

Chapter XVI

Truths

Friday, August 18, 1972

"I wish you'd let me go shopping with you," Mary growled.

"Mother," Harry warned.

"What kind of betrothal jewelry can you buy for two Galleons?"

Harry glanced around and saw that they were not likely to be overheard. "Didn't you know Grandfather left me a large keg of gem stones?" he whispered.

"A keg? No. He said 'a few'," Mary replied.

"Am I a powerful wizard?"

"I take it that is a rhetorical question," Mary reproved.

"Do you think I'm powerful enough to reshape two Galleons into a necklace, a ring, and a pair of earrings, all set with blue diamonds?"

"With you, that might be close to a rhetorical question," Mary had to admit.

"Thank you for arranging this," Harry told her. "You were right. I do need this in my life. Something, someone, pure and innocent."

"Try and keep her that way, at least for a while," Mary said drily.

"She's twelve," Harry answered, offended.

"In a little over a month, she'll be thirteen," Mary answered.

"Then stop worrying for at least, say, thirteen months, okay?"

"Very well," Mary answered.

The betrothal was a simple, mostly family affair. The four Potters, plus Sirius and Remus, as well as the five McGregors, plus Lily. Dumbledore was present, as there had to be a Wizengamot member present who was not an immediate

member of either family. There was also a middle-aged witch who would be conducting the actual ceremony and a young clerk from the Ministry.

Harry and Ellen were dressed in nothing but plain white robes. They would have to open these in front of the witch to she could place some of the spells on them. They first had to announce that they were making these pledges of their own free will, and then they pledged their lives to each other.

While Harry allowed most of the spells to affect them, he did alter those which could in any way injure them or their magic should they become actual lovers in the most technical sense. Harry knew that he wouldn't 'jump the gun', as Ellen would still get pregnant after that first time, no matter what precautions they took, but that would be the only penalty.

The pair closed their robes and Harry placed the diamond ring he had made on Ellen's finger. It looked a little clunky on her slim finger, but Harry would use the surplus to easily expand the ring over the years as needed. He then went further than he had to by hooking the gold chain with its large diamond and six smaller diamonds around her neck, and handing her the earrings to insert herself.

With that, the ceremony was over, so Harry gathered Ellen in his arms and they apparently portkeyed away. Only Dumbledore saw that Harry had instead double-apparated them, leaving behind the correct sound effects and masking what he had done from the Ministry apparation and under-age sensors.

New fully-betrothed couples had to spend the week together. With all the spells on a betrothed couple newly in place, premature sex could lead to death. This was a test, and why most families opting for the most-traditional of arranged marriages often had the ceremonies before either participant was eleven.

"Where are we?" Ellen asked.

"It was a games keeper cottage," Harry answered, "that my grandfather expanded into a small guest house. It's about two miles into the woods from home." Harry had been uncertain about this, as this was where his parents had died in the other time line, but now he smiled. "Actually, I should say that my parents' house is about two miles from our home."

"Our home?"

Harry gestured. "We have a life-lease on this. This is our home, Ellen."

"It's rather empty," she said. There was nothing in the room but the fireplace.

"Right now, it's only set up with the kitchen, dining room, and one guest bedroom and the nearest bath," Harry said.

"Why?" Ellen asked.

"Why, so we can decorate it over the next few years the way we want it," Harry answered. Ellen smiled, and Harry put his arm around her.

"How many rooms does it have? I mean, Potter Manor has ninety- six and your mother calls it a house. What about a cottage?" Ellen teased. "Fifty?"

"Nine bedrooms, a master suite of three rooms and a bath, five other baths, a library, two parlors, two dining rooms, and a kitchen," Harry answered, "not counting the attic, an enclosed front porch, the wine cellar, the storage cellar, the elf loft over the kitchen, the pantries. . . ."

"Right, just a cozy little cottage," Ellen said nervously.

"There's nothing to be nervous about," Harry said. "That event is at least seventy months plus away."

"How do you figure that?"

"The soonest we should get married is the end of June, 1978," Harry reminded her. "A little more than seventy months away." He smiled. "We get to really know each other, and love each other, like no one else on Earth who hasn't undergone this Bonding can. And then we can decide on having a family."

"I think we get one nine months after we marry," Ellen pointed out.

"True, but we can decide where to go from there."

"I hope I'll want lots," Ellen said.

"A some-what fake Seer did once say I'd have twelve children," Harry teased her.

"Then I hope we have lots of twins!"

Harry smiled and called, "Dobby!"

Pop! "Master Harry?"

"Dobby? I know you've met, but this is my betrothed, Ellen. You will obey her in all things, save my commands. Ellen, this is my friend and servant, Dobby."

"Dobby is pleased to serve Mistress Ellen," Dobby said, bowing.

"And I am happy you are going to be with us," Ellen answered.

"Dobby, are our regular clothes upstairs?"

"Yes, Master Harry. All clothes there."

"Why don't you get dressed. Dobby, could you show Ellen to the room we're using, and then bring me a pair of boxers, a vest, socks, and my trainers?"

"Yes, Master," Dobby said.

"Come back when you're dressed, and I'll give you the tour. If you have any preferences for dinner, tell Dobby."

The next morning, Ellen stretched in the large bed, smiling very happily. All she and Harry had done was hold each other the night before as they fell asleep, but at her age, cuddling was more than satisfying. Sitting up, Ellen saw that there were clothes laid out for her. She got up and took them into the bathroom with her.

Coming out, Harry was waiting for her at the small table set for breakfast in their room. They didn't have much to say, and so just ate, happy in each other's company. When they were finished, Ellen asked, "What do we have to do before getting for the party tonight?"

"We need to talk," Harry answered. "Could you get your wand?"

Ellen went over to her dresser and brought the wand over to Harry. He took it, and it glowed for a moment. "I removed the tracking charms. That's one of the ways the Ministry tries to keep an eye on people." That Harry could do that was a real shock. "Now that we are betrothed, I would like to tell you some very important things, but I would need you to swear a privacy oath as well."

"So that I can only talk about things with you?"

"And my parents," Harry agreed. "I'm willing to share my life with you, and it's a lot more complicated than any twelve-year-old's should be."

"Of course I will swear it," Ellen said.

"Actually," Harry said thoughtfully, "there's one other person I should tell. Dobby!"

Dobby popped in. "Master Harry?"

"Could you bring that little foot stool from the red parlor here?"

"Dobby would have to ask Master or Mistress Potter," Dobby said, since he was taking property which did not belong to Harry.

"Go ahead."

Dobby was back with the foot stool in less than four minutes.

"Thank you, Dobby," Harry said. "Please sit down."

"Master Harry?"

"I asked you to sit, Dobby. I have a long story to tell, and I want you as well as Ellen to hear it." Shocked, Dobby sat.

And with that, Harry spent most of the next five hours telling his story. Dobby was upset that he didn't have time to fix a proper lunch, but Harry assured him that sandwiches would be fine, as there would be plenty of food at the Crouchs'.

When the story was finished, Harry sat back and drank some hot tea with honey. Dobby looked at Ellen, and when he saw she wasn't ready to speak, said, "Dobby now understands why he was called to Master Harry, and many of the things Master Harry has said to Dobby. Dobby does not think he would like to be really free, but Dobby is glad that not only does he work for the greatest of wizards, which Dobby already knew, but that he works for the kindest and wisest of wizards as well."

Harry looked embarrassed.

"Master Harry does not really believe Dobby," Dobby said. "Perhaps Mistress Ellen will convince him. Now Dobby must get your clothes ready for tonight." He disappeared.

Harry looked at Ellen. "It's a lot to believe, even though of course I believe it," she said. "So I died?"

"Yes," Harry said. He had spent a lot of time in one of the many forgotten rooms in Hogwarts, working with a penseive to retrieve the minor memories of the first time line. One thing he had looked for was Natalie talking about her family. "Don't worry, the time line is very different now. If we don't count his time at school, it took Voldemort fifteen years to build the basis of an organization, and then about eight years to begin any sort of even minor attacks. In terms of his British support, he's almost a leader with no followers."

"And outside of Britain?"

"He had a few outside followers, and they are the three known to have escaped. They did have ties to old Grindelwald factions, so it is possible he might tap into them this time. He didn't the first time until 1997."

"It sounds so odd when you say that!"

"How about 2010," Harry teased.

"Even odder," Ellen admitted. "One set of details you left out. Lily is your mother?"

Harry nodded. Ellen breathed a sigh of relief.

"So, what does this mean for us?"

"It means, until Voldemort is killed, I might be disappearing at odd times. You have to not notice if I'm not where I should be."

"Or even give you a false alibi?" Harry colored. "Oh, Harry! Do you think a white lie, given to help my future husband save wizarding Britain, would bother me?"

"I love you," Harry answered. "I don't want anything sordid to ever touch you." Ellen shivered as she felt Harry's raw power, and the love behind it. "My mother wanted us together mostly so I would have someone with me at all times I could share myself with. I also needed someone to fight for, someone pure and wonderful, not something abstract. And that could only be you."

Ellen flushed from embarrassment, but said, "Don't make me more than I am, Harry. I am not perfect."

"No," Harry teased, "you're not. Your left little toe is a bit bent, and you stole the sheet last night."

Ellen scowled and looked at her left foot. "H'mm," she said, "so it is. She lifted it towards Harry. "Can the most powerful wizard alive fix it?" she teased.

Harry knelt and set the foot on his knee. He covered the little toe between his hands and concentrated. A rush, not quite pain but certainly not pleasure, coursed through Ellen's body. She shook her head and looked down. "I was joshing!"

"I know," Harry said. "Just remember, I would do just about anything that isn't immoral for you."

"Then I hope I never ask for anything that even makes you think it might be," Ellen answered.

Harry stood and hugged her. "Let's get ready for your relatives."

Barty Crouch Sr. looked over at the newly betrothed couple, not quite children, as most were, but certainly not adult. He beckoned Bonnie Jean over. "We have not treated your part of the family very well over the years, have we?"

"To be truthful, cousin, while you and your wife have always behaved correctly, the others have been downright rude and nasty," Bonnie Jean answered.

Crouch smiled slightly. "Considering your sharp tongue and sharper brain, that's hardly surprising. You were supposed to be grateful for every crumb of attention the magical parts of the family gave you, and you have always preferred to show them up."

"I think they more than held their own," Bonnie Jean retorted.

"So they have," he agreed. "I would hope things improved at least somewhat after your marriage."

"Ian's background wasn't magical enough for most of them, although if he were from an old family, they would have disapproved of that," Bonnie Jean answered. "And they were just **so** nice when only one of the twins was magical."

"I can imagine," he answered, amused. "Well, they are all green with envy tonight, my dear."

"Because Ellen is the center of attention?"

"Because the future Mrs. Henry Potter is the center of attention," Barty corrected. "Harold Potter is a powerful figure in magical finance, and he has started to translate that into real political power. The Parkinsons over there, and the Puceys are unused to not being the centers of attention at these get-togethers. I was surprised we could trace no donations to Voldemort from any of them."

"So am I, but I know you tried," Bonnie Jean acknowledged. Her cousin had been one of the few of ancestry and influence in the Ministry to back much of The Order of Founders' agenda, at least where the Death Eaters had been concerned.

"Now Adrian Pucey and Carlotta Parkinson have been trying to trip the young couple up all night. Young Adrian has a temper, and looks about to lose it. Shall we see?" He offered Bonnie Jean an arm.

Bonnie Jean took it, and they moved towards the two couples. Others in the large reception also sensed trouble, and turned or moved to watch. Adrian, a large soon-to-be Seventh year Slytherin beater, was getting red in the face, and was finally heard by any to say (since the crowd had suddenly gone silent), "You

do realize your children will be half-bloods? She is, after all, little better than a Mudblood herself."

Carlotta, realizing that nearly everyone had heard that, started to back away. Ellen went pale. Harry glared up at Adrian, who was over a foot taller, and stated just as clearly, "I'd rather any of my children be a bit muddy than heaping piles of pure manure like you, Pussy." Harry knew how much Pucey's son had loathed being called Pussy, and was betting this one felt much the same.

He did. Adrian went for his wand.

And suddenly, he wasn't there any more.

Ellen looked down. "Oh, look! Someone turned him into a newt!"

Harry shrugged. "He'll get better." He escorted Ellen away, wondering for a moment why neither she, Elaine, nor Lily were laughing, until he remembered that *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* hadn't been made yet.

Barty Crouch restored Adrian, and Adrian's grandmother sent him home early. As Bonnie Jean went over to see to her daughter, Amelia Bones walked over to Barty. "Do you think young Potter did that wandlessly?"

"He must have, but I don't see how it's possible," Barty answered. He looked at the young boy, and realized that here was the future.

At that point, the small orchestra struck up another tune, and many of the couples started dancing.

Tuesday, August 29, 1972

Mary Potter escorted the six 12 year olds to Diagon Alley for the day. She left Harry and Ellen at Madam Malkins', as they needed some dress robes. Barty Crouch Sr. had apparently taken an interest in the couple, and they would be invited to several Ministry social functions not usually open to those under 16.

The Alley was moderately busy, but since the weather had been glorious the previous few days, most of the returning students had already come, unless they or their families were still putting off a visit to the last two days. As the group exited from the main apothecary, they heard screaming up further up the Alley.

Suddenly, the Dark Mark appeared over where the screams had come from.

Voldemort had returned to Britain.

Harry and Ellen had just stepped out from Madam Malkins' when, for only the second time since he had travelled back, pain shot through Harry's scar.

"What is it?" Ellen asked.

"Duck into this little alley," Harry said, pushing Ellen in to where several doors let tenants out of upper stories. "I love you. If you love and trust me, do not move from here," Harry said.

"Alright," Ellen replied, frightened as screams were now starting not far away.

"These are just glamours," Harry said, changing his appearance. And then he disappeared.

Voldemort and twelve foreign Death Eaters appeared in the very heart of Diagon Alley, not too far from the entrance of Gringotts. All thirteen shot off indiscriminate Killing Curses, and then six of the Death Eaters laid down short bursts of the Cruciatus while the other six kept watch.

After a few seconds, the six torturers changed targets and Voldemort launched the Dark Mark into the sky. "You thought you were rid of me! Fools! This is just a reminder that no one can oppose Lord Voldemort! No one can save you! You will all bow to me, sooner or later. Or else you will die!"

Suddenly, deep red smoke shot up into the sky, where a red dragon formed -- the Mark of Merlin, not seen in over 1000 years. The Red Dragon shot through and destroyed the Dark Mark.

The crowd of screaming, cowering figures parted, and a lean wizard of not quite average height appeared. He had wild white hair, and two lightening scars, one over each eye. He wore black trousers, a black shirt, a black cape, and dragon-hide boots, and carried a long staff.

A wave of the staff, and the twelve Death Eaters froze. "Tom Marvolo Riddle, who calls himself Lord Voldemort," the wizard stated, "I, the archdruid of the Order of the Founders, the Heir of all Four Founders, the Heir of Merlin, condemn you and your followers."

"Avada Ked. . . ." Voldemort never finished the spell, for the wizard had muted him -- and the Killing Curse had to be voiced.

The staff waved again, and the twelve Death Eaters screamed back to life, and Voldemort screamed even louder. The Dark Marks burned through their forearms, and the connecting symbol on Voldemort's forearm did as well. Then, their arms started to dissolve, crumbling into ash as the black glow crept up their arms. They were being killed by their own Dark Magic.

Voldemort was the only one who acted quickly, using a cutting curse to sever his own left arm just below the shoulder and then portkeying away. The twelve Death Eaters completely dissolved into ashes.

The 'archdruid' was already gone.