

From the Abyss Breaking the Chains

Chapter One
~ Breaking the Chains ~

I was insane.

It's curious how I can say those three words so easily. Isn't it?

I.
Was.
Insane.

The frightening thing is; I'm not really all that sure about the "was" part. D'you think that possible? An insane man who thinks he's sane who's worrying that he might actually be insane, but only imagining that he's sane because...

This would have worried me. Years ago it would have. But not now. Not really.

I can't really say how long I was insane for. A day. A year. A decade. A lifetime. It's all very relative, the way time passes when you're insane. I don't really have any clear memories of when I was not exactly in my right frame of mind. Any frame of mind for that matter. It is like an old, almost forgotten dream from when I was a child. There were some moments of lucidity during my time of madness, but they were few and far between. They did not last long either, only a few minutes, although again time passes in strange ways here.

Where is here?

Truth be told I have absolutely no idea where this place is. I can tell you its name, oh yes, I know its name well. It's a funny thing really, names. Take *You-Know-Who* for example, or perhaps even *The-Boy-Who-Lived*, or even better *He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named* (I love that one). Wizards (and witches - we can't forget the fairer sex now, can we?) tend to place great importance on names.

Voldemort, yes, I'm not afraid to say it. Nothing can scare me anymore. Nothing. Not even the much feared Dark Lord, *You-Know-Who*. But back to names and the significance magic folk always attach to them. Voldemort is supposedly such a terrible and dastardly figure that they cannot bring themselves to utter his name out of the fear for him.

Pathetic really.

I wonder what they call me? Have I become reviled and abhorred enough to deserve some special name instead of what my parents christened me?

I hope so.

This place I am stranded on. It has a name. A name that strikes fear into the hearts of all those who hear it. The fear of this little island is so strong that people almost breathe its name in a whisper rather than say it normally. I don't understand why they haven't bothered coming up with some idiotically original way, a euphemism or whatever, for saying it.

The Dark Island.

The Cold Place.

The home of Nightmares.

The home of the Dementors.

Azkaban.

Az. Ka. Ban.

Three syllables. First syllable. Sounds like-

Y'know, I'm really beginning to wonder if perhaps I really am insane. It seems like a reasonable explanation for everything. I keep finding things that would have once amused me boring. Totally and utterly boring. Inconsequential. Pointless. Of course, at the opposite end of the spectrum, I find hilarity and boundless humour in things that I never would have found funny before.

Before.

Before I came here that is.

No.

Before I was *sent* here.

Before I was raped.

No, no, not my body. The Dementors aren't equipped for that. No, it was *me* that they raped, that they tore apart so mercilessly. Me. My thoughts. My mind. My memories. My soul. Me. I was barely even conscious when the Aurors dragged me into my cell, tossing me inside with what I'm certain was excessive force. They thought I was guilty. They punished me for it.

Then they came for me.

All of them.

The other prisoners must have been delighted.

Every Dementor on this miserable island seemed to invade me then. It was not like before. This was not the tortuous recollection of my worst memories. This was the brutal, unremorseful, unending destruction of who I was. The sun had not even set on my first day in this prison and I had already been driven completely and utterly insane.

But I'm better now.

Everyone and everything else on the island is dead.

But I'm better now.

Better. Yes. I was insane and now I'm not.

At least not totally.

I want to laugh. I want to throw back my head and roar with laughter as I contemplate how my mind was torn apart and cast into the depths of the Stygian abyss. An abyss from which I have only now begun to awaken. Drawing the tattered remains of my broken life, my broken mind, my broken soul, back into a working whole.

I do not know how long I have been here.

It could have been a day.

Or a year.

Or a decade.

Or even a lifetime.

I do not know. I was insane for most of it. All of it really, if you discount those scarce few minutes (maybe hours) where I was aware of where I was and why. I spent most of those brief moments laughing or crying that I doubt anyone realized I was temporarily sane. Not that anyone save the Dementors ever bothered to check.

Nobody came.

I don't remember anyone coming, but then again I wasn't really all there at the time. Still not. Not really. I wonder what they would have thought? Would they feel glad that I had been destroyed by my captors? Would they feel satisfaction that justice had been served? Would they feel pity, as if I were a wounded animal? Would they guess that I, however briefly, knew where I was?

Azka ban.

The most dreaded wizarding prison in the world.

I was sentenced to life imprisonment in Azkaban for a crime.

A horrible crime.

Several horrible crimes actually.

The *rape* and bloody murder of Padma Patil.

The bloody rape and *murder* of Parvati Patil.

It must have been a twin thing.
See? My sense of humour is warped.

The murder of the Rubeus Hagrid, the half-giant caretaker and keeper of grounds and keys at Hogwarts.

It was the Killing Curse that did it. *Avada Kedavra*.

The torture of Professor Sybil Trelawney under the Crutiatius Curse to the point that she was driven irreparably insane.

Not that anyone should've been able to tell.

There were thousands of witnesses. Well, perhaps hundreds. Er, maybe a dozen or so. At least for the murder of Hagrid. Nobody saw me kill the Patil twins, but I was apparently caught with my trousers down (literally) just as I was leaving the Prefect's Bathroom where I had ended their miserable existences in an orgy of blood.

From what I hear I ran, fleeing at a pace they could not match. I burst into the Great Hall, whereupon I sent poor Hagrid to the next great adventure. A flash of green. A rush of death. I ran out the hall and was outside, escaping into the forest, before his body hit the ground. They say I was caught an hour later, emerging from the forest in a drunken stupor. I don't really remember all that much.

Dumbledore was angry.

My friends...

Nobody realized that silly bat of a Divination professor had been done in until she wandered into breakfast the following day, babbling as though she were out of her mind. Of course, eventually they realized that she really was out of her mind. After listening to her insane ramblings they discovered that I must have been the one who had tortured her so horrifically.

And so I was tried, convicted and sent to Azkaban.

Nobody listened to my pleas of innocence.
Nobody stopped to consider that I was telling the truth.
Nobody.
Nobody.
Nobody.

Not my allies.

Not my friends.

Not even my fucking *ow* .

Fitting I suppose.

I've always been alone.

Even with my "*friends* " by my side.

I wonder what they would say or do if they saw me now? For that matter, I wonder what anyone would say if they could see me. Little me, emaciated to the point of being a skeleton held together by parchment thin skin, white as porcelain. The only living creature on what was once the island of Azkaban.

An amusing tale it is, how I regained my sanity. More or less. Sometimes I think less. Some part of me is still broken. Oh yes, indeed. The tale. Tail? Tale. Story. Saga. Legend. Amusing in every detail. Provided you're me and not somebody else. Of course, if you weren't me and were somebody else then you wouldn't find it amusing because you'd also be dead along with everyone else.

The Dementors were tired of me, I suppose. They could no longer drain any sustenance from my shattered mind and soul. I was no longer of any use to them. Much like those who sentenced me to rot in this hell. Which probably explains why they decided to give me a kiss. I think I even have a vague memory of it. Or I could have hallucinated the entire thing. Either way, the results were pretty much the same.

What happened?

If I ever work it out I'll probably not be the first to know. That's how my life works, y'see. Nobody ever tells me anything about what's going on. Dumbledore would probably be able to guess what changed me, but wouldn't tell because I'd be "*safer not knowing* ". Voldemort might guess as well, but would then try and kill me for being a threat to him.

A threat.

Ha !

A threat!

Delicious irony that is. Me, a threat. It's like dropping a Muggle nuclear bomb on top of some poor sod's head, detonating it and then saying it's a threat to his health.

Bollocks !

Of course it's not gonna be a threat to his health, it's gonna blow him into fucking atoms is what it's gonna do!

A threat.

Fuck.

Fuck Voldemort.

Fuck Dumbledore.

And fuck the rest of the shite-kicking ponces!

A threat.

In case you haven't noticed - I'm feeling a wee bit bitter.

Of course, if you'd been wrongfully imprisoned in the seventh ring of Hell for only the rest of the world knows how long, you'd also be a tad miffed.

Heh.

Hmm...

Y'know... I'm thinking I should bugger off this sodding slagheap of an island before somebody from either the Ministry of Magic, the Order of the Phoenix or perhaps even Voldemort's Death Eater's shows up.

Twould be best, don't you agree, that they believe nobody survived.

What d'you mean what am I talking about? Survived? Oh. Oh. Sorry, got off track there. It was the Dementor's fault you see. They tried to give me a kiss. The Dementor's kiss. They wanted to suck my soul (screwed up as it was) (as it is) out of my body and then probably kill the empty husk left behind. Shit, for all I know they were probably planning on chopping my soulless body into teensy bitsy pieces and feeding me to the other prisoners.

Anyways, as I was saying, they made a mistake. They tried to do me in. Apparently nobody told them that people who try that tend to regret having made the attempt. I remember this god-awful ugly head, with no eyes and a gaping, toothless maw, coming towards me.

Then the world went white.

After that it went black.

I don't know how long I sat here, in the centre of the glassy crater that now covers the entire island. The prison itself is gone completely. Not a stone left. The rocks have all melted and the sand is fused into a seamless sheet of black glass. Slowly, like a bubble rising from the bottom of the deepest trench in the deepest ocean, I returned.

Awakening.
Rising out of the abyss that had claimed my sanity.
It was not easy.
It hurt almost as much as getting raped did.
Maybe more.
There was all consuming pain.

Pain.

I've never know anything else.
It's a distraction.
I can overcome it.

Love.

I no longer need or desire it.
I used to, but learnt that it is transient.

Hate.

What others feel when they look at me.
What I feel when I think of them.

Them.

My classmates and "*friends*".
They doubted me.
They betrayed me.

Me?

That is who I am.
Who am I?
I was different then.
I am different now.
I am powerful.

Power.

I have a lot of it. Now. I don't know where it came from. It's not mine, so I'm not really sure how it got inside of me, but I'm not complaining. Maybe it's the Dementors. Maybe I killed them (can you kill something that isn't truly alive?) and drained their powers into me. Maybe I sucked the life out of everything on the island, including the other prisoners, and then scoured them from the face of the earth.

Maybe I'm still insane, but don't really realize it.

Of course, if I was - would I be able to tell?

Hmm...

I have to get out of here though. That much I know. Somebody has to have noticed that Azkaban is no longer on the map. Any map. It would not do for them to find me here. No no no, it would not. Yes. Already they fear and despise me, despite the blood I spilled for them.

Lots of blood. Mine. My blood.

If they discovered that I had destroyed their precious little prison, it would only make them dread and loathe me more.

Azkaban's an island.

I need to fly away.
Or swim.

Perhaps I will become a fish?

It would be easy. I don't need a wand anymore. Not now. Not after. I don't need to say anything. No incantations. No chants. No silly Latin words. I don't need to gesture my hands. No claps. No swishes. No flicks. All I have to do is want what I want and it happens.

Getting from where I lay to the shore is not easy. My legs have not seen much use in my tenure here. They have atrophied and become too weak to properly support me. I don't use them. My magic can carry me. Maybe I will fly away. But I want to swim. The water. I want to feel the water all around me. Clean. Cleaning me.

I need a bath too. I stink.

But that will come later. Now I must leave.

I'm off the island now. What was once Azkaban is behind me as I lazily drift out over the sea. Levitation was one of the first things I learned at Hogwarts. Feathers. It was difficult at the time. For an eleven year old. I needed my wand. I don't need a wand now. I don't need anything.

I drop into the water.

Fuck! It's cold! Fucking cold! Fuck, fuck, fuck!

The shock has managed to jolt me out of my distracted daze.

I'm awake. I'm sane. I'm slowly sinking to the bottom of the ocean. I lost a lot of air when I hit the water, surprised by the penetrating cold. My lungs are beginning to ache. I must act quickly. Change into some sort of sea creature. Then swim to shore.

But what?

A dolphin?

No, I immediately reject that idea. Dolphins are kind, gentle and playful creatures. I am no longer kind. The world showed no kindness to me. I am no longer gentle. The world did not treat me gently. I am no longer playful. The world stole my playfulness when I was a child.

A shark?

The perfect mindless killing machine. No, that would not suit me. Regardless of what anyone may believe I am not a killer. I have never taken a human life, though my time in Azkaban has stripped me of any conscience that might prevent me in the future. I could kill now, yes, without hesitation or remorse.

But I am not mindless.

A goldfish?

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. .
. .
. .

?!?!

A goldfish?

Obviously the lack of air is starting to weaken my already shaky awareness. All around me is dark now, I've sunk deep beneath the waves while contemplating what form to take. I no longer have the luxury of time to think about it. I must change into something that can survive here quickly or die without properly regaining my freedom.

It's *perfect* .

An orca. A killer whale. I should have thought of it. It's so obvious in hindsight. Massive and powerful. Sleek and fast. Intelligent and cunning. Black and white. Rare. *Dangerous* .

Just like *me* .

It's easy to surface in this form. Barely two strokes and I'm breaking the surface, sucking in life-giving air. I briefly consider retaining the shape, but including gills so that I can make the entire journey underwater.

Reject.

This form is fine as it is.

My eyes aren't that good though, here in the air, but I can sense the land. It will not take long for me to cover the distance from the island to the mainland. It's at the very edge of the horizon, yes, but not a strain for my current shape. It's a good thing I shed away the weak and malnourished condition of my human form.

When I reach land I will change back, but it will be easy to change and yet retain the perfect health and fitness I now enjoy.

This is fun.

I never liked swimming. But it's actually not that bad now. Of course, after possibly years of being confined in Azkaban, any outside activity is a bliss. This is amazing, so pleasurable to feel. The water sluicing over my think, rubbery skin. I don't know if I should be able to feel such acute sensation, but I don't really care. It's almost orgasmic. Better even. If I were still human right now I would have a hard-on that could break down Hogwarts' stone walls.

I briefly contemplate "*polishing my wand* " (as young wizards call it) when I reach land. It had been over a week since I had last had the time to do so before I was arrested. Then, in the very brief two days that included my very brief trial, I was literally chained to a wall. Then, for a time I know not how long, I was in Azkaban.

Basically, I'm horny and need to get off.

But first I need a safe haven. I need a place to rest. I need to gather my strength. I need to learn what has happened since I was imprisoned. I need to decide what to do next.

I also need decent food.

Preferably with a strong drink.

Whiskey?

Vodka?

Brandy? They're supposed to give people brandy when they faint.

Skimming just below the surface I can see the mainland looming up in front of me. The shore is little more than a pile of rocks and stones. I will definitely not be enjoying myself when I hit land for the first time. I increase the pace of my strokes, wanting to get it over with quickly, and crash through a breaking wave and slide halfway up the beach.

Shit, I hate being right. That hurt.

Changing back into human form I kneel there for long minutes, the waves lapping around me. I did as I intended and now my body is fit and healthy. As it was before I was framed for those crimes nobody believed me innocent of. It's a good feeling, but while my legs are strong once again, it has been a long time since I last used them.

I feel like a baby. Learning to walk again.

I did it once before I can do it again.

Half an hour of stumbling and trying to achieve the proper balance. It's beginning to come back to me now, though I'm hobbling around. Kind of like I used to after spending hours on my broom during Quidditch practice back at Hogwarts.

Quidditch.

I was a Seeker.

I haven't thought of that game in years. Or however long I was crazy. Could an insane person have an interest in sports? I wonder who won the Cup after I was expelled from the school and banished to Azkaban?

I hope it was Slytherin.

Snakes.

Green's a nice colour.

Better than red.

I don't like red. Bad memories. Good memories. More bad though.

By now I'm almost walking properly. It's not made any easier by the lack of shoes. For the first time since I awakened I notice the clothes I'm wearing. Clothes. *Hah* ! Rags would be a better description. I don't even have to think about what I would rather be wearing. The frayed, tattered and disgustingly filthy encrusted material transfigures into a decent shirt, coat and pair of jeans without any conscious thought on my part. Socks and shoes complete my outfit, making me feel almost civilized.

Civilized. *Hah*. *Heh heh heh*. I am not civilized.

Not any more.

Not *ever* again.

All that is left to tell of my time in prison is my long and matted hair, which obscures my hazy vision as I make my way further inland. I must have been away for some time if my hair grew so long, past my shoulders, while I was insane. There's also an annoying itch all around my cheeks, jaw and lips. A beard I'd imagine. I reach up and confirm it. A couple of inches from the feel of it. By the time my hand has dropped to my side again, I'm clean shaven and my hair has been cut to an acceptable length, keeping it out of my face.

There is a road up ahead of me. Following the coastline. No signs. No cars. It could be miles to the nearest town. It's starting to rain. Large, fat drops which will no doubt be followed by a torrential downpour that will soak me through and through.

I go to Aberdeen.

It only took a second. Less even.

Apparation is possibly the greatest advantage wizards have over Muggles. I don't know how to Apparate. I was arrested in the April of my sixth year. I never had the chance to learn how. But I don't need to Apparate to go where I wish. It was a simple matter of moving from wherever I was to where I am now. Very simple.

Heh. Too simple.

It's not raining here, but there are clouds from horizon to horizon. Just a matter of time I suppose. Enough to find a place to stay until I sort myself out. Sort myself out. Into a house? Where would that raggedy old hat put me this time? Does Hogwarts have a house for people whose main personality trait is burgeoning madness?

I appeared in an alley, away from any prying eyes. I may be a little touched, but I'm not stupid. Stepping out into the street I spot a Muggle banking machine a little further up and on the other side. I turn and start walking in the opposite direction, using my newfound abilities to move several thousand Pounds worth of notes into the inside pocket of my coat without having even taken a step towards it.

Robbery?

Perhaps.

But I need the money and personally I think the world owes it to me.

That might have been one of my mistakes you know.

I should have charged for my services.

Hah ! I must be getting better, reclaiming more of my fragile sanity, if I can joke about my rather problematic past. But I guess it's either develop a sense of humour or slip back into madness.

Tempting...

Ah...

The first human being I have seen since the Aurors locked me in Azkaban and threw the key into the nearby ocean. He's a Muggle I can tell. Not a whiff of magic coming from him. About as Muggle as you can get. From the look of things I'd say he's some sort of businessman. Something pompous and arrogant. The kind of person I despise.

"Sir? Excuse me?" I ask. I scarcely recognise my voice. Those three words are the first I have spoken since the judge declared me guilty. Ordinarily I would have avoided this man, who looks at me as if I were shit on his soles of his shoes, but he has something that interests me.

A newspaper. Still folded up. Tucked under his arm.

The Daily Prophet?

No, he's a Muggle.

The Times.

Very droll and professional.

"What is it?" he asks. Yes. Pompous and arrogant. I want to hurt him. Kill him. I resist the urge to strip the skin from his flesh, boil his blood within his veins and crush his bones to dust. It's not easy. Then again, my life has never been easy. I move to stand closer to him. Smile thinly. He must feel intimidated since he takes a step back.

I ask him for the time, not really looking at him, but rather the newspaper. I lean to one side to see the date. The man is clearly unnerved by my manner. He glances at his wrist and tells me that is a bit after eight in the morning. I ignore him, focusing on the date instead.

Three years.

Three years.

I've been away for three years and a couple of months. Funny that. It seemed longer, yet at the same time, so much shorter. I look into the businessman's eyes. He's afraid of me. I can tell. I can smell the colour of his fear shouting around him. It tastes good.

"Thanks."

Without another word I turn and continue on my way. I don't really know where I'm going, but I think a hotel or something. Anyplace with a soft bed and a bath. Yes, a bath. I want to soak in a nice, hot, scalding bath.

With bubbles.

Pink bubbles.

I don't really need to bath - my magic has made sure I'm perfectly clean. Squeaky clean in fact. But I want to enjoy my freedom and I've always heard people talking about the satisfaction of a nice hot bath. It's supposed to relieve tension.

I'm still horny. Maybe later, after the bath, I'll go to a pub or somewhere and pick up a Muggle girl. Actually I'm not sure I have the social skills to pick up a blade of grass at the moment. I've been insane for three years. Even if I had been sane, Azkaban does not exactly promote a lot of social interaction. Not that I was any good at it before I was cast out.

It doesn't matter though. I don't need to interact with a woman get her to follow me wherever I wish her to. My magic can bend her will to mine as easily as that blade of grass I can't pick up. It wouldn't even be illegal, since I don't need to use the Imperious Curse. I'm beyond using such pathetic methods. So mundane. Rape? I don't know, nor do I care. I was sent to Azkaban for such a crime. Amongst others.

I was innocent.

Not any more.

Perhaps I will do it just to spite *them* .

Petty revenge? Maybe. But as I said; I don't particularly care. I no longer consider myself bound by the morals and strictures that others follow.

I've managed to walk a couple of blocks before I jerk to an abrupt halt.

I didn't notice. Not at the time. Lucky, or I might have caused the stuck up business man to shit in his expensive tailored trousers. I was more interested in the year than the rest of the date. But now I realize just what *today* is.

Oh the irony.

I've spent three years in Azkaban. I no longer care what people think of me. I lean against the nearest wall and laugh until the tears are streaming down my face. If there is some supreme being, other than myself as I now am, controlling the fate and events of the universe, then this is conclusive proof that whoever it is has a sadistic sense of humour.

Today is a very special day indeed.

It has nothing to do with the fact that I escaped from Azkaban not even an hour ago. Only the second person to do that. It has nothing to do with the fact that I can do anything I want just by thinking it. Sometimes without thinking it. It has nothing to do with any of that.

It has everything to do what happened twenty years ago today.

Today is my birthday.

My name is Harry.

I used to save the world.

TBC...

From the Abyss The Trip Home

Chapter Two
~ The Trip Home ~

I hardly recognise myself.

It's true. Standing here, in front of the mirror, I cannot see any resemblance to the young and innocent boy that once attended Hogwarts. Gone is the short little midget that my housemates used to tease me of being. I'm a good foot taller now. It was easy to will myself to shoot up like a rocket in the space of a minute. I haven't measured or anything, but I'm probably around six and a half feet.

Imposing.

I enjoy no longer having to look up at people.

Instead they now have to look up at me.

I have to duck when I go through doors.

Unfortunately I learned that the *hard* way.

My scrawny underfed orphan look is gone too. I definitely don't look like Hercules or anything, but I have that lean muscled appearance of a professional athlete. I like the way it causes my shirt to stretch tightly across my chest and shoulders. A vast improvement to Dudley's cast-offs which hung from me like skinned elephant hides.

The most noticeable change, primarily to hide my appearance, is my face. The unruly mop of raven black hair that I inherited from my father is gone. As are the bright and intense green eyes that I was always being told were carbon copies of my mother's eyes. My hair is now a dark blonde, straight and neat as a pin, professionally and tastefully combed back. My eyes --no longer hidden behind those horrible round glasses-- are as black as the night. They are just as I remember Hagrid's eyes being.

He was a *true* friend.

Unlike others.

He never *doubted* me, regardless what was said about me.

Unlike others.

And now he's *dead*.

Unlike others.

My face is also different. Not much, but enough. Squarer chin. More definition around the cheeks and nose. Harder lips and a distinct lack of laugh lines around my eyes and mouth. Frown lines and scowl lines though. Lots of them. Leftovers from an unrelenting life of hardship and three years of insanity in the world's most terrible prison.

I could out glare Snape if I tried.

I turn around to see my scar. My *famous* scar. That *accursed* scar, which I loath almost as much as Voldemort and all the other witches and wizards in the world. I can't get rid of it. Even with my powers I cannot remove its blight from my body. I cannot properly hide it either. Instead I have contented myself with shifting it from its place on my forehead.

Now, staring over my shoulder to my naked body in the mirror, I appreciate what it has become. My scar now rests on my right shoulder blade. It is almost completely disguised from view by the tattoo I imagined there. A phoenix rising from the ashes on a dark, stormy and thundering night. My scar blends in seamless with the stylised lightning flashing across the background.

Surprisingly it looks very professional. I have trouble drawing stick figures, but this looks like some renaissance painting. That is if Leonardo ever tried to smoke pot and paint the Mona Lisa at the same time. Pot. Weed. Tried it last week. *Good* stuff. Made me forget for an hour or two. Looking at my scar, hidden as it is, I can't help but remember. The golden tan of my skin and slightly faded colours make the image look far older than the three months it has been there.

Three months.

Three months of wonderful and glorious freedom.

Three months of food, drink and sex .

I'll admit, the food cannot truly match the feasts at Hogwarts. But after three years trapped within Azkaban --and my own mind-- even gruel would be a delicacy to me. The drinks are not really for taste either, but mostly the effects the alcohol produces, the pleasant buzz in my brain and the warmth in my gut.

The sex...

It's just that. Sex. *Fucking* . It has been wild and passionate and feral and crazed and harsh. All that and more. But no *love* involved. None. It was just sex. *Fucking*. I chuckle under my breath, not wanting to wake the sleeping girl in my bed, at the feeling of power it has given me. I'm positive that I've shagged more women in the past three months than my so-called "*friends* " have during the three years I was trapped in Azkaban.

Heh. Probably more than they'll ever get in their lifetimes, even if they live to be three hundred.

How many?

I don't know. I don't care.

Fifty? A hundred? More? Around that I'd hazard. I honestly don't care. Care? Careful? Why should I be careful? I'm a wizard. No. I'm beyond a wizard. If it didn't sound so conceited I'd declare that I was a god.

I am.

A hundred women in three months. At least one a day. Sometimes more. Some I let them spend the night with me, bringing them back to the hotel I'm staying at. Expensive hotel. Grand. Big bathtub. The other women I was content to shag wherever I happened to find them. In the manager's office. In the mens' room. In the ladies' room. In the back seat of a car. In the parking lot. Their husband's bed. Anywhere I felt like it.

They were all Muggles of course.

Amusing, wouldn't you agree? The famous and much celebrated Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived, who saved the wizarding world while still a baby, losing his virginity to a Muggle girl rather than a witch. And yes, she was merely a girl. Her name was Sarah. Princess. I didn't bother beyond that. She was fifteen and happened to be walking past the first pub I had stopped at when she caught my eye. Her eyes were brown as was her hair, which was curly. Somewhat bushy. She was a bit shorter than I would have been had I not altered my body. She didn't even reach my new shoulders. Reminded me a bit of Hermione.

That's probably why I was so *rough* with her.

I simply drew her to me, using my magic to make her follow me without complaint behind the bar. She will never realise that she was not acting of her own free will. I could have used the *Imperious Curse* . I don't need to. She will never believe that everything that happened wasn't her idea. It was mine. She will never know.

It was the same with all of them.

They will never know what I really did to them.

Does that make me a coward?

I don't know. I don't care.

Once we were alone in the pub's storeroom, I briefly questioned her. Just her name, age and the fact that she too was a virgin, nothing more. I wasn't really interested. I'm still not. There were no preliminaries in my actions when I started. All I wanted was to fuck her.

And I did.

Not totally heartless, not yet anyway, I made the experience a pleasurable one for her. For all of them. By the time I came inside her, after pounding relentlessly for long minutes, she had come more times than I could count. She was quite willing to service me again after that, never realising that her pleasure had only existed because I used my magic to induce it.

And she did service me again.

I took her from behind. Then I sodomised her.

I altered her mind so she *enjoyed* it.

Can it still be called rape if she did?

I don't know. I don't care.

I left her lying face down in the storeroom, barely conscious, her clothes scattered around her, her slender legs spread wide and her battered and

bruised holes dripping with a mixture of her juices, her blood and my sperm.

With the others, except the ones I brought to my hotel room, I didn't even bother to learn their names. The ones I brought back? Not really important, I'm not even sure I remember the name of the well satiated blonde that I am watching sleep in my bed now that I've left the bathroom. She's fairly tall for a woman, slender too. Older than me, probably in her early thirties and married to a bloke called Jeremy (funny how I can remember his name but not hers). Lucky bastard, she's a great lay. Quite a screamer too.

So... three months of unrelenting and shameless self indulgence.

I could live like this forever.

But yesterday was the last day.

For now.

Yesterday I felt it.

My scar.

I had forgotten.

You-Know-Who.

Our bond.

Voldemort.

My blood.

Tom Riddle.

His blood.

Blood.

Ours.

I had been hoping that with the destruction of Azkaban that my part in all that would finally be over. Harry Potter was, as far as anyone knew, dead. Dead. Unmourned as well, no doubt. I go back into the bathroom, dip my head in the sink and turn on the tap. The cold water pouring over my head is refreshing. Relaxing.

Thank God my scar's no longer on my forehead - no more splitting headaches whenever my dear old friend is in a foul mood.

Thank God?

Thank god?

Thank me?

Am i a god?

A god can do anything. I can also do anything.
--and more--

When I return to the wizarding world--
which will be soon
--will they hail me as a saviour?

A prodigal son returned?

Somehow I don't think so.
I'm sure Jesus also had days like this.
Of course, he only had one Judas to betray him.

Does this mean I have a messiah complex?

Or a god complex?

Enough.
Enough.
Enough.
Enough.
Enough.

I wonder why I haven't felt anything before now. Has Voldemort been inactive for three years? Doubt it. Why would he stop? No. Was I too crazy to

feel the burning pain that used to shoot through my head? Could be. Probably helped keep me insane that. Insaner than I was anyway. Insaner than I am? Am I still insane?

I must be.
I'm going back.
to hogwarts
That's nuts.

I shake myself out of my aimless wanderings of thought and turn back to the matter at hand. I think I'm drowning. I pull my head out of the sink and close the tap. The water is overflowing and dripping onto the floor. I walk back into the bedroom. Water is dripping down me. My shoulders, my chest, my back are wet. Lauren (I remember her name now) has shifted about and is now lying on her back, sprawled across the bed.

Beautiful knockers. I can see bite marks --mine-- around her nipples.
Her flesh is bruised and discoloured. I can see a little blood as well.
I clearly remember the taste and her loud cry when I pierced her skin.

Can't waste time admiring the view though. I have to leave.

Pity.

I was planning to shag her again this morning as a wakeup call.

The thought is making me hard.

I'm still horny after last night.

No time.

Still a pity.

Water's gone. I'm dry. Lauren's wet. Between her legs. I remember the taste of her on my lips. She's frigging herself. Must be a nice dream. I don't dream. Three months I've been free from Azkaban. I haven't had a dream. Not that I can remember at least. The last dream I remember was before I was imprisoned. It was about Hermione. It wasn't sexual in nature. Just pleasant. Comfortable.

I should've fucked the snotty bitch when I had the chance.

I run my fingers over my left cheek.

Scars. Three of them. Parallel slashes across my face. Hermione gave them to me. After the trial, when the Aurors were dragging me away. She slapped me. Harder than she slapped Malfoy in our third year. I felt the sting. A little blood too. Her nails must have scratched me. Was it an accident or on purpose?

I don't know.

I never got a chance to see the scratches before I arrived at Azkaban. I don't think they should have left scars. Not such obvious ones any way. It must have been the prison. They got infected and didn't heal properly. I was quite surprised when I saw them for the first time, after getting out of the hot bath --with pink bubbles-- that I had drawn after taking the room.

I kept them. As a reminder. She doubted me. She didn't trust me when I said I was innocent. They all doubted me. None of them trusted me. I was innocent. And they let me be destroyed.

But I'm *better* now.

Gone now. I can't keep them if I'm going back. Someone might suspect. Especially the whore that gave them to me. Hermione's a smart witch, rhymes with bitch, even if she abandoned me. I wonder who she ran to afterwards? Ron? Probably. I imagine they were going at each other like rabbits before I'd even been gone a day.

My clothes. Scattered around the bedroom. Shorts. Trousers. Shirt. Hmm... where the bleeding shit have my socks gotten to? Socks. Dobby... will he recognise me? He's a house-elf, not a human so I don't know. I'll have to see. Ah. There they are. How'd they get there?

Lauren's moaning. She must be getting close.

I'm dressed. The room's paid for.

I leave.

London.
Big city.
Small world.

I'm outside the Leaky Cauldron. It's still early. Not a lot of Muggles on the streets. Not too many cars out either. Perfect. I never liked crowds. I still don't. Even less than before.

Hmm...

Place doesn't seem to have changed. Not on the outside anyway. Okay. Okay, the inside is clearly a different story. Practically deserted. Two hags in a corner. Smoking. Not fags. Not cigars. In between. Drinks. Fire whiskey? One wizard in dark brown robes. Pipe. Eggs and bacon. Toast. Tea? Coffee. Who's this? Not Tom. I don't really like the look of him. Tom at least knows how to smile.

"Can I help you, sir?" he asks. No, I don't like him.

"Where's Tom?" I ask back, scanning the nearly empty room.

The man looks puzzled for a moment. "Tom? I'm sorry, but the previous owner was killed in the Death Eater attack on the alley two years ago."

Two years ago. One year into my insanity.

"Pity." I liked Tom. He was always helpful to me.
Welcome back, Mr Potter, welcome back.

I'm leaving, heading out back to the entrance. I ignore any further attempts the new bartender tries to make in talking to me. Ah, here I am. Interesting. The arch into the alley is being guarded. Two Aurors. I *hate* Aurors. The ones guarding me during my trial beat the crap out of me. I was barely conscious for when the verdict was finally announced.

Two men. One fairly young, the other a bit older. Mid twenties and late thirties I'd say. Doesn't really matter. Don't know them. Don't want to. They're looking at me. Clearly suspicious. Damn. Forgot to transfigure my Muggle clothing into appropriate robes.

Talk my way out? my way in? Whatever.

Too much of a hassle.

The younger Auror obediently taps at the necessary bricks. The older one resumes his watch for those evil Death Eaters that are going to be waltzing in through the front door. Right. Neither of them were difficult to manipulate. Curious. I'd thought magical folk would be harder to control than Muggles. Guess not. They're as easy as the Muggle women I forced myself on.

I step through the stone archway.

Diagon Alley.
Diagonally.
Horizontal.
Vertical.
Free fall.
Falling.
I'm falling.
I've fallen.

A fallen angel?
--*A broken angel*--

I can remember my first visit here, with Hagrid as my guide, as if it had happened yesterday. It had been a world of wonder to me. So young back then. Still so innocent. A boy that had spent a decade living in a cupboard under the stairs. Sometimes I wish I'd *never left* that cupboard. It's not a world of wonder anymore.

Hagrid's gone.

Almost as empty as the pub. Most of the shops aren't open yet. Closed? Temporary? Permanent. Aw, no. *Quality Quidditch Supplies*. Ruined. If I find the dumb fuck that burnt down what was once my favourite shop I'll rip his tonsils out - through his arsehole! Then I'll tear his head off and shit down the bleeding stump--

No.

Save that for whoever framed me.

Revenge.

Focus.Focus.Focus.Focus.Focus.Here.Now.

It's almost scary, how quiet this place is now. Used to be alive with chatter and talk and loud, argumentative (but playful) bargaining. Feels like a tomb. Chamber of Secrets. Tom. Diary. Ginny. Malfoy. Lucius. Draco. Wonder what happened to him? Maybe I'll be lucky and find out that he seduced that little redhaired bitch, made Ron an uncle and gave the entire dickless family heart attacks.

Malfoy never betrayed me.
He hated me. I hated him.
We understood each other.

Hmm... nice bum that one has. Slender but somehow ample. Very fuckable. I'm such a horny bastard these days. Maybe I'll put off my return for

another day, have a taste of some witch pussy getting back in. Certainly like to get in her pants. Fine arse and her tits are nice and perky too... fuck... is that... fuck.

Katie Bell ? Hardly recognised her. Haven't seen her since I was betrayed. She was in her last year, I was in sixth. Hair's longer than I remember. Blonder. Wilder. Outdoor life? Outdoor job? Interesting the way she's walking. Very purposeful. Outdoor job.

Wonder which side she chose.

Dumbledore?

Voldemort?

Fucker Fudge?

I'll lay odds on Dumbledore. Katie was always the more cautious of the three girls. Our old team. We were the best. I miss those days. Me, Oliver, Fred, George, Alicia, Angelina and Katie. We were the best Quidditch team Hogwarts had ever seen.

Until I was cast out.

She's looking at me. Seen me watching her. I'm right outside my destination. Good. She's got a glare on her this one. Checking me out - not in a friendly fashion either. Probably thinks I'm a Death Eater. Fuck, I still forgot to put robes on. Oh well. I smirk at her, something I learned from Malfoy. Visibly look her over - like a side of beef. Cute, she's blushing.

I nod politely, smirk broadening. Step inside. See you around, Katie.

Ah. At least this place hasn't changed. Still crammed full of boxes. From floor to ceiling and all the way into the musty depths of the back. Lots of dust. Doesn't Ollivander ever bother to clean this place?

"Yes?"

Yep. Hasn't changed. The sly old bugger still creeps me out. Must be the knowing smile. And the eyes. That pale blue. Like moons. Moons. Moony. Remus Lupin. He's a werewolf. Has the Ministry, the world, persecuted him unjustly as it did me? He's looking at me funny. Seems puzzled. Of course - he remembers every wand he's ever sold. Every customer as well. He can't recognise me.

"I need a wand," I tell him.

"But of course, Mister..." he trails off. He's expecting a name.

Hmm... Hadn't really thought about it. Match his stare. I'll worry about it later. For now, I'll just keep my mouth shut. Wizards pay far too much attention to names. It's annoying. Eventually Ollivander seems to realize I will not be forthcoming. He wants to know which is my wand arm.

"Whichever I need it to be."

He blinks at my answer. Pulls out his tape measure. It works over both my arms while he potters (I hate puns, so why'd I think that?) around. He's trying to get me to talk. Going on about wands and their cores and other shit. Not really interested. I don't need a wand to do magic. I'm only getting one because people will expect me to have one.

I wonder what happened to my old wand? Dumbledore took it away when I was arrested. Did he snap it in half? They're supposed to do that if you get expelled. Did it to Hagrid. Or maybe he kept it. After all, it's the brother wand to Voldemort's. Same phoenix, Fawkes, gave the feathers. He no doubt thinks he might find a use for it in the future.

He won't. It's *mine*.

Maybe I'll reclaim it. For sentimental reasons.

"Typically an Ollivander's wand used to contain one of three possible types of magical cores."

He's *still* talking.

"Dragon heartstring, Unicorn hair and Phoenix feather. In recent years, since the second rise of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, I have begun experimenting with other magical substances."

Curious. I wonder, "Why?"

Ollivander pierces me with those pale eyes. A sharp look. "These are dangerous times, sir. People may have a need for more powerful, more robust wands than before."

He has a large assortment of boxes in his arms. He drops them on the counter and rummages through them. Pulls out one box and opens it. I accept the wand he holds out to me.

Twelve inches. Jacaranda. Griffin hair.

No.

Ten inches. Blue gum. Triffid stem.

No.

Eleven and a half inches. Maple. Veela hair.

No.

Nine inches.

No.

Willow.

No.

Sphinx feather.

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

For crying out loud, I'm sure it didn't take this long the last time I was here. He's gone through a hundred wands. At least. Shit, I think he's actually enjoying himself. Yes, he's having a good time of it. Muttering something about a tricky customer again. I should have just gone to a Muggle pool hall and swiped a cue. Made myself a wand from that.

"Yes, yes. Perhaps. This one? I wonder."

Something about that look in those pale eyes of his. It seems familiar. It's that same look he gave me nine years ago, when I first came here. The look he gave me just before he handed me my wand. My first wand. *Holly and phoenix feather, eleven inches, nice and supple.*

"Holly and phoenix feather," he says.

My heart stops.

"Eleven inches, nice and supple."

Fuck.

Fuck.

Fuck.

Fuck.

Fuck.

Shit and piss!

Does he know?

Will he tell?

"It is a unique wand. Only one other like it in the world," his eyes are almost glowing. "Just the one... and that other's brother. I remember that brother well. Yew. Thirteen and a half inches. Very powerful. Much like its twin, upon which this wand is based. Different core unfortunately."

I take the damn wand.

My fingers can feel a comfortable warmth as I hold it. The air around me swirls and ruffles my now blonde hair. A light seems to envelop me, centred around the wand. Red and gold. Sparks stream from the wand's tip. Just like last time.

"That will be twenty Galleons, sir." I arch an eyebrow at the price. Last time it was only seven. He looks faintly apologetic as he shrugs. "These are hard times, sir."

I reach into the pocket of my Muggle coat, I have to remember to change it to wizard robes, and pull out a small bag which is heavy with gold and silver coins. Just as I took money from the Muggle machine upon arriving in Aberdeen, I took a fair bit of Galleons and Sickles from one of Gringotts' vaults when I entered Diagon Alley.

Not my own, of course. *Malfoy's*.

I take revenge where I can.

Even if he didn't betray me.

"Take care, sir," Ollivander tells me as I'm leaving. "The last owner of such a wand, did many terrible things with it."

I look back at him and say, "Terrible, yes, but great."

He's smiling.
He knows.
I leave the shop.
He isn't smiling.
He doesn't know.

Hopefully my Memory Charm will work better than Lockhart's did.

'Allo 'allo 'allo...

It would seem Katie has decided to hang around and keep an eye on me. She's trying not to be too conspicuous about it. Standing outside Madam Malkins and peering into the window at the robes displayed there. She's watching my reflection off the glass. I want to fuck her. I wonder how she'd react if I went over and propositioned her.

Hey, want to grab a room in the Leaky Cauldron and have a quick shag?

I'm tempted to try, but I need to restrain myself. If she works for Dumbledore, which I suspect she does, I might get a chance to meet her when I go to Hogwarts. Maybe then I'll see if witches are as fun to play with under the sheets as Muggle women are. Still, no reason why I can't be a bit of a flirt right now though.

I need wizards robes. She's outside Madam Malkins. Perfect.

I brush past her as I enter the store. I lightly stroke my hand over her tight buns, earning a surprised squeak. Oh, she'll be a fun one in the sack. A squeaker, not a screamer. I'm inside before she can recover from her shock. I walk into the racks of robes, moving deep into the shop until I'm out of sight. She can't see me leave.

Ottery St. Catchpole.

Seriously fucked up name that.

Seriously fucked up village for that matter.

Looks like an army of Death Eaters marched through here. Probably just what happened. The Burrow is in about the same condition as Quality Quidditch Supplies. Didn't happen recently either, the smell of smoke and burnt wood has faded away. Must have happened around the same time as the attack on Diagon Alley. Two years ago.

I wonder if anyone died?

Did the Death Eaters kill them? Was it Avada Kedavra?

Or where they crushed by the house when it collapsed?

Perhaps they were burnt alive in the fire afterwards.

I don't know. I don't care.

With a lazy wave of my hand (I'm feeling extravagant) the Burrow is repaired. It's perfect in everyway. Just as it was. Just as I remember it being in the summer before my sixth year. Before my adopted family threw me aside and let me rot in Azkaban. I just rebuilt an entire house from the ground up in less than a second. *I'm not tired*. I can't even detect any sign of strain or exertion.

Another wave of my hand (I'm feeling very extravagant) and the house is even better. The skew lines and angles and walls are now straight. Almost machined to exactly perfect standards. My standards. Not just outside, but inside as well. The Burrow no longer looks in imminent danger of falling on its side. Maybe I should visit the Leaning Tower of Pisa as well.

Pizza. I'm hungry.
Thirsty too.
I want a stout.

There's nothing left for me to do here. I couldn't be bothered going inside and looking things over. Too many memories, happy memories, reside inside this house. If I went inside I'd be forced to remember them. Besides, I have to go to Hogwarts. I'm not even sure why I came here in the first place.

To see the Weasleys?
Why?
They betrayed me.

The house falls into ruin again.
Like a house of cards collapsing.
Cards. Exploding cards. Exploding snap.

I used to play that with Ron.

On the train ride to Hogwarts.

In our common room at Hogwarts.

Hogwarts.

I'm outside the doors of Hogwarts. The castle is looming up in front of me. I'm surprised there aren't any guards visible. I look back and can see four wizards, Aurors probably, standing watch by the main gates. Of course. You cannot Apparate or Disapparate on Hogwarts grounds. They wouldn't expect me to bypass the gates entirely. After all, I don't Apparate.

Nobody else can do what I do.

I'm better than I was before.

better. stronger. faster.

I don't know why. I don't care either.

I just am.

I study the castle for a minute. Nothing seems to have changed since I was here last. According to my watch --a Rolex I *acquired* during my stay in Aberdeen-- I've arrived just in time for breakfast. Perfect. I don't care about the breakfast. I'm hungry though. I ignore it. Still, it does give me a perfect opportunity to make an entrance. It will be fun to see everyone's reactions when I burst in on them. Interrupt their pleasant little lives with the chaos that follows my every move.

Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived, who was betrayed and abandoned by those he trusted, is back at Hogwarts after a three year absence. I'm going to rock their world and turn their reality inside out and outside in. And they'll never know it's me doing it. I'm not going to tell them until I know the revelation will destroy them. Or until I destroy them myself. Maybe I won't ever tell them. Maybe they'll never know who it is that will finish them.

Sad really.

And I still need to transfigure myself some robes.

But you know what the *worst* of it is?

I'm still fucking horny.

TBC....

From the Abyss Dubious Hospitality

Chapter Three
~ Dubious Hospitality ~

My head hurts.

That must mean I'm awake.

I was asleep?

No.

I was unconscious.

Someone knocked me out. Hit me from behind.

HARD.

Idiot.

I'm an idiot.

I wasn't paying attention. I burst through the doors leading into Hogwarts, striding past a few surprised and frightened looking children in the Entrance Hall. Students. I swept past them in my best imitation of Snape. He's a Death Eater. Shit Eater. Kisses Voldemort's boots.

Grand entrance into the Great Hall. Halloween decorations were still up. Everyone's eyes were on me. Teachers. Students. Others. Hundreds of them. All of them. I must have looked impressive. Didn't have a chance to say anything impressive. Everyone's eyes were on me. Unfortunately my eyes weren't on everyone. Pain. Falling. Blackness. Awake.

I try to move. Can't.

I hear talking.

Voices. Familiar. Unfamiliar.

"-could be a new recruit. You-Know-Who has been branching out to the continent lately."

Idiots. They think I'm a Death Eater. Don't recognise the voice. Sounds familiar, but I can't place it. Another voice speaks. This one I know instantly. I could never forget it.

Dumbledore. "Severus?"

Severus? Snivellus. Snape. His voice isn't as oily and smooth as I remember. Harsh. Rasping, as though hoarse from hours of screaming. Much like my own. "I don't recognise him. It's possible we've met, but if he had his mask on at the time... I'd need to hear him speak."

"Speak?"

My voice brings silence to the room. I think the raw fury contained in that single word must have surprised them. Scared them. Good. 'Cause I'm seriously pissed off. I'm really tempted to just blow the fuckers to oblivion, find Voldemort and separate every piece of him from every other piece and then go find a cute Muggle bitch to suck my cock.

Damn them.

I'm madder than Hell. Madder than I've ever been.

I open my eyes. They recoil. Except Dumbledore.

Bastard.

There's quite a few of them in the room. Dumbledore, the old fart, appears to have scarcely changed over the years. Ageless. Timeless. When I'm done with him he'll be *dickless* as well. If he isn't already. I entertain myself for several seconds imagining the experience of castrating the old man with my bare hands.

Behind him is McGonagall. Her hair's gone almost completely grey. Dull grey. Dull woman. More wrinkles than I remember. Still looks like she's been sucking lemons her entire life. Sodding ol' sourpuss. Nothing I ever did was good enough for her. I remember the last words she said to me.

That I was an insult to my parents' names.

She couldn't have hurt me worse if she had slapped me - like Hermione did. She looks a little apprehensive, but still stern as ever. Unrelenting.

Snape.

Damn.

Definitely uglier than I remember. Scars on his face. Looks like he was mauled by a pack of dogs. Must have hurt. A lot. Good. After all, he always took pleasure in hurting me. Not physically, but his verbal abuse was more than enough. Turnabout's fair play, I'd say. I only wish I'd been there to witness the event. Would've brought popcorn. I've never had popcorn, but I would have brought some. I wonder if it was just happenstance, an accident, or if maybe Voldemort did it to him as a punishment of some sort.

I try to stand.

Can't.

Something's keeping me in place. I'm in a chair. Straps around my wrists. Straps around my ankles. Magic all round. I can taste it. Smell it. Feel it. Holding me down. Binding me to the chair. What is this thing? We're in one of the dungeons. A torture chair? No. Execution chair? No. Interrogation chair. Yes, they're going to try make me tell them things. Oh, I'm going to tell them things all right. Things that they definitely won't like hearing. Things they don't want to hear. I bare my teeth in a snarl.

"So this is the *famous* Hogwarts hospitality? Leaves a lot to be desired, let me fuckin' tell you that much!" I glare at Snape, a low growl in the back of my throat. "Want me to speak some more scarface? Or do you still not recognise me?"

I taunt his disfigured face by using the name Malfoy tormented me with. I doubt he remembers it, but the words slide under his pallid skin like a sharp blade. I sneer at him as his lips draw into a thin line. Yes, he's getting angry. Good. I doubt he would recognise my voice either, I sound completely different to the boy they betrayed. Azkaban left its mark on me in more ways than just my tortured mind and soul. Three years of insanity makes for a lot of screaming.

"Do we know you?"

Dumbledore again.

Always asking the stupidest questions. Must be a talent of his.

"Of course you know me you blithering idiot!" I snap.

The supersillious old fool actually blinks.

"Here now, just a minute!" exclaims one of those I don't recognise.

"Oh, I'll give you a minute," I tell the little shit. He is a little shit. Littler than I was before I changed my appearance. *Littler*? Ah, who cares about correct grammar at a time like this. I'm bloody pissed off. I give Dumbledore's lackey a glare that not even scarfaced Snape could match in his best foul mood. "I'll give you a minute that will last a fuckin' eternity!"

Motion. Movement.

I snap my head in that direction.

Dumbledore shifting about.

Leaning in. Looking at me.

Closely.

Like a bug scientist dissecting a butterfly.

Or a wasp. Or a scorpion.

I'm far too dangerous now to be a harmless little butterfly.

Scrutinising my face, as if he knows this is not my true appearance. He straightens and looks pensively at me. Pensive. Pensieve. I got lost in one of those --his pensieve-- during my fourth year. Before the third task. Before Cedric died. Before the first part of my innocence died with him. If I was ever innocent to begin with. Ten years in a cupboard under the stairs...

What right does he have to look at me like this?

"What are you looking at, old man?"

After what he let happen to me?

"Disrespectful whelp!" Snape growls. He's reaching for his wand. Perfect. Dumbledore stops him before he can do something stupid. Damn. Pity - I wanted him to do something stupid. Then I could have an excuse to hurt him. I already have one, an excuse, but they don't know that.

Dumbledore's looking at me. Curious. What does he think... Ah. Like that time in my fourth year again, when he captured Barty Crouch Junior. Phhhffft. Like that's going to intimidate *me*.

I had my mind raped and tortured and all but destroyed by the Dementors.

Compared to that; Dumbledore--

even Voldemort

--is nothing but an amateur. Nothing he can do will be able to hurt me.

Not anymore.

I'm beyond pain.

I survive on pain.

I use it to feed my anger.

My hunger.

My thirst.

Revenge.

"I gather you do not plan on co-operating with us?"

Yes, it's a talent.

I sneer by way of reply, "What was your first clue, oh bearded one?"

Oh yes, I think I'm starting to get to him. Oh yes, I'm definitely starting to work my way under that thick skin of his. Imagine that, I'm managing to do what no-one else ever has. I'm pissing the famous-for-his-cool-under-fire Dumbledore off.

Am I good or what?

I'm not good.

Not anymore.

Not after what they did to me.

But I'm not evil, either.

Not yet.

"Severus," he orders, back straightening almost imperceptably in annoyance. I'm probably the only one in the room that notices. The only one that can notice. I'm more than a simple little wizard anymore. I'm *better* than the rest of them. I'm better than all of them will ever be.

Dumbledore continues, "Veritaserum."

I start to laugh.

I laugh.

I laugh to the point that I'm almost in tears.

I laugh until I *am* in tears.

Hilarious.

Veritaserum.

Truth potion.

Oh yes, like that's going to work.

"Might I ask what it is you find so amusing?"

My laughter slowly dies. Chuckles. Giggles. Gone. I look up, catching my breath and glare at Dumbledore with such venom that he actually takes a step back. Yes, I am good. Better even.

"Amusing"? Screw amusing - this is fucking hilarious," I tell him.

"There's no need for such language," states McGonagall primly.

I leer at her, "Just 'cause you ain't been laid in this lifetime doesn't mean you have to be all sour about it, Min. Or maybe it's the other way round? You being shagged too much, getting your hips cricked outta place? By who? This old wanker? Huh, there's a laugh - almost as funny as using Veritaserum on me."

Hee hee... Dumbledore's absolutely livid.

I think he's actually considering hexing me.

Please. Try.

I don't think I've ever had so much fun in my life.

Before and after I was insane.

"Severus."

Snape begins to move, but I stop him with a sharp bark of laughter. I giggle insanely --perhaps not entirely an act on my part-- and grin like a maniac.

"Won't work."

"Nobody is immune to Veritaserum," declares Snape.

So staunch.

So confident.
So firm in his belief.

I'm going to enjoy shattering his illusions.
illusions? allusions? delusions?
whatever.

"Except for Harry Potter."
I discovered that early in my sixth year.
Caused quite a stir with the Ministry.
It struck a nerve.

Still strikes a nerve I see.
Even Dumbledore flinches at the mention of my name. I find that a little bit amusing. Always the one that's unafraid to call Voldemort just that;
Voldemort. Dumbledore's respected, almost famous, for it.

Yet he cringes at the name *Harry Potter*.

Does he now revile me so much that he cannot bear to hear my name? Or perhaps he fears me, what I might have become? Have become. What they made me. Perhaps he's even feeling a little guilty? He should. I'm sure he considers my "failure" to be a reflection on him. Maybe he's ashamed to be associated with me?

So do the others, particularly McGonagall. Snape clenches the little vial he's holding so tightly I wonder that it doesn't shatter. I hope it does. It'll hurt him. Just as he always went out of his way to hurt me - if not physically then emotionally. *Our newcelebrity* indeed.

"Fortunately *Potter*," Snape almost spits my name, "is dead."

"Really?"
I smile.
It's an evil smile.
I know.
I practiced it last night.

The change back slowly rolls over me.

It starts with the eyes.
Windows to the soul.
If I have one.
I don't know anymore.
Maybe the Dementors took mine away.

My eyes were the last part of me that changed. From green to black. Now they slowly change from black to green. Bright green. Unnaturally bright. Like emeralds sparkling in firelight. I can feel the change as my irises revert, a strange tugging and pinching sensation.

My face is next, the lines and angles of it shifting slowly about. My chin. My cheeks. My nose. It feels like my skin is both growing tighter but at the same time looser on my skull. A slight burning prickle across my left cheek, teasing almost, as the trio of scars Hermione gifted me with, slash into existence again. I can't really feel my hair changing from straight and blonde to unruly and black, but I feel the change anyway. The shift in the reality of it.

I think it is the hair and the eyes that do it.
They recognise those features of me.

The black hair of my father.
James.
The green eyes of my mother.
Lily.

The last thing to change back is my scar. That damned scar. It's a horrible painful burning that stabs through my head - rather like having a flaming hot poker stuffed up a nostril and used to stir my brain up. I revel in it, use it to speed my transformation back. I can feel it acutely as that accursed lightning scar cuts and burns its way over, across and through my forehead.

I wonder, briefly, if my phoenix tattoo is still on my shoulder blade or not. I certainly don't need it anymore. Not with my most *famous* feature once again prominently displayed for all and sundry to gawk at.

I smirk up at their dumbstruck faces.
And confirm their disbelief.

""Fraid not."

.

.

·
Hmmm, not quite the reaction I was anticipating. I'd've thought they would be screaming in both terror and outrage by now. Throwing hexes and curses and spells and kitchen sinks at me and acting like the heroes --traitors-- they believe themselves to be.

It's rather disappointing how quiet it is.

I was hoping to get to kill someone in "*self-defence*".

·
·
·

"Harry."

I let my blazing --I know they're blazing; I can feel the power filling them-- green eyes slide to where Dumbledore is standing. He's ashen, looking for all the world as if he's just seen a ghost. I almost giggle at the thought. Hogwarts is full of ghosts. By the time I'm done here it will be full with a good deal more, hopefully.

"Give the man a cigar," I drawl. Damn, I sound like Malfoy. Both Malfoys. I smirk just like both Malfoys as well. Wiggle the fingers of one hand. Heh, the look on their faces is priceless as those Havannas suddenly appear in their mouths. Wish I had a camera. Gods below, how could I even think of something like that? I will *not* turn into Colin Creevey!

Disbelief.
Amazement.
Confusion.
Understanding.
Mounting horror.
Blind terror.

I bare my teeth in a savage grin. I wish I had a mirror, 'cause I'm sure I've never looked so utterly evil or vicious in my life. Yes, a mirror. Not a bloody camera. Chuckling. Crazy sounding giggle really, an insane amusement at their reaction.

I stand up.

Oh ho, that's funny. One of the lackeys just pissed himself! Must have something to do with the fact that I got to my feet in spite of all those silly restraints, physical and magical, that were supposedly binding me to the interrogation chair.

Heh. Nothing can bind me anymore.
The shackles around my wrists and ankles evaporated.
The wards and charms holding me down disassociated.
Nothing can stop me anymore.
Heh.

Ooh, they've got their wands pointed at me.

How... unimpressive.

"Potter," Snape growls, some colour returning to his sallow cheeks.

"Snape," I return, dismissively.
He's nothing to me, as I am now.
I will pay attention to him when it's his turn.
Not before. His turn.

Can feel the magic flowing through the room. About the room. Shifting here and there. Gathering in their wands. Why would it do that? Are they...? Yes, they're calling the magic to the wands. To them. They're going to curse me. Going to hex me. They want to send me back. Back to Azkaban. Back to hell itself. To oblivion. The abyss.

Won't let them.

I snap my fingers (melodramatic, I know) and all their wands *explode* in a spray of splinters. Howls. Screams. Pain. I smile at the sound of it. I wouldn't have, before. But now I do. One wizard's death rattle is my symphony. A symphony of pain. Of revenge. That's all I want. All I need.

...how is he, poppy?
not well i'm afraid, albus. the potion has...

What? Potion?

Dumbledore frowns and looks at the others with concern. He didn't draw his wand. Bastard. That means his hand isn't torn and bleeding and filled

with shards of wood. He isn't hurt. He isn't in pain. I want him to be hurt. Hurt as much as I was hurt. I want him to know a shadow of the pain he forced upon me. I want to kill him. He turns back to me. No twinkle. He used to twinkle a lot, I remember. Now his eyes (as blue as mine are green) look so solemn. Sad almost. Disappointed.

Disappointed?

Disappointed?

I can feel the power surging within me, rising up and up and up until it's bubbling and frothing and writhing and churning just below the surface.

How dare he.

How dare he.

HOW DARE HE!

HOW DARE HE!!

no

No.

Calm.

Not yet. Not yet. Not now. Later. Time. Take your time. Take my time. Can't kill him now. Can't kill him yet. Have to make him suffer first. Show him. Show him what he has done to me. Make him understand that it was his betrayal that destroyed me. His betrayal that made me what I am, what he can never become. Will never become. Kill him. Yes, I'll kill him. I'll kill him and all the others too. All the ones that abandoned me without reason, without cause, without warning.

But not now.

No.

First he must suffer.

As I suffered.

As I still suffer.

As will they all.

Painfully.

Slowly.

"Harry."

He's trying it again. He always tries it. That oh so wonderful grandfather routine. As if he really cares. If he cared, would he have sent me to Azkaban like that? Would he have believed those lies about me without question? Would he have abandoned me without a fight? Without even listening to my pleas? Would he?

I bare my teeth and hiss. "You cannot comprehend how close I am to killing you, traitor."

Grandfather is gone. Ah, here comes the ever concerned and caring headmaster act. Another of the facades he wears. The man has more masks to cover his face than a theatre company. I know what he's going to try next. Be reasonable, Harry. Stay calm, Harry. Hear me out, Harry. Don't do anything you might regret later, Harry. Don't rip my balls off and stuff them up my arse, Harry.

"Why do you want to kill me, Harry?"

A finely honed talent. He must practice.

"You never told me what I wanted to know, what I *needed* to know," I tell him. The loathing and hatred I feel for him fills my voice. I spit at his feet, show my contempt. "Why shouldn't I return the favour?"

"Harry--" Raise a hand, cut him off.

"I don't want to listen to your false platitudes, traitor."

Ooooh, I'm using big words.

"You have nothing to say that I'm willing to hear."

I push past him, knock him out of my way with a nudge of my shoulder.

"And I have nothing to say to the likes of you. Not yet."

"Potter!" Snape?

Look behind me. What? How did he get a wand? I destroyed their wands. It's in his other hand, his wand hand is hurt too much. Did he have it concealed in his robes. But I don't... my wand. He's using my wand. *My wand*. No. Not *my* wand. The wand I bought from Ollivander earlier today. I altered his memory. Easy. Getting the wand back from Snape would be even easier. Easy, but I don't need it. I don't want it.

I scare them more, doing what I can do, without a wand.

Such a primitive tool.

Child's toy.

He's walking towards me now. Wand's unsteady. He wants to be close enough to know that he won't miss. I don't have the time, nor patience for this bullshit wand waving. I'm beyond such childish games. I'm so much more than this. So much.

"Oh, shut the fuck up, Snape, and stay right where you are," I tell him.

That's funny, he actually listened.

Oh.

Oh, yes.

Of course.

He doesn't exactly have a choice now, does he?

I look past him --Snivellus-- and catch Dumbledore's gaze. The others are too busy worrying about their injuries or the slimey git to notice. I smirk -- should've let the Hat put me in Slytherin-- and lift my hands up. He can see they're empty. Misleading that. He must think this means I can do wandless magic. Close. But not. It's not magic. It's power. It's me.

"Look, ma, no wand!"

I turn to leave. The door leading out of the room is sealed. Locked. Bolted. That won't stop me from leaving. Nothing can stop me. Not even myself. The door explodes outwards, clearing the way for me. Took part of the wall with it. Lots of dust in the air. Stings at my eyes as I walk out. Wisely none of the idiots try to stop me. I almost wish they would.

I want to kill them.

All of them.

Everyone in this forsaken castle.

This forsaken school.

All the teachers.

All the students.

Every single wizard.

Every single witch.

All of them.

Without exception.

None deserve to be spare.

None.

Not even their owls, their cats or even any toads they might have.

Maybe, before I leave today, I'll turn anyone that gets between me and the front door into toads. Like Trevor. Neville never could keep track of where that stupid creature was. I wonder if any toads I might create would be lost just as easily. I doubt it, nobody was as absent minded as Neville. Quiet, shy, timid, underachieving, cauldron melting Neville. I considered him a friend after my fifth-year. After the Ministry of Magic. After the Department of Mysteries. I would have trusted him with my life after that night.

I did.

That was a mistake.

He betrayed me.

Abandoned me.

Just like the others.

He will pay, though.

Just like the others.

All of them.

Vaguely aware of shapes, students, scrambling to get out of my way. Maybe some of them recognise me. I don't know. I don't think so. At least I don't hear anyone screaming, "Run for your lives, it's Harry Potter! Aaaeeeeiii!"

Pity. That would have been funny. Might've lightened my mood.

As it is, I still want to hurt something. Kill something. Someone.

"Stupefy!!"

Someone up there must be smiling down on me right now. Thank you, whoever you are.

Aurors. Five of them. One of them tried to stun me. Idiot. I might've been bloody pissed off and a wee bit distracted by thoughts of carnage and revenge, but it'll take more than that for anything so pathetic to catch me unawares. I learn from my mistakes. What happened when I got here won't happen again. Fool me once; shame on me. Try to fool me twice; I'll kill the fuckers before they get the chance.

Spreading out around me. Circling me. Blocking my way out. I could just leave. I don't need to Apparate. The wards around the school can't stop me. They can't stop me. Should I? No. I think an object lesson in my power might be in order here. Show that old bastard Dumbledore a preview of things to come. A taste of what the destruction of Azkaban has unleashed.

"Let. Me. Through," I grind out. They must recognise me by now. Black hair. Green eyes. Great bleeding lightning bolt scar on his head. Gee, I wonder what that could be. Pity they're not as intimidated I would've hoped they'd be - facing down the infamous rapist and murderer; Harry Potter.

"I don't think so, sir. You're not going anywhere," says the leader, the eldest of the five. Sir? Who the fuck is he calling *sir*? Me? There's a laugh. Maybe they don't recognise me after all. Their funeral. He lifts his wand to my face. The rest keep their weapons --wands?-- trained on my body.

Very professional.
Very intimidating.
Very fucking annoying.
I'm not in the mood.

"Let. Me -- fuck it."

Red. White. Grey.
Blood. Bone. Brains.

I'm rather surprised, as the Aurors' bodies fall to the floor, that none of the gore landed on me. The five of them were standing in a circle, with me in the middle. It really stretches credibility that not a single speck came my way. Of course, since it was their spinal columns that exploded upwards and out the top of their skulls, perhaps the assorted mush was deflected away from me. Or maybe --more likely I think-- my own fastidious need to be clean and neat is what sheltered me from the spray of fluids and flesh. My power turned it away from me, directing the mess outwards.

Onto the students gather round.
Watching.
They're not going to forget this show.

Silence.

A long moment.

They don't understand what's happened. It hasn't sunk in. Slowly. Slowly the comprehension begins to dawn in them all. The older students first, but not by much. Soon. Soon one of them will break the silence. Shatter it with a scream and then everything will dissolve into chaos. Anarchy. Bedlam. Music to my ears. Another symphony. Yes, it starts. A girl. She screams enough to rival the Hogwarts Express. I'm tempted to repeat what I did to Snape, but restrain myself. This is supposed to be a lesson to them all.

How will they learn if they can't panic properly?

Lots of screams now. My symphony is beautiful. Each section of the orchestra plays in perfect harmony with the other. Horror. Terror. Disgust. Revulsion. It's a wonder to hear. Magnificent.

Some of the weaker stomachs cannot contain themselves anymore. The acrid stench of vomit joins the bitter tang of blood as the sound of retching blends into the music. I'll bet it's a bunch of duffy Hufflepuffs. They never had the stomach for the real world -- except Cedric, but he was an exception. He was a hero. I was supposed to be a hero. They turned me into a villain. That's what I am now. I kill people. Heroes don't murder people. I do. Because of them. Because of what they did to me. Because they abandoned me --betrayed me-- to a fate worse than death.

The symphony is rising to a crescendo. Panic is spreading throughout the school. Pathetic really, how easily these children fall into disarray. They always have and always will. They are weak. Not like I was. I was strong. When there was a troll in the dungeons (how stupid we were to fall for that) I was the one that kept his cool and thought of Hermione. When everyone panicked at the bloody message Tom left by a petrified Mrs Norris, I was the one that remained focused. I was always apart from the rest of those feeble children. Surrounded by "*friends*" and housemates and acquaintances and enemies, but always alone. Always. I've never known anything else.

They're running now.
Running from me.
They needn't bother.
They cannot run from me.
They cannot run from the inevitable.
And it is inevitable.
My vengeance.

I step around the bloody remains of the lead Auror, careful not to slip in the spreading pool of blood surrounding his headless corpse. Headless. I bet ol' Nick will be jealous. The children, those that have not already fled, scream even louder and finally turn tail. They must think I'm coming after them now. I laugh as I stride through the corridors, leaving a trail of bloody footprints in my wake.

The doors have been locked shut. Because of my escape? Maybe. Can't stop me. Nothing can stop me. I'm about to blast them off their hinges, but stop. A thought, following on from before. Tom. Mrs Norris. The basilisk. The message. A message. I should leave a message. Let them know who it was that came a visiting this day. I think about using the same spot Tom did in my second year. No. No. I don't want to follow in that bastard's footsteps. This place, here, will be a much better canvas for me to paint my message.

Harry Potter has returned to Hogwarts.
Let the traitors beware.
My justice. My revenge.

I leave that burned into the Entrance Hall floor. Burning. The flames, burning as green as my eyes, are as eternal as my hatred for those who betrayed me. Nothing they try will be able to extinguish the fiery words proclaiming my return. I shall not permit that. Not until my thirst for vengeance has been slaked. Then... then I will let the flames die. But for now they will burn. A warning. A reminder.

Footsteps.
Pounding on stone.
Drawing closer.
Reinforcements?
I'm still not in the mood.

I wait until the Aurors come bursting into the room. They come at me from three sides. Wands drawn. Curses and hexes on their lips. I stay just long enough for them to see me. To know that I am standing there. Then I go to Hogsmeade. I imagine the panic that must cause. Such a sudden disappearance, right before their eyes. They don't know what I can do. They don't know that I'm no longer using their pitiful magic. They don't know that I'm beyond that. They will draw their conclusions from what little they do know. It isn't much. If they knew anything they would never have believed me capable of what they accused me of. Rape and murder.

Fools.

They can't imagine what I am capable of now. Which means that they will, once again, start making idiotic and uninformed assumptions. They will believe that I escaped them by Apparating. That is what a wizard would do. I was a wizard. Not any more, but they don't know. Yet. If they believe that I can Apparate, then they will believe that I can Apparate through the anti-Apparation barrier that enshrouded their precious school. *That* will scare them. Not even Voldemort can Apparate through such an obstacle. They will think that I can. That I am more powerful than Voldemort - which I am, though in a different way than they think.

That will terrify them.

Hogsmeade. I remember it fondly. More or less. There's Honeydukes. The Three Broomsticks is around the corner. People are milling about. Not as many as before. The war has made people cautious. They don't venture out anymore unless dictated by necessity. Some have noticed me, but none seem to recognise who I am yet.

Time to catch their attention. I was always good at that. Being a celebrity and all. Now I'm even better. In some ways being infamous is better than being famous. I'm in one of the main thoroughfares of the village. Pretty much in the middle of everything. Perfect place to put down roots, don't you think? I throw my hands into the air, not consciously thinking about what I want. My power doesn't need explicit instructions. It knows what I need more than I do. My new home appears with a concussive blast of air, a clap of thunder.

Definitely caught their attention.

I smile and step inside.

Things didn't go quite as I had planned.

But that's all right.

I think I got my point across.

TBC...

From the Abyss Eye of the Needle

Chapter Four
~ Eye of the Needle ~

Hogwarts.

Looks so small from up here.

It is small.
Like a stamp.
I want to smack it with postage cancelled.

Actually, everything looks small from up here. I can't even see the people on the ground, I'm so high up. They don't even look like ants. Pity. If they did I'd be tempted to step on them. No, they don't look like ants. Smaller. Dust mites. Dust. Useless. Worthless. Pointless. They are nothing to me. Less than nothing.

Yet I want to walk amongst them.

Not because I'm lonely or yearn for companionship. Quite the contrary. I hate them. I despise them with everything that I am. Everything that I was. Everything that they have made me become. Everything that I will be. I hate them and *that* is why I wish to be in their midst. I want them to see what they have done to me. I want to see them realize that they were the ones that melded me into what I am. I want to see them realize that I came back to repay them in kind for what they did to me.

I want their fear. I want to see it. I want to smell it. To taste it. Hear it. Feel it.

I want to become their fear.

After blowing those five Aurors' heads off, I think I'm getting off to a good start.

That and creating this tower have managed to give the townsfolk of Hogsmeade, and those brats at Hogwarts, a thus far healthy fear of me. Truth be told, I think they're more impressed with the tower than they are the decapitated Aurors. After all, this is a time of war. Death, carnage and slaughter have become familiar faces to them. I'll show them a new face to hide from.

Yes, death is commonplace now. Nothing to get excited over.

Conjuring up a mile-high tower with a thought... now that's something to talk about.

This tower *is* a mile high. I think. I haven't exactly taken a yardstick and checked, but if there's one thing I've discovered about my power, it's that it takes things very literally. I want a mile-high tower, even if the dimension is only subconscious, then that's exactly what I get. It's only a couple of yards across, on the outside, but it *is* a mile high. I think.

That's something I've always liked about magic. That appearances can be so deceiving. A mile high tower that's a yard or two on the outside, a hundred or more on the inside. Deceptive that. By its apparent internal volume I think my tower's bigger than Hogwarts. They really shouldn't take my accomplishment at face value. Pity I didn't realize that applied to people as well as rooms and buildings. Like my so-called friends. I thought they'd always be there for me. I thought I could trust them. I thought I could love them. Love.

I no longer remember the meaning of that word.

It doesn't matter.

I don't need *love* anymore.
I don't want it.
I have something better.
Power.
I can do anything.
Anything at all.

Almost.

I can raise mountains with the slightest gesture.

But I can't get rid of this bloody scar.
I can level those same mountains in an eye blink.
But I can't raise the dead.

I know.

I tried.
Cedric.
Sirius.
Hagrid.

Conclusive proof, I think, that the universe still hates me.
Or is continuing to play with me, like a cat with a mouse.
The universe had better watch out if it thinks it can do that.
Cornered mice have a habit of pulling giant mallets out of the most unlikely places.

And my mallet is bigger than any other.

I wish I had some binoculars. Hermione used to watch my Quidditch matches through binoculars. I don't plan on watching Quidditch. I'm more interested in seeing what the assholes at the foot of my tower are trying today.

It's been nearly a month since I arrived at Hogwarts. A month since I revealed myself to that old bastard and the rest of my betrayers. At least those who were there. McGonagall. Snape. Snape... I wonder if they've managed to move him yet. I told him to shut up and stay right where he was. My magic --power-- is different to what they taught at Hogwarts. I ask and I receive. I want and I obtain. I will and it is done. I believe they will have no more luck moving that bastard than they have had luck getting inside my tower.

It's been nearly a month since I created this tower. I think I'll call it *The Needle*, 'cause it must certainly resemble one. A mile high, a couple of yards thick, and made from some shiny material that is as immutable as my hatred. My need for vengeance. I would call it *The Wand*, but that would only remind me that I haven't had my own "wand" serviced by some tight, hot, wet, little Muggle bitch since I made my return.

I suppose I'll simply have to find a tight, hot, wet, little witch bitch that I can bend over and help myself to.

Preferably one of those whores that betrayed me.
Not McGonagall.
Don't want to *imagine* that.

Tonks.
Luna.
Ginny.
Hermione.
Hermione.
Yes...
Yes.
I think I'll visit her... second. After.
Yes.
Second.
Or fourth, if you look at it that way.
Family before friends, after all.
Yes.

"Harry Potter, sir?"

Ah, my hired help.

I don't know why I was surprised when Dobby turned up the morning after I arrived here. I should have known he'd never believe I was guilty. Even though he was free, and employed by that old bastard, he somehow considers *me* to be his master. Probably the only person in the world that was happy to hear of my return. More than happy. Delighted. Ecstatic. Hell, I thought he was going to cum, he was so excited when he Apparated into my bedroom.

Scared me shitless.

I was expecting an army of Aurors or Death Eaters or both to start Apparating into the Needle at any second. I'd created nearly a hundred... I don't know what they are exactly. Or what to call them. They're certainly big mother fuckers though. Look sort of like a cross between a medieval suit of armour and something out of Star Wars. Ten foot tall and each with enough raw magic and hi-tech gizmos to level Hogsmeade twice. Haven't a clue how they work either, but I've placed five of them on every floor of the Needle now. That's eight hundred of the bloody things. An army. My army. Haven't tested them in battle yet, but I bet they'll be almost unstoppable.

I had willed nearly a hundred of the bloody things into existence before Dobby managed to calm me --and by proxy himself-- down. To my relief I learnt that none of the witches or wizards outside have been able to Apparate inside the Needle. They'd been trying from almost the minute I'd created it. Dobby had only been able to Apparate inside because he was a house-elf and uses a different kind of magic. I fixed that now. Nothing can enter the Needle without my permission. Not house-elves. Not owls. Not cats. Not snakes. Not even bacteria. Nothing.

[illegible]

Sigh.

Seems the crazy twit's punishing himself for disturbing me. Must've taken my lack of a prompt reply as a censure of sorts. Some things never change, I suppose. Pathetic really. Not that I'm one to talk. After all, I used to beat myself up (though not physically) when I still cared about what people thought. When I was worried about their opinions of me. Not any more. Not ever again.

I'll try and wean Dobby off this habit of self-flagellation.

"Bad Dobby!"
thunk
"Bad Dobby!"
thunk

It's going to take some work and a lot of time.

"Stop head butting my desk, Dobby," I finally say.

"Thank you, Harry Potter, sir. Sorry, Harry Potter, sir."

I think he must be seeing double. Maybe even triple or more. His eyes are definitely a little glazed over. I think about moving to support him as he sways there in front of me, staring up at me with those great big eyes of his. Tennis ball eyes. Never played tennis. I don't move. He wouldn't appreciate my attempting to help him. Protested whenever I tried when I was still in school. Don't think that's changed either. In a way I'm relieved. hate physical contact.

Sounds hypocritical, doesn't it?

I abhor being touched, yet I spent the three months before coming here indulging in an orgy of physical pleasure. I don't understand it myself --not that I want to-- but that's how it is. I never found comfort in the arms of those girls and women I slept with. Comfort? I've never known it. Not really. I thought I did. Once. At Hogwarts. With Hermione.

She scarred me.

The three parallel slashes across my cheek tingle with the memory.

No, I didn't fuck those girls so that I could lie comfortably in their sweet embrace -- *sweet embrace* ? Gods, I'm sounding so clichéd. It was pleasure. My pleasure. I screwed their brains out because I wanted to get my rocks off. That rock. Azkaban. My very own private hell for three years. Three lifetimes. Three eternities. Longer even. And shorter. My perception of time is different from what it used to be. Bursts of speed where everything seems to happen all at once. Periods of stillness where life seems like an underwater ballet.

Perhaps it's just a shift in my perception of the universe. Or maybe I can actually control the flow of time itself. Not that I need to of course. But it is an added bonus. One of the changes I've been through since my... rebirth, as it were. There've been a lot of changes. The way I act, the way I see things, the way I think. Guess I shouldn't be surprised by the last one. Years of Dementor induced insanity would change the way anyone thinks.

Just look at what those accursed things did to Sirius when he was there.

Course, he was always a bit off. Him and Dad. *And the other two*. They'll get theirs, those two. Mark my words they will. Wormtail that filthy rat traitor. Literally. And the werewolf. They will meet their fate at my hand, the both of them. Sirius never betrayed me. Nor did Dad. Unless you take into account the fact that they got themselves killed... leaving me alone. If Sirius had still been alive I'd bet all the gold in Gringotts that he'd have come after me. Gotten me out of Azkaban, regardless of the risk. Regardless of whether or not the attempt would've killed him.

Like it did at the Ministry.

My own damn stupid fault that was. A mistake. One that I most certainly won't be making again. Not that I could really. Sirius died because he came charging in like some deranged knight in shining armour. He was deranged, y'know. Had to be. And my father with him. I mean, really...

Padfoot?

Prongs?

Bonkers, the both of them. Even if they were only a pair of schoolboys.

But it won't happen again. Nobody's left that cares enough to try and rescue me from anything, let alone a life threatening situation. They abandoned me to hell. Condemned me to it really. I seriously doubt they would risk their lives on my behalf after having done something like that.

"What did you want to speak with me about, Dobby?"

"Dobby had served Harry Potter's breakfast in the dining hall, Harry Potter, sir."

Practically swooning with enthusiasm.

Bouncing up and down so eagerly.

I resist the temptation to sigh.

"Thank you, Dobby. Let's go then, shall we?"

I turn away from the small balcony I've been standing on. Here on the top floor of the Needle. Best view of Hogwarts from here. The place in my private chambers, which occupy this entire level, that looks down onto the world outside. A world I have come to abhor.

"Don't disappear, just yet, Dobby."

I could feel that he was preparing to leave.

House-elf magic is different from wizard magic.

But I can feel it --sense it-- just as easily.

Over the past month I've learned to read it too.

"There's something I want to talk to you about."

"Has Dobby done something wrong, Harry Potter, sir?"

Harry Potter, sir.

I'm going to get him to call me just plain *Harry* , or at least just plain *sir* , even if it kills one of us. Probably him, since I'm pretty sure nothing on this earth could kill me any more even if they tried. Hard. I must admit though, it would be fun. Seeing them try that is. Voldemort. Dumbledore. The Ministry. I think I'll enjoy playing with them. It's about time the tables were turned and for once I can be the one that does the manipulating.

Hmm. I better answer before Dobby starts bashing his head against something again.

"Actually, Dobby, I want to discuss your wages."

"Dobby's wages, Harry Potter, sir?"

He looks so surprised.

I look at him with exaggerated incredulousness.

"Of course, Dobby. You can't honestly believe I expect you to wait on me hand and foot without some compensation. In fact, I already feel positively guilt that we haven't addressed this sooner. You've been in my employ, such as it is, for nearly a month now."

"Harry Potter, sir, is most gracious. Dobby does not need to be paid."

I swear he's blushing.

"We can discuss it after breakfast."

Almost at the table. He's outdone himself once again. Even when I was at Hogwarts...

"In the meanwhile, Dobby, I have another job for you to do."

He's bouncing up and down again. So eager to serve. So eager to please. Just as I was. Just as I will never be again. I smile wistfully. "There's a note that I need you to deliver. I'd like you to hand it personally to Professor Dumbledore. And while you're at Hogwarts, you can inform the headmaster that you are no longer in his employ, but mine instead."

"Yes sir, Harry Potter, sir."

The note appears in my hand. It's exactly as I imagined it. Exactly as I wanted it. I unfold it briefly to check. Just in case. Yes. Exactly. I hand it to Dobby and he disappears with a crack. The only creature, other than myself, who can come and go as he pleases through the Needle's protective barriers. A part of me wishes I had gone with him. Just to see the look on old man Dumbledore's face when he reads that note.

Just thought I'd let you know; I intend to finish what Hagrid started nine years ago.

I wonder if he'll be able to work it out quickly enough to try and save them.

Don't really care.

He can't save them.

Nobody can.

Mmmm, I wish I knew how Dobby makes these eggs so perfect. And the toast... such a wonder golden brown and just the right crispiness.

I'll finish breakfast. Give Dumbledore a little time. After all, the game's not fun unless some challenge is presented to the players. My revenge will be much more satisfying if I have to put a little more effort into it. Not that I put much effort into anything these days.

Still... I'll finish breakfast. Give Dumbledore and his feeble Order of the Phoenix a bit of a head start. Then, for the first time in a month, for the first time since creating this tower, I'll be going back out in to the world.

It's been a long time since I was in Surrey.

Time to pay a visit.

TBC...

From the Abyss A Family Affair

Chapter Five
~ A Family Affair ~

Hmph.

Not all that different from what I remember.

Pity.

Some part of me had been hoping this place had been razed to the ground.
Like the Burrow.

Good.

Another part is delighted; it means I can finally take my revenge on them.
I've been waiting a long time...

It really hasn't changed all that much.
Different car standing in the driveway.
Newer model.
Different flowers around the garden.
Nasturtiums.
Personally I preferred the Begonias.

I wonder if they're still here, or if they moved away. Only one way to find out, I suppose. It's a Sunday, so they should be home. They never used to go out on Sundays. Wonderful preservers of habit and routine. They wouldn't change their customs if their lives depended on it. Which in a way they do, since I'm stopping by for a visit.

I walk up the path to the front door. The garden lawn is as immaculate as ever. They must have found someone else to do all their dirty work after I was imprisoned. Heh, they were probably angrier with me for that, for making them spend some of their money, than they were with the fact of why I was being condemned. Or maybe they got smart and took in another orphan to use as slave labour. Someone else to hide in the cupboard under the stairs. Someone else to neglect and abuse.

If I find anyone in that cupboard I'll do worse than kill them.

I knock on the door.

Who am I kidding? I'm going to do worse than kill them anyway.

I knock on the door again.
Insistently.

A bellowed response. "I'm coming, dammit!"

I knock on the door one last time.
Just to get his goat.

"Dammit, I'm right here!" he practically spits as he swings the door open. Glaring at me like some malevolent gargoyle. Gargoyles are better looking, actually. Goyle. Malfoy's lackey. I'd say he and Uncle Vernon here have about the same brain capacity. Who knows, maybe they share that lone, itty-bitty, grey cell between them. No, probably not. That would be giving them too much credit. Neither of them would willingly share anything with anyone. Vernon especially.

His face is almost puce coloured as he glares at me and bellows in my face. "Who are you and what d'you want here?!?" A spray of spit in my face. Not too different from a garden hose during a hot summer day. Maybe a bit wetter though. Doesn't matter. My power takes care of it. Not a drop touches me.

"Vernon."
I purr the name.
"As charmingly ebullient as ever. Why am I not surprised?"

He blinks in surprise.

Tries to recognise me.
Not surprised he can't.
The Dursleys--
 the name curdles darkly in the corners of my mind
--scarcely bothered to pay any attention to me.
Except when things went wrong.

They'll be paying a great deal of attention to me soon.
Things are about to go very wrong.

"Do I know you, boy?"

Boy.

How ironic.

Boy.

He doesn't recognise me.

Boy.

But he addresses me as he always did.

Boy.

I'm going to enjoy this.
So much.

"Actually, Vernon, you do know me. Much to your regret."

A puckered frown.
Idiot.
Anyone with two brain cells would have recognised me by now.
Ah.
Yes.
I'd forgotten.
He only has the one, and half of that is on permanent loan to the Gargoyle.

Time to remind him.

"It's been a while, hasn't it, Vernon?"
Nearly four years now.
"Nearly four years now. More actually."

He tries to slam the door shut in my face. I stop him with a hand. He's a big man, Vernon is. Stocky, with lots of meat on his bones. Unlike Dudley, his weight isn't entirely made up of blubber. Even with my newfound height and build he's bigger than me. Should be stronger. Definitely has more weight to throw behind him than I do. My hand is pressed flat against the door, holding it half open. I can see his consternation. He's straining himself. Shifting to push against the door with all his not inconsiderable weight. I hold the door open with just my one hand and with such ease as if I were pushing against a newborn baby rather than an adult sumo wrestler. Puffing and panting in his exertions as he struggles against my opposing force.

I'm stronger than he is. Stronger than anyone alive. Or dead.
Azkaban may have driven me to the brink of sanity--
 and beyond

--but I'm as intelligent as ever. More so even.
There's a fine line between insanity and genius.
I frequently cross from one side to the other.

What would happen if the power I gained in my freedom were to leave as suddenly as it came? I cannot risk being left without something to defend myself. I was always a better than average magic user. Powerful. Focused. I could perform the Patronus Charm, which even adult witches and wizards find difficult, when I was only thirteen. But I haven't used my magic since my betrayal and incarceration in Azkaban.

I don't know if I even remember how.

I certainly don't think I'll ever be able to produce a Patronus.
You need a happy memory for that.

I think it's time that I make myself a happy memory.
The memory of when I was finally able to take revenge on my "*family*".
Years of subservience. Years of degradation. Years of neglect.
Ten years in a cupboard... alone in the dark, under the stairs.
Yes, my vengeance will be a sweet memory.

My regenerated body is a masterpiece. Three years of wasting away in Azkaban. Undone in a moment. I made myself better than I was before. Better. Stronger. Faster. I have that tall, lean, sleek and toned look of an athlete. But I am stronger than I seem to be. Stronger than anyone would believe possible. I can crush stone blocks into powder with out straining. Dobby was very alarmed by that accident. I'd been thinking about those

red haired traitors at the time. My hands clenched as the stone railing I was holding and it crumbled like so much dust. My tower, the Needle, is a mile high. Taller than any building in the world. I can climb the stairs, from ground to roof, in less than five minutes. I don't even breathe hard afterwards. I could rip a man three times my size apart with my bare hands. Haven't tried it yet, but I haven't been in the same room as Vernon Dursley until now. Speaking of which...

A slight flexing of my arm and the door Vernon has been straining against it knocked wide open. It actually comes off its hinges as the old fool tumbles to the floor and lands on his fat arse.

"Vernon? Who is-- VERNON!!!"

Ah, my *beloved* Aunt Petunia. As horse faced as ever I see.
Heh.
Horse faced. Soon I'll be saying that literally. Soon...

"Who are you? What do you want?"
She's shrieking at me.
As usual.
Irritating, harsh, voice.
As usual.
Kneeling down, next to Vernon.
Not usual.

"What do I want?"

The question is dripping with scorn. With contempt. Aunt Petunia is helping that tub of lard husband of hers to his feet, both of them staring up at me. Eyes wide with worry, with alarm, with fright, with terror. I will relish this moment for years to come. Finally, I have them cowering before me. Like the animals they are. For they are animals. Nobody, nothing human, would have done what they did to me. And now, now that I am no longer human myself, now that I am so much more, now that I am all but a god... now I will return the favour.

But wait.
We're missing one last character in this little play.

"Mum? Dad?"

Ah, so he *is* here.
I had wondered.
Visiting?
Probably not. I'll wager he's still living here.
Big D would never be able to survive on his own.
I did. I still do.

"Dudley."
His face goes white when he sticks his head through the living room door.

"Who are you?" Just as belligerent as his father. As his mother. "What are you doing to my folks?"

I smile that vampire smile I've perfected.
They cringe at the sight.
Aunt Petunia whimpers against Vernon.
Dudley pales another shade of white.
Vernon, to my surprise, demonstrates a modicum of bravery.
He shields his wife behind him and tries to match my eyes.

I ignore them for a moment. The front door is lying at my feet. I step through the empty doorway and into the house, the place where I grew up. Ah, there's my cupboard. So close. So far. So long ago. A lifetime. More. I step further into the house and off the fallen door. I glance down at it and with a nod of my head it rises into the air. Slides snugly back into its proper place. Can't have the neighbours watching, after all. This is a private matter. Family only.

"You - you're one of *them*, aren't you?" Vernon accuses, going red in the face. He snarls, not unlike that horrible bulldog his sister had. What was its name again? Ripper. "Get out! I will not tolerate any abnormal freaks such as you in my house! D'you hear me? Get out! OUT!!!"

"I am *not* one of *them*," I counter.

Anger rises, bubbles and boils within me at the thought of being compared to those traitors. I would have willingly abandoned them entirely after my escape from Azkaban, would have never returned to their forsaken world of magic, were it not for Voldemort. I came back with the sole purpose of killing that bastard. And to take my revenge on those that betrayed me. Abandoned me. After that, when I am done, Harry Potter will disappear. I enjoyed those three months in the Muggle world. When my task is finally complete, that is where I shall return to.

"You can't trick us, you -- gurkle!"

I've clamped my hand on his throat, choking him off. It's not easy. The man has a neck as thick as a bull. If I weren't as strong as I am now, I'd never be able to do this. I raise my arm, lifting his feet clear of the floor. There's only the slightest tremor in my muscles, the strain is barely noticeable. I

could hold him here all morning.

"Never compare me to those miserable creatures," I snap. I pull my arm in so that I'm looking right into his eyes, my own aflame with burning anger. "I am nothing like them. *Nothing*!"

I toss him back, so that he crashes against Aunt Petunia, knocking them both to the floor in a heap.

"Mum! Dad!" Dudley runs to join them.

Aunt Petunia looks up at me.

I can see when the realization hits her.

The widening of her eyes.

The catch in her breath.

"Oh my God."

"Now *that*" I agree, smiling that smile, "is a far better description of what I am."

"Petunia? What is it? What's wrong?" Vernon is clamouring to his feet, helping Aunt Petunia up. She doesn't look away from me, her gaze frozen on me. I wonder what triggered it. The hair? She was always complaining about my hair. The eyes? Was it her sister's eyes that she finally recognised? I doubt it could have been my face. After three years in hell, I bear only the vaguest resemblance to the sixteen year old boy she last saw me as. It couldn't have been the scar, that damned scar. I made sure my hair was hiding it from view before I left the Needle.

"It's him," she whispers, unable to break my gaze. "It's him."

"Who? Dammit, Petunia, what are you talking about?"

"Really, Uncle Vernon," I doubt even he could fail to realize who I am now. After all, who else would call him *Uncle* Vernon, save his only nephew. Me. "I would have thought it was obvious."

He turns white as a sheet.

"The boy."

That makes me angry again.

The boy.

The boy!

He doesn't even have the decency to call me by name!

"Yes," I confirm darkly, "the boy."

He turns red as a Muggle fire hydrant.

"You miserable little ingrate! How dare you show your face here!"

He charges at me, just like the bull that he is.

I watch as he storms towards me, his jowls bouncing up and down with every step. Moustache bristling under his nose. Piggy eyes glistening with hatred. Hatred that doesn't hold a candle to my own. He's moving so slowly. So slowly. It will take him a minute to cross the room and reach me. It's that different perception of time I've been experiencing ever since leaving Azkaban. A moment lasting an eternity. An age passing by in an eye blink.

He's starting to move his arms. Spreading them out wide to grab me. Crush me. I watch him as he comes. He's taking so long I'd have time for a cuppa before I need worry about him. Still, I have to wonder. What should I do? With my power I could tear him into bloody ribbons with scarcely a thought. Or simply will him out of existence. But I won't. He's a simple minded man. He wouldn't appreciate what I can do to him using my power. He wouldn't understand it. He'd certainly be scared of it, but he wouldn't understand it.

Physical violence.

That he will understand.

Most men do.

A leftover from when we used to beat on our chests and hit the women over the head with our clubs before dragging them off to the nearest cave for a night of shagging. Heh. I wonder if I should be thinking that literally. If anyone had to knock a woman unconscious so that he could get her in bed, Vernon would. Dudders as well. After all, what woman in her right mind would willingly fuck an oaf of a neanderthal like Vernon? I certainly can't imagine my prissy Aunt...

"Oh yes, Vernon ! Yes! Harder! Harder, Vernon ! Harder! Faster! Oh, yes!"

Then again, maybe I can imagine it. Gods, I wish I hadn't. That was certainly not an image I'd ever want to see. Vernon's fat arse pumping away between Aunt Petunia's skinny legs. Rates up there with that bitch of a whore Umbridge in a string bikini. Or worse even, Snape in a bikini. Snape and Umbridge together, taking those same bikinis off... I have to swallow against the bile rising up from *that* thought.

Children are always supposed to have difficulty imagining their parents having sex. It's one of those things they'd rather not think about I suppose. Not me. I fantasize about it. Watching them. James and Lily. Hearing their voices crying out with pleasure as their bodies slam together in the height of passion. I considered it to be the ultimate expression of their love. Their love for each other. The love that resulted in my birth.

I can certainly deal with that more easily than I can the concept of Vernon and Aunt Petunia going at it.

Hmm, he's getting closer. Almost half way at me.

I'm bored.
Why wait?
Step forward.
Left jab.
To his jaw.
Driving right.
To his gut.
His eyes bulge and his cheeks puff out as his breath is expelled in a rush. Like a puppet that's strings have been cut he goes limp. I take a short step back, getting my distancing right. He's beginning to collapse, falling down, but it will be minutes before he reaches the floor. I still have time. I twist and plant my foot against his chest.

Time catches up.

Vernon has suddenly changed direction, thanks to my punches and the kick. I'm sure he's going to have whiplash from the abruptness of it. He literally flies backwards, sailing through the air. Ten, fifteen feet straight back and into the wall between where Aunt Petunia and Dudley are standing. He impacts with a resounding crash, leaving a cartoon-like Vernon shaped dent in the plaster. Hangs suspended for a second before dropping to the floor with an equally resounding crash. The entire house seems to be shaking. Picture frames, photos of this happy family (minus myself of course) tumble from their places on the wall. The sound of glass breaking as they spill to the floor all round.

Dudley and Aunt Petunia are screaming. Aunt Petunia drops to her knees and tries to help Vernon, but his eyes are still crossed. Doubt he even knows where he is right now. Dudley bellows, rather like a bull chasing a cow in heat I suppose, and follows in his father's footsteps. Apparently he's not quite the coward I remember him being. Hiding in the corner from Hagrid. Squealing at the mere sight of the Weasleys, especially Fred and George. Mewling pathetically as the Dementors approached. Perhaps he's forgotten. Or he's just stupid. There's a fine line --I know-- between courage and stupidity. Knowing Dudley, and his parents, I'll wager on this being a display of his stupidity.

He swings at me. He had developed a fondness for boxing before I left. I wouldn't have expected him to just come in with arms flaying about like this. Such a lack of control. Lack of finesse. This will just make it easier. I duck under his first punch. Under his second as well. Rise up and block his third with my arm. Clamp my hand on his wrist, latching on to him and holding him in an iron grip. I squeeze. The sound of bones cracking like dry twigs fills the house. He barely has time to register what I've done when I swing him around --like a rag doll, not that I ever had a chance to see one, let alone play with one-- and slam him into the wall. Like Vernon, he leaves a dent. Picture frames fall like an avalanche again.

"My, how the mighty have fallen."
I sneer at them. Snape would be impressed.
"Pitiful really."

I reach down, pick Dudley up by the front of his shirt. It clearly strains not to tear under his weight as I carry him to the other side of the entrance hall and deposit him in a heap by his parents. Vernon seems to have shaken off his daze and is glaring up at me. A mixture of hate and fear. Mostly fear. Aunt Petunia looks utterly terrified and is trying to pull Dudley's bulk closer to her. Whether for his comfort or hers I don't know. She isn't having much success.

I squat down on my haunches, more or less eye-level with the three of them.

"I tortured one of my professors until she was insane."
Trelawney.
"I raped and butchered two of my classmates."
Parvati. Padma.
"I murdered the very first friend I ever had."
Hagrid.

Of course, I didn't really do any of that.
Of course, they don't know that.

I grin. The smile Death makes when he comes for you.

"Now it's your turn."

Dudley's blubbing like he always does. Clutching his wrist to his chest with his good hand. Looking at me with unrestrained terror in his dull eyes. Terror that I created within him. Vernon's still glaring at me, but I think it's more out of habit than anything else. The fear he's feeling is literally reeking off of him. It smells wonderful. Tastes even better. A nectar and ambrosia that I willingly feast upon. Delicious. Even better than Dobby's breakfast earlier this morning. Must remember to find out how he makes those eggs so perfect. Aunt Petunia looks at me, dread in her eyes. She's not sneering disdainfully at me any more. I think, perhaps more than the other two, that she can sense the inevitability of this meeting.

"Harry--"
Harry? This is the first time I can remember her ever calling me by name.
"--why are you doing this to us?"
Is it because she's scared of me now? Terrified? Trying to placate me?
Might as well try to stave off Death itself by holding out a bouquet of roses.
Or maybe a box of little chocolates, all shaped like little scythes...

Wait.

Why?
Is that what she asked?
Would she really dare?
Why?

"Why?"

Could they honestly be that stupid?

"*Why*?"

Could they honestly not understand?

"You want to know *why*? Why I am here? Why I am doing this? Why I have come for you?"

My voice is a deadly whisper.

"Did you really think I would forget? Forget all those years? All those years in the cupboard? All those years of being given hand-me-down clothes? All those years having my birthday ignored? All those years when I got toothpicks and paperclips for Christmas? All those years I did chores while Dudley sat on his fat arse and watched the telly? All those years of being punished for things I did not do or could not control? Did you really think I would forget everything you did to me? That I wouldn't, one day, come back?"

I rise to my feet. Towering over them. I manipulate the world around us. Making it darker. Shadows deepen and lengthen as if the day were suddenly winding down and settling into night, rather than midmorning. My voice is still a whisper, rasping in the utter silence filling this miserable house. Not a sound from outside intrudes. A silencing charm perhaps? I don't know and don't particularly care either. If it helps scare these creatures cowering at my feet, then it's fine by me.

"Did you really think I wouldn't want to repay your *generosity*?"

Aunt Petunia winces at the harshness of this question. The sarcasm I laded that last word with. Generosity indeed. As if they ever went out of their way to accommodate me during my time with them.

"Did you really think I wouldn't want revenge?"

A foul stench reaches my nose. A bitter, acrid smell. I know it. After years in Azkaban, even if I was completely out of my mind during that time, I couldn't help but know the smell of someone fouling himself. It happened to me often enough I imagine, though I can't remember it. Being mentally brutalized by the Dementors tends to cause one to lose control of one's body for a time. A long time. Until I escaped. Until I killed those foul creatures and erased their blight from my mind and soul.

I wonder which one it is. Ah, Dudley. Ever the coward. I can see the dark stain of his piss soaking through the front of his trousers. He's shivering uncontrollably, almost as if he's in the throes of a fit. Rather like how he was after that brief encounter with the Dementors before my fifth year. I wonder if perhaps I took a part of the Dementors with me when I wiped them out and levelled their island. If I could duplicate their effect...

I shift around until I'm standing right in front of my cousin. The boy who tormented me. *Harry Hunting*. He's still a boy. I'm a man. I kick him once, twice. Not hard, just enough to focus his attention on me. "Tell me, Dudley... Dudley, are you listening? Are you?" I wait until he nods. Doesn't meet my eyes though. No surprise. "Good. Now, tell me... d'you remember Hagrid?"

He shakes his head dumbly. Again, not a surprise. From what I remember and what I know of Dudley, if it's not served to him on a plate then he's not likely to pay much attention to it. I prod him again with my foot. "Of course you do, Dudley. Big man. Had a little pink umbrella. Gave you a present."

Still, he shakes his head. More emphatically now. Perhaps he does remember, but is in denial.

"Oink oink, Dudders."

Another smell --even fouler than the last-- as he loses control of his bowels. Yes, he remembers Hagrid. And, if the horror dawning in his eyes, dawning in Vernon's eyes, dawning in Aunt Petunia's eyes, is any indication... he remembers what Hagrid did to him all those years ago. In the shack on the rock in the sea on my birthday. Quite a tale. Quite a tail. What was it my friend said? Tried to change him into a pig, but he was so much like one already that a tail was the best he could manage. Something like that. Thanks for the inspiration, Hagrid. I'll make you proud.

"No." Vernon whispers the denial, even as Dudley changes. I make it a slow transformation. Not like an Animagus. Not like transfiguration. This is more like the change of a man into a werewolf. Slow and painful. As painful I hope as what Lupin feels each full moon. For some reason, as the change comes to completion, I'm amused to note that Hagrid was right, as he so often was. There really wasn't that much of a difference. Vernon struggles to his feet. "No! Turn him back!"

"I have a better idea," I counter, rounding on him. Grinning with a demented glee that has been threatening to escape me since my arrival here. Vernon steps back, realizing that he would have been wise not to turn my attention to him. He stumbles over Aunt Petunia and crashes to the floor. I give him just long enough to hear my words and comprehend them before I repeat the process I just subjected Dudley to. "Why don't I let you keep him company?"

He opens his mouth, either to protest or beg, but all that comes out is a squeal. He has only a moment to register surprise before the change accelerates. By the time he has recovered enough to try again it's too late. As with Dudley, he doesn't look all that different as a pig to what he did

as a human. If he was ever human to begin with. A bleating noise as he tries to charge at me. Blind panic. Blind stupidity, if he thinks that will help.

I drop to one knee and smash my fist into his forehead just before he reaches me. His skull's thicker as a pig than as a human, so the blow doesn't kill him. Unlucky for him, considering what I have planned. He staggers backwards unsteadily, only able to remain upright for a few steps before his legs collapse under him. Aunt Petunia is screaming and wailing and howling in terror and desperation and horror. Bargaining. Cajoling. Pleading. Begging.

I look at her now. Aunt Petunia. Aunt. Hardly. She was never my aunt. Just another one of the trials I had to suffer through during my youth. My youth, not my childhood. I never had a childhood.

Because of them.
Because of her.

Just Petunia then.

"Don't worry, Petunia, I'm not going to turn you into a pig," I tell her, rising once again. She looks up at me, a hint of hope in her eyes. I shatter that hope with a cruel delight that I've never known before, but cannot help enjoy. "No, there's a far more fitting animal I can turn you into. Something much more appropriate."

I had planned to turn her into a horse.
She's certainly got the face for one.
But I rather like horses.
Rather like unicorns.
Graceful and elegant creatures.
If you discount the Thestrals.

Petunia is hardly graceful.
Or elegant.
It would be wrong.
So... I think a mule will do instead.
A beast of burden.
Something she considered me to be.
All those chores.

I have to step back to make room. A mule, even a skinny one like Petunia, takes up a lot more space than Dudley and Vernon. Of course, that's not saying much. Those pigs are definitely large enough to win tournaments. It's getting rather crowded in here with the three of them. Petunia screams, but it trails off as she changes to my will. Stomping around in a panic, causing more damage to the room than I did with her frantic motions. As if that will help. Dumbledore himself, even with Voldemort's help (should the impossible come to pass), would not be able to reverse what I've done to the three of them.

They're too busy having a right panic to realize I'm leaving them in the entrance hall and going into the sitting room. It only takes a moment to find Vernon's scotch. The bottle drifts across the room and into my hand. Well well, look at this. Vernon actually has --had-- some discerning taste. Twenty year old scotch. The same age as I am. Same age as Dudley, which probably explains it. I call a tumbler and it comes to me. I break the neck of the bottle, I don't really need to, but it feels satisfying to damage something Vernon has obviously been saving for a long, long time. Pour myself a shot.

Oh, that's good.
Pity to waste it like this.
But some things can't be avoided.
I finish the scotch with a gulp.
Then I throw the bottle across the room.
It shatters against the wall.
Liquor sprays over everything.

I focus on Dudley's clothes, out in the entrance hall with the animals. Yes, he still smokes. I don't have any interest in his cigarettes though. No. I want the matches. Ah, no matches. A lighter. Cheap one too. Cheap fags for that matter. I call the lighter to me, just as I called the tumbler. A brief pause in the bleating noises coming from the animals. They must have noticed the lighter drifting up into the air and out of the room. I take it in hand.

Flick.
Fire.

Release.
Gone.

Flick.
Fire.

Release.
Gone.

Flick.
Fire.

Stay.

Release.

Still fire.

Heh.

I look at the wall where I threw the bottle of scotch.

I look at the lighter in my hand, now unable to go out.

I throw it.

I go outside. I don't use the front door. I just disappear and reappear. So similar to Apparation in appearance. So dissimilar in execution. No need to say goodbye to the mule and two pigs. They never bothered to say goodbye to me, why should I give them that now that I'm done with them. I'm outside now, on the opposite side of the street, standing in front of number five Privet Drive. I can see the glow of the fire through the living room window. I settle back and watch.

I feel them arriving. Wizards. Witches. Aurors or possibly members of the Order. Apparently Dumbledore finally worked out the clue I gave him. The note I had Dobby deliver this morning during breakfast. Pitifully slow response. Clearly the old fart is succumbing to his advanced years. I had expected better from him. Strange that I should do that. I can see them from where I'm standing. They don't see me. I won't let them. I want to enjoy this moment, this spectacle, without interruption. Without disturbance. Without interference.

They don't know what to do. Looking about blankly as the flames grow and grow. I think it's me; making them grow so quickly, so wildly, so enthusiastically. Engulfing the house. Beautiful. All those wonderful colours. Yellows and oranges. A bit of red. I don't like red. Reminds me too much of my time in Gryffindor. But there's not a lot of it. Mostly flickering yellow and orange, dancing inside this place that I've hated for so long. I feel like crying. In fact, I think I already am. I lift up a hand to touch my cheek. Yes... it's wet. I'm crying. I've been wanting this for so long, so horribly long, that I am actually crying now that it has come. I'm not ashamed. A grown man crying. No, never ashamed. Such beauty as what I can see opposite me should move anyone, even my betrayers, to tears if they could appreciate the significance of this moment.

For the first time in my life I'm finally free of this place.

The place that was more of a prison to me than Azkaban ever was.

It feels... nice.

Sounds reach my ears over the crackling of the ever growing flames. Those idiots Dumbledore sent aren't even trying to stop the fire from spreading. Wait. They are, but only from spreading to the other houses along Privet Drive. They either think they are too late to save those animals, or they don't realize that my once erstwhile family are still trapped within the house. The sounds are clearer now. Strange. Inhuman noises. My family. The fire must be consuming them alive.

Wait. A shadow by one of the front windows. It's growing, it's... Petunia. She's taken a running jump, a leap for freedom through the window. The glass shatters easily, spraying outwards and showering those nearby with shards. I can see how the fire has burnt her as she staggers into the street. Burns and blisters all over her body, her mane and tail have been burnt almost completely away and some parts of her coat are still burning, smoking. She stumbles, weak from her wounds or in pain I can't tell. Maybe both. It's a bad fall. I can hear one of her legs snapping from where I stand. I smile. I know what happens to lame horses. With luck the same applies to mules.

More noises. Inside the house. And a smell. A familiar smell. Screams of pain. No. Squeals. Porcine squeals of two animals that are being burnt alive, consumed by fire. The smell is growing thicker in the air as the bleating wails of my two male relatives fade away. Yes, I recognise that smell. I smelt it just this morning at the breakfast table. The memory makes my mouth water, though some of the Aurors seem to be reacting in an opposite fashion. Pathetic. I would've thought that those who fight Voldemort and his minions, on an almost daily basis, would be made of sterner stuff. Certainly they should have stronger stomachs. I breathe deeply, luxuriating in the smell of my triumph. My revenge.

Bacon.

Ah, Hagrid, my old friend.

We should've done this years ago.

TBC...