

Chapter XIV

Summer Visits

Lily and Ellen left shortly after lunch on Sunday. The six friends had spent most of the morning in the air, but as there were storms gathering, the four boys had to spend the rest of the day inside.

James and Harry showed their two friends the Manor in detail. After all, when there are 96 'proper' rooms (storage closets, water closets, baths, and the like didn't count) spread over three floors, plus the attics, cellar, and an old sub-basement now used as a wine cellar and elf room, that can take up an entire afternoon and evening, with time off for a cream tea.

The rest of the week was fairly nice, and so the four boys spent most of their time out of doors. It was three miles to the village of Godric's Hollow, and half that distance, plus for about ten miles to the west (over the Welsh border), it was both Potter land and also forest. The boys went exploring and mudlarking, and came back every afternoon dirty at the least, and completely covered in mud twice.

The house elves merely sluiced them off with warm water and brought them changes of clothes.

The only school work they did was their astronomy observations, on the one totally clear night that they had, The quartet set up to sky watch on the flat part of the Manor's roof. In all, they had fun, and the Potters were nearly as sorry for Remus' visit to end as their sons were.

On that Sunday night, the holiday switched gear, as Harold Potter told his sons and Sirius to present themselves, fed and dressed in decent robes over good Muggle clothes, in front of the floo fireplace at 8:25.

The three boys did as they were commanded. Harold inspected them and decided they passed muster. "James, Sirius, it's time the two of you understood something. You are both the elder sons of important and well-off families. Nearly all the properties in both of our families are entailed. That means it goes to the oldest son." Sirius' eyes went wide, and James looked guiltily at Harry. "Most of the Potter fortune is also entailed, as part of the Potter Trust. Harry will be able to claim a substantial allowance, but it will be in part up to you, James, to see to the family fortune once I'm gone. Sirius, the Black fortune in Trust is much smaller, but you still need to know the basics of business. So, the two of you are going to be spending the week with me at my office, and also being taken on tours of some of my businesses, magical and Muggle. It's just a

taste, but it will let you know the breadth of what you both will have to deal with some day."

Seeing the looks on the boys faces, Harold went on, "Having such fortunes is a great responsibility. To be blunt, Sirius, your great-grandfather and grandfather were spendthrifts and wastrels. Your father has proven to be a far too-conservative steward. Your family fortune should have been a close second to the Malfoys' in the section of society your family closely associates with. It is instead fourth, and that only because of the money your mother brought back to the main Black line. When Grimmauld Place was built by your great-great grandfather, and by that I mean the entire area, it was a solid upper-middle class neighborhood. The next three stewards have let the area decline into a rather poor neighborhood, with a resulting loss of income."

He glared at them. "Money does not make itself. Even my father, as he made his way up the ladder of the MLES, spent most of his free time overseeing the Trust. It didn't grow very much under such an arrangement, but it more than held its own, which was satisfactory since he was doing other important work. What important work did your immediate ancestors, do, Sirius?"

"Nothing," Sirius said bitterly. "They just sat back and complained about Muggles and their losses."

"Exactly. Your father realizes that he won't change, but that you could reverse the decline of your family fortunes, with some tutoring from me. You are both going to get it over the next few years." Harold turned to Harry. "You expressed an interest in learning more about banking and the goblins. You'll be spending the week with them." He held out the floo powder. James, Sirius, and he flooded on to Harold's offices. Harry then flooded through to Gringotts.

Of course Harry was not going to be spending the week learning about goblins and banking, although he had some very interesting conversations with various goblins. Instead, he spent most of his time in the first vaults, learning even more secrets of Merlin, the Triad, and the Founders.

Harry was scheduled to go to the Evans' for tea on Thursday, July 20. He therefore emerged from Merlin's vault early that day for lunch. The eyes of the goblin guards all went wide when they saw that Harry was carrying an object out of the vault, the first object to leave Merlin's vault for over 1100 years.

Harry was carrying a six foot magical staff. It was one of three staves of Merlin which were stored in the vault. This one held 13 different magical cores, which all worked together. One of these was a feather from Fawkes. Voldemort's wand could not work against it, but because of the other 12 cores, it could work against that wand.

"I am the Heir of Merlin," Harry declared. "I say declare this to you, because of the reverence Merlin had for your people, because of the veneration you have for Merlin, and because of the deep respect I have for you." The large roughly-

cut diamond sparkled with power, and the staff disappeared. "Never doubt that it is with me," Harry said. And with that, he went off to the carts, so he could go back to the Leaky Cauldron to grab his trunk.

Harry wandlessly shrunk and lightened the trunk and stuck it in his pocket, and went off to the Underground. He would ride to a point some six miles from the Evans' house, which was in Surrey. He would then need to take a taxi. Mr. Evans would be driving him back to the Leaky Cauldron after Church on Sunday.

"One freak, in addition to you, in the summer isn't enough? You have to bring along another one?" Petunia sneered.

"I believe five of our eight great-grand parents were magical, and eleven of our sixteen great-great grandparents were," Lily retorted. "In this family, what does that make you?"

"They became normal," Petunia argued back. "You're the throw- back."

"I think you should keep that mouth of yours quiet while Harry is here," Lily warned.

"Why? Do you think a scrawny, undeveloped witch like you already has a boy friend?" Petunia teased.

"If I look like you when I'm sixteen, then you can call me scrawny and undeveloped," Lily retorted.

Petunia's face went red, and she was about to strike her sister when Rose intervened by coming to the doorway of their room and saying, "Stop it, the pair of you! Petunia, one more word, one more insult, and you'll be grounded all next week. Do you understand?"

Petunia sulked.

"I asked you a question!"

"Yes, mother," Petunia answered through clenched teeth.

"If you persist in acting like a small child, I shall sit you in the corner, and you won't be going out with Verne tonight."

"Vernon, mother," Petunia corrected, a hint of desperation in her voice.

"Sorry, Vernon. Now, the two of you behave!" Rose stalked from the room.

"Vernon? A new one?"

"He attends Smeltings," Petunia said in a superior tone.

"Those bully boys? You mean you've already slept through all the locals to the point they all know about you?"

"You keep your mouth shut about that!"

Lily sneered at her sister and softly hissed, "Which would shock Vernon more? Learning that you're from a magical family or that you've been earning your pin money giving blowjobs for a pound a suck for the last three years? Or is that why he's interested?" Petunia was wild with rage, but didn't dare actually hit her sister since their mother was still nearby.

"If you're polite to my friends, not nice but polite, I won't tell Vernon, and you can pay me five percent instead of ten percent of your suck money."

Petunia reigned in her anger. "I can do polite," she managed to say. "But they had better be polite as well."

"Agreed. Deal?" Lily asked, putting out her hand.

Petunia grimaced but shook Lily's hand. A soft glow showed that their previous deal had been modified.

Harry was not thrilled by the idea of being in the same house as Petunia, but was very interested in meeting his original maternal grandparents. Harry had at least seen photos of John and Rose Evans at the Dursleys', although the images were either just of the two of them or had Lily cut out of the photos. For some reason, they had all been black and white.

Rose was between her daughters in looks, although she had the same deep green eyes as Lily. John had receding light red hair, and the same hazel eyes as Petunia. The surprise was Petunia, who had the same hair color as her mother. Harry had never known she dyed it to be less noticeable, but he decided that he shouldn't have been surprised.

Harry politely sipped his tea and ate one fairy cake, which Rose Evans had baked fresh that morning. He answered the questions the Evans' had about the magical world as best he could, downplaying anything too 'odd', mostly for Petunia's benefit.

It was odd seeing the Evans' meeting Vernon Dursley for the first time. Vernon was 17, and unlike his later self he was a very fit individual, if very husky. It turned out that Vernon competed in field events at Smeltings (shot put and

hammer throw) as well as Rugby and boxing. Harry was a bit impressed despite himself.

Vernon had preened a bit in Harry's slight admiration, and it was difficult to see where the nasty Vernon he had known came from in this polite if slightly self-centered, muscled young man. Harry had easily seen the sour, vinegar-spirited, neighborhood old cat in the 16-year-old Petunia. Harry decided that Petunia had been worse for Vernon than Vernon had been for her. He had always thought it had been the other way around.

Vernon was already thinking about University, where he would major in mechanical engineering. Harry knew that in the last time stream, Vernon left with his degree in 1977 and immediately landed a job at Grunnings, where his job combined consulting and sales. His parents died in 1977 and 1979, and he had used his small inheritance for the down payment on the house on Privet Drive, marrying Petunia in June of 1979, several months after Harry's own parents had in fact married in the previous time stream.

"Nice kid, that friend of your sister's," Vernon said as he and Petunia left to go to the cinema.

"He's not as bad as I expected," Petunia allowed.

"Dinner, movie, and then a little cuddle on a back lane?" Vernon asked.

"Vernon! Not on the first date!" Petunia exclaimed. She had made that mistake with the local boys, and had gotten a reputation. It had earned her a fair amount of money, but she was determined to change that image. She would be proper and normal for the rest of her life, if she had anything to say about it, at least when it mattered.

"I have to admit, I'm surprised at how unsurprised you are about the Muggle world," Lily said to Harry Saturday as they walked home from the cinema. Harry shrugged off the compliment, but she had noticed that he had not been impressed or surprised by television, the movies, or the electric appliances. From what she had overheard in the common room, she had thought Harry would be amazed.

"Some magical people live in total ignorance of Muggle life," Harry agreed. "Most of the rest of us live near it and just don't play attention to it. Take James and Sirius. James has played with the boys in the village our age for years. We've been to the village dozens of times. We've been to Muggle London a few times. Sirius lives in the middle of residential outer London. Yet both were taken by those silly metal toys in that toy shop near the Leaky Cauldron and felt lost inside Harrod's." Harry shrugged again. "They don't pay attention." Harry remembered Mister Weasley's fascination for plugs and batteries, and Mrs.

Weasley's misunderstanding of stamps. "I bet most of us who live purely magical lives couldn't make a phone call."

"And they seem to think it's good," Lily said, shaking her head.

"If the magical world was revealed, what do you think would happen to us?" Harry asked. "Would we be accepted, or feared? I think we'd be feared and used. The Muggle world is just as bigoted and prejudicial as the magical, and I think any tiny minority like us would be taken advantage of. If you can accept that as possible, if not probable, you can understand the magical mindset."

"In what way?"

"Did your grandparents tell your parents about their magical ancestors?"

"No, not really," Lily admitted. "Not until I started showing that I had some magic."

"So, every time a Muggle-born or someone from a family with some distant Squibs in it is brought into the secret of the magical world, so are their parents and siblings. Every time someone magical marries a Muggle, another Muggle learns about us. The chances are good that not all their children will be magical -- more non-magical people in on the secret. We live with an underlying fear that we will be discovered and have to go deeper underground to escape persecution. That, and the natural arrogance of any group of self-contained people, explain most Pure-blood attitudes."

"Just most?"

"If Muggles knew that most magical beasts were real, how many would want to go hunting for dragons, griffins, or even unicorns?" Harry asked, and Lily had to admit to herself that was likely true. "How long would it take Muggle science to track magic, at least large-scale use of magic, and if needs be send a missile in to attack some place like Hogwarts? How long before our rather primitive economy would be overwhelmed by the Muggle, and we'd be selling our magic for food and shelter? I don't agree with ninety-nine percent of the Pure-blood agenda, but I do understand the underlying fears that help cause it. I also know that we can never control the Muggle world." Harry smiled. "If we could, we would have long ago, before Muggle technology became so powerful."

"So, you don't think much of our chances?"

"Our chances for what? Improving the magical world? I do think we can do that. The League is a good first step, if we can keep it going once we all leave Hogwarts. For ever integrating the magical and Muggle worlds? At least in our lifetimes? Or even our grandchildren's? No, not unless we ever gain more numbers. We're only about one out of every twenty-seven hundred people. We'd have to be at least one out of every hundred to stand a chance."

"That actually makes some sense," Lily had to say. These were difficult concepts, but Lily was very bright for her age. "Still, I don't think I could give up magic."

"I couldn't either," Harry agreed, "even if I were the richest Muggle in the world instead."

"Harry," Lily asked, "may I ask you something?"

"I would imagine so," Harry teased.

"I'm serious," Lily said. "You seem to know these kind of things, and you'll give me an honest answer. Are we superior to Muggles?"

Harry sighed. "Yes, in some ways," he answered. "We live longer, we're more resistant to injury and disease, we tend to have slightly better memories." He shrugged. "That's about it."

"Really?"

"Really," Harry said. "If your sister takes care of her self and is lucky, she could easily make it to her early eighties, and maybe into her nineties. Ellen's sister should make it until her nineties. You and Ellen should easily make a hundred and forty or more, and at seventy you'll probably still look like you're forty."

"You're kidding!"

Harry shook his head. "The Headmaster is a hundred and twenty- seven. You saw those people who came to examine the Fifth and Seventh years?" Lily nodded. "Three of those examiners taught Dumbledore, and another one of them had already quit the Hogwarts' staff and become part of the first examinations board the year before Dumbledore showed up at Hogwarts, which is when the N.E.W.T.s were started."

"Wow."

"Merlin was two-hundred and fifty three when he was killed, and there are probably a half dozen magical people alive just over the age of two hundred. Some legendary magical users made it to three hundred, but those could just be legends, or maybe they somehow artificially extended their lives."

"But that's not enough to say we should rule the Muggles, is it?"

"I wouldn't think so," Harry agreed. "Besides, if we had always ruled the world, the world would probably still be neolithic farmers and hunters-and-gatherers. We seem to always take the easy way out, and get most of our new ideas from Muggles." Harry smiled. "Of course, the environment would be a lot healthier if there were less than fifty million people and we were all neolithic farmers and hunter-gatherers."

"Much less pollution," Lily agreed. She thought a moment. "Is that why the Pure-Bloods are afraid of Muggles?"

"Almost every Seventh year at Hogwarts could throw up a shield that will stop a bullet, given sufficient warning," Harry answered. "Not one wizard out of a hundred can throw up a shield that will stop twenty bullets fired at it in less than a minutes. Not one wizard in a thousand can contain the power of a simple hand grenade, and the Muggles have much more powerful ways of killing than those. The Communists used Muggle-born infiltrators to wipe out large chunks of the old Magical communities in Central and Eastern Europe, not to mention in China, Indochina, and North Korea. All those Muggle-raised magical users did was point out where the magical communities were. They were wiped out, often in pitched battles, by the Communist Muggles. That tells us right there that the Muggle world can't just be trusted.

"My goodness," Lily said, shocked. "It's not simple, is it, Harry?"

"No," Harry had to agree, "it's not."

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