

Fleur sighed in her mind as she saw out of the corner of her eyes the looks William Weasley was shooting her. Her part-time job in Diagon Alley had made her frequently run into the redhead wizard who was a Gringotts curse breaker. They had quickly struck up a conversation in one of their random meetings on the street and ever since then, she had noticed William springing up near her frequently. Oh, she knew why the redhead was following her around but it was frankly becoming a little too much bothersome. She was just waiting for the wizard to gather up the courage to ask her out and then she could let him down gently.

It wasn't as if she was starving for a relationship right now. Her arrangement with Harry was quite satisfactory even though she didn't like Harry holding on to the Greengrass girl. To be honest she has her doubts in mind that Harry has some feelings for Daphne Greengrass. Exactly the extent of those feelings, she didn't know but it was there and it was starting to bother her a little. A few days ago, she wouldn't have probably felt this way because Harry always went out of his way to spend time with her during his summer vacation. But now, Harry was in Hogwarts and she was busy with her own job in Diagon Alley. It didn't help she has to hear all the lewd details of her cousin's relationship with Sirius while she was constantly reminded of how lonely she was in bed.

Fleur took another sip of her tea to calm her nerves feeling the eyes of Weasley trained on her person. Oh, how she wished she had Harry or someone like Brigitte with her in the tea shop.

"Hey there Fleur. I didn't expect to see you here."

Fleur's eyes widened and relief flooded her as she came to see Nymphadora Tonks waving at her enthusiastically. She could not believe her luck but she pounced on it like a cat about to get the canary.

"Come Tonks. Sit with me. Tell me how're you doing?" Fleur pulled the older witch to her table.

Her relief and excitement must have been easily readable because Tonks immediately looked around the tea shop.

"Who're you avoiding?" Tonks asked curiously.

"How'd you know?" Fleur frowned.

"Oh, please. I know that look on the face. I'm very familiar with the situation you're going through." Tonks waved dismissively before leaning forward her eyes darting around discreetly. "So, who's the stalker?"

Fleur looked at Tonks searchingly before deciding to answer.

"Outside the window to your right. The redhead pretending to read a leaflet." Fleur said embarrassedly.

"Isn't that William?" Tonks immediately recognized the familiar red hair and face.

"Yes. You know him?" Fleur blinked in surprise.

"Yes. He was my senior at Hogwarts. His younger brother Charlie was in my year though." Said Tomnks.

Fleur felt really stupid. Of course, Tonks was going to know the redhead wizard because of Hogwarts.

"Is he bothering you? I mean, the guy is not a troublemaker as far as I know."

“No... no. William never misbehaved or anything. I think he is just trying to muster up the courage to ask me out.”

“And? You’re okay with it?” Tonks raised an eyebrow.

“No. I mean I’d prefer if he left me alone.” said Fleur.

“Are you sure?” Tonks asked sceptically.

“Yes, I’m sure.”

Tonks eyed her closely before suddenly going straight for the window on a dime before Fleur could protest.

Fleur didn’t know what was said between Tonks and William Weasley but when Tonks returned the redhead wizard was gone from the window side. She suddenly felt a wave of affection for the older witch whom she admired for her bold carefree attitude.

“Thank you.” Fleur chirped brightly. “You saved me from an awkward conversation.”

“Uh-huh. Bill won’t be bothering you anymore.” Tonks waved away her gratitude before directing a coy smile at Fleur. “I just said you’re already seeing someone. There is someone right? Cause Bill is a nice guy if only a tad shy.”

Fleur was immediately on guard with that line of conversation. She had given Harry her word that their relationship would remain under wraps. She kind of even found it enjoyable in the beginning as the thrill of secrecy in Hogwarts always riled her up. But now that she was not allowed in Hogwarts, she was finding the secrecy not that attractive. Her extended silence however didn’t go unnoticed by Tonks.

“Hey, you don’t have to tell me if you’re uncomfortable. We’ve only known each other very recently.” Tonks offered her a graceful way out but that just made it worse.

“No, Tonks. I just...” she hesitated a little bit. “It’s just complicated.” Fleur eventually settled on saying rubbing her forehead with the back of her hand.

“It’s okay. You don’t have to feel pressured into saying anything.” said Tonks, her hair taking a yellow streak taking Fleur’s attention briefly.

She shook her head.

“I’ll need something else than tea to talk about my love life.” Fleur ended up saying.

“Booze? Oh, I’ve got that covered. Let’s go.” Tonks was quickly on her feet teeming with excitement while Fleur slowly realized she had fallen into a trap.

But she could not rethink her decision as Tonks happily pulled along Fleur and she was not immune to the charms of the resident Metamorphmagus.

‘At least, I got a friend out of it. I think.’ Fleur thought as she left the café together with Tonks.

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Harry angled himself forward on the broom before he went for the dive. The air that rushed past him pumped up his blood. It was way better than the feeling of riding a bike. He missed that thrum of the engine as the piston got smacked down after each stroke. The comforting vibration and weight of the bike beneath him were something he dearly missed but he'd happily trade it over for the magical broom because he was flying. Bikes sadly could not fly, at least, normal bikes could not. He was hoping Sirius would restore his bike before the Yule holidays.

Harry suddenly had to veer off to the left arresting the dive he was attempting. The air seemed to have pressed down on his sides heavily, but the adrenaline pumping within allowed him to ignore such minor inconveniences.

'Oh no, you won't you stupid piece of metal.' Harry thought resolutely as he chased after the snitch accelerating fast enough to be just a blur to most observers.

The snitch rose slightly in its linear path and Harry deduced it was once again preparing to dive as he was closing in on the troublesome metal. Harry made a snap decision to go into an early dive at full speed and his arm reached out like a coiled snake. He could feel the weight of the snitch comfortably resting in his palm.

"Ha! Gotcha!" Harry smiled, watching the snitch helplessly beat its wings in his palm before slowly giving up and admitting its defeat.

"Good one there Harry." Ginny said zooming past him on her broom.

"No surprises there Harry, our pal." said George.

"Our friend." Fred also joined in.

"Our benefactor." the Twins chorused together.

"Okay, guys. Remember our deal. No publicity for now. I don't want your mom to send me howlers," said Harry.

"Oh, Harry. You don't have to worry." Said George, putting his arm around his shoulder.

"Yeah. Dear mum reserves the howlers for us or Ron. No one else will ever get that honour." said Fred.

"Good work there, Harry. Any advice for our reserve seeker?" Angelina asked once she neared him on her broom.

"She's fast and has good reflexes. She just needs a faster broom. I think I'll just let her practice on the Firebolt. If you wish you can let her have a go at one of the matches." Harry suggested.

"Why? Are you planning on skipping a match?" Angelina asked with a dangerous undertone.

"Whaa? No! I just think it'd be better if our reserve seeker gets some experience." said Harry, suggested tentatively as he slowly realized he might've overstepped here. Angelina was the captain and he was sort of putting her on the spot by springing up this suggestion with Fred and George watching.

"You'd be comfortable with Ginny playing a game?" Angelina asked a thoughtful frown on her face.

"She has the talent required for the position. Anyway, it was just a suggestion. I think Ginny is a good flier that's all. She handles herself well in the air." said Harry.

"I know. I've been hoping to use her as a reserve Chaser you know. I don't know what it is you Weasleys are fed but y'all are turning into a bunch of Quidditch geniuses."

"Not perfect Percy." Fred reminded.

"Brought shame to our family, he did." George agreed with a serious look that frankly looked comical coming from the chaotic Weasley twins.

"Well, I hope your brother Ron inherited enough Quidditch skills somehow because this tryout is all about finding a good keeper." said Angelina before she took her to leave by rocketing away on her broom to the ground.

"Well, I hope Ron does his best. He has been practising a lot at the Burrow." George said, eyeing Ron who looked red as a tomato with a bunch of keeper hopefuls near the hoops waiting for Angelina.

"He'll get the spot. All he must do is maintain his confidence in the pitch," said Harry. "I think." he whispered the last part.

After a long practice session in the quidditch pitch which Angelina insisted was keeper tryouts to the rest of the team, Harry hit straight for the shower. The moment he was out of the shower he was immediately accosted by Hermione and Neville who were waiting for him outside the locker room.

"You owe us an explanation." Hermione looked imploringly at him initially confusing Harry but then it clicked in his mind.

"Oh!" Harry looked between the two before sighing. "All right, what do you two want to know?"

"Everything that happened in the Third Task." said Neville.

'Yeah, right. No way I'm going to incriminate myself to a bunch of teenagers.' Harry thought.

"There is nothing much to tell. The Triwizard cup was a portkey. It transported me to a graveyard. There was Peter Pettigrew and Voldemort. Voldemort used a ritual to restore himself to a physical body and we duelled while his death eaters watched. I managed to get out of the graveyard by finding my way to the Triwizard cup and returned to Hogwarts while the Death eaters got mowed down in the graveyard by some gunner." Harry summed up the story so fast Hermione and Neville were left gaping at him. "So, that's it. Now, let's go."

"Now...just you wait. We need more details." Hermione ran after him breaking out of her stupor closely followed by Neville.

"Okay. I'm amicable to continue this talk in the kitchen."

"The kitchen?" Neville asked confusedly.

"Oh, yes. The house elves are such loyal creatures you see and I bought them some gifts for being very kind to me last year." said Harry.

A few minutes later, Harry, Hermione and Neville were sitting in the Hogwarts kitchen. Harry was nursing a cup of hot chocolate happily taking a few sips greedily. The gifts he had brought the house elves of Hogwarts were a bunch of cookbooks, boxes of chocolates, some magical sanitisers which Dobby said most house elves loved and finally painting kits. He never thought the house elves were such enthusiasts when it comes to paintings but he should have seen it coming a mile away. Most magical portraits in the wizarding world are painted by house elves. The elves have an innate ability to properly capture the character of the family members they serve in a wizard's house and they can

pour out this slice of magic into a portrait to give it life and character. He learned that little tidbit of detail from Kreacher who was obsessed with keeping the portraits in Grimmauld Place safe and sound. Some wizards also have replicated the process but they need to be commissioned early and the process remains to this day very difficult and time-consuming.

Since the house elves are essentially a bank of secrets when it comes to their serving family, they know everything about their masters better than they know themselves. The task of transferring a wizard's memory into a portrait was a difficult piece of magic to pull off but not for a house elf. If Harry were to guess he suspected the magical portraits in Hogwarts were painted and maintained by the house elves of Hogwarts.

So, it was safe to say that the house elves were close to tears when he pulled out the gifts and handed them over to the excitable little creatures. He was careful to leave out any clothes lest he accidentally set the elves 'free'.

"It was a nice thing you did Harry." said Hermione before muttering to herself about how she didn't think about doing something nice for the elves.

Harry was happy Hermione has yet to take extreme measures like forcibly setting the house elves of Hogwarts free. He like his kitchen privileges too much to let something like that happen especially when the house elves have a comfortable life in Hogwarts. As far as he knew, there was no one here to boss them around in Hogwarts. There was no doubt in his mind the elves were far better off in Hogwarts rather than binding themselves in servitude to wizarding families like the Malfoys.

"So... You-Know-Who is back for real?" Neville muttered, bringing down the merry mood in the kitchen.

Even the otherwise happy house elves were suddenly silent and morose.

"Yes." Harry confirmed.

"But why didn't you say anything, Harry?" Hermione asked tentatively.

"Why should I? Dumbledore knew Voldemort never died a decade back and he didn't say anything. He knew for sure when Voldemort tried to steal the Sorcerer's stone in our first year. Dumbledore knew all this time but he was content to keep the public ignorant of the danger. He never did anything to find and destroy Voldemort all these years. He was happily playing his role here at Hogwarts. So why should I be the one to come out and say Voldemort is alive to all of Britain? They'll declare me mad the very next day just like they're doing to Dumbledore."

"That's true. The Ministry would've made your life difficult Harry." Neville said after a moment of silence. "I think you did the right thing. But I don't think You-Know-Who'll leave you alone Harry."

"I know. What'd you think I'm going to do from now on? I'll be training in all the magical disciplines known to wizardkind and kill that son of a bitch down for good." said Harry.

"Harry! Language." Hermione jabbed him.

"Ow!"

"I like the sound of that. I'll help you in any way I can." Neville said, his brown eyes filled with steely resolve.

“Revenge won’t change anything that happened to your families,” Hermione said softly, looking concerned and sympathetic at the same time.

“No, it won’t,” Neville whispered. “But we can make sure it won’t happen to more families.”

“Well said. The werewolf attack in Godric’s Hollow was a precursor to what is to follow. Voldemort is gathering his old allies and soon he’ll try his luck in breaking out his most loyal followers from Azkaban.” said Harry, noting out of the corner of his eye the way Neville froze up.

“I’m sure Azkaban won’t be easily breached. There are the Dementors and the aurors.” Hermione tried to reassure Neville.

“No. Harry’s right. If You-Know...” Neville took a deep breath to gather himself. “If Voldemort wants to break out his loyal Death Eaters, then Azkaban won’t stand a chance. What’re you planning to do Harry?”

“Me, nothing. At least, not yet. I can only train myself to surpass Voldemort and his cronies. Realistically, that’s what any of us can do right now.” Harry shrugged.

“Then that’s what we’ll do.” Neville nodded as did Hermione.

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Harry’s footsteps echoed throughout Slytherin’s Chamber. He had often wondered why Salazar Slytherin would leave a Basilisk in his secret chamber. Some of the legends claim Salazar’s monster was supposed to eradicate those he considered impure from Hogwarts. In a sense, the Basilisk ended up trying to do just that at the bidding of Voldemort. But Harry doubted this particular tale. The Basilisk won’t be differentiating those with pureblood from other ‘impure’ students of Hogwarts. Its gaze was a death sentence for purebloods, halfbloods and muggleborns. There were other more subtler ways of making sure purebloods alone were allowed to attend the school if that was truly Slytherin’s intention. For one, Slytherin could have stolen Ravenclaw’s magic quill and registry that finds all magical children born in Britain. It’d have considerably cut down the intake of muggleborns into Hogwarts.

To Harry’s mind, his idea would’ve worked far better than the Basilisk which only ever worked in Tom Riddle’s time and it only managed to kill one muggleborn. Not a stellar record for the supposed secret weapon of Salazar Slytherin.

There was another argument that Salazar Slytherin quarrelled with the Founders over the issue of muggleborns. But he left the school after leaving a guardian in his secret Chamber so that whenever the school is in danger his heir could awaken the beast and defend the school. Now, this version is much more believable as there was sound logic in the thinking. However, Harry didn’t think this tale was also accurate. Most of the battles that happened outside the Hogwarts walls are recorded in great detail as Hogwarts has always triumphed. While Hogwarts has functioned as an educational institution it has also functioned as a fortress against hostile forces that have cropped up in the wizarding world intent on subjugating the British Isles. In all those recorded battles, not once have the infamous beast of Slytherin which was supposedly guarding Hogwarts made its presence known.

So, Harry theorized there were only two conclusions that he can arrive at after learning all this. Either Slytherin’s descendants never found the Chamber or the Chamber of Salazar Slytherin and the

Basilisk in it had another purpose. Two things can be true at the same time. It could be said that Slytherin's heirs never found the Chamber and at the same time Salazar could have created the Chamber and left the Basilisk as the guardian to safeguard the secrets contained in the Chamber.

If Slytherin had truly intended to use the Chamber as a place to protect his secrets then Harry regretted having the effigy of Slytherin modified. There was nothing he could do now other than restore the original face of Slytherin. But first, he was eager to know what other secrets the Chamber was hiding. So, he made a beeline for the books that were written in a combination of ancient Celtic languages like Welsh, Branx, Gaelige and Breton. He had only identified these languages with some help from some of the obscure books of the Hogwarts library. There were many other languages that he could not identify and he doubted he could translate any of them without devoting at least decades of his life. He didn't have that kind of time to waste but thankfully fate intervened in the form of Fleur.

The all-translate charm Fleur taught him in France was a trump card. The charm could help him with reading and speaking foreign languages so long as there was a source of the language nearby when the charm was cast. Taking a deep breath Harry envisioned the charm in his mind before tapping the tip of his wand against one of the books in Slytherin's collection. The tip of his wand glowed white before it changed into pale blue. As he dragged his wand back he could feel something in the space change. The spell was pulling some magic from the book confirming his theory of the spell's working. He suspected the spell was pulling the magical residue or memory from the intent of the writer of this book.

'I've got to learn exactly how something like that is incorporated into a spell. Perhaps, a talk with professor Flitwick and Professor Vector is necessary.' Harry mused.

Harry smiled and pressed his wand against his temple. He closed his eyes as the charm washed over him like a blanket made of silk. When the sensation passed, he opened his eyes and the strange squiggles and symbols in the book were making sense to him. He took the book with him to his study and began taking notes on his notepad.

For once, he was ahead of his immortal grandmother.

'When I find what you want Perenelle Flamel, I'll be the one with the upper hand.' he thought, going back to the task at hand.

After all, he didn't have an iota of time to waste. There were a total of three books and some twenty or so scrolls for Harry to read up and find any clues about the Hallows and their connection to Salazar Slytherin.