Adventures in Babysitting by tmkline

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Chapter 1: Adventures in Babysitting

Adventures in Babysitting

Part One – the Crowley's House

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A muffled groan echoed inside the Crowley's modest contemporary-style house and pulled Hermione's attention away from the magazine she was perusing. Looking around the den with the soothing earth tones, she reassured herself that the sound was simply the house settling and meant nothing. Houses creaked and settled and it was a common thing that shouldn't even catch her notice. Only, it did.

She knew she was being overly sensitive and that she should feel ridiculous for being paranoid. After all, none of the protection wards had been tripped and the security alarm hadn't been set off. Their chocolate lab, Bambi, was still snoozing peacefully at her feet. Taking a deep breath to calm her nerves, she slowly counted to ten and looked down at her page once more. To the impartial observer, she had returned to her original calm state, only the goose bumps on her arms betrayed her nervous insecurity. With determination, she forced herself to return her attention to the text in her lap but she was unable to become absorbed once more in the celebrity gossip.

It was really Ron and Harry's fault for making her paranoid at the start of the summer. As her eyes glazed over the page she thought back to their parting at King's Cross Station.

Instead of a brief hug goodbye, Ron had wrapped her up in a death grip and refused to let go as Harry watched on with approval.

"It's just for the summer, Ron and you can still owl me," Hermione reassured the red head as she patted his back in hopes she'd be released.

"I still don't like it," Harry stated joining the conversation as he crossed his arms over his chest and glared at the green Lincoln waiting to take Hermione to her parents' muggle home.

Hermione sighed heavily feeling incredibly tired of the argument she'd shared with her two overprotective best friends for the past month since she'd decided to have a magic free summer.

"Harry, for the millionth time, I will be perfectly safe. The muggle neighborhood my parents live in has never experienced any trouble. It's just a few months to catch up with my parents and muggle friends. Honestly, I had less trouble getting them to let me go to Hogwarts than getting you two to let me go home for the summer." Hermione responded her voice full of frustration.

"That doesn't matter. Voldemort has gained strength. Even Dumbledore thinks that something big is coming and we don't know what yet. Things are getting really bad and you're one of my best friends. I don't think it's safe for you to go to a muggle neighborhood unprotected," Harry reiterated his complaint.

"It's not as if I'm going into a dangerous area. Really! There are wards set up on the whole street thanks to your paranoia. If there's any magic done within a mile of my house, the whole of the wizarding world will know about it. What could possibly happen to me?" Hermione soothed.

"I agree with Harry. It's just not safe for you," Ron chimed in finally releasing Hermione from his death grip.

"It was perfectly safe every other summer. I know things are getting more dangerous but that's why I need this little break so much. It'll be nice to go home and forget about Voldemort and Deatheaters and just everything. Besides, you're the one who said it was safe for my parents who can't even use magic," Hermione reminded.

"Fine, its safe," Harry spat looking murderously at the Lincoln.

"Just be careful and keep your wand on you at all times," Ron ordered.

"Don't worry, Ron. I'll be completely safe. Nothing bad will happen," Hermione reassured him with a

peck on the cheek before grabbing up her trunk and heading over to greet her parents.

More to ease her mind than out of concern for her charge, she decided to go upstairs and check on the baby. The lab rolled onto his side as she walked past and she knelt down to give the dog an affectionate pat before heading for the staircase. The nursery door was ajar, just as she'd left it. A soft golden glow bathed the room allowing her a good view of her young charge. Little Jocelyn was lying on her side curled up into a tight ball with her mouth slightly ajar allowing a trickle of saliva to puddle on the mattress below her cheek.

Hermione smiled at the precious bundle that had recently brought so much joy to her next door neighbors. It was a testament to their trust in Hermione that she was here. It had been so good to see her parents and learn about Jocelyn. Her reunion at King's Cross Station had been perfect.

Her father had wrapped her up in a brief hug that her mother immediately repeated.

"Hermione, we've missed you! You've grown again!" her mother gushed.

"I've missed you too, mum!" Hermione responded allowing the overwhelming feeling of coming home to wash over her.

"Still leading the pack?" Her father questioned with a teasing expression.

Hermione nodded with a smile as her mother continued updating her on what she'd missed while she was away at school.

"Darling, you'll never guess what happened. It's the most wonderful news!" her mother gushed.

"What is it?" Hermione asked enjoying the excited sparkle in her mother's eyes.

“The Crawley’s have finally adopted a little girl,” Her father answered with a soft smile that belied his true happiness over the situation.

The Crowley’s had been trying to start a family since before Hermione had received her letter from Hogwarts. They’d suffered through years of infertility and then several more of devastation as fertility treatments allowed conception to occur but were thwarted by miscarriage after miscarriage. They’d tried adopting for years but it seemed that paperwork kept working against them. The couple had always treated Hermione like a favorite niece inviting her over to use their swimming pool in the summers and taking her with them for carnivals and the circus. They were her favored babysitters when her parents needed to attend dental conventions. She couldn’t have been happier if her parents had announced that she was finally going to be getting a sibling.

“There’s just one little thing,” her mother added as they got into the vehicle.

“What is it?” Hermione had asked worried that something would happen and once again the wonderful couple would be left without a child.

“Mark and Pam’s annual accounting convention is coming up. Pam wants to stay home with Jocelyn but it will endanger her position with the accounting firm and since she wants to be able to continue working from home, she really needs to attend. Mark’s up for partner and if he doesn’t attend he could loose his place.

Naturally, we offered to baby-sit but Pam really wants Jocelyn to adjust to her new home before she spends the night elsewhere. The poor baby has been passed around from home to home so much in her young life and Pam just wants her to feel safe and stable.

Hermione nodded in full agreement with Pam and her mother’s assessment.

“So I offered for you to stay with Jocelyn at their house for that weekend. Then she could be in her own home and we’d be right next door if anything comes up. I hope you don’t mind,” her mother explained.

“I’d love to do it,” Hermione responded enthusiastically thrilled that she’d be able to do something for

the neighbors who were more like family to her.

The ride home passed quickly as Hermione chatted merrily with her parents sharing all the amusing stories surrounding her NEWTS and plans for the fall while avoiding the heavier topics of Voldemort and his Deatheaters. Her mother had some snap shots of little Jocelyn and Hermione oohed and ahhed over how beautiful the little baby girl was.

Slowly, Hermione crept forward to cover the sleeping infant with the soft blanket she had kicked off. The maternal instincts looking at the baby produced caused Hermione to finally relax again. Of course it was a creak. Houses made sounds even in the muggle world. She was just being silly from too much time in the wizarding world.

Hermione decided to clear her mind and went into the powder room to wash her face before returning to the den. As the warm water renewed and refreshed her, she thought of how good it had felt to come home again.

Entering her room had been a soothing balm to her rattled nerves from the previous school year. She had looked forward to taking a break from potions, spells, NEWTS, and settling into the muggle world for a little holiday. She was already signed up to take a few summer courses at the community college. Due to her annoyance with Harry and Ron's fears, she defiantly laid her wand on top of her trunk before closing the lid and placing it in the back of her closet.

She was beginning to regret that action as her nerves continued to plague her but she knew it was just being alone in a strange house and the feelings would pass.

Her first night home had been wonderful. Her mum had made Sheppard's pie and bread pudding and then the family had settled in to watch Monty Python's Flying Circus before calling it a night and heading to bed. All in all, it was a wonderful homecoming.

The next two weeks involved sleeping late, shopping with her muggle girl friends, and getting to know Jocelyn. It was a lazy and relaxing time without the concerns brought on by Dark Lords, Deatheaters and even magic. Sometimes Hermione hated her magical abilities and wished she'd remained an ignorant

muggle, but now that she knew of both worlds, she couldn't help but learn about them both to the full.

Harry and Ron were driving her nutters with their constant owls. They would remind her that she needed "constant vigilance" and to never be without her wand.

Hermione would respond with "having a lovely time, go do the same" on the back of each missive and with a treat, send the owls on their way determined that the wand would remain in her school trunk for the summer.

Hermione decided to take one more peek at the baby before heading back downstairs. As she watched the baby's even breathing, she remembered earlier in the evening.

A frantic Pam greeted her with a hug and a harried expression as she gratefully led Hermione to the nursery where little Jocelyn was napping.

The baby looked like an angel sent from heaven with her fair skin and pale, silky hair that was almost too light to be human. Silvery eyes that held hints of blue looked up above a sweet smile as she reached up towards Hermione. Glancing at Pam, who nodded her approval, Hermione lifted the babe out of the crib and into her arms.

The baby cooed and stuck a thumb in her mouth as she nestled into Hermione's arms. It was easy to see how Jocelyn had already charmed her way into the hearts of the Crowleys as Hermione felt her own heart melting for this beautiful baby. The little girl could almost pass for a Veela or a Malfoy Hermione mused before scolding herself for thinking again of the magical world she was trying to take a break from.

Hermione busied herself with changing Jocelyn's diaper, giving her a bath and feeding her while Pam and Mark finished packing for their trip.

"We'll only be away for the weekend and I've put the number of the conference and both our cell numbers on the refrigerator along with the number to her pediatrician and your mother's right next door if anything comes up and you aren't sure what to do. But you're such a clever and responsible

young lady. I know you'll take perfect care of our little Joy." Pam enthused petting Jocelyn's head and handing Hermione an envelope with money for take-out and emergencies.

"Of course, Pam. I will take care of her as if she were my own sister," Hermione readily agreed setting the envelope down on the sofa table so she could use both arms to settle Jocelyn's busy hands.

Pam sighed with relief and grabbed her bags to follow Mark out to the car. Hermione helped Jocelyn wave "bye-bye" to her parents and locked up behind the retreating automobile.

For the next hour, Hermione played with Jocelyn. The little girl was a very happy baby who giggled and cooed with little effort. When the baby became fussy, Hermione changed her diaper and gave her a bottle before tucking her into her crib for a nap and possibly the night.

It felt so normal to be babysitting in a nice, average muggle home. The pictures stayed still and didn't converse. The dishes stayed where you set them and no odd sounds led you to boggarts hiding in the closet or cupboards.

She breathed a sigh of relief as she descended the stairs. Reaching the bottom, she turned right to head into the kitchen for a drink before returning to the den. A low menacing growl caused her to stop in her tracks. Turning her head slightly, she saw Bambi standing at attention with her hackles raised as he continued to growl at the patio doors.

"What is it Bambi?" Hermione asked nervously her gaze flickering between the patio doors and the lab.

With her question, Bambi ran to the patio doors and began to bark and show his teeth in a display of protection that would have brought great comfort to Hermione if she wasn't acquainted with all the possible things that could be causing this reaction in the dog.

Steeling up her courage and reminding herself that neither the wards nor the security alarm had been set off; she walked forward and turned on the exterior lights so she could see the backyard more clearly.

A black clothed figure was revealed as it scurried into the woods behind the house. The lab jumped at the glass trying to break through it to give chase.

“Hush, Bambi, it’s alright, you scared that burglar away,” Hermione quickly tried to calm the dog before it woke the baby. But it was too late. Little Jocelyn began to wail as she was woken up by the barking dog.

To add to Hermione’s nerves, the dog continued to bark and ran from the patio doors towards the kitchen door at the rear of the house. The one that would be the next logical entry place if you were coming from the woods.

“Damn,” Hermione cursed her poor luck and hesitated on what to do. There was definitely someone outside. Someone dressed in black. She couldn’t tell if it was a common burglar or a Deatheater and now the baby was crying. What to do. Get the baby? Call the police? Find a way to contact the Aurors? If only the dog would stop barking, she could think more clearly. How she wished she’d brought her wand with her.

Allowing her natural instincts to take over for her, she found herself climbing the stairs and picking up the baby to comfort her. Again she was met with those huge, silvery blue eyes.

“Shh, it’s alright. Hermione’s here to take care of you,” Hermione soothed the infant as she carried her back down the stairs and towards the kitchen where Bambi continued to growl and bark at the back door.

Just then, a peculiar alarm that was only heard by those with magical ability sounded informing her that the magical wards on the house had been breached. Someone with the ability to do magic was inside the house with her. This meant help would be on the way but it only takes a moment to cast an unforgivable.

“Oh shit,” Hermione whispered as she balanced the crying infant over her shoulder and scanned the area for a weapon, a place to hide or preferably both. Spying a wooden spoon on the counter, she began moving cautiously towards it.

Years of being in life or death situations with Harry and Ron hadn't really prepared her to face Deatheaters wandless and alone. She was oddly comforted by the dog at her side despite knowing that it wouldn't be able to help. Trying to remember if the wards were keyed to the Ministry or the Order, she prayed that help would arrive in time as she crept through the kitchen. Picking up a wooden spoon and holding it out in front of her like a wand, she prepared to play a very dangerous bluffing game.

"Silenco!" a voice hissed and the lab became unnaturally quiet despite the appearance of barking while the baby continued crying.

"I've contacted the Aurors; you only have seconds before your capture. If you surrender to me now, I'll try to help you stay out of Azkaban." Hermione bluffed bravely as she held the wooden spoon at an angle so it would appear to be a wand.

"Granger? Is that you?" a familiar voice drawled.

"Malfoy?" Hermione asked, feeling a slight sense of relief despite the danger she was still in.

"Thank Salazar, it's only you. When I saw those wards, I thought I'd have a lot more trouble getting in here," Draco responded stepping out of the shadows and lowering his wand.

"Are the Aurors really on their way?" he asked with a smirk as he reached out to pluck the wooden spoon from Hermione's hand.

"Yes, at first I thought it was a prowler but with your black robes, I assumed it was a Deatheater and look, I was right," Hermione responded taking back the wooden spoon and smacking Draco's arm with it.

"Ouch! Are all muggles as violent as you? If you wanted it back you could have asked, you didn't have to hit me with it," Draco whined rubbing his arm and glaring murderously at Hermione.

“When you break into a private residence you should expect to be assaulted. Now get out!” Hermione growled as she dropped the wooden spoon and rubbed Jocelyn’s back in hopes of soothing the still sobbing baby.

“Relax, Mudblood, I’m not here for you. Just give me the baby and I’ll be on my way,” Draco drawled his eyes roaming the room.

“What?” Hermione asked in shock.

“Hand over the baby and I’ll be on my way,” Draco repeated looking around nervously as though he could sense something.

“Over my dead body,” Hermione threatened spying a frying pan over Draco’s shoulder.

Draco’s body seemed to stiffen and his voice took on a tone of panic. “There’s no time for Gryffindor theatrics, Granger, they’ll be here soon. Please let me have Jocelyn and I’ll go.”

“What are you playing at?” Hermione asked watching Draco as he seemed to get more agitated though he didn’t appear to be a threat to her.

“I’m not playing! They’re coming for her! Now! Please, I won’t hurt her but we have to get out of here,” Draco pleaded as his eyes darted around the kitchen and his body began to tremble.

“Who’s coming?” Hermione questioned, confused by Malfoy’s actions.

“Merlin, they’re here, we must go!” Draco cried trying to get a hand on Hermione’s arm.

“I’m not going anywhere with you,” Hermione hissed as she wondered why Bambi continued to silently bark but hadn’t attempted to bite the blond yet.

“Please, Hermione,” Draco pleaded his usually pale completion somehow even whiter as though he no longer had any blood in his face. He futilely continued reaching for her arm as cracks of apparition shook the kitchen.

Six masked Deatheaters had arrived and now faced them.

Helpless without her wand, Hermione turned her body to shield Jocelyn from the attack as hexes and curses began flying. Her mind raced searching through every random fact she’d ever read in search of a way to protect the infant.

To her shock, a shimmering green bubble appeared around her and the baby muffling the sounds of the battle and protecting them from the hexes filling the air. Hermione glanced in shock over her shoulder at Draco who must have cast the shield that was currently protecting her and Jocelyn.

Love, concern, and gratitude filled Hermione as Bambi joined the blond in battle despite her silence by launching her body, teeth and claws at the closest Deatheater clamping her jaws over his arm and clawing at his torso. The lab knocked the Deatheater off his feet as he was caught unexpectedly.

A second began sending stinging hexes at the dog but only managed to hit his fellow Deatheater instead so that Bambi was successfully distracting two of the Deatheater threats.

The lab’s display of loyalty reminded Hermione why she always felt safe with the dog by her side. Unfortunately, the dog would only last a short time against wands and soon the cowardly boy she knew from school would be the only thing standing between them and a sure death.

Watching her protector, Hermione noticed that Draco Malfoy was much taller than she recalled with broader shoulders but the trembling of his limbs only cemented her fears.

Draco was throwing and deflecting hexes faster than Hermione believed him capable as the four Deatheaters formed a semi-circle to trap them against the wall.

Removing her mask and looking triumphant, Bellatrix cackled, “Your loyalties have been displaced.”

“Hand her over or suffer the consequences,” Rodolphus ordered removing his mask with a sneer.

“Fuck you!” Draco retorted before shouting “Avada Kedavra!”

Hermione watched in shock as a masked Deatheater fell.

“Crucio!” Bellatrix shouted and Draco fell to the floor his mouth open in a silent scream.

As Draco fell, the bubble surrounding Hermione and Jocelyn lightened and faded completely leaving her helpless once more.

“Hand over the brat or you’re next,” Rabastan threatened brandishing his wand and waving it with a flourish like a sword.

“Never, Hermione gritted out from clenched teeth clutching Jocelyn tighter and curving her body around the baby to protect her the only way she could.

“Petrificus Totalus!” a gruff voice cried out as light sparked from a wand and collided with Hermione’s side.

Hermione silently screamed in rage and horror as the body bind took effect and she was frozen in place. Wishing she was more powerful like Harry and able to break the body bind she watched in a rage of

helpless frustration as Rabastan took the baby from her still and useless arms.

This was Pam's daughter. Pam trusted her to protect the baby. She had to save the baby. Hermione tried desperately to focus her magic on breaking the curse.

"Now, let's have some fun," Rodolphus leered.

Hermione's heart thundered in her chest as the foul Deatheater advanced on her. She could see Draco continuing to writhe under the Cruactius curse as his aunt cackled madly and realized that he would be of no help.

Silently begging every deity she'd ever read about she prayed for help to save Jocelyn before it was too late.

At that moment a welcome crack of apparition announced the arrival of Harry and Ron followed by several more cracks bringing Moody, McGonagal, Tonks and Lupin to the rescue. Hermione's heart filled with hope and gratitude that their salvation had arrived, then plummeted back to despair as the Lestrange trio instantly apparated away with Jocelyn leaving the dead Deatheater and their other two lackeys who were still being subdued by an overprotective lab to face the consequences at the mercy of the Order.

Ron rushed to Hermione's side and cast Finite Incantum to release her from the body bind.

"Are you alright?" Ron asked pulling her into his arms.

Hermione's relief at her own safety warred with her fears for the baby as she choked out, "They took the baby," and then broke into sobs of fear and relief.

Ron held her tightly and rubbed her back trying to calm her obvious shock and touch of hysteria.

“What baby?” Harry asked joining them with a tail wagging Bambi by his side. To Hermione’s relief the dog let out a single bark to show she’d been released from the Silenco. Hermione wrapped her arms around the dog and kissed its brown head.

“You were wonderful, Bambi. Thank you for protecting us,” Hermione whispered as tears ran down her cheeks despite her best efforts to stop them.

The dog lay down with his chin on his paws and watched the proceedings as though his job was done and it was time to rest.

Hermione took a deep breath and forced herself to focus on the situation at hand. Crying like a child would not help Jocelyn. She needed a plan and help. Thank god that Harry and Ron were here. With a slightly trembling voice she answered, “Jocelyn, I was babysitting for the Crowleys and they took Jocelyn.”

Having subdued and unmasked the remaining Deatheater threat, Moody cleared his throat loudly to gain everyone’s attention and questioned, “Why would these riffraff want a muggle child?”

“It’s personal,” Vincent Crabbe spat.

“That abomination must be killed,” Greg Goyle added glaring at Draco.

“I think Malfoy knows, at least he came to get the baby first,” Hermione responded her voice gaining strength as the shock left her body leaving her feeling drained.

Moody’s attention turned to the shaking mass of black and blond lying on the kitchen floor.

“Get up, you worthless piece of shit,” Moody growled kicking Draco in the small of the back.

Slowly, Draco sat up and glared at Moody, his body still shaking from the Cruatius he'd just endured.

"If you don't want to go straight to Azkaban, you'll talk Malfoy," Moody threatened.

"She's not a muggle," he panted holding his arms tightly around himself as though he needed to hold himself together.

"Than what is she?" Moody continued in his interrogation his tone belying his lack of patience with the situation.

"She's a half-blood witch," Draco spat pulling up his knees and wrapping his arms around them tightly in an obvious attempt to stop shaking.

"Why do the Deatheaters want her when she's just a baby?" Moody continued, relentless in his pursuit of facts.

"She's not just any half-blood. She's a Malfoy, a corruption of the pureblood line and a terrible spot on our reputation that must be removed. As soon as the Dark Lord learned of her existence, he ordered her killed," Draco grimaced glaring at Moody in a way that would have caused any Slytherin to wet their pants but had no effect on the hardened Auror.

McGonagall's face paled taken over by a look of horror as she gazed at her former student and questioned, "So you came here to kill her?"

Turning his head slowly in denial, Draco responded "No, I came to save her."

A look of understanding passed over Hermione's face before she cried in outrage, "Oh my god! She's your daughter; you raped some poor muggle girl didn't you!"

Draco's eyes flooded with an expression that Hermione couldn't identify and he forced himself to his feet, lunging at Hermione as he loudly denied, "I didn't rape anyone!"

"Oh so you're telling me that a muggle willingly let you touch her?" Ron asked looking ill.

Looking much steadier on his feet, Draco hissed, "It's none of your business."

"Wrong, Malfoy! The minute you involved Hermione in your twisted life you made it our business." Harry quickly chimed in getting right in the Slytherin boy's face and preparing for a scuffle.

Taking the room back into his charge, Moody placed a hand on each boy's shoulder and pushed them an arm's length apart, then resumed his questioning as though the outbursts had never occurred, "Anytime a child has been taken, it is very much our business. How long do we have before they kill her?" he demanded.

Closing his mouth tight, Draco glared defiantly at the hardened Auror refusing to speak.

"We can do this the easy way, or we can do this the hard way, but regardless of my entertainment, I will be getting my answers," Moody threatened releasing Harry to pull his wand and pointing it at Draco's throat.

Sighing as though he were being forced to sit through one of his mother's boring society functions instead of facing the frightening Auror, Draco drawled, "Probably three days. There's a ceremony to return the purity to the blood line. It's got to be done under a full moon so that means three days."

"The Dark Lord is going to kill you for this," Vince hissed at Draco.

"What's one more Malfoy child dead in his grand scheme of things?" Draco returned sounding oddly

philosophical at the death threat.

“You’re a pureblood, you could have been someone. Why do you care if some half-blood freak lives or dies?” Greg added looking lost and confused over Draco’s betrayal of the Dark Lord.

Grey eyes swirled silver with unreadable emotions as the blond whispered so softly that Hermione wasn’t sure anyone else heard, “I care.”

A single tear slowly slid from the corner of one stormy eye and made a wet trail down the side of Draco’s pale cheek. Hastily he wiped it away with the back of his hand and returned his cold glare to Moody’s

“Wow, I guess there’s a beating heart somewhere in there after all,” Harry broke the tension.

“Shut up Potter, you’ll ruin my reputation,” Draco muttered a flush of embarrassment coloring his cheeks briefly before giving Harry a patented Malfoy sneer.

“You’re reputation is already ruined. Traitor!” Vince cried out.

“Quiet!” Moody ordered, turning his attention to the slight body on the floor. As he removed the mask from the slight Deatheater lying on the kitchen floor, Hermione felt her stomach tighten in nausea as he revealed the childish face of Theodore Nott.

“Oh god, I think I’m going to be sick,” Hermione moaned as Ron quickly engulfed her in his arms to lend support.

Completely unaffected, Moody questioned, “Who killed him?”

“Malfoy,” Hermione whispered meeting the Auror’s good eye.

Turning his attention back to the unmarked body, Moody questioned, “Kedavra?”

“Yeah,” Draco responded wrapping his arms around himself once more and swaying a bit as his skin gained a greenish tinge.

“Talk,” Moody ordered pulling out a kitchen chair and sitting heavily on it.

“I want immunity,” Draco stated raising a single eyebrow.

Lupin looked askance at Draco and questioned, “Immunity from what?”

“I want immunity from all charges for my cooperation,” Draco demanded.

Moody growled, “We won’t be ignoring crimes, boy.

“You’d best read me my rights,” Draco tested.

“You haven’t been charged with a crime, yet,” Moody pointed out.

“Immunity or you’ll never find out what you want to know,” Draco bluffed.

Tonks walked over and stood next to Draco looking him over before morphing into him and mocking, “I won’t talk and you can’t make me.”

Draco turned his icy glare on the Auror and clenched his jaw in frustration.

This succeeded in relieving a bit of the tension as even Moody muffled a chuckle.

“Alright boy, this conversation will be off the official record so we won’t use anything you say against you. That’s the best I can do,” Moody finally agreed.

“Blood oath,” Draco stated jutting out his chin.

Moody’s face burned red as he stood up and pushed his face directly into the real Draco’s. “My word, take it or I’m hauling you off to Azkaban and forgetting which cell I put you in, you’ll rot and nobody but your pathetic mum will be missin’ you!”

Trembling slightly, Draco nodded with wide eyes, took a deep breath, and began to speak, “I found out about Jocelyn last week in a meeting of the inner circle.”

“How does a greasy little whiner like you end up in an inner circle meetings?” Moody taunted.

“I was to take my father’s place by the Dark Lord’s side and have been brought into many such meetings.” Draco responded his chin tilted as though daring anyone to contradict him. With a glance back at his former bodyguards, he took another deep breath and continued on, “The Dark Lord found a new method for locating Muggleborn wizards and witches. It’s a new form of scrying over muggle cities that only shows those of magical ability.”

Hermione felt horrified that Voldemort was now actively seeking out defenseless children and gasped in shock, “No muggleborn child will be safe.”

Draco raised a single eyebrow in response, though Hermione couldn’t figure out what it meant. As she was puzzling his response, McGonagall quickly agreed, “How can we keep them safe before they’re ready for Hogwarts? Albus must be informed.”

Lupin was quick to agree with her assessment. “I don’t understand how the Order was not made aware of this?”

“Perhaps your source has dried up?” Draco suggested looking smug.

Moody was quick to regain control of the room as he cleared his throat and bellowed, “Continue.”

Draco rolled his eyes and resumed as though he hadn’t been interrupted, “When it showed Jocelyn, I recognized her magical signature as that of a Malfoy. She was in a children’s home at the time. I don’t know what became of her mother. I heard the Dark Lord’s plans to eradicate all the muggleborns before they could be taught to harness their magic. To save her, I pointed out her Malfoy lineage. He ordered me punished and the child put to death.”

Harry’s body jerked slightly as he interrupted to ask, “Why would he order you punished?”

Again, Draco seemed to feel a single raised eyebrow was sufficient answer for his classmate before picking up as though the question hadn’t been asked, “I escaped and tried at the children’s home but Jocelyn had already been adopted. It took me a week to track her down. I didn’t know that Hermione would be here. I just knew that the Deatheaters were on my trail and that they were determined to kill her.”

“So you were fighting to protect the child?” Moody questioned.

Draco nodded averting his eyes downward and looking at the corpse causing his skin to turn a slightly darker shade of green.

Lupin mused aloud, “Why did you kill, why not stun?”

“Instinct, self preservation, training, it’s how I react when my life is in danger,” Draco shrugged appearing non-chalant except for the green tinge still staining his skin.

“Who else have you killed? Are you marked?” Moody demanded gently shaking Draco’s right arm.

“Only animals in training and I’m not marked,” Draco answered boldly as he seemed to regain his composure and pull his hatred around him like a protective barrier.

“Show me your arm,” Moody ordered.

The room seemed to still as Hermione noticed both Harry and Ron leaning forward to see what would happen when Draco pulled back his sleeves. Harry let out a relieved sigh and Ron let out a disappointed sounding groan when two unmarked arms were revealed.

Tonks allowed herself to morph back to normal and grinned as she stated, “We might have to let him go.”

Moody glared at Draco and muttered, “Not until I’m satisfied.”

Draco shuddered slightly and glanced over at Hermione with what would have passed for a pleading look coming from anyone else but from Malfoy looked a bit like he’d bitten into something extremely sour and couldn’t decide whether to spit or swallow.

“What will you do if we release you?” Moody questioned.

“Find Jocelyn,” Draco answered without thought or hesitation.

“And when you find the child?” Moody continued undeterred.

“Take her away from here and keep her safe,” Draco answered without hesitation.

Hermione’s face flushed with the heat of her anger. “She’s not yours to take, she’s the Crawley’s daughter,” Hermione reminded angrily.

“She’s my blood!” Draco spat back.

“You don’t own her!” Hermione continued taking a menacing step forward.

“Well, neither do you and she’s my family!” Draco shouted back.

“Children!” Lupin interrupted before threatening, “Do I have to cast a Silenco?”

Both Hermione and Draco flushed with embarrassment and looked at the tiles on the floor.

“What do you think?” Moody asked, ignoring Hermione and looking over at Harry.

Harry studied Malfoy carefully before agreeing, “He seems genuine.”

Feeling guilt clawing at her chest for not having mentioned it sooner, Hermione added, “He cast a shield over the baby and me when the Deatheaters arrived. I think he really intends to protect Jocelyn.”

“If we take him into the Ministry for questioning, they’ll let him sit and rot. He’d be more useful if we could get him to talk and help,” Moody mumbled deep in thought.

Harry fidgeted for a moment before walking towards Draco and demanding, “Do you know where they’ve taken her?”

Draco flushed and looked to the floor before responding, “I don’t know. I know possibilities but I don’t know which one they’d go to.”

Looking up uncharacteristically shy and sheepish he added, “They know that I know, you know?”

“So you’re useless,” Moody spat in frustration.

Always one to defend himself and his actions, Draco quickly denied the accusation, “I wouldn’t say that. I’m aware of many hidden places. I’m just not certain which they’ll use as they know I’m aware of them. At the same time, it would be logical to use one of the obvious assuming I’d overlook it.”

Looking between Tonks, Lupin and Harry, Moody posed the question, “What do you think?”

“He’s a coward but he’s also quite loyal to his blood. I think he’d be an asset,” Harry began.

“The Blacks are tricky and tend to used blood spells, his blood could work to your advantage,” Tonks added.

“I think he’s a wanker and we don’t need him,” Ron chimed in.

“He did protect Jocelyn and it wouldn’t hurt to have another person on our side who’d risk themselves to keep her safe,” Hermione countered.

“He’s rather clever and could prove very useful if he can really be trusted,” Lupin added.

“Greasy little brat, but it looks like having him help might work to your advantage,” Moody decided. “Best to let Dumbledore decide. I say we take him into Headquarters.”

“So what do you say Malfoy? Are you with us or against us?” Harry asked.

“It doesn’t look like I have much choice,” Draco responded with a smirk.

Moody insisted on restraining Draco before leaving him in Lupin’s custody and apparating away with Tonks, Crabbe, and Goyle to attend to paperwork at the ministry.

Hermione looked sadly behind her at the dead body of her former classmate Theodore Nott before the Portkey swirled them back to Grimmald.

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Chapter 2: Adventures in Babysitting

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Part Two – Headquarters

Ron flopped down on the sofa feeling very satisfied as he watched his school rival being lead to the kitchen in restraints. It served the prick right for trying to kidnap an innocent baby. Ron didn’t believe for a second that Malfoy was trying to protect a baby. The Slytherin had ulterior motives, for sure. He probably wanted to deliver the infant to the Dark Lord personally or use it in a dark ritual to increase his own pathetic magic.

“You seem pleased,” Hermione commented easing into place beside him and curling slightly into his side as Harry plopped down on the other side of him his gaze following the blond menace and Lupin.

Ron smiled inwardly with approval at Harry’s watchful attitude. At least someone still agreed with him that the blond was dangerous.

“I’m just happy you’re alright,” Ron told her wrapping his arm protectively around her as he felt Hermione relax against him in a way that was both familiar and soothing.

The sofa jostled a bit as Harry appeared agitated while he squirmed in his seat before getting up and leaning against the door to listen in on the conversation in the kitchen.

“You should get an extendable ear,” Ron suggested quietly.

“No time, I don’t know where Fred and George are and don’t want to miss anything,” Harry whispered back concentrating in his effort to hear what was being said in the next room.

Hermione stiffened and sat up a bit as though something brilliant had just occurred to her. Ron turned his attention to her to see “that look” on her face. She was definitely planning something ingenious.

“I have to check something,” Hermione announced jumping up and heading in the direction of the library.

Ron looked between Harry whose ear was still pressed to the door and Hermione’s retreating back and made a decision to follow the girl.

He almost laughed aloud as he entered the library to find her already carrying several books from the

shelf.

“What are you doing?” Ron questioned taking the books from her and carrying them to the table.

Hermione’s face was flushed with excitement making her eyes sparkle as she eagerly answered, “If Voldemort can use a scrying spell to search randomly for children with magical ability, I bet I can use one to locate a single child.”

Feeling pride over his intelligent friend swell his chest, Ron praised, “That’s brilliant!”

“Thanks, Ron,” Hermione blushed as she flipped through books and began writing notes.

Ron was only too happy to watch her work. When Hermione was in research mode, she was a beauty to behold and appreciate. He felt a little bit guilty about allowing Harry to keep an eye on Malfoy alone but he knew his friend was more than capable of the task and Hermione might need him for something.

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Harry strained to hear the conversation in the kitchen but only succeeded in hearing a few random muffled words. He noticed Hermione hurrying off and assumed she’d thought of something and needed to look up information to be sure she was right. He was pleased to see Ron quickly follow after their bookish friend like a puppy following his master. He wondered when the two of them would ever get the clue that they were made for each other.

A half smile crossed his face as he considered the person who he wished was made for him. Now if he could just hear what they were saying, he’d know whether or not he could trust the Slytherin.

He was so focused on trying to hear what was happening in the kitchen that he didn’t hear the soft footsteps approaching him from behind and was only alerted to the presence of another when a nasally

voice hissed in his ear, “What is so interesting on the other side of that door?”

Harry jumped in surprise and turned to face his former Potion’s Professor. Surprised and caught, Harry blushed and stammered out, “Malfoy.”

“Senior or Junior?” Snape drawled.

Collecting himself, Harry stood straight and answered in a clear voice, “Draco, sir.”

“I see, and what is young Mr. Malfoy doing in the kitchen?” Snape questioned looking slightly nervous.

Harry immediately realized that Snape knew Draco was a Deatheater and he was concerned about keeping his spy status a secret.

Feeling a moment’s elation that he knew something the greasy git didn’t, Harry answered, “I’m not sure. That’s why they’re questioning him. He’s either changed sides or he’s just in trouble with both sides.”

“Then excuse me while I resolve this issue,” Snape responded pushing past Harry and entering the kitchen, seeming to take too much pleasure in closing the door in Harry’s face.

Harry scowled in frustration when it became apparent that the greasy git had cast a privacy spell after entering the kitchen. Now he couldn’t even catch the muffled word or two that had been slipping out of the closed room.

What could they possibly still be questioning Malfoy about? It shouldn’t take long for him to admit he had a daughter. Butterflies filled Harry’s stomach as he contemplated the odd news. Malfoy had a daughter, what a funny thing. Harry had always thought he was gay. Even with the messy Pansy business and various rumors that time there was something about Malfoy that screamed Queen. Maybe he was bi? Shaking his head slightly to clear it, Harry tried to dispel the privacy spell so he could better hear.

Fortunately for him, he'd taken a step back to cast because it was at that moment that the kitchen door swung open and a very excited Remus came rushing out.

"Harry, oh how wonderful, we require Hermione's presence. Do you know where she's gotten to?" Remus gushed looking over eager to find her.

"I think she and Ron went to the library to look something up," Harry answered hoping that his friend would fill him in on current events.

"Wonderful, I'll go get her. Feel free to go in. I dare say you'll be brought up to date quickly," Remus assured him ushering him into the kitchen before hurrying away down the hall.

Harry entered the kitchen to find a beaming Dumbledore seated at the head of the table with a smug looking Snape on his right and a sulky and defiant looking Draco on his left.

"Harry, my boy, how good it is to see you. So much has happened, I'm sure you'll be pleased. Would you like a lemon drop?" Dumbledore enthused gesturing for Harry to take a seat and offering him an open tin.

"No thank you," Harry responded taking a seat across from Draco and two seats down from Snape.

Dobby arrived just as Harry was settling in and set out tea and biscuits. The elf watched Draco with a wary eye but otherwise held his tongue. Harry was about to comment on the odd behavior when Hermione and Ron burst into the room and quickly settled themselves on the left of Harry so as to be as close to him as possible while remaining as far from Snape as possible. Hermione seemed to be bouncing in her seat as though she had to use the bathroom or really, really wanted to answer a question that she just knew was about to be asked.

Lupin took a seat next to Draco and gave him an encouraging smile and a pat on the back of his hand.

Draco sneered in return and Snape rolled his eyes raising an eyebrow at his former favorite student.

The Floo filled with green flames and McGonagall stumbled out and into the room followed by Madam Pomfrey and Professor Flitwick.

The two teachers and mediwitch settled themselves at the table and turned their attention to Dumbledore.

Everyone began helping themselves to tea and setting biscuits on their plates. Harry chuckled to see Ron place a half a dozen on his plate before pouring his tea while Hermione frowned at him helping herself to only one.

Percy arrived next followed by Bill and Charlie who seemed to be having a fun time picking on him about the Ministry and false alarms of some sort but Harry missed the rest of the conversation as Fred and George arrived in a puff of smoke.

“We found a way…” George began with a flourish in Fred’s direction.

“to apparate here,” Fred finished with a bow.

Dumbledore looked like he was about to burst into laughter as Arthur walked in followed closely by Molly who gave the twins one stern look that immediately brought everyone in the room to attention.

“Ah, I believe we can begin now,” Dumbledore announced looking around at the group in the kitchen.

Dumbledore stood up and cleared his throat to gain everyone’s attention before making his announcements, “It seems that He-who-must-not-be-named has found a way to locate all the muggleborn magical children.

There was a quiet intake of air as the news seemed to sober everyone immediately.

The silence was broken when Molly whispered, “Oh dear Merlin, how?”

“It’s a perversion of a common scrying spell with a unique twist that I didn’t know was possible. It seems that Voldemort has found a way to separate a wizard from his magic and harness that magic. By using some of this separated pure magic in the spell, he can find anyone with any magic in their blood. Let me be clear so you understand the seriousness of this new discovery. He can locate anyone of magical ability, anywhere and there are no spells or wards that can hide them from this new type of scrying.” Dumbledore informed everyone.

Another shocked silence broken only by gasps filled the room.

Arthur cleared his throat and questioned, “Fidelus?”

Dumbledore looked sad as he responded, “I’m afraid this new magic renders our safest option useless.”

Bill swallowed hard and cleared his throat before asking, “So he could see us now, sitting here as a group?”

Dumbledore gave a slight nod as he responded, “It would be quite easy for him to spot any large group of magical people. That makes it good that for our purposes he is only looking for the smallest bits of magic which appear to be muggleborn children as they aren’t surrounded by large groups of magic. The safest place for anyone magical is in a magical village where there is so much magic about that it is more difficult to determine one magical signature from another.”

A tremor of horror coursed through Harry as he thought of his godfather. He felt sweat break out over his face despite the chill that brought out goosebumps and made him tremble. Unable to control himself in his panic, he burst out, “What about Sirius?”

Draco who had remained impassive during the meeting thus far, turned his attention to Harry with questioning eyes.

Ignoring the sudden outburst and panic in Harry's eyes, Dumbledore calmly responded, "Will need to be moved for his own safety."

"I volunteer," Lupin immediately offered.

"Me too," Charlie quickly chimed in.

Lupin smiled over at Charlie with a look of appreciation which he seemed to return.

At that moment, the Floo filled with flames and Tonks came tumbling out. The usually happy-go-lucky Auror had on a grave face and her hair was a very grayish shade of blue. This was never a good thing.

Dumbledore brought a slight smile to his grave face and turned his attention to the young Auror, "Nymphadora, how nice you could drop in. May I offer you a lemon drop or some tea?"

"Sorry Albus. I'm here on official Ministry business. I need to take young Malfoy in for questioning. His cronies implicated him in the death of Nott and we need to have his official statement regarding the matter." Tonks responded looking almost angry about her task.

Malfoy stood up looking entirely enraged as his face turned an impressive shade of red and he began shouting, "You said if I spoke to Moody that I wouldn't have to go into the Ministry. You said if I told you everything that I had immunity. I won't go! You can't make me! I have immunity! Do you know what that means or are you too stupid with your silly changing colors to learn the English language. I'm not going! I'm not!"

Dumbledore was shaking slightly with suppressed laughter as he nodded in Snape's direction. Snape

seemed completely unaffected as he flicked his wand and cast a Silenco charm on Malfoy.

It took a few seconds of ranting before Malfoy noticed that he was no longer speaking aloud and turned to glare at Snape in a way that would have frightened a Hufflepuff but had no effect whatsoever on the Potions Professor.

Noticing that he'd gained Draco's attention, Snape drawled, "Mr. Malfoy. Please remember that you are no longer a child who can throw tantrums. I realize that your father has yet to control his urges to act out like a toddler when disappointed but I had hoped that you would have acquired more class."

Draco looked crestfallen for a moment and seemed to deflate as the rage left his face a pasty shade of white. He lowered his head no longer looking Snape in the eye as though he were a puppy that someone had just swatted with a newspaper for piddling on the carpet.

Snape flicked his wand again to remove the Silenco before softly addressing Draco again, "Draco, you were told to go with the Auror."

"Yes sir," Draco answered in a shaky voice, his body trembling just so that it was evident if you were looking closely at him.

Tonks sent a soft smile Snape's way before addressing Draco, "Come on cousin, I'll make sure you're treated fairly."

Draco's head snapped up to reveal slightly wet, reddened eyes which he quickly wiped with the back of his hand. He whispered, "Thank you," and walked over to stand beside Tonks.

"I'll be needing Hermione too. She needs to fill out a statement about what happened tonight," Tonks added giving Hermione a kind but apologetic smile.

"Sure, I'd be happy to. Besides, I want to make sure that they take into account the shield Malfoy cast to

protect me and Jocelyn as well as the fact that he was defending me when he killed Nott." Hermione readily agreed.

Ron immediately piped up, "I'm going with you. I don't want you facing the Aurors alone."

Harry smiled proudly at his friends. Hermione the fair and Ron the protective what a wonderful team. "I'm coming too. I can't let Ron steal all the glory," he joked.

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Chapter 3: Adventures in Babysitting

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Part Three – The Ministry

Tonks used a portkey to bring the group directly into a locked interrogation room located deep in the bowels of the Ministry. It was complete with a long rectangular table, uncomfortable chairs, quills, parchment, and a pitcher of ice water and stack of paper cups.

Two big and burly Aurors were waiting for them wands at the ready. The first resembled a bear while the second looked more like a giant pig.

"Mr. Draco Malfoy?" the first questioned.

Harry noticed that Draco began to tremble slightly as he stiffly responded with a nod.

“Mr. Malfoy, you are under arrest for the murder of one Theodore Nott. You have been identified as a follower of the Dark Lord and a Deatheater. Your crimes will be added to as they are discovered. Based on the knowledge of your daughter, we can only assume that rape will be added to those charges and as soon as we find the muggle girl, we will ensure that those charges stick.” The second Auror announced.

“This isn’t right. Moody promised Malfoy immunity in exchange for information,” Tonks quickly informed them.

“I see nothing about immunity in his file,” the second Auror smirked pulling a thick manila folder from his robes and holding it out like a prize.

“Come with us,” the first ordered pointing his wand directly at Draco.

“I was promised immunity,” Draco managed to croak out despite his obvious fright.

Harry placed a hand on the blonde’s shoulder to steady him and was relieved to feel the trembling subside slightly.

“Only the Minister may grant immunity. I would think with all your connections in the Ministry that you would be aware of that,” the first Auror answered smugly.

Harry felt Draco’s shoulder sag minutely as though he knew the man was speaking the truth but wasn’t about to admit it or show it if it could be helped.

“Before Mr. Malfoy is charged, I wish to speak with the Minister,” Harry broke in unable to remain quiet when he could feel Draco’s distress so clearly.

“And why do think the Minister will see you? Being Harry Potter means nothing here. We know what you are. A little show off who attracts Dementors into public places and then pretends he was attacked so he can show off his magic to muggles even though he’s underage. Don’t think we find your name impressive

here. Around here you're nothing but a fame seeker. You will not be granted any special favors. In fact, you have no business here," the second Auror who was obviously the more talkative of the two took great pleasure in explaining.

Before Harry could respond, Tonks interrupted, "That's enough. I gave Mr. Malfoy my word that he would be treated fairly. I was there when he was promised immunity in exchange for the information he shared. He is here, of his own free will, to answer our questions and give his full cooperation. So long as he is here in our custody. I don't see how there can be a problem."

"Well of course that's how you'd see it. Moody always gives you special treatment. Wonder if it's because you're related to the little wanker that you're so concerned about his being treated all fair-like? Do you think that maybe your uncle Lucius pulled a few strings to ensure that you got a cushy job? Well your uncle can't pull any strings for you from his cell in Azkaban and your cousin's about to join him. I say the high and mighty Malfoy's are finally getting what they deserve. If you don't hand him over right now, I'm going to report you to your supervisor." The second Auror threatened.

Draco's body went rigid. Harry wondered if this was the first time he learned that Tonks really was a blood relative of his or if he'd known.

"That would be Moody," Tonks answered dangerously.

"We'll see about that!" the first Auror finally decided to add to the conversation before storming out of the interrogation room.

With a glare that could rival Draco's and a swirl of his robes that could make Snape jealous, the second Auror followed right at his heels.

"What no kiss goodbye?" Draco snarked under his breath so that only Harry could hear him.

Harry gave his shoulder a reassuring squeeze before letting go and pulling out a chair to sit at the massive table.

His natural movements seemed to break the tension in the room and Ron and Hermione quickly joined him at the table each helping themselves to glasses of water as Tonks and Draco settled themselves at the table too.

“Where’s the food? I thought you were supposed to have coffee and donuts like those police pictures on the telly,” Ron announced looked around the table in disappointment.

“Can’t you ever think of anything except your stomach?” Hermione questioned looking incredulously at Ron as Harry stifled a chuckle and Draco looked around at them as though they’d all joined Luna in insanity.

“Since our time is limited, we’ll start with your statements and then move on to questions,” Tonks began with an apologetic smile as she cast a recording spell on a quill and parchment so that every word would be preserved.

“Hermione, in your own words, describe the events of this evening that lead to the death of Theodore Nott,” Tonks prompted.

Hermione began her tale with how she came to be babysitting at the Crawley’s house, made sure to emphasize how protective Draco had been of Jocelyn, and finished with the Auror rescue. Ron stayed firmly by her side with an arm wrapped protectively around her shoulders as she relayed the frightening events of the last few hours.

Harry watched Draco’s reactions to her words and was surprised to see his usual mask drop several times to reveal a glimpse of shock or appreciation before it was carefully replaced.

The quill never stopped in its furious attempts to document every detail as stated.

“Thank you, Miss Granger, your retelling of the events should prove most helpful to our Auror department. The only detail that requires clarification is why you were without your wand,” Tonks

questioned.

Hermione bowed her head as a blush spread over her face. “I was determined to have a magic free summer and these two prats,” with this she looked up to glare first at Harry and then at Ron, “was acting so overprotective that I put myself in danger just to defy them.”

Hermione finished with a sigh and face flaming with embarrassment. Harry looked properly chastised and embarrassed but Ron looked apocalyptic. He grabbed her shoulders to turn her to him and began sputtering non-coherently.

Harry turned to help as Tonks spelled the quill to stop recording before speaking once more.

“I see. Ron you’re only going to make things worse. Calm yourself. It’s over and I’m sure Hermione will never be without her wand after this. Draco, I’m not going to take your statement until those clowns get back. I’m sure they’re going to insist on Vertiserum and if even one word of your statement doesn’t match after the Vertiserum they’ll use it as an excuse to lock you up.” Tonks stated in a rather reassuring tone.

“Are you really my cousin?” Draco asked sounding stunned despite the calm look on his face.

“Your mum is my mom’s sister,” Tonks answered with a saucy smile.

“Andromeda?” Draco questioned.

“That would be my mum,” Tonks replied watching for a reaction.

“It’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance,” Draco responded giving a slight smile that no one at the table had ever seen before.

“Likewise,” Tonks answered, a look of absolute curiosity coming over her face as she seemed to wait with baited breath for his response.

Their family reunion was interrupted when the two Aurors from earlier entered the room followed by the current Minister for Magic.

The newest Minister was a rather unimpressive figure. He was slight in height and stature. In fact, truth be told, he was three inches shorter than Professor Flitwick with a personality that was almost as dull as Professor Binns. But his opinion of himself rivaled Gilderoy Lockhart’s and despite his grotesque facial features and oddly shaped body, he insisted on dressing in the latest fashions which were designed for much taller men and therefore looked sadly like a little boy dressing up in his father’s robes and playing at be important.

Ignoring bear face and pig face, the Minister took in the little group sitting around the table and in a booming voice, meant to make up for his lack of size, and announced, “Mr. Malfoy. You are under arrest. Anything you say or do will be held against you at the Wizengamot. I’ve arranged for an immediate hearing. You are to come with me.”

“Now wait just a minute,” Tonks began only to be cut off by a wave of the Minister’s hand.

“Nymphadora Tonks, you are on suspension for aiding and abetting a known criminal due to family loyalties. Turn in your badge on your way out. If you further impede this investigation, I’ll be giving you a cell right next to your uncle and cousin and you can have a nice little family reunion in Azkaban.” The Minister spat with vehemence.

“I didn’t grant him immunity. Moody did and his being my cousin has no bearing on his guilt or innocence!” Tonks shouted right in the Minister’s face.

“Well, I say it does and one more outburst from you and you’ll find yourself in a holding cell. Your badge, now!” the Minister ordered.

Tonks reached into her robes and handed her badge to the furious little man who currently resembled an

aggravated Chihuahua. With his yipping out orders and signs of self importance.

The Minister turned and headed out the door motioning his bodyguards to follow. Bear face turned to face Draco with an evil glint in his eye.

“Your dainty little ass is mine, Malfoy,” he growled grabbing Draco’s arm and man handling him towards the door.

Hermione opened her mouth to protest but Harry quickly stopped her with a restraining hand on her arm.

“Don’t, he whispered. They won’t let us watch the trial if we’re disruptive and Malfoy’s going to need all the help he can get.”

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Chapter 4: Adventures in Babysitting

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Part Four – The Trial That Wasn’t

Draco could not believe what was happening to him. He was going to stand trial for murder without so much as a few moments to confer with a law wizard before being forced to take the stand. Under normal circumstances such a travesty would never be tolerated, but at the moment, keeping quiet seemed to be his best option and his Slytherin survival instincts were working on overload.

The two burly Aurors would have caused Crabbe and Goyle to back down even on their most boastful days. The Minister, while unimpressive, was relatively new and not used to the authority that the Malfoy

name commanded.

A shiver ran through Draco's body as he realized that the one unselfish act he'd ever committed might very well land him in the worst prison known to the wizarding world. Why did he have to protect Jocelyn and the Mudblood?

His own father would have let the child die. Why did he have to care so much? And the Mudblood, why did she care? Why was she following along behind with the strange blue haired Auror, Weasley and Potter. Was her only concern to return Jocelyn to the muggles or was she so grateful that he'd saved her ass that she was going to put her neck out to defend him? Would he have done the same for her? Would he have even bothered to protect her if not for Jocelyn? Weasley was his usual annoying self but Potter was acting very strangely. Why was Potter suddenly being encouraging and helpful? What did he have up his sleeve?

Draco took a fortifying breath and allowed himself to be manhandled into the courtroom of the Wizengamot.

The current Head Warlock in Charge stood up to bring the courtroom to order. It appeared that only 12 members of the Wizengamot were present, but it would be enough to send him to Azkaban if they were all in agreement.

Draco scanned the faces taking into account the chances of his getting out of this and they weren't good. Celius Pomfrey, Chloe Wistwater, Silas Petrelli, Marcus Snapmaster, and Tori Angellorem were all previous recipients of Lucius blackmail to get his way with Ministry laws and elections. Normally, this would be an advantage, however, with Lucius still imprisoned and no time to bribe the officials, Draco wasn't so sure. They were looking at him with a frightening satisfaction as though they were pleased the Malfoy heir would finally be getting what he deserved.

The Head Warlock in Charge was Amos Balthazer, a rather unfortunate circumstance as he was Theo's great uncle on his mother's side and would likely look for a guilty charge and life sentence, if not a Dementor's kiss over the death of his blood.

The other six members present were witches and wizards that had been beneath Draco's notice

previously but not one of them smiled encouragingly at him and two were giving him a death glare.

Draco listened with disinterest as he was seated in the accused chair and the Wizengamot in attendance was listed for the official record. Instead of looking around or trying to elicit sympathy, Draco forced himself to sit straight with his head held high as though he were one of those doing the judging instead of the one being judged. Slipping into his Slytherin mask, he remained impassive and watched as Potter began whispering furiously to Weasley who seemed to be nodding and agreeing with each word. Granger looked a bit concerned and a feeling that was a cross between hope and fear began radiating from the pit of Draco's stomach.

"Mr. Malfoy will you acquiesce?" Balthazer growled.

Realizing that he had been ignoring his own trial in favor of watching Potter and Weasley plotting, Draco quickly brought his attention back to the courtroom.

"My apologies, it's been a rather long and trying evening and I was a bit distracted. Could you please repeat the question?" Draco smoothly responded.

"Due to the nature of the crime and your alleged association with known Deatheaters including your own father, will you agree to bear both your forearms and accept a small dose of Vertiserum for your questioning?" Balthazer repeated with a wolfish grin.

Now there was a question for you. If Draco refused to take the Vertiserum, he would be accused of lying and if he took it the man could ask anything. But not taking it would be far more damaging than taking it and clearing up the damage later so Draco forced down his fear and put on a relaxed face once again.

Rolling up his sleeves to show his arms, he smirked as he stated, "Of course, I have nothing to hide."

"Go get the Vertiserum," Balthazer ordered excitedly.

At the same time that a deputy Auror hurried out of the room to get the potion, Draco noticed Ron Weasley slipping quietly out behind him.

There was a collective gasp from the onlookers as the seriousness of what was about to happen became clear.

“Order!” Balthazer cried out to regain the proper attitude of his courtroom.

Those in attendance seemed to settle down despite the buzz of excitement that lingered in the air.

On the outside, Draco remained a cool, poised, and immaculate shell of disdain. Inside, he was going through hell as terror mounted causing his blood pressure to rise and his heart to race and his breathing to become noticeably faster. Fortunately for him, no one else seemed to notice as he’d perfected his “mask” in his formative years. He silently offered to sacrifice his first born in exchange for the cunning to evade their questions.

Much too quickly, the deputy Auror returned with a small vial of the Potion that he dreaded having to take since the first day he’d learned of its existence. As if drawn to the commotion, Dolores Umbridge followed the deputy Auror into the court room and took a seat in the front row where she could watch Draco’s eyes carefully.

Silently, he cast a quick and wandless occulemens to shield his mind. Bless Aunt Bellatrix for being such a relentless teacher as he’d never truly trusted the Frog faced woman.

“Mr. Draco Malfoy. Will you, now willingly submit to this vertiserum and agree to answer our questions?” Balthazer smugly questioned one last time to keep things perfectly legal.

Looking up with his shield firmly in place and defiance on his tongue, Draco hissed, “Yes.”

“Wonderful, let’s begin,” Balthazer ordered.

The deputy Auror opened the cork and held the vial to his lips. Despite the turmoil inside, Draco calmly opened his mouth a bit and swallowed back the bitter Potion.

“Thank you, Mr. Malfoy. As a show that the Potion is working, I ask that you tell me the names of your mother and father.” Balthazer began his questioning.

“Narcissa and Lucius Malfoy,” Draco answered relieved that the vertiserum would allow him to answer as he thought and not force him to reveal all. As Balthazer grinned in triumph, Draco’s pulse began to slow. The serum wasn’t as dangerous as he feared it didn’t force their full names, only their names as Draco had immediately thought of them. He just needed to guard his thoughts a bit and he could get through this.

“What brought you to the Crawley house earlier this evening?” Balthazer started eagerly too excited to realize that the vertiserum required more specific questions.

“Apparition, sir,” Draco answered making his eyes appear wide and innocent.

Narrowing his eyes at Draco a bit, Balthazer rephrased his question, “Why did you Apparate to the Crawley house?”

Draco took a steadying breath as he felt his entire body relax. He would not be forced to give away any vital information. This man really was a fool.

“I went there to save an infant witch from death,” Draco responded making sure to allow a slight blush to stain his cheeks in order to give the appearance that he was embarrassed by his heroic action.

“Mr. Malfoy, why did you think she was in danger?” Balthazer continued.

“She’s a half-blood sir,” Draco answered lowering his eyes but keeping his head towards the Head Warlock for now in a show of respect.

“There are many half-blood babies, why was this one so important?” Balthazer continued, his face taking on the passion of a bloodhound on the trail of a rabbit.

“She’s a Malfoy.” Draco responded, lowering his head a bit as though ashamed and knowing it would instill sympathy from the court. He fought to control the smile that threatened as he heard a collective sigh of understanding from at least half the females in the courtroom.

There was a sudden silence in the courtroom as every attendee waited with baited breath for Balthazer’s next question.

“How did you come to find out that she was in danger?” Balthazer continued.

Draco smirked inwardly as he forced himself to put on a mask of distress complete with a single tear to run down the side of his face, “I overheard the Dark Lord’s plans to hunt down and destroy any muggleborn or half-bloods before they reached school age. Having learned of Jocelyn’s existence, I knew she would be a target and wanted to protect my blood.”

“What did you find at the Crawley residence upon your arrival?” Balthazer questioned, changing tactics to avoid any more undue sympathy for the Malfoy brat.

“I found Jocelyn being cared for by a wandless witch,” Draco continued, this was just too easy.

Looking like a child who was being handed a cookie, Balthazer asked, “Who was this witch?”

“Hermione Granger.” Draco answered, glancing her way to see her on the edge of her seat and wiggling

as though dying to add something. Didn't the silly girl know that the less you said in these situations the better?

"Seeing the child in such excellent care, why did you not leave?" Balthazer questioned trying to look puzzled through his smug expression.

"As I stated, she was wandless and Deatheaters began to apparate in shortly after my arrival." Draco added putting a little too much emphasis on the word wandless.

"And what did you do?" Balthazer asked ready to pounce.

"I cast a shielding charm over Miss Granger and Jocelyn to protect them before engaging the Deatheaters in combat to repel them."

Now Balthazer was outright grinning as he asked what he thought to be the damning question, "In your combat, were you responsible for the death of one Theodore Nott?"

Draco looked the man in the eye allowing all the disdain he felt for him to creep into his eyes, took a single breath to steel himself and opened his mouth to speak. Before he could utter a single word, the fire alarm went off ringing loudly through the building so that no one could hear anything over the racket. To add to the chaos, the sprinkler system began to spray the courtroom with icy cold water.

The audience began to gasp and cry out as they made their exodus towards the doors.

Draco noticed that his restraints had receeded and he was being manhandled by the bear faced burly Auror, only he had a slight pink patch of hair under his right ear that Draco hadn't noticed before and oddly, he was taking Draco through a side exit where Harry, Hermione and Ron appeared to be waiting for him.

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Chapter 5: Adventures in Babysitting

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Part Five – The Escape

“Hurry, we’ve got to get lost in the crowd so we can surface quickly,” the Burly Auror hissed in a feminine tone shoving Draco through the hallway and towards the lifts.

“How long do we have?” Harry whispered as they reached the lifts and he impatiently pressed the button, holding it in as if that could make the lift arrive more swiftly.

“Not long, Bill couldn’t stay with the alarm or he’d be accused of being the one who’s been setting them off,” Ron responded.

“Has he?” The Burly Auror questioned looking intrigued.

“Nah, it’s Larson but why should Bill take the wrap for it?” Ron explained with a mischievious grin.

“What?” Hermione asked looking as puzzled as Draco felt.

Ron chuckled in good humor despite their precarious position. The lift doors finally opened and Harry ushered everyone inside quickly as the crowds began to surface in the hallway on their way to the stairwell and lifts.

Draco watched the Burly Auror as he grew smaller and his pink hair covered his head growing longer with each moment until Tonks appeared in his place.

“Why is Larson setting off false alarms and why hasn’t Bill stopped him if he knows about it?” Tonks questioned.

“Percy’s been an annoying little rat and Larson and Bill cooked up the false alarms to keep him busy while Charlie pushes through his Dragon Reserve paperwork,” Ron answered gleefully.

“Sweet Merlin, so that’s what its all about. The Ministry thought Deatheaters had infiltrated and were causing random chaos,” Tonks gave in to her humourous side.

“Nah, just Weasleys,” Harry laughed along as he nudged Ron playfully receiving a nudge back as the boys began a pushing “war”.

Soon the lift reached the main floor, before the doors could open to allow the exchange of witches and wizards, Tonks murmured a spell and a second panel formed over the first. She took her wand tip and randomly tapped the new square buttons making them glow in what appeared to be a random pattern.

Hermione was watching with great interest and seemed unable to contain herself as she asked, “What does that do?”

“It’ll take us straight to the surface so we can get out of here more quickly. They’ll find Jackson before too long and I need to be gone before they figure out that I helped Malfoy escape. I’m already on suspension and had to turn in my badge, I don’t want to be removed permanently,” Tonks explained.

“Er, thank you for that,” Malfoy managed to stutter out.

“Anytime, cousin,” Tonks responded in her usual playful manner.

“My god, Malfoy, are you alright? That must have hurt. I don’t think I’ve ever heard you apologize to anyone, ever,” Harry teased.

The blond gave Harry his patented Malfoy glare but didn’t rise to the occasion to continue the petty bickering, another Malfoy first.

The lift trembled and shook until they reached the surface and were able to exit what appeared to be a muggle bus waiting station.

“Be careful, I’ll see you soon,” Tonks admonished before disappearing into the muggle streets outside.

Draco watched the golden trio with a look of suspicion as they began to murmur together.

“Saving Jocelyn is our top priority, we need somewhere safe to work the scrying spell,” Hermione began.

“No, first we need to gather supplies and form a plan,” Harry corrected being the logical one for once as his emotions weren’t as wrapped up in the child as Hermoine’s.

“You’re right, I’ll need a wand,” Hermione agreed her logic quickly turning to the forefront as she realized that rushing into Deatheater territory unarmed wouldn’t help her to rescue Jocelyn.

“Let’s go to your house and get it,” Ron suggested.

“We can’t,” Harry quickly disagreed, “the wards are still in place and they’d expect us to go there for the wand. If we want to be free to save Jocelyn, we’ve got to avoid Aurors.

“We should head to the Burrow and see if Mum can loan you hers,” Ron suggested next.

“No Ron, it won’t take them long to figure out it was Bill this time and that will lead them to your family so the twins are out too,” Harry quickly reminded.

“It can’t be Headquarters, they’ll stop us,” Hermione added.

“The cave or the tent maybe?” Ron continued suggesting ideas.

“The cave kinda got destroyed,” Harry responded sheepishly.

“And the tent lost its concealment charm,” Hermione added.

Sighing with frustration, Draco questioned, “What are you all babbling about? It’s simple. First we need to get out of sight. Next, we need to get Granger armed. Then, we need to find Jocelyn and save her.”

“Thanks for clearing it all up for us, Malfoy!” Ron spat angrily. “We never would have figured it out without your help. Stupid ferret!”

Harry gave Ron “the look” that told him to “shut up” without a word needing to be spoken before turning to Draco, “We can’t stay here so where do you suggest we go?”

“Stonehenge.” Draco stated firmly.

“Stonehenge?” Hermione asked puzzled.

“Are you insane?” Ron piped up.

“I don’t understand,” Harry added, a puzzled expression on his face.

Clearing his throat to regain the attention of the group, Draco explained, “It has an unmonitored apparition point and its full of muggles so its easy to get lost in the crowd.”

A loud voice interrupted their discussion as an Auror shouted, “Hey you!”

Draco’s face paled another shade as he grabbed Hermione tightly by the forearm, “Trust me,” he whispered before a pop announced their departure.

Hoping that he knew where Draco was taking her, Harry focused on the apparition point in Stonehenge and popped out next.

Ron, disappeared with a pop just as the Auror reached out to grab him by the robes.

Harry arrived and was unceremoniously dumped onto his rear as he lost his balance upon bumping into Draco and Hermione.

“Nice apparating, Potter,” Draco drawled from where he was standing and helping Hermione to regain her balance so that she didn’t join Harry on the floor.

“Where’s Ron?” Harry asked.

“Didn’t arrive yet,” Draco answered pulling out his wand and tapping the stone in front of him in a pattern that was reminiscent of the brick wall in Diagon Alley.

The stone began to glow emitting a soft white light as Ron arrived next to Harry who was finally back on

his feet.

“You’re not activating the stones, are you?” Ron asked without greeting anyone.

“No, just opening the passage to the catacombs,” Draco responded, watching the glowing stone with fascination as it turned from white light to golden.

“I’m not going into the catacombs, you can forget it,” Ron stated firmly.

“Weasley, be reasonable. It’s the easiest way to get Granger a wand,” Draco argued.

“What’s wrong with the catacombs?” Harry asked looking pointedly at Hermione.

“I didn’t know there were catacombs,” Hermione answered looking between Draco and Ron as though unsure which was more likely to give her an informative answer.

“Nothing,” Draco spat as Ron screamed, “Everything!”

The stone’s glow changed again from golden to a faint pink.

“Ron?” Harry questioned, watching Draco out of the corner of his eye.

Ron stuck his tongue out at Draco who seemed to be pouting with his lower lip pushed out really rather adorably.

“It’s a Dark magic trap. There used to be catacombs for witches and wizards to visit Stonehenge and see the magic of the place without disturbing the muggles but servants of Grindlewald set traps to capture

the half-bloods and muggleborns and they were never all destroyed. There are rumors that some of the traps can even drain a wizard of all their magic leaving him a squib," Ron explained, his face grave with the seriousness of the information he was sharing.

Draco rolled his eyes, "That's just tales that parents tell children so they don't wander off on an adventure. Blaise, Vince, Greg, and me used to explore every inch of these catacombs and never had anything happen. The traps have been dispelled and besides being a tourist attraction, it's also an underground connection that will take us to Boschetto Boulevard."

"What is Boschetto Boulevard and how dangerous is this passage?" Harry questioned looking to Hermione to play mediator.

Hermione shook her head lightly looking very frustrated at not knowing the answer to a question.

"Ron?" Harry prompted.

Again, Draco looked stricken at his not being asked and huffed a bit as he pushed his lower lip out a bit more giving him the appearance of a toddler that had been denied a treat.

The stone glow changed from faint pink to a dark orange.

"Boschetto Boulevard is a wizarding shopping area like Diagon Alley only a lot more expensive." Ron responded glaring at Draco with hatred.

"It's not more expensive, it's more exclusive," Draco retorted folding his arms over his chest and going into a real sulk.

"What about the passage?" Harry prompted.

“Dark magic Harry, definitely not safe and I’m not going. I’m going home to the Burrow and talk to Dad. I’m sure he can fix this.” Ron stated firmly.

“I’m not going back to the Weasel’s little hovel and waiting for the Aurors to show up and drag me to Azkaban. I’m going to Boschetto Boulevard and getting supplies and then I’m saving Jocelyn,” Draco retorted just as firmly.

“Hermione?” Harry questioned, looking to her to take a side.

“I’m sorry, Ron, but Draco’s right. If we go to your house, we risk getting taken back to the Ministry and Bill might not be able to help us escape again. I need to save Jocelyn, I promised the Crawley’s that I would take care of her and protect her. I understand your hesitation but Draco knows these catacombs so he knows the safe passage. I’m sorry but for once Malfoy and I are on the same side.” Hermione responded her face tinged pink and her chest heaving with her conviction and embarrassment.

“Harry?” Ron whined out in a pleading tone.

“Sorry, Ron I’ve got to go with Hermione on this one,” Harry responded, not looking sorry at all.

“Thank Salazar someone’s making sense,” Draco mumbled.

“Okay, if that’s how you feel. Fine.” Ron retorted looking truly hurt.

“You know it would be a good idea for someone to inform the others where we’re going in case we get into trouble. At least this way, we have the Weasleys and the Order aware of where we are going and what’s happening.” Hermione pointed out kindly.

“That’s a good idea, Mione,” Ron reluctantly agreed moving into her arms for a hug goodbye.

The orange glow changed to blood red and began flashing.

“The portal’s open, make your choices, I’m going through,” Draco announced disappearing into the flashing red light around the stone.

“See you soon, Ron,” Hermione whispered kissing his cheek.

“Tell them where we’re going and we’ll see you once we have Jocelyn,” Harry agreed waving once before wrapping an arm around Hermione’s back and disappearing into the red light.

Ron watched as the light faded to orange, pink, golden, white, and finally disappeared. “Good luck,” he whispered before apparating home.

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Chapter 6: Adventures in Babysitting

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Part Six – The Catacombs

Draco was leaning against the stone wall, his arms crossed over his chest and one leg bent at the knee with a foot against the stone wall sporting his classic “I’m bored” look when Hermione and Harry walked through.

The jerk would probably look perfectly at ease anywhere. Hermione thought mutinously before considering her surroundings. The catacombs were incredible. It was like stepping into an underground stone street. The floor, walls and ceiling were made of stone but unlike the passage to the shrieking shack, this one was maintained well. It was spotlessly clean with no undergrowth or roots above. It

reminded Hermione mostly of the dungeons at Hogwarts, complete with magical torches lighting the way sure to never burn out.

“What no weasel?” Draco taunted a bit.

“Lead on Ferret,” Harry ordered pointing to the right and hoping it was the correct direction.

“It’s this way,” Draco retorted leading them to the left.

Harry and Hermione fell into step behind Draco.

“So how old are these catacombs?” Hermione questioned, dying to learn all about this new discovery.

“No one knows, they’ve been in existence as long as the stones above,” Draco answered with a genuine smile instead of his usual smirk.

Wondering what mischief Draco was up to, Harry glared at the blond and wrapped a protective arm around Hermione’s waist.

“And how long have wizards been using them?” Hermione continued, oblivious to Harry’s unease.

“Since Merlin showed them to Morgana,” Draco answered his smile growing wider as he noticed Harry scowling.

“How far is it to Boschetto Boulevard?” Harry questioned wishing they’d stop the history lesson.

“Awe, what’s the matter Potter? Jealous that your girlfriend would rather talk to me than you?” Draco

taunted a bit.

“She’s not my girlfriend,” Harry growled.

“Oh no, what happened? Did weasel beat you to the girl? Is the little hero…jealous?” Draco continued teasing.

Before Harry could answer, Hermione began giggling.

Harry looked panic stricken and grabbed her arm, “Don’t” he pleaded.

“Oh this has got to be good,” Draco declared turning his full attention to Hermione.

“Please,” Harry begged the girl with his best puppy dog eyes.

Hermione reached out and gave Harry’s arm a squeeze and him a kind smile, “Harry’s just not interested in me that way. We’re much more like siblings. The idea of us in a romantic relationship would be as disgusting to us as if I were to date my own sister.”

“Ewww, thanks so much for that thought. I’ll need to scourgify my mind now,” Malfoy ranted.

“Did you have to go there,” Harry muttered under his breath.

“He didn’t catch it,” Hermione whispered back looking rather pleased with herself as thoughts began forming in her mind.

Looking an odd combination between relieved and disgusted, Draco continued on turning right here and

left there. Stopping here, turning a bit and then continuing on and at one point backing up and turning them around.

At one point, Harry heard a rather unpleasant buzzing sound and felt as though the lights were going dim, but Draco whispered something he didn't catch and the buzzing sound disappeared and the tunnel regained its brightness.

"What was that?" Hermione questioned.

"Magical barrier," Draco responded but didn't seem willing to elaborate.

"Is it much further?" Harry questioned.

"I don't know," Draco responded.

"Malfoy, I thought you knew these tunnels. What do you mean you don't know?" Harry demanded.

"Well, they don't really connect from one wizarding place to another. The stones are magic. They work similarly to the Room of Requirement. You have to think about where you want to go and then follow the magic trail to your destination," Malfoy patiently explained.

"I don't see a magical path," Hermione stated looking a bit suspicious of the explanation.

"That's because I'm the one leading the way so I'm the one that the catacombs are reacting to and showing the path to. If we get separated, think about finding me and the path will lead you right to me," Draco answered with a smirk.

They continued on in silence watching Draco stop every now and then to touch the cave wall or hop on one foot on the other. Hermione suspected he was trying to distract her from retaining the way but

couldn't be sure. Then, suddenly Draco stopped and held perfectly still as though he'd run into an invisible wall. He put his hand out and it passed straight through the apparent invisible barrier. At this point, he mumbled something and turned around with a relieved smile.

"Why did you turn around?" Hermione questioned worriedly, appearing truly frightened for the first time since they'd entered the catacombs.

"Did you get lost?" Harry taunted despite the slight concern in his voice.

"The catacombs are magical. When you reach your destination, you feel as though you hit a wall, but there are rules. In order to enter a wizarding area, you have to know the magic. Every destination is different every time so unless you understand the magic, you will always need a guide. That's why the children of Deatheaters, uhm, I mean why Pureblooded children are encouraged to play in the catacombs while they are still young; so they learn the magic. Since we want a wizarding village, in this case, if you don't move back here, you can never move forward and you will wander the catacombs until someone finds you. The only way for someone to find you is if they have finding you as their destination so no one will stumble upon you accidentally. Many wizards have died that way," Draco answered watching Harry for a reaction.

"How did you know that you needed to turn back here?" Hermione questioned.

"You can feel it. Can't you feel the magic? It pulses letting you know you've reached your destination," Draco answered.

"I don't understand, I don't feel anything," Hermione responded looking a bit put out.

"I only feel a twinge of magic," Harry answered with a shrug.

Draco looked puzzled by their lack of feeling and waved his wand casting a spell neither had ever heard before. The invisible wall glowed a faint red and a red colored unicorn that reminded seemed to be made of smoke shimmered to the surface for a moment and then all disappeared.

“It’s a pureblood spell. This must be one of the traps set by Grindlewald. The magic reacts with your pureblood so you feel the need to go back. That must be why muggleborns and halfbloods get lost so often in these catacombs. I can add muggleborn blood to it if Hermione will give me a little,” Draco offered.

“I don’t think it’s a good idea to alter spells that have been there for years, we should tell Dumbledore and let him dismantle it,” Hermione disagreed.

Draco shrugged, “suit yourself,” and placed his hand on the invisible wall in front of them. A strange slurping sound emanated from the wall before it disappeared to reveal a stairwell with a wizarding street above.

Boschetto Boulevard nothing like Diagon Alley. Where Diagon Alley was crowded and truth be told a bit littered and dirty, Boschetto was sparsely traveled and immaculately clean. The street practically shimmered as though it had been polished and a few witches and wizards passed by dressed in fine dress robes and carrying parcels that were done up to look like muggle gift bags. Harry had to fight to keep his mouth from dropping open in wonder. Hermione didn’t appear to mind and allowed her face to show her wonder and delight as she looked at the various shops.

The shop names were different but most welcome after the nerve wracking trek through the underground catacombs. “Glorious robes for Galleons, Vicarotti’s Frozen Delights, Devil’s Disastrous Mischief Makers, Norbert’s Scrolls and Novels, Parade of Pets, and the one they came for Dante’s wands.”

“Shall we?” Draco asked offering his arm to Hermione.

Hermione gratefully accepted and Harry grumbled as he followed the pair.

“Granger, when we’re inside, let me talk. I know it’ll be hard for you not to ask a lot of questions but Dante is rather old-fashioned and doesn’t believe in witches rights and things. Please, if you want a wand don’t say anything. Nod or shake your head only,” Draco warned.

Hermione looked annoyed but nodded her head in agreement as if to show her obedience.

Harry trailed behind as Draco opened the door and the trio entered.

“Mr. Malfoy! What a pleasant surprise! How may I be of service to you?” the shopkeeper greeted.

Hermione looked him over and was puzzled by Draco’s previous warning. This man looked, well, sweet. He was only about four foot tall and he may have been three feet wide with a jovial smile and very little hair on top. His skin had a golden glow and his teeth were a flattering shade of white. He reminded her of an Italian Santa Claus as he gushed over Draco offering him a chair or refreshments before they started.

Draco politely refused any niceties stating that unfortunately urgent business required this to be a brief trip.

“Then, how may I be of service?” Dante asked still smiling.

“I wish to purchase a wand for my dueling partner. It seems I was a bit aggressive in our practice and ruined hers. Her last one was vine wood with a dragon heartstring but I’m not sure of the length, it was a bit destroyed,” Draco informed him looking more proud than sorry.

“Hmmm, well let’s see,” Dante mumbled reminding Harry strongly of Olivander when he was searching for a wand.

“Give this a try,” He suggested handing a wand to Hermione who waved it and frowned when nothing happened.

Dante allowed an eyebrow to rise before taking the wand and handing her a second.

Again Hermione gave it a wave with no result.

Dante gave an aggravated “Hump,” before handing her a third.

Once again, Hermione waved it without result.

Dante turned his attention to Draco giving him a glare that was at once frightening and caused Hermione to tremble slightly despite it not being directed at her.

“Did you bring a squib in here as a joke?” he demanded.

“Excuse me, Dante, I regretfully didn’t inform you, Rosewood won’t work she’s not a Pureblood,” Draco admitted.

“You? A Malfoy? You of all people, bring a half-blood to my store! Non capisco!” Dante cried out.

“My apologies, I meant no disrespect. You are the finest wand maker I know and I needed to replace what I destroyed with something better, therefore you were my only thought. It never occurred to me that you would mind,” Draco smoothly responded.

“Do not accuse Dante of your prejudice. I am not one of the Dark Lord’s lackeys. I simply specialize in the best wands and few can afford a quality wand. Alright, we’ll show this bella ragazza the exquisite perfection of a fine wand,” he agreed, his feathers smoothed as he turned and pulled a box from under the counter.

Draco reached out for it and smiled as he tested the weight before handing it to Hermione.

“Ten inches, willow with a dragon heartstring,” Dante proudly stated.

Hermione gave it a wave and a golden glow immediately filled the air with the sound of gently tinkling bells.

“Bellissimo, it is perfect,” Dante stated proudly.

Hermione smiled and nodded.

Dante pulled out a small parchment which Draco looked over and signed.

“Thank you, Dante, give Blaise my best,” Draco stated, turning without waiting for a response and exiting the store followed closely by Hermione and Harry.

“He knows Zabini?” Harry asked thinking the man looked similar and wondering if they were relatives.

“His uncle,” Draco agreed leading them into the Unicorn’s Tale.

The Unicorn’s Tale was a modest pub with rooms available for rent. The barmaid greeted Draco the moment they entered.

“Ciao bella,” Draco greeted her in return before enquiring, “do you have any rooms available?”

It seemed the Malfoy name was well known and catered to as they were given a room the equivalent of a muggle penthouse complete with three bedrooms, two full bathrooms, and a living area.

Harry and Hermione began to eagerly explore while Draco signed for it and arranged to have their dinner

delivered.

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Chapter 7: Adventures in Babysitting

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Part Seven – Planning a Rescue

Chew, swallow, bite, repeat… Hermione continually reminded herself as Harry and Draco sat side by side nibbling on barbecue wings and licking their fingers almost in unison.

Harry didn't notice Hermione staring at them as he was in his own circle of hell. His eyes were constantly moving as they followed pale hands picking up a wing and swirling it in barbecue sauce until it was dripping. Then those pale, long fingers would bring the wing to lightly pink and pouty lips. Here the torture would begin in earnest as a soft, pink tongue darted out to first lick away some sauce before a bite was taken. The lips would move in a slow, sensual dance that caused the droplets of sauce to shimmy around and draw more attention to them as the succulent wing meat was savored. Then that perfect little tongue would make a second appearance to slowly lick the sauce off those now reddened lips as the remains of the wing were discarded onto the bone plate. That same little tongue would finish by licking the fingers clean from where they met the hand all the way to the perfectly manicured tips. Then, that same long finger would slide between the lips and follow the tongue into the caverns of the mouth. A pureblood wizard's mouth must be larger than a normal mouth like wizarding space as Malfoy's fingers were so very long that Harry wondered how he could fit the entire finger into his mouth without gagging and then he wondered if there was any truth to the rumors that long fingers were a sign of other things. Judging from his own physique, it was plausable. Sighing heavily and feeling slightly confused, he continued eating his share of the wings.

Draco was starving. Being on the run from Deatheaters, hiding from his family, and searching among muggles for Jocelyn had kept him on his feet and so busy that he barely took time to wash and sleep. Food hadn't even been a thought because his nervousness over staying safe and saving Jocelyn alone had kept him from feeling hunger. Come to think of it, he hadn't eaten much in the past two days and

was finding the wings to be a poor choice of a first meal. The barbecue sauce was making his stomach want to revolt. Sucking on a finger he considered abandoning them for a slice of pizza, but then he noticed how much Hermione was staring at him. Obviously she wished she'd ordered wings too. Fighting the urge to sneer at her around the finger he was sucking on, he glanced at Harry who was watching him with the same attention that Hermione seemed to be staring with. Now there was no way he was jealous over the wings as he had ordered some too. This seemed like more of a challenge. Maybe to see if Draco could handle the spicy sauce? Must be a muggle thing like eating Scottish foods, haggis came to mind. Draco wasn't sure exactly what the challenge was but he wasn't about to let Potter win. Who cared if it was petty? Draco took his time and savored every drop of sauce and every bite of chicken demanding his stomach to settle and not let Potter win.

When the last wing was eaten, Hermione found the ability to speak once more.

"We need a plan," Hermione began.

"That's simple, we sneak in, take her, and sneak out," Draco responded with a smirk.

"Don't you think they'll notice us?" Hermione questioned beginning to wonder if the Slytherin wasn't dim witted after all.

"No, they won't." Draco responded with so much assurance that Hermione was certain he knew something she didn't.

"How can you be so sure?" Hermione questioned.

"Because they won't guard her. The Dark Lord's forces are spread very thin right now. Besides its aunt Bell and she can't be bothered to babysit a child. She'll place a nanny spell on Jocelyn and put her behind some kind of barrier that she thinks we won't be able to get past. A Death eater favorite is a Pureblood barrier and Aunt Bell's personal favorite is a Black blood barrier but my guess is that…" Draco began to explain.

Hermione interrupted, "What is a nanny spell? Is it safe? Will Jocelyn be alright? And what is a Pureblood

barrier and a Black blood barrier? I've never heard of either."

"A nanny spell is really quite simple and used by all Pureblood families. Our mothers are much too busy at social events to spend time being a wet nurse or changing nappies. So they cast a spell that puts their child in a state of stasis. It's almost like being asleep only you're still aware of what's happening around you. When you feel hungry a bottle is instantly conjured, you are burped and your nappie is spelled clean at the first hint of dampness but you aren't touched. Its how Purebloods avoid their children getting too attached to house elf nannies." Draco explained.

Harry's face was an interesting shade of red. Through his reigned in laughter, he managed to choke out, "Malfoy, did you just say nappie?"

Draco's cheeks pinked as he realized how common that sounded and Harry began to laugh in earnest.

"There is nothing funny about nappies. I think it's terrible. Babies need to be held and loved. No wonder so many Pureblood children are cold and distant if they aren't getting affection growing up. It explains a lot about Death eaters, though. Now, tell me about these barriers we're going to be facing." Hermione ordered.

"Do you remember the age-line Dumbledore drew to stop underclassmen from submitting their names for the Tournament in our Fourth Year?" Draco questioned.

"Of course," Hermione agreed.

"And, do you remember the magic in the catacombs that responded to my Pureblood to tell me what I needed to do to reach our destination?" Draco continued.

"Yes," Hermione agreed again her face revealing the way her mind was working through the problem of how the two were connected.

“A Blood barrier is a combination of the two. It’s a line that you draw much like an age-line but it responds to blood. It can respond in many different ways. It can require a sacrifice of blood to open or allow those of certain blood to pass. We won’t know what she uses until we get there and reveal it but we can be assured she won’t use Pureblood or Black blood this time since I can get past both.” Draco answered.

“I don’t understand, what is Black blood? Is it blood tainted by Dark Arts?” Hermione questioned, her face scrunched up in as she puzzled.

Draco laughed outright, “No, my mum’s maiden name is Black. It would be family blood.”

“So what might she use?” Harry chimed in obviously following the conversation but not joining it until he had an unanswered question.

“With Aunt Bell, it’s anyone’s guess. She’s quite the lunatic. It could be house-elf blood, werewolf blood, vampire blood, banshee blood, thestral blood, dragon…” Draco began listing the possibilities.

Again, Hermione felt the need to interrupt, “Wait a minute, banshee blood? Did you say banshee blood?”

“Of course,” Draco readily agreed.

“But I thought banshees were ghosts, they don’t bleed, how could you get banshee blood?” Hermione questioned.

“Ghosts can bleed, you just have to know how to extract the blood. Look at the Bloody Baron, do you think he always looked like that? Years ago, a Slytherin student who wasn’t ready or experienced enough tried to take his blood. Obviously it didn’t work but the poor Baron hasn’t been able to be completely repaired since. Of course, it helps if the ghost is a willing participant but it’s not impossible even when they don’t want to cooperate,” Draco explained.

“That’s just gross,” Harry responded looking disgusted.

“That’s wrong,” Hermione agreed.

“That’s the Dark Arts.” Draco corrected. “Now, how are we going to find Jocelyn? I know of several hide outs but I don’t know which Bell would use or if she knows of one that I don’t.”

“Hermione,” Harry stated looking at the girl with an expression of genuine affection.

“I’ve been doing some research,” she began.

“Of course you have. In the 20 hours since the baby has been abducted and we were arrested, interrogated, and in my case tried, you were able to fit in some light researching,” Draco teased, with an affectionate smile of his own for the girl.

“I’ve come up with a new spell. It’s similar to a scrying spell but more specific. I used the idea you gave me from Voldemort’s corruption of it to find magical blood and changed it a bit so it can just find one person. Not to show an image of the person but an exact location. I have Jocelyn’s pacifier in my pocket and I thought we could use that as something that belongs to her to find her.” Hermione explained.

“Brilliant,” Harry complimented.

“I’ll clear the table, you two get the supplies,” Draco directed, already picking up paper plates and napkins and moving them to the rubbish bin.

As Draco put away the left over food and placed cooling charms on the cardboard and styrofoam containers, Hermione cast a cleansing spell over the table and set out the copper bowl. Harry went into the loo to fill a container with water and cast the necessary enchantments to completely purify it and its

vessel.

Draco returned from cleaning up and silently stood behind them to watch. Having completed his task, Harry stepped back to stand beside Draco. Hermione withdrew her new wand and held it over the bowl whispering an incantation so old that the original language had long been forgotten. Next, she took out the pacifier and placed it in the bottom of the bowl. The copper bowl turned clear. While it was still there in form, it was now completely transparent. Hermione began to pour the purified water into the transparent bowl and whisper more ancient words.

Draco gently reached out and nudged at Harry's hand with his own. On instinct, Harry took the hand into his own and gave a slight squeeze. Draco returned it with a small squeeze and a soft smile of gratitude before returning his attention to the witch and her spell but he didn't relinquish the hand.

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