard Sue's voice demanding that he open the door.

Sighing, he removed the locking charm and hid his wand. It was time to go back to being simple sentence Harry.

Grabbing some toilet paper, he held it next to his mouth and opened the door. Sue Edmondson stood there with an angry scowl on her face until the smell hit her. The young woman bent over and proceeded to vomit all over his trousers.

For his own part, Harry hadn't thought the smell had been that bad, but years of potions classes, and all the unsavory ingredients he had handled, might have conditioned his senses to the point where the stench from Winky's wound didn't really overwhelm him. Sue wasn't so fortunate.

Knowing that he couldn't use magic to fix the problem, Harry grabbed another handful of tissue and offered it to the even more incensed woman.

"Want some?" He asked, trying to sound as innocent as possible.

-X-X-X-X-X-X

“Where’d Mom go?” Maggie asked while she scanned the crowd. She didn't see Harry either and found that odd.

Her older sister, who was looking quite pale, said, “There was a bit of an issue with Harry and she took him back to the facility.”

“Is he all right?”

“I don’t know,” Sue said. “He got really sick. I’ve been at the aftermath of entire dorm parties and haven't heard as much puking. Still he looked fine when he opened the door...at least until I caught a whiff and lost it.”

Maggie gave a sympathetic look and said, “Well, I guess he's okay then. Otherwise, Mom would be taking him to an emergency room. So are you and Kelsey ready to put up with me again?”

“It won't be that bad,” Sue said. “You know how big Uncle D's place is. With all the events, activities, and everything else, there's hardly a time when all of us are there together anyway. So aerospace engineering huh? I always thought you put a little too much time into those paper airplane contests we used to have. Of course you know most of the spacer jobs are filled with ex-military. Does that mean I'll be getting a picture of you at enlistment ceremony sometime soon?”

The freshly graduated student rolled her eyes and replied, “I don't think I'm what the military is looking for right now. They’d just crimp my style. I'd rather get paid to build the bus than drive it. Besides defense contracting is where the real cubits are these days.”

“Well, I'm glad you got it all figured out, Sis. Now, can we find where the best graduation party is and go celebrate? I know this isn't Cap City, but I'll try my best to have a good time.”

Maggie ignored her sister’s sarcasm. “There are four to choose from. One, I am definitely not welcome at. There's another where we should go first, before everyone gets drunk and says what they really think about me. Or we can go to either the other two, but I’ve learned that the best tasting alcohol belongs to the people who like you least, but have to give it to you anyway.”

“From the sound of things Margaret, you aren't going to have any problems with philosophy electives.”

-X-X-X-X-X-X

The on call physician was a female intern in her late twenties named Dr. Lindsay. Harry always got the feeling that she didn't completely believe his story. Her bedside manner was somewhat lacking and she was very quick to throw bottle after bottle of medication at a problem.

“Honestly, Director,” the woman said addressing Nancy. “I think your daughter was exaggerating. Harry doesn't show any signs of severe dehydration. He's not running a fever. I could run a blood test but look at him. He doesn't seem to be in distress at all. In fact, when I examined his throat I

didn't see any sign of irritation. Vomiting more than a few times would definitely leave some telltale signs.”

Harry kept his expression blank while internally scolding himself at unsuccessfully pulling off his ruse. Somewhere in the great beyond, both his Godfather and his father were deducting points from his performance.

“What do you recommend?” Nancy asked.

“Why don't we give him some anti-nausea medication and keep him inside for the rest of the day. If he doesn't experience any further symptoms by dinnertime, he should be out of the woods.”

The director nodded but Harry saw a smidge of resentment in Nancy's face. The doctor had implied that either he or her daughter was lying and it was clear that Mrs. Edmondson didn't care for her subordinate's attitude. This left Harry with a twinge of guilt but when weighed against Winky's life, didn't even rate as an annoyance.

Either way, he just wanted to get out of here and check on both of his elves.

Nancy gave him a set of coveralls to change into and had him put his pants into a plastic bag until they could be laundered. Unfortunately, Harry caught Nancy giving him an appraising look and knew she wasn't completely in his corner.

“Hope Maggie is having fun,” Harry said. “Wish I could have gone.”

Nancy Edmondson smiled and said, “I'm sure she is. Probably more now that her mother isn't slowing her down. Sue messaged me and said they were going to see some friends. Now, let's take you back to your room.”

Harry walked down the hallway with her, somewhat sorry that Nancy didn't get to stay for her daughter's graduation and that the dinner plans had been scuttled.

“I'll be fine from here,” Harry said just before they reached the edge of where his repelling ward would take hold. He'd noticed that suggestions helped the effectiveness of his wards. Mainly, he wanted to make sure she wouldn't hear or see anything in the room.

The director frowned, but let him go on with instructions to stay inside, get rest, ring the on call nurse if he needs anything, and be sure to come to dinner.

Opening the door, Harry immediately slipped inside and shut it behind him. After a quick silencing charm he asked, “How's she doing?”

Dobby had been hovering over the female's face. It was somewhat comforting to know that he didn't just do that to Harry.

“Winky is still breathing,” Dobby answered wiping her forehead with a damp cloth. “She has a fever.”

The fact that Dobby sounded completely lucid drove home the seriousness. Sadly, Harry didn't know that much about House Elf physiology. In truth, he barely knew anything about humans. "Alright, let me in there so I can cast a diagnostic charm. I need to cast one on you as well, so I have a baseline."

"Dobby would gladly change places with her. He wishes now that Dumbledore had sent Winky first."

Harry nodded, knowing that his friend felt miserable, while wondering what his life would have been like with the more restrained of the duo here. Both were as damaged as any of the humans in this building. Dobby's physical torture at the hands of the Malfoys was obvious, but Winky's treatment by Crouchs Senior and Junior amounted to psychological abuse as each played her against the other.

He promised to be both a good master and friend to the pair. Truthfully the bar wasn't set very high, but he would try just the same. It wasn't like he had many friends either.

Thinking about the number of potions he'd already given the female elf, he decided to wait at least another three hours before administering anything else. One of the first things Hestia Jones tried to drill into his head was to be patient and not try to overmedicate.

"Potions need time to work, Harry," she said.

"Isn't it supposed to be magic?" Harry countered, remembering the tears of a phoenix closing his wounds.

"Yes," the witch answered glancing over at the Muggles they were treating. "But it's not miracles. You also have to be mindful of the amount of magic in the patient you're treating. A fully trained witch or wizard will react more quickly to a potion than a squib or a Muggle."

They didn't cover treating House Elves. On one hand, their magic wasn't terribly potent, but on the other, they are extremely magical.

Harry reached out and took Winky's left hand in two fingers and used his thumb to massage the back of her hand.

Her eyes fluttered open and she said, "Master Harry."

"Hello Winky. Are you feeling any better?"

"It hurts, but not as before."

"That sounds promising, but I do not want you overdoing things. Dobby will do all the work around here. You focus on healing. I can't say for certain how long it will take you to recover."

Privately, he worried whether she'd be able to walk correctly after his drastic actions.

"I will get better, Master," she said. "Dobby, have you given Master Harry the package?"

Her mate looked suddenly distraught. "Dobby is forgetting Winky's package! No! No! No!"

He practically vaulted over Winky to get into the hidden area Harry had created in the back of the closet which Harry had laughingly named, "Dobby's Swinging Bachelor Pad." The space was a roughly six foot by six foot square...not much bigger than Harry's cupboard under the stairs at Number Four and represented his first real achievement in size expansion magic.

Dobby's "Pad" was normally dominated by an engorged toy doll bed Harry had found in the Lost and Found bin located in the front office. Dobby had moved that into the closet proper and placed Winky on it.

Harry looked at the box Dobby returned with. It wasn't terribly big. Opening it, he saw the familiar folds of his invisibility cloak. With great care, he ran his fingers across the smooth fabric. The second object didn't warm his heart so much as pique his curiosity. It was roughly a foot long and rumored to have been crafted from dark wood floating in the River Styx. Harry wondered if even old Ollivander would know what material was in the core.

It hummed with power when Harry brushed his finger against it. He was its master. His headmaster had said that the Elder Wand made powerful spells unstoppable, temporary transfigurations last longer, and even allowed for larger, more complex permanent conjurations.

A tiny part of him couldn't wait to slip out tonight and try it out.

He sifted through a couple of books looking for the third Deathly Hallow, but there was no sign of the resurrection stone. There was only a half written note dated from what Harry guessed would've been three weeks ago.

"Winky? Are you well enough to tell me what happened?"

The elf nodded and composed her thoughts. "After Dobby left, Mr. Dumbledore told Winky that Harry and Dobby hadn't returned. Winky was very sad. We moved every few days. Nasty men caught up with us in France and fought a big battle. Many people hurt, wizards and Muggles. Dumbledore tells Winky to grab this and take it to Harry."

Harry thought that fighting in France was a sign that Malfoy didn't mind international incidents. "Do you know if there was supposed to be a stone inside his package?"

"Sorry Master, but Winky doesn't know."

"Who was there from the Order?"

She listed off names, few he recognized. Bill Weasley and Fleur were the only two he had close personal knowledge of. Scanning the letter, Harry saw mostly the apologetic tone of a man who was out of ideas, but no clue as to the whereabouts of the stone. Perhaps he never intended to give Harry the third Deathly Hallow or had loaned it out.

The books both concerned magical Greece. One was a compendium of Greek runes and spells. The other looked to be a tome concerning magical creatures of that region. Dumbledore hoped Harry would find them useful.

Quizzing Winky about who visited Dumbledore only added a few other possibilities. About the time he had started the letter to Harry, he'd been visited by Snape and a few days after that by Remus Lupin. Given his choice, Harry hoped his werewolf friend had the last Hallow. The things Severus Snape might want to learn from the specters of the departed made Harry shudder.

"How many bad men were attacking Dumbledore when you left?"

"Not sure, Master. At least seven maybe more."

"Was his phoenix with him?"

"I didn't see it Master Harry, but Winky was not looking."

"Do you know if he told anyone other than you and Dobby that I was still alive?"

Winky shrugged helplessly, starting to get upset that she didn't know many of the answers to his questions. He stopped and told her it was alright.

"Maybe I can use Legilimency on her when she's recovered," he thought. "Being able to see parts of the battle might give me a better feel about whether or not Albus survived."

"Dobby," Harry said, coming to a decision. "I want you to go back to the museum after they close and make sure the little alarm I set up is still fully charged after Winky set it off. We need to know if anyone else comes through."

Even though Harry gained a new ally, along with some powerful items, the moment still felt bittersweet. He was no closer to going back to Earth than he'd been this morning.

Turning to the pair of elves he said, "The three of us are family. We're all we have left. Each of us watches out for the other two. It's us against the...well I guess it's us against the Galaxy."

The Next Lord of Kobol The Caprica Cowhenge

The Next Lord of Kobol

Chapter 12 – The Caprica Cowhenge

(Exactly nine years before the fall of the Twelve Colonies)

-X-X-X-X-X-X

"Harry! They're coming in on your right, high side!"

"Okay," he said and pivoted his turret engaging the pair of Cylon Raiders as soon as they entered his firing arc. Maggie seemed to enjoy all the military lingo. From his point of view, he was just happy that he could follow her shouts. Since she graduated, Maggie seemed to be hell bent on finishing this game. Considering he was stuck here for the time being, Harry welcomed the company.

Still, he knew it would be only a matter of time before she was packing up and heading to Caprica City. She was the closest thing he had to a friend, other than his elves and he didn't want to admit how much he would miss Maggie Edmondson.

Through his viewport, the Atlantia and the Olympia continued to burn as they traded fire with four of the toaster base ships. It was visually distracting and made it difficult to pick out the shapes moving against the fiery background.

Maggie's job wasn't much easier. She had to stay out of the engagement zones of all six capital vessels, destroy as many Raiders as she can, and get close enough so they deliver their nuclear payload to the targeted Basestar. In the distance, the planet Kobol loomed...as it had on the previous six missions where they'd died. The final mission was to break the Cylon blockade over Kobol to uncover the location of the Thirteenth Tribe. Thus far, the blockade had resisted their best efforts.

"Harry, I'm going to try something," she yelled.

Harry recognized this as "Maggiespeak" and that the "something" was implied to be marginally insane.

The Raptor pivoted and dove headlong for the hailstorm of gun and missile fire being traded by The Atlantia and the target Basestar. Meanwhile, Harry did his best to destroy their pursuers.

Maggie pulled out of the path of certain death and skirted the edge of the free fire zone, looping around it and making pursuit more difficult. Between the warning klaxons and the ship being buffeted by nearby collisions Harry was strangely reminded of the time he'd ridden Buckbeak over the lake.

Her insane maneuver cut down on the angle the raiders could come at them and made Harry's job that much easier. It was like a Keeper having to only guard two rings instead of three. The only downside was, there were no ammo packets in this area. He would have to make each burst count.

"Time to target, sixty seconds! Arming the missile! Radiological master alarm clear."

The high pitched warble cut out as she silenced it. Their nuke wouldn't destroy a Basestar by itself, but a surface detonation would fry the sensitive electronics. Without precise battery coordination, that third of the Cylon ship would be vulnerable to the Battlesar's fury.

Of course, every Cylon raider in the vicinity also knew there was a live nuke on their ship. Harry's DRADIS screen showed over a dozen breaking contact and thrusting in their direction.

"Two raiders moving to intercept at carum eleven by zero four five."

Harry did his best to decipher what she'd just said. He looked in the sector of space he believed she indicated and caught sight of the toasters.

"I see them!" He answered. "Can you flip us over?"

Maggie barrel rolled the Raptor to give Harry a better shot and Harry rotated the turret. From what he'd seen of the new generation that replaced this model of Raptor, they'd gotten rid of the turret and ammo bay altogether in return for giving it a FTL drive and a big electronic warfare package.

Somehow, he didn't think the new ones were as much fun to fly in reality.

Now in his twelve o'clock position, he could see the non-stop torrent of gunfire and streaks of missiles. The raiders were now comfortably in his four o'clock position and he sent a quick three second burst from the cannons that helped him gauge the distance and see their reactions.

Harry realized that he didn't have to destroy them, but just had to keep them occupied until Maggie could fire the nuke.

"Thirty seconds, Harry! Don't you dare get us killed."

He expended a pair of ECM drones when the closest raider fired missiles. The signal scrambling affected a few of the nearby heavy missiles and they were rocked by a series of detonations. The good news was that the explosions had forced the pair of raiders to make a detour, but it also sent

them careening away from the edge of the engagement zone.

"Go fast, Maggie!" he said, seeing more Raiders fast approaching.

She yanked the throttle all the way back and the Raptor lurched forward in response.

"Just keep them off our six for a few more seconds and leave the rest to me," she shouted.

Harry did his best to disrupt the Raiders as Maggie lined up her shot. Even so, the armor indicator began trickling away much faster than he would like.

"Track one! Missile away!"

Harry released his last two ECM drones, not wanting to be killed before the missile hit. Posthumous victory didn't sound near as good as seeing the end credits.

He fired an extended burst from his guns and looked over his shoulder as the nearest part of the Cylon mothership was engulfed in an atomic blast.

The Basestar slowly began to rotate as the coordinated fire diminished, but a wall of munitions from the Atlantia smashed through the defenses and triggered a series of cascading secondary explosions.

Maggie broke hard to port and did her best to angle away from the shockwave as the vessel exploded. The entire craft shook with the strength of the detonation.

Almost immediately, two additional Battlestars - The Hyperion and The Galactica jumped into the battle and began launching vipers practically on top of their location. With the Raiders around them vaporized in a hail of point defense fire, the LSO on the Galactica sent them their landing signal. Inside the Raptor, the Colonial Anthem began to blare through the speakers as another Basestar broke apart under the sustained firepower of the new arrivals.

With nothing left to do, Harry scrambled from his tail gunner seat and ran up to jump into the co-pilot's chair and enjoy the ride onto the Galactica's starboard side landing pod.

Over top of the Anthem, came Admiral Nash's actual speech that he'd given on tenth anniversary of the Armistice. Harry listened to the words of congratulations laced with those of caution about their enemies lurking out in space somewhere.

"Never forget the price paid to ensure our survival as a race. Savor each moment in the light as a reward from the Gods for overcoming our own mistakes and hubris. Do these things with the knowledge that our enemies could one day return to begin the struggle anew."

Harry thought the man sounded quite a bit like Dumbledore as a gleeful Maggie brought them down on a landing pad and the elevator began lowering them into the pressurized bay full of cheering virtual deckhands.

"We did it!" Maggie said, bouncing in her chair. Her enthusiasm spread like a cheering charm throughout the cabin.

"When did you think of flying beside the fire from Atlantia?" Harry asked, referring to her unique strategy.

"I saw a biopic about a viper pilot who did something like that during the war," she answered unbuckling her harness and standing. "I just can't believe we finally finished it!"

A pair of badges materialized and each reached out to grab them. The code was woven onto the skin of their avatars to indicate they'd completed this game. The fact that hardly anyone ever finished this game seemed really important to the female next to him.

Maggie's avatar threw her arms around him and crushed him into a tight embrace. It ranked up there with some of Hermione's, even if it was in a virtual world.

After about five seconds, Harry pulled his head back and looked at her. She was still beaming and smiling at him. He saw her expression change and she leaned in and gave him a kiss.

There was something more behind it than that embarrassing instance in front of Aphrodite's statue. Even though it wasn't completely real, it felt very real. He could feel her hands wrapping around his head and pulling him tighter and taste of her tongue sliding through the gap in his lips.

He'd never been snogged before, but he was pretty sure that it went like this. He liked Maggie. She had this way about her. He wasn't sure if it was the "good girl" hidden under her "hellion" exterior or that he was attracted to her wild side. Either way, it wasn't as important as enjoying the moment. Harry searched his mind for the answer to the question of, "How would Sirius Black or James Potter handle this?"

When no immediate answer came, Harry went with his gut and pulled off his grid glasses. They'd been playing in his room, after being interrupted in the lounge twice earlier. Sitting cross-legged on the end of his bed was the real Maggie Edmondson. She had a confused look on her face, probably from him de-resing in the middle of snogging.

She was in the process of removing her glasses when he stretched over the gridbox and put his lips on hers.

He sensed a moment of surprise followed by the clatter of her glasses hitting the floor. She made a "mmmph" sound, but didn't immediately push him away. She didn't lace her fingers behind his head, but did place her hand against his cheek and cup it. This time she seemed more uncertain and when his tongue slipped inside her mouth, she slowly backed her head away.

Opening his eyes, he saw she was flushed and looking at him. "Why'd you leave the game? What are you doing?" she asked almost whispering it.

"Wanted to kiss the real Maggie," he fumbled his reply. "Like you better."

Harry saw the look of surprise, heard a quick intake of breath, and hoped he hadn't mucked things up. He leaned further toward her and went to kiss her again.

"I don't know if we should..." Maggie said and trailed off. Her eyes closed and she met him.

Truth be told, Harry didn't know if they should be doing this either, but he was tired of pretending to be something he wasn't...tired of all the secrets. Maggie was the closest thing he'd had to a friend his age since Umbridge caught the DA. Maybe that was the source of his intensity. He wasn't sure.

After perhaps another thirty seconds of snogging, Maggie slid off his lips and down to his neck. It tickled him something fierce and he couldn't help but laugh.

His laughter broke the spell between them and she backed away for the second time. He wasn't ready to give up so easily, but she stopped his forward momentum with her open palms.

"I think that's enough for tonight," she said. "I'd better get back to my room before bed check."

Harry looked at the clock and knew they had another twenty minutes, but Maggie was already collecting her gridbox. She climbed off his bed and started to the door. Halfway there, she stopped and turned around. Walking back to him, she touched his cheek and kissed him.

"Goodnight Harry, I'll see you tomorrow."

He watched her walk away, wondering if he should've done something else, but happily noted that neither of them were crying and his soul was intact.

That alone counted as a win in his book. For a change, it was good to be him.

-X-X-X-X-X

After shutting her bedroom door, Maggie allowed her weight to fall back against it and stared down at the gridbox and glasses in her hands.

"Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!" she said and tapped the back of her head against the door to punctuate each word. She cursed Cyrus for planting the idea that Harry was some kind of replacement for him. All this time she'd been spending around him had left her feeling comfortable, and look what she'd done.

"Oh, what am I going to do?" she asked no one in particular. Kissing Harry threw her for a loop. She was the one in control...or at least she was supposed to be. Maggie didn't know which would be worse – breaking his heart or really liking him. She certainly hadn't intended for that to happen.

She stopped on her way to the bed and put the items in her hands on her nightstand. They'd gotten her into enough trouble this evening.

Needing some advice, she first thought of her mother, but discarded that notion as making things worse. Instead, Maggie grabbed her vidphone and called Kelsey.

It took a minute, but her sister answered. Kelsey was in sweats and looked like she was in the middle of a casual night in.

“Hey sis,” she said. “To what do I owe this honor?”

“I need some help, Kel.”

“What did you do this time?” The girl answered and crossed her arms.

“I kissed Harry.”

“Harry? That kid Sue threw up all over? Isn’t he a patient there?”

“Yes to both. I wasn’t thinking.”

“That’s kind of the story of your life, Mags.”

“Harsh!”

“Sorry, just getting a laugh. You did interrupt my hot date with a vid. You’re just lucky Sue isn’t here. So how’d it happen?”

Maggie frowned and replied, “We’ve been spending a lot of time together since I finished school and just finished a game on my gridbox. We’d died something like six times on the last level and I was really excited about finishing it, so I kind of pounced on him in the V world.”

“Okay, nothing too wrong with a little V action. If things don’t pick up by the time you get here, I’m probably going to go on the grid and get my freak on.”

“I seriously did not need to know that, Kel.”

“I’m sorry. Go on with your story of corrupting an innocent boy.”

“It’s not like that!” she protested.

“Well what’s it like then?”

Maggie grunted. Kelsey was frakking with her and having a laugh at her predicament. “So we were kissing in the V world and he slips his glasses off and starts kissing me for real.”

“Was he any good?”

Her sister’s question stopped her in her tracks. “Uh, kinda. Well, he wasn’t really that good, but it was really intense.”

“Intense you say. Tell me what happened to ‘What goes on in the grid stays in the grid?’ You’re violating the rules, Mags.”

“I know! I didn’t think he’d go all real world on me and then like an idiot I ask him what he’s doing.”

“Oh, what’d he say?”

“That he liked kissing the real me better.”

“That’s sweet. Is he cute?”

“Yes, which clearly doesn’t help matters.”

It was Kelsey’s turn to frown. “Alright, maybe I’m a little slow, but so far I’m hearing that you kissed a cute guy in the grid and he started kissing you in the real world. He says he likes you better than your avatar. Considering my last dinner date spent a full hour griping about how Sam Anders should have been rookie of the year and got robbed in the voting, I’m not seeing the problem so far.”

“He’s a patient here. His verbal skills are getting better and we can talk, but he can barely read and write. I broke up with Cyrus because we were headed in different directions. Fast forward a few weeks later I’m swapping spit with a different boy that I’m going to leave behind in a little over a month. Are you seeing the problem yet?”

“Okay you’ve got a problem. Are you worried about breaking his heart? Is he immature or just illiterate?”

Maggie had to think about that one. “I don’t think he’s immature or at least any more than any other guy our age. He’s illiterate, but he’s learning.”

“Okay, so you shouldn’t be expecting any love notes or him composing epic poems in the foreseeable future. Was that something you were counting on?”

“Kelsey!”

“Maggie, you’re blowing this way out of proportion,” Kelsey said. “You kissed a guy. I’ve seen you kiss lots of guys. It’s sort of disgusting if you ask me, but it’s just kissing. Just play it by ear when you see him next. If you still want to kiss him that might be a good sign. Have a summer fling. Who knows? Maybe keeping the home fires burning for Harry will keep you focused when you get here. If you don’t want him, just write it off as another one of your misadventures and try not to break his heart too badly.”

The way her sister put things made a tremendous amount of sense. Both Kelsey and Sue accused her of being a drama queen. Maybe there was something to that.

They continued talking and Kelsey made her send a picture of Harry to her and listened as she

dissected the young man's attributes. After another hour, Maggie felt better and her sister thanked her for an evening of entertainment and promised not to tell Sue about this.

Maggie didn't believe her for a second. Her sister would spill her guts the moment Sue entered the room. As for Harry, she'd sort him out in the morning...or the afternoon considering this was probably going to cost her a good night's rest.

-x-x-x-x-x-x

Harry's good feelings waned and turned to nervousness when he didn't see Maggie at breakfast. He went to the groundskeeper's shed and stared at the mower while cursing his teenaged self. There was a brief moment when he toyed with the idea of going into the chapel and saying a quick prayer to Aphrodite.

"This is beyond stupid. I've killed a Dark Lord. I've fought Death Eaters. Sirius would be giving me no end of shit if he saw me right now! He's probably watching and laughing his arse off right now."

Since the mower wasn't going to give him any answers or mow the grass by itself, Harry grabbed the fuel can and started filling it up. Finishing, he began pulling it out of the shed only to see an uncertain Maggie standing in doorway watching him. He knew precious little about the grooming rituals of Colonial females, but it looked like she had taken a little extra time with her appearance today.

Hopefully, it was a good sign.

"Hi," she said, looking every bit as nervous as he was. Strangely enough, her anxiety made him feel better.

"Morning," he said and smiled. "You look pretty."

"Thank you," she answered and paused before continuing, "So...this is awkward."

It was – very much in fact. Harry thought about being sick in before Quidditch matches or the panic when he saw the horntail. He realized this girl was no dragon. This wasn't life or death. It was just life.

Harry frowned, gathered his famed Gryffindor courage, and said, "It doesn't have to be."

"It doesn't?"

"No," he said firmly.

"Why not?" she demanded.

He paused, trying to make sure he got the words right. "I liked kissing you, last day. I mean last night! I think I'll like kissing you again today."

She rolled her eyes and said, "Someone sounds sure of himself."

Harry noted she was smiling. That was definitely a good sign.

"You know I'm going to Cap City to start college in a few weeks?"

He nodded. Some of the boys at Hogwarts used to talk about leaving their Muggle girlfriends home and wondering if they'd still be there when the term ended. In an odd way, he was about to turn into one of those girls.

"Just a train ride," he dismissed. "They're okay. You'll come back to visit."

"You remember riding on trains?" she asked.

"I think so," he lied. He doubted the trains here were anything like the Hogwarts Express.

Pulling the mower next to her, he stopped and gave her a lopsided smile.

"Alright," she said. "I guess we should see if there is anything to this."

Maggie stepped in and kissed him. He let her lead. After a few seconds of nuzzling, he felt things picking up. She had some kind of sweet tasting lip gloss on. Clearly, she'd put some thought into this as well. He also smelled a hint of fresh perfume.

He was glad he at least showered and brushed his teeth that morning. Suddenly he wished he had put more effort into his appearance.

Breaking away after what Harry considered a rather jolly way to spend a minute; she brushed her lips with her index finger and said, "Okay. Maybe there is something to this after all, but we still might crash and burn."

Harry shrugged and replied. "We blew up over twenty times trying to get to Kobol in the last three days."

"This isn't a game," she said.

"You're wrong, Maggie," Harry said. "It's the best game around."

"You're a strange one, Harry Potter." There was no malice in her words and she wrapped her arms around his waist. They stayed like that for a moment before she continued, "I should've known you were trouble the moment I saw you."

Harry chuckled and replied, "I knew you were trouble."

There was a sharp clearing of someone's throat and they saw the actual groundskeeper. They jumped apart so fast it was like they had burst into flames.

“Harry,” the older woman said. “Mrs. Edmondson wants to see you. You can mow when you get back.”

“Okay,” he answered. Casting a look at Maggie he said, “I’ll see you later today.”

-X-X-X-X-X-X

“Maggie? Do I want to know what’s going on between you and one of my patients?”

She’d known this conversation was coming ever since that crotchety old bitch caught them in the shed. Maggie half-hoped the woman wouldn’t say anything that might jeopardize all the free labor she was getting out of Harry, but her hopes were dashed the moment Maggie saw the look on the groundskeeper’s face.

Sure they’d never gotten along, but she thought the bitch liked Harry.

Maggie opted for the truth for this instance. “We kissed last night. It caught both of us off guard. I spent awhile talking to Kel about it and she recommended I kiss him again to see if it was just a onetime thing or whether I was really attracted to him.”

Her mom interlaced her fingers and rested her chin on her connected hands. “What did you decide?”

“I’m attracted to him.”

“I’m not certain he’s emotionally ready for something like that, Margret.”

Flushing, Maggie felt the need to defend Harry. She toyed with commenting on how his tongue would disagree with her mother’s professional opinion, but instead said, “I’ve been spending time with him. He’s more mature than you give him credit for. What did you want with him today anyway?”

“I needed him to sign some paperwork. We’re petitioning the Magistrate to get him an identity card and the other records, since his are nowhere to be found.”

Maggie breathed out the air she didn’t know she was holding. They were making official records for him. “Did you ask him about us? You didn’t interrogate him did you?”

“No, I didn’t hear about that until after he’d left. Although, it does explain why he seemed rather nervous when he first showed up. This does complicate things.”

“I’m not on staff here,” Maggie replied.

“Yes, but it does leave me in an uncomfortable position. I don’t want to see him suffer a setback. He’s made tremendous progress.”

“Nice way of saying your daughter is a problem, Mom.”

“He’s not a toy.”

“I know that! I’m trying to keep things casual and I certainly don’t want to make him suffer.” Maggie stopped and saw a hint of a smile in the corner of her mother’s mouth. “What?”

“I just remember apologizing to Harry for the names you called him back when you had your brush with the law. Now, you’re standing in front of me coming to his defense. Just let me enjoy the irony for a moment.”

Maggie sighed and said, “You were right. He is sweet...probably too sweet for someone like me.”

“Now I’ve heard everything!” her mother exclaimed. “Alright, I won’t try and stop you two. All I will say is take it very slow and use your best judgment. I know how things get in the Virtual World and Harry may not be adept at differentiating the two, so take it slow in there too.”

-x-x-x-x-x-x

After bed check, Harry asked Dobby to stay and watch the room, while he Apparated to the greenhouse. Maggie's insistence that they keep things "casual" gave him the distinct impression that she wouldn't be dropping by unannounced. When they met up, she said that her mom wasn't going to cause them problems. Harry had been around enough people who say one thing and then do the opposite to wonder how things would really be, but for now, he took it at face value. Besides, Nancy was no Severus Snape. She had much better hair.

Considering the relationship between the two, he wondered if Maggie had somehow learned to cast a *Confundus* charm on her sole parent.

Nancy had finally gotten through the bureaucratic red tape and, assuming a judge agrees that Harry's "memory loss" is permanent, he'd finally get some kind of proof that he was a living being. It was almost impossible traveling anywhere without one of those cards. Even that daytime trip to the museum raised a few eyebrows when he didn't have any identification.

"How are things Winky?" Harry asked the recuperating elf. She was hovering a water can, taking care of a row of plants. The elf was having difficulties walking or standing for greater than thirty minutes, so Harry had repaired and then animated an old wheelchair he'd found in a storeroom and equipped it with a cushioning charm. Winky mastered its operation in two days. Now, she moved about like she'd been using one all her life.

“I’m getting better, Master Harry. Dobby tells Winky that you are kissing the Maggie girl.”

Realization dawned on Harry that it might actually be the elves and not the students who were the source of Hogwarts’s legendary gossip network.

“Yes, he’s right.”

“Good. Master Harry is needing female companionship.”

He was about to protest, but on some level, she was right. He wasn't going to let this get him down. "You're probably right."

"Are you going out to practice your magic?"

"Yes, this wand takes some getting used to."

"Here I was worried that my magic was going to get weaker," he thought. *"My old wand was a precise tool. This bloody thing is a sledgehammer!"*

He tried a Muggle repeller on the first night and everyone left that wing of the building. The *Reducio* he cast shrank his dresser practically out of sight. Harry concluded that casting spells with the Elder Wand shouldn't be done on the grounds of Amanda's Open Arms. A simple spell might cause thousands of cubits in electrical damage.

"Dobby says he is trying to find you a proper cauldron."

"Considering I was never that good at the subject and I'll be swapping out ingredients, he'll probably have to find me several. If nothing turns up, I might have to work on my transfiguration and conjuration."

Harry knew this was a bad idea. Transfigured cauldrons were only for emergency situations. The residual magic can have unpredictable effects on anything brewed inside. Looking around the greenhouse, it was still rather Spartan. Most of Harry's stuff had been relocated here when Maggie started coming to his room. He didn't want to take any chances. His furniture conjurations were utilitarian at best. The few "nice" bits of furniture were the result of Dobby and him visiting the nearby city dump and recovering some items. *Reparo* and *Scourgify* made a fearsome combination. He might be able to augment his income by fixing things and reselling them until he could actually get a paying job or whenever he could start selling the crops growing in the greenhouse.

Magic was, of course, bringing in the crops quicker. Dobby had severely understated his farming skills. The elf's abilities far outstripped everything Harry knew about the subject either from school or his time in Petunia's yard.

Glancing at his other elf, Harry still felt bad over Winky's injuries and had made more of an effort to get to know her better. The female was considerably more level headed than Dobby. Not that he wanted to know, but he had her tell him about raising Barty Crouch, Junior because it was important to her. She asked him about the things Dobby had told her about Harry's time at the Dursley's.

Dobby had some bizarre ideas about his time with the "nasty, nasty Muggles." Sure they were pretty miserable excuses for human beings, but the elf's distorted imagination dreamed up a few things that most certainly did not happen.

"Winky needs to heal physically, but the more I hear...the more I think Dobby needs to heal

mentally.”

After keeping her company for the better part of two hours, Harry Apparated to a spot where he could overlook the city of Delphi and work on his magic. This area was outside of the park boundaries, so he didn't have to worry about the cameras that caught his Animagus form. He cast a strong Muggle repeller to ensure that if there were any campers in the area that they wouldn't travel in this direction. The airbase was north, about fifteen kilometers on the other side of the city. From what Harry could gather, the airbase was a training command and they didn't fly over the city at night because of the civilian populace.

Starting with a decent sized rock, Harry animated it and made it grow four legs. By the time he was finished with it, the construct looked like a stone cow. The budding prankster in him considered making ten of these statues and leaving them in a circle next to a hiking trail.

“It could be the Caprica Cowhenge!”

He decided to go the full way and transfigure it from stone to bovine. When he finished, he immobilized it just like Dumbledore and Sirius would and gave it a thorough inspection. The definition around the legs looked real enough, but the whole area around the udders was a certifiable mess. He'd screwed that up completely.

Switching to his holly wand, Harry redid the transfiguration with what seemed like considerably more effort and checked the work again. It wasn't perfect, but it was much closer.

Disappointed that fine control using the Elder Wand eluded him, he returned the cow to the original base material and wondered how best to correct this. If he were being honest with himself, he wasn't in the mood to keep casting spells.

“Maybe this thing with Maggie has me all worked up?” he thought, and looked out at the city. Up until now, he'd resisted the urge to go exploring beyond his invisible trips to the dump, but he figured his language skills were now good enough to where he could function in a conversation.

Thinking back, he'd never really been exploring in a big city. It wasn't like the Dursleys had taken him anywhere. The few times he'd gone to London were either to get to King's Cross, Diagon Alley, or the Ministry. Even his time "on the run" with Sirius and Dumbledore kept them away from the large cities.

Exhaling slowly, Harry realized that his days of at the Open Arms weren't really doing him as much good as they used to. It was time to get out and see this society. There was only so much he could learn by looking at broadcasts, talking to the staff and patients, and using Maggie's gridbox. Bolstered by his first time kissing someone that ended in mutual enjoyment, Harry made his decision. It was time to take in a few sights.

Delphi was nowhere near the size of Caprica City. The pictures he had seen on the videos were somewhat intimidating. From the statistics on it, Harry suspected that the population of England's top five cities could be contained within. Delphi was probably closer to London's size.

Going back into the greenhouse, he let Winky know that he was going exploring and grabbed the few Colonial coins he'd either found or been given since his arrival. It was a paltry sum, but he took it anyway.

Using his cloak, he Apparated toward the lights of the city. Other than the museum where he arch was located and a couple of instances where Nancy Edmondson had taken him into Delphi, this was all unfamiliar territory.

He found the areas around the skyscrapers to be mostly empty this time of night. A few windows were illuminated and he could see an occasional person at a desk or cleaning staff.

"Right now, that's probably one of the few jobs I could actually get when I finally have an ID."

Growing bored, he decided to Apparate to the top of a building and look for someplace more interesting. He saw lights and vehicles a few streets over. With a quick crack, Harry appeared closer to that area.

"Looks like a nightclub district," Harry thought. Through the window of the club across the street from the building he now stood on top of, he saw a topless waitress bringing a tray of drinks around. Like the unisex bathroom, this took some getting used to. From the couple of times he'd been out on the grid with Maggie as his only supervision, he knew that the society tolerated a greater level of nudity than where he came from. People, especially in the Virtual world, behaved like none of their actions carried any type of consequence.

Of course when Maggie's avatar got uninhibited, it ended with Harry getting his first meaningful kiss. It amused him to no end to contrast her grid behavior with the considerably more restrained real world version.

Using his old wand, Harry cast a glamor charm to make him appear like Sirius Black. Harry certainly didn't want to be recognized.

Another apparition and he was walking down the sidewalk and trying to feel like a normal person out and enjoying the nightlife. Harry was certain that he couldn't look more out of place if he tried. Still he managed to enter some kind of pub and gaming hall filled with loud noise, music, and laughter. The most "out of control" party experience Harry had to this point had been the parties Fred and George Weasley put together after a Quidditch match.

The scene in front of him made that look like a bloody tea party.

"Can I get you anything?" a voice asked. Harry turned to find the topless waitress he'd seen from the other side of the street. He tried his best not to stare...or drool.

"Something sweet," he said. In his confusion the first thing that came to mind was a butterbeer.

She smiled and replied, "Okay, how about a glass of Scorpion Green?"

Having no clue what that was, Harry nodded. He sincerely doubted that anything in the Cyrannus

system would knock him on his arse the way Fire-whiskey did. There was the added bonus that if he did like it, he could have Hufflepuff's cup make a glass or two for him.

"I win again!" Harry heard a shout and it was emphasized with a thump on the table.

Turning, he spotted the source. It was a woman wearing a military leather jacket, waving a bottle of alcohol in one hand and using the other to nudge the pile of cubits on the table into her pile. It looked like she'd just won a decent sized pot. She tilted the bottle and sloshed more down.

"Slow down there, Kara," the man sitting next to her said. He was a tall and lean man who also wore the same type of jacket. Obviously, they were from the nearby base. Looking around the room, he saw several others and wondered whether this was a regular occurrence or if a class had just graduated.

She dismissed his concerns with a wave of her hand. "I got this, Helo. The drunker I get, the easier it is for me to take their money. I can do this all night!"

Harry knew the card game was called pyramid. He'd seen some of the more coherent patients and even a few of the staff play, but he hadn't learned much beyond the basics. Back on Earth, Vernon Dursley liked to spend a few pounds on the races now and then, but the Colonials appeared to really enjoy their gambling. Others at the edge of the table made side bets on which of the five players would take the next hand.

Watching the cards being dealt, Harry concentrated on Kara's eyes. They seemed to move quickly about; drinking in her opponents faster than her mouth consumed the beverage. She offered only a small token bet and Harry could tell that the woman knew she wasn't going to win the hand. He turned to study the "side action," but realized that you could only bet on who would win the hand, not who wouldn't.

The waitress returned with his neon green beverage and told him that it would be four cubits. Harry added two more for a tip and hoped that it was enough. She gave him a smile and sauntered away. He had ten more in his pocket, but hoped the woman at the table would help him increase that number shortly. The glass of Scorpia Green was sweet and rather potent when Harry tested it. It had a fruity aftertaste, but was acceptable.

Sure enough, the ensign lost the hand. Harry watched her eyes again on the next hand and saw the fleeting hint of a predatory gleam in them. It was good enough for Harry. He bet his five cubits on Kara to win.

A minute later, Harry had an additional five cubits. Twenty minutes later, he'd turned his ten cubits into thirty. There was a brief moment where Harry caught Kara's eyes and he felt something similar to the featherlight touch of Legilimency that reminded him of Dumbledore, but much weaker. Even with his meager training, Harry brushed it aside with ease.

It definitely shocked Harry and Kara frowned at him. During his instruction in the mental arts, Dumbledore had mentioned that extremely perceptive and those who trained as duelists were

capable of a passive form of Legilimency that he called skimming. It wasn't intrusive and could only pick up just a hint of information. This Kara woman seemed able to skim. It was probably why she was able to easily best the other players at the table, despite her obviously intoxicated state.

She shook her head, clearing the cobwebs in her mind and returned her attention to the game, but Harry had disrupted whatever mojo she had and Kara lost the next two hands and appeared less certain. Harry stopped betting on her while he still had twenty-five cubits and finished the drink he'd been nursing. He left and wanted to get back outside. Encountering even a weak form of magic here on Caprica wasn't something he'd expected. He'd seen some history programs about the accuracy of various oracles and knew that latent talents might exist. Poking around the grid there had been some legends of a group of semi-tribal warriors called the Borellian Nomen who swore by an ancient chieftain who reportedly could take the form of an animal.

There was also anecdotal and even some captured evidence of people who claimed to be "touched by the gods" and given great strength in a time of need or incredible bursts of speed that saved them from certain death. These miracles were attributed to the blessings of the gods, but to Harry they sounded more like bouts of accidental magic.

He Apparated back to the roof and waited for Kara and her friend called Helo to exit. He wanted to follow her and perhaps learn if there was something he was missing. Twenty minutes passed before he saw a familiar pair in green military flight jackets staggering out of the gaming hall and down the sidewalk nearby. The blonde, short-haired female seemed to be either pretending to be more drunk than she'd let on, or the alcohol had finally taken its toll on her.

"Come on Kara," the male said. "Let's get a cab back to the base."

"Frak that Karl!" She slurred her reply. "We graduated and earned our wings tonight! Don't you get it? We're the real deal now! No more trainee Thrace or trainee Agathon. Never again gonna be a nugget! Nothing's going to stop us now and I'm not going to stop partying as long as I can still stand!"

The male named Karl laughed and said, "Well considering you're not doing so hot right now, I think we're about done."

The woman made a clumsy dismissive gesture with her left hand and then grabbed a lamppost. She tugged jacket open and looked at her shirt. "Did I wear a bra tonight?"

Her only slightly more sober partner answered, "I don't remember dressing you, Kara."

Pulling her shirt up allowed Harry to confirm that she in fact wasn't wearing a bra. A couple of guys walking on the other side of the street shouted their approval. Kara threw them a crude hand gesture.

"I could have sworn I had one when we left the barracks."

Harry popped over to the next roof as the duo started walking again. Their antics were amusing.

“You were in the bathroom back there for a long time,” Karl said. “Did you make a new friend?”

“Why? Are you jealous? Don’t worry, Helo. You’re my best friend.”

“I think you meant to say, ‘only friend,’” he said.

“I can’t help it if the rest of those wannabees aren’t fit to polish my boots. Good thing you are, even if you’re gonna fly a Craptor instead of a real ship.”

Karl laughed and said, “Real ships have a FTL drive, Starbuck. I’ve seen you try to calculate a jump. You have the same look on your face when you’re passing gas.”

“*What the hell is a Starbuck?*” Harry wondered as the female protested that she doesn’t break wind. “*Wait what’s that?*”

He saw four men walking in their direction. Two of them were the ones he’d been betting with and the other two had been at the table with Kara. They knew good and well how many cubits she carried. The men moved casually, but one of them kept looking to the sides of the street to see if anyone was watching. Harry got a bad feeling and didn’t like where this was headed. The duo turned the corner and started down a sparsely populated side street.

As the four men continued their leisurely pursuit and separated from each other. Harry switched made sure the wand in his hand was his old wand and not the Deathstick. If he had to intervene, he needed his magic under control. A ridiculously overpowered stunner might stop a person's heart.

Harry ran through his lists of spells and started with the ones that would be hardest to see. The red light of a stunner was far too noticeable, but a tripping jinx is a thin ribbon of pale blue color that could blend in easily. He spotted an alley where he could conduct his little ambush, but Kara spun around and saw the quartet.

"Hey!" she shouted. "I know you guys. Karl, these were the guys who gave me all their cubits at the card table. You frakkers suck!"

Kara degenerated into a fit of hysterical laughter, while Karl gave the appearance of a man who knew they were in trouble.

"Let's just take it easy," Karl said.

Harry interpreted the words one way, but the others took that as an invitation to charge. Agathon was larger and in much better shape, but they had the numbers. Kara threw a couple of wild punches, one of which landed, before the man assaulting her threw her up against the side of the building. As she slid to the ground, Harry decided he'd seen enough. Apparating a couple of feet behind the man towering over Kara, he sent a stunner into the man's back at point blank range.

One of the goons holding Karl's arms got a clear Confundus charm while the other took a tripping jinx and fell into the street, releasing the pilot's arm.

Karl spun the confused man in between him and the one who had been working over his gut and mashed his fist into the nearest face.

The one in the street turned and saw Harry. He scrambled to his feet and came running. Harry let him get close enough before whispering, "Stupefy."

The red jet hit the man in the stomach and Harry caught the man as he fell and made a show of doing a fake punch using his wand hand. Pulling back for a second "punch," Harry slid his wand up his sleeve.

Harry dumped the man onto the sidewalk and saw that the fourth had run off. Karl looked at him, over to Kara, and then at the two bodies on the ground.

"Nice moves," Karl said.

"Lightweights," Harry replied. "You didn't need my help. Are you calling the police?"

The man rubbed his cheek and spit a little blood out of his mouth. "No, we're flying off planet tomorrow and I have no desire to spend my last night here filling out paperwork. I say leave we leave 'em. Besides, she's in no shape to be around any authority figures. Of course the same could be said even if she wasn't drunk."

His plan seemed reasonable enough to Harry.

"I don't want to sound like I'm an ingrate, but you look a little young to be out and about at this time of night."

Harry suddenly realized his glamor charm must have worn off. Trying to hide his surprise and cursing himself for not renewing it, he shrugged and said, "Boyish good looks. It's a blessing and a curse."

Karl didn't look entirely convinced, perhaps even a bit wary, and Harry decided to change the topic. "Do you need help with your friend?"

His words came out broken and uneven as his nerves began getting the better of him. Internally, Harry grimaced, knowing he'd overestimated his verbal skills and there was more work to do.

The man eyed him curiously before walking over and bending down on one knee. Harry followed as Karl asked, "Starbuck? Are you okay?"

"My head hurts, but I saw pretty colors," she slurred. "Can we go back to the base now?"

He helped her up and as he did so, Harry cast a quick sobering charm on both of them. Karl immediately shook his head. From Kara's face, Harry thought it might take several minutes to set

in.

"Thanks again. I didn't catch your name," Karl said, still looking at him oddly.

"No problem. I didn't give it. Safe travels," Harry replied and started crossing the street.

"Hey, wait!" Karl said, but Harry was certain he'd overstayed his welcome.

Stepping into an alley, Harry disappeared with a soft crack, returning to the rooftop where he'd left his cloak, and watched them. Karl stared into the alley for a moment before helping Kara walk back to the relative safety of the bar district. The muggers seemed like they'd been just looking to rob the two pilots and rough them up, so he hadn't saved any lives tonight, but it did give him a good feeling knowing that he'd done something more than just mow the grass, magically repair broken glass, or a crack in the wall. It balanced the books for those extra cubits in Harry's pocket.

Actually encountering a person with even the smallest amount of magical talent made Harry feel less isolated and alone. It wasn't much, but even so, he'd take a pinch of positive karma where he could get it. Too bad that female pilot was leaving Caprica, but maybe he'd find others out there.

Either way, he would be interacting with this new world on a regular basis, and this wasn't a bad start at all.