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Wizards Fall: Down the Rabbit Hole (part 1)

Standard Disclaimer:

Alyx peered over the top of the monitor and looked down. "Another Wizards Fall? The minions will be so pleased."

Bob looked up from the keyboard and glared at her. "You know you shouldn't call our readers minions, they are people, they have lives, hopes, and dreams. And your dressing them up in leather and llama costumes has got to stop!"

Alyx shrugged. "They don't seem to mind, as long as we keep typing, they are happy to do what I tell them. Why the other day I had one that didn't even mind the power tools..."

"Stop!" Bob said loudly. "I don't want to hear this," he muttered to himself. "It's bad enough I have my own perversions without dealing with yours."

Alyx glared at the mention of *his* perversions. "You? Your boring, all you can think of is busty, scantily clad women bearing jelly donuts. Me, I have flair, I am experiencing the gestalt of humanity."

"Alan Rickman in a hot tub with you while being served by three minions in llama costumes is not a gestalt!" Bob shot back.

"I swear I'm never going to live that down," Alyx muttered. "So what now? We could argue about this all day you know."

Bob shrugged. "Simple, you tell the people that we don't own Harry Potter while I go plug this story in and turn it on for the minions... errr readers."

Alyx nodded happily and turned to face the audience. She was pleased to see the large number of them wearing llama costumes and it reminded her that she still needed to work on her llama drama.

Bob shook his head in despair noting Alyx drifting off into her own fantasy world. "And now, Wizards Fall folks. Enjoy."

Wizard's Fall, Part IV Down the Rabbit Hole

Harry's Villa, Norman's Cay (September, 2007)...

It had taken Luna nearly two months before she felt ready to move into the house next door. During those months she had suffered intense depression. Harry and Hermione helped her through the days and the long lonely nights. On few rare occasions when her nightmares were really bad, all three slept in the same bed, usually with Hermione in the middle.

There existed a strange kind of tension between them. It was as if each of them realized in their own way that the relationship could easily turn into something like what the twins had. It was something that scared all three of them, and while they never spoke of it, each thought it would be a bad idea to take that extra step. Even without that final step, there was a love beyond words that existed between the trio.

Only Luna knew the absolute truth about what was happening between them and she was sure they weren't ready to know about it. Hermione would soon learn some of it, but Harry couldn't know for now. It didn't bother her much. She'd had her Richard, and had foreseen a time when Harry would share himself with her with Hermione's blessing.

Eventually, she moved into the villa next door; the same villa Harry had created when he had rescued Hermione. She hadn't wanted to move really. Neither had Harry or Hermione, and that was part of the reason she felt the move was necessary. She felt the distance, small though it was, was needed to keep their relationship from taking a step they weren't ready for.

Slowly things got back to normal for Harry and Hermione, except the daily visits with Luna and the shared meals.

Harry had returned to working on his space expanding charms and Hermione began to seriously work on solving the Avalon equations. Harry had produced a first rate foundation for the equations and she took his work and built upon it.

Luna spent her days reviewing and checking many of the machines that she had shipped from Nantech when it dissolved upon Richard's death. Harry had set up a large building next to the old Weasley Wheezes building and she spent most of her time installing and testing some of the most advanced machines in the world, on an island mostly powered by magic.

She had the germ of an idea, but hadn't been able to do more than consider it in broad terms. First, like Hermione, she needed to get the foundation put in place, and that meant making sure all of the equipment she needed worked. And even then, she knew she'd never be able to bring her idea to fruition unless something drastic happened.

Harry and Hermione's Villa, Norman's Cay...

Harry stepped into the bedroom and stopped dead in his tracks. There was an extra door there that didn't make any sense. He frowned. Hermione had told him she would be making a change to their bedroom, but she hadn't told him what that change would be.

The wardrobes were missing, a fact that only dimly registered. He walked over to the door and opened it. It was dark inside. He took a step inside and the door swung shut behind him. He took a deep breath, trying to stem the tide of fear that began to wash over him. A whimper escaped past his lips and the fear he had spent most of his life fighting quickly overwhelmed him.

Luna's Villa, Norman's Cay...

"I wanted to thank you, Luna," said Hermione. "Your approach to the equation was just what I needed to see. The change in perspective did the trick and I'm moving forward again."

Luna smiled. "Richard used to say I could alter his approach after ten minutes of looking at his problems. And then he'd moan about all the months spent wasting time when my way was so different from his."

Hermione sighed, but Luna held her smile. "The hurt is receding, so don't be afraid you're going to hurt me by bringing up anything that reminds me of him."

"So, has Harry brought down all that equipment you had shipped to Nassau?"

Luna nodded and looked dreamily out the window. "Once I get the twins to finish making the necessary power adapters, I'll be set up and able to continue my research. I have most of them now, but some of the devices require specialized power adapters that the twins never heard of. They'll probably have it in a week or two. Harry arranged for them to visit a factory on the mainland where they can see some of the equipment in operation. It will allow them to take some readings on their power needs."

Hermione sighed and looked down. Luna looked over at her. "What is it?"

"You don't know how much I envy you, Luna. You have a clear goal. I have the equations and that's about it," Hermione replied.

Luna shook her head and smiled at her gently. "You have far more than that. You just don't recognize it yet. Life isn't about goals, it's about doing what you need to do to find your own brand of happiness. Besides, my own goals have changed recently, much like yours did when you first came here. I've decided to turn my research toward ways we can protect ourselves."

She trailed off and cocked her head to one side, her brow wrinkling in concern. "Something is wrong with Harry."

At the same time Hermione felt a rush of primal fear run through her from her ring. She shivered violently and stood. She darted out of the house with Luna running right behind her.

The two ran into the Potter house, Hermione almost frantic from the emotional storm she felt from the ring on her finger. "Harry!" she shouted.

The sound of thrashing and things falling over could be heard from the bedroom and the two women ran to see what was causing the noise. Hermione skidded to a halt in the empty bedroom, then her eyes fell on the new walk-in closet.

Several long strides took her to the door and she yanked it open. Harry tumbled out, covered in clothing. He curled up in a ball on the floor, eyes tightly closed and began to tremble.

"Dobby!" Luna called.

She turned when Dobby appeared. "Go to Alicia," she commanded. "Ask her for a strong dose of calming draught."

Dobby nodded and tore his eyes away from Harry, who was oblivious to everything.

Hermione knelt by Harry, but for once in her life she was at a loss. His emotional storm was still sweeping through her and it added to her own fear.

Luna knelt next to her and bent down close to Harry's head. "It's going to be all right. You're out now," she said, gently rubbing his back.

Hermione looked at Luna incredulously. "Do you know what's going on?"

"He's claustrophobic, Hermione. I'm surprised you didn't know," the blond said a bit harshly. Her focus was on Harry. Hermione could come later.

"No, I didn't know," whispered Hermione, mortified. She hadn't known and he had never told her.

"Something has triggered a panic attack. He might have a lot of power, but he's still human," Luna said softly.

Dobby reappeared holding a calming draught. A moment later, Alicia popped into the room. She was one of the few people Harry keyed into their private wards so she could always apparate in.

"What happened?" Alicia said as she knelt next to the two women.

"A panic attack caused by his claustrophobia," Luna replied authoritatively.

Alicia blinked at her, then took the potion bottle from Dobby. With a competent wave of her wand she magicked the contents directly into Harry's stomach.

He slowly relaxed his position and Hermione could feel the emotional storm lessening.

"I had no idea," Hermione said with a bit of chagrin.

Alicia frowned. "I'm not really an expert on it, but I don't think he's actively claustrophobic. More likely something triggered a flashback to when it was a serious problem. Even people that beat the problem can still get overwhelmed from time to time."

Harry opened his eyes and Hermione leaned closer. "Hey there," she said softly. "Are you all right?"

"What happened? Last thing I remember was the door slammed shut and the lights went out."

Hermione nibbled on her lip worriedly for a moment and nodded. It finally dawned on her exactly why he always insisted that at least one light be kept on at night. Even the bedroom onboard the Lily had a Mickey Mouse night light. Now she felt guilty for teasing him about it.

"We think you had a panic attack. Why didn't you tell me you were claustrophobic?" she asked.

He shrugged wearily. "I thought I had beaten it. Madam Pomfrey helped me deal with it in my first year at Hogwarts. I haven't had a panic attack in years, not even when I was on a full binge."

"I never knew that!" exclaimed Hermione. Suddenly she felt a wave of shame hit her through her ring and she understood his need to appear strong against his muggle relatives, and to the world. Her expression softened and she reached down and caressed his cheek.

"So a light in the closet would prevent it?"

He nodded. "Pretty much, yeah," he replied tiredly. "Closed in spaces don't seem so... intimidating when there is a light on."

"I think someone needs to sleep for a few hours," Alicia commented, observing him.

Hermione and Luna helped him stand and walk over to the bed. "Rest, Harry," Alicia commanded.

He nodded and lay back on the bed.

Alicia watched for a moment longer then nodded in satisfaction. She waved to the other two witches to follow her out of the room. Out in the kitchen, she turned to Hermione. "He'll sleep for an hour or two. Those sort of episodes always tire someone out afterwards."

While, Luna bustled around the kitchen putting out cups and conjuring tea for everyone, Hermione nodded absently, her eyes on the door to the bedroom. It bothered her that even now the way he had been raised was still causing him difficulties.

Alicia took a cup and nodded gratefully to Luna. "He's lucky, really. Madam Pomfrey had some experience that she could use to help him get past the problem. Gabrielle is pulling her hair out dealing with some of the problems we're only now starting to see. She's got standing orders for books on Mind Healing for the committee."

"I didn't know it was that much of a problem," Hermione said softly. "But I guess I should have." Her eyes glanced towards Luna for a moment.

Luna noticed her look and smiled slightly. It was true that she had had her own share of problems and still had them to an extent.

"It's worst among the children," Alicia said sadly. "Madam Maxime is currently housing nearly 300 orphans. Some of them are having considerable difficulty. Granted, a lot of them are nearly adults at this point. Most of the children we picked up came from the magical schools. Angie's group had the youngest ones."

Hermione and Luna both looked startled by the news. "Is there anything that can be done?" asked Hermione worriedly.

Alicia shook her head. "Angie is trying to get people interested in taking in some of the children, but we don't have any adoption agencies or procedures for that sort of thing."

Luna looked down at the table. "You don't need agencies or procedures, all you need is an adult or two who are willing to share their lives and love with a child. Surely that can't be that hard to find? Some of the children can be adopted, others could be mentored, or even apprenticed."

Hermione could feel Luna's anger bubbling just under her calm exterior and she laid a hand on hers. "I'll speak with my father. Perhaps we can get the committee to appeal to the islanders to take in a child."

Alicia nodded and looked relieved. "That would be a big help. They know about the situation in broad terms, but I think they have been concentrating on other matters. Road building and planning for this next enlargement is nice, but what good is it to have all this in place when your people are hurting?"

"It is a mistake to worry about people's physical comforts when they have other needs that aren't being addressed," Luna murmured.

Alicia stood, happy with the results of her conversation. Hermione was a member of the Rescue Committee and would see that the problem received the attention it deserved. As the senior healer for the island, she felt it was her duty to bring this problem to their attention. Angie and Maxime's attempts to get people to take in the children hadn't been successful enough. With Hermione and Harry's backing, something would be done to help ease the situation.

With a wave, she apparated back to the infirmary. She still had some potions simmering. Since Angelina had given birth to a little girl not long ago, she had taken over the potion making until Angelina was done nursing the baby. Angelina had several very capable assistants who she was

training up to make potions in her absence, but for now, she couldn't be around the fumes from the simmering potions.

Hermione stared at the spot where Alicia was for a moment longer then she turned back to look at Luna. "We've been so engrossed in the nitty gritty details that we completely forgot the people we're trying to help."

Luna smiled weakly at her. "To be honest, it never even crossed my mind until Alicia mentioned it. Part of the problem is that people seem to expect the Rescue Committee to take care of everything."

"I bet Harry knew. He visits Madam Maxime's school at least twice a week. He also helped Hagrid bring in all sorts of animals, magical and muggle."

"Knew what?" said a voice from the doorway.

Both women turned to look at Harry. His hair was even messier than normal and he looked like he had just woke up.

"What are you doing up?" Hermione asked. "Alicia thought you'd sleep for a couple hours."

He shrugged, then walked over to a chair and sat down. "You know I sleep less than most people," he said softly. "Now, what did I know about?"

"You knew about the problems with the orphans at the school," Luna replied.

He nodded and his expression turned grim. "I do know about it. I even asked Madam Maxime about adopting the children."

"All of them?" Hermione nearly screeched in dismay.

Harry chuckled and shook his head. "No, not all, and I wouldn't have done anything without your input. You know that. I just wanted to see what Maxime thought. I was shocked when she was discouraging."

"That makes sense," Luna said approvingly.

Hermione and Harry both turned to her, a bit startled.

"Oh? Why?" Hermione asked.

"Most of the children are too old," replied Luna airily. "You'd be more like big brother and sister than parents to them. We have almost no preschool orphans and Angie's group contains the youngest children, who are all starting primary school this September."

"That was Maxime's argument to me as well. We settled on a bit of a compromise. Two days a week I'll be at her school, teaching a class about discovering magic beyond the wand, and a class for the older kids, which I call 'making it happen'," Harry said, then he looked at both of the witches. "I was sort of hoping that you two would help with that second class, since it's going to be about starting with a desired result and then creating a spell to make it happen."

Hermione's expression lit up. She'd missed teaching and even a part time return to the field would be a welcome change to her life.

Luna, however, looked pensive.

Harry noted her look and reached across the table to pat her hand lightly. "Don't decide now. Take some time and think about it. I know you still have your research. But one day a week break isn't going to make that much of a difference."

Luna looked down at the table. The ideas she wanted to research now centered around ways to use her new science to protect the island and it's inhabitants. That meant looking down darker paths than her original ideas she had been following with Richard. And soon, she'd have to speak frankly with Harry and Hermione about it. She didn't like the path she was considering and found it difficult to focus on it.

Add to that the pull she felt from Harry, who truly wanted her to help with these classes, and it made it even harder to focus on what she was doing.

Reluctantly she nodded and stiffened slightly when Hermione leaned over and hugged her. "It will be fun, Luna."

Luna looked up and smiled at the pair.

Harry stood and walked to the counter where he poured himself a cup of coffee. "I think I'll go work on the enlargement procedures some more."

"Harry?" Hermione called before he could exit the room.

"Hmmm?" he said, turning to look at her.

"I know you're fine, but I'd feel better if you took it easy for today, and stay away from the walk-in closet until I've installed some lighting."

He chuckled and at her protectiveness. Even after all this time, it still made him feel good.

Once in the study, his mood darkened as he looked at the sixty seven page hand written incantation for the enlargement. If he didn't figure out how to reduce it down, it was never going to happen.

A bell above deck rang three times and Amos looked up sharply. It wasn't possible to easily ward a moving object, even one as big as the Mary Celeste, but it did have a charm which warned him of approaching magical people.

Amos was alone, as usual, and he wasn't expecting company.

He stood and walked up the short gangway to the main deck. Once there, he squinted into the low sun, trying to spot his visitors. Growing concerned when he couldn't see the approaching intruders, he fingered the necklace he wore nervously. It had been given to him by Harry. Everyone who left the island on a routine basis now wore one. It wasn't a portkey, as a lost necklace could be hazardous to those on the island. Instead, it was charmed to track the whereabouts of the wearer.

His fingers twitched around the necklace when he spotted six broom riders drop their disillusionment charm.

"Keep your hands where we can see them," shouted one of the red cloaked men.

He smiled bravely and hoped that someone would find out what happened to him. He wasn't concerned about giving up the island's secrets. He wasn't the secret keeper and he had taken a vow that would take his life in order to protect the island. Even if they used a truth potion or some form of mind control on him, the vow would kick in, killing him.

Three of the men landed, while the other three circled the ship on their brooms, watching him for any signs of treachery.

One man approached him and snapped a pair of manacles on him. He could feel the anti-magic spells suppressing his core. The man then patted him down, removing his wand, a pipe, a knife and his wallet. To Amos' surprise, his necklace was not removed or even noticed. "He's clean."

"All right, slap a portkey on him and let's get out of here," said another.

"Wait! What about the boat?" asked the third.

The Auror in charge shrugged. "Not our worry. We just need to bring this idiot in."

Amos bowed his head and tried to blink back his tears. Mary was his family, it had been his source of income and his companion for almost as many years as he had been alive. With a strength born of desperation, he struggled free from the Auror holding him. "NO!" He shouted. "I'll not leave my Mary!"

He took two steps before collapsing under the weight of two powerful stunning spells.

"Crazy old fool," muttered the lead Auror. He picked himself up from the floor. "You just added resisting arrest to what could have been a minor charge of endangering the secrecy statutes with your boat."

An Auror knelt next to Amos and tapped the manacles and watched as the prisoner disappeared. The leader looked around for a moment, then he nodded to the others, who mounted their brooms and lifted off.

Harry's Villa, Norman's Cay (September, 2007)...

Hermione looked up when the orb appeared in front of her. She was clad in a pair of light weight shorts and a tank top, normal attire for her when Harry wasn't home, and she wasn't expecting company.

"Commente!" she said clearly, activating her side of the communications spell.

Harry's head appeared floating in the orb. She was surprised to see water in the background, as he was supposed to be with the Weasley twins. They were working on converting their old Wheezes building into a manufacturing center for items used in defense of the island.

The wards that Harry had put up were impressive, and so far had kept out the curious. Harry felt there was a chance, however remote, that someday they would be detected and he wanted to be prepared for that eventuality.

"Harry? Where are you?" she asked. "Aren't you supposed to be with Fred and George?"

"Hermione, I don't have a lot of time. Something has happened to Amos. Right now I'm aboard his ship and it's empty. Amos is missing and I can see the residual signatures of several stunners, as well as a portkey. I think he's been picked up by a capture team.

"I've got to bring the Mary into port, and that's going to take me a few hours. Then I have to find and rescue Amos."

Hermione frowned. "Are you sure you're all right alone on that boat of his?"

"Ship," he said, correcting her absentmindedly. He had explained the difference to her many times about boats and ships, but she refused to change her ways. "I'll be fine, it's just that I'm the only one that knows enough to sail the her into Amos' deep water dock. It's what happens afterwards that bothers me."

"Why? You'll just go rescue Amos like you've done for nearly fifty other islanders who've been picked up."

He frowned at her. "Do you want to be the one to tell Amos that his Mary is probably what drew the attention of the Aurors and he shouldn't be sailing her like he has been?"

Her eyes widened and her hand flew up to cover her mouth. "Oh, Harry, this will kill him."

Amos worked tirelessly for the islanders, but he had one real love in his life, his Mary Celeste.

He nodded grimly. "Unless we can come up with a solution. He lives for his Mary and if we're going to be honest, we need him to keep making his runs. He provides a service that we need at least for the foreseeable future."

"What can I do?" she asked.

He thought for a moment before speaking. "Contact Fred and George and tell them what's happened. I didn't have time when I felt the pulse from his necklace. I may need some of their inventiveness to provide a distraction when I go pick up Amos."

She nodded and gave him a smile. "Hurry home, Harry. We'll be ready when you get here."

He nodded. "Right. Fini!" he said, ending the communications spell.

Hermione pulled out a small notebook and scribbled a few notes, then she summoned Dobby to her. Harry and the twins would handle getting Amos safely home. She had an idea which might help with Amos' problem.

She stood and walked out the door of their home and walked the short distance to their library. There were some books she needed to check.

The Mary Celeste, 2 miles North of Norman's Cay...

Harry stood on the deck and considered his problem. The Mary Celeste was moving along at a good clip, thanks to a little help from his magic and the fact that he had unfurled nearly every square inch of sail he had on board.

Norman's Cay was a large bump on the horizon and he could see the lights on Amos' dock. Even though he was still more than two miles away, he began the process of slowing the large ship down.

Harry absently waved a hand, causing a number of sails to lower. At the same time, the first of several sea anchors streamed out aft, slowing the ship. He wanted to dock the Mary, not crash her into Amos' concrete pier.

Twin pops signaled the arrival of the Weasley twins and he grinned at them when they both stumbled and fell to the deck. "You would have thought that trying to apparate to my dive boat when I'm doing sixty miles an hour would have convinced you two not to apparate to a moving ship."

Fred looked up at him sourly. "Yeah, yeah, but this is important. Amos needs us."

Harry shook his head at them. What they had done was incredibly dangerous. Apparating onto a moving vehicle involved all sorts of forces that didn't exist when apparating to a stationary location. The last time they jumped to his dive boat while he was going full throttle, their feet had barely touched the boat before they'd gone overboard, nearly dragging Harry with them.

"And Hermione says I'm nuts?" he muttered, then he looked back at the twins, who were staring at him, wearing identical grins.

He shook his head again. "Idiots," he said fondly.

George threw both arms around him and kissed him wetly on the cheek. "Yeah, but you love us anyway!" he proclaimed loudly.

Harry danced back out of his arms and wiped at his cheek. Movement caught his eye and he held up a hand, stopping Fred from repeating his brother's gesture. "Maybe, but I prefer my kisses to come from someone who doesn't need to shave their face."

Fred's eyes sparkled with mirth. "I can ask Angelina and Alicia. I'm sure they'd be willing, but Hermione might object."

"Hermione? Luna would too," added George.

A motion on the horizon caught Harry's attention and his hands flared with magic. The Mary heeled hard to one side and another sea anchor dropped off the stern. Almost immediately the large ship slowed noticeably.

Fred and George looked nervously at the rigging moving around and sails being neatly tied off, all without any visible hands to perform the work.

"What do we know?" asked Harry. He watched the horizon carefully. He could see the dock in the distance and was nudging the large ship into the proper position.

"We traced Amos' signature to a location north of Atlanta. Remember hearing about that new ICW holding camp? We think he's been taken there," Fred said, tearing his eyes away from the rigging.

"We don't know why he was taken. Amos still keeps his official residence up in Nassau, so we don't think it's because he's been linked with us or what we're doing."

Harry nodded absently then spun the helm hard. The aging ship heeled again before coming upright and heading directly for the pier. His hands flashed with magic one final time and the ship slowed to a crawl.

"We'll be docked in a few minutes, then we'll see what we can do about Amos. I'm not going to let anyone take him from us. He's worked too hard

for everyone here and we owe it to him," Harry said softly.

Fred grinned broadly. "Mate, we have this type of bomb that turns everyone's head into cabbages, it's perfect for assault..."

Harry shook his head. "No, we can't."

Both twins looked at Harry as if he had grown a second head and he frowned at them. "Don't you see it? Amos is too close to what we've got here. His rescue needs to be low key. So low key, in fact, that the ICW won't know we took him. If you guys want to work up a diversion, that's fine, but play elsewhere. Leave the mainland facility where Amos is alone," he paused and looked thoughtful. "You know a diversion might not be a bad idea, especially if you made it appear as if one or more of the member nations of the ICW were trying to break away."

George blinked and his expression grew sly. "So you're saying we have permission to play, as long as we don't make Georgia our sandbox?" He turned to his brother. "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

Fred grinned. "Yup, it's time to pay ickle Percy another visit."

George nodded and turned back to Harry. "Thanks, Harry! We'll see you later tonight when you bring Amos back."

And with that both twins popped away.

Harry shook his head and muttered about momentum. He hoped the twins didn't injure themselves too badly when they arrived. He'd tried to explain momentum to them. When they'd only started at him blankly, he had dumped the explanation in Hermione's lap. She'd done her best, but their vacant stares had annoyed her so much, she'd turned the problem over to her father. Though he'd done his best, Duncan hadn't had any more luck than Harry or Hermione. The twins still hadn't understood.

Shrugging, Harry let the problem go. The twins had hard heads. A few concussions wouldn't do them any lasting damage.

Norman's Cay Hospital, the next morning...

Alicia looked up when the door opened. She smiled when she saw Hermione enter, followed by Harry and Luna, and motioned for them to enter her office.

Out of habit, she ran a practiced eye over Harry. She had checked him last night when he had returned with Amos, but she knew he tended to think little of his own personal health or safety.

"How is he?" asked Hermione in a hushed voice.

"Cranky and more than a little unhappy," replied Alicia, "but otherwise he's not hurt. He's convinced that we're going to take his boat from him."

"Ship," Harry corrected absently.

Luna smirked and Alicia shot Harry a dark look, then she turned back to Hermione. "He's just finishing breakfast. Unless he develops some life threatening disease in the next thirty minutes, I'm going to release him." Standing, she motioned them to follow.

A few short moments later, Alicia led them out into the main ward, where Amos was eating his breakfast and glaring at the elf who stood nearby, making sure he ate. The old man looked up at his visitors and dropped his fork onto his plate.

"What happen'd to my Mary?" he asked bluntly.

Harry grinned at him. "She's sitting in her berth, no worse for wear," he replied. "I brought her home for you."

Amos eyed Harry for a moment, then nodded slowly. "You probably be the onli mon on dis island tha' can handle Mary." His expression turned glum. "I'm gonna lose her?"

Luna and Hermione sat down on the bed next to Amos and Harry pulled up a chair. He waved a hand in the direction of the two women. "Not at all, Amos. We know what your Mary means to you and we have a couple of ideas that should allow you to keep her and keep using her. Hermione and Luna have a couple ideas which should work for you."

Amos turned to look at the two women. "Ideas?"

"I've noticed that most of your magic seems to be very practical," Hermione said softly.

"I learnt from my pappy and his pappy. Its bin gud enuf for a hunnert years," Amos replied.

Hermione frowned. The concept of someone being totally home schooled went against everything she believed in. "It's worked for you very well, Amos, but if you're to keep your boat, we need to teach you some new magic."

"Ship." said both Harry and Amos.

Luna snickered softly. She liked Amos a lot. He didn't laugh at her comments about strange creatures and he often brought her magical creatures he found while out sailing.

Harry reached over and touched Amos on the shoulder. "What we're thinking of doing is really simple. First step is to make the Mary look a little different. We're going to color all of your sails. I realize that the gray canvas is traditional, but we want her to look like a different ship."

"Second, the committee is going to ask for volunteers to be your crew. We have plenty of people, some of whom have asked if they can be taught to sail a ship like yours or our Lily. From the committee's point of view, learning boating safety is a sensible thing to do. Learning how to sail your Mary will help with that. Finally, Hermione is going to teach you a spell that will allow you to create the illusion of having a crew for those times when you're sailing alone."

Amos sat silently for a long moment, looking at the three of them. He could see they were trying very hard to do everything they could to let him keep his Mary. Finally, he looked away, choked up by the fact that he was accepted and loved by these wizards. It was a rare experience for a wizard as old as he was. He had lived long enough to experience a time when a Caucasian wizard wouldn't dream of being friends with a black wizard. The rest of the wizarding world might be tearing itself apart, but here on Norman's Cay, things were very right, in his opinion.

He looked up again to catch Harry's eye. "You tink dis really work?"

"It has to, my friend," Harry replied. "You're part of our family. You need the Mary and you do provide a needed service. Besides, Hermione is a great teacher. She'll teach you the spells you need to know in no time. All we need to do is make the Mary appear more mundane, so you don't attract any official attention."

"Harry, won't the ICW be looking for him?" Luna asked.

Harry shook his head. "I don't think so, but I used the Twins Permapolyjuice, so there is a chance..."

"Harry, you didn't!" admonished Hermione. "That hasn't been tested!"

"I know that," he replied smoothly, "That's why I didn't personally test it. However, the warden of the prison volunteered."

Hermione gaped at him. "You didn't!"

When Amos began to laugh, Luna grinned happily. She still had a bit of a blood thirsty streak when it came to official representatives of the government. Harry could have easily turned the man inside out and she'd approve whole heartedly.

Hermione shook her head ruefully. She knew that Harry had drained the man's magic before using the potion on him. Harry might pretend to the outside world that such measures didn't bother him, but she and Luna knew the truth of it.

"And the twins? What were they up to if they weren't with you last night?" she asked.

Harry's expression grew guarded. "Erm... well, they might have taken a couple of portkeys I made and visited Britain last night. With the ICW centralizing all of the DMLE functions, I thought it might be useful for them to create a diversion in case I accidentally triggered some alarm. They might have... erm... created a disturbance or two."

Luna giggled again and Amos looked up at Harry, his eyes narrowed in speculation. He could well imagine the trouble the Weasley twins could wreak when left unsupervised.

Hermione turned her full gaze on her husband. "Just what are you not telling us? What did they do?"

Harry suddenly felt like he did when he first met Professor McGonagall. He looked down and scuffed one foot along the floor, then he muttered something inaudibly.

"I can't hear you," Hermione prompted.

Harry sighed and sat down on the bed opposite of Amos. "I said the twins decided to visit Percy last night. I suggested that an abortive attack elsewhere that looked like it came from a member nation of the ICW might throw people off our trail. So the twins decided to pin the blame on the Swedish."

Hermione's expression grew thoughtful, then she asked the one question Harry had hoped she wouldn't ask. It was so embarrassing!

"How did they blame the Swedish for the attack?"

"Talking Reindeer," Harry muttered.

"That doesn't sound too bad," Luna offered. Talking reindeer didn't seem that unusual to her. When she was younger she often spoke with the reindeer that visited her every year at Yule.

Hermione's eyes narrowed. "What were they saying?"

Harry looked away. "Look, I want you to know this wasn't my idea. If I had known what they had planned, I would have straightened them out before hand!"

"What did they say?" Hermione repeated through gritted teeth.

"Bork bork bork," Harry said, shaking his head in defeat.

Hermione blinked and stared at Harry for a moment before she started to laugh.

Harry looked at her in dismay. He had been telling her only a few days ago that the twins were growing up and taking their new duties seriously. He never expected them to pattern an attack on a TV show that they had become addicted to while babysitting Hermione's little sister one evening.

In fact, the twins home now sported a Television and the complete collection of the Muppet Show on DVD, as well as all of their movies. The Swedish Chef and Animal were two of their favorite characters.

Hermione wiped the tears from her eyes and looked up at Harry. "They attacked Percy with muppets and talking reindeer?"

Harry looked down at the floor, "I knew you wouldn't understand," he muttered.

She laughed again and he couldn't help but smile to himself. Her laughter always lightened his moods and this time was no exception. When Amos began to laugh, he looked up, grinned at the two of them, then began to laugh with them.

Luna looked the three of them and shook her head fondly. *Muggle born and raised*, she thought, *they are such strange people sometimes*.

Harry and Hermione's Villa, Norman's Cay, December 2007...

Hermione pulled her sweater about her body and leaned against the railing of the deck, sipping her tea. In the distance she could just make out the bright yellow sails of the *Mary Celeste*. She couldn't help but smile.

Amos was in seventh heaven. The old wizard had been convinced that no plan would allow him to continue sailing his beloved ship, but in fact the opposite turned out to be true. A large number of people had come forward asking to be taught to sail, both his ship and the much smaller boats that Harry and the committee had been purchasing.

Amos found himself teaching sailing and life as an islander to an avid group of people ranging from fifteen to fifty, and he was loving every minute of it.

"Hermione? Are you home?"

She turned and smiled at Luna, who was standing in the living room looking around for her.

"Out here, Luna," she called.

Luna spotted her and grinned, then she joined her on the deck. Dobby appeared a moment later and placed a tray containing a fresh pot of tea and some biscuits on a table. Hermione nodded in thanks and motioned for Luna to have a seat on one of the lounge chairs.

"You said you wanted to talk about something. It sounded serious," Hermione prompted.

Luna poured herself a cup of tea and she leaned back on the chair, her gaze moving out over the large bay that used to be the island's small lagoon. It was dotted with small craft, belonging mostly muggles and squibs, who contributed to the welfare of the island by fishing.

"How much do you know about what I used to do?"

Hermione frowned. If there was one thing she hated the most it was to admit ignorance about a subject. "I can't really say I understand it at all..." she said hesitantly.

Luna smiled softly. "I greatly admire you and Harry both, more than I can express in mere words. But while you immersed yourself in the Wizarding world and Harry tried to deal with his problems, I found myself becoming interested in the source of our magic. That research led to a merry chase that ultimately hooked me up with Richard."

She paused and took a sip of tea while Hermione looked at her, her brow wrinkled in confusion.

"This island and everyone living on it represent one of the last bastions of free wizards and magical people in the world," Luna said softly, then she focused her gaze on the witch beside her.

Hermione couldn't help but stare back, pinned by her icy blue gaze.

"It scares me, Hermione. We're going to be living here, raising our families here. Yet, just outside our wards is a world that would destroy us."

Hermione shook herself, freeing her gaze from Luna's. "What does this have to do with your work? Or the source of magic?"

"I've been looking into using science to help protect us, but it's such a frightening prospect that I'm not sure if I should continue with it, or simply set fire to the lab and help Harry full time with his teaching at the school," Luna whispered.

Hermione leaned forward on her chair and looked at Luna intently. "I don't understand."

Luna took another sip of tea. "A Nanite is a machine so small that you need an electron microscope to see it. The machine does what I design it to do. If I want the machine to locate cancer genes and remove them from a strand of DNA, that's exactly what it will do. If I wanted to, I could make the Nanite capable of replicating itself, and passing itself from person to person."

Hermione frowned. "That sounds like it could be dangerous, like a disease."

Luna nodded solemnly. "It can be. Nanites are artificial forms of life and, like a virus, can spread across the planet. People have no immunity from their effects."

Hermione nodded slowly as she worked it out in her mind. "All right, but what does this have to do with the source of our magic?"

Luna placed her cup of tea on a table next to her chair and gazed out over the bay for a long while before speaking again. "While Richard worked on producing Nanites that could repair and maintain deep space probes, I worked on two slightly different projects. I explored the use of Nanites for gene therapy and I searched for the source of magic."

This caught Hermione's interest. "You found the source of magic?"

Luna turned her gaze back to Hermione. "What do you know about the Magical Event Horizon?"

Hermione blinked and stared at Luna for a moment. She was used to Luna jumping around like this in their conversations. "It's a term Harry invented when he worked on the island's wards," she replied slowly. "Harry explained it as the point where warded and unwarded space met. I found it interesting."

Luna smiled again, used to Hermione-speak now that they'd spent so much time together. She knew Hermione was trying, in a round about way, to say that she didn't think the idea was that important, it was a curiosity and nothing more. She pulled out her wand and, with a slight gesture, an image of a house appeared floating in front of the two women.

"Imagine a *Fidelius* ward as a bubble, surrounding a house like this one," she said. Another gesture and the house reappeared inside a bubble.

"The house is hidden from view and protected. Only those living inside the bubble, or knowing the secret, know the house exists. Those that once knew about the house have forgotten it entirely. To the rest of the world, that space where the house once stood just isn't there."

Hermione nodded. "Yes, I follow that."

"Good," Luna replied. "Now, the bubble itself is invisible, but it's not totally undetectable. Harry's event horizon idea suggests that, while the bubble and it's contents remain hidden, the very point at which the bubble meets regular space will emit a low level of magic. A sort of bleed through from the magic powering the ward."

Hermione frowned and stood. She paced for a moment thinking furiously. "That would mean that the area that is being protected is still detectable. They might not know what is being protected, but they would clearly know that there's magic there."

Luna nodded unhappily. "You see it too, then?"

"We're vulnerable, While they can't tell what's beyond the wards, they will know something is here," Hermione replied softly.

Luna sighed. "The amount of magic leaking out is very small, but not beyond the ability of the average Auror to detect. And now you know why I have such a problem."

Hermione blinked and her mind churned furiously for a second time in as many minutes as she continued to pace. "You've been working on something that can act like a disease that has no cure and you've found the source of magic. You've been working on tinkering with genes and our magic has to be genetic. Add to that the desire to protect what we have here?"

She paused in her pacing and stared at Luna in horror. "Luna, what have you done?"

Luna brushed off Hermione's horror with a wave and looked away. "Nothing yet. I have bits and pieces and the knowledge. The real question is what do I do with it? Given a couple years, I could have something that could really protect us, but right now all I have is doubts and fear. Fear that the Ministry will come here."

When Luna looked at her, Hermione sighed, seeing how upset she was. "All right, I think we should talk about this, at least with Harry and maybe a few others. I want to say no, it's wrong. I want to tell you to forget it..."

"But you can't."

Hermione nodded. "I can't. Harry and I want a family. I was planning on taking the contraceptive antidote next week. And now we've just worked out that we still aren't safe enough here."

"Harry can add several more lethal ward layers," Luna offered.

"He can, but what good would that do if they used a force like when they attacked Shangri La? Even a dozen extra lethal layers wouldn't stop a force that big."

Hermione paused and snapped her fingers. "We can still beef up the wards, but if Harry were to ward several other places in a similar manner, uninhabited islands..."

Luna grinned brightly. "Misdirection, I like it. In the meantime, I can continue working. I can do everything piecemeal until the only thing left to do is put it all together. That should take another year or two."

"So we'd have at least a year before we have to decide anything?" Hermione asked hopefully.

Luna nodded. Both women knew it wasn't a perfect solution, but it would give them time. A lot could happen in a year.

"So, where did Harry go today?" Luna asked.

Hermione sighed heavily. "He went to see Snape. He does this nearly every year at this time."

Luna nodded. It was close to the anniversary of Snape and his goons killing Ginny Weasley. She looked at Hermione. "Does it bother you?"

Hermione sat back down on the lounge. "No, not any more. I understand it better. Ginny was his first love, and he refuses to forget that. He thinks that to forget her would be dishonoring her memory. Personally, I don't think Ginny minds very much, but honor is important to Harry."

Luna stared out over the bay for a long moment considering Hermione's words. "I think it's more than that. I don't think he does it just to torment Snape, or himself. Are you sure he's just visiting Snape?"

Hermione blinked and looked at her friend before nodding slowly. It was possible that there was more to his yearly trips than she knew about.

Azkaban Prison...

Harry sat in a conjured chair and eyed the filthy disheveled man in the cell. Severus Snape had been placed in jail only after Harry had come within inches of nearly killing him. The twins managed to talk him out of it. As satisfying as it would have been, they were right. By that point it would have been murder.

The Ministry hadn't wanted to put Snape in prison. So few of the pureblood Death Eaters that survived the war were going to prison. In fact, when Harry learned about their attitude towards Snape, he had marched down to the Ministry building and had a private conference with then Minister Scrimgeour. While it wasn't public knowledge, he later admitted to the twins that he threatened to kill Scrimgeour and claim he was under the Imperius. Scrimgeour immediately saw the light and agreed to Harry's request. He even went as far as bypassing the Wizengamot and declaring Snape guilty. It tickled Harry's fancy that Snape went to jail without a trial, just like his most hated school mate, Sirius Black.

"Another year has come and gone, Severus," Harry said softly. The cell block was blocked off in both directions. Harry had placed a series of wards, preventing anyone from passing through.

Snape looked at Harry and tried to sneer as he drew himself up to his full height. "Potter. Come to torment me again?"

Harry hid a smirk and conjured a table with a cup of coffee and some warm pastries on it. "Something like that," he replied. "I thought I'd drop in and see what's new with you, old bean. Have you been getting out much?"

The aroma of the pastries hit Snape like an avalanche and he couldn't help but drool a little while Harry blew on his coffee to cool it down.

"I'm afraid my social calendar prevents me from getting out as often as I'd like," Snape replied snappishly.

"Ah," Harry replied knowingly. "Yes, I understand how these bars would prevent you from getting out much, but then I do believe that is their purpose." He gestured to the bars. "It is a far kinder fate than the one I had wanted to give you."

Harry conjured a large loaf of bread, then casually pushed it sideways into the cell. The loaf passed seamlessly through the bars as if they weren't there. Snape's eyes bulged and he lunged forward only to bounce off the very solid bars.

"Severus," Harry said, shaking his head sadly. "You know I can't let you out. Why... why... that would make me a criminal if I let you free. Besides, you don't deserve freedom yet. Someday perhaps, but not today."

Snape glared at him from his position on the floor and he rubbed his nose, then his eyes bulged outwards and he lunged again, only this time for the loaf of bread sitting on the floor. He viciously bit into the loaf and nearly moaned in pleasure. It was still warm! He hadn't tasted anything so good in years!

"You know, Severus, you really ought to consider decorating this place," Harry said. "It's really quite dull. I mean, I knew you liked dull. How else could one explain your classes? But really, this is beyond belief."

Snape glowered at him and refused to rise to the bait.

Harry grinned and leaned back on his chair.

"I think someone wants to speak with you," Snape muttered.

Harry glanced down the corridor to see a man practically jumping up and down in frustration at the edge of his ward. Behind him were several guards and at least two uniformed Aurors.

"Meh," Harry said and with a wave of his hand, turned the ward opaque, preventing anyone from seeing through it. "Probably some flunky from the Ministry, wanting to ask me questions. They always want to ask me questions these days. Why, did you know that at our dear Minister's wedding they had the gall to try to pull me out of the service? Fortunately, I changed their mind and they left me alone after that. I really wanted to see Percy marry Su Li. It was quite touching, you know."

Harry tapped his chest. "It kinda got me right... All right, that's a lie. It really was the biggest farce you can imagine. Percy had a ceremony that would have made the Queen green with envy, and Su strutted down the aisle like she owned the world and everyone in it."

"Dumbledore was there. He tried to talk to me too, but one of the visiting dignitaries had a wand accident." He smirked. "The man could have lost his buttock like Mad Eye always warned about, but he didn't. I was rather disappointed, I must say. It would surely have been a sight to see! But no. Instead he hit Albus with some sort of confundus charm, coupled with a very localized optical illusion that only Dumbledore could see. Would you believe he ran around accosting the guests, claiming they were all me? Shameful, simply shameful behavior! Fortunately, they carted him off to St. Mungo's and had him fixed up by the next day."

He grinned and leaned forward. "Now they really did a lousy job on picking a caterer, or so I'm told. I didn't stick around for the bash, but I hear that most of the guests ended up catching some sort of food poisoning. I hear it was quite spectacular, all those pure bloods being sick, I'm almost sorry I missed it."

He leaned back on his chair and lit his pipe. "Of course, Percy blamed his missing brothers for his misery, but then he blames them for everything lately," he said with a shrug. "I would have stuck around for the party, but I had an appointment and frankly, I got tired of sending the Aurors that kept trying to detain me to foreign countries."

Harry knew exactly who had sabotaged the food at the party, but he wasn't about to admit that. It wasn't time for those sort of secrets to be revealed.

Snape glared at him and shook his head. "Why are you doing this to me, Potter?" he growled with a mouthful of bread. It would have sounded more impressive but the bread prevented that.

Harry puffed slowly on his pipe and blew several smoke rings, then he turned his attention back to Snape. "Because I can, Severus. I visit you every year because this place isn't punishment enough for you. If I had my way, you would have been bricked up in a cell with a dementor for company." He sighed. "Unfortunately, I killed them all. How very short sighted of me. So every year I show up to remind you that you chose your path and that's why I'm out here and you're in there. You sealed your fate when you accepted that mark on your arm."

Harry paused and his expression grew reflective. "You know," he said slowly. "I think you should hate the Weasleys even more than you hate me. They were the ones that talked me out of killing you. My idea would have been the stuff of nightmares! I could kill you still, Severus. I've learned a lot over the years. Would you believe I've even become a moderately decent potion maker? Why, I can brew all sorts of undetectable poisons these days!"

Harry's eyes gleamed in the dim lighting and Snape shuddered back from his look, then he stared at the half eaten loaf of bread in horror.

Harry laughed softly. "Your bread is safe. I'm not ready for us to give up these stimulating conversations."

Snape stared at Harry for a long moment before cautiously lifting the bread to his lips again. If it was poisoned, it was much too late to worry about it.

Harry puffed calmly on his pipe and waved a hand, causing the ward to become transparent again. The man from the Ministry was still standing there, only now he had a lot of company. It seemed that at least two of the men with him were attempting to break the ward. He chuckled and shook his head. It would take a lot more than two men to break down that ward, but he'd let them try.

The officious looking man, seeing Harry, started to wave wildly and jump up and down.

Harry turned his attention back to Snape. "I tried looking up some of your old friends, but I'm afraid most of them were unavailable, seeing as how they're all still dead. It seems as though the man you all pledged your lives to didn't bother to share his secret of how to cheat death. Although, come to think on it, he wasn't very good at it, was he?" The smile that crossed his lips had Snape shoving away from him in fear.

"Interestingly enough, I've been told that the spot where your Lord and Master died is cursed," he went on, ignoring Snape's odd behavior. "People are afraid to go anywhere near it. Of course, it doesn't help that it's in the middle of Diagon Alley. It's really very amusing to see people deliberately move to one side or another to avoid that spot as they walk past.

"Malfoy is still smoking, which is really bad for his health, but the healers can't seem to fix him. Pity, that. Oh, and Narcissa is still missing. I think she believed those rumors that I was going to turn her into a House Elf and ran as fast as her little Death Eater feet could take her. Personally, I hope she's living as a muggle somewhere. Now that would be poetic justice."

"Potter, enough already!" Snape said between mouthfuls. "Must you rub it in? Yes, I made a mistake. Yes, Voldemort was evil, but he was powerful. Power is something that attracts all men."

Harry frowned and looked at the man, his eyes cold. "Voldemort was a babe compared to the power I wield. He had no intention of sharing his power with you or anyone else. You were a tool, stupid and vain and utterly convinced that your methods were right. What did it get you? Life in prison and a stain on your soul that nothing will cleanse."

"I said I know what I did," Snape replied angrily.

Harry was still for a moment, then leaned back on his chair, nodded and puffed on his pipe. "Yes, you admit it, but what sets you apart from the rest of normal people is your total lack of regret for your actions."

Harry stood and vanished his chair and table. He shook himself slightly, then smiled.

Snape shuddered back. There was something...wrong...with the man in front of him. His eyes were emotionless and devoid of anything human, but

his smile was so genuine looking. The combination was the stuff of nightmares. Tearing his gaze away, he stared down at the small bit of bread still in his hand and wondered, yet again, if Potter was insane.

"I'll see you in a year, old bean," Harry said. "Maybe next time I'll bring a book to read to you. The muggles have a wonderful author named Doctor Seuss. I think you'll enjoy him. His *Green Eggs and Ham* is marvelous."

Green Eggs and Ham? thought Snape. *Muggles really are disgusting creatures if they wait until eggs are so rotten they turn green!*

Harry waved and faded from sight.

Up the corridor, the ward vanished abruptly, causing the curse breakers to become violently sick as their spells backfired on them. The man from the Ministry and several prison guards rushed up the corridor.

"What did he say to you?" demanded the Ministry man.

"Nothing," Snape stammered. He knew what was coming. It was what always followed one of Potter's visits; a beating from the guards for not cooperating with them. He knew it was just an excuse. After all, they could have easily dosed him with Veritaserum. The fact that they didn't said they really didn't care what Potter had to say.

Later that day at Harry's villa...

Harry sipped the large mug of coffee that Dobby had handed him and he stared out over the bay, his gaze unfocused in thought.

Hermione opened the large bay door and stepped out onto the deck. She walked over to sit in the lounge chair next to his. A moment later, Dobby handed her a cup of tea. Unlike Harry, she rarely drank coffee.

"I didn't know," she said quietly.

Harry tore his gaze from the bay and turned his attention to her. "I know. I suppose I should have told you about it, but I didn't want you feeling guilty because I visited her and you didn't."

She nodded, after a moment of reflection. Harry had appeared a few hours ago at the island infirmary with a patient that surprised everyone. All these years she thought he had been going to visit Snape in prison. He was, but he'd also been visiting someone else. She knew he would continue to visit Snape, but now his visits made even more sense to her.

"Is there any real hope?" she asked.

Harry shook his head unhappily. "Alicia was working hard on her when I left the infirmary, but she didn't look hopeful. Fred, George and Bill will stay with her as long as it takes. They seemed pretty broken up about it. Maybe she'll have enough lucid moments to recognize them." He sighed heavily. "I got there too late. I knew she had been abandoned, but I never expected this to happen."

He bowed his head and Hermione could feel a wealth of emotions flowing from her ring. He was angry at himself for not being able to help her in time, and angry at those responsible. He was sad and hurting because she was dying and had been so alone until he arrived.

"Do you want to talk about it?" she asked gently.

He sipped his coffee and leaned back against the chair, his eyes closed. "I went to visit Snape, you know I do that at least once a year. I like to remind him that he's behind bars, while I'm enjoying life. I know it's petty of me, but it's the closest thing to revenge I can have on the man who changed our lives so dramatically."

He looked at her and reached out to touch her hand. "His actions, in a way, helped us to find each other and I don't regret that. I just wish it hadn't come at such high a cost."

Hermione nodded unhappily. She hated his yearly visits to Snape, but she hadn't been able to talk him out of going. Now she understood them a little better and could agree. The cost was painfully high for both of them. Snape's actions, both at school and during those final days, had a major impact on their lives. Had Snape not killed Ginny, it was very likely that they never would have hooked up in this lifetime.

"When I left Snape, I was in a foul mood. Then I remembered that I hadn't checked in on Molly Weasley in a long time. The last time I saw her was over a year ago. Normally, I try to stop in to see her a few times a year, to make sure her elf has enough money to care for her and himself.

"Molly didn't like elves, so the poor thing couldn't stay at the Burrow. I gave him enough money and converted Arthur's old work shed into a comfortable place for him to live. He'd slip into the house each night, clean up and make sure there was food in the cold box for Molly."

He opened his eyes and looked at her. "She was nuts, you know. Oh, maybe not nuts like, 'Lets go kill everyone', but she was quietly nuts. She was convinced that Ron and Ginny would be home shortly and that Arthur was at work. Going to see her was painful. Usually I'd check with her, then spend most of my time talking to the elf I hired."

Hermione nodded in understanding. Molly had slipped into insanity after her husband had died. Arthur had been seriously injured during the final battle in Diagon Alley and had lingered for several months, before finally succumbing to his wounds. After that, Molly slipped into her own reality and refused to come out. The last time Hermione had spoken with the woman, she had firmly believed that she and Ron were just days away from their wedding, despite the fact that Ron had been dead for nearly a year at that point. Visiting with the poor woman was emotionally draining. After that

last visit, Hermione never saw her again. It was something that she now deeply regretted.

He paused and his eyes narrowed in anger. "Where Charlie was while this was happening, I have no idea. I expect this is mostly Percy's work, but if I ever see Charlie again he better be able to explain..."

"Harry," Hermione chided.

"You didn't see it, Hermione," he replied hotly. "She had Aurors guarding the property, keeping her in and others out. The elf I paid to watch over her had been killed by one of the Aurors and the house sealed to prevent her from leaving! She hadn't eaten in weeks. Every cabinet, every nook and cranny of that house, had been stripped of food. Merlin knows how long she's been without food, but even in her insanity she tore that house apart looking for something edible."

He paused and his grip on his coffee mug tightened. "They were killing her slowly because the Minister didn't want the public to know about his crazy mother. It would have been kinder to just use a killing curse on her."

"How did you..." Hermione stopped and looked at Harry, who returned her stare. She nodded slowly, understanding that he had probably questioned the Aurors and drained their magic when he was done. He would protect his friends and family, and she knew deep down that Molly Weasley had always treated Harry like a son. It was a feeling he returned. She was the only mother he had when growing up.

With Molly in her own world, Fred and George had helped as much as they could, until they were chased out of Britain. The twins figured that one of their brothers had taken over caring for her. Both men were incensed at what had come to pass. When Harry first looked in on her after the twins arrived on the island, it had been obvious that no one was taking care of her and that she'd been left to fend for herself; something she was incapable of doing.

Harry hadn't told the other Weasleys. Bill and the twins would have rushed off the island with the intent of killing their siblings. Instead, he'd made arrangements with a free elf to care for her. Harry gave the elf a generous supply of money to buy whatever was needed.

When Harry returned from Britain with Molly, the Weasley men had been incensed and wanted to return to confront Percy and Charlie over what they'd done to Molly. But Alicia pointed out that Molly needed them now, and that nothing they did would make one bit of difference to their mother.

As for Harry, had Molly been in her right mind, he would have tried to move her to the Cay. But she was stuck in the past and no one had been able to convince her to move from the Burrow. So, he'd done what he thought was the next best thing. It never occurred to him that Percy would decide his mother was a political liability and decide to starve her to death.

Harry had arrived back on the island several hours ago with Molly in his arms. She was drifting in and out of consciousness. Wizarding medicine could do a lot, but some things were beyond even its abilities. Molly was dying. The only thing left to do was make her as comfortable as possible and hope that having her family nearby would help ease her passing.

Hermione reached for her husband's hand and gripped it tightly.

A glowing orb floated in the room and she could feel Harry tense up.

"Commente," Hermione said quietly.

It grew in size, then Alicia's head appeared. It swiveled inside the orb until she spotted Harry and Hermione.

"Yes, Alicia?"

"The twins and Bill would like you to come down here, Harry. You and Hermione both. You're part of the family. Time is short, so you need to hurry," Alicia said softly.

Harry sighed heavily and sagged on his chair, nodding tiredly..

"We'll be right there," Hermione replied, then dismissed the orb.

Harry stood and looked around. Hermione couldn't help but think his expression seemed a little lost.

"We don't have to do this," she said softly as she stood up.

"Could you stay away if it were your mum?" he replied softly.

She shook her head and moved closer to him, wrapping her arms around him. "No I couldn't, and neither could you. Just remember, I'm here for you."

He kissed the top of her head. "I know," he whispered and then he shifted them both to the Island Infirmary.

Alicia wiped the tears from her eyes and looked up, seeing Harry and Hermione appear in the area roped off for apparitions.

Hermione broke free from Harry's embrace and moved towards her. "Are we too late?"

Alicia shook her head. "No, but her core is nearly collapsed. It's just a matter of time now. I did everything I could think of to save her, but it was no use. The twins and Bill are inside."

Hermione embraced Alicia, who was clearly upset with her failure. "I'm sure you did everything possible."

Alicia leaned into Hermione's embrace for a moment before letting go.

"Is Angelina here too?" Harry asked.

"She'll be along. She's waiting for Maxime to send her someone to watch the baby."

Harry smiled, thinking of the child. Freddrica Georgina Weasley had been born only a few months ago. The twins had finally settled on the order of the name with a traditional game of rock paper scissors. Everyone else called the little red head, who seemed to have a rather large pair of lungs, Freddie. It was amusing to watch the twins with her. The baby had already wrapped her daddies around her little finger. With the twins being identical in all ways, even magic couldn't determine who the father was. Unsurprisingly, it bothered no one.

Alicia turned away to open the door to her little critical care ward, when Angelina arrived with a modest popping sound. She was breathing heavily. "Am I too late?" she asked.

Alicia smiled at her sister-wife and shook her head. "No, we were just about to go in."

Angelina nodded and fell in behind Harry and Hermione, who followed Alicia into the room.

Fred looked up from the bedside, one of Molly's hands in his. George stood behind him, his hands on his twin's shoulders.

Bill stood stiffly next to a window, watching the woman on the bed, while Fleur gently rubbing his back. It was obvious that he'd been crying recently, as the tracks of his tears were still visible on his cheeks.

Hermione stifled a gasp and turned to Harry, wrapping her arms around him. She couldn't believe how thin and frail Molly looked. The woman who had always been a poster child for robustness now looked like a concentration camp victim!

Harry wrapped an arm around Hermione and nodded to Fred.

George walked over to him and placed a hand on his shoulder. "Harry, mate, I don't know how to say thank you for what..."

"It's ok," Harry mumbled. "How is she?"

"She's sleeping again," he replied, looking down at the bed.

As if in response to the new arrivals, Molly stirred and opened her eyes. She spotted Harry and Hermione and smiled.

"Harry! Hermione!" she said in a voice that was barely above a whisper, then she looked around. "My family is all here, except Arthur, Ginny and Ron. Where are they? Why haven't they come?"

"They've been delayed, Mum," Fred said through his tears. "I'm sure they will be here soon."

"Please call Arthur, Fred. I'm so tired, but I'd like to speak to him before I sleep," she murmured.

Fred bit his lip trying to hold back a sob. Alicia moved behind him and wrapped her arms around his waist.

Harry glanced around and made a decision.

Hermione looked up at him when she felt his magic surging. The temperature in the room dropped a few degrees and three figures took shape. They were slightly translucent and had a faint glow around them.

Ron, Ginny and Arthur smiled down at Molly and everyone gasped.

"Relax people, it's just an illusion for her," Harry said softly. George squeezed Harry's shoulder when he saw Molly's smile broaden.

Bill smiled his thanks to Harry.

"Arthur, you came!" Molly said in a whisper.

"How could I not?" he replied. His voice had an ethereal, echoing quality to it. "We're all here for you, my beautiful Mollywobbles. Your family is here."

Harry looked at the image and scowled slightly. The figures didn't look correct. Arthur appeared younger and Ginny and Ron appeared older. He looked at Molly, but she didn't seem to notice any difference.

"I'm so tired, Arthur," she whispered.

"Then it's time to come on home, Mum," Ron said. "We're all waiting for you."

"Your family is in the best of hands, Mum. You can rest now," Ginny added.

Molly smiled and closed her eyes again. Her chest rose and fell in an ever slowing rate until it rose no more.

Harry sighed and canceled the spell, then he pulled Hermione close to him, burying his face in her hair. She wrapped her arms around him and

rubbed his back comfortingly.

"Harry, can't you cancel that spell?" Bill said tightly.

He looked up in shock and stared. "I did!"

The three phantom Weasleys ignored the others and kept their gaze on the still figure on the bed. Molly slowly started to glow and a form rose, separating from her body.

A younger, more robust Molly, smiled and stretched out her hand.

Arthur, his expression joyous, reached out and pulled her into his arms.

When they separated, Molly turned to face her living family and her expression was one of love and, finally, peace. Slowly, the phantoms faded from sight.

"Merlin!" exploded Fred. "What was that, Harry?"

He shook his head. "I don't know. I canceled my spell. It was just supposed to be an illusion!"

"Could eet haf been real?" asked Fleur.

Bill blew his nose loudly and everyone turned to him. "I don't know if it was real or just a product of our magics combining during a very emotional moment. Frankly, I don't care to know. You gave her what she needed at the end, Harry. I'll always be grateful."

"Perhaps it was her gift to us," Angelina said in a voice filled with awe. "Maybe she wanted us to know that she would be all right and that she was with family."

"I...I just don't know," Harry said quietly.

The images had shaken him considerably. He knew he had cut off the magic to the illusion, so he had no idea how it had continued. He was beginning to wonder if he'd actually cast an illusion. The figures he thought he'd conjured wouldn't have been capable of doing anything but standing still. There was no ability to make any sounds in that spell!

Alicia moved firmly over to where Fred still held Molly's hand and gently pulled his hand from his mother's. "I think it's time for us to leave. Gabrielle and I will take care of Molly later."

"Yes," Angelina added. "Angie said she was bringing over some food. You're all welcome to come home with us."

Hermione nodded, then looked up at Harry, who seemed to be confused.

"I did cancel that spell," he murmured.

She reached up and cupped his cheek. "I know, Harry. But sometimes love is stronger than magic. And Molly had more love in her heart than anyone I've ever known."

He looked down at her and thanked every deity he could think of that this girl had entered his life.

The much subdued, and just slightly awed, Weasley family filed slowly from the room.

ICW Headquarters building, Britain, Late January 2008...

"Minister, Albus Dumbledore is here as you requested. We found him heading to the Department of Magical Law Enforcement."

Percy looked up as his aide opened the door wider and Dumbledore entered. He stood and walked over to a table, where a tea service sat.

"Professor, thank you for coming. Would you like some tea?" he asked.

Dumbledore smiled benignly. "No, thank you, Minister, but if you have any lemon drops?"

Percy shook his head. "I'm sorry, sir, but..."

"No matter. I always carry some around with me. Would you like one?"

Percy took his seat and stirred his tea. "Thank you, but it's too early for me to be eating sweets."

Dumbledore nodded sagely and popped a sweet into his mouth. "So, how is your lovely bride? Has she recovered from her illness?"

Percy nodded, and his brow wrinkled as he frowned. The Department of Mysteries had been called in, along with St. Mungo's, to investigate the illness that had followed his wedding reception. Despite their efforts, no one had managed to isolate the potion or pathogen that had caused eighty percent of the guests to experience uncontrollable diarrhea, and those had been the lucky ones. The remaining twenty percent experienced an intense bout of flammable flatulence. The St. Mungo's burn ward had been swamped for a short period following the reception and they were still rebuilding their potion stockpile from the disaster.

His bride, Su Li, had suffered from extensive burns that were quite painful. As a result, their honeymoon had been delayed.

"Yes, she's fine now. Thank you for asking," he said. He paused for a moment, then shifted uncomfortably and pushed on. "Albus, about this latest Potter visit to Snape. I've reread the report filed by the warden about the shield he put up to keep his visit private. It's been over a month and our Department of Mysteries still can't figure it out. As you know, we've been wanting to talk to Potter for a quite a while now and it seems no matter where he shows up, something always goes wrong and we end up missing the chance to question him."

Dumbledore nodded. "Yes, I've noticed that as well. However, as has been noted, no one has ever seen Harry cast any spells that would prevent us from talking to him. When I saw him at your wedding, I tried to talk to him, but was prevented from doing so, due to the Italian Ambassador's wand misfiring. Harry had nothing to do with that."

Dumbledore reached into his pocket and pulled out another lemon drop. "Where Harry goes for most of the year no one knows, not even I. But wherever it is, he stays out of sight and out of trouble. Honestly, Minister, we can't ask for more than that. As much as I would like to question the lad, he has effectively left the wizarding world, except for a few brief appearances. His yearly visits to Snape seem to be the only time he actively uses magic. In fact, in my own conversations with the Warden, he told me that Harry never arrives by normal means, he is just suddenly there."

Percy frowned. "So you don't think he is a danger to our way? I mean, you're implying a level of magic far above what is normal. He could be a danger to us."

"I think," Dumbledore said slowly, "that unless provoked, Harry Potter will never be a danger to our way. He is too interested in staying away from our world. It is possible that he might know some useful information, but I have to question if what he knows is worth the possibility of him putting up a fight. Harry has always exhibited an inordinate amount of good luck, as his fight with Voldemort proved. Given enough provocation, it's possible that you could lose what ever Aurors you send out to capture him."

Percy looked pained. One of the things his government had kept secret, even from Dumbledore, was the fact that a number of Auror teams had been lost for no apparent explanation.

"Honestly, Minister, I think you have more to worry about in those two brothers of yours, than you do in Harry Potter. One of the reasons why I came to the Ministry today was to report an attack on one of my Professors. I believe your brothers were responsible for it."

Percy scowled. Fred and George had become a public relations nightmare for him and he was firmly convinced they had something to do with the disappearance of his mother.

As for the whereabouts of his mother, he didn't know where she was and had no idea where to begin looking. The house had been sealed and the seals were intact when they investigated the missing Aurors. Opening the seals and entering the Burrow led to the discovery that Molly was missing. His press office told anyone who asked that the Minister's mother was convalescing at a hospital in southern Spain, where she could take advantage of the milder climate.

The Aurors who had been on guard detail were accused of deserting their duty posts and warrants had been issued for their arrests.

With Molly missing, he'd ordered the destruction of the Burrow and the construction of a new, twenty five bedroom Ministerial mansion on the site, as a gift for his new bride.

During the first month of construction, accidents began to happen that halted all work on the sight. The Burrow had been razed, but it was as if the land itself rejected any new construction. Worse yet, at least for Percy, was that the money had already been spent and it was too late to recover a single knut of it.

Work crews called the site cursed and refused to enter it. Even when new crews were brought in, within a single day they fled the scene. Percy had visited the site only once since the problems arose and he vowed never to return. He had felt the curse, or geis, or whatever it was, resonating with his magic. It was clan magic and instinctively he knew Bill had invoked it as the magical head of the family. He knew one step inside the property boundaries would spell his death.

He had tasked the DMLE with stepping up their hunt for Bill and the twins. He was certain they were together and that the twins had to have helped Bill invoke some of the more obscure aspects of the curse.

Shaking his head, he brought his attention back to the aging Headmaster who sat across from him. "Someone was attacked at the school, you said? Who?"

"Your brother, Charlie. He was supposed to be giving a class on Flobberworms which, as you know, are the most innocuous of creatures. Instead, someone had substituted the Flobberworms with Flesh Peeling Sand Crawlers. It was only the timely intervention of another teacher that allowed us to save him.

"Sand Crawlers, as you might recall from your own classes, are nearly identical to Flobberworms. Even an expert like your brother would be hard pressed in telling them apart from a simple glance. After the incident, I inspected the box that contained the beasts and was surprised to discover that it was stamped with the Weasley Wizarding Wheezes logo on the bottom."

Percy scowled. "Did you save the box? The Aurors might be able to get a few clues from it."

Dumbledore shook his head. At the time, he'd been more concerned with preventing his Deputy Headmaster from bleeding to death, than preserving evidence. *Idiot. He's more concerned about catching his brothers than the fact that Charlie was injured,* Dumbeldore thought.

Percy leaned back, thinking quickly. "I'm not sure what else can be done, Professor. The DMLE has a forty Auror task force that's been hunting my brothers for two years now and they have little to show for their effort. There have been unconfirmed sightings of them in Bangkok, Capetown, New York, and Manchester, just to name a few places. We even had one report that had them working as male strippers in Paris!"

Dumbledore sighed and nodded unhappily. Charlie would recover from his injuries and return to his post teaching. The Ministry would continue to try to find the Weasley twins and that was about all he could hope for, especially in light of the other problems they faced on the international scene.

He stood and nodded amicably to Percy. "Minister, thank you for your time."

"Professor, don't forget that we have an ICW meeting tomorrow. We plan on ratifying the global banking law to refuse muggle currency conversions."

Dumbledore turned and nodded to the man. It was about time, in his opinion, that the bank made that move. It had been a long time in coming, but the Global Bank had taken over from the old Gringotts and had absorbed all of the non-human species banks. They'd needed time to divest themselves of muggle holdings held by the other banks.

"I look forward to it, Minister," he replied, then he walked out the door, closing it behind him.

Percy stared at the door for a moment longer, then went back to the report from the Unspeakables that were trying to break the curse on the Weasley family land. So far, the report wasn't optimistic.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry...

Charlie looked up from the book he had been reading and frowned. For a moment, he'd thought someone had been in the room, but he didn't see anyone.

Madam Abbott was overseeing his recovery, despite the fact that she was just a school medi-witch and not a full fledged healer. Poppy Pomfrey had retired shortly after Minerva left the school and Albus brought in Abbott, stating that the school had no need for a full time healer. Because of this, he was visited twice daily by Healer Thorenson, who took the floo in from St. Mungo's.

Looking around once more, he turned back to his book, but a parchment caught his eye. It lay on his night table and he was certain it hadn't been there a moment ago. He reached for it, then hissed in pain and pulled back his badly injured hand.

He had been injured when someone had sent him Sand Crawlers instead of Flobberworms. Healer Thorenson had been forced to regrow much of the tissue from his elbow to his fingers. It was a slow and painful process, but he had managed to save the arm. For a while he had been afraid he was going to lose it.

Reminded of his injury, he reached for the parchment with his left hand and picked it up.

*Charles,
No doubt by now you know who sent you those Sand Crawlers. Had your brothers and I really wanted to kill you, it would have been something a little more lethal, like one of the Hissing Steam Spiders of Borneo.*

Charlie shuddered when he considered receiving a steam spider from someone. The bludger sized spiders were hyper-aggressive, blindingly fast, magic resistant and highly venomous.

You might be wondering why your brothers and I have taken such step as to send you a dangerous gift, especially since we have not had any contact with you since we were forced to flee for our lives. But seriously, what better present could there be for a man that all but abandoned his own mother and allows his brother to starve her to death? You and Percival murdered our mother, Charles.

Our mother, Molly Weasley, passed gently away after her daughters-in-law struggled for hours to save her and reverse the damage that had been done. Her passing was easy and she was comforted by the presence of her loving family as she left this world. We true Weasleys mourned her passing and vowed that someday we will bring her home so she can be laid to rest next to our father.

Until that day, she rests, knowing that her real family is nearby and loves her. A lesson she taught us and one you have seem to have forgotten.

Now, to the heart of this letter. I, William Henry Weasley, as head of the Weasley Family, cast you, Charles Arthur, and your brother, Percival Ignatius, from the family. By right of magic, I ban you from Weasley ancestral lands for all eternity. As I proclaim it, so mote it be!

If I had the power, I would damn your souls to everlasting Hell. I know there will come a time when you will have to face those who loved you and you will have to explain your actions. You will stand and be judged, and no excuse, no reason, no law of Percy's making, will save you from damnation.

Your brother will, of course, ignore my decree, and you, spineless bastard that you are, will probably go along with him. However, if you don't believe the measure I've taken, then by all means, step onto the lands of your birth and see what happens.

My brothers and I will not mourn your passing. You were once part of a family that stood up for their beliefs, even in the face of mortal danger, but you have lost that and will never regain it.

In case you haven't figured out, my darling wife, despite her being an outlawed and hunted half breed, has charmed this letter, so you'll never be

able to talk about it with anyone.

William H. Weasley

Charlie laid the parchment down on the night table and he gazed out the window. He had been wondering about the change he had felt over the last several days. Now it made sense to him. As he stared out the window, the note dissolved away, leaving no trace behind.

He knew what Molly was going through, but had elected to listen to Percy. Shrugging, he picked up his book on rare animals, but he couldn't ignore the little voice in the back of his head that whispered, "Murderer" over and over again.

Harry and Hermione's Villa, Norman's Cay, March 2008...

Harry was up to his elbows in engine parts when he heard the door to the little workshop open. He looked up to see Hermione enter, carrying a single sheet of parchment.

When she smiled and motioned that she'd wait for him to finish, he nodded and turned back to the outboard engine he had partially disassembled. He placed a part into its proper position, then ratcheted it tight. Satisfied, he turned and picked up a rag to wipe off his hands.

"It's a good thing you asked me to look over your incantation for the enlargement," she said with a broad grin. "My husband might be the mightiest wizard since Merlin, but when it comes to making up spells, your over powered approach shows. There is much about you I love and admire, but this incantation of yours proves to me that I need to double check any ritual work you create from scratch."

Harry turned and leaned against the work bench, one eyebrow raised. "That bad, eh?" he asked. "Well, I'll have you know that I'm married to a very smart witch and I'm sure she'll figure out just how to fix the problem."

"And she did," Hermione replied smugly, walking over to join him.

She was extremely pleased with the way he had been growing lately. Unlike his behavior when they lost Minerva, he came to her the very night they'd lost Molly. He didn't try to work himself until he dropped. Instead, he waited until they were in the privacy of their home before seeking the comfort he so desperately needed. To her, it was another sign that they were finally putting the problems from the war behind them. She was realistic enough to know that not everything would be healed over, but it was a clear sign of progress.

He eyed her carefully as she approached. She was wearing a blouse that clearly showed she had left her bra back in the house, and he knew from experience that she wore nothing under that short skirt of hers. That suspicion was confirmed when she got within a foot of him and he could feel her warming charm. Winter on Norman's Cay was downright balmy compared to London, or Northern Scotland, but it was still too chilly for her current clothing.

She handed him the parchment and he glanced down at it briefly, then looked up again at her breasts as they swayed slightly under her blouse. He blinked and looked down at the parchment again. "What is this?"

"That, husband of mine, is your incantation, after I reduced it down. I removed the null terms, redundant namings and conflicting clauses. And unlike your original incantation, this one won't enlarge the insects on the island. Frankly, I'm comforted by that fact. We have big enough spiders as it is and I don't think we need Mosquitoes with four foot wing spans."

He stared at the sheet, reading it carefully. "This can't be more than thirty seconds long!" he exclaimed. His original incantation had been huge and would have taken considerable time to chant. He had turned it over to Hermione, along with his notes for the ritual, because it would have taken too long to cast the spell and the odds of such a long incantation being said without error were practically zero.

She grinned impishly at him. "Forty five seconds, with time for three breaths. I had Dobby time me."

Her hand brushed the parchment he held. "Do you have any idea what you've done? Forget the incantation problem. That stemmed mostly from the fact that you don't normally need incantations, unless you are doing very precise work. Harry, love, you managed to come up with a way of increasing the size of this island, and ensuring that the wards grow to compensate for the new size! No one has done that before. Ever!"

He shrugged, his expression a bit dubious. "I don't know, it just seemed logical to me. If we couldn't ensure that the wards would grow with the island, all of this would have been a waste of time. We would have had to drop all the wards, then enlarge the island and recast them. Someone surely would have found us that way. Tying the wards to the enlargement made sense."

She shook her head in amazement. Something this stupendous, and he called it logical? It had surprised her to discover shortly after coming to the island that Harry had tapped in multiple Ley lines to power the wards. The island's location near one edge of the Bermuda Triangle made it a perfect place to access three of the six Ley lines, which converge in the center of the Triangle. Oh, yes, her husband was one smart man!

He looked up from the parchment. "This is still going to take a lot of power."

She nodded a bit unhappily. 'A lot of power' was an understatement. Frankly, she wasn't sure a hundred wizards could do it, but Harry had more power than a hundred wizards. "I don't know when you plan on doing this, but I intend to ask Alicia to be standing nearby."

Harry looked thoughtful. "Not until the spring or summer, I think. We need time to mark every building and every outdoor structure with the necessary runes to preclude them from the effects of the spell. That's going to take time. But I do think having Alicia nearby sounds like a smart move."

Hermione breathed a sigh of relief. She'd been afraid he'd want to rush into doing the incantation as soon as possible. That he was approaching

this with caution was another sign, in her mind, that he was shedding the last vestiges of his self destructive behavior.

With a gentle tug, she pulled the parchment from his hands and sent it back to her study, then she moved closer.

“Harry?” she asked breathlessly.

He watched her. “Yes?”

“I canceled my contraception potion this morning,” she replied, watching him carefully for a reaction.

He blinked and looked confused for a moment, then he smiled slowly. “Really?”

She nodded and eyed him closely. “You don't mind?”

He shook his head. “Why would I mind? You're offering me something I've always wanted; a family of my own.”

She took another step closer and her hands fumbled at his belt. “Good,” she said huskily, “let's start working on that family now.”

In Luna's villa, only a few dozen yard away, the blond looked up from the computer she was working on and smiled in the direction of Harry's workshop. She could feel the love radiating from the pair of them and knew that, even in this, their love reached out to include her.

Harry's Villa, Norman's Cay, March 2008...

Amos hurried up the walkway to the villa. He wasn't surprised to see the Grangers and Angie coming from another direction. He had summoned all of the members of the Rescue Committee to meet at Harry's place.

The Grangers slowed, spotting Amos, and they waved. He nodded grimly and they noted his expression. Obviously he wasn't bringing happy news.

The Grangers and Angie stopped at the door and waited for Amos to catch up with them. A moment later, they pushed the door open and entered the house.

Inside Hermione sat with Luna. Luna wasn't part of the committee, but her views and opinions were valuable to them and had helped on many occasions.

Nearby, Harry fiddled with his short wave radio, setting it to scan until it locked onto a familiar station. The speakers blared to life with a three tone warble, then the newscast began.

“This is the BBC Broadcasting from London. Continuing our coverage of the Asian Crisis, the Ministry of Defense is now confirming that a limited nuclear exchange has taken place along the Chinese/Russian border. Both nations are blaming the other for starting the attack. The incident took place earlier this morning after two border patrols exchanged gunfire across the river Amur. The battle escalated from there. Military sources are unclear as to who fired the first weapon, but we've confirmed that the cities of Heihe, in China, and Blagoveshchensk, in Russia, have been destroyed by nuclear weapons.

“According to UN figures, a total of a half million people resided in those cities. The Ministry of Defense estimates that as many as eighty percent of the population could have perished in the attack.

“World wide reaction has been swift and unanimous, calling for both sides to halt any further attacks. Offers of aid have been made by many countries, assuming that the attacks cease. The United States and the Ministry of Defense have placed their forces on high alert. NATO has issued a general recall and placed it's entire force on alert.

“The UN Security Council has called for an emergency session in the hopes of preventing this war from escalating. In the meantime, the International Red Cross says it is now accepting supplies for shipment to the war zone. A spokesperson from Red Cross Headquarters announced that they were ready to ship a complete field hospital to the war zone as soon as a cease fire occurred.

“World Financial markets fell sharply in reaction to the news. The Dollar and the Pound gained, while the Yuan and the Rubble have fallen off by nearly thirty percent.”

Harry hit the mute button and the radio went silent. He turned to face the others, his face white with shock.

“Heihe was de home to de Chinese Ministry of Magic dis year,” Amos said into the silence. In a way, he was relieved to not have to break this news to everyone.

Everyone turned to look at Amos in surprise. The Chinese Ministry of Magic moved from city to city on a yearly basis so that they could stay out of the hands of the Communist muggle Government.

“Amos, what are you suggesting?” asked Duncan Granger. He gripped Cassandra's hand tightly. Hermione's mother had tears streaming down her cheeks. As muggles, she and Duncan understood even better than Harry and Hermione the horrors that had been unleashed.

“Dunno,” Amos said with a shrug. “Dem ICW fellas took a hard hit when dey took out Shangri La.”

Harry pinched the bridge of his nose tiredly and looked at Amos. “You're suggesting that someone at the ICW might have decided that using Muggle forces might work to take down the Chinese Ministry?”

"Could be," Amos said, "Dey knew de Chinese were threatenin' to ask the muggles for help. I don know, Harreee, I just know dat I wouldn't put it past dem."

The door opened and Maxime, Hagrid and Bill Weasley entered the room, all looking grim.

Hermione stood and quickly glanced around, taking a head count. "Let's move into the dining room. We have more room and we'll be more comfortable there."

As a group, they moved into the dining room. No one was surprised to see Dobby putting out a tea service and other drinks for them.

Once they were all seated, Harry turned to the oldest Weasley. "Bill, you have the best Wizarding Wireless we could buy up at the school. What news have you picked up?"

"I don't pretend to understand all of the details, or how just two weapons can destroy two cities, but the ICW broadcast out of Geneva is claiming that an alternate Chinese Ministry has been formed by a group of Wizards in Hong Kong. The broadcast says this new government is asking the ICW for help in dealing with the loss of Heihe. The ICW admits there was a problem with something in Russia and that the leader of the Russian auror force has been executed for high crimes against the wizarding world."

Bill tightly gripped the cup of tea that he had been given by Dobby, and he looked around the table at the people staring at him.

"The broadcast went on to lament the loss of nearly eight hundred wizards and witches in both cities. Maxime tells me that the cities were destroyed and thousands of people died."

"Half a million souls," whispered Duncan.

Bill jerked upright and turned to stare at him. Cassandra leaned against her husband and wept silently. Like all of the muggles and muggle-born or raised, the horrors of nuclear war were firmly embedded in their psyche. Even the thought of a destination was terrifying, regardless of where it happened. To have two cities destroyed by nuclear weapons was a nightmare.

"Hermione, how close are we to invoking the Avalon Equations?" asked Harry softly.

She turned to him, astonished that he would ask that now. "There's still a lot of work to do. Even with the books fully decoded, the incantation and runes for the ritual were deliberately omitted. The authors of the book didn't want just anyone creating their own private dimension. With a firmer understanding of the equations, I can start to build the incantation and runes."

Harry sighed. "Several more years, then? I'm not doubting your abilities, love, I just want to understand the time frame better." He gestured to include everyone else. "I think we all need to understand it."

Hermione relaxed and nodded. "Yes, the equations are hideously complex. I'm just going to guess, but three years, if I put everything I have into it."

He looked at her hard. "No, I don't want you to work yourself to death doing this. As important as it is, there are other things just as important." He knew what she was really asking and he didn't want her to go back on the contraceptive charm. The others might not understand what he was saying, but she did. He wanted them to have a family, not to work themselves into the ground.

"Six years then," he mused aloud. "We are going to have to hold on for at least six more years, perhaps as much as ten. That's going to mean we need to become a black hole in the water. We need to vanish completely from sight."

Amos nodded unhappily. "Less trips up to de big island for me and my Mary."

Cassandra reached out and patted Amos on the arm and he shot her a grateful smile.

"That's true, Amos," Duncan said slowly, "but let's be honest here. There are times you make the run up to Nassau simply because you like sailing the Mary. I know we can't do without the supplies you bring us, but we need to be smart about it. Your Mary was made to haul cargo, so let's try to make sure her holds are full when you make a trip. We also need to look at our own people and try to limit their off island jaunts to only essential trips. Some people have been going off island simply because they need something that isn't brought in on the Mary, or available via the owl drops up in Nassau," Duncan added.

"And limit our contact with the wizarding world," Bill threw in.

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Wizards Fall: Down the Rabbit Hole (part 2)

"We need to become more self sufficient," Angie added. She, like Luna, wasn't a permanent member of the rescue committee, but they often went to her for advice. Her role as a Wiccan had granted her a special place among the wizards. Those who knew her and had experienced her magic were a bit awed by her. A number of the islanders had even inquired about her beliefs.

Her coven was growing again as both wizards and muggles alike learned about the Goddess. As belief systems went, hers was a gentle, loving philosophy that many found attractive.

"We need to start growing our own crops and other basic staples, instead of bringing them in."

Duncan and Cassandra nodded, but others looked unconvinced.

Harry leaned forward on his chair. "We'll have the land for a lot of new uses. The final two expansions will give us land for farms and other things. I dare say it will be more of a case of what to do with all the space we'll have."

"How big will it ultimately be?" asked Bill.

Harry grinned. "Well, if you were planning on driving, it would take you nearly three hours at fifty miles an hour to get from one end to the other. I even have some landscaping ideas in mind."

Bill stared at Harry as if he'd grown another head. "You can't be serious!"

Hermione chuckled. "My husband is very serious, Bill. While ordinarily such a feat of magic would be impossible, Harry rather wisely chose an island that has three different Ley lines running underneath it. He will use power from the lines to help with the expansion, using his own magic to guide it."

She leaned back and grinned. "I know this will come as a shock to no one, but I did a little bit of research when I finally figured out what he had in mind. There are hundreds of sites around the world where one Ley line can be found. There are several hundred sites where two can be easily tapped, and just handful of such sites that can access more than three. Harry's decision to purchase an island on one edge of the Bermuda Triangle meant he was near one of two locations in the world where six lines converge. Our location gives us easy access to three of those converging lines."

Harry shrugged. "I didn't plan it that way. I just liked the scenery," he muttered, causing everyone to chuckle.

Duncan coughed lightly catching everyone's attention. "I think we need to schedule a meeting of the committee to work out some issues. We have a lot of people and can't just tell them they can't leave the island."

"Sure you can," Amos put in. "Dem people are smart enuf to know it's for dey own good."

Duncan nodded thoughtfully, then turned back to Harry. "All right then, what about the wards? Can we beef them up anymore?"

Harry rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Maybe," he replied, somewhat doubtfully. "If they came at us in force, like they did to Shangri La, the wards wouldn't hold. I mean, no ward is made to stand up against fifteen hundred wizards. I can promise you this much, though. Between the wards and my involvement, they would lose a lot of wizards."

Bill snorted. "They lost nine hundred wizards in that battle, and another two hundred never fully recovered. They don't have a force anywhere near that size and probably won't for several more years. It's only a guess, but I'd say it's probably why they resorted to using Muggles to take out the Chinese."

"Aye," Amos said. "Dem ICW fellas be low on Aurors. Most be used for upholding dem laws, not making war."

Harry leaned forward again and reached for Hermione's hand. "Before the Centaur bank of Miami got swallowed up by the Global Bank, I pulled all my money from them and used it to make some purchases. Hermione and Luna gave me an idea a while back and I ran with it. Later this month, Hermione and I will be going off the island for a couple weeks. I've purchased three other islands, one off the coast of Nova Scotia, another near French Guiana, and a third one in the Indian Ocean, just off Borneo. I'm going to ward those islands like this one. The only difference is that we will be here, and those islands will be protected with lethal wards and totally deserted."

He paused and looked at the ceiling for a moment. "None of them are as big as this island is, otherwise I'd be tempted to use one as a safe location to run to."

"I like it. A red herring," Angie murmured. Several of the pure bloods looked at her in confusion. "He's setting up the islands as a ruse. If there are multiple islands protected like this one, the ICW will have to split their forces to assault them all."

Duncan scowled at the table.

"What's bothering you Dad?" Hermione asked.

Duncan looked up at his daughter, then around the table. "I can understand the idea of red herrings. I think it's a good idea. But I think we should consider those islands as possible escape hatches in case we're attacked."

Hermione turned to Harry, her expression thoughtful. "It's an idea," she offered.

"That's a lot of portkeys we need to make," Bill said doubtfully.

"Let's bring this up again at our next meeting. We have enough to worry about right now. Plenty of people will have picked up one of the short wave broadcasts and learned about the attack on the Chinese," Maxime said softly.

Everyone looked around sheepishly, realizing they had gotten way off topic. The meeting broke up shortly after that, each going out to explain to the islanders what they knew about the attack that had killed a half million muggles and eight hundred wizards.

The island settled into an uneasy silence that night and many people went to bed thinking they were extraordinarily lucky to have found such a safe haven.

ICW Headquarters building, Britain, March 2008...

"Minister, Senior Auror Ives is here, as you directed."

Percy nodded and straightened up his desk slightly, while the older man walked into his office.

"Well?"

"It's done, sir. As of thirty minutes ago, every one of O'Connell's family has been pushed through the veil."

The senior auror repressed the shudder he felt when he recalled the pleading from O'Connell's teenage son and daughter. It was a brutal thing to do, but the man was directly responsible for the worse mass murder of wizards since Lord Voldemort. It was true that Potter tore through many of the pureblood British wizarding families, but he knew well enough not to blame Potter for that.

"I know it's unpleasant business, Ives, but O'Connell was in charge of things and he allowed Dribinov too much leeway. Dribinov nearly brought down our entire secrecy because he opted to control one muggle."

Serge Dribinov had been the senior Auror for the Russian branch of the ICW, and the man heading up the effort to undermine the Chinese Ministry of Magic. The Ministry had briefly considered, and then rejected the idea of using controlled muggles to assault the Chinese Ministry. Dribinov, however, had his own ideas. He took control of a general in charge of a division of border troops and ordered him to cross the Amur river into Heihe.

The Chinese muggles reacted to the incursion by launching a counter attack with heavy armor. Suddenly, Russia and China found themselves in a war that neither side understood. When Russian forces were reinforced with several heavy armored divisions, China dropped a tactical nuke on the Russian city of Blagoveshchensk. Russia replied in kind and, by pure accident, succeeded in achieving the goal of the ICW by vaporizing the Chinese Ministry of Magic and two hundred thousand muggles.

When Percy realized that eight hundred wizards had been killed in the conflict, he'd had Dribinov executed. But he hadn't stopped there. The list of those executed included the Russian governor of the ICW, the European senior Auror in charge and, finally, their ultimate boss, Maurice O'Connell, Head of the ICW's Auror and Protection services.

Percy stabbed a finger at Ives. "I want you to take over O'Connell's position, Ives. And take a lesson from your predecessor. Keep a tight rein on your people at all times. This mess will use every person we have who can cast an obliviate, and even then it will take weeks to clean things up."

Ives swallowed nervously. "Yes, sir. Lesson noted. And with your permission, I'd like to suggest Kingsley Shacklebolt to assume my old posting?"

"Yes, Shacklebolt has done well leading the British Aurors. He'd be well suited for your old slot and Dumbledore likes him," mused Percy. "Inform Auror Shacklebolt of his new duties, which are to start immediately, and then let my public affairs office know. We'll schedule a press conference to announce the new staffing changes. It's only local news, but it's better than nothing."

Ives stood. "Yes, sir. I'll take care of it immediately."

Percy nodded. "See that you do. Dismissed."

Percy turned his attention back to the reports coming from China and Russia and never noticed when Ives let himself out of the office.

Maxime's School of Magic, Norman's Cay, March 2008...

Harry appeared just outside the campus built by Hagrid and Maxime and he smiled. As far as schools went, it was, without a doubt, one of the most unique in the world. Maxime recognized early on that space would be needed for newcomers to the island and she had set up several dormitories to house families just arriving.

Children were immediately taken into classes, while their parents were gently eased into the newly build society on the island. Classes were varied in the extreme, since the school catered to magical and non-magical alike. It wasn't unusual to see a Charms class being held right next to a class on algebra. Maxime felt it was important to provide the normality of school as quickly as possible to the children of the refugees, and it was something that both Harry and the committee agreed with wholeheartedly.

Harry had shown up today because he wanted to read some of the reports his students had provided concerning their project. His favorite class was turning out to be a major success, as each of the three classes worked on separate projects of their own choosing. He had been especially

pleased when all three class groups had selected projects that would enhance life on Norman's Cay.

"Harry!"

He turned to see Bill waving to him. He taught Defense and curse breaking at the school, while his wife, Fleur, taught Charms and languages. Gabrielle worked as the school Medi-witch while she studied for her own healer's Mastery under Alicia. The three, along with Maxime and Hagrid, were instrumental in creating the island's first school.

Since its creation, more schools had been built and Maxime led the effort to insure quality education for all of the island's children, magical or muggle.

Harry waited and Bill trotted up to him, panting heavily.

"You should take up running or something, Bill," Harry said softly.

Bill nodded and looked down at the slight bulge at his belly. "I know. Not enough exercise, and Fleur's cooking is as good as Mum's was."

Harry smiled knowingly. Fleur was a wonderful cook, and unlike Molly, had trained under her family chef. She could cook meals worthy of a five star restaurant. For Bill, however equating his wife's cooking to Molly's was the highest praise possible and Harry wouldn't dream of disagreeing with him. Molly's cooking might have been a bit on the plain side, but it was made with pride and love.

"So, what's up?" Harry asked.

"We had six families turn up here last night, and another that bounced off the wards."

Harry's eyes narrowed. "I thought they were screened for enchantments before being given portkeys? Has one of the transfer centers been compromised?"

Bill shook his head. "I don't believe that's the case. That broad spectrum detector of yours picked up something unusual."

Harry motioned Bill over to a set of benches and they both sat down. Bill was the committee member in charge of the access to the island, so he was naturally worried. Harry leaned back and thought about the problem. "What if one of the family members had some sort of active magic talent? Something that might trigger the bounce."

"Would it? I think the only way to know for sure would be if you checked them out. You might be able to see what caused the problem," Bill said quietly.

Harry looked across the campus towards the ocean. The school was originally built only a few hundred feet inland. But now, with the first initial enlargements, the shore had moved more than a mile away. When the next set of enlargements occurred, they'd be more than twenty miles from the shore.

"I suppose I should," Harry replied slowly. "We need to know if this is a new Ministry enchantment or not."

He stood and looked at Bill. "Orb Hermione and let her know where I'm going."

"Oh, no, you don't, Harry. Hermione would have my head on a platter and Fleur would help her. I'm not letting you go into some unknown situation without some support."

When Harry looked at him, one eyebrow raised, Bill had the grace to blush, but refused to back down. The simple fact was that anything they encountered that gave Harry a problem would be unbeatable by a normal wizard like Bill.

"I suppose you're right," Harry admitted ruefully. With a minute gesture, a shiny orb appeared and sped away at high speed. Seconds later, another appeared with Hermione's head floating inside.

"Harry? I thought you were going to stop by the school to check on your students?"

"Something has come up. Bill and I are going to take a quick trip down to one of the containment islands. A family got bounced last night and we don't understand why. They were checked for enchantments before they were portkeyed. Bill thinks, and I agree, that we need to make sure this isn't some new spell that the Ministry has thought up. If it is, it could be pure luck that they bounced and we need to know what's going on, so we can counter it."

Hermione frowned. "I don't like you being so far away now. The temperature is nearly perfect."

Harry nodded and shrugged his shoulders. "I understand, love, but what can I do? We need to check this out."

She sighed and nodded unhappily. "All right. Are you wearing your alert necklace?"

He grinned and pulled down his shirt slightly so she could see the necklace around his neck. Everyone that went off island had been given one. It would allow the wearer to be traced if ever they were captured by the Ministry and they were charmed to be virtually undetectable.

She nodded and closed the connection between them.

"What's that about temperature?" Bill asked.

Harry blushed. "She's using some muggle method that her Mum taught her. It's complex. When she tried to explain it, it made my eyes cross and I wanted to glue my ears shut. We want to have a family and this is the way her Mum did it." His head tilted slightly in thought. "But with this bouncing business and her obsession over her temperature lately, she and I may have to have a long talk about priorities someday soon," he muttered.

Bill shook his head and grinned at Harry. "Can't you just do it the old fashioned way?"

"This from a man whose wife has a bona fide mating season," Harry muttered darkly.

Fleur's Veela/bird heritage effected more than just her sex appeal. For procreation, she was fertile only once a year, in the spring. Fortunately, the Veela had evolved eons ago and no longer laid eggs.

Bill's grin faded and he scowled, having lost that round to Harry.

Harry offered a hand to Bill and helped him stand up. A moment later, they vanished without a sound.

A moment later they reappeared on a desolate island and a cold wind swept over the landscape. It was a foreboding place. But then, it was meant to be.

"Over there," Harry murmured, pointing towards two people huddled around a brightly glowing wand. One of the people, a man, spotted them. He stood and pointed his wand at them. He pushed the woman behind him, shielding her and the small child she held in her arms.

"What do you want?" spat the man, his wand tip flaring in tune with his magic.

Harry held out both his hands, showing he was unarmed. "We came to check up on you."

"You sent us here? Why?" asked the man in a pained voice. "We were told we were going to a place of safety and instead we found ourselves here!"

Bill stepped up to stand next to Harry. "Something about one of you caused the wards to bounce you away, to this place. We came here to find out why."

"There's nothing here!" sobbed the woman. "It's been freezing all night long! Are you trying to kill us? Are you here to kill us?"

The little girl buried her head into the woman's shoulder and whimpered. Her hair slowly changed from jet black to white.

"I think we found out why the ward triggered," Harry murmured to Bill, then he turned to the woman. "No one is going to kill anyone. As a precaution, our island is protected by many wards. One of them detected a magic it couldn't identify and it bounced you here. Correct me if I'm mistaken, but is the child a metamorphagus?"

The woman blinked and shook her head as if confused by the question. "Yes, she takes after her grandmother in that regard."

Harry nodded and looked at the man carefully. Other than his magic being tightly held in check at the moment, there was nothing special about him. The woman was the same, but the child had an active magic field surrounding her.

He took a step towards the woman and child and the man moved to block his path. Harry blinked and tried to smile reassuringly. "I mean no harm, but if you are to pass through the wards I need to understand why she has an active magic field about her. Let me figure this out and I promise you, we'll all be sitting down having a hot meal in a very short time."

Harry had learned from experience that the most calming and reassuring thing to incoming refugees was an offer of a hot meal. As one person explained to him, people who mean to kill you rarely offer to feed you first.

The man glanced over his shoulder at the woman, who nodded reluctantly.

When the man stepped aside, Harry approached the woman and child. "Hello," he said softly, trying to calm the girl. "I'm Harry. What's your name?"

The girl looked at him with huge eyes and her hair turned black with green tips. "Bethany," she whispered.

Harry smiled. She was perhaps three or four years old and clinging to her mother, terrified. Both mother and daughter shivered in the brisk wind and without thinking, he cast a wide area warming charm. The mother shot him a grateful look as the bitter sub-Antarctic chill faded away.

Harry conjured a small teddy bear and held it out for the child. "My friend here needs a home. Would you like to care for him for me? I've been neglecting him fearfully, I'm afraid, and he desperately needs someone to love him."

Bethany nodded and shyly took the bear. As she reached for it, he extended his senses and examined the girl carefully. She took the bear and hugged it to herself and smiled shyly. He returned her smile, then turned back to Bill.

"It's a natural field. I don't pretend to understand it. Is it part of her metamorphagus talent or another talent that hasn't matured? Regardless, I do know she's generating it all by herself. No one has cast anything on her."

"So then we can get them to the receiving center?"

Harry nodded and turned back to the man and woman. "I apologize for what happened to you. Your daughter triggered a reaction from the wards, which is why you ended up here. If you and your wife will grab my hands I'll take us all back to where you're supposed to be. It will be warm, and

there will be plenty of hot food for you. Bill place a hand on my shoulder.”

“We’ll be safe?” asked the woman.

Harry nodded with a smile. “I promise.”

She looked hesitant, then she grabbed Harry’s hand. Feeling he had everyone, he concentrated and they all vanished from the desolate island.

For little Bethany and her parents, there was a second of disorientation unlike any apparation they had experienced and then they were in the Norman Cay receiving center at the school. Several people rushed forward with blankets and hot drinks. Gabrielle looked up from her desk and then approached to check them over for medical problems.

“See?” Harry said. “These people will take care of you now. You’re safe here.”

The man swallowed convulsively and nodded, trying hard not to show tears of relief. He had to be strong for his family’s sake.

Harry nodded to Bill and told him he was heading to his office to check on his student’s reports. Bill waved him off, then turned to the newest arrivals. He knew that Harry wanted Gabrielle to examine the girl closely. He’d stick around to find out what she learned from her examination.

“Please,” said the woman. “Who was that man? Harry?”

Bill grinned. “That was Harry Potter.”

“Thank you,” she whispered, as she watched Harry’s retreating back. She wasn’t sure if she had met a legend or a dangerous criminal, but one thing was for sure, he wasn’t like people made him out to be.

Luna’s Villa, Norman’s Cay (the same day)...

Hermione canceled the communications spell and walked out onto the patio heading toward Luna’s house. She was surprised to see Luna standing at the door waiting for her.

“Luna, I’m sorry I was delayed. Harry orbbed me.”

Luna led her into the spacious living room. “Yes, he had to go check out that anomaly.”

“You knew about it?”

Luna shrugged. “In vague terms. I knew something unusual would take him off island long enough for us to talk without his interference.”

Hermione blinked and stared at her, confused. “Why would Harry interfere?”

“He wouldn’t, but then he won’t know about this conversation except to say that he will have guessed it took place.”

“What are you talking about, Luna? Harry wouldn’t interfere in any conversation you and I had.”

Luna sighed and looked out over the bay for a moment before turning back to Hermione. “I want something, Hermione, something that belongs to both of us, but is yours at the moment.”

Hermione brows knitted in concentration for a moment, then she stood in alarm. “You want Harry!” she exclaimed.

Luna rubbed her forehead tiredly, then looked at the outraged witch in front of her. “Things might have been easier if we could have joined at the first cusp, back during our Hogwarts years. On the other hand, the permutations from that cusp were anything but attractive and that old fool of a Headmaster wouldn’t allow it to happen, so he took steps to prevent Harry from creating any attachments. It was one of the few times he manipulated people that I actually agreed with it.

She stared at Hermione for a moment, then shook her head. “You can’t tell me you don’t feel it! I know I do, and so does Harry. We three are unique. You were told you were part of a soul mated pair, but technically that isn’t correct. You’re part of a soul mated trio. Our souls are so perfectly attuned that you and Harry can create new souls, Harry and I can create new souls. If it were biologically possible, you and I could create new souls.” Her brow wrinkled in thought. “Although, with the nanites, I might be able to alter our DNA so that you and I could procreate,” she muttered, then waved away that rather fascinating thought. “Never mind. I have enough to do as it is.”

Hermione sank back into her chair. “Wait. What? You and I? You and Harry? You expect to share Harry with me?” She glared at the blond. “I know the wizarding world doesn’t frown on multiple marriages, but that wasn’t how I was raised and it wasn’t how Harry was raised! And as much as I love you, Luna, I’m not going to have sex with you or have your babies!”

Luna smiled softly. “As much as I would like to be able to enjoy Harry’s loving touch, or yours, I don’t think any of us are ready for that kind of relationship and perhaps we’ll never be. No, I want something else. You and Harry are trying for a baby and I want one too.”

“But you said...”

“Hermione, what I want is for him to be the father of my children. The muggles have a way of doing it that doesn’t require sex.”

Artificial Insemination," Hermione murmured and Luna nodded.

"Yes. It's a rather cold procedure, but it gets the job done."

Hermione stood and walked over to a window, her mind racing. Suddenly, like a door opening, she remembered when Harry broke down the barriers between this world and the hereafter. She remembered Ginny's words as clearly as if she were speaking them again.

"Hermione, things will get worse in Britain. We're sorry about Percy, but he is condemning himself. Your path ahead will be a twisted one and will have events and people that you would never believed if we told you. I will tell you this. When the time comes, listen carefully with your heart and your head," Ginny told her earnestly. *"Someone from our past will ask you for something. Listen carefully and follow your heart."*

This must be what Ginny was talking about, she thought. What Luna wants lays an extra burden of responsibility on Harry. What if he insisted on doing it the normal way? Can I share him? Is that what we're going to become? One husband with two wives?

"Hermione, what happens will happen. Or, as Angie would say, the Goddess wills it. But I know Harry, and you do to. Feel it, Hermione. He will never do anything you don't want to do. I can see many things, including our family, children, from both of us. Our children will have one father, and call us both Mum. Besides, the very thought of the three of us in bed together would send Harry into a faint."

Luna bit her lip and watched Hermione from her chair. She had nearly said too much. While it was true she couldn't see them becoming a three way relationship, she did see paths which could lead to Luna and Harry being intimate. There were too many decision points for her to see a clear path and she didn't want bring up anything which might fuel Hermione's turmoil.

Hermione turned and smiled weakly at Luna. "I never realized just how insecure this could make me. I knew there was something between the three of us and I was sure that you knew more about it but weren't telling. Wait a second... What did you mean, first cusp?"

Luna leaned forward and picked up a mug of tea, then took a sip before answering her. "Are you sure you want to know? My father always said that you shouldn't ask questions if you're not prepared to hear the answers."

Hermione shivered under Luna's direct stare. This Luna was much changed from the one they knew at Hogwarts, and yet she wasn't. She could achieve moments of crystal clarity and two seconds later be down on her knees playing with Hermione's little sister and telling her about the great Snorkack migrations of the past.

Victoria lapped up Luna's stories. After all, a witch who had her own dragon familiar was more prone to believing in the impossible.

After a moment of silence between the two women, Luna leaned back. "Let me put it this way. Harry's dislike of Dumbledore is rooted far deeper than just his going into hiding. You know about his manipulations of Harry. Suffice to say that Harry wasn't the only person being manipulated. Some just never caught on to it like Harry did."

Hermione stared at her in horror. "You mean he used a potion?"

Luna waved a hand in dismissal. "Nothing of the kind. Dumbledore was far too smart to resort to outright criminal acts. You were merely given more time with Ron, while he kept your access to Harry to a bare minimum. There was a brief moment, barely a month long, in your sixth year when we three had the chance of becoming a trio. The permutations from that were disturbing, for many reasons. However, Dumbledore changed our schedules so that we saw less of each other."

Hermione sat down and recalled the mid term schedule change that was blamed on a problem in the potions lab. "So we could have been a trio, involved even back then?"

She looked up to see Luna's sour look and quickly said, "Wait, I don't want to know. I trust you."

Luna sighed with relief. She hadn't wanted to explain to Hermione how, in that permutation, they would have ended up as concubines, bound to Harry Potter, warlord and ruler of the wizarding world. She was extremely thankful that, for once, Dumbledore's manipulations had a positive impact.

Hermione nibbled on her lower lip, but her thoughts kept returning to what Ginny had told her. She rubbed her hand over her heart and closed her eyes. Her mind raced with insecurity, but in her heart, it felt right. She took a deep breath, then let it out slowly and opened her eyes.

"All right, Luna, I'll agree. Now, how do we convince Harry?"

Luna's gaze went dreamy and she pulled a plastic lidded cup out of a pocket. "I suppose we can't just ask him to masturbate into this cup, while thinking about the famous three breasted Tibetan Mermaids?"

Hermione stared at Luna for a moment and Luna looked back at her calmly. For a brief moment she considered the possibility of Mermaids somewhere in that frozen mountainous country, then discarded the idea entirely. "Ummm... I don't think that will work with Harry. I think we'll need to explain the entire process to him."

"Won't that overwhelm him even more than the Tibetan Mermaids? I would have thought Harry was a breast man."

"He is, but... wait... no... blast! I mean... damn it," Hermione stammered, blushing heavily. Harry was a breast man and she loved that about him, but Luna didn't need to know that. One of the reasons for her insecurity concerning Luna was the fact that the younger woman had a well defined figure for her size. She was shorter than Hermione, and while they might be the same cup size, Luna looked bigger because of her smaller frame.

Luna smirked at her and leaned across the coffee table to pat her hand. "Don't worry about it, Hermione. They'll grow, once you become pregnant."

As for Harry, we'll explain it to him together.”

Hermione could only nod. She was afraid to say anymore.

Harry's Villa, Norman's Cay (the same day)...

Harry stepped into the house and immediately went for the couch. He was nursing a whale of a headache. After reading and rereading several dozen reports from his students, he wasn't sure their approach would work. But that wasn't what gave him the headache. No, that little gem came from having to power his way through the wards with Bethany and her family. Add to that mix the simple fact that so many of the students didn't speak English as their native language and translation spells rarely worked well for technical papers. Reading their reports was sometimes the most difficult thing.

The net result of teleporting the family and dealing with some very badly written student papers was a headache the size of Wales. Funny. He'd never thought Wales was particularly large, until now.

He had managed to translate the little girl's magical field into a basic set of runes and arithmancy equations, but it still didn't make any sense to him. He had checked with Bill before leaving the school and Bill told him the family was settling in nicely and the elf work crews already had them down on the list of homes to build.

While Harry was capable of conjuring dwellings, he rarely did so anymore. He had built the Granger's home, and Luna's house, of course. But for the rest of the islanders, they relied on house elves to erect modest two and three bedroom homes for most people.

Like so many others, the elves that had come to the island to live had joined in the effort to help everyone. A small group of roughly twenty elves made up a work crew capable of erecting a two bedroom home in just about four hours. Other elves had fanned out among the islanders, helping muggles and squibs deal with magical issues or providing food. Only Dobby remained firmly bonded to the Potter family, although both Harry and Hermione would be surprised to discover that the other elves considered themselves Potter elves, as well.

He leaned back and closed his eyes, then rubbed at his temples with both hands. A pair of hands pushed his away, then took over the job of massaging his temples. “You're pushing too hard again,” said a voice.

“Can't be helped this time. We had to go see what caused that family to bounce. Bringing them back here through a ward that didn't want the little girl to pass took more power than I thought it would. If nothing else, I now know that it takes a lot of power to breach that ward,” he replied.

Dobby appeared and handed Hermione a steaming goblet. She smiled at the little elf and turned to Harry. “Here, take this. It will help with your headache.”

He took the goblet and drank it down in a few gulps, then he shuddered for a moment. “Why does this stuff always taste so nasty?”

Hermione grinned. “Don't tell Angelina I said this, but all Potion brewers are perverse, evil, people who like knowing we have to swallow their vile inventions.”

Harry nodded. “That explains Snape, I guess.”

“Harry, nothing explains that monster. I still wish he had gone the way of Voldemort,” she replied with some heat. “However, I won't tell Angelina that you compared her to Snape. If she knew, I'm sure she'd spike your potions with every vile tasting ingredient should could get her hands on.”

Harry's lips twitched tiredly. “Thanks for that. Although, if you did, I would be forced to tell her that you called her perverse and evil.”

“Hmm. Looks like we have each other over the same barrel.”

“Now there's an interesting thought,” he murmured. “Though it might be hard on the back.”

She huffed a laugh and shook her head. “So, tell me about this family with the mystery girl.” She moved around the couch and sat down next to him.

He nodded wearily and waved a hand causing several runes and equations to appear in front of them. “As best as I was able to determine, that will replicate the effect she was creating naturally. She's also the cutest little metamorphagus you've ever seen. But I can't see what that active magic field is doing, except disrupting one of my wards.”

Hermione examined the glowing runes and equations floating in the air and her brow furrowed. “It looks like she's extending a magical field around herself and then folding it back into her core?”

Harry shrugged. “That's what I thought also. At first I thought it might be related to her metamorphagus abilities, but I've never seen a metamorph with my mage sight. Tonks...”

He faltered and bowed his head, remembering the bouncy metamorph who'd died in Diagon Alley, along with so many others.

Hermione rubbed his shoulder. “I know, it still hurts sometimes.”

He nodded and looked up again, gesturing at the equations. “I don't think it's related to her morphing ability. All I can do is guess that she has a talent that's still maturing. She couldn't be more than three or four years old.”

“What are you going to do about it?” she asked.

He looked up at her. "What should I do about it? I don't think she's a danger to anyone. She's just a child. I suppose I could give her parents a monitor of some sort that would signal if the magic around her changes, but unless she exhibits some dangerous aspect, I don't see that I need to do anything."

She nodded, then pushed him back on the couch and straddled him. He looked up at her with thinly veiled amusement as she unbuttoned his shirt. Once they had made the decision to have a baby, Hermione had become rather voracious in her appetite, not that he was complaining. With his shirt partially open, she pulled her wand and whispered an incantation over his alert necklace, causing it to glow blue for a second.

"What did you just do?"

She smiled. "I needed you today. Twice in a matter of hours the temperature was just right, but you were away on that island down in the Falklands."

He fingered his necklace. "And your spell will do what, exactly?"

She ran her hands across his bared chest, loving the feel of the light dusting of hair against her palms. "I'll be able to let you know that I need you now," she murmured.

He could see her eyes glazing as logical Hermione, sweet, methodical Hermione, shut down and the minx awoke.

There was something unique about making love to Harry that she hadn't felt with Ron. It was almost as if Harry was somehow using his magic to enhance the experience for both of them. She didn't care, she just knew that she was at her most fertile time and she wanted him with a desire that burned.

Mary Celeste's berth, Norman's Cay, April 2008...

Harry surfaced and pulled off his mask. He turned until he spotted the floating basket and placed the mask and snorkel into it.

"How bad is it?" Amos called from the dock.

He looked up and grinned at the old man. "Not as bad as it could be. Hang on a moment and I'll be right up."

The water was still too chilly for regular swimming, but he managed with a little help from a short neoprene wet suit, and a warming charm. He owned a full suit for scuba diving, but the short suit was perfect for this type of swimming and gave him more freedom of movement with the short sleeves and half pants.

He swam the few feet to a ladder that extended down from the pier side and he climbed up. He barely managed to squeak by the Mary Celeste, who listed towards the pier and low in the water. On the deck, three powerful pumps spewed water overboard.

Harry stood and turned towards the Mary. With a wave of a hand, he shut down two of the pumps. The third continued to pump, but the flow of water was already diminishing.

"Several hull planks were broken and you sprung a whole mess of seams on your port side, Amos," he said as he turned back to the old wizard. "I've repaired the planking and sealed the seams, so she's not taking on any more water. Now, do you want to explain to me just how you managed to get her in such a condition? Had it not been for your magic, you never would have made it back to the island."

"Wasn't my fawt. I hits something," exclaimed Amos unhappily. He had been coming back from Nassau when he struck an underwater object and started taking on water.

Harry nodded knowingly. Submerged obstacles were a problem for all boats. Sometimes it was a reef hidden just below the surface, ready to tear the bottom out of a passing boat, or an object floating a few feet from the surface. Those were the most dangerous. A log, for example, could float for months, slowly soaking up the water before sinking to the seabed.

"Well, she's fixed and she'll be pumped dry in under an hour. I'm wondering if I should charm the hull like I did with the Lily."

Amos turned away from the sight of the pump still spitting out water and looked at Harry with interest. "Eh?"

"I charmed the leading and trailing hull edges to prevent leakage, then I charmed the hull to be impervious. It's not a perfect solution, but her hull is probably as strong as steel by now," Harry replied.

He'd been at the school when word came that the Mary Celeste had been badly damaged in an accident. Amos had managed to slow the leak enough to get her into her dock. By the time Harry had arrived, the Mary was listing and settling to the floor.

"You wuld do dat for Mary? It be a lot o work!" Amos asked in surprise.

Harry shrugged. "We need the Mary, Amos, and we need you. You provide a service to the island that we can't do without. I know we've forced you to cut back the number of trips you make, but we need you to be able to make those trips. I hope that doesn't sound callous. More importantly, you're my friend, and keeping the Mary safe is important to you. So, yeah, I'd do it for you."

Amos nodded slowly. There was no doubt in his mind that the islanders needed. He had cut back on the number of trips to Nassau until he went only six times a month, and each time the Mary returned to the island with her hold bulging with needed goods and materials. No owl post was

allowed to come to the island, so his ship was the only source of items that couldn't be easily conjured or created locally.

He was also extremely touched by Harry's friend comment. It hammered home the point of how much change he had witnessed in his life.

"How much damage to your cargo was there?" Harry asked.

"Some o de food be ruined and some electronics got wet. I s'pose dat can be fixed, but we need to replace de food."

Harry nodded and thought about it for a moment. "Give your cargo manifest to Cassandra. She'll figure out what needs to be restocked and what we can do without."

Harry hesitated, then he asked the one question he had been afraid to ask. "Have you heard anything new?"

The old man sighed. "You know bout de Russia China cease fire?"

Harry nodded. A formal cease fire had been negotiated a week ago, according to the short wave broadcasts. Other than the initial two nuclear exchanges, neither side had used them again. After the initial exchange, both sides had settled into an uneasy fight, occasionally traded artillery fire, but neither side crossed the border again.

World Wide opinion had so turned against both participants that many believed the international trade embargo was what forced China and Russia to the bargaining tables.

"Rumor has it dat de Russians were forced to quit by some magical means," Amos said softly, "but de ICW is denying any involvement in de muggle crisis. I did read an article from de Nassau Wizard Press. Dat Percy fella says dat if need be, de ICW will take steps to protect Wizards from muggles."

Harry frowned and turned his gaze out over the Atlantic Ocean. "So they will deny anything muggle from entering their society, but they're not above stepping in and interfering with muggle society."

Amos nodded unhappily. "Dat what I tink also."

"How about the local ICW?"

Amos shook his head. "Dey be worse than de ol Ministry. Corrupt and crooked. I heard dat de Govnor can be bawt. Dey still haven't replaced all dem aurors you fawt."

Harry shook his head in disgust. The more things changed, the more they stayed the same. "I don't think we want to get involved with that. From what I've read, bribes never last and the cost always increases. On the other hand, maybe we should bring this to the committee. Maybe someone will have an idea on how we can capitalize on it."

Amos started to reply when an orb appeared in front of Harry and expanded to full size.

"Commente," Harry commanding, activating the two way link.

"Harry?"

He smiled at Hermione. "Yes? Is something wrong?"

"No, I was just wondering how much longer you're going to be with Amos?"

He glanced at his friend, then turned back to the orb. "I think we're done here. We've fixed the problem with his ship and by tomorrow it should be as good as new."

She smiled and nodded to Amos. "Good. Amos, Harry caught some extra snapper this morning. I'll have Dobby bring you some in a little while. Harry when you come home, please meet me at Luna's? We need to talk to you about something."

"I'll see you in a bit. I need to clean up here first."

Hermione nodded and the orb vanished when she ended the spell.

"You best get going. You don't want two witches getting angry with you," Amos said with a chortle, then he nudged Harry in the ribs. "Hey! Maybe you get lucky tonight, eh?"

Harry blushed. Many on the committee knew there was something unusual about the friendship that existed between Harry, Hermione and Luna. As a result, they teased both Harry and Hermione about it. Teasing Luna was an undertaking that few wanted to attempt since the twins tried pranking her and she switched their hands and feet with a simple wave of her wand. The twins had to live with that for three days before Alicia managed to convince Luna to reverse her unique switching spell.

A half hour later, Harry strode up the walkway to Luna's house after having stopped at home for a quick shower. One of the more valuable lessons Amos had taught him was the value of rinsing off the salt after swimming in the ocean. He had no desire to repeat that particular rash, or the ribbing that came from having to ask Amos what he could use to treat it.

"Luna? Hermione?" he called from the foyer.

In the living room," Hermione called out.

Grinning, he walked into the living room to see Hermione and Luna sitting calmly on a couch, watching him. He wasn't sure why, but he suddenly felt nervous.

"Harry," both women said at once, then they turned and looked at each other and smiled sheepishly.

"No, go ahead, Hermione," Luna said. She leaned forward and picked up a mug of tea.

"You sure, Luna?"

The blond smiled. "He does belong to you, after all."

Harry blinked. *I do?* he mused. *Well, I suppose one could put it that way.*

"Harry, you know how we've been trying to have a baby?"

Harry nodded warily.

"Well, I wanted to tell you that we finally managed to achieve our goal."

He blinked again. "We have?" he asked dubiously. After all, she didn't look pregnant.

Hermione looked at him, a bit disappointed by his reaction and did something she had never done in front of him before: she pouted. "Yes. I'm pregnant."

His legs felt rubbery and weak. He was going to be a father! In a way, he was also relieved. Hermione had charmed his necklace with a portkey that she could remotely activate and had used it on several occasions so she could pull him home for sex. While he didn't have a problem with having sex with her, it was more than a little embarrassing to be talking to a newly arrived family, only to be whooshed away for some afternoon nookie because her temperature was right. He never had gotten around to that talk about priorities.

Luna smiled at him. "Well done, Harry. I've been waiting for Hermione to get pregnant. Now I want to have your baby, as well."

He turned to stare at her for a moment, then his eyes rolled up into his head and he slid to the floor.

"Uh oh, I thought that might happen," Luna murmured. "I swear, men simply can't take any real pressure. No wonder they're the weaker sex."

"Luna!" exclaimed Hermione. "Look what you did!"

"He'll be fine. He's just surprised, that's all," she replied, then she pulled her wand from behind her ear and levitated Harry into a chair. Once he was sitting, she squirted some water at his face and he woke up sputtering.

"Wha? Whoa... Talk about a weird dream. For a moment I dreamt that Hermione said she was pregnant and Luna wanted to have my baby, too," he muttered, shaking his head.

Hermione smiled to herself. "You weren't dreaming," she said softly. "I am pregnant, and Luna does want to have your baby."

He looked up, startled to hear her voice and realized he wasn't in his own bedroom. "But..." He shook his head. Where was he supposed to go with this? He looked between the two women, then settled his wary, if slightly confused gaze on his wife. "Let me see if I understand this," he said, then cleared his throat, as his voice was sounding just a bit too squeaky. "Luna wants to have my baby and you're all right with that?"

Hermione hesitated only for a second. "Yes. Luna and I have discussed this completely. In fact, we've been planning on having this talk with you for a while now."

Harry stood and walked over to the window, his posture stiffening. "Right. So, how are we going to do this then? Am I to spend half the weeknights here and half the weeknights with you, Hermione? Or perhaps you two have decided that we'll all share, like Fred and George do."

He turned and looked at the two shocked women. "I'll admit, if any woman, other than Hermione, could catch my eye, it would be Luna," he said. His expression, once wary and confused, was now one of anger. He swung his gaze to Luna and looked at her with such a frank appraisal that she squirmed uncomfortably.

Luna shook herself from the feeling that Harry was mentally undressing her. "Wait, wait, wait!" she said quickly. "We started this conversation off badly and no one is really listening."

"I think I heard you rather well, Luna. You and *my wife* decided that I would get you pregnant. I don't know what bothers me more, the fact that I haven't been asked, or the fact that I'm being pressed into stud service."

He turned back to the window and Hermione looked aghast. They hadn't asked him! She had repeated one of the Dumbledore's greatest mistakes by assuming he'd blindly do what they said, rather than taking the time to ask him. If there was one thing Harry hated the most it was to be manipulated. She turned to Luna with a stricken look.

"Harry?" Luna said softly.

He grunted in acknowledgment, never turning from the window and the view of the sunset across the bay.

"You're right, we should have asked you," Hermione said, then she stood and walked over to him and placed a hand on his arm. "Harry?" she whispered, her eyes were filling with tears.

He turned to look at her and she could see the hurt in his expression.

"I'm so sorry. We should have asked you about it. I should have asked you when Luna first brought it up," she whispered. "Don't be angry with Luna. I should have known better."

He lifted a hand and wiped away her tears with his thumb. "I know, it just hurts. You both know I'd never turn down a request from either of you, but to decide without even asking me? I've lived all my life with someone telling me what to do."

Hermione's lower lip trembled and she embraced him. He wrapped her arms around her and buried his face in her hair, holding her as tightly as she held him.

Luna leaned back on her chair and relaxed, realizing the situation was under control. She had seen Harry and some of his mood swings in the past few months, but had never really realized exactly how much power he wielded until now. While he stood there, staring angrily at the two witches, he had been leaking enough magic to move the island to another ocean!

After a few minutes, Harry turned his head so that he could lean his forehead against Hermione's.

"I'm sorry," she whispered again.

"It's all right, but don't do something like this again," he replied, then he looked over at the blond. "Luna, if Hermione really doesn't have a problem with it, then I suppose I don't, but you know we're probably going to have to do it several times before you get pregnant, right?"

Hermione gasped and realized that yet another major part of the conversation was still missing.

Luna, however, was feeling the brunt of Harry's gaze. For the first time, he allowed himself to do a bit of ogling, and she blushed furiously under his gaze.

"Harry!" Hermione said commandingly. She reached up with both hands and cupped his cheeks, pulling his gaze away from Luna. "That's not going to happen," she growled. She may be willing to share some parts of Harry with Luna, but *that* part wasn't an option!

He blinked and looked at her in confusion. "Huh? But you said..."

"No. No one said anything of the sort," she replied calmly. "We're going to do this the muggle way."

Now he was really confused. *The muggles do it differently than we do?* he thought with surprise. *All that porn that Fred and George hide from their wives is wrong? Well, the twins weren't muggles, so maybe it was wrong. I mean, if you have to hide it from your wife...*

He shook his head and glared at his wife as something she said clicked into place. "Wait. Hermione, you and I do it the muggle way. The same way your mother, you know, the muggle, did it. You take your temperature, then grab me, no matter what I'm in the middle of, and we go at it until we're tired to twitch. And it obviously works," he exclaimed, waving a hand at her still trim waist.

She rolled her eyes. "Muggles have several ways," she began.

"Oh, great. Just when I get the hang of it. What does this muggle way entail? Swinging from the light fixtures and flinging it at her?" he muttered, pointing at Luna.

Luna looked away and coughed, trying to cover her laugh.

Hermione sighed and led him over to a chair.

He sat down and looked at the two women, confused and more than a little frustrated.

"Harry," Luna started, "I've made an appointment with a clinic in Miami. What I want you to do is masturbate into this cup." She held up a small plastic container with a screw on lid.

"Then I'll take it to the clinic and they will take your sperm and freeze it for later use. They'll also use a small amount of it right there to try to get me pregnant. Timing is critical, so if you don't mind? You can go into the bathroom if you want privacy, otherwise here is fine. I won't mind and I'm sure neither would Hermione."

She reached out, holding the container in her hand, clearly waiting for him to get on with it.

Harry had other plans, however. For the second time in less than an hour, he slumped forward in a dead faint.

"Oh dear," Luna said softly. "Maybe we should call Alicia. He shouldn't be fainting like this all the time."

Hermione frowned at her friend. "He wouldn't be fainting if we eased him into this idea instead of dumping it on him all at once."

"I suppose we could have asked him like the twins would. 'Say Harry, would you mind very much wanking off in this cup for us?'," Luna replied.

Hermione's frown became a scowl as she realized that there really wasn't a way of nicely asking him to provide sperm for Luna to use without referring to sex in one way or another.

"I guess. But still, telling him he can do it where he sits? He'd never do that." she replied.

"Wouldn't you like to watch him doing it? I think it would be fascinating," Luna countered.

Hermione blushed, not trusting herself to speak. Luna enjoyed tripping her into little admissions, not so much because she wanted to know, but rather she felt these little slips helped Hermione keep a level head.

"I'd better wake him," she murmured, changing the subject. In the back of her mind, however, a small voice concluded that she really wouldn't mind watching him do that. She ground her teeth and tried to ignore the voice.

She gestured, then smiled brightly. Her wandless magic wasn't up to Harry's level at all, but she was slowly mastering it. She could levitate small objects, and even generate a blast of cold air, which she just did, at Harry's face.

Harry flinched and opened his eyes. Over the years, Hermione had learned that Harry was head shy. No matter what the circumstances, he would flinch if someone touched his head without warning. She knew that he had no problem with her touching his face, as long as he could see her. That blast of cool air, no matter how gentle, always startled him. Hermione knew it was a reminder of his upbringing and never tried to touch his face without making him aware of her intent first.

He looked around warily.

"I was only kidding when I said you could do it here in front of us, Harry," Luna said with a soft smile. "But if I'm to keep on schedule, I will need that sample sometime in the next two days."

Harry's eyes narrowed on the blond. "You really did want to see me do that, didn't you?"

When she didn't reply, he turned to see Hermione blushing furiously. "You too?" he asked incredulously. "Maybe you two shouldn't hang out together so much," he muttered. "You're both perverts and you're rubbing off on each other. Hmm. Rubbing off on each other. That could be interesting to watch." He eyed them both lasciviously.

Seeing their expressions of shock, he smirked. "Now you both understand at least a small part of what I've been feeling since I walked in here! Though I'd feel a little better if at least one of you fainted."

Seeing that neither woman was about to faint, he pretended to pout for a moment, then turned to Luna and shook his head. "All joking aside, I have to ask; why me, Luna? There are plenty of other men on this island and a bunch of them are unattached."

Luna stared back at him in dismay. He was right. There was even one person on the island who was nearly as good a match as Richard was. But Harry and Hermione were both perfect fits and their close proximity prevented her from forming relationships. Harry couldn't know about the unique bond they all shared. It was the one thing that Luna and Hermione had agreed on completely. Luna had foreseen what was to come and many of the paths had shown her that things would end badly if they became a "triplet" at this cusp.

"She has foreseen it, Harry, and we think that you would love all of your children, mine and Luna's," Hermione replied.

Harry looked at Hermione and then he remembered something. "You're really pregnant?" he asked softly.

She smiled and nodded. He leaned back on his chair and turned to Luna. "And you want to have my children, as well?"

Luna nodded and tried to look encouragingly at him.

"They will be Potters through and through, you know. We might not have the same kind of relationship that the twins have, but we would all be a family," he said softly.

"I don't have a problem with that," Luna replied. "The rest of the world might not think so, but I would be honored to be a Potter."

"I know I am," murmured Hermione.

Harry shot Hermione a grateful look, then he leaned forward and took the sample container gently from Luna's hand. "I'll be back in a bit," he mumbled, cursing himself as he felt his cheeks flush.

The two women watched him retreat into the bathroom and close the door behind them.

"We could have done that better, but all things considered, I think it went pretty well," Luna declared.

"Yes, but we should have remembered that he hated being manipulated," replied Hermione with a slight frown. How could she have forgotten that?

"We weren't manipulating him. We just screwed up the explanation. Harry rarely refuses a request. The problem was, we jumped to the end, assuming he'd do it and skipped the request altogether. Careless, yes. Manipulative?" She shook her head, then frowned suddenly. "Drat! I forgot to tell him about the three breasted Tibetan Mermaids! I even have a photo of one here in the house... somewhere."

Hermione laughed. "I'm sure he'll do just fine. How are you doing on your project?"

Luna looked down at her hands and counted her fingers. She was sure there were twelve there a moment ago, or perhaps there were twelve fingers in an alternate reality she'd seen. It wouldn't surprise her. In one reality she had viewed, the three of them were all three toed sloths, living in the amazon. That particular reality had the nicest bananas she had ever tasted! She shook her head and tried to clear her thoughts. Keeping the realities separate was difficult sometimes.

"It's going well. I've got a lot of the pieces working as prototypes, but I have to be extremely careful that none of them escape their containment," Luna replied.

The two women talked for nearly an hour about her project, and Hermione's work on the Avalon equations.

Sometime later, Luna looked at the woman who was her best friend, sister and so much more. "You have no idea how much I envy you Hermione."

Hermione blinked. "What? What brought that on?"

"Harry's been in the bathroom for over an hour. Even Richard didn't have that kind of staying power. Mind you, he could be a real demon in bed, but three times in a night was about the best he could do and even he couldn't last an hour."

Hermione glanced at the clock and frowned. Standing, she started to walk towards the bathroom when she realized she was being rude. She turned back to Luna "Well, Harry's pretty good that way, but I think I'll just check on him."

Luna laughed. "All right, but try not to make too much noise. You have your own house for that sort of thing. And remember, I need that sample, so don't waste any!"

Hermione's blush deepened and she promised herself that some day she would find something to make Luna blush!

Walking to the bathroom door, she knocked. When he didn't answer, she pushed the door open far enough to slip inside.

Like their house, Harry had created this one with huge bathrooms. It was a sinful luxury that Hermione immensely enjoyed. Harry had grown up with heavy restrictions on his bathroom use, and in particular, hot water use. As a result, when he saw the Prefect bath tub he had fallen in love with the idea of a huge bath and huge bathrooms with no hot water restrictions.

Glancing about, she saw him sitting on a stool near the bath. On the edge of the tub rested the sample container that Luna had given him. She frowned slightly at his pensive expression. He was still dressed, his only concession to why he'd come into the bathroom was his open zipper.

"Harry? Are you alright?"

"Not really," he mumbled in reply. "I know what I came in here to do, but it seems that things aren't working as well as they should."

He looked up at her with a worried look. "Do you think I should talk to Alicia? Or maybe ask her to recommend a male healer in Miami, maybe?"

She tried not to smile. "You're probably just upset from the conversation. Then, too, there's the pressure of doing this in a strange place."

"Not to mention that this is about as arousing as seeing Snape and Umbridge do it on the Head Table at Hogwarts," he muttered sourly.

Hermione scowled at the image and crossed the distance between them. She caressed his cheek with one hand and leaned a little closer. "She loves you, you know, as much as she can. As much as we can allow her. I think she's seen more that she isn't telling us, but I trust her. She wants your baby as much as I do."

Her hand slid into his opened zipper and lightly grasped him.

"I can't believe you're willing to go along with this," he said, his breath quickening.

"Luna needs us. It's just that simple. Right now, I'm going to help you help Luna, then I'm going to take you home and show you exactly why you'll never feel the need to look outside of our relationship."

He pulled her tightly to him and marveled at the women in his life... and the confusion they caused.

Duncan and Cassandra's Villa, Norman's Cay, Late May (2008)...

"Harry, you've been awful quiet during this meeting. Is something wrong?" Cassandra's asked gently. She sat next to Hermione, who just starting to show some slight signs of her pregnancy.

All of the members of the Rescue Committee turned to look at Harry, who seemed rather uncomfortable during the meeting. He had been off the island yesterday on an errand and had been quiet since his return.

Hermione leaned forward in her chair and reached for his hand. "What is it?" she asked.

He looked down at the table, then looked up, glancing around at the expectant faces. "I find myself in a bit of a quandary. I've erased memories and left people as complete squibs. I've even, on occasion, killed in order to protect what we have. But last night I found myself in a predicament that I am having trouble resolving. Last night, I used an unforgivable for the second time in my life."

Duncan leaned forward in his chair. "We're all wanted criminals in the eyes of the ICW, Harry. The question you need to ask yourself is, what

motivated you to use such a curse. I don't think anyone here will fault you for using one."

"I used the killing curse several times on the night when the Aurors came to the school," Maxime murmured from her chair. She looked at Harry and her eyes echoed a piece of what he was feeling. "I know I killed that night. I could have used another curse to kill, but I wanted to express my anger, and nothing else seemed to fit."

She paused and rubbed her temples for a moment. "Pardon, putting my words into English properly takes some effort. I think what is bothering Harry isn't the curse itself, but what it represents. It is our nuclear weapon."

Harry looked up sharply. "Yes! We were raised to think of those three curses as being the absolute worst and only the most vile of evil individuals would use one."

"Kinda like carpet bombing versus one big nuclear bomb. The dead don't care what killed them, they're still dead, but the living cared. Carpet bombing was acceptable, an A Bomb was not," mused Angie, who remembered the carpet bombing days of the Vietnam war.

"What curse did you use last night, Harry?" asked Hermione.

Harry looked very unhappy with himself. "I wanted to know what the Ministry was up to and we really have no way of finding out that information. So I went to the source."

Bill leaned forward with an incredulous look on his face. "You didn't! You went to see Percy and put him under the Imperius!"

"And his wife," Harry muttered.

Hermione tightened her grip on his hand. "Love, you did what you thought was necessary to keep us safe. Yes, those curses are distasteful and upsetting, but even I would use a killing curse to keep you, or our baby alive."

He looked at her hopefully. "Really? There was a time you hated anyone that used one of those curses."

Hermione nodded. "Yes, there was a time, and everyone of those people were trying to kill and hurt people for no reason other than their own personal gain. They weren't protecting people, they killed for sport and fun. You used an unforgivable to save lives."

"There is a difference," Angie said gently. "The Goddess tells us that the purest use of magic is when it's used to help others. That little girl, Bethany, or Victoria, or even the baby that Hermione is growing right now, your baby, is protected by your actions."

He looked at Angie for a moment before nodding slowly, then he looked to Hermione for confirmation of Angie's words. His greatest fear was that one day, in trying to keep them safe, he'd cross a line and Hermione would hate him for it.

She smiled and squeezed his hand again.

"Better now, Harry?" asked Cassandra. She loved her son-in-law, but she knew that sometimes he needed extra gentle handling. There were some aspects of life, like the gentle teasing that existed within a family, that he wasn't used to.

Cassandra glanced around the table, then turned back to Harry. "Now that we've cleared that up, I think there are several of us that are very curious to discover what you learned last night."

"Hmmm. I could show you the memory of last night, if you want," he offered.

"We don't have a pensieve," Hermione replied. "The committee has been looking for one for a long time now, but they are quite rare and rarely come up for sale."

Harry looked thoughtful. "I suppose I could steal Dumbledore's pensieve. Merlin knows he's not using it for anything useful, since his brains are mush."

His eyes gleamed and he got a faraway look on his face as he pondered sneaking into Hogwarts and stealing the pensieve of Albus Dumbledore.

"Harry? Harry!" Hermione called, reaching out for him.

He blinked and looked at her with chagrin. "Sorry," he mumbled, then he waved a hand at one wall and it faded to a light blue before it showed a bedroom scene.

"The best I can do is show it like this. I'm sorry, but you'll be watching everything from my perspective," he said, as people began to shift around so they could watch.

The blue coloring faded away and an opulent bedroom came into view.

Harry looked around carefully. He had already taken care of the security detail that protected the mansion. They were sleeping and would not wake for another four hours. The signature recording charms were disabled and he stood looking at presumably the most powerful man in the wizarding world, the Minister of the ICW, one Percival Ignatius Weasley and his wife, Su Li.

Harry looked at the sleeping pair and couldn't help but compare them to Hermione and himself. Percy and Su were on opposite sides of the huge bed with at least three feet separating them. The bed looked to be the same size, but invariably Harry and Hermione were a tangle of limbs for most of the night.

He snapped his fingers and smirked. The resulting crack of thunder sounded like it came from the space precisely between the two, and both occupants bounced out of bed in terror.

Su was a trained Auror and a little better able to cope. Her first impulse was to go for her wand. Unfortunately for her, Harry had locked her speed down to a slowcrawl. Her wand was only a fewfeet away on the nightstand, but it might as well have been a million miles away, considering howslow she was moving.

Percy's reaction was more in line with his chosen life's profession of coward. He screamed and fell to the floor, pleading for his life.

Harry gestured and both Su and Percy suddenly found themselves sitting in straight back wooden chairs, immobilized from the neck down.

"Good evening, Minister Weasley, Mrs. Weasley. I would have made an appointment, but I was afraid you wouldn't have accepted an invitation to tea and conversation. So I thought I'd come here to talk a bit with you both."

Percy and Su stared at him, both horrified.

Harry smiled at the pair, not realizing howmuch more frightening that made him appear, though he wouldn't have cared much, had he known. He had loosened his restraints on his aura and he knew he was glowing.

"P-P-Potter? You won't get away with this! I'll see you in Azkaban for this!" Percy said, all bluster.

Harry sat down, facing his fellowHogwarts alumni. That he sat down on nothing only caused them to struggle even harder against the binding that held them.

Harry stared at Percy for a moment, then nodded as a soft yellowglow surrounded the Minister's head.

"Now, Percy, is that any way to treat a guest? Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to ask you some questions and you're going to answer them truthfully. I'm going to use a spell to make sure you do so. I must warn you, however, that the results of fighting my spell could be uncomfortable," he said gently.

Su opened her mouth to protest and he silenced her with a mere glance.

"Wait a second!" protested Hermione. "That was a silent *Imperio* us? That yellow glow?"

When he nodded, she shook her head in dismay. As far as she knew, none of the unforgivable curses could be performed wandlessly or with a silent incantation.

Harry restarted the playback on the wall.

"I'm interested in your plans for the muggle born. Surely you're not killing them all?" Harry asked.

Percy shook his head, fighting the spell, then he moaned in pain. "No! We're not killing them all. We're not barbarians you know!"

Harry leaned back and looked thoughtful. "So, what are you doing with them?"

Percy shrugged. "Our Department of Mysteries figured out a way of siphoning off their magic and giving it to someone else. Some of the muggle born we catch are used to bolster the flagging power of the older families. Many are killed trying to escape."

"Escape?" Harry asked dryly.

Percy screamed in pain and writhed in his chair. Harry leaned forward and said in an intense voice. "The pain will worsen until you are driven insane. Comply, be truthful, and the pain will end."

"All right! All right! They're sent to Russia, to the mines," Percy said with a gasp.

"Mines? What mines?"

"With the goblins gone, we need to mine our own gold to mint into coins. Making sure we have enough gold to mint for the entire world isn't easy."

Harry frowned. "Howheavily guarded are the mines?" He was already considering the possibility of an assault on them to free prisoners.

"We don't have to guard it at all," Percy said proudly. "The inmates do it all for us."

"Why is that?"

"They are little more than mindless automatons, thanks to the potions we feed them. The fewthat can still think well enough knowthat, if they don't continue receiving the potions, they'll die."

"Potion slavery," Harry murmured in disgust. There would be no rescue for those poor souls. He knewwell enough that there were some addictive potions that a person just couldn't be weaned off of.

"Muggle born," Percy replied with a shrug as if to say they didn't mean anything.

"What about those muggle born that you haven't caught?"

"We will. Sooner or later, we'll catch them all."

Harry's scowled deepened. "Did you interfere in the Russia/China war?"

"Yes. They were killing wizards. I had one of our people control the leaders long enough to put an end to the war."

"And that's it? You've left them alone since?"

"No. We've formed a committee that's looking to put someone close to every major world leader. If something like this happens in the future, we'll be able to head it off by taking control. If necessary, we'll mass our Aurors and conquer them."

Harry shook his head in dismay. Percy had no clue what he was talking about, and worse, he honestly believed that the magical world could take over the mundane world. It would be a disaster that would make World War III look like a walk in the park, and probably would result in destroying much of humanity.

Harry stood and paced the room for a few moments. He seriously considered killing Percy and Su right there, but the next Minister might even be worse than Percy. Or, Merlin forbid, Dumbledore could take the job.

Harry turned and gestured at his prisoners. A light brown haze hovered over their heads and they lost the look of panic on their faces. Both of them assumed almost serene expressions.

"When I leave, you will forget about my visit entirely. However, you will remember the following commands, Percy," Harry said authoritatively.

Percy nodded dreamily.

"The muggle born are becoming less of a threat, in your opinion. You will start concentrating your efforts on keeping the member nations of the ICW in line. In fact, Sweden is close to rebellion and several other nations are following their example.

"Dumbledore is right. Interfering with muggles is a bad thing. The committee might make recommendations, but you will be slow to act upon them, out of fear of breaking the secrecy of the wizarding world.

"You will slowly begin to cut back on the budget for the DMLE, even if it means firing Aurors. The money should be spent on educational programs emphasizing personal hygiene and wand care."

Harry stepped back and crossed his arms in satisfaction. His suggestions were suitably lowkey enough that Percy would not make any radical policy shifts. His changes would be enacted over time, and by diverting resources away from the hunt for the muggle born, more might escape.

He turned to leave, then he paused and turned back to Su Li.

Harry stopped the playback and looked at his friends expectantly.

"Hold it just a second there Potter," Hermione said with a growl.

"You stopped the playback early. Why?" asked Cassandra.

Several others glanced at the two women, then turned to look at Harry with curiosity.

"It's done. Really!" protested Harry.

"Harry," Hermione admonished.

Harry sighed. "Fine, but really, the important stuff is finished."

"Then you won't mind showing us the remainder," Duncan said smugly. He suspected something interesting was about to happen.

Harry's shoulders drooped and he nodded to the wall again.

"Do you know what a Terrier is, Mrs. Weasley?" Harry asked.

"It's a dog of some kind," she replied in a dreamy tone.

"Yes, it's one of those little dogs that has a very annoying bark. Do you know the kind I mean?"

"Yes, I do."

Harry smiled. "Excellent. From here on, whenever you make love with your husband, you will feel an uncontrollable urge to bark and growl, just like a terrier. When you are done making love, you will not remember barking or growling and you will deny it ever happened. Even if someone

shows you a pensieve memory of it, you will neither see, nor hear it and will deny it happened. Do you understand me?"

"Yes. I will bark and growl while making love with my husband."

Harry grinned maliciously and faded from sight. The view on the wall shifted suddenly to palm trees and an open beach before fading back to blue again.

Harry turned back to the others after returning the wall to its normal color and glanced around.

Bill was barely visible. He had slid under the table and only the top of his head could be seen. Someone must have cast a silencing charm on him, because his head was bouncing up and down but he was making no noise.

"Barking and growling?" asked Hermione drolly.

"Hey, I was improvising. It's not like I had a script or anything," he retorted. He couldn't help but notice the general mirth that had infected all of his friends.

Finally, Duncan controlled himself enough to wave a hand. "I like it. Your commands were subtle enough to help relieve the pressure on us without things happening too quickly and arousing suspicion."

"And the barking part was just tops," Cassandra added gleefully.

Harry blushed as the rest of them broke out in laughter again.

Duncan rapped on the table to catch everyone's attention. "Summing up then. Harry's planted a seed that could result in easing some of the pressure on the Ministry undesirables. His other suggestions, slashing the DMLE budget and pointing suspicion at a member nation, will also work to ease the pressure, at least for a while. Percy is Minister and his word carries a lot of weight, but he's not a king, nor a dictator, so he has to work with others, and that means he won't always get his way.

"Now, what about this bit with mines? Should we be thinking about raiding them to release the prisoners?"

Harry looked down, refusing to answer.

"We can't, Daddy," Hermione replied softly. "Percy didn't need to name the potions. It's well known that some potions are poisonous. If some who's been taking them suddenly stops ingesting them, they'll die. They could be using one of those potions or even a combination of them. The fact that he called them mindless suggests a heavy narcotic component. I'm afraid that, even if we broke them out, we couldn't care for them or figure out the proper potion combinations in time to keep them alive."

"It would be more merciful to drop one of those knuckle bombs on them, poor bastards," Bill said somberly. No one seemed interested in correcting his mistake.

Cassandra shivered for a moment, then looked around. "Does anyone have any more business?"

"I do," Harry replied quietly. "I am shooting for a mid to end of July target date for the enlargement. As such, come the end of June, we will need to halt all construction. I'll need time to teach the elves the rune sets needed to be marked on every structure, and we'll have to mark everything. From homes, to equipment shacks and piers to laundry lines. Some of the structures will get a different rune set than normal because we don't want them to change their location in the expansion."

"Might not be a bad idea to run a practice drill or two," Bill offered. "How long will people need to be indoors?"

"I figured two hours, tops," Hermione replied. "But Harry will be applying the spell twice, taking it to the absolute limit of expansion. We'll do it once, wait a few days, maybe a week, then do it again."

"Why so much time in between the castings?" asked Angie.

"The spells are very powerful," Hermione replied. "There's a very good chance that Harry will be exhausted after casting it. I've already spoken to Alicia, asking her to be present, just in case."

"I'd like you to be there as well, Angie," Harry murmured. Everyone turned to look at him in surprise. He shrugged. "Well, the blessing of the Goddess can't hurt, can it?"

Angie smiled gently at him. He hadn't professed to be part of her faith, like some other wizards on the island had done, but he clearly respected her beliefs.

"All right, why don't we schedule our next meeting to put together a plan for a dry run of the expansion. We have a lot of details to work out. Maxime, we might need to borrow some of your students to help alert people," Duncan said.

Maxime nodded. "They will be happy to help."

ICW Headquarters Building, London, late August 2008...

The door opened and Dumbledore walked into Percy's office.

"Good morning, Professor," Percy said from his desk. He held the report from the committee that had investigated the Russia/China war and their recommendations for what to do about the Muggle governments. "Have you seen this?"

Dumbledore took a seat and nodded. "I have. I finished reading it yesterday and some of the recommendations disturb me."

"Yes, they disturb me, as well. I don't like the idea of us getting that close to the governments, and frankly, I'd be afraid we'd do something that might inadvertently expose our world."

"It's the reason why we enacted those laws to prevent us from interfering with their world," Dumbledore replied sagely.

"Yes and they still make sense to me. I'm going to present the committee's report to the Wizengamot tomorrow, along with the recommendation that we table their suggestions for the time being. Will you support me on this?"

Dumbledore nodded and pulled a small bag from his pocket. Opening it, he reached inside and pulled out a lemon drop. Popping the candy into his mouth, he then offered one to Percy, who turned it down.

"Have you worked out your budget needs for the next year?" asked Percy, now that the really important part of the conversation was done.

"Mostly. I'll be ready to submit it by the end of next week. We've had a few increases in the price of things, but on the whole, I don't see tuition being raised. And that brings me to another matter. I understand that you're earmarking more funds for education in this budget?"

"Yes. Revenue has flattened out recently and I think we're finally put the mess caused by having to pay the families of all those aurors we lost at Shangri La behind us. Because of that, I'm trimming the DMLE expenditures slightly and intend to funnel that money to education. You hold our future in your hands. Properly educated, the next generation will be a law abiding, tax paying generation," Percy said pompously.

Dumbledore's brow furrowed. "You're cutting DMLE funds? Are you sure that's wise?"

Percy waved a hand, dismissing his worry. "Oh, I'm not gutting them, Professor. With China finally on board in the ICW, we don't need to have such a large Auror force. Why, it was practically an army!"

Percy paused and shuffled some papers around on his desk, then he looked up at Dumbledore. "Besides, other than the Swedish problem, we no longer have a need for such a large force."

Dumbledore leaned forward on his chair. "Swedish problem? I take it you're talking about that attack on your residence some months ago? I thought it was proven that the Swedish weren't rebelling against the ICW?"

Percy frowned slightly. "Yes, that was what we thought. On a hunch, I had all of the Swedish Aurors transferred and moved in Aurors from Germany. I asked them to investigate the country for signs of unrest. What they have found is startling. It appears that we may, indeed, have a problem with Sweden."

Dumbledore sighed unhappily.

It never occurred to either man that the very fact that Germans policing the Swedes could be the cause of the unrest that was growing in that country.

"Actually, the Germans have done such a good job in Sweden that I might use them again elsewhere, once we get the population settled down. The only bad thing is we've had to send several old line pure blood families to the mines. Fining them and threatening them with prison seemed to only incite them to further acts of violence."

"I will, of course, support your efforts, Minister. We can't afford for any member nation to suddenly become rebellious, can we?" Dumbledore offered.

"Thank you, Professor," Percy said with some relief. Dumbledore commanded a large block of ICW support in the International Wizengamot. He needed the man and the political power he wielded.

Dumbledore stood and left the office and Percy went back to composing his speech to the Wizengamot, in which he would recommend that the Wizarding World not actively plant agents in the muggle governments.

Party Point Park, Norman's Cay (the same day)...

Harry looked around and shook his head in amazement. Party Point had been kept fairly untouched from the enlargement charms, but there was now a large park attached to the small peninsula that jutted into the bay.

The enlargements had gone off without a hitch, but he was honest enough to admit that his wife considered otherwise. The second enlargement had been so taxing and she had been forced to stand helplessly, watching as Alicia worked frantically to save him.

Harry woke three days later to a massive headache and orders from his healer not to use magic for another ten days.

"Look at this," he said softly.

Hermione turned to look at him questioningly. "What?"

She had largely gotten over her anger with him as rushing into the second enlargement when she was still too tired from the first. She had made it clear that she expected him to take into consideration the baby growing in her belly, as well as Luna's. Both children needed their father alive and happy!

Harry waved a hand around them. The park was overflowing with people as luaus and barbecues cooked food everywhere. There was a sound of music playing from a live band, and children of all ages dodged in and out of the adults, playing. Not far from where he sat he could see Victoria and Annette, Lee's little girl, playing with Puff, under the watchful eye of Duncan.

"There must be a thousand people here," he said quietly.

"More den dat," Amos said with a snort. "According to de latest census, we gots six tousand peepole here, Harreee."

Harry turned and stared at his older man in astonishment.

Cassandra tore her gaze away from watching her husband and the children and turned to Harry. "Duncan says that if the number of people coming in stays constant, we could have twenty thousand people in another ten years."

Hermione leaned against Harry. She was five months pregnant and showing. He rubbed her lower back and she shot him a grateful look. "It's a good thing the enlargement is finished, then."

Harry nodded. "I'll agree to that. We'll have the space for them, I think."

"We have space for a lot more than that," Cassandra said. "Even with your little addition to the scenery, we have loads of space now. Dun wants to get a car, since we can't always rely on Dobby or you two to pop us someplace."

Harry's addition to Hermione's incantation had resulted in a fake volcano rising some three thousand feet above the middle of the island.

He grinned. He'd never worked on an automobile engine before.

"Uh oh, I know that look. Something else for him to get all greasy on," Hermione said with a fond smile. She was convinced that he took apart his outboard engines just for the fun of it, rather than real need.

He blushed and looked away. Not far from where he sat he could make out Hagrid and Maxime and her group of students joining in the party atmosphere.

"Dey be celebratin cuz dey be safe," Amos said softly.

"It is our first luau since the enlargement," Hermione added. "People need to blow off some steam. We've all worked so hard, extending roads, planting groves of trees, even helping put up two new schools. I think the thing that has people excited the most is the two towns."

Everyone nodded. Until recently, there had been no centralized location on the island, no towns, no shopping center. Once the enlargement was complete, the committee announced their intent to build two towns, one at each end of the island, and they held a contest to see who would get to name them. The winner had aptly named both towns Hope, East Hope and West Hope. Everyone agreed the names were perfect and seemed to be an omen of better times to come.

"Angie is waving at you," Hermione murmured.

He looked up to see the woman gesturing to him. He turned to Hermione, "You'll be alright?"

She rolled her eyes.. "How many times do I need to tell you? I'm pregnant, not sick."

He grinned and stood, then walked over to Angie, who took his arm and led him away from the mass of party goers.

"He worries about you and Luna . It's part of the nature of a loving husband and father-to-be to worry," Cassandra said to her daughter. "Your father drove me to distraction with his worrying."

Hermione watched Harry's retreating back for a moment, then turned back to her mother.

In Goddess Grove, another, more serious conversation was taking place.

Harry let Angie lead him into the grove. It was a part of the original Party Point, and a place where Angie had worked her magic to make a garden that was truly unique. Spites, pixies and fairies fluttered about, tending the numerous flowers and plants. The gently sculpted garden had winding paths and several fountains. Everyone who visited it felt a sense of peace in the garden.

"The Goddess is discontent, Harry," Angie said, by way of opening the conversation.

Harry looked at her, alarmed.

"You have done much good here, more good than can be attributed to one person should he live a hundred lifetimes. And yet, all that stands on the brink of destruction because of one person," she continued softly.

Harry opened and closed his mouth a few times. "What's wrong? What have I failed to do? I know I haven't joined in your faith. Is that what this is about?"

Angie shook her head and smiled at him. “Child, if it were that simple, I would tell you. But even I don't know all of the facts. What I do know is that your moon child, your second wife, is going down a dark path that troubles the Goddess. I have tried to speak to her about it, and she listens to my words but does not hear.”

“Luna?” he said in astonishment.

Angie nodded somberly. “She harbors a great anger toward those that hurt her, Harry. An anger that she controls, barely, with help from you and Hermione. Unfortunately, she needs a firmer hand than you've been willing to provide.”

Harry looked pained. “Angie, we all agreed that, while I would give her what she needed to have my children...”

He stopped when Angie chuckled and shook her head at him.

“I'm not talking about sex, Harry. Making love to her might solve this problem, but it would create others. No, the Goddess knows that she is following a path led by her anger. She is so terribly smart, perhaps even smarter than Hermione, but her moral compass has no north pole. You need to step up to the plate and be that for her.”

Harry walked over to a bench along the path and sat down, motioning for Angie to join him. “Luna is my friend,” he said in explanation. “I'm not sure I can just order her about. I can't even order Hermione about, unless it's something directly related to her safety, and she's my wife. I'm not sure she'd listen to me.”

Angie nodded knowingly. “I could never tell Vinny what to do, either. But there are times when you need to do what you must. Those babies that are growing in Hermione and Luna's bellies right now may not see their tenth birthdays if you do nothing.”

She paused and took a deep breath. “Look around you, child. What do you see?”

Harry glanced around, seeing the garden with the fairies and pixies fluttering around. He heard the sound of children's laughter, back at the party.

“I see the garden, and I hear the people at the party.” He paused for a moment and closed his eyes. “It's peaceful. It feels...right.”

“All that could be lost, if Luna is not turned from her path,” Angie replied gently. She held out her hand and several pixies flew over to land on it. “The Goddess might not be the God of the Christians, or the Jews, or maybe she is and God is just God, no matter what name we use. What I do know is she is clear in her warning. Luna's path needs to be diverted, and soon.”

Harry sighed and looked down at his hands in his lap. “I have been so busy with my own tasks, I never felt that I needed to watch closely what the others are doing. I trusted Luna to do the right thing.”

“She hasn't stepped over the line yet. It's not too late to fix this. The Goddess approves of what is happening here and doesn't want to see it lost. That's why the warning has been given. She hasn't told me, but I suspect that if we fail, magic, all magic, will flee this world, never to return.”

He looked around, then his gaze fell on one of the pixies that sat calmly, watching him from Angie's cupped hands. His gaze met the pixie's and he could feel the plea from her. He could feel it reaching out and asking to be saved.

Harry stood abruptly and nodded to Angie, then vanished without a sound.

Angie shook her head. “Goddess bless you child. She loves you more than you know,” she murmured, then smiled reassuringly at the creatures in her hands.

Luna's Villa, Norman's Cay...

Harry appeared just outside Luna's house. A moment later, Hermione appeared, alerted to the crisis by the wave of anger she felt from her ring. Harry ignored her, instead turning and entering the house.

Luna looked up from a computer she was typing at when Harry walked into her comfortable study. Hermione trailed behind him, perplexed and more than a bit alarmed at the unexpected situation.

“Harry?” Luna asked.

He looked at her hard before turning slightly to Hermione. “Sit.”

Hermione resisted the impulse to point out that she was not a dog. The man before her was not the loving man she'd married. In his place was the cold, hard, battle ready man who'd killed Voldemort. The same man who had so much power, he could expand an entire island to epic proportions.

She felt the power wrapping around him and flowing from him. With a nod, she sat down stiffly.

When he turned to face Luna, the blond frowned as she felt the same thing Hermione had experienced. The power, *and* the anger, both barely leashed...and directed at her!

“Your nanites, Luna, what are you designing them to do? Hermione said something about you finding the source of magic,” he said through gritted teeth. Unlike his wife, he had read the popular literature detailing the advances in nano-technology. While he didn't understand the exact science, he understood enough to be aware of many of their capabilities.

Luna's eyes narrowed and she stared at him. Few people could withstand her direct gaze, but Harry was one of them.

He glared back at her and after a few minutes of awkward silence, she looked away.

"You're planning on killing the magical world," he stated. "You're making a disease that will kill them all."

"They deserve it!" she shot back. "They killed Richard!"

"Oh? And what will you say to the three year old as he drowns in his own bodily fluids? 'I'm sorry, but you have to die because you're bad.'" he shot back.

Luna flinched as if she had been struck.

"Luna," he said coldly, "they killed my parents, Cedric Diggory, Sirius, Ron, Ginny, Tonks, Remus and so many others. I struggle everyday with the urge to go back and raze their world to the ground. I had the man who killed Ginny in my grasp and wanted nothing more than to gut him slowly. But I didn't do it. I'd like nothing better than to torture Albus Dumbledore for weeks before letting him die. But I don't do it."

She looked at him, her eyes filled with tears.

He took a deep breath. His expression gentled somewhat, but his voice was firm and authoritative. "Hermione and I welcomed you into our family. I gave to you the only thing I can truly call my own. The mother of my children will *not* be remembered for creating a disease that killed millions. I want your promise that you will not do this. If I don't get it, I will destroy your laboratory. I'll wipe it from this island and salt the ground on which it stood. I will not have a mass murderer as mother to my children."

When Luna choked out a sob, Hermione looked at him in shock. She had never heard him speak that way before. He was not asking, he was commanding. She realized that he was not threatening Luna with the destruction of her laboratory. He was simply informing her of the consequences of disobeying him!

When Luna looked up at him, her eyes huge and tear-filled, he shook his head. "We love you, Luna, but this course is wrong. Besides, if I can't destroy them, neither can you. And you have to admit, I have as much cause to hate them as you do."

She nodded and looked at Hermione, who had been watching, shocked to her core by both Luna's plan and Harry's behavior. She and Luna had talked about her plans in vague terms, but she hadn't realized the extent of what Luna planned until Harry said it out loud; death for the Wizarding World.

Taking a shaky breath, she nodded. "He's right. We both still love you, but you can't do this."

"What shall I do then?" Luna asked in a whisper. "Abandon it all and come work at the school?"

Harry looked up at the ceiling for a moment, as if searching for answers. "No, I think parts of your idea have merit. I won't allow you to kill them, but that doesn't mean something else can't be done to them," he said, thinking quickly. "You found the source of magic. Can you take it away from them? Turning them into what they hate the most would be a just punishment."

Luna shook her head. "You can't take away someone's magic. Well, Harry could. But it's like having a heart or lungs." She paused for a moment. "However..."

Hermione leaned forward. "Yes?" she pressed.

"What if we took away their ability to pass their magic on? Maybe take it away from everyone, even the muggles?"

Hermione glanced at Harry, gaging his reaction.

"I like that idea," he murmured. "It's fitting and taking the ability away from the muggles won't hurt them in the slightest."

Luna lifted her chin and wiped at her tears. Hitching a breath, she looked him the eyes. "I would rather be mother to your children, than to have you consider me a killer. I will destroy the stock of the disease prototypes and delete my files on them. On my magic, I so swear."

Luna glowed softly as her oath took effect and Harry held out a hand for her. She looked at him curiously.

"There is a party going on and you're missing out on the fun," he said softly.

Hermione stood, moved to his side and offered a hand to Luna.

Luna closed her eyes, realizing how lucky she was to have them both in her life. Reaching out, she placed a hand in each of theirs and allowed them to help her to her feet. When arms wrapped around her waist, she sighed. Being held between Harry and Hermione was very comforting; a soothing balm to her ragged emotions.

"We let you go to early," Harry murmured quietly. "Tomorrow, we'll move you back into your bedroom at the house. We all need the closeness for awhile longer."

She nodded in acquiescence. He was right, so there was no sense in protesting.

Thirty miles away in Goddess's Grove, the pixies and fairies glowed brightly and began to sing. Angie watched, enraptured, as a number of

budding flowers suddenly blossomed.

"Goddess bless you, child. You did good," she murmured. Then, pulling her shawl about her shoulders, she walked out of the Grove to rejoin her children at the party.

Fini

Authors Note:

When we wrote the very first Wizards Fall short story we inadvertently opened a window into a unique universe of our own creation that had been taken far from the world created by JK Rowling. While many people are interested in the whole concept of Avalonian time and what would happen when they came out of that time, we were not among those interested.

Frankly my personal interest has always been in the steps involved in taking a group of people who were refugees from their society and seeing what was needed to make them decide it was perfectly acceptable to infect the entire world with a disease that would halt the spread of magic.

This entry into the saga shows how that decision came about and pretty much satisfies my personal need to explore this universe. Will there be another Wizards Fall installment? Honestly I can't tell you. Right now I have no plans for one, but that could change.

And honestly folks, the results of what happens 1000 years in the future are best left as science fiction. Depending on whether you think it would be a Gene Roddenberry vision of the future or a Mad Max future, but I don't see us going that way.