

## The Quiet Place

**Title:** The Quiet Place

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**Summary:** Five hundred years after the defeat of Lord Voldemort a new generation of Death Eaters is on the rise. Will the Muggles they attack be able to survive the encounter? For that matter, will the Death Eaters?

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It had been five hundred years.

In fact, today marked the five hundredth anniversary of the fall of the greatest dark lord in the history of wizardkind. Five hundred years since the purity of wizard blood had been opened to corruption by more Mudbloods than you could shake a wand at. Five hundred years since the honourable and noble pureblood houses of old were able to wield the power and respect due to them. Five hundred years since those ignorant Muggles had felt the commanding touch of their betters. Five hundred long, long years of watching from the shadows and waiting. Biding time until the moment was right to reclaim the glory that had once been theirs.

Dominius Malfaey had never been so excited, so anxious.

He had been waiting for this day since before he had even held his first wand. His father, Augustus Malfaey, had regaled the young Dominius with tales of the Dark Lord and his reign for as long as he could remember. Now, forty years later, the heir to the Malfaey name (which had long ago been one of influence and power) was finally prepared to remind a complacent world of what had come before and would come again.

"Not as many as I had hoped," he commented while looking over those gathered in the ballroom of Malfaey Manor.

"Perhaps," agreed his long-time associate and friend, Tungsten Reinhardt.

In contrast to Malfaey's tall, slender and pale looks, Reinhardt was built like an ancient Norse berserker, almost as broad as he was tall and possessing a rugged physique. He stroked his thick red beard, which he had grown in honour of his grandfather, Mercurius Reinhardt, and looked appraisingly over the wizards mingling before them in the Malfaey drawing room.

There were thirteen of them, fifteen once Malfaey and Reinhardt were included, all belonging to once prominent pureblood families that held ties to the noble house of Slytherin. Since the fall of the Dark Lord, however, their prominence had been all but destroyed - dragging them down from their once lofty seats and into the muck as if they were common rabble. Now, at Malfaey's instigation, they were banding together to reclaim their rightful status.

All of them had some knowledge of the Dark Arts, as was tradition in their families, and all were eager to put that knowledge to the test. After half a millennium of relative peace and prosperity the Ministry had become weak and overconfident in their position as the governing body of the wizarding world. The Aurors had degenerated into little more than a glorified police force, more for show than anything else, and had not tested their mettle against anything more than the occasional dissident warlock that would turn up every decade or two.

Now was the time to strike.

"It is enough for what we plan," Reinhardt eventually decided, having run his oft jaundiced eye over their comrades and evaluating their strengths and weaknesses.

They were a rag-tag group to be sure, but fifteen fully grown and trained wizards would be more than a match against a village of helpless Muggles. Even if the Ministry detected them and dispatched a team of Aurors they would still have a seven to one advantage. The cowed robes and skull-like masks would keep survivors, if any, from identifying them.

"True," agreed Malfaey with a sharp nod. "In any case, once we have established ourselves as a real power, especially one of such noble standing, others will soon flock to the cause."

Reinhardt nodded in agreement before withdrawing an antique pocket watch from his robes. Checking the time, something Malfaey had always found tedious when involving so many planets and moons, he nodded.

It was time.

They had gathered shortly after dawn, several hours ago, planning to make the assault at nine o'clock in the morning. There had been some debate about this, questions as to why they should strike during broad daylight rather than in the safe embrace of the night.

The long and the short of it, as Malfaey summed it up, was that attacking during the day would be the last thing any of those idiots at the Ministry would expect. Besides which, such an act would not only be a declaration of their return to power, but also a message that they were not afraid to strike in the open, wherever and whenever they wanted. Fear, which this would arouse within the general populace, was by tradition one of their most potent weapons.

"Come, my friends," Malfaey declared, drawing the others' attention to him. He smirked, a family trait, and waved them forward, "It is time."

"Where?" asked Tobias Eckersley, the youngest and most impatient member of the group.

Malfaey's smirk became the smile of a predator. "A cosy little Muggle hamlet, called Resting Peace, in Midsomer. It's relatively isolated from the surrounding villages and is small enough that we don't have to worry about being overwhelmed through sheer weight of numbers, yet large enough that even those blind sheep at the Ministry won't be able not to notice."

Reinhardt was handing out small maps showing where the layout of the village. "There's only fifteen houses - one for each of us, which is another reason why we chose this particular mud hole. We'll be Apparating to the spot marked on the maps, in the main street, where we'll have easy access to all of the houses. There aren't any shops or stores to worry about, so we don't have to worry about keeping a look out for strays."

"So we go in, kill 'em all and leave before anyone knows we were there," summed up Aleric Shackleton, who had never had much patience for long winded speeches - or thorough planning for that matter.

"Basically," agreed Malfaey. He pointed to the much larger map which he had laid out while Reinhardt had been distributing the smaller copies. "Each of us has an assigned house. Gather up all the Muggles, nothing fancy --we want to be quick about it-- and bring them out to this spot here... a playground of some sort for their brats. Once we're all together we'll use the Killing Curse, one at a time, starting with the children before moving onto the women and finishing off with the men. If any of them try to resist, then we can use some of the Pain Curses to cow them."

"Aren't we going to have any fun with them first?" asked Dick Dirken with a lecherous leer to his eyes. His companions knew very well what the pallid faced man was talking about - he had something of a reputation when it came to young girls. He called it an interest of his, as if it were a hobby. The Ministry, though unable to ever prove anything, called it molestation.

Malfaey frowned and shook his head. "Not this time, Dirken. We're going to make a statement; a proclamation that the servants of the Dark Lord have risen once again. Nothing more. We will let you satisfy your... interests... when we have more time, perhaps when we attack during the night. Until then, this is strictly business, not pleasure."

Dirken grumbled under his breath, but acquiesced. Malfaey smirked once again he rolled up the large map before moving to the nearby side table. There he picked up and donned his Death Eater robes and mask, an action quickly mimicked by his fellows.

Robes, once the traditional garb for wizards, were a rare sight these days - having lost their popularity as more and more Muggleborns entered the magical world. Muggle garments were much less cumbersome and restricting. Now the only institutions that used robes were some of the more traditional magical schools, such as Hogwarts' faculty, and a few high ranking Ministry officials, who in truth wore them more for ceremonial purposes than any other.

The black robes Malfaey had acquired for himself and his companions were therefore purchased from a specialised Muggle tailor in Istanbul - making them almost impossible for the Ministry to trace. The design was centuries old --from before even the Dark Lord's time-- and quite frankly Malfaey thought them somewhat foppish looking, but it was traditional.

Another tradition were the bone white masks which would hide their faces from their victims. These as well had, to Malfaey's disgust, had been acquired from the Muggle world. They had been brought into England from America - which Malfaey had visited several years ago on a business trip. Unlike the robes, the masks were more than capable of scaring decades off the lives of anyone they might run into.

"Let's get going."

Drawing his wand Malfaey focused on his destination and Disapparated with a soft pop, reappearing an instant later in the main street (such as it were) of a small hamlet several hundred kilometres from his ancestral home.

All was still.

Quiet, save for the chirping of a few birds and what sounded like a piano playing in the distance. Bach. The Goldberg Variations. Who would have thought simple Muggles were cultured enough to play such an elegant instrument?

A rapid series of pops, some louder than others, signalled the arrival of his fourteen compatriots. A glance over his shoulder confirmed their safe arrival and that nobody had Apparated to the wrong location. With a direct wave Malfaey sent them into action as he made his way to the house he had chosen for himself, the one at the very end of the street.

As he strode down the lane --he thought it far too narrow to consider it a proper street-- Malfaey looked about at his surroundings. All in all it was rather... quaint. At first glance he would almost believe that this tiny village would not have been out of place five hundred years ago, during the days of the Dark Lord.

The houses were quite large, larger than he had been expecting - especially from a bunch of Muggles. There were few signs of Muggle technology - aside from the occasional motor car, all of which were fairly new models, if Malfaey were any judge.

Reaching the front gate of the house, he paused to look back at the other Death Eaters, all waiting eagerly outside their respective targets. Malfaey grinned beneath his mask, scarcely able to believe that his family's long-time dream was finally about to be realized.

He gave the signal to begin and watched as his friends charged into action. Turning back to his target he strode quickly and surely past the gate and up the path leading to the front door, fingering his wand eagerly as he went.

If, before giving the signal, he had paused to scrutinise the house and its surrounds a little more closely, Malfaey might have survived the day with his dignity and sanity intact.

Unfortunately he did not and thus failed to notice a small, but very important, inscription on the garden gate he had so callously pushed through.

"Draco Dormiens Nunquat Titillandus."

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The soft murmur of voices led Malfaey towards the dining room after he had snuck into the house. He had been surprised to find the front door unlocked. Even in the peaceful security of modern times, few people were trusting enough to allow such ready access to their homes. Malfaey did not complain though, as this only made his task that much easier.

He silently moved into the doorway leading from the hall into the dining room. Sitting at the table was a boy and girl, both around ten or eleven years old. The boy had a shock of black hair that hung in his eyes, while the girl's waist-long tresses were a shade of blonde not dissimilar to Malfaey's own, though a fraction darker.

Both were somewhat skinny, but in a healthy fashion, and still dressed in their pyjamas - the boy's a bright red and the girl a powdery blue. They were also completely oblivious to his presence in their home. The boy was prodding the grapefruit on his plate with his spoon, as if expecting it to suddenly jump up and attack him. The girl was laughing merrily at his antics and trying not to fall out of her seat.

"Don't move!" Malfaey bellowed, catching their attention as he stepped fully into the room and levelled his wand in their direction.

The children instantly froze in place, the boy's spoon jammed deep in the soft pink flesh of his grapefruit. He turned his head to look at the girl, which Malfaey assumed was his sister. They each blinked at each other in apparent confusion, the girl shrugging as well, and both turned in place to stare at him.

"Right," said the boy, placing his spoon gently on a side plate. His gaze was a curious one as he looked Malfaey up and down. "And who might you be?"

"I said don't move!"

"I'm not moving. I'm talking," the boy countered in a level, almost condescending voice. His eyes were sparkling with amusement however, a clear indication that he had no idea of the danger he was in. "You still haven't answered my question."

"I don't answer to the likes of pathetic little Muggle brats," Malfaey snapped. He shook his wand menacingly at the boy and then the girl. "Now, where are your parents?"

The girl blinked once again, her expression a puzzled one. "Our parents?"

"Where are they?" he demanded, his voice rising in volume as his patience wore thin. "Tell me, now! Quickly!"

"They're with my Godfather," answered the boy.

Malfaey frowned and cursed silently. "They're not here?"

The boy nodded, almost ruefully. "Haven't been for quite a while."

"Is there anyone else in the house?" asked Malfaey, shooting a glance at the door leading to the kitchen and then another to the arch that opened into the lounge. This was a large house, large enough for an equally large family. If the brats' parents weren't here, it did not necessarily mean that there was nobody else present. He had to be sure.

"Does our doggy count?" asked the girl, her wide, unblinking blue eyes fixed on Malfaey with an intensity that he was beginning to find a little unnerving.

"Don't try my patience, or I'll punish you for it."

"Nope," said the boy with a shake of his head. His black hair fell over his eyes as he did. He shrugged casually. "Just us two. And the dog."

"Get up," Malfaey ordered them, motioning them to stand. "We're going outside."

"I don't suppose you'd let us put on our coats first?" asked the girl as she and the boy rose from the table and calmly walked over to where he was standing. "It's rather chilly out this early in the morning. We might catch cold."

"A cold is the least of your worries, girl," he growled, stepping aside so they could move past him. Though he would not admit it, there was something unnerving about these two. They were acting far too calm, considering the situation. He pointed them in the direction of the front door and commanded, "Move."

The girl frowned and pouted slightly. "Fine, but if my nose starts running, you'll be in trouble."

Malfaey valiantly resisted the urge to curse her and simply followed after the two as they walked down the hall to the door. The boy swung the door open and motioned for his sister to exit first, before stepping outside himself. Once outside they immediately strolled down the garden and into the lane leading up to the house. After opening the garden gate for the girl, much as he had the front door, the boy reached out to hold her hand as they waited for Malfaey to join them.

"Move faster you little ingrates!" he snarled, giving the boy a push between the shoulders as an incentive to hurry up. These Muggle brats weren't showing nearly enough --or any at all for that matter-- fear of him. "I didn't tell you to stop."

The boy stumbled from the shove, but stayed on his feet with help from his sister. Once he had fully regained his balance he turned to give Malfaey a jaundiced look. It actually made him shiver slightly.

It was something about the eyes, more than anything else. He had never seen eyes quite like them. They seemed to warn against crossing him, as whoever did so would not like what happened. Malfaey had seen a similar look before; in the eyes of a nesting dragon.

"I don't like you."

The words were simple ones. Childishly worded. Childish sounding. But they made Malfaey shiver even more so than the gleam in the boy's jade green eyes. It didn't help when the girl stood close to her brother, wrapped an arm around his waist and stared up at Malfaey with the same disturbing intensity.

"Me too!" she agreed with a sharp nod.

Before Malfaey could do anything, could think of something to say, the pair turned away from him and hurried down the street - not looking back.

Shaking himself in an attempt to ward off the strange sensation he was feeling, Malfaey looked after them. He must have been imagining things, letting the excitement, the heat of the moment get to him. They were simple Muggles, after all, and only children at that. What could they possibly do against a fully trained wizard?

This decided and his somewhat rattled nerves restored, Malfaey hurried after them, trying to catch up. They might have only been children, with far shorter strides than his own, but they made up for it with an enthusiastic pace.

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Much to his chagrin, Malfaey and the two Muggle children were not the first to arrive at the village park. Several of his fellow Death Eaters were already waiting, with their prisoners - most of whom were still in their pyjamas and dressing gowns, who were clustered in a small group near the playground swings, their captors arrayed in a loose circle around them.

Before he would order them to do so, the two children pushed their way past the surrounding Death Eaters. They strode up to an elderly couple, who seemed to be the ones the rest of the Muggles were centred around.

The man was tall and lanky, slightly bowed with age, with a pair of square reading glasses perched on the tip of his long nose. His hair was thinning on top and white by his temples. The woman, who was most likely his wife, barely came to his shoulders and had her hair done up in a strict bun - though several bushy strands of grey hair stuck out at odd angles.

Unlike the old man, who was chatting to a middle aged black man with dreadlocks and looking about eagerly at the goings on, the old woman was pointedly ignoring everything happening around her. Instead she was leaning against the framework of the swings, with a gnarled walking stick in one hand and a steaming cup of coffee in the other.

The two children ignored the woman's apparent indifference and marched up to her, broad grins on both their faces as they greeted her in cheerful chorus.

"Good morning, Grammy!"

"After another two or three cups of coffee," the old woman rasped dryly, "it might be."

"Aw, it's such a shame," said the boy, grinning cheekily up at her, "to be so old you can't even get out of bed without the help of caffeine."

The old lady responded by bopping him lightly on his head with her walking stick and admonished, "Oh be quiet, you bothersome scamp."

Malfaey let his attention drift away from the remainder of their banter, insipid as it was, and looked over the rest of their prisoners. None of them seemed particularly threatening, indeed they were all rather docile and seemed to be looking at the slowly gathering Death Eaters with open curiosity more than anything else.

At the sound of some familiar heavy footsteps come up from behind him, Malfaey tore his eyes away from a stocky red-haired man and what must have been his teenaged daughter. The man had caught Malfaey's eyes mostly because of his hair and the prominent beard, both of which gave him a passing resemblance to Reinhardt.

Turning away from the Muggles, Malfaey saw his long-time friend approaching with two Muggles under his watchful eyes. They were a fairly young couple, somewhere in their twenties, and had apparently been out jogging. Malfaey had to admit that the woman, even sweaty and ungroomed, was particularly attractive. Tall, slender, elegant and with rich auburn hair. Clearly related to the bearded man, if the hair was any indication.

They arrived almost simultaneously with another family, another red-haired man and his blonde wife, and their two children; the boy an almost spitting image of his father. The red-haired boy and his sister ran over to where the other two children were still talking to the old woman. The adults of the group sauntered over to join the rest of the gathered villagers, greeting and acknowledging each other with such a relaxed casualness that Malfaey had to wonder if the entire lot were mentally deficient in some way. It would certainly explain their oblivious attitude to the danger they were in.

"Quiet!" bellowed Reinhardt as he came to stand by Malfaey. "We did not give you Muggles any permission to speak!"

A brief silence descended as the assorted Muggles stopped talking and turned as a group to stare curiously at Reinhardt. Malfaey took a quick headcount and saw that all of his fellows were present, meaning that they had successfully secured the entire village. He took a step forward, ensuring that all eyes were on him.

His speech, which he had spent the last week working on, was interrupted before it even began as young Eckersley gasped in horror and pointed at something opposite him, behind Malfaey and Reinhardt.

"Great gods, it's a Grim!" he exclaimed.

All of the Death Eaters turned to look and found themselves facing a massive hound. It was the largest dog any of them had ever seen, easily a match for a full grown werewolf. Its shaggy black hide glistened wetly from the morning dew as it padded towards the park.

"An ill omen!" gasped Pucey. "We should leave! Now!"

"Shut up, you simpering idiots!" Malfaey snapped angrily. He regarded the approaching dog, a trifle unnerved, but unwilling to show it. "That's no Grim."

"Of course it is! Look at it!"

"Buffoon!" retorted Reinhardt, taking several long strides until he was standing next to the man who had protested. Smacking the offender upside the head, almost knocking the man's mask off in the process, he growled, "What would a Grim be doing in a Muggle village of all places? In broad daylight too!"

The dog, which had not paused for a moment, brushed past Malfaey and leapt upon the black haired boy, knocking him to the ground. Before he could protest the hound slobbered its tongue up and down his face before sitting back on its haunches and panting happily.

"Growf."

"Ack!" complained the boy, wiping his face with his pyjama's sleeve. "Dog drool!"

"Growf!"

It was not even nine o'clock in the morning yet, and Malfaey could already feel the onset of a massive migraine. These Muggles were all completely out of their minds, standing around as if all that was happening were nothing more than a walk in the park. Admittedly, they *were* actually *in* the park, but any normal people, when accosted in the early morning by fifteen black robed and white masked strangers, would have been in a state of near panic.

Deciding that enough was enough and that he would have to make them pay the proper attention to himself and his companions, Malfaey raised his wand and prepared to cast the Killing Curse on the dog. Before he could utter the incantation and begin channelling the magic, the old woman from before stepped forward and interrupted.

"How rude. Didn't anyone ever tell you it's impolite to hide your faces like that?" she reached up with her walking stick and gave Shackleton, who was the nearest Death Eater to her, a sharp rap on the forehead. She glared at the assembled dark wizards, her brow puckered in a deep frown and commanded, "*Take those ridiculous masks off of yourselves right now.*"

Malfaey watched with absolute astonishment as every Death Eater present, including Reinhardt, reached up and removed their masks, tossing them to the ground.

"You bloody fools! What are you listening to her for? Put your masks back on!"

"Why?" asked Shackleton, who was rubbing where the old woman had smacked him on the forehead. He grimaced and waved his wand in the Muggles' direction. "We're going to kill them all anyway. What does it matter?"

Pucey nodded in agreement and commented, "Aye, and I can't help but notice you took your mask off as well!"

"What?" Malfaey reached up in surprise and found, to his disbelief, that he too had taken off his mask and discarded it to one side. "How?"

Since they were no longer wearing their masks, most of the Death Eaters pulled back the cowls of their robes, revealing themselves fully to the watching Muggles. Malfaey, though he did not know why, followed suit. As his face came into view, the Muggles reacted in what looked like surprise.

The red-haired woman, whose sweat-soaked t-shirt clung enticingly to her generously endowed chest, took a step forward and asked tentatively, "Draco?"

"What?"

"Oh, sorry, my mistake," she apologised, after scrutinising his features for several seconds. She returned to her husband's side and shrugged. "For a moment there, I thought you were another idi-- er, bloke we used to know."

This, Malfaey felt, was an inexcusable insult. Being compared to some Muggle simpleton? That was something he refused to tolerate. It was bad enough that the villagers were acting completely unintimidated by the Death Eaters, even going so far as to talk back to them. Now a personal affront to the illustrious lineage of the noble House of Malfaey...

Working himself into a state of high dudgeon, Malfaey drew himself up tall and proudly presented himself. "I am Dominus Malfaey."

The Muggles stared at him blankly for a moment before a look of bemusement crossed their faces, even the children.

"Oh, goody goody lemon drops!" squealed the blonde-haired girl, clapping her hands happily as she jumped up and down. The massive black dog bounded around her, barking raucously. "Another one to play with!"

"Thought he looked familiar," said the sandy haired man that was apparently the pretty redhead's husband.

The balding old man nodded thoughtfully, "Mmm, yes, the sneer is obviously hereditary."

"Not to mention the lack of common sense."

"Hair's a little darker than the last one, though."

"You ignorant fools!" Malfaey snapped. "Do you have any idea who I am?"

The red-haired woman chuckled and nodded her head. "Actually, we probably have a better idea about who and what you are than you yourself do."

Malfaey snorted in disbelief. "I doubt that a *Muggle* could possibly begin to even comprehend what I am."

"You mean an overbearing--"

"--Self-righteous idiot--"

"--With delusions of grandeur?"

Malfaey looked at the red-haired man and his equally red-haired son, who had alternated back and forth as they mocked him. He clenched his teeth in a silent snarl and could feel his knuckles pop as he squeezed his wand tightly - eager to instruct the insolent pair in the proper manner of how to treat their betters.

"For heaven's sake, this is no time to play around, you two!" the man's wife chided them, wagging a finger at the man and then at her son. Both looked on with obvious amusement and not the least bit repentant. "We're in a serious situation here."

"At least on that count we are in agreement, woman," growled Malfaey, easing the death grip he had on his wand. He would not kill them now, but he would most certainly make them regret their words before he was finished. Perhaps he would start by torturing the mother, or perhaps the daughter. "That is the only reason why I don't kill the both of them where they stand."

His thoughts on the matter were cut short as the black-haired boy, who had climbed back to his feet after the dog had finished slobbering on him, asked, "So, if you're not an overbearing, self-righteous idiot with delusions of grandeur... then what exactly are you?"

"I am a Death Eater!" Malfaey roared, spreading his arms wide to include his companions. He bared his teeth at the Muggles, his patience all but finished and hissed angrily, "One of the most feared people in the wizarding world and a humble servant dedicated to the values and teachings of the greatest Dark Lord of all time!"

"Salazar Slytherin?" asked the old woman with the walking stick.

"Of course not, you foolish old hag!" he retorted disdainfully. "I speak of Lord Voldomert!"

The words had just passed his lips when Malfaey almost stumbled over his own feet - which would have been quite an accomplishment considering he was standing still at the time. He gawked at the old woman in frank consternation, wondering at the realization that a Muggle had just mentioned, by name, one of the four founders of Hogwarts.

"Voldomert?" repeated the boy, emphasising the last part of the Dark Lord's name.

"You shouldn't be rude like that, you know," his sister told him, tossing her long blonde hair over her shoulder as she moved to stand by his side. "Just because the poor man has a speech impediment doesn't mean you can tease him."

"Shut up, you little whelp!"

Reinhardt, who was the one that had spoken, took two long strides forward and backhanded the girl hard across her face. The smack of flesh on flesh was loud in the early morning air, followed by a startled and pained exclamation from the girl as she fell to the ground.

Immediately her brother knelt down beside her to check on her condition as several of the adults moved to flank the pair. If it weren't for the fact that he was a wizard and they were mere Muggles, Malfaey might have felt worried by the suddenly dangerous gleam in their eyes as they closed ranks

around the children.

"Nobody dares make light of Lord Voldomert's noble name!" exclaimed Reinhardt, shaking his fist in warning.

The balding old man, who had also knelt down by the fallen girl, looked up with a peculiar expression. He adjusted his glasses and asked, "Did he say it as well?"

"Sounds like it," confirmed the sandy-haired man.

"Voldomert?" repeated the old man, shaking his head. "Good grief."

"Could be worse," said the old woman, leaning on her walking stick as she regarded Malfaey and Reinhardt with a frighteningly dispassionate gaze, tinged with a morbid curiosity.

"How's that, dear?"

The old woman smiled cheekily at Malfaey and answered, "They could be calling him Moldieworts."

Malfaey gaped at her for a moment, unable to believe her audacity, especially after the example Reinhardt had made of the girl. His friend, however, did more than simply gape.

"Insolent crone!"

Reinhardt stepped forward, drawing his arm back in preparation to loose another backhand, one that would beggar what he had hit the girl with. He started his swing, putting his shoulder behind the motion to land a blow that Malfaey felt might possibly kill the old woman.

It was the strangely eager grin on the old woman's face that first alerted Malfaey to the fact that something was wrong. The second, was when Reinhardt's blow failed to land, stalling stone cold just inches away from its target.

Reinhardt, and all the other Death Eaters, stared at the small, slender hand which had caught him by the wrist and held him in an impossibly firm grip with a deceptive ease. He moved on to the arm the hand was attached to and then slowly up the arm, until he found himself staring in stunned disbelief at the young girl he had struck not a minute ago.

The blow Reinhardt dealt had left her with a split lip and the blue tinge of a forming bruise on her cheek. But even as he stood there, Malfaey watched as the bruise faded away and the split lip healed, leaving her face in perfect health - as if nothing had happened.

Malfaey's feeling of dread, which had been growing greater with each passing moment, grew to new heights as he caught sight of the girl's eyes. They matched, almost exactly, the look he had seen earlier from her brother. Only this time with a cold edge that simply should not, could not, be present in one so young.

"Dreadfully sorry, but I cannot allow you to hit Grammy," she said in a dreamy voice, as if this were nothing more than a game to her. Then her languid expression shifted to take on a hard edge that matched that of her eyes as her hand suddenly tensed. "If fact, I won't allow you to hit anyone... ever again."

There were several loud snaps as the bones in Reinhardt's arm broke under the pressure she exerted. The big man grabbed at his injured arm with his free hand, gasping in pain as she grimly twisted it about. He was reaching to her hand, probably hoping to pry her loose, when she abruptly released him. Reinhardt had barely enough time to realize this before she took a step in front of him and drew back her leg.

"Nicely done, Luna," commented the red-haired boy, while the Death Eaters watched with dull fascination as Reinhardt toppled limply to the ground. He was clutching at his groin with both hands, even the injured one, and gibbering unintelligibly. "Not only have you shut him up, but hopeful prevented him from breeding as well."

"Definitely," agreed the boy's father, sounding very proud. "Wouldn't want the likes of him contaminating the gene pool, after all."

"It's a little late for that, I'm afraid, George," said the man's wife, shaking her head, but clearly finding some amusement in the situation this time round.

The rest of the villagers were also twittering in soft laughter, though one or two of the men seemed to be looking on with a strange eagerness. The stocky man with the beard was actually rubbing his hands together in anticipation. So for that matter was his teenaged daughter, who had a positively demented grin on her face.

None of them seemed the least bit concerned by the fact that such an attack against one of their number would surely prompt the remaining Death Eaters to respond in kind.

Malfaey, for his part, was wondering what he and his friends had gotten themselves into.

By now the lines had been drawn, the Death Eaters assembled in a tight knot around Malfaey on one side and the Muggles standing in a loose group on the side.

The wizards were no longer so sure in their superiority as they had been and now had their wands on prominent display - all directed at chest height towards the on looking Muggles. It would probably have been a far more impressive sight, Malfaey felt, had the Muggles any comprehension of exactly what it was being aimed at them.

The Muggles, on the other hand, remained blatantly unconcerned. They stood quietly as the small, black-haired boy stepped forward. His red pyjamas were wet in places from when he had been toppled over by the dog, the knees were soaked from when he had knelt beside the blonde-girl and there were bits of grass clinging to him here and there.

Not the most impressive sight in the world.

But something about the way the boy held himself... perhaps it was the cocksure confidence of someone who knew he was going to win the upcoming fight. Someone who knew that there was no possible way he could lose. Someone who had been in situations like this time and time again until it was no longer anything to worry over. Someone with an impossible amount of experience.

The grin that spread across the boy's face would have made a dragon nervous.

"Since you were so kind to introduce yourself and your compatriots, Malfaey, allow me to return the favour."

A stiff wind unexpectedly stirred up around the park, ruffling the boy's unruly hair. It did not take Malfaey long to realize that the wind was not a natural one, for it remained perfectly steady in its intensity and seemed to concentrate on the boy, lifting his fringe clear of his forehead - allowing all to see what happened next.

With frightening slowness, as if time itself had slowed almost to a halt, the smooth skin of the boy's forehead rippled with dispersing magic. Emerging from behind the cover of a fading Glamour Charm of some sort, a scar made its appearance - a scar that was all too familiar to those who had studied the details of the Dark Lord's defeat five hundred years before.

He sketched a short, mocking bow.

"My name is Harry Potter."

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The silence that fell after that simple statement was absolute. The kind of silence usually reserved for when somebody announced that the world was about to end.

"I'm-impossible," stuttered Malfaey in disbelief. This had to be a hoax or something similar, an elaborate charade devised by the Ministry. It had to be, because Malfaey simply did not want to contemplate the alternative. "Potter's been dead nearly four hundred years!"

"Sorry to disappoint you," the young boy replied, his emerald eyes sparkling with mischief above that wicked smile.

With a flicker and a twitch his bright red pyjamas transfigured themselves into a simple shirt and trouser combination, underneath the standard robes of a Hogwarts professor. The professor who finally broke the supposed curse of the Defence Against the Dark Arts position, teaching that which he was best at for nearly twenty years before his appointment as the school's headmaster, which he held for another fifty years.

The apparel looked incongruous on the boy's small frame, like a child dressed up for a party or Halloween. Then the boy began to grow, shooting up to stand nearly six feet tall in a matter of a second or two. His arms and legs thickened with an onset of lean muscle as the chest broadened to fill the fabric of his shirt more fully. All traces of baby fat around his face melted away, leaving the angular lines of an adult with penetrating green eyes and an untamed mop of black hair.

In a much deeper voice he continued, "but I really am Harry Potter. Otherwise known as The-Boy-Who-Lived; the last Heir of Gryffindor, Saviour of the Wizarding World and Executioner of the Dark Lord *Voldemort*."

Merlin. The Founders. Albus Dumbledore. Harry Potter. Names that were legend amongst wizards. Synonymous with power and skill that no ordinary person could hope to match. They were the paragons, the epitome of what it meant to use magic. Some even went so far as to say that they did not *use* magic; they *were* magic.

Quite naturally, when coming face-to-face with one who held such an illustrious position in history, several of Malfaey's Death Eater friends collapsed to the ground as their legs gave in under them.

Harry Potter chuckled appreciatively at their reaction, as did several of his friends. His eyes were filled with amusement as he walked over to the old woman, who continued to lean on her walking stick. Placing a hand on her shoulder he spoke, "Allow me to introduce the smartest witch to ever attend Hogwarts. Genius, Scholar, Spell-Writer and Enchantress of the first order. Hermione Granger."

The old woman rolled her eyes, apparently finding the situation a trifle melodramatic, but still willing to play along. She raised her walking stick up and then struck the ground at her feet. There was a crack, like thunder, as her faded dressing gown shifted into the ceremonial indigo and violet robes of a professional Enchantress. The walking stick transformed into a six foot long oak staff, crowned with a gleaming, fist sized ruby. Her hair seemed to explode free of the confining bun, forming a halo around her face that shifted from grey to brown as the years faded away to reveal an elegant witch in the prime of her life.

This, perhaps because of its blatant display of raw magic, unnerved Malfaey more than Potter's own transformation. He would have tried to escape, but a sudden heaviness settling in the air was enough to disperse that idea. Someone, probably Granger with her staff, had just cast an Anti-Apparation ward around the immediate area. Indeed, if the legends of her prowess were true, the ward most likely extended over the entire village.

"That chap over there is her husband and my best friend, Ronald Weasley," announced Potter, pointing at the bald old man that was standing not too far away. "The Captain and Keeper combination that led the English Quidditch team to seven consecutive World Cup victories before he retired."



The old man, who had until now been nearly doubled over in silent laughter, waved a hand in their general direction before straightening up. As with his wife, Granger, the years seemed to melt away from Weasley - wrinkles smoothed out and a thick scalp of red hair quickly covered his head. There was no impressive display of magic, however, save for the dispersal of whatever had been hiding his true appearance. His rumpled plaid pyjamas and patchwork dressing gown remained as rumpled and patchwork as they had been since his arrival in the park. The only change, aside from his physical appearance, was that he slipped his reading glasses into his pyjamas breast pocket.

"The cute redhead next to him is his sister, Virginia, with her husband Neville."

The pair bowed mockingly at the dumbstruck Death Eaters, their sweaty workout clothes transfiguring smoothly into crisp white and blue parade dress robes with gold trim.

Seeing the oh-so-familiar design and its proud colours, one of the few types of robes still used by wizards - though only for ceremonies requiring some pomp and circumstance, Malfaey had a dreadful feeling that he knew exactly who the couple were. After all, even five hundred years after the fact, it was widely known that where Harry Potter went, so did Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley. And where one Weasley went the rest were sure to follow...

Having seen the comprehension in Malfaey's eyes, Potter's grin grew even broader and he confirmed the man's suspicions. "The Longbottoms. Possibly the two greatest Aurors of the time and responsible for the arrest and conviction of over three hundred Death Eaters and other Dark Arts practitioners between them during the course of their careers."

Malfaey's mouth was so dry that he could not even manage to swallow.

Potter walked back to where he had started, placing a hand on the shoulder of the small girl that Malfaey had originally taken as his sister. He looked down with obvious affection at the girl. "And this inexcusably cute young lady here reminds me of my wife for some reason."

"That might be because I *am* your wife," the girl retorted.

Reinhardt, still on the ground, scrambled backwards as the girl suddenly grew in height. The hips and chest widened with this onset of adulthood, leaving behind a striking young woman whose pyjamas strained to cover. A casual wave of her hand and an instant of wandless magic remedied this by transfiguring the garment into a better sized arrangement, though the skirt was short enough to reveal a great length of leg.

"Oh yeah. That explains it," Potter said, as if that fact were something that had simply skipped his mind. He turned his attention to Reinhardt and said, "In that case, Luna Lovegood, the witch who almost single-handedly redefined mass media in the wizarding world. Better known, sometimes, as Mrs Luna Potter. My wife."

The only reply Reinhardt could manage was an indistinct whimper. Potter seemed to realize that this was all the response he was going to get and thus continued his introductions. He turned to indicate the red-haired father and son pair that had the habit of alternating between themselves when talking. Malfaey had the terrible feeling that he knew who these two were as well.

"These two gentlemen are the infamous Weasley twins, Fred and George."

The pair were grinning like lunatics as their clothes changed into a combination of colours and textures that were almost painful to look at for too long. The younger of the pair, who appeared about thirteen or fourteen, shot up by over a foot until he matched his 'father' in height. They both gave exaggerated bows as Potter elaborated for anyone that had been living in a cave for the last few centuries.

"The prankster pair who founded the now corporate conglomerate Three Double Yew, originally Weasley's Wizard Wheezes."

"Delighted to make your acquaintance," declared the one twin, George Weasley.

The other, Fred Weasley, nodded in agreement, "Yes, positively ebullient."

Potter chuckled at their banter and turned to the two women standing beside the twins. The young girl that Malfaey had taken as the daughter of the family had apparently grown up into a rather pretty woman during the twins' introduction.

"And here we have their long suffering wives Katie and Alicia. Over there's Angelina and Lee. The eager looking one is Tonks--"

"Wotcher!" waved the supposed teenager daughter of the bearded redhead. Her hair, which had at some point turned an electric blue, rotated through several vivid colours before settling on a lurid lime green.

"--Charlie, Bill and Fleur--"

A mind numbingly beautiful woman, with eyes the colour of a summer sky and hair like spun gold, presented herself with a sweeping curtsey. Clearly a recipient of some veela blood in her ancestry.

"--and the rest of our little family," concluded Harry with a broad sweep of his arm that included the remainder of the villagers.

Malfaey had felt as if he had been kicked in the gut by a hippogriff when Potter had revealed himself. Then Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley had been unveiled and he almost had a coronary. After the revelation that the Longbottoms were also present he was sure he had experienced a haemorrhage of some sort. By the time the infamous Weasley twins were mentioned, Malfaey had just about lost the ability to think coherently.

The other names weren't as famous, but most were still known to him. People who had fought on the side of the light in the last great war. They had all played a role, some parts greater than others. They had helped Potter and his circle of close friends work towards that final, fateful battle in which Lord Voldemort --Voldemort?-- had been banished from existence. They were the heroes of a war that irrevocably changed the course of the

wizarding world's future - Malfaey's history.

They were the stuff of legends.

And they were all here.

Standing in front of him.

Harry Potter had an arm around his wife's waist and wore a cocky grin. He reached out with his free hand and plucked a pair of round glasses from out of nowhere. He settled the spectacles on his face, emerald eyes sparkling. Now, more than ever, he looked exactly like his portrait, which hung in the headmaster's office at Hogwarts.

"Pleased to meetcha."

Oh shit.

\*\*\*

The assorted residents of Resting Peace were having a hard time restraining themselves. Half of the small village's populace were trying not to burst into laughter at the expressions wrought on the hapless Death Eater's faces. The other half were trying not to jump into the fray and start throwing curses and hexes left and right. Either option was altogether almost too tempting to resist.

Luna glanced at Harry and commented, "Come now, love, you really shouldn't tease the Death Eaters. It's not polite."

"Maybe," admitted Harry, but there was still laughter in his eyes and voice, "but it certainly is fun!"

"Can't argue 'bout that, Luna," agreed Ron. He looked pointedly at Malfaey, who seemed rooted to the spot. "Besides; we always used to make fun of Malfoy, don't see why we can't do the same to his bratty descendents. They enjoy it as much as we do."

"I don't know; it doesn't look like he appreciates it," Hermione wryly observed.

"Oh, come on, Mione," Ron insisted. "If they didn't like it the sods wouldn't keep coming back!"

"Maybe they're just natural masochists. Runs in the family?" suggested Ginny.

Neville nodded thoughtfully and began listing off names on his fingers. "Well, let's see; first Lucius, then Draco, his son Tiberius, then the funny one with all the piercings - Lancerius... yeah, I guess it does run in the family."

This mocking dissertation on his ancestors seemed to spur Malfaey out of his stupor in protest. "Now see here!"

"All these centuries of inbreeding hasn't helped either," noted Tonks, cutting him off. She was looking over several Death Eaters with an appraising eye, trying to decide which one of them would give her a decent challenge in the upcoming chase. She paused in her perusal for a second to snort indelicately. "Heck, they can't even remember who they're trying to serve. Lord Voldomert, indeed."

"Probably a misprint of Voldemort that nobody bothered to correct at the time and eventually forgot about," Charlie suggested from his spot beside her.

Bill, who had both arms wrapped around Fleur's waist, nodded in agreement. "Yeah, I used to see a lot of that when I was still working for Gringotts in Egypt."

Ron shrugged. "Not like we can do anything about it."

Hermione nodded and asked, "What can we do about it?"

"A far more important question, I think," said Ginny, with a lazy wave in the direction of the Death Eaters, "is what do we do about them?"

"Maybe, just this once, we should go easy on them," proposed Susan Bones, who had been standing to the rear of the assembled villagers.

"Easy on them?" repeated Neville incredulously. He looked at her with feigned concern and asked, "Susan, are you feeling all right? You're not sick are you?"

Hermione rolled her eyes and explained, "I think she means that if they can't even pronounce ol' Moldieworts' name correctly, then they can't be much of a threat."

All attention suddenly focused on Fred and George, who had both stepped forward and struck dramatic poses. With their exaggerated motions, not to mention their lurid clothing, it was hard not to notice them. For that matter, it was even harder not to laugh at their antics.

"Voldemort , Voldomert --"

"--Potay toe, Potah toe--"

"--What's the difference?" they chorused.

George smiled wickedly, "Let's just--"

"--start hexing!" finished Fred, rubbing his hands together.

After that things descended into chaos very quickly.

\*\*\*

Tungsten Reinhardt had always been supremely assured of his own superiority over the dregs of humanity, be they wizard or Muggle. Right now, his faith in that superiority had been dealt a near mortal blow.

Once the Weasley twins finished their short proclamation all hell had broken loose, mostly in the form of more hexes and curses that Reinhardt thought anyone had a right to know. Even worse was the fact that almost all of the curses flying through the air were being cast by the supposed Muggle villagers who seemed to be having a jolly time of it. Not only were they casting spells without bothering to use wands, but they were wearing positively giddy grins as they did so.

"I think a strategic retreat is in order," he heard Malfoy suggest as they fled from the playground they had brought the villagers to.

"Forget that, just keep running!" he panted through clenched teeth, the sharp driving pain from his broken wrist contrasting with the dull throb of his bruised gonads.

Any hope of the Death Eaters presenting a united front against the inhabitants of Resting Peace had been blown out of the water long ago. Nobody, not even Reinhardt, was suicidal or stupid enough to think that they stood a chance against some of the greatest witches and wizards in the last five hundred years. Already several of the dark wizards had fallen prey to a wide variety of spells which promised to take days, if not weeks or even months, to remove fully.

By now the surviving Death Eaters, or rather those who had not yet been hexed into sweet oblivion, had scattered throughout the village in varied attempts to flee for their lives. These were seemingly doomed to failure from the very start, as the abrupt transformation of Tobias Eckersley into an overweight Chinese panda bear seemed to indicate. Then there was Dirken, who was being playfully pursued by the Grim-like dog, which was barking excitedly as it bounded ten metres through the air and landed in front of its quarry.

When a Pinocchio Curse hit him on the shoulder and caused his nose to grow nearly a foot in length, Reinhardt decided that he should be less concerned about the fate of his fellows and more concerned about his own. Desperate for a reprieve he jumped over a low gate and belted across the garden lawn and around the house.

Once in the back garden he made his way to a tool shed that was standing in the corner, half hidden amongst the shrubbery and a large willow. He hoped that he would be able to hide in there long enough to counter the few curses that had hit him and maybe cast a small Healing Charm on his injuries.

In short order he removed two Blistering Boil Hexes (both in unmentionable places), one Itching Curse and one Colouring Charm that had changed his robes from black to rotating red and white stripes which were quite dizzying to look at. The last was mostly so that he would not be as easily spotted. A brief moment was spent casting a Pain Relief Charm on his aching groin and another on his wrist. It wasn't all that easy to do, considering the broken wrist meant that he had to hold his wand in his left hand rather than the right, but he managed nonetheless.

He was just preparing to remove the Pinocchio Curse when a slender hand reached over his shoulder and bopped the tip of his elongated nose.

"Need some help?"

Too shocked by this sudden interruption, Reinhardt barely noticed that his nose had shrunk down to normal size. Instead, he whirled in place and levelled his wand on the person that had appeared behind him. He had no idea how they had come to be there, as the tool shed had been empty when he entered and he had been facing the door the entire time. He had not even heard a telltale pop or crack of Apparation, though that should have been impossible as well, considering the Anti-Apparation ward that had been cast over the village by Granger.

"Any other curses you'd like removed?"

Luna Lovegood. Luna Potter. Whatever you called her. The wife to the most powerful wizard since Merlin himself, perhaps even a smidgeon more powerful. Admittedly she was not quite in the same league as her husband, but she was still considered to be in the upper echelons of powerful witches. By the time of her supposed death, four hundred years ago, she had a controlling interest in every wizarding newspaper or magazine of the time. Her influence in the wizarding community had rivalled that of her husband. All this ran through Reinhardt's mind in an instant, as well as a single other thought which left all others trembling in its wake.

Luna Potter. Harry Potter's wife. And he had hit her.

Faced with this undeniable fact, Reinhardt did the only reasonable thing he could think of - he dropped his wand, fell to his knees and started babbling like an idiot.

\*\*\*

Kenneth Vrystaat had always had a warmly sentimental appreciation of violence. This was largely due to the fact that he was hardly ever around when any of said violence was being doled out by his compatriots. That and the fact that when he was around, he was the one dishing it out, rather than being on the receiving end.

Now he was discovering --much to his dismay-- that violence wasn't half as much fun when it was being directed in his general direction. Particularly as those maniacal redheaded twins were the ones directing it.

He had managed to escape the worst of the hexes that had been flying about the playground, mostly because he had turned heel and bolted for his life the instant everything went to pieces. He did not know the fate of his compatriots, and quite frankly he did not really care. Right now his priority was to get the hell out of Resting Peace and the Anti-Apparation ward which surrounded it. Once free of the ward he would be only seconds from the safety of his own home in Norfolk.

Unfortunately a glancing curse had seemingly confounded his sense of direction - thus sending him round and round in circles as he ran between the houses lining the streets. The problem was that he was currently so flustered, in a state of near total panic really, that he couldn't remember how to apply the appropriate counter-curse. He was beginning to despair, especially when he realized the house he was approaching was one he had already hidden behind. Twice. He recognised the name engraved above the door - Draconus Keep.

Turning to duck down a narrow path between that and the house next to it, Kenneth was chanting under his breath. "Nononononononono..."

"Have you had enough time--"

"--to make your peace--"

"--with the world?" asked a pair of voices from directly above him.

Kenny looked up in terror to see the Weasley twins perched on the roof above him, their outrageously coloured clothes fluttering in the soft breeze and fairly glowing in the morning sunlight. He whimpered pathetically and squeaked out the first thing that came to mind.

"No?"

\*\*\*

Alasdair Tenhauser was heroically resisting the urge to scream in terror. This was not easy, as anyone being chased by a premier Auror would testify. Just being chased by an Auror was a bad thing. Being chased by an Auror that not only knew what she was doing, but also had a reputation for doing what she did exceptionally well, was even worse. Knowing that the Auror you were running from was also the legendary Ginny Longbottom... well, most dark wizards would be hard pressed not to scream.

"You can run, but you can't hi-ide!" called a sing-song voice from behind him.

Redoubling his pace, or at least trying to, Tenhauser rounded nearest corner at such a pace that he almost tumbled over. Somehow managing to maintain his footing, he sprinted along the back of the house until he came to a shoulder high brick wall that was overrun with ivy. Not pausing to reconsider he slammed his right hand down on the wall, the ivy cushioning his palm, and vaulted over the wall and into someone's back garden.

A garden lined with rose bushes.

Once again Tenhauser found himself heroically resisting the urge to scream. Only this time it was from pain, rather than sheer terror. Fortunately he was still wearing the thick black robes which Malfaey had provided, but this only afforded a small amount of protection as he began flaying about. Thorns and broken branches were digging into him and it seemed an eternity before he tore his way clear, the back of his robes being ripped to ribbons by the motion.

"Oh, you shouldn't have done that."

Rolling onto his hands and knees, Tenhauser found himself staring across the neatly manicured lawn. Directly opposite him, floating six inches above the grass, was Ginny - who was watching him with a predatory smile. She had traded the crisp white and blue of her parading robes for the subdued black and grey of Auror field robes. Magical energy began to glow and writhe around her clenched fists as she hovered in place.

"Susan's spent decades grooming her roses. She is not going to be pleased."

He opened his mouth to protest, which he knew was a futile idea, but tried anyway. Before he could get a word out, Ginny was suddenly flying straight at him, like a Seeker diving after the Snitch. Despite everything he had ever been told about how to react in a fight, Tenhauser froze in place; unconsciously hoping beyond hope that if he remained absolutely still, then Ginny would not be able to see him.

The last thing he saw, before everything went black, was Ginny's glowing fist.

\*\*\*

Aleric Shackleton had never had much use for thorough planning. In that respect he was more like a Gryffindor than a Slytherin, preferring to jump headfirst into a situation, more often than not without bothering to check the water beforehand.

Right now, however, he was sorely cursing the thorough lack of planning which had led to his coming to this place. How anyone, especially Malfaey, could miss the fact that this supposedly quaint, supposedly Muggle village was in fact the home to some of the greatest wizards in history...

His silent cursing became audible as he tripped over a root and fell to his hands and knees. Stumbling to his feet he looked behind him and sighed with relief when it became obvious that nobody was pursuing him. He had managed to slink off early on, aware that he was so vastly outclassed that any attempt to duel would be a futile one.

The Anti-Apparation ward that he had felt settle over the entire village was the only thing keeping him here. Unwilling to risk trying to Disapparate while still within the ward's boundaries, he had fled the village immediately. He had found a narrow country path, leading through a thick copse of oak trees, and had been running down its length when he tripped. He did not know how far the ward extended, but was hoping that once he cleared

the line of trees that he would be free of it.

Feeling assured of his imminent escape he took a moment to catch his breath and slow the pounding of his heart. Finally he turned to resume his run down the path, only to suddenly feel the urge to fall on his knees and begin confessing his sins - which comprised a rather long list. There, leaning casually against the trunk of a nearby oak tree and looking perfectly relaxed, as if he had not put any effort into the chase, was Neville Longbottom.

Shackleton looked behind him and then back at Longbottom in consternation.

"How did you...?" he asked, not finishing the question.

"Magic, of course."

He swallowed nervously as Longbottom cracked a wicked looking grin. When the retired, not to mention supposedly long dead, Auror pushed off the tree and began to walk towards him, Shackleton began to back-pedal furiously.

"Don't worry, lad," Longbottom said soothingly. His grin, however, was anything but soothing. "This is going to hurt you a lot more than it'll hurt me, I'm pleased to say."

The sudden impact of a root against his heel caused Shackleton to trip on his own feet and topple over again. He landed with a thump, his long black robes hopelessly tangling his legs in their folds. He looked up as Longbottom's shadow stretched over his prone form.

His last coherent thought was that his morning was going to be a very painful one.

\*\*\*

Reginald Houghton was cowering behind a hedge, praying that he would get out of this mess alive. He had been hiding here for nearly five minutes, trying to keep perfectly still and utterly silent in the hope that the witch and wizard on the other side of the hedge wouldn't discover him.

"Tonks seems to be enjoying herself," commented Ron Weasley as a resounding crash was heard several houses over.

"Maybe we should go after her. She might need our help," said his wife, Hermione Granger. A high pitched scream followed on the heels of her statement. She shook her head and corrected herself, "On second thought, the Death Eater might need our help."

As the pair continued to talk, trading observations on the mayhem taking place throughout the village, Reggie cursed his bad luck. Of all the occupants of the village to be trapped by, these two were almost the worst. The only one that would have been worse would have been Harry Potter himself. Still, The-Boy-Who-Lived's best friends were nothing to scoff at.

Granger, who had insisted on retaining her maiden name even after she was married, was one of the most wise and powerful witches in history. An Enchantress that had writ more spells, horribly complicated ones at that, than a dozen other Spell-Writers combined. People often compared her to Rowena Ravenclaw - only smarter.

Her husband, Weasley, was acknowledged as an unequalled tactician - whether it be in the arena of battle, chess or Quidditch. It was he who had planned the strategy used by Potter and his friends in the final battle against the Dark Lord. A stratagem that had been executed flawlessly and resulted in an overwhelming victory for the light.

Reggie was shaken out of his musings as the pair's next words registered.

"D'you think he'll ever realize that we know he's there?" asked Weasley.

"If he didn't before," replied Granger, "then he does now."

Realizing that his hiding spot had been discovered, if it had ever existed in the first place, Reggie steeled himself and leapt to his feet. His wand was in hand and he levelled it across the top of the hedge without bothering to take proper aim - he was close enough that it wouldn't make any difference.

"*Avata Kadivra !*"

There was a flash of green light, momentarily blinding him in its intensity. Blinking away the spots that clouded his vision, Reggie found himself staring across at a bemused looking Weasley and Granger. Both were in perfect health and showed not the slightest sign of having just been on the receiving end of a Killing Curse.

Reggie looked down at the smouldering piece of wood that had been his wand.

"Uh, oh."

\*\*\*

Dick Dirken was panicking. The monstrous dog that was chasing after him refused to lie down and die. He had hit the damned thing with three Killing Curses so far and yet it kept on chasing after him. He was starting to think that maybe it really was the Grim. It was certainly capable of things no ordinary dog could manage. It had jumped over a house. A house!

"Growf!"

"*Khonflagrae* !"

He tried a different method of dealing with the Grim this time, twisting as he ran and firing off a Conflagration Curse, which engulfed the hound's hulking form in a blaze of white hot flame. There was a startled yelp as the Grim tumbled to a halt, the grass underneath and around its body scorched black from the heat of the fire. The horrible smell of burning fur filled the air, along with a fair bit of smoke, as the animal writhed in agony.

Dirken smirked, his panic momentarily abating, and congratulated himself on his quick thinking. The sounds of battle, or rather the rout of his fellow Death Eaters, reminded him that now was not the time to dally. He nervously looked around and was alarmed to notice several villagers nearby - though none seemed particularly interested in him. In fact, one man had been looking directly at him, but turned away and continued to throw hex after nasty hex at whichever poor fool was hiding behind the nearby antique police box.

A low, dangerous and slightly annoyed growl alerted Dirken to the reason why nobody was taking an interest in him. It was because he was already taken. Feeling his panic beginning to well up again, he turned to find himself faced with a monster right out of his worst nightmares.

Muscles and sinew of bronze and copper moved with unnatural fluidity over a burnished steel skeleton. A few tattered strips of smouldering pseudo-flesh and burnt stubble sloughed off the steaming metal as the Grim rose to its feet, shaking its head as if to clear out some cobwebs. It then shook out its entire body, as if shaking water out of its destroyed coat of fur, and then turned to face Dirken, naked metal gleamed in the morning sun.

"Good doggy. Good doggy. Nice doggy, nice," he whimpered as a pair of glowing red eyes fixed upon him. One part of his mind noted that this was no dog and it was anything but 'nice'. Then he noticed the teeth. The inch long steel fangs gave the now skull-like head a truly evil appearance - as if it were grinning at him. "Please don't bite... please?"

In response to his timid plea, the metallic Grim crouched low to the ground in readiness to pounce. Knowing he was caught, but too panicked to even think about giving up, Dirken turned to run. He did not even manage to take a single step before an incredible weight slammed into his back and knocked him to the ground, his breath exploding from his lungs on impact and the sharp tang of blood filling his mouth as he bit his tongue and cheek. Tears flooded his eyes and for a moment he felt that maybe he would be lucky and pass out before anything worse could happen to him.

Then a set of impossibly sharp teeth sank into his rear.

\*\*\*

Dominius Malfaey was vaguely aware of the fact that he should, by all rights, be in the throes of a nervous breakdown and be sobbing hysterically. That reaction, however, had been put on hold as he was far too busy at the moment simply trying to survive his opponent's relentless barrage of spells.

For reasons he thought best not to contemplate, it appeared that Harry Potter, the Saviour of the Wizarding World himself, had decided to pair off against the nominal leader of the Death Eaters. Malfaey was all too aware that his ancestors had fought against Potter in the past, loyal servants of Lord Voldomert that they were, and had been soundly defeated. Which was why he had been pleasantly surprised to find himself matching Potter curse for curse once they started duelling.

His pride in this accomplishment had lasted perhaps five minutes before he came to realize that Potter was toying with him. All of Malfaey's attacks were readily deflected or absorbed without any apparent effort on Potter's behalf. Malfaey, on the other hand, found himself besieged by simple offensive spells that were taught to fifth or sixth-year students.

At first this had made him angry, until Potter grabbed hold of one particularly vicious dark arts spell with his bare hands and then sent it straight back where it had come from - almost taking Malfaey's head off in the process. The decidedly Slytherinesque smirk on the Saviour's face was enough to convince Malfaey that he was so far in over his head that he should count himself lucky Potter was going easy on him.

"*Avata Kadivra* !" he tried again, hoping that perhaps the Killing Curse would drain Potter's defences faster than any of the other curses in his arsenal.

Potter batted the curse away with casual ease and commented, "Y'know, we used to say it as '*Avada Kedavra*' in my day. More like how the Muggles say '*abracadabra*'."

Malfaey licked his lips nervously and slashed his wand in a wide arc aimed just in front of Potter. The earth exploded up in a spray of dirt, small stones and clumps of grass. It was hardly enough to seriously injure someone with shields as strong as Potter's but it provided enough of a distraction for Malfaey to cast four Killing Curses in rapid succession. The eruption of dirt ended just in time for the first of the curses to hit its mark.

Once again, Potter batted it aside with casual ease. The second curse flew wide, impacting and shattering the windscreen of the Muggle motorcar Potter was standing in front of. The third and fourth curses were on target, but proved as ineffective as the first curse, one being deflected down into the ground and the other up into the sky.

"You're making a mess," Potter remarked, looking pointedly at the torn earth at his feet.

"*Kruceo* !"

Potter actually yawned as the curse struck his chest, cleaving through his shields as if they weren't even there. He gave Malfaey, who was looking at him with wide eyes, an almost pitying look. Then, taking the Death Eater completely by surprise, he vanished from sight. By rights Malfaey shouldn't have been surprised, after all this way Harry Potter - one of the strongest wizards in recorded history, but the shock of seeing him Apparate right through Granger's Anti-Apparation field left Malfaey frozen in place for precious seconds.

"Imp-- Tha-- He can't..." he sputtered, staring at where Potter had been standing.

Gathering his rattled senses as quickly as he could, Malfaey looked around frantically for his missing opponent, but there was no sign of Potter anywhere in the immediate vicinity. He slowly turned in a full circle, checking all round him for any clue as to where his adversary was hiding. The dozen or so villagers that had been standing on the sidelines, watching the duel, seemed highly amused by something, but he did not understand what.

Then an all too familiar voice spoke up from behind him.

"Boo."

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Harry strolled casually into the park, Dominius Malfaey following behind him. The aspiring Death Eater hung limply in the air, victim of enough curses to fell a dragon. Several of those residents, that had joined in the mad scramble to chase after the fleeing Death Eaters, had already returned and were standing proud over the restrained forms of their captives. All waved or called a greeting, which he returned.

His attention, however, was instantly drawn to his wife. Luna was waiting for him, sitting lazily on one of the park's three swings. The object of her own pursuit, the Death Eater that had struck her, was laying to one side - hogtied with what looked like a garden hose and hexed almost beyond recognition.

"Hello there, love," she greeted as he approached. She glanced down at her trophy and then glanced over Harry's shoulder, looking at Malfaey. "Took your time, didn't you?"

"Thought I might as well enjoy the chase while I could," he told her, noticing as he did that she had confiscated the Death Eater's wand and, as was her habit, had tucked it behind her right ear.

Luna laughed gaily. "I must admit; they were not much of a challenge."

Harry sighed and released the magic supporting Malfaey - allowing the lead Death Eater to drop to the ground with a thump. He moved behind Luna, kissing her briefly as he passed, and began to gently push her back and forth on the swing. "We haven't had a decent challenge for nearly two hundred years."

"And I much prefer it that way, thank you very much."

The pair glanced to see who had spoken, even though they could not fail to recognise her voice. After five hundred years, it would have been impossible not to.

Hermione, still wearing her Enchantress robes, had just returned to the park. Ron followed alongside her, their prisoner bobbing up and down in the air between them.

"That's the way to do it, Hermione - take all the excitement out of my life," Harry jokingly griped.

"We had more than enough 'excitement' as you call it during our time at Hogwarts," she rejoined.

"That was five hundred years ago!"

"Forget about that and help me with this twit," demanded Ron, trying to shift their captive into a more reasonable position. The Death Eater had apparently caught a breeze and begun to drift away. "The sooner we're done here, the sooner we can get back home. I'm starving!"

Hermione huffed as Harry and Luna rolled their eyes. "Honestly! You ate breakfast not even an hour ago."

Ron looked at her and complained, "The Death Eaters interrupted me! Bloody wankers!"

"It was something of a surprise, wasn't it Fred?"

"That it was, George, that it was."

Fred and George turned up to deposit their Death Eater, who they had caught up with near Charlie and Tonks' house - otherwise known as Draconus Keep. The poor man appeared to be the only Death Eater still conscious, albeit in a state of shock induced catatonia. All-in-all, exactly what you would expect for someone on the receiving end of the twins' mischief.

George was nodding in agreement. "Weren't expecting any wannabe dark wizards to turn up for at least another five or six years."

Fred looked thoughtful and hummed, "Mmm, they're ahead of schedule."

"We should complain to someone about it," said George solemnly.

"I wonder if the Ministry has a department for that?" pondered Fred.

Following on the twins' heels was one of their greatest works; Snuffles. The magically animated hound, created and named in honour of Harry's godfather Sirius Black, was now in need of a new coat of pseudo-skin and faux-fur. Snuffles was dragging along an unconsciously Death Eater, a particularly unlucky person that would be in for a great deal of pain once he awoke, as the artificial dog was holding him in his steel jaws by the seat of his now tattered pants.

Hermione looked at Harry and acknowledged, "They do have a point, you know."

"They do? Since when?" asked Ron incredulously.

"Idiot," she growled, smacking him playfully over the head with her staff. "Seriously though, it's only been ten years since the last bunch tried to make a name for themselves - or whatever they were trying to do."

"The Coven of the Black Rose," supplied Luna as she came down from a high swing.

There was a long moment of silence, broken only by the squeak of the swing. Everyone had paused to wonder, not for the first time either, just how often that particular group of dark wizards had been dropped on their heads when they were babies. It was now that Ginny and Neville arrived, each with their respective prisoner in tow.

"They do seem to be popping out of the woodwork more and more often these days, don't they?" asked Ginny, having apparently caught the tail end of the discussion.

"Good thing they're getting progressively dumber as they do," observed Neville dryly.

"Naturally," agreed Luna as she swung by - Harry giving her a push as she did. "A smart Death Eater is something of an oxymoron."

"They are rather devoid of intelligence," chuckled George.

"But you have to admire their persistence," said Fred.

"Personally, I'm starting to find it a bit annoying," said Harry, giving Luna another push. He sighed as he watched her swing high into the air. "I wish they'd just take the hint and give up once and for all."

"At least they're not particularly dangerous," Hermione noted. "Especially when we manage to stop them before they can even get started."

"Except for... uh..." Ron floundered about for a moment, trying to remember. He quickly gave up and turned to Hermione to ask, "Who was that idiot a couple hundred years back?"

Hermione had to chuckle as she answered, "The one who read the Lord of the Rings? Called himself the Dark Lord Sauron?"

Ron nodded. "Yeah, that's the one."

"I still wonder where he found an entire army of bloody orcs," Neville questioned, scratching at his scruffy chin as he thought about it.

"What I've always wondered is how the Ministry was able to convince the Muggles it was actually an invasion of aliens from another dimension," Harry asked.

"They couldn't Obliviate the entire planet, Harry," Hermione told him.

"I know, but still... aliens?" he asked sceptically. He shook his head in disbelief, almost missing the fact that Luna was on her downswing and about to crash into him. "Some cover story that was."

Ginny laughed, "Don't forget the fact that the Muggles actually believed it."

Luna, who had almost taken Harry's head off a moment ago, nodded. "What a gullible breed."

"Talking about breeds," interjected Fleur as she and Bill made their way over to join in the conversation - their poor Death Eater looking somewhat scorched, no doubt from Fleur's veela fireballs, "what should we do about this lot?"

She indicated the various Death Eaters that lay strewn about haphazardly.

Harry shrugged and replied, "The usual."

"Couldn't we just strip them of their magic? Just this once?" asked Bill, sounding slightly petulant about it. "That way we might not have to worry about them getting their kids all worked up twenty years from now."

"You know we decided against that Bill," Hermione told him sternly.

"Obliviate them, a small Dissuasion Charm against too much dark activity, and then send them back to where they came from. That's it," confirmed Ginny with a sharp nod. Her years as an Auror had given her a strong need to follow any rules and regulations down to the letter. Except in cases where said rules and regulations interfered with her fun, in which case she would rip the proverbial book into tattered shreds and then set fire to the individual pieces.

"Yeah, I suppose," Bill agreed reluctantly. He sighed tiredly and explained, "It's just, our village isn't as quiet as it used to be."

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!!!"

They all turned to watch as Bill's assertion was displayed before their eyes. One poor Death Eater was running past, looking as if the devil himself was behind him. This proved to be somewhat true as, a moment later, Tonks appeared - chasing hard on his heels. She had, sometime in the interim, done herself up as an ancient Celtic warrior of sorts, complete with blue face, tartan kilt, shamrock and a transfigured broadsword.



"Come back here, ye lil' Sassenach piece o' haggis!" she yelled in an exaggerated Scottish brogue. She waved her sword menacingly at the fleeing man's back. "I'm nae finished wi' ye!"

Following behind his wife as a more sedate pace, was Charlie - who was clearly enjoying himself if the box of conjured popcorn was any indication.

Ginny shook her head and returned to the conversation at hand with a mournful, "It's our own fault, I'm afraid."

"Seemed like a good idea at the time--" began George.

"--casting a spell to make us--" continued Fred.

"--the first target for any--"

"--potential dark wizards that--"

"--might come along," finished George.

"It's not only our fault," said Neville. "The Ministry obviously isn't pulling its weight as much as it used to."

"Too much peace eventually leads to complacency," agreed Ginny. She shook her head again. "I don't doubt today's Aurors aren't half of what we used to be."

Fred snorted and noted, "Nobody was half, even a quarter, of what you were, Gin."

"You and Nev were the best," agreed George.

"So were we for that matter."

"Still are. Only nobody except us knows it."

"We should remind them."

"So we should, so we should."

There was a sudden expectant pause as, by their own volition, all eyes turned to Harry. The former Boy-Who-Lived, now Saviour of the Wizarding World, had developed a wicked gleam in his emerald eyes.

"Y'know, that's not a bad idea." he mused thoughtfully.

"Oh no," groaned Ron, covering his eyes with a hand. "Here we go again."

Harry glanced over at Hermione as he took a step to one side and narrowly avoided having Luna crash into him. "I don't suppose you know who's headmaster of Hogwarts right now, Hermione?"

"Actually, I do," she told him with hint of pride. She glanced over at the Neville and Ginny. "Harmonia Higginbottom."

"One of Ginny and Neville's great-great-grandchildren is Hogwarts' headmistress?" asked Luna, whose swings --without the impetus of Harry's pushes-- were beginning to slow down.

The twins glanced at each other and grinned.

"If only Snape were alive to see it."

"Yeah... it would kill him right off."

"Again," they chorused gleefully.

Ginny sighed in defeat. "Honestly, you two..."

Harry was pacing around as he deliberated the idea which had occurred to him. "I wonder if they're still accepting students for the new school year."

"It's April. Final applications don't have to be in until a month before the start of term," Bill pointed out. "Unless they've changed things since you were headmaster."

"Which means we still have a few months left to arrange things, if you want," said Fleur.

"I don't want to go through school all over *again*!" objected Ron.

"Come on, Ronald. It'll be fun!" asserted Luna, jumping off the swing and crossing over to Harry.

"Potions class with the Slytherins! Transfiguration homework!" listed Ron. He shuddered and then glanced meaningfully at his wife, "Separate dormitories!"

Hermione resisted the urge to roll her eyes and responded, "Inter-house Quiditch."

Ron turned to Harry and asked, "When can we leave?"

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!!!"

Again the conversation ground to a halt as everyone turned to watch as Tonks charged past, still in hot pursuit of her prey, who was looking much the worse for wear. And hot pursuit it was indeed, as the hem of the Death Eater's robes were now on fire - and it seemed to be spreading.

"Stand still, you silly twit!" Tonks demanding, swinging her sword in wide arcs as she ran after him. She was still dressed in her Gaelic garb, but had reverted the skin of her face to its normal healthy pink. "How am I supposed to lop yer bleeding head off if you keep running away?"

"I have a feeling Hogwarts isn't going to know what hit it," Harry wryly observed.

"Yes. One almost feels sorry for them," agreed Luna, watching as Tonks and her smoking Death Eater disappeared around a corner.

"Especially when they're first introduced to Tonks," noted Bill with a chuckle. "She's been getting restless."

"She does seem to have a lot of excess energy," Luna concurred thoughtfully. She looked in the direction Tonks had come from and suggested, "Maybe we should ask Charles to attend to her needs more frequently."

Charlie, who was strolling by, popcorn still in hand, waved at the group as he followed after Tonks.

Ginny, waving back, said, "It'll be good to be back though."

"Definitely," agreed Luna, also waving. She dropped her hand and looped her arm around Harry's as she looked up at him, "I wonder if I'll finally be sorted into Gryffindor this time?"

"I don't know, but if that stupid hat tries putting me in Slytherin again..."

"It didn't do it the last four times, why should it now?" asked Neville.

Harry scowled unhappily, "Damned thing *a/ways* tries putting me there."

Hermione nodded sympathetically and admitted, "I know the feeling - it seems to think I'm the perfect Ravenclaw..."

"But you are!"

Turning to give her husband a gimlet eye, Hermione began to advance towards him. Ron, having a vague awareness that his continued health might be in danger, started to nervously back away.

"Never learns, does he?" quipped Neville.

"Of course he doesn't," asserted Ginny, giggling as her sister-in-law swung her staff up into the air and dropped it down on Ron's head with a thump.

Fred laughed outright. "That would take all the fun out of it."

George nodded in agreement, "Besides, he's related to us!"

"Not a sterling reference to our lineage," Ginny observed sardonically.

"Oh, our wounded hearts!" exclaimed George, reaching up and miming a blow to the heart. He began to stagger about as he bemoaned, "That our little sister--"

"Favourite sister!" put in Fred.

"Only sister," corrected Neville.

George, still staggering, continued as if there had been no interruption, "--considers us to be the black sheep of the Weasley clan!"

Luna looked at the twins and blinked owlishly. "I thought you were supposed to be proud of that fact."

They grinned broadly and chorused, "We are!"

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!!!"

Everyone's attention was caught by Tonk's Death Eater, who was now beginning his third pass of the playground. His robes were now in tatters, still smouldering in places, and he looked positively ragged as he scurried along.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA--OOF!!!"

The chase came to an unexpected end as Tonks, appearing out of nowhere, slammed into the Death Eater with a flying tackle to the ground. They tumbled over the grass before coming to a stop, Tonks straddling the poor man around the waist. With a grin that would not have been out of place

on the twins' faces, she hopped to her feet.

"Finally!" she crowed, and grabbed him by the legs so that she could drag him towards the playground.

"LEMME GO! LEMME GO!! LEMMEGOOOOOOOO!!! MUMMY!!!!" the terrified man shrieked in unadulterated terror, clawing and tearing at the grass as the metamorphmagus relentlessly pulled him along.

"I am *not* letting you go!" Tonks declared, putting her back into it as she dragged him towards where the other villagers were standing. "I only just caught you!"

Perhaps it was the exhaustion of having been on the run for nearly half an hour. Perhaps it was the stress of having a half mad ex-Auror on his tail for that long. Perhaps it was the thought of what she might do to him now that she had him. Perhaps it was a combination of all of these. Regardless, the end result was the same. The poor man finally, mercifully, gave out and fainted dead away.

"I think you broke him," declared Charlie, now sipping on a butterbeer, as he sauntered into the park.

"But we hadn't even gotten started!"

"Tonks!" admonished Hermione, "Don't tell me you've scared *another* one to death! That's four this century!"

"Okay, I won't," Tonks replied happily, releasing hold of her captive and letting his feet thud to the ground. She stood up straight and jogged over to them, leaving the object of her long, hard pursuit, in the hands of her husband. Her hair flickered through several colours before settling on a powder blue as she asked, "So, what y'all talking about?"

"We've decided to go back to Hogwarts," Harry told her. He arched an eyebrow in inquiry and asked, "Want to tag along?"

"You can't..."

Everyone turned in surprise to see that Malfaey had somehow managed to drag himself into a state of semi-consciousness, though he had not managed to physically drag himself upright. Though they would never admit it, this was rather impressive, as it was a common fact that when Harry cursed someone, they tended to stay cursed for a long while.

The latest descendant of their childhood, and earlier adulthood, nemesis; Draco, repeated the muttered words that had drawn attention to him. "You can't..."

"Can't what?" asked Ron, puzzled.

"I imagine he's protesting our imminent return to Hogwarts," Luna helpfully suggested.

Malfaey was obviously struggling to move, to no avail, and continued to protest, "You... you can't..."

Harry walked over to where Malfaey lay, "We can and we will."

"But..."

"We've all been back to Hogwarts at least twice since our 'deaths'," Harry told him, squatting down beside him. "This time won't be any different."

Malfaey shook his head weakly, "No..."

"I'm afraid there's nothing you can do about it," Harry said almost apologetically. He waved his hand over Malfaey's head, "Now *sleep*."

With a whisper of escaping breath, Malfaey collapsed into unconsciousness for the last time that day.

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It had been five months.

Five long, long months since Dominus Malfaey had last had a peaceful night's sleep. The nightmares plagued him such that he seldom lasted more than two hours before waking in a cold sweat. His wife had taken to sleeping in one of the manor's guest rooms, as he was now prone to mumbling and thrashing about at all hours of the night. He had no idea of what the cause of this problem was, never remembering his dreams once awake.

Climbing out of bed and staggering to the bathroom, Dominus began the task of grooming himself to present the proper aristocratic appearance that was required of a Malfaey in public. Today, more so than most, was of particular importance in that his eldest son, Caligula Malfaey, would be departing for Hogwarts for the very first time.

It took slightly longer than usual to prepare himself, as the bags underneath his tired eyes were particularly difficult to clear away this morning, but Dominus eventually made his way downstairs for breakfast. His wife, Alyssana, and two sons, eleven-year old Caligula and eight-year old Hannibal, were already present and eating.

"Good morning, father," acknowledged Caligula as Dominus took his seat next to Alyssana, Hannibal echoing his brother's greeting a moment later.

"Caligula. Hannibal," he returned. He glanced at his wife and was tempted lean over an kiss her senseless - the past five months had been

particularly hard on Dominius' libido, ever since Alyssana moved into the guest room. Unfortunately, such behaviour was inappropriate for a Malfaey whilst in the company of others, even their own children.

Repressing a disappointed and frustrated sigh, Dominius settled for a lukewarm, "Lys."

Alyssana gave a perfunctory smile and nodded in greeting, "Dom."

Helping himself to some eggs and bacon, Dominius looked to his eldest son, who was shovelling his food into his mouth at a rate truly unbecoming of a Malfaey. "Caligula, you bothersome scamp. I understand that you're eager to leave for Hogwarts, but that is no excuse to eat your breakfast like a slovenly muddblood."

"Sorry, father," the boy replied, slowing down just a fraction.

Dominius, however, had frozen in place and was unable to move or speak. Those words. Bothersome Scamp. Something about them had triggered the fear reflex in the Malfaey patriarch and it was all he could do not to jump to his feet and flee for whatever safety he could find. He felt as though he had only just woken from one of the nightmares that beleaguered him so, only this time it had been a waking dream.

The remainder of breakfast passed in an unmemorable blur and, before he knew it, Dominius and his family were arriving at King's Cross Station. Being a proper pure-blooded family it was a point of pride that they did not make their way through the Muggle section of the station, arriving instead directly on Platform Nine and Three-quarters. They were cutting it close, as it was nearly eleven o'clock, but there was still time to find young Caligula a compartment and see him off.

The platform was unsurprisingly busy, considering the time. Dozens of students were hurrying to and for, pushing their trunks on trolleys, their parents anxiously following after or leading ahead of them. Most were obviously Muggleborns, a breed of wizard becoming more and more common as time passed, though Dominius did recognise several of the pure-blooded families he normally preferred to associate with.

He and Alyssana were leading Caligula and Hannibal towards the waiting Hogwarts Express, when a pair of youngsters caught Dominius' eye. They were a pair of identical redheaded twins, first-years by the look of them, were introducing themselves to a naive looking group of students that he felt positive were Hufflepuffs.

"I'm Fred Weatherby and this is my brother George."

"I'm Fred, *you're* George," corrected the other twin.

The first twin looked at his brother in confusion and asked, "I am?"

The second twin nodded sagely, "You are."

"Well, if you insist," said the first with a shrug. He turned back to the cluster of Hufflepuffs, who had been watching with a mix of amusement and bewilderment. The boy's mouth twisted into a wicked smile, causing Dominius to hasten his steps, and asked with obviously false innocence, "So... d'you want some fudge?"

Dominius was so distracted by the pair and their victims that he failed to notice someone crossing his path until he stumbled right into them. Biting off a curse he staggered back a few steps and glared down at the child he had collided with. He was about to give the brat a tongue lashing it would never forget when the boy turned to give Dominius a jaundiced look that caused his breath to hitch in his throat.

A pair of startling green, unnaturally bright, eyes stared up at him from under a shock of black hair. For a moment they widened in surprised recognition, but only for a moment. Once that single instant had passed those eyes narrowed and pierced Dominius in a fashion that seemed to warn against crossing him, as whoever did so would not like what happened. Dominius had seen such a look before, though his mind was drawing a terrified blank.

"I don't like you."

The words were simple ones. Childishly worded. Childish sounding. But the impact they had on Dominius was enough to leave him with shaky knees. A profound sense of déjà vu settled like a whirling dervish in the pit of his stomach and his breakfast threatened to rise up again. Things only became worse when a cute girl of about the same age, with long blonde hair and wide blue eyes, moved to stand close to the boy. She wrapped an arm around his waist and stared up at Dominius with disturbing intensity.

"Me too!" she agreed with a sharp nod.

Before he could do anything, could think of something to say, the pair turned away from him and hurried down the platform - not looking back. The last thing Dominius heard before the world began to spin around him and fade to black, was Alyssana commenting, "How rude."

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"You positively enjoyed that," declared Luna as she and Harry walked down the length of Platform Nine and Three-quarters, the sleek blue, white and silver lines of the third Hogwarts Express to one side.

"Just driving the lesson home," Harry answered with practiced nonchalance.

Luna nodded thoughtfully, "I wonder if he's having nightmares about his lesson."

"I wouldn't be surprised," Harry admitted. He sent a rueful smirk her way, "If he knows what's good for him, he'll heed the warning."

They came to the place where Ron, Hermione, Neville and Ginny were waiting. The group were milling just outside the next to last train carriage. The supposed 'adults' of the group, namely Fleur, Bill, Susan and Terry, had already departed back to Resting Peace, leaving the "Ministry Crew" as they were still sometimes called, to their own devices. Nobody even wanted to know what the twins were getting up to, though Lee and Angelina had volunteered to try and keep them out of too much trouble before they left.

Ron was cursing under his breath as Harry and Luna approached, but gave out a loud exclamation as they joined the group. "Just our bloody luck!"

"Language, dear," chided Hermione.

"What's our bloody luck?" asked Luna innocently.

"I can't win, can I?" Hermione groaned to Ginny.

The red-haired girl grinned and shook her head. "Nope."

Ron, in the meanwhile, explained the source of his ire, "It's our luck that the same year we decide to return to Hogwarts, Malfoy's brat starts as well."

"It's Malfaey now, Ron," corrected Neville. "We don't want to tip our hand if we can help it."

"Malfoy, Malfaey, same thing," Ron waved his hands in dismissal. He turned to glare at the Malfaey family, who had only just managed to revive the hapless Dominius. He snorted in disgust and declared, "He'll be sorted into Slytherin."

A loud whistle sounded just then, catching their attention. Hermione moved to grab her trunk, struggling to lift it off its trolley and push it into the train carriage. It was common knowledge to her friends that she had shrunk and packed almost every book and tome in her private library into her school trunk. Five centuries had not changed anything in that regard.

"Come on, that was the final boarding call," she urged.

"Tonks and Charlie saved us a compartment to the rear," Ginny informed them.

"Then what are we waiting for?" asked Neville, picking his own trunk up and leading the way. "Let's go."

They started board the train, eager to once again immerse themselves in a magical world that they so seldom got a chance to visit these days. They certainly kept track of what was happening in the wizarding community, but old on rare occasions did they have any interaction with the people they had sacrificed so much for. These excursions to Hogwarts, usually spaced a century or so apart, were considered as holidays more than anything else.

As Ron and Hermione hurried after Ginny and Neville, Luna looked to her husband and smiled. "Almost home, Harry."

Harry shook his head, a hint of melancholy in his voice, as he told her, "It's been five hundred years since I considered Hogwarts my home, Luna."

"And now it will be again," she stated confidently.

"If you're there with me," he agreed, sliding an arm across her shoulders as they watched Hermione berate Ron for fumbling with her trunk - which he complained was the fault of the many books she had packed it with.

"Of course I'll be there," Luna assured him with a smile. A fervent glint that he was all too familiar with began to spark in her pale blue eyes. "Somebody has to tell all these poor children the truth."

"About Voldemort?"

Luna gave Harry that look which told him he was being stupid. She shook her head and explained, "About the Ministry conspiracy to hide the existence of Heliopaths from the public!"

After five centuries of marriage, Harry no longer felt the need to roll his eyes when Luna got like this. Even after all this time, in which she was often more serious than even Hermione about the happenings in the world, she could still latch herself to the strangest theories and ideas imaginable. It was, in his opinion, one of her most endearing traits - just one more reason for him to love her as much as he did.

"Sorry, should've know that was what you meant."

"Harry! Luna!" called Hermione from inside the carriage.

"After you," Harry waved Luna on.

"Thank you, Harry," she said, stepping up and through the door. She glanced over her shoulder and smiled, "You're such a gentleman."

"I try."

After Luna had disappeared into the train, Harry mounted the steps and began to follow. He paused on the threshold of the door and looked up the length of the Hogwarts Express. This was the third train used to transport students from the station to Hogwarts, having been commissioned nearly a hundred and fifty years ago. This meant that the actual design of the train was nearly three hundred years old, based on the cutting edge maglev trains of the late twenty-second century.

"Home," he whispered. A broad grin stretched his lips. "I'm going home."

Fin.

**Author's Note:** Just an idea that came to me - what would happen if a bunch of wannabe Death Eaters make the mistake of trying to attack the equivalent of a retirement home for the most powerful wizards in history? This was the basic premise that I worked on.

Harry and all of his friends (including most of the Weasleys and assorted Order and DA members) acquire a form of immortality or eternal youth when Harry defeats Voldemort. I don't know how, perhaps they absorbed some kind of energy that was released during the battle. In any case, they went on their merry way and lived happily ever after. And ever after. And ever after.

After a while it kind of sank in that none of them were dying of old age and eventually they began to fake their own deaths. This freed them of the burdens of being some of the most famous witches and wizards in history. After falling out of sight, they founded a small village where they could live in quiet anonymity - without being bothered by reporters or fans or what not.

In order to complete the illusion of a proper Muggle community, a variety of spells are employed. Some couples advance themselves into middle age, others into old age and some do the exact opposite - pretending to be the kids of the village. Everyone gets a chance of being in a different age group over the years, knowing Hermione she probably drew up a schedule for it!

They cast a spell of some sort, either over England or the entire planet, which subconsciously directs any potential dark lords and their followers into attacking the retirement home before anything else. This works out for everyone involved, except the bad guys, in that it saves the rest of the world the hassle but also allows our heroes to have a little excitement in their lives every so often.

At some point during this time the twins got together with Luna and produced a replica of Snuffles, I imagine as a gift of some sort, perhaps for Harry's four hundredth birthday or what not. With regards this new Snuffles, once its fur and skin is burnt off by Dirken, imagine a canine version of the terminator - only with myomer muscles instead of hydraulics.

Which all leads up to the present... well.

Hope you enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it.