

Chapter XI

Harry's Friend Sunday, April 30, 1972

Harry woke up, sore and stiff. Old habits asserted themselves, and he took stock of his situation before making any movement which could alert anyone where he was, let alone that he was awake.

Aside from feeling slightly achy, only the back of his head really hurt. Something or someone had hit him there. Simply breathing told him three things: he was in the Infirmary, and Lily and Ellen were to the right. His next reaction was spontaneous -- a whimpered, "Mum?"

"Neither of us is your mother, Harry," Lily said.

"What happened?" he muttered.

"What's the last thing you remember?" Ellen asked, taking his hand on hers, and real worry in her voice. Lily placed a hand on his upper arm, and he could tell she was worried as well.

Harry frowned at their actions, and then remembered that they had been told he had had amnesia once before. He concentrated, and said, "We were coming out of the League meeting." Ellen's and Lily's grips slightly relaxed. "There was a group of a dozen Pure-Blood types, mostly from Slytherin, but with some Ravenclaws." He thought about that. "Eight Slytherins, four Ravenclaws, all at least Fifth years. Shackbolt asked why they were there, and things were said by both sides."

Then Harry remembered the rest. One of the Slytherins had looked at Lily and said, 'We don't want filthy Mudbloods like you reproducing and polluting our Pure world.' He had been lucky to have been wearing robes, because they partially deflected the vicious kick Harry had delivered to his groin. Harry flushed.

"I think he remembers," Ellen said.

Lily stood and said, "Thank you, Harry." She sat on the bed and gave Harry a hug.

Harry almost convulsively hugged Lily back, because he could not remember any of his birth mother's hugs.

"Are you sure you don't want to mother him?" Ellen teased. "It looks like he needs it."

Lily gave Ellen a wry smile, but said, "Sure, why not? I don't know if you know the term, Harry," she said, stroking his hair, "but I'll be your Wendy-lady if you want, and be your mother away from home."

To the girls' surprise, Harry's response was one sob, and he held on to Lily for some minutes. Slightly embarrassed when he finally let go, Harry merely said, "Thank you, I needed that." He turned to Ellen, and she was happy to share a hug as well. Madam Pomfrey came and chased the girls out a few minutes later.

Although Harry didn't realize it for some weeks, his fate with Lily had just been sealed. Although she was never obvious about it, Lily was in most ways even more maternal by nature than Molly Weasley. However, she could never be romantically interested in someone whom she looked upon maternally. Harry, and Remus as well, now became her 'lost boys'. Although younger than both, she basically became their big sister/surrogate mother.

Even though Harry had an excellent surrogate mother in Mary Potter already, and Remus' mother cared for Remus as best she could considering his affliction, both boys were happy to be petted, primped, loved, and nagged by Lily for the rest of their time at Hogwarts and after.

Normally, this would have resulted in a fair amount of teasing aimed at the two boys. It was already very clear to everyone in Gryffindor, however, that Harry Potter was not a boy to be lightly teased. In fact, only Ellen and Lily could get away with any.

As for the twelve Pure Bloods, when Dumbledore refused to punish them, Hogwarts and 'the Founders' punished them instead, refusing to allow them out of their common rooms for the remaining Sundays of the school year. The same punishment had been inflicted on six of the League members who had been too enthusiastic in the brawl that had grown out of the confrontation. Nine others had to spend fewer weekends confined to their common rooms as well, including Harry, who was sentenced to three.

Neither Dumbledore nor the Governors were happy about the active role the castle was taking, as it was the first time in centuries that it had happened so openly, but there was little they could do about it. In fact, the Governors were reminded that since the castle had never magically accepted the Board they had little magical standing in the matter.

The Board was offered a chance to exercise some real power, but none of the members were willing to submit to the castle's approval of their own appointments.

4 May

Dear Mum and Dad:

First of all, thank you for not making the letter a Howler. Being told about the Sunday confinements on my birthday was punishment enough, I promise you. Still, I am a Potter. Did you really think I could make it through an entire year without officially getting into trouble at least once?

Secondly, congratulations! I know how much you want another child, and of course I won't tell anyone until it's further along, not even James. Since it will be due just before Christmas, maybe we can name it Holly if it's a girl?

inally, I've been thinking about the summer. I was wondering if we might have some guests. Actually, James was wondering about inviting Sirius first, and I offered to write about it. The less time Sirius spends with his family, the better off I think he will be. I would also like Remus to spend some time with us as well, if it is possible. Again, yes, he is perfectly safe. The full moons this summer are at 7:24 am sun time on 26 July and 18:22 sun time on 24 August. Despite the stories, he won't transform during daylight hours, although he will be ill and cranky.

I was also wondering if two girls in our class might join us for shorter times: Lily Evans and Ellen McGregor. Lily is Muggle-born (yes, that Muggle-born, although she has magical ancestors). Their addresses are attached. We shouldn't have either of them there at any time Sirius is there, assuming you allow any of the visits, unless Remus is there as well. James and Sirius together are just too much for either of them, unless both Remus and I are both watching them.

*love
Harry*

"What do you think he's up to?" Mary asked her husband.

"I have no idea what he's up to with the girls," Harold admitted. "Still, I don't see any reason to refuse him. I suppose I should talk with the Blacks and the Lupins."

"And I'd be glad to talk with the others," Mary said.

"I'll send Black a note tomorrow."

Walburga Black glowered as she followed her elf into her husband's library/office. She had married him because he was the senior Black, and had nearly all the family property. His father had lost much of the family's liquid assets, however, and he had married his cousin because her father had managed to make a large pile of gold. Being older and richer, and of the same ancestry, Walburga always resented those times when she was not the one in control. Still, when a private message came magically sealed for her husband, she knew enough not to touch it.

Orion looked at the seal in surprise. "Potter? What can he want?"

"You look worried," Walburga stated.

"I am," Orion admitted. "Your donations have brought the spotlight on us. We both have had dealings with people even more associated with Voldemort, like the Malfoys, and not all those dealings would look good if exposed."

"So?"

"So Potter is the new force in the Wizengamot," Orion reminded her. "He might not be a blood traitor, but he and his group aren't that far from being so either. If he's decided to revive the Wizengamot's investigatory powers, we could be in trouble."

"I doubt he's have sent anything like that under his personal seal," Walburga pointed out. "Blackmail?"

"The Potters? Not likely, and if they did, they would have gotten someone else to expose themselves." Orion shrugged and opened the letter.

"Well?"

"I was wrong, it is blackmail, of a sort."

"What does he want?"

"He wants Sirius to spend part of the summer with his sons," Orion answered. He held out the letter.

Walburga frowned and took it to read. After doing so, she had to nod. The letter was brilliantly phrased, she had to admit. There was not one real threat in the letter. However, it was also clear that it would be in the Black family's interests for their son to be associated with people like the Potters. The fact that Walburga and her older brother had been fined for donating to Voldemort's movement, and that her niece had died as a Marked Death Eater had been skated over, but present.

"We can't fully disinherit the boy, more's the pity," Walburga growled, tossing the letter on her husband's desk.

Orion shrugged. "Who can tell how the boy will turn out in the long run? If worst comes to worst, he'll get the property and my idiot brother's small horde, and Narcissa can marry Regulus and that will keep your father's fortune together. We can't disinherit Sirius from the property, but we can disown him from the family title and give that to Regulus if we have to."

"True."

"And at the moment, the tide has shifted against us and towards families like the Potters. It might not be a bad idea to have a foot in that camp, as Muddy as that camp might be in the future."

"So you'll meet with him?" Harold had offered to meet with Orion in any of several different ways.

Orion nodded. "I need to go to Gringotts next week in any event. We can meet in a coffee house."

Walburga didn't like it, but knew that Orion was right. Therefore, she merely nodded.

Monday, May 8, 1972

Rose Evans and Bonnie Jean McGregor were both surprised to see envelopes propped near their stoves that morning. These contained notes from Mary Potter, asking if she might visit sometime over the next two weeks. Rose, interested in learning more about her daughter's world, the world she and her husband's grandparents had alluded to, wrote that she would be happy to welcome Mrs. Potter any afternoon between 3:00 and 4:30. She was thrilled with the return notepaper disappeared when she sealed it as directed. When told about the impending visit, her husband was a bit thrilled, and Petunia planned on spending her afternoons away.

Bonnie Jean consulted her husband, whose eyes went wide when he realized who was coming to call. Bonnie Jean decided that she needed to clean the silver tea service, and so invited Mrs. Potter the following Wednesday or Thursday for tea.

Eliza Lupin was manning the counter when the stranger walked in. Strangers were rare, but hardly unheard of. Granted, their village was in about as boring a place as there was in England. There had been no battles within twenty miles. There were no ruined abbeys, pretty churches or other interesting architecture, great country houses, cities, or anything to draw a tourist within fifteen miles. Nothing of importance had ever happened, and no one famous had been born, lived, or died in the vicinity. Still, people did get lost.

On the other hand, the front window near the counter had a good view of the car park, and that was empty except for their old delivery lorry. And the man was dressed far too formally, and his shirt, loud tie, and shoes did not really match the expensive suit. "May I help you?" she asked, placing her hand on her wand under the counter.

"Mrs. Lupin?" the man asked in a polite voice.

"Yes?"

"I was wondering if I might have a word with your husband? Or with you and your husband, for that matter?"

"May I ask in regards to what?"

"In regards to your son." Eliza gripped the wand more tightly. "My sons go to Hog . . . go to school with him. My name is Harold Potter."

Eliza's eyes went wide. The man smiled. "No need to worry. It's nothing bad." He had just realized what fears the parents of a young werewolf might have.

Eliza supplied tea in the office behind the counter. Paul Lupin sat down with Harold, while Eliza listened in and stood at the counter, in case there was a customer. "Again, I apologize. I didn't mean to startle either of you," Harold said.

"We understand," Paul answered. "What can we do for you?"

"I suppose you know that your son is friends with my twin boys, especially Harry."

Paul smiled. "Remus is a good lad. He writes often."

Harold returned the smile. "Like many of our kind, we live somewhat . . . outside of society. My boys asked if their friends might come and visit this summer. I do realize, of course, that you will want to spend time with your son, and that he will want to spend time with you. Still, we hope that Master Remus would be interested in spending at least two or three weeks in total with us. We

thought at least a week in July and then from the Twenty-eighth or ninth through the Thirty-first of August. We would spend at least three days in Diagon Alley. We would make certain he gets any supplies he needs and gets to the Hogwarts Express."

"The Twenty-eighth. . . ."

Harold nodded. "We know you will want your son with you during the full moons, even if they are during the daylight hours in July and August."

Eliza gasped and Paul dropped his teacup.

"There is no need to be afraid," Harold said. "The names of werewolves are public information, you know. I talked this out with the Headmaster last summer, and my wife and I were well-assured that there were no reasons to fear, even if the experimental potion had not worked as well as it has. My son Harry knows as well, and helps make certain that the information doesn't become widely disseminated, and helps keep silver from touching your son by accident. I understand they've become close friends. Your secret, his secret, is quite safe."

"You . . . you don't mind. . . ?"

Harold grimaced. "Well, I think we would all prefer that your son had not been bitten, of course. And I must admit that if most children told me their best friend was a werewolf, I might have been apprehensive. Both my sons have good minds and good hearts, traits Harry assures me your son shares as well. My other son, James, doesn't always have the best judgement, which is why he does not know the secret. Harry, however, does. Between what he and the Headmaster told me . . . well, let's just say not that I don't mind but that I have no qualms about inviting your son into my home and to offer him houseroom." Their eyebrows went up. 'Houseroom' meant that, if Remus ever needed sanctuary, the protection of a powerful House, he would have it with the Potters. And that 'making certain he gets his supplies' meant that the Potters would be paying, sparing them some expense. In short, Remus was being offered formal protection from a very powerful family. The Lupins were not poor, but they were closer to poor than being well-off. "If it meets with your approval, Harry will extend the invitation to him. If not, then young Master Remus need never know."

Paul and Eliza exchanged a look and both nodded. Just then a customer walked in. Eliza shut the door, so that the two men could discuss dates in peace.

Rose watched Mary look around the ground floor of the semi-detached house. Except for her passion for flowers, demonstrated by the many plants and even

some awards from various garden shows, it was a typical mid-range middle class semi-detached suburban home. It had an entrance hallway, a large front parlor, a dining room, a large kitchen, a small pantry, a small laundry room, and the door which led to the garage and from there into a larger-than-usual back garden. None of the furniture was antique or valuable, but everything was neat and comfortable.

"Have you never been in a, well, a regular house before?" Rose asked.

"Actually, not really," Mary answered. "One friend of mine at Hogwarts came from a mixed household, but they lived mostly magical." She frowned. "They did have one room where electronics, excuse me, electronics worked, but that was all. Is that a television? It's much larger than the one they had. Not that we ever watched it. That was still during the War, and it wasn't receiving then."

"Yes, that our tellie," Rose answered, holding back her worried smile. Her family had not gotten a television until 1955, and Rose knew that only the upper classes had had televisions before World War II. She gestured at the kitchen table, already set. "Let's have some tea, and you can tell me why you've come."

Mary sat and simply said, "We were hoping to invite your daughter to stay with us towards the end of August at the very least. We will be inviting several other of Harry's friends throughout the summer, and then all of them at the end of August, offering them houseroom. We will take them to Diagon Alley once or twice, just in case they need anything for the upcoming year, and see that they get safely on the train."

"Harry's friends? Not James'?"

Mary smiled. "James' best friend is also a good friend of Harry's, and the reverse is true as well. From what I hear, neither James nor Sirius get along terribly well with Ellen McGregor or your daughter."

"Will you be inviting Ellen as well?"

Mary nodded, "Yes. Most likely separately during the summer, and then at the end of August as well. From what Harry has said, it might not be wise to have James and Lily too close to each other for too long."

Rose smiled at that. "Lily and Ellen have already talked about seeing each other during the summer. If Lily is interested, I see no problem, although I will of course talk to my husband about it tonight."

"And I shall be visiting Mrs. McGregor for tea this Wednesday," Mary said.

"Do you think Harry might like to visit here?" Rose asked.

"I don't know," Mary admitted. "Still, just as it will be educational for Lily to see a purely magical household, it might interest Harry to see your home. I shall

mention it to my husband. I would imagine we shall be content to allow the children to decide."

Rose smiled. "You don't think your other son would be interested?"

"James can be quite the handful," Mary said with a smile. "And, to quote what Harry says, James sometimes 'acts more than a bit stupid' around your daughter. At the moment, while James might like to visit, I don't know if your daughter would really welcome him."

"We shall see." At that moment, the timer on the oven rang. Rose got up to pull out freshly-baked scones, to be served with strawberry jam and clotted cream. She reminded herself to ask Bonnie Jean what 'houseroom' meant.

The next afternoon, the patrons of 'Adolf & Abdul's -- Fine Coffees Since 1692' were shocked to see the heads of two very old and powerful families, families which had not seen eye-to-eye in the 900+ years of their mutual existence, meet at a private table.

"Orion."

"Harold."

The waiter came and took their orders, and was soon back: a Turkish coffee and two small pieces of Turkish delight for Orion, a cafe-au-lait and a current scone for Harold.

"Tell me honestly," Orion said, "are you trying to steal my son?"

"Formally, no, of course not," Harold answered, "although we will offer him houseroom. Are we trying to protect him from some of your political views? Well, to be honest, I wouldn't mind."

"Some?"

"I have not endorsed the so-called 'League of Founders' positions, have I?" Harold asked.

"None of them?"

"Not the political ones, that's for certain," Harold answered. "We need to stay totally separate from the Muggle community. That doesn't mean hating them or their magical children. Come now, you know as well as I that there are very few truly Muggle- born. They mostly have some Squibs on both sides of their family, and usually just three or four generations back. I would bet that all the others are a result of some wizard sowing some wild oats directly or after a generation

or two. I rather like the ideas the Founders put forth for teaching the Muggle-raised more about our culture."

"Well, that one point was a decent one," Orion conceded. His wife loathed it, of course -- 'Keep those Muddy brats away from proper children!' had been her response.

"However, along with any 'suspect views', let me remind you of something else I hope to teach your son, along with my oldest."

"And what's that?"

"The only reason why your father-in-law made a fortune was because the Muggles offered him that money for air bases during the last war, especially that money for the land in Iceland he'd inherited from his mother. All of it was just laying there, unused except for bragging rights about how many acres he owned. He then made the same mistake your father and grandfather did -- he put all of it into wizarding enterprises. If he had properly invested it in the Muggle economy, it would be worth at least three times the amount now, more likely ten times."

"Come now, don't make that sort of face," Harold went on. "How do you think the Malfoys made most of their money, at least until they sold the best bits off too cheaply, to pay their fines and to start rebuilding their house this past year?"

Orion smiled grimly at that, it was nice to have some rumors confirmed. "And you'll teach my son what exactly?"

"Over the upcoming summers, at the very least how not to make the basic errors our kind make when dealing with the Muggles. I hope to teach them some basic business as well."

Orion thought it over. "You'll be taking the boys to Diagon Alley, I suppose?"

Harold nodded.

"Sirius would like to play Quidditch."

"From what Harry says, all three have a shot next year," Harold agreed, knowing he had just agreed to buying a racing broom.

"Then we have a deal."