

Waking was painful. Every nerve surged with a fire that left her chest burning and her mind screaming out for relief. Her arms felt heavy from disuse and her vision was fuzzy around the edges. Looking up from where she was hunched on the cold stone ground, she could just make out two figures in the room with her. One was dark and planted firmly on the ground, while the other was floating just a few inches above it.

Words were spoken but she didn't have the presence of mind to make them out. Shaking her head, she tried to clear the grogginess, to find some semblance of clarity. A woman's voice pierced through the malaise then, "...ther, are you alright?"

The words sounded odd to her, and yet she understood their meaning. *How strange?* Again, she was asked, "Mother, are you alright?"

Mother? Oh, Helena. You've come home. But her faint hope shattered as she looked at her daughter, "Helena?" *What has happened? Why is my daughter a ghost? And the blood?* Her head pounded painfully, and she reached for her temple to drive it away.

"Mother," Helena hung there, shining with a silver translucence, "how do you feel?"

"Like..." The words sounded odd to her ear, but she managed to respond all the same, "Like... I've been run over by a hippogriff, or fifty."

"How much do you remember?"

Her intellect had once been a thing of legend, but as she racked her brain everything felt just out of reach, "I... uh... not much... What... what's happened?"

There was a moment of long silence and then Helena spoke again as she moved to hover just in front of her, "So much... it will take time to explain..."

A shadow of a memory returned to her as she looked around the room. *This is my room, my office. What was I doing the last time I was here?* And that's when it returned to her, "I was dying... from grief... from losing you."

"From my betrayal." Helena corrected her, but Rowena could only shake her head.

"No, your theft... was my doing. It was born of my own mistakes and my own obsessions. I wish... I wish I never made that cursed diadem. That I never made you feel like you were unimportant." They were words she'd spent months pondering as the weight of her own idiocy pressed down on her very soul.

Shimmering silver tears appeared in the corner of Helena's eyes, "I was a foolish young woman, mother. I only understood the depth of your love for me after you sent for me."

The words should have been comforting, but instead Rowena could only look at her in horror, "The Baron? I sent the Baron..." she looked at the blood stained dress that would stay with her for eternity in her undeath, "He..."

"Always had a temper," Helena said dispassionately, "and he didn't take my refusal well."

"Another of my many mistakes." Rowena was still a proud woman, and she would not cry, but her throat burned with the guilt. Finally, she managed to find her strength and she pushed herself up.

It was only then that she took note of the other person in the room. He was taller, with pitch dark hair, and emerald-green eyes. He was watching the whole interaction with keen interest. He wore... odd clothing, they were neither wizard's robes nor the garb of Muggles. It added to the growing list of oddities. *Like how it is I'm speaking an entirely different language I don't remember learning.*

"I... was dying?" Rowena said slowly, eyes filled with love and remorse for her ethereal daughter, "What has happened?"

"You gave your body and your magic to Hogwarts." The school, outside of her daughter, truly was her greatest creation. She would happily give her own life to protect it, to keep it safe for even another year, "Tied yourself to the very stones and magic of it for centuries."

A shadow of a memory came then, of the ward stones, of embracing the heart of living magic on which they'd built the castle. It was a worthy end for a flawed woman. Her will had been in every stone of the old castle since that day, "I suppose that explains why I can speak this odd language." She'd learned much in those years, but all of it was just on the fringes of her mind, as hard to grasp as mist.

"It's English mother," Helena said, mildly amused, "Just a millennia later."

"I'm sorry, a millennium?" Rowena asked, shocked. When she joined with the castle, she'd thought it would be for eternity, a noble purpose after so many mistakes. But now she was displaced from her own time by a thousand years, very much alive. *And very much healed, too.*

"Yes, mother." Helena looked like she was blushing.

With every passing second, the strength returned to her bones, "And why have you retrieved me after so long?"

"Because of me." The young man finally spoke up.

"Explain." She told him imperiously.

"A descendant of Salazar Slytherin has taken up the mantle of a Dark Lord." Just the mention of Salazar made her blood boil. The arrogant man had been nothing but trouble, and if it hadn't been for his old friendship with Godric, she never would have allowed him to be part of their dream. *To think, anyone with magic is inherently less than another simply because of their blood.* "It was Helena's belief that you'd be willing to help me in bringing him to an end. I need... someone with experience. With the headmaster dead..." He left the rest unsaid.

Whatever Rowena had been expecting, that wasn't it, "Much as I detest Salazar and his beliefs..."

"He defiled your diadem, mother and Helga's cup as well." Helena interjected before she could get going, "He turned them into horcruxes." Her diadem had been an achievement, one that caused her no end of trouble, but an achievement all the same. To hear it was being used to keep some vile scion of Salazar's alive... it was infuriating. *And dear Helga's cup, a tool of such great kindness to suffer such a horrible fate.*

Bile rose in her throat at the very implication, "From everything I heard of Herpo, even he wasn't mad enough to split his soul more than once." She was quite knowledgeable on soul magic, it was what allowed her to tie herself to the castle. *It was also the thing that Salazar most often pestered me about. How often did he consider making a horcrux of his own?*

“Do you know where they are?” Rowena asked the young man in front of her.

He ran a hand along the back of his neck, “Uh... no. I have some hunches and a few leads, but that’s about it.” That wasn’t necessarily a problem. There was magic that could be used to find such things if you only knew exactly what you were looking for and had the necessary knowledge.

“One is here,” Helena spoke up, shame tinging her voice. The young man’s eyes snapped to her ghostly daughter, “We need only ask the Room for hidden things. I... I told a handsome, charming young student where he could find it... in Albania. I... didn’t expect what would come of it.”

The young man looked incensed but had the good sense to let it go for the moment. Rowena knew her room better than any other. With a simple thought, it shifted and they were in a cluttered mess. *Gods and goddesses, look at the state of it.*

Fortunately, there was no spell or enchantment that could hide the diadem from her. Her wand, made of white ash and with the heartstring of Hebridean Black dragon at its core, was in her hand. Objects tumbled and shattered, and she didn’t care one bit about it as her most famous creation came racing toward her through the clutter. The silver tiara glinted in the low light of the room before it reached her

Catching it in the air, Rowena felt the filth that had been forced upon it. It tried and failed to warp and influence her mind. Despite the trouble it had caused her, she couldn’t help the fury that bubbled up in her stomach. *And to think this was done to Helga’s cup as well. Abominations!*

There was a groan from nearby that got her attention though, the young man was running a hand down his face, clearly frustrated, “What is it?”

He cursed under his breath, muttering, “Really good, Potter... Never thought to actually find out what it looks like and so you just bloody missed it.”

“What. Is. It?” She repeated, more pointedly.

“I saw that ruddy thing weeks ago!” He was angry with himself, not her, but she didn’t appreciate the tone either way, “I used it to make sure I could find something I feckin’ hid in here!”

Despite herself, she chuckled at that, “People coveted it in my time, and probably looked for it for centuries. And you didn’t even recognize it?”

He blushed under her scrutiny, “I might not be the best about history. Doesn’t help that we have the worst Professor imaginable for it.”

Rowena looked at her daughter for confirmation, who nodded, “He’s a ghost, mother. A ghost obsessed with Goblin Rebellions. It’s horrid.” *That is simply unacceptable.*

Huffing, Rowena willed the room to change back around them, “Something else to deal with.” There were two plinths in the room that awaited them. One was empty, where she placed the diadem, the other had a similar looking tiara on it. Paying the others little mind, she went to work.

The process was difficult, soul magic was delicate at the best of times... and a horcrux even more so. But her own extensive knowledge allowed her to succeed in the end. It took time and a measure of blood magic to achieve, but she managed to extract the twisted fragment of a soul that resided in her diadem and move it to the other. It sapped her of what little strength she had after such a long slumber.

All the while, her daughter and the young man were silent. When she was finished, she pinned him with her dark, blue eyes, "It's done."

"You've destroyed it?"

"No. I've moved it." Rowena told him, not daring to touch the soul vessel again. Every moment of her work it was whispering in her mind, trying to get her to put it on, "The diadem might still be of some use to you. And now it's free of this curse."

"Can you destroy it?" He asked her.

"I wouldn't risk Fiendfyre," Casting the cursed flames wasn't something she was comfortable doing, especially after so long asleep, "And something tells me there's no Basilisk venom around." She chuckled to herself at the thought, "Always tickled me that Herpo birthed the very thing capable of destroying his horcrux."

The young man wasn't paying attention to her though, he was wracking his mind, "I'll be right back." The exit appeared suddenly as he rushed out and disappeared just as quickly.

Turning to Helena, she quirked an eyebrow, "What's his name?"

"Harry Potter."

"And why is someone so young hunting down the horcruxes of a Dark Lord?"

"Fate..." Helena said simply, "And because... he murdered his parents. And because it is the right thing to do."

Rowena huffed, irritated, "The right thing... would be for witches and wizards of age and experience to do what is necessary. To burn away the filth." *It's what we should have done to Salazar centuries ago.*

Her daughter looked at her with discerning eyes, "Will you?" The question hung in the air, weighing on her mind as they waited for him to return. It was quite the wait in the end, and Rowena took the time to take stock of herself.

Her body was healthy and hale, in far better condition than she remembered centuries before. She'd passed from the world at forty-seven years of age, but she still looked no older than a woman in her early twenties. Her curves that had caught the eye of Godric and Salazar alike were still there. *Not that it got them anywhere. I sooner would have jumped in Helga's bed.*

Her evaluation of herself ended when he came back holding something in a wrapped cloth. Carefully, he showed them what was inside. A Basilisk fang still dripping with its deadly venom, "How?"

"I might've killed Slytherin's basilisk... in the Chamber of Secrets... when I was twelve..." Rowena's eyebrows climbed toward her hairline with every word. *That must be a joke.* But he didn't pay her any attention as he moved to the horcrux. His hand sliced through the air, wielding the fang like a dagger, and it pierced the tiara with a wretched, inhuman scream. It shattered like glass as the venom burned the silver an ugly black. It was interesting to see that he recoiled backward just a second later.

But it lasted only a second as he beamed down at the destroyed horcrux. She interrupted his silent reverie with a question, "You found Salazar's chamber?" Rowena really couldn't believe it. They'd spent

months searching the castle for it and yet, nothing. She had a vague memory of a sink opening in a lavatory. *Memories from my time within the castle. They don't mean much to me yet.*

"With a good deal of help, yes." He told her humbly.

"And you killed his monster?" To kill a basilisk at such a young age was unheard of. If nothing else, that earned some level of her respect.

"With the Sword of Godric Gryffindor." He pulled his sleeve up to reveal, a large white scar on the inside of his arm, "It nearly killed me."

"It should've killed you," She said eyeing the wound, impressed both at the feat and at retrieving Godric's weapon, "You must be a lion."

"Right in one," he told her proudly.

Rowena smiled slightly, "Godric would've been pleased with that." She looked him over with midnight blue eyes as she reached a decision. This young man, no more than a student, was risking his life to fight a Dark Lord. *And all because we didn't have the stomach to do what was necessary.* Given this second chance, it seemed there was only one thing for it, "And I'd have my own conscious to contend with if I didn't help you."

What she wasn't expecting was to be wrapped up in strong arms. Rowena Ravenclaw didn't blush but she absolutely scowled at her daughter's giggle.

Sitting in the Head Office, Rowena stared down at the broken remains of four of the horcruxes. The diary, destroyed years before, lay in tatters. Slytherin's locket, found in the home of Harry's godfather, was broken. She hadn't cared one wit about destroying something of Salazar's. Then there was the false diadem she constructed and finally, the proxy of Helga's cup.

The goblins of Gringotts had no interest in housing the foul magic, and had retrieved the heirloom for them... after she and Harry both greased their palms. It had been worth it to have her dearest friend's greatest achievement back where it belonged. It sat on a shelf beside her diadem and Godric's sword.

With her return, the school still served as a safe haven for all those who wished to learn magic. She taught lessons and served as Headmistress. The Ministry fell victim to Tom Riddle over the summer, but Hogwarts remained as a bulwark against the creeping darkness.

Many of the students didn't understand, and nor did the family's that they protected there, but they were happy for her protection all the same. Tom Riddle knew of her presence, and it gave him pause. She didn't know how long that would last, but she took advantage of it while she could. *He will come eventually.*

But her mind turned away from the self-styled Lord and returned to the same thing she'd been thinking on for weeks. Harry Potter. He was... unique. Selfless and brave, and relentless in his desire to destroy the monster that had pursued him for so much of his life. She'd learned a great deal about him in the months that they'd been working together. From his time with magic-hating relatives to his ridiculously dangerous time spent at Hogwarts. *And despite it all, he's still so kind. A truly rare soul.* And it was his soul that she was concerned for.

“There is no other way.” The portrait of Albus Dumbledore said from behind her. After he’d gotten over his initial shock, the old man had chose to pontificate to her at every opportunity. *But never when Harry is around. Then, he’s always happily asleep.*

“Just because there was no other way for you to remove it doesn’t mean that I’m equally limited.” Rowena bit out. They’d had the same conversation a dozen times or more, ever since she realized that he’d raised Harry like a lamb to slaughter. Memories came slowly, but she could recall more than one conversation between the greasy Potions Master, and Albus.

Even before the memories returned, she suspected. She was the brightest witch of her age, and one of the brightest minds to ever walk wizarding Britain. It didn’t take her long to realize the truth. *And his attunement to the horcruxes certainly made it that much more obvious.*

“You must not tell him.” The bearded old headmaster insisted, but Rowena ignored him. She wouldn’t have taken orders from Albus Dumbledore were he alive, she certainly didn’t intend to take them from a portrait.

It was at that moment that there was a knock on the door. It opened without her saying anything and Harry stepped through. He was one of only three with the password. Minerva being the third. The portrait of the last headmaster fell predicably silent as he stepped inside, “Row, you wanted to see me?” While Harry was at Hogwarts, he rarely if ever took part in any classes. Instead he fell under her direct tutelage.

The pair had become close in their time together, spending more than one night deep in conversation about what came next, “I did. Please come and sit. Did you bring what I asked?” He held up a small golden orb, “Thank you.”

Sitting across from her, he waited patiently as she gathered her thoughts. Worried at her hesitation, he asked, “Is there something wrong?” They’d been lucky enough to have successes pile up in quick succession, so she could understand his confusion.

“Yes, but it’ll be corrected in short order.” There was steely conviction in her voice as she looked down at the snitch in his hand, “I know how to open that snitch and find what’s inside.”

That certainly caught him off guard, “What? How?”

“Because I worked out the machinations of your former headmaster,” Harry quirked an eyebrow in confusion, but she just pressed on, “Now, you need only tell it... that you are about to die.” His captivating emerald eyes widened in surprise as they sought out Dumbledore’s portrait, but there were no twinkling eyes looking down at him.

“I am about to die.” The snitch opened with a click and the stone that once resided in Marvolo Gaunt’s ring tumbled out onto the desk. Harry stared down at it with silent interest as he worked out just what it meant.

“He expected me to die... to sacrifice myself for the sake of the wizarding world...because,” There was a tightness to his voice that went right to her heart, as the truth of it reached his mind, “because I’m a horcrux... aren’t I? So long as I’m alive, he can’t die.”

“That’s Dumbledore’s belief, yes.” She stood and walked around the desk Cupping his cheek, she forced him to look up at her. He was so desperate for an explanation, for truth of it all, “But learned as he was, he didn’t know everything.” Her finger’s scratched along his strong jaw, “And I won’t allow it.” She’d always been prideful, sometimes to a fault, and this was no different. When something threatened that which she cared about, she always found a way to deal with it.

“You can remove it... like the others?” He was hopeful, and she understood why. *He has so much life ahead of him. All that promise shouldn’t be snuffed out so soon.*

“Not like the others,” She shook her head, “You’re a living breathing man with magic of your own. It is a part of you, and so extracting it won’t be so simple.”

He looked at her with such earnest trust it made her feel fragile, “But you can do it, you wouldn’t tell me if you couldn’t.”

Leaning down, she gave him a tender kiss above his brow, “Yes, I can. If you’ll let me.” What she said next was difficult, but it must be said, “There are old magics, magics that have existed since before any spell was cast. Love... is one of them.” She couldn’t help but stutter, “It’s that magic that your mother used to protect you once and it’s the magic I’ll use to help you now.”

Here she was a thousand years past her time admitting her feelings to a young man half her age. *But then, he’s easy to love. Everything he does makes you want to care.* Helena’s own father hadn’t held this sort of affection from her, he’d been a Scottish toiseach that her father married her off to when she was barely more than fourteen. He’d died before she was twenty.

Harry’s gorgeous emerald pools held such raw affection that it nearly took her breath away, “Alright.” He accepted it so easily, “When?”

Her hand went to the back of his neck, and she felt him shiver, “Now?” He nodded and let her take his hand. Leading him to her private quarters, she wanted to be away from the prying eyes of the many Heads that served the castle.

The bed was soft, far softer than anything she slept on in the 11th century. And they ended up standing at its side, “There are preparations that need to be made. Magic that needs to be worked. You’ll need to be naked for it.”

Without question, he started stripping. She found herself admiring the lean muscle of his upper body and the enticing-v that led down to his groin. Rowena forgot to blink as she watched him. Her breath hitched when he pushed his trousers down his thighs and revealed his manhood hanging heavily. *Gods. This will be interesting.*

Free of his clothing, she gestured for him to lay down as she retrieved a bowl from her bedside. It was filled with blood, her blood. She’d been preparing for weeks, hoping that he would agree. Kneeling at his side, she took his hand, “This will only hurt a second.” She used a silver dagger to cut open his hand. She guided the dark red liquid to drip into the bowl. The wound knit itself back up before she went to work.

The runes were ancient, some of them completely forgotten to time. They’d been old even in her youth and now they’d passed from any living memory. She worked from his feet up to his head. As she worked, he grew aroused, the feel of her soft hands filling his impressive member with blood. She didn’t mean to,

but she spent a bit longer drawing the ruins on his lower abdomen and actually had to pull herself away. She finished by tracing the scar upon his brow in blood. Every ruin glowed a bright red, and then Harry seized briefly as the magic started its work. But this was a ritual, and they were far from done.

Standing at the side of the bed. She pulled down the straps of her dress. It was made of fine velvet with lace around the collar and it was her favorite shade of sapphire blue. It was far from her normal attire and she'd worn it just for him. She reveled in the feel of his eyes as she slowly divested herself of the elegant garment. Lingerie was an invention of a time long after hers and so she only wore a pair of simple white knickers beneath the gown. They were lightly marked with the evidence of her own desire.

Hooking her fingers beneath the band of them, she let them fall down her slender legs. His whispered adulation reached her ears and made her blush, "Beautiful..." His cock leaked a bead of his precum into his own bellybutton as he took her in.

There was a deep abiding ache in her womanhood that she desperately wished to satisfy. Throwing one leg over his hips, her sticky sex kissed the underside of his cock as she straddled him. Taking him in her soft hand, she could feel every pulse of his heartbeat as she guided the tip toward her weeping entrance. There was some small part of her that worried that she was taking advantage of him. She was the elder, the more experienced and here she was ready to rut him until they were both exhausted.

Unable to stop herself, she asked, "Are you sure? There might be another way."

One of his bigger hands came up and wrapped around the back of her slender neck, "I don't need another way. I've been dreaming about this moment for months." His hand trailed down her neck until it was on the swell of her pillowy breast. His touch lit a fire deep in her belly that she'd never felt before. When he squeezed the sensitive flesh and tweaked her ghostly pale nipple, she couldn't stop the wanton moan that escaped her lips.

Unable to deny herself any longer, she shifted her hips and let herself sink down the first couple inches. It'd been an incredibly long time since she'd had a man, more than two decades even before her long slumber. *And I've never been filled like that before.* Her sheath stretched around his girth. It was a blissful sort of pain that sent her eyes fluttering shut. But then she felt his strong hand on the curve her hip and she was looking down at intense emerald eyes.

She'd never seen anything so captivating as his face filled with desire and need as it was directed at her. Guiding her down, he filled her with inch after inch. *How is there still more? Surely that must be all of it.* His glands scraped against her walls until his dome nudged against the deepest part of her, "Oh..." It was an odd sort of pain, but it bled away in instant to be replaced with pleasure.

Looking down at where they were joined, she could only marvel at the sight of her sex split open obscenely on his thick, veiny member. He squeezed his eyes shut as he gripped her hip and his leg shook as he reveled in the pleasure. Looking down, she commanded him, "Look at me... Look at me, Harry. I want to see those eyes every second."

Battling through the delightful feeling of her grippy sex around his cock, he managed to do as she asked. The emerald of his eyes was just a thin line around his dilated pupils, he appeared delirious with desire as he looked at her with pure lust and no small amount of love either.

Staring down at him, she reached down and tickled his swollen, life-harboring balls with the tips of her digits. She felt him throb within her. Placing her other hand down on his hard chest, she flexed the muscles of her legs and started gliding up and down his shaft.

Thwack... Thwack... Thwack.... Every ascent was slow and deliberate as she squeezed her inner muscles as tightly as she could manage around him and then she shot her hips downward and met his own with that meaty thwack. His hand tightened on her hip hard enough to bruise, but she didn't care. His breathy moans were music to her ears, and she wanted to spend many years to come pulling them from him as many times as possible, "Fuck... fuck... so good... Row."

Her name was said as an awed plea, and he shut his eyes again. Rowena dug her nails into the hard muscle of his chest and forced his eyes open yet again, "I told... I told you... look. At. Me." She punctuated each command with a particularly poignant thrust of her hips.

He groaned low and sinful in his throat as his cock throbbed in her depths. The ruins, etched so carefully and so lovingly into his flesh, started pulsing with a growing intensity. Her purpose was clear in her mind, make him fill her, and her wonderfully snug sex was doing just that. He surprised her as he leaned up and wrapped his arms around her lower back.

It was intimate and sensual to have his hot breath wisp across her nipple. Her hands tangled in his hair as they rutted almost obsessively against each other, "Just finish, my love... fill me... there will be time enough for more later... But I need... I need you to..." She couldn't finish the thought as her own peak cascaded through her body. Every nerve was alight with pleasure like she'd never felt before. A lewd squelch came from her cunt as she covered them both in her essence.

Her desperate sex gripped ever tighter to his length trying urgently to coax his seed from him, she cried out wantonly. "Come on... come on... please!" She needed him to do it for two reasons, to quench the raging fire deep in her core and to cleanse himself of the parasite that had leached on him for so many years.

With a primal moan, both of his hands went to her hips, and he pushed her down deeper than ever. She felt him swell impossibly bigger in her depths. The warmth suffused her body as he emptied himself into her. With every pulse of his cock, the runes grew brighter and brighter.

And then came the screaming. The pleasure turned to pain as his famous scar started leaking blood. The ruins on his skin glowed a constant and steady red before absorbing down into his skin. There was nothing she could do but comfort him as the ritual reached its conclusion. He twitched in pain as his eyes rolled to the back of his head.

Finally, it happened. A black wisp emerged with that same vile feel as the horcruxes. After so many times breaking his soul, it was pitifully small. Lacking form or consciousness, it disappeared like smoke in the wind. Another piece of the monster taken to the realm of the dead.

Harry fell back to the bed unconscious. Rowena laid herself down with her head on his heart. Comforting herself with its steady beat. She knew that there was more to be done, but this felt like a beginning of its own. *Whatever comes next, we'll face it together.*