

“Don’t you have anything else to do other than play bodyguard with me?” Harry asked tiredly feeling the shadow of a familiar woman falling on him once again.

“What? You don’t like me hanging around you anymore?” Nymphadora or Nym as he calls her for his own safety, asked him while he was combing through the shelves of Flourish and Blotts for some interesting books on Charms.

“Oh, I do. You’re quite the fun character to be around Nym. But you seem to have no idea about something called personal space.”

“Whatever do you mean Harry?” Nym asked, batting her eyelashes innocently at him while looping her arm into his.

“Exactly.” Harry grumbled as she made sure he could not slip away from her again.

“Sorry, Harry. This is not the time for the rebellious teenager in you to emerge. You know how precarious the situation is. So, don’t act like a baby.” said Nym flicking his nose.

“Ow! Stop abusing me Nym.”

“Then behave you, little troublemaker. You gave me the slip in the robe store.”

“That’s not my fault. You were taking ages in there fussing over robes and jackets.” Harry complained, only to get flicked on the nose again.

“Ow!”

Harry blinked owlishly while rubbing his sore nose as he came face to face with a book with a peculiar title that read, Charms: The quizzer to test yourself.

“Huh. Interesting.” Harry muttered, looking at the description of the book written inside. The book was interactive offering several quiz sessions along with a wide repository of spells in the Charms frontier. “Yep, I’ll take that.”

He took the book into a collecting basket along with all the interesting books he found along with fifth-year prescribed books.

“Runes, Arithmancy and Charms. I thought you’d be hunting for books on curses and hexes. Just one look at the collected books in that basket paints you as a nerd.” Nym commented from nearby looking into his basket while leaning against a shelf.

“I’ve got more than enough books on DADA. Besides you never know when runes and wards can come in handy.” Harry said moving to the counter with all the books he collected.

“Yep. Definitely a nerd. How in the name of Merlin did you end up in Gryffindor?” Nym asked incredulously.

“I’m brave and heroic. What more do you need to become a cub in the House of lions?” Harry joked.

As they were exiting the book store Harry found himself facing Hermione who was with her parents.

“Harry!” Hermione came running towards him enveloping him in a hug.

“Oh, hey there Hermione. I didn’t expect to find you here today.” Harry said, patting her on the back.

“You would’ve if you had written to me.” Said Hermione, pulling him aside from the earshot of her parents after he greeted them properly.

“As I explained in my last letter the new wards don’t allow outside communications of any sort and Hedwig was strictly told to just deliver your birthday present and return.” Said Harry, keeping Nym and Hermione’s parents in his line of sight.

“I’m thankful though. You finally escaped those awful people.” Hermione sounded genuinely happy for him.

“Oh, yeah. I didn’t get to say a proper goodbye to the Dursleys but that’s probably for the better.”

His expression must have shown something Hermione was uncomfortable with because she quickly changed the subject.

“So, living with Sirius. How was that?” Hermione asked.

“Can’t complain. It’s been a rollercoaster ride for sure.” said Harry, thinking about his many trysts with Fleur under Sirius’ roof. “We even managed to go on a Holyhead Harpies game a few days back which was fun.”

“So, you like it then?” Hermione asked, her brown eyes lighting up when he nodded affirmatively.

“Umm... Harry. Why is she with you?” Hermione pointed at Nym.

“Oh, she’s on Order business.”

“I don’t quite follow.” Hermione said, looking curiously at Nym who was chatting away with her parents.

“Order of the Pheonix. It’s a group of wizards and witches led by Dumbledore in the last wizarding war who fought against Death eaters. My parents were also part of that group.” Harry explained.

“Oh, I see. So Tonks is your bodyguard?” she asked.

“More like an unwanted bodyguard. The only reason I allowed her to tag along is that she’s family and annoying as hell if you cross her. The other characters of the Order of Fried chicken are a bunch of pacifists or useless bums. At least, Nym is an Auror.”

“Order of Fried chicken?” Hermione guffawed.

“Oh yes. Want to hear the name I came up for our mighty headmaster? Dumb-ass-door, that’s what Sirius and I call him.”

“Harry!” Hermione hit him with a small velvet bag in her hand.

“What? The man made my life a hell of a lot more difficult with the stunt he pulled at the feast. As if anyone was going to believe Voldemort was resurrected after all these years.”

“About that. You owe me an explanation.” Hermione huffed, looking irritated at not knowing what really happened at the end of the Third Task or why Harry was keeping everything close to his chest.

“I’ll tell you soon but not here.” said Harry, looking around at the busy street of Diagon Alley.

“All right. Mrs Weasley invited me to stay over at the Burrows but I thought it’d be better to decline. So, we’ll meet on the train I suppose.”

“At the train then.”

They parted ways and Harry was quite relieved that he had the presence of mind to send a letter explaining his situation along with Hermione's birthday present during the holidays. Otherwise, it'd have been one awkward conversation that was waiting for him today. It was only after he finally returned to Grimmauld place and was arranging the books he brought that he finally remembered that he forgot to tell Hermione about the prefect badge.

'Oh, well. It'll be a nice surprise for her on the train.' Harry thought, resuming his activity.

**XXXXXXXX**

Harry had no shame in admitting that he found Quidditch wholly not interesting as a sport. For entertainment value, yes, Quidditch was one exhilarating sport to watch so long as the players were skilled with a broom. But the scoring system just did not make much sense. He thought that the sport would've been better off without that snitch messing up the game. It was ridiculous and stupid to assign the snitch so many points. Whoever created this game needed to be introduced to Carrom. Though it is a board game the Queen (red disk) only has five points, the highest among the carrom men of either colour. By keeping the point difference between the carrom men relatively low the players have fair shot at going at it with a battle of skill rather than luck.

And that was the failing point of Quidditch. It was a battle of luck rather than skill most of the time. If the Seeker gets lucky and catches the snitch early on the game ends abruptly. The reverse was also true as the game could go on indefinitely if both seekers fail to capture the snitch. Winning or losing, in the end, gets decided by the snitch making the chasers and their hard work almost irrelevant in most games. In conclusion, the snitch was the fun killer of the game.

Unfortunately, he was required to play the position of seeker when he returns to Hogwarts which was something he was not looking forwards to. Not that he was gunk at flying or anything. All things considered, he was quite good at flying but the job of a seeker looks to be a boring one compared to a seeker. He found that out through experiencing the position of a chaser.

Harry banked his broom to take a hard right angling it in such a way that his left side was open to making a move. He punched the quaffle with all his might and managed to put it straight through one of the rings despite Sirius' best efforts to prevent otherwise.

"Woohoo!" Nym celebrated pumping her fists in the air as she soared toward his side. "Nice one there Harry."

"Oh, yes. This is definitely more fun than chasing after the snitch." Harry laughed feeling the thrill of the game.

"Well, you certainly inherited James' skill with a quaffle." said Sirius, coming down from guarding the rings on his broom.

"Wait. I thought he was a seeker?" Harry asked confused.

"He was both. You see Harry your father played both positions. He played seeker till his fifth year and later switched to the position of a chaser when he became Gryffindor's captain."

"No one found fault in that?" Harry asked incredulously.

“Umm, why would anyone find fault in that? Mind you, James was dab hands at catching the snitch but he emerged at the top in Chaser tryouts. Besides, your dad was convinced Edgar Stone was going to be a better seeker which he was by the way. We won the Cup in the Sixth year. It was one wild night of celebration.” Sirius said wistfully reminiscing of the good old days.

“Enough playing around you three. It’s nearly sunset. Go clean yourself up. Dinner is almost ready.” Andromeda shouted from the kitchen making Nym groan.

“She always finds some way to ruin my fun.” Nym complained.

“Grow up kid. You are an Auror and a grown woman. Do you really want to spend your time playing quidditch of all things?” said Sirius, while securing the brooms and the quaffle in a cabin.

“Look who’s talking.” Nym growled.

“Hey, I’m free to play quidditch and do all kinds of stuff. I was locked up in that hellhole for thirteen years. I’ve to make up for my lost time with all kinds of fun but you’re not like me or Harry. It’s high time you get serious in your career and settle down with a family of your own.” Said Sirius, walking past Nym and Harry.

“He’s pulling my leg, right?” Nym asked in a near whisper to Harry.

“He has to be. He’s acting all responsible and mature...oh!” A light of understanding passed through Harry’s eyes and he discreetly pointed at Brigitte who appeared out of nowhere greeting Sirius with a kiss.

“He’s acting like that for her?” Nym asked amusedly.

“Oh yes. He’s whipped.”

Harry and Nym shared a snicker at Sirius’ expense.

“I heard that, Harry.” Sirius called back.

“Damn his dog ears.” Harry muttered which made Nym laugh hard and began teasing Sirius earnestly throughout dinner.

The dinner in the Tonks’ household was fairly a decorous affair. The family dinner was largely for the benefit of Sirius as the old dog has decided to take things more seriously with Brigitte. Sirius was not the one to ask for the ‘vetting’ of Brigitte as Harry had first thought but it was an initiative taken by Andromeda. Harry, Nym and Ted Tonks kept themselves out of Andromeda’s way as she poked and prodded at Brigitte and Sirius throughout the dinner.

“She’s like a mother hen fussing over the chicks.” Nym murmured against the napkin so that only Harry could hear.

“Watch and learn dear cousin. It won’t be long before you sit in Sirius’s place.” Harry muttered back.

His quip earned a squeak of laughter from Ted Tonks keying into the fact that their conversation was not as secretive as they had hoped.

Harry, Sirius and Brigitte returned to Grimmulad place with their bellies full and just about ready to retire to bed. While Sirius and Brigitte turned in for the night Harry was up and about in his room with the information Andromeda discreetly handed him over before leaving their home. It had taken her a lot of time and resources but she did manage to unearth some information from the Goblins

about the mysterious benefactor of Lucius Malfoy. There was not much to go by as Andromeda's source in Gringotts refused to hand over any names. Only the names of the many Dwarven banks involved in the transaction across the world were mentioned in the parchment. While the information was wholly useless in identifying the source it gave him a bleak picture. The names of the banks also gave him the names of the magical nations where the banks were located.

A total of sixteen transactions were made to Lucius' Gringotts vault. Most of the transactions came from the Kingdom of Thailand, the Chola kingdom of southern India, the Principality of Oman and several scattered African nations like Mayotte, Madagascar and Mozambique. There was even a bank of Alaskan origin. Harry was quite surprised to see these locations on the parchment.

"I didn't even know there were magical nations like these." Harry muttered, shaking his head at how small-minded he was.

'Of course, there is a diverse group of magical nations scattered around the globe.'

He frowned however at the select nations that housed these banks from where Malfoy got his gold to escape the debt trap. It looked as if someone went the extra mile to keep out banks of European origin from taking part in this plot. He just smelled something fishy going on. If anything, he'd have expected Malfoy to get aid from his extended relatives in Italy or France.

'Malfoy is not so thoroughly connected, is he?' Harry thought, once again looking at the obscure magical nations and most of them were even ruled by royal families judging by the names.

Then something clicked in his mind. The well-connected network of financial aid and Lucius' miraculous survival from the graveyard never made sense. He was sure he saw Malfoy go down with several bullet wounds that night.

'An unlimited supply of gold and magical knowledge to heal someone from critical wounds.'

That line of thought led him straight to his newly revealed grandmother who also happened to know what exactly transpired in the graveyard.

"Lucius Malfoy is her creature?" Harry muttered disconcertedly.

It was a wild conjecture on his part but Harry was sure he was onto something. Otherwise, he'd have to assume that Lucius Malfoy has powerful friends with very deep pockets and powerful healers at the man's beck and call.

'No, Perenelle Flamel is involved somehow. One way or another I'll have answers.' he vowed.

Harry knew just how he was going to get those answers.

**XXXXXXX**

Harry marched down to the edge of the wards that surrounded the Greengrass manor. He was about to tap the ward with his magic announcing his presence but before he could do that the wards parted making him blink in surprise. He only paused briefly before he strode in purposefully through the garden of the Greengrass family.

He found Damien and Lady Evelyn in the garden drinking tea.

“Harry, welcome. This is quite the unexpected surprise.” Damien greeted him with a pleasant smile.

“Enough with your games Greengrass. I know how Malfoy magicked the gold he needed in such a short time and how he remains as healthy as a horse despite other circumstances.”

“I don’t quite follow, Harry.”

“I know.” Harry emphasized. “You made those transactions too squeaky clean. You and Perenelle Flamel are all involved in this. Deny all you want but I know. You used me for your gain and somehow Malfoy is now working for you.”

“You make it sound like you didn’t benefit from our partnership.” said Damien. “Sirius came out a free man and he was suitably compensated with millions of Galleons making him the richest man in Britain. And you have a place to stay and the protection of House Black instead of wallowing in misery with your muggle relatives.”

It took Harry a considerable amount of effort to not blow a gasket. He forced down the impulse to just rage at the man and instead burned away the emotions tugging at his mind that was bombarding him with irrational thoughts. When he began to think clearly he realized he was wasting time with the Greengrasses. These people were pawns on the board. In a game of chess, the most powerful pieces are castled inside waiting for the opportune moment to deal maximum damage to the enemy.

‘I’m wasting time by focusing too much on the pawns.’ he thought.

“I want to talk with Perenelle.” Harry said.

He saw Damien Greengrass eye his wife and at that moment he realized he had assumed wrong. It was not Damien that was pulling the strings here. It was the man’s wife. He saw Lady Greengrass nod at her husband.

“That can be arranged. In the meantime, how about you enjoy some tea.” said Damien, a chair suddenly appearing in the garden courtesy of a house elf. “I’m sure Daphne and Astoria will also enjoy your company.”

XXXXXXX

“I apologize, my lady. Mr Potter was very insistent that he needed to meet you.” Evelyn Greengrass said, shooting an apologetic look at her mentor.

“You know Evelyn if I’m required to handle even the littlest of things, I’m failing to see what use I have for you.” said Perenelle.

“My lady, I thought it prudent for you to speak first so that we may not lose Mr Potter like we lost Miss Evans.”

Evelyn however wilted under her mentor’s stare.

“If you can’t even handle a teenager then I’m afraid I’ve vastly underestimated your abilities, my dear.” Perenelle shook her head walking away.

She finally found her grandson in the company of Damien Greengrass by the fireplace.

“Leave us, Damien.” she said, entering the room.

“My lady.” Greengrass bowed his head before walking away.

Perenelle flicked her palm forcing the door to close shut behind her.

“Now then dear grandson. I assume you’ve taken a peek at my blood and saw for yourself that you are my blood.”

“Yes. But you should know blood matters very little in the world.” said Harry, his green eyes darkening making Perenelle smirk.

“Oh, don’t be so quick to judge. You who have been gifted with the tongue of serpents should know that blood is not without its uses.” said Perenelle, taking her seat in a chair. “But we are not here to argue about blood. Take a seat and ask away Harry. I’ll see whether I can answer your queries.”

“You used me to trap Malfoy into a debt trap only to seep in and rescue the man at his lowest moment. You turned him to your side possibly using a magical contract or a vow. If I’m to guess, you now have a mole in the Dark Lord’s camp, one that is high enough in the pecking order.”

“All thanks to you. It was a welcome surprise that you decimated the upper echelons of the Death Eaters. Good work, by the way.” Perenelle interrupted.

Going by the look on her grandson’s face she knew that annoyed him.

“Thanks.” Harry gritted out. “So, tell me? What are you playing at? What is your interest in Voldemort?”

“In Voldemort?” Perenelle scoffed. “Nothing. My interest has always been in you, Harry.”

“In me?”

“Of course. Tell me Harry? What do you know of the Peverell brothers?” Perenelle asked.

The way all colour drained from her grandson’s face and the light of understanding frankly surprised her. Nonetheless, it made her all the more certain that it was time to gift the boy a small peek into what his destiny holds. Not all of it but she could leave enough breadcrumbs for the boy to get interested in following her.

‘In time, perhaps, he’ll understand the true calling of the blood pumping through his veins.’