

Chapter 2

Harry had the best summer of his life spending time with his mother and sister. Jasmine looked like a younger version of his mum, with long red hair and bright green eyes. Though she looked like Lily, she acted far more like James, but without the small streak of cruelty his father had shown growing up. Jasmine was just as into Quidditch as Harry, and often enjoyed pulling a good prank. In a way, she reminded him of the Weasley twins, all the life of the party and looking for a laugh.

It was a bit difficult in the beginning for both Harry and Lily to get used to their now lives, although it was slightly harder for Harry. It took a few days for the memories of the lives they lived in this time to feel more like memories they lived, and less like watching the memories of strangers that looked like them. It felt like they were adjusting to a whole new world, and that was how Harry often thought of it in his head. Jasmine had noticed them acting oddly the first few days and remarked on their sudden closeness more than once.

Harry explained it away by telling her his was going to miss them when he went off to Hogwarts in September, but he wasn't completely sure she bought it. Still, Harry refused to feel embarrassed about spending time with his mother after waiting so long to meet her. He got answers to so many questions that had plagued him over the years. Even simple things, like what her career was and her who her friends were had eluded him for so long, it was a relief to finally find the answers.

His mother had been training to be an Unspeakable, someone who worked in the Department of Mysteries researching the most arcane and complex magic imaginable. She took time off when she was pregnant with Harry and ended leaving again only a few months after returning when she learned of the prophecy.

He also learned that in their old world, most of his mother's friends had been killed, or worse in the case of Alice Longbottom. Fortunately, here, her closest friends Alice and a witch he had heard mentioned before, Marlene McKinnon, were both alive and well. They often came to visit, bringing over Neville and Marlene's daughter Olivia, who was the same age as Jasmine. Harry was also happy to see his mother was good friends with Andromeda Tonks, and that, despite the difference in age, Tonks and he were close.

There were so many changes to the world around him, both small and large, that it felt disconcerting at times. Tonks, for instance, while still older than him, was only three years older, rather than the seven-year difference he was used to. Hogwarts starting at eighteen was probably the biggest change he had noticed so far, with the obvious exception of his mother being alive. A handful of other people had also survived or escaped horrible fates and live normal lives.

Some things were still the same, sadly. Voldemort had still attacked his home on Halloween, killing his father and attempting to kill Harry. Here, however, he had only stunned his mother before turning his wand on Harry. Dumbledore had always talked about how his mother's sacrifice had saved him, and he wondered what had caused the spell to rebound this time. With so many things different, it was hard to guess.

With his mother surviving the attack by Voldemort, she had been able to tell the Aurors and Dumbledore the truth about switching secret keepers, and Sirius was never arrested. Pettigrew had fled and was still on the run. He wondered if he was still pretending to be the Weasley's pet rat. That would make catching him fairly easy, he thought.

Resolving to worry about Voldemort and Death Eaters once he got to Hogwarts, Harry spent most of his time during the summer with his family.

All too soon, it was time for him to head to King's Cross station to board the Hogwarts Express.

"I'm going to miss you." Harry said, hugging his mother tightly.

"I'm going to miss you too." Lily said tearfully.

As soon as they separated, Jasmine, unusually emotional, rushed forward to hug him just as tightly.

"You'd better write." she told him; her stern tone ruined by a snuffle.

"I will." Harry promised.

The horn sounded, signaling the train would be leaving in one minute. With one last goodbye, Harry grabbed his trunk and boarded the train. As it chugged away from the platform, Harry leaned out of the door and waved before slipping inside. Pulling his trunk down the aisle, he was looking for a place to sit when he spotted a familiar face. Hermione was sitting in a compartment alone, her nose buried in a copy of *Hogwarts, A History*. Harry couldn't help but smile, remembering their first meeting. He knew it would be painful to talk to her when she didn't remember him, but he couldn't resist talking to her.

Sliding the door open quietly, he poked his head inside.

"You mind if I sit here, everywhere else is full." he said, smiling as he parroted Ron's first words to him.

Hermione looked up from her book. "Help yourself." she said.

Stepping inside and closing the door behind him, he lifted his trunk onto the rack and sat down across from her.

"I'm Harry, by the way." he said, holding out his hand.

"Hermione." she said.

As she took her first good look at him, her eyes landed on his distinctive lightning bolt shaped scar and her brown eyes widened.

"You're Harry Potter!" she gasped. "I've read all about you."

"Er, yeah." Harry said, rubbing the back of his neck.

"I'm sorry, that was terribly rude of me. I was just surprised. I mean, I knew you'd be going to Hogwarts this year, but..." she trailed off, looking a bit embarrassed.

"It's alright." he told her with a smile. "Just don't put too much stock in what's written about me in books."

Hermione smiled back at him, relieved he wasn't offended.

"Excited about Hogwarts?" he asked.

"Of course! I can't wait to start doing magic. It's all just so exciting, isn't it!" she said, her brown eyes sparkling. "There so many different kinds of magic and history to learn. Do you know anything about Hogwarts or the professors? I mean, I know this is your first year too, but I thought, living in the magical world, you might know something."

"I know a bit." Harry said with a smile. "What do you want to know?"

As expected, Hermione bombarded him with questions. He answered all of them happily, and even got in a few of his own. From what she told him; her life was pretty much the same as he remembered. About an hour into their conversation, the door to their compartment was thrown open.

"Well, well, well, what do we have here? Potty and the Mudblood." Malfoy drawled.

Behind him, Crabbe, Goyle, and Parkinson laughter nastily. Across from him, Hermione bristled. Even if she didn't know what the word meant yet, she was smart enough to know when she was being insulted.

"What do you want Malfoy?" Harry asked calmly.

After everything he had been through, Harry wasn't bothered by the boy's petty insults. He also knew that no matter how much he pretended, he would never be as dark and cruel as his father.

"Just thought I'd give you a friendly warning." Malfoy said with a smirk before turning serious. "What your back Potter, mummy's not here to protect you anymore."

Crabbe and goyle cracked their knuckles threateningly, while Malfoy did his best to look imposing before turning to Hermione, his nose wrinkling in disgust. She opened her mouth to say something, but before she could, Harry stood. With blinding speed, he drew his wand and had it pointed lazily at Malfoy's chest. Startled to find himself at wand point, he backed up half a step until he bumped into Crabbe and Goyle.

Twirling his wand so the tip was facing him, Harry reached down and grabbed Malfoy hand. Slapping the hand of his wand into the blonde boy's hand, he raised his arm up until Malfoy had Harry's own wand aim at his chest.

"Go on." Harry said.

"What!?" Malfoy asked incredulously.

"You want to kill me? Well, go on, here's your chance." Harry said, holding his arms out the side.

"Are you insane!?" Malfoy yelled, completely throw by the situation he found himself in.

"Curse him, Draco!" Parkinson cheered excitedly.

"Yeah!" Goyle grunted, his eyes glinting cruelly.

Harry kept his gaze lock on Malfoy as he stood confidently. He could see fear and uncertainty in his silver eyes. For several long seconds, he continued to stand there as the tip of his wand began to shake in Malfoy's hand. Feeling his point was proven, he snatched his wand back, tucked it in his pocket and sat back down in his seat.

"So, what house do you think you'll be in?" he asked Hermione.

She worked her mouth silently, staring at him incredulously. Looking pale and shaken, Malfoy pushed Crabbe and goyle out of the way and fled the compartment, ignoring the questions of his friends as they followed after him.

"That was incredible." Hermione said finally, staring at him in awe. "How did you know he wouldn't curse you?"

"Malfoy's a git, but he doesn't have it in him to kill." Harry said with a shrug.

Hermione shook her head and sat back in her seat, looking at him curiously.

"What does Mudblood mean?" she asked quietly a few seconds later.

Harry sighed.

"It means dirty blood. There are some older families that think Muggleborns shouldn't be allowed in our world." he told her reluctantly.

"Oh." she said, looking troubled.

Thankfully, the snack trolley came by just then, and Harry bought sweets and drinks for the both of them. That lightened the mood, and they were able to get back to their old conversation

“You never did tell me what house you want to be in.” he reminded her.

Several hours later, they arrived at Hogsmeade. Making their way over to Hagrid, they boarded a boat where they were joined by Neville and Ron. Together, they rode the boats up to the castle and waited anxiously for the sorting to begin.

“How do you think they’re going to sort us? It’s not a test, is it?” Hermione asked nervously.

“It’s not a test, just relax Hermione, you’ll be fine.” Harry reassured her.

“Fred and George told me we have to fight a troll.” Ron said, his face pale.

Harry smiled as the theories of how they would be sorted grew more and more ridiculous. Hermione noticed and narrowed her eyes at him.

“You know, don’t you?” she accused him quietly.

Harry glanced around to make sure no one else was listening, and leaned in closer to whisper to her.

“It’s a hat made by Godric Gryffindor. It reads your mind and picks the best house for you.” he told her.

Hermione bit her lip nervously.

“What if it puts us in a house we don’t want.” she asked.

“It won’t.” he said with certainty.

Before she could ask him anything else, McGonagall returned and ushered them into the Great Hall. He smiled as he watched his classmates gaze in wonder at the ceiling. They walked up between the tables until they stopped in front of a three-legged stool holding the ratty looking Sorting Hat. Standing in front of them, McGonagall started reading their names off of a scroll.

Name after name, everyone went to the same houses as he remembered. When it was his turn, Harry walked up, and McGonagall set the hat on his head.

“My, my, you’ve certainly been through a lot.” The hat’s voice echoed through his head.

“I’d appreciate it if you’d keep that to yourself.” Harry thought back.

“Of course.” the hat said. “Now, let’s see...It seems pretty clear where you belong. Better be...”

“Gryffindor!” the hat shouted aloud.

The Gryffindor table broke into loud cheers, Fred and George among the loudest, as he joined their table. He took a seat with the rest of the first years and looked around the hall while the sorting continued. Tonks caught his from her place at the Hufflepuff table and stuck her tongue out before giving him a wink. Harry smiled back and continued looking around. When his eyes landed on Professor Quirrell, he felt a small tingle in his scar, but none of the sharp, intense pain he had experienced in the past. It seemed that despite no longer having a Horcrux inside of him, he still had some kind of muted connection to Voldemort.

As the sorting came to an end, Harry was lost in thought. He would need to start figuring out a way to finish Voldemort once and for all. He made a note to write to his mother for advice after the feast.

For the next few weeks, classes went normally, and Harry found himself incredibly bored relearned the lessons he had taken years earlier. Still, he was careful not to look too good in class. Not only did he not want to raise suspicion, but he also didn't want to be placed in a higher year away from his friends. On the upside, homework was much easier for him this time around.

On Halloween, Harry did his best to keep Ron from insulting Hermione after class and breathed a sigh of relief when he succeeded. His friends wouldn't be in danger this time, he promised himself. Still, by dinner, his stomach was in knots, and he only picked at his food. His plans rarely worked out, and Halloween was never a good day for him.

That thought turned out to be prophetic when he saw Ron enter the Great Hall with Neville and Seamus, his ears red, and Hermione nowhere in sight.

"Where's Hermione?" he asked sharply.

Ron looked down at his plate while Neville and Seamus exchanged an uncomfortable look.

"Where is she?" Harry demanded.

"Well..." Neville started. "Ron got into a bit of a fight with her-"

Not bothering to let him finish, Harry stood and bolted out of the Great Hall. There was no need for him to ask if they knew where she was, he already knew. Cursing under his breath, Harry took every short cut and secret passage he knew to get to the girls' bathroom in the dungeons as fast as he could. Without bothering to knock, he barged into the bathroom and skidded to a halt. Hermione, her eyes red from crying, looked up from where she was standing next to the sink. Next to her, Tonks was patting her back comfortingly.

"Harry! What are you doing here?" Hermione asked in surprise.

“You do know this is the girls’ bathroom, right?” Tonks asked teasingly with a raised eyebrow.

“We need to leave. Now!” Harry said.

“What’s wrong?” Tonks asked, going from teasing to serious in an instant.

“There’s a Troll in the castle. Now, come on.” he said urgently.

As he spoke, he saw them stare wide eyed at something over his shoulder just before a foul stench assaulted his nostrils. Drawing his wand, Harry spun and barely got a shield up before the Trolls tree branch like club slammed into it. Even though the shield protected him, the force of the blow sent him flying across the bathroom. Slamming back first into the tile covered wall, he grunted in pain as he hit the floor. His vision went blurry from the impact, and he struggled to get to his feet.

Hermione screamed in terror as the nine-foot-tall Troll bared its teeth and roared at her and Tonks. She stood still in shock at the massive club descended rapidly towards her head.

“Protego!” Tonks shouted.

Her shield sprang up just in front of Hermione, stopped the club from hitting her and deflecting it into a sink next to her. The porcelain shattered into a thousand pieces and water sprayed onto the floor from the broken pipe. Tonks was flung backwards from the force of the blow. She slammed into the frame of the stall behind her, a sickening *thud* coming from the wood where the back of her head smacked into it before sliding to the ground, dazed.

Hermione backed up against the sink, her wand trembling as she aimed it at the Trolls chest. Harry scrambled to his feet just as it raised its club over its head.

“Carpe Retractum!” he shouted.

Like a lasso, a golden, pulsating thread of magic flew from the tip of his wand and wrapped around the club. As the troll tried to swing it down, Harry grunted as he used his magic to hold the club in place. The Troll gave a grunt of its own, this one in confusion. Doing an odd, uncoordinated pirouette, the Troll spun to face Harry. Following the golden thread with beady brown eyes, it growled angrily when it spotted it connected to his wand.

“Mine!” Harry yelled, yanking then club.

Normally, he would have been no match for the strength of a fully grown Mountain Troll, however, aided by his spell, he was nearly able to wrench it from its hands. Roaring in fury, the Troll yanked back, but the club stayed tied to Harry’s wand.

“Mine!” Harry yelled again, yanking on the club.

Hermione helped Tonks to her feet, and they stared incredulously at the ridiculous argument taking place in front of them. Back and forth, like a tug of war where only on person pulled at a time, Harry and the Troll fought for the club.

With a low growl, the Troll planted its feet and furrowed its brow in concentration, preparing to yank hard on the club.

“Fine, you can have it.” Harry said.

Just as the Troll pulled, he dropped the spell. As if in slow motion, he watched as the Troll’s face went from triumph when he pulled the club free, to puzzlement when it continued at high velocity towards its face.

THUD!

The club smashed into the Troll's face, sending two thumb-sized teeth clattering to the tile floor as it swayed on its feet.

"Run!" Harry yelled to Hermione and Tonks.

Tonks and Hermione scrambled out of the way as the Troll teetered back and forth precariously. Like a tree, the Troll reached a tipping point and toppled over, gravity accelerating it towards the ground. It crashed to the ground, vibrating the ground under their feet. Harry breathed a sigh of relief as Tonks and Hermione came to stand next to him, staring at the Troll in shock.

Just when it seemed to be over, the sound of running footsteps, rapidly growing closer, announced the arrival of the professors. Snape was the first to come bursting through the door. Slipping on the wet floor, he flapped his arms wildly to keep his balance, but failed and fell on his ass. Tonks covered her mouth to suppress a snort of laughter as McGonagall walked into the bathroom, wand raised and ready, only to blink in surprise at the unconscious Troll.

"Is it safe to come in Minerva?" Dumbledore asked outside the room.

"Yes, the girls are decent." she replied.

Dumbledore peeked cautiously around the corner before entering. Cursing under his breath, Snape climbed to his feet, water dripping off of his soaked back and sleeves.

"What happened here?" McGonagall demanded.

"Ron and Hermione had a fight, so I came to check on her." Harry explained. "I heard Professor Quirrell yell about the Troll, and I knew I had to warn her. Tonks was already here, but the Troll showed up before we could leave."

“You expect us to believe that you single handedly took down a fully grown Mountain Troll without so much as a scratch?” Snape asked skeptically.

“It’s true professor. We would be dead if it wasn’t for Harry.” Tonks said.

“Ms. Granger?” McGonagall asked.

“He’s telling the truth, professor. The Troll would have killed me if Harry didn’t stop it.” she answered.

“You’re certain he saved both of your lives?” Dumbledore asked, eyeing them intently.

“Yes, sir.” they answered in unison.

“I see.” he said, stroking his beard. “Ms. Granger, would you please take Harry and Ms. Tonks to the Hospital Wing. Professor McGonagall, if you could contact their parents?”

“Parents?” Harry asked in surprise.

With all of the accidents and injuries at Hogwarts, he had never known the professors to call in someone’s parents unless it was extremely severe.

“I will explain shortly.” Dumbledore said.

Before Harry could question him further, the Headmaster turned at left. Harry sighed in frustration, feeling like he was missing something. McGonagall ushered them out of the bathroom, and he followed Hermione to the Hospital Wing.

“Thank you for coming to check on me.” Hermione said once they were out of earshot of the professors. “And for saving me from the Troll.”

“Yeah, thanks mate, that was impressive.” Tonks said, her grateful smile turning mischievous. “I think that deserves a hug.”

Tonks wrapped her arms around his neck and hugged his head to her chest. Harry found his face sandwiched between her breasts and tried to pull back in surprise. She laughed at his weak struggling, growing her already impressive bust to button threatening proportions.

“My hero!” she exclaimed theatrically, swaying her chest back and forth.

“Tonks!” Hermione yelled, scandalized.

Laughing, Tonks let him go and shrank her breast back to their natural size. Harry’s face was beet red as he straightened up, his glasses sitting lopsided on his face. Not really sure how to react, he marched determinedly down the hall, ignoring the snickers behind him.

Arriving at the Hospital Wing, Madam Pomphrey treated them for minor injuries, and a mild concussion in Tonks’ case. Right as she was finishing up, Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall arrive with Lily, Andromeda, and Hermione’s mother, Emma Granger.

Immediately, Lily rushed over to Harry.

“Are you alright, sweetheart?” she asked.

“I’m fine, but something else is going on.” he said quietly.

“I know, come with me.” she said, pulling him to the far side of the room by the hand while Emma and Andromeda checked on their daughters.

"I'm so sorry I didn't remember this sooner." Lily said as soon as they reached the last bed.

"Remember what?" he asked, his stomach churning with unease.

"Life debts work differently here." she said. "They create a much stronger connection between people. Essentially, it means you'll be linked for life with anyone you save."

"What!?" Harry hissed.

"It's not as bad as it sounds, it doesn't turn them into slaves or anything, but it does enhance any positive feels they have for you." she explained.

"Bloody hell." Harry groaned.

"This isn't necessarily a bad thing, Harry, just different." Lily said, rubbing his back as Harry put his elbows on his knees and his face in his hands.

"What should I do?" he asked.

"Nothing." his mother said. "Just treat them as you normally would, continue being a good friend, and let things develop naturally. Come on, let's get back to the others."

Sighing, Harry stood up and followed Lily back to the rest of the group. Before he could sit, Emma rushed up to him and pulled him into a bone-crushing hug.

"Thank you so much for saving Hermione." she gushed gratefully.

"Uh, you're welcome." Harry said, patting her back a bit awkwardly.

Emma pulled back and smiled at him, her hands resting on his upper arms.

“I’m so glad my daughter has a friend like you. She writes home all the time about how nice you are.” she told him.

“Mum!” Hermione yelled, her cheeks going pink.

Harry felt himself blushing as Emma chuckled and sat back down next to her daughter. Andromeda came up to him and gave him a hug a well. Once everyone was seated again, Dumbledore addressed the group.

“First of all, I would like to apologize for the danger your children were in. We are investigating how a Troll managed to get into the castle and we are confident nothing like this will happen again.” he started. “I can assure you, instances like this are highly unusual at Hogwarts.”

Not anymore, Harry thought, hiding a smile.

“Are you sure Hermione will be safe here?” Emma asked.

“I give you my word, we will do everything we can to keep your daughter safe.” Dumbledore said diplomatically.

“This really is a safe place.” Andromeda jumped in. “And this is the best place for her to learn about magic. Pulling her out now will only make her a danger to herself and others.”

“I’m staying mum, I can’t leave now. There’s so much to learn.” Hermione said pleadingly.

Emma sighed and held up her hands in surrender.

"You're old enough to make your own decisions now, I just want to make sure you're safe." she said, patting Hermione's leg.

"I promise you Mrs. Granger, your daughter will be safe in our care." Dumbledore assured her. "Now, while we're all grateful for Harry heroic actions, it does complicate things slightly."

"How?" Emma asked.

"Albus." His mother interrupted before he could answer. "Maybe it would be best if Andy and I told her."

Professor Dumbledore actually looked a bit relieved at the offer and quickly nodded.

"If you have any questions, I'll be in my office. Professor McGonagall can show you where it is." he said.

As the Headmaster left, Lily turned to Harry and Tonks.

"Why don't you two go get some sleep, Hermione will be up in a bit." she told them.

Knowing better than to argue, Harry and Tonks left the Hospital Wing after saying goodbye to their mums. They walked through the halls in companionable silence for a couple of minutes, until the staircase. Tonks put her hand on Harry shoulder, stopping him from going up the stairs.

"Seriously Harry, thanks for the rescue." she said sincerely.

"Don't mention it." he told her with a smile.

To his surprise, Tonks cupped his cheeks with both her hands and kissed him suddenly. After a moment to get over his shock, Harry wrapped his arms around her waist and kissed her back. He couldn't tell how long they stayed like that, it felt both like an eternity and far too brief at the same time. When they finally broke apart, Tonks grinned hugely, her hair cycling through the entire rainbow before settling on bright purple.

"I've wanted to do that for a while." she admitted with a wink. "Good night, Harry."

"Night, Tonks." Harry said softly as he watched her sashay down the stairs, stumbling slightly halfway down.

Shaking his head with an irrepressible grin on his face, he resumed his walk to Gryffindor Tower.

When he got there several minutes later, he sat down on the couch across from the fireplace and opened a magazine while he waited for Hermione. It was another three hours, just a few minutes before curfew, that she finally returned, a small stack of books in her arms.

"Hermione?" he called out softly.

Luckily, the common room was nearly empty, most students were in their dorms getting ready for bed. Only Harry and a few older students remained.

"Oh. Hi, Harry." she said nervously.

Harry felt his throat tighten with worry that he may have just lost his best friend before she truly got to know him. It was only a small relief when she set her books down and sat next to him on the couch.

"Did my mom explain everything?" he asked.

“Yeah, she did, but I went to the library to do some research.” she said, indicating the pile of books.

“I'm really sorry, Hermione.” he told her.

“Don't be.” she said, placing her hand on top of his. “It not your fault. Don't get me wrong, I really appreciate what you did, it's just...”

“You don't like not being in control.” Harry finished for her.

“Exactly.” she said with a nod.

“So, are we okay?’ he asked worriedly.

“Oh, Harry. Of course, we are. I'm not mad at you, I'm just a bit...I don't know, confused, nervous, take your pick.” Hermione said, running a hand through her bushy hair in agitation. “I just need to understand more about this before I'll know how I really feel about it.”

“I understand.” Harry said, although he doubted that he really did. “But just so you know, you're still my friend until you want that to change.”

“Thank you.” she said gratefully with a small smile. “I need to get to bed. I'll see you in the morning?”

“Definitely.” he told her.

Hermione smiled brightly and leaned forward to hug him tightly. Harry hugged her back, felling a bit better but still a bit concerned. As she pulled back, Hermione turned her head and kissed

him on the cheek. Pulling back sharply, her eyes widened, and her cheeks went pink, as if suddenly realizing what she had done. Harry could only blink at her in mild surprise.

“G-Goodnight Harry.’ she said before standing quickly and gathering her books.

“Goodnight, Hermione.” he said as she rushed off up the stairs to the girls’ dorm.

Sighing, Harry climbed to his feet and trudged off to bed, lost in his thoughts. Sometimes, it really felt like fate just loved messing with him.